

## Toward a Test of Wheeler's "Integrative Theory" in Six Union Election Cases

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### Résumé de l'article

Aux États-Unis, la croissance syndicale se réalise ou non lors des élections pour fins d'accréditation. Cependant, nous n'avons pas encore bâti une structure théorique acceptée pour comprendre et prédire tel phénomène. La présente étude tente de vérifier une théorie potentielle à cet égard en utilisant une méthodologie comparative de cas pour examiner six élections syndicales d'accréditation.

Il s'agit de la théorie intégrative du conflit industriel de Wheeler. Cette théorie propose trois chemins alternatifs pour expliquer la tendance pour des employés de recourir à l'action agressive afin d'atteindre leurs buts au travail. Deux de ces chemins trouvent leurs origines dans la privation. L'un d'eux, le chemin de la menace, est poursuivi lorsque les employés se voient privés de leurs récompenses existantes telle une coupure de salaire. L'autre, le chemin de la frustration, est utilisé par les employés qui ont entamé des actions pré-syndicales pour se soulager de leurs privations et voient leur employeur les empêcher. Le troisième chemin implique un calcul rationnel seulement pour mener à l'action sans requérir de privation. Pour que cette action prenne la forme de la syndicalisation, il faut que certaines conditions facilitantes ou inhibantes soient présentes ou absentes.

À partir de la théorie, nous avons déduit un ensemble de propositions modèles qui seraient vraies si la théorie était correcte. Non seulement nous nous attendons à ce que chaque variable individuelle soit reliée de façon significative avec les gains ou les pertes des syndicats, mais également que différentes chaînes de variables soient présentes ou absentes dans de tels gains ou pertes. Nous distinguons entre les gains syndicaux « chauds » et « tièdes » et différentes attentes existent pour chacun d'eux. L'échantillon est constitué de six cas d'élection d'accréditation dans la région sud-est des États-Unis. Il représente de façon égale des gains et des pertes et reflète une variété de taille d'unités et d'industries.

Les résultats sont présentés autant cas par cas que variable par variable. Quant au cas par cas, les résultats confirment à certains égards le modèle généré par la théorie, même si ces résultats sont quelque peu contradictoires. Dans deux cas de gains syndicaux, les résultats reflètent une tendance généralement compatible avec les gains « chauds ». L'autre cas s'apparente plus à un gain « tiède ». Dans deux des cas de pertes syndicales, la tendance inclut, comme prédit, une brisure dans la chaîne causale du modèle qui mènerait à un gain. Dans les deux cas, le lien manquant le plus clairement est la perception qu'un syndicat contribuerait à l'atteinte des buts et récompenses recherchés par les employés au travail. Dans le troisième cas de perte syndicale, les résultats ne permettent aucune conclusion.

L'étude variable par variable révèle que les plus importantes sont la privation (paie, respect et sécurité d'emploi), le calcul coûts-bénéfices de la syndicalisation par les employés, l'instrumentalité et la croyance que les syndicats ont tort en principe. Nous avons également observé la présence de haine et d'actions pré-syndicales dans certains gains. Il semble que la destination gains « chauds » et gains « tièdes » soit significative à la lumière de ces données.

Nous concluons que nous avons trouvé des résultats quelque peu contradictoires quant au modèle et fait un pas vers la vérification d'un modèle qui peut être utile à la compréhension et à la prévision du phénomène.

# *Toward a Test of Wheeler's "Integrative Theory" in Six Union Election Cases*

**Hoyt N. Wheeler**  
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**Roger D. Weikle**

*Using data from six union certification election cases (three union wins and three union losses) in the United States, this study examines the phenomenon of unionization, drawing upon Wheeler's (1985) theory of industrial conflict. The comparative case study assessment suggests that a union win is related to employee deprivation, calculation as to union effectiveness, instrumentality perceptions, and attitudes about unions. In general, the results are somewhat supportive of the theory and suggest avenues for future research.*

In the United States, union growth ultimately occurs, or fails to occur, at the level of the union representation election. This is where individual decisions become aggregated into the collective act of unionization of a group of employees — resulting in certification of the union as the bargaining agent for the employees. The score on “wins” and “losses” is kept at this level by practitioners and policymakers, lending saliency to election outcomes as a subject of study.

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Research at the election level has provided a great deal of knowledge about particular variables that are related to election outcomes. However, in contrast to the *individual level* literature, with some exceptions, e.g. Lawler (1990), the *election level* literature is, in our view, somewhat deficient in theory. This study attempts to address this by utilizing and deriving testable propositions from a theory of such phenomena — Wheeler's "Integrative Theory" (Wheeler 1985) — and to use data collected in a set of six comparative case studies to see whether the facts match the pattern thereby posited (Yin 1985). What primarily motivates this paper is a felt need to make progress toward a useable theory of union election outcomes so that research at this level of analysis can be more fruitful, and our understanding of the phenomenon at this important level can be improved.

This paper will first set out a summary of the relevant literature, the theory used, and the propositions derived from it. After giving a description of the sample and method it will set out the findings, both case-by-case and variable-by-variable, and then propose some conclusions.

## RELEVANT LITERATURE

Election level studies have analyzed a large number of potential determinants of union election wins (Heneman and Sandver 1983). There are several findings as to the association between election unit characteristics and union wins. These characteristics include unit size (negative) (Heneman and Sandver 1989; Hurd and McElwain 1988; Maranto 1988), voter turnout (negative) (Heneman and Sandver 1983), and location in the South (mixed) (Heneman and Sandver 1989; Hurd and McElwain 1988).

Strategic and procedural variables that have been found to be significantly related to union election wins include the use of management consultants (negative) (e.g., Lawler 1984), the election being on a non-consent basis (negative) (e.g., Maranto and Fiorito 1987), and election delays (mixed) (e.g., Roomkin and Juris 1979; Hurd and McElwain 1988). Union and employer characteristics that have been found to be related to union wins include more democratic, larger and less centralized unions (positive) (Maranto and Fiorito 1987), personal characteristics of the organizer, such as self-esteem and need for control (positive), and "Machiavellianism" (negative) (Reed 1989), and a firm being unprofitable or capital intensive (positive) (Maranto 1988).

As the collective election level phenomenon necessarily includes decisions by individuals, we believe that a model of election level collective action should, as does the Wheeler model, include a stage that takes this into account. This means that the literature at this level of analysis — the *individual level* — is of some relevance for an election level study such as this one. The theoretical structures utilized in this literature have been recently analyzed in

some detail (Wheeler and McClendon 1991). For our purposes perhaps the most useful notion that can be drawn from this analysis is the distinction between dissatisfaction-based models (Wheeler and McClendon's Model A) and purely utility-based models (Wheeler and McClendon's Model B). Dissatisfaction-based models require a "starter" of dissatisfaction, implicitly involving a greater degree of arousal, i.e., are "hotter," than models that posit utility calculations as the sole ground for action. As to particular variables, the clearest findings from the individual level literature are: (1) a negative relationship between job satisfaction and union support; (2) a positive relationship between both general attitudes toward unions and perceived union instrumentality and union support; and, (3) union proneness of blacks.

## THEORY

The theory that we draw upon is the "integrative theory" of industrial conflict set out in Wheeler (1985). This theory aims at a broad based understanding of such phenomena as organizing and strikes, drawing upon knowledge from a number of disciplines — biology, social psychology, political science, sociology, industrial relations — and attempts to integrate them into a single model. The result is a rather complex structure for analysis, leading to complexity in the design of our study and the reporting of its results.

A version of the Wheeler model, refined somewhat to make it specific to union elections, is depicted in Figures 1 and 2. As is shown in Figure 1, its basic argument is that the impetus toward unionization begins with deprivation of individual employees as to compensation, respect, or job security. Employees suffering such deprivation may move toward a readiness to take some action against the employer by one or more of three paths. First, they may move immediately to such a readiness if the deprivation comes from a reduction, or a threatened reduction, in their achievements, i.e., an attack upon these such as a pay cut (labeled the "threat" path in the Wheeler model). Second, and very commonly, they may take pre-union action, such as individual or informal group attempts to relieve the deprivation, e.g., individually ask for an increase in pay, and be blocked, i.e., frustrated, by the employer's refusal to meet their demands. Third, they may coolly make a cost-benefit calculation (balancing costs and benefits) that leads them to believe that it is to their advantage to participate in aggressive action such as unionization. Unlike the other paths, this third path does not require deprivation as a "starter," and leads to a different kind of readiness, one that does not involve the high degree of arousal commonly associated with "anger," which is the term used by some social psychologists to denote a readiness to take aggressive action (Berkowitz 1968). In a particular case different employees may come to readiness by different paths, or a single employee may pursue different paths, either simultaneously or one after the other.

FIGURE 1  
Model of Unionization  
Individual Readiness Stage

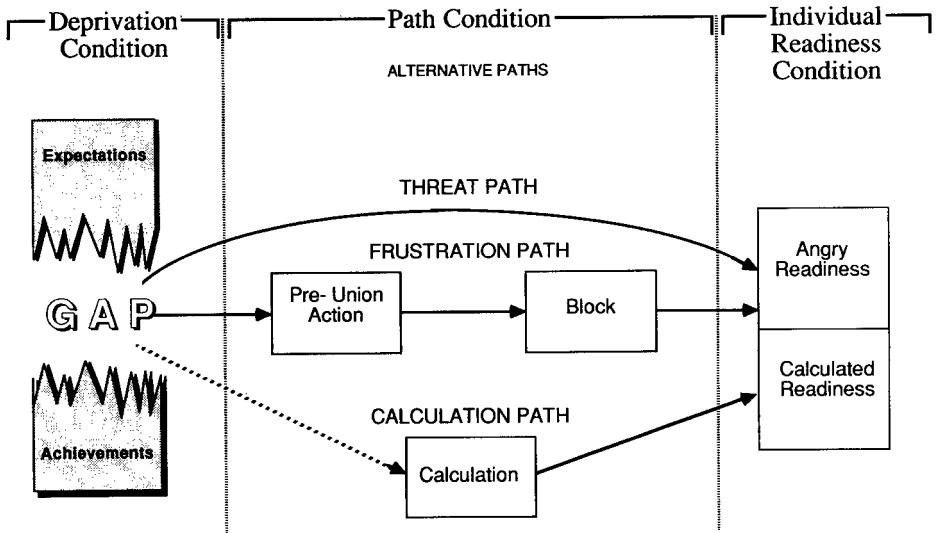
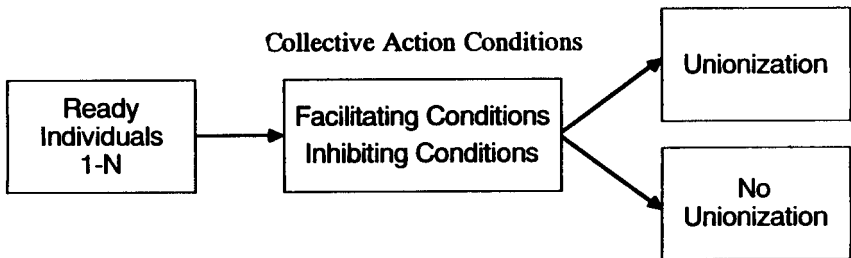


FIGURE 2  
Model of Unionization  
Collective Action Stage



Where a substantial number of individual employees becomes ready to take *some* action, the question still remains whether this will take the form of the collective action of unionization. At the second, or collective action, stage of the model (Figure 2), this comes to depend upon the presence or absence of certain collective action conditions that either facilitate or inhibit it. It is believed that unionization is facilitated by: (1) solidarity among employees, both among themselves and versus supervisors; (2) the belief that a union will be instrumental in ending their deprivations by providing them with benefits (not balancing these with costs); and, (3) the notion of unionization being made salient by either a dramatic event or skillful leaders. Unionization is inhibited by: (1) perceptions that employees will be punished for supporting unionization, i.e., fear; and, (2) perceptions that unions are wrong in principle (similar to the general beliefs about unions variable used in the individual level studies).

## PATTERN PROPOSITIONS

From the integrative theory we derive the following propositions. These are dubbed "pattern propositions" because they reflect the pattern of observations that we expect to find if the theory is valid.<sup>1</sup>

In union *wins*, we expect to find the following pattern of employee perceptions to *exist for a majority of the employees*. For the expected causal chain to be present in a union win *all* conditions must be met. In union *losses*, we expect to find that one or more of the conditions will be lacking, thereby breaking the causal chain.

### Individual Readiness Stage

*Deprivation Condition.* Deprivation as to respect, pay, or job security, or calculation as to it being to the employees' advantage to support a union (Proposition 1).

*Path Condition.* Readiness to take aggressive action against the employer arising from either: (a) deprivation that derives from a *reduction* in respect, pay or job security by the employer (Wheeler's "threat" path);<sup>2</sup> (b) attempts to resolve respect, pay or job security deprivation by some means short of

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<sup>1</sup> The measures that relate to these propositions are set out in a technical appendix available from the authors upon request.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that we were unable to develop a useable measure of the presence of the Threat Path. Accordingly, we have only anecdotal evidence to refer to in detecting its presence.

unionization, and the *frustration* of those attempts; or, (c) cost-benefit *calculations* in regard to unionization (Proposition 2).

*Readiness Condition.* Either: (a) anger, providing Angry Readiness; or (b) calculation, providing Calculated Readiness (Proposition 3).

### **Collective Action Stage**

*Facilitating Conditions.* Solidarity with other employees and versus supervisors (Proposition 4).

The belief that the union would be instrumental to relieving the employees' deprivations as to respect, pay or job security (Proposition 5).

An event or leaders that make unionization salient (Proposition 6).

*Inhibiting Conditions.* The absence of the belief that employees will be punished for supporting unionization (Proposition 7).

The absence of the belief that unions are wrong in principle (Proposition 8).

As is shown in Figure 1 by the dotted line between the Deprivation Condition and the Path Condition of calculation, it is consistent with the model to have the Readiness Condition (as Calculated Readiness) arrived at through the Calculation Path in the absence of Deprivation. This is a separate alternative path in the model and is tested by a separate set of criteria. In such a case, our expectations would be met if the following Conditions were met:

### **Individual Readiness Stage**

*Path Condition.* Calculations in regard to unionization, supporting Calculation Path (Proposition 9).

*Readiness Condition.* Calculations in regard to unionization, supporting Calculated Readiness (Proposition 10).

### **Collective Action Stage**

*Facilitating Condition.* Belief that the union would be instrumental in serving employees' interests (Proposition 11).

Such a case might be characterized as a "cool" union win, where anger would be missing or at a low level and utility calculations would predominate. Union organizers distinguish between "hot shops" (in which employee feelings are highly aroused) and those that are not "hot." Using this terminology, we distinguish between "hot" and "cool" union wins, labeling union win cases involving deprivation and anger to a substantial degree as "hot," and those not having those characteristics, and being clearly utilitarian, as "cool."

This is similar to the distinction in the individual-level literature, alluded to above, made by Wheeler and McClendon (1991) between dissatisfaction-based models and purely utility-based models of the individual decision to support unionization.

In summary, in each case of a union win in a "hot" case, we expect to observe that the Deprivation Condition is met by evidence of at least one type of deprivation (pay, respect, job satisfaction), that the Path Condition is met by there being evidence of at least one Path (threat, frustration, calculation), and that the Readiness Condition is met by there being evidence of one of the two types of readiness (Angry or Calculated). We also expect to find one or more of the Facilitating Conditions, and the absence of the Inhibiting Conditions. In each case of a "cool" union win, we expect to find evidence of calculation, which meets both the Path and Readiness Conditions. We also expect to find the presence of the Facilitating Condition of instrumentality. These patterns contrast with the patterns expected in losses, where we predict one or more missing links in these chains.

## SAMPLE AND METHOD

The sample consists of six cases of attempted unionization where a representation election was held. Three are union wins. Three are union losses. All are in the Southeast region of the United States. They were selected principally on the basis of availability, given the rather intense cooperation needed from the union in each case, and in such a manner as to obtain an equal number of union wins and losses as well as some variation in size and industry. They range from large (2,000 employee) to small (100 employee) units and include both manufacturing and service operations. Although limited to the Southeast, the locations include local areas that are both relatively high and low in union density. To preserve promised anonymity, they will be not be identified (instead, like hurricanes, they will be anthromorphized).

The overall strategy of the study is that of a set of comparative case studies (see Yin 1985). The appropriate procedure for such a study is to begin with an extensive research protocol (Yin 1985) that furnishes a plan for the study and facilitates replication.<sup>3</sup> After doing this we devised and, by means of a pilot study, the results of which are not reported here, tested the research

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<sup>3</sup> The research protocol is too extensive to set out here. The authors will provide copies upon request. The protocol, following Yin (1985), includes an overview of the project, a statement of its background and significance, a literature review, a summary of the theory used, the research propositions, the research procedures, a consideration of problems to be encountered in the research, an outline of constructs and data sources, outlines of planned reports of research results, and drafts of interviews and questionnaires.



instruments which consisted of a telephone survey questionnaire and structured employee and organizer interviews.

In each case a telephone survey of a sample of employees was conducted. Samples were drawn in *Case Anne* and *Case David* by successive draws from the unions' election lists, until an adequate sample size was reached. Random number tables were used until there remained only a small number of untried names (those for which telephone contact had not been attempted at least twice), at which point the remainder were selected alphabetically. In the other, smaller, cases two attempts were made to contact *all* employees on the unions' election lists. In addition to the structured telephone survey, structured personal interviews were conducted in four of the six cases. Interviews were also conducted with union organizers in all but one case (*Case Evelyn*).

Sample representativeness was examined by comparing the proportion of self-reported union supporters in the sample to the proportion of yes voters in the certification election. This comparison indicates that the proportion of self-reported union supporters was similar (within 10 percentage points) to that of union yes voters in the election in all cases but one (*Case Basil*, where union supporters constituted 75 per cent of the sample, but only 54 per cent of the voters were yes voters).

Because of concern about obtaining responses on this sensitive subject, telephone surveys were used. Time and expense limitations restricted us to the use of single-item measures. However, during interviews with respondents in both the pilot study and the case studies, similar questions were posed to interviewees. The results of our analysis of these qualitative interviews are quite similar to those of the survey, providing indirect support for the reliability and construct validity of these measures.

Particular propositions are judged to be supported if *our analysis shows that we can be 95 per cent confident that a majority of employees in the case have the predicted perceptions*.<sup>4</sup> The predicted overall pattern is judged to be present in a win if we have this degree of confidence that each Condition (e.g., Hot win — Deprivation, Path, Readiness, Facilitating and Inhibiting; Cool win — Path, Readiness, Facilitating) is met. It is judged to be present in a loss if we have the required degree of confidence that there is a break in the chain of Conditions that would be necessary for a win. It is important to understand that

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<sup>4</sup> Ninety-five per cent confidence intervals are reported for each of the sample percentages in Tables 1 and 2. These indicate the percentage points greater or lesser than the observed sample percentage within which one can be 95 per cent confident the population percentage lies. For example, in *Case Anne* the percentage in the sample indicating pay deprivation is 56, with a confidence interval of 4. This means that one can be 95 per cent confident (have a 5 per cent chance of being wrong) that the percentage of the entire population of employees in that bargaining unit experiencing pay deprivation is 56+ 4, or between 60 and 52.

generalization is attempted through the theory rather than through any claimed representativeness of a larger population of cases by the sample of cases studied (see Yin 1985).

## FINDINGS

Following a comparative case approach, we will first briefly consider the findings on a case-by-case basis to see whether the expected pattern is found in each case. We will then consider the results variable-by-variable. The data used in analyzing the findings in the various cases are set out in Tables 1 and 2.

### Case-by-Case Analysis

#### *Union Wins*

*Case Anne.* This was a major union victory in a large unit. The region is one that is highly unionized relative to the rest of the Southeast. Immediately prior to the organizing campaign, management adopted cost saving strategies that included reducing employee breaks and, more importantly, laying off workers without regard to seniority and replacing them with lower cost temporary workers.

Our study of this case involved a telephone survey of a sample of 406 of the approximately 2,000 unit employees, interviews with 30 employees (all union supporters), discussions with several organizers and the review of materials, including video tapes of television newscasts.

Looking at Table 1 as to *Case Anne* in terms of our model we can conservatively conclude that the Deprivation Condition was met by all three types of deprivation being present; that the Path and Readiness conditions were met by support for the Calculation Path and Calculated Readiness; that the Facilitating Conditions were all present, except for leader induced saliency; and that the Inhibiting Conditions were both absent. This is consistent with our model.

*Case Basil.* This union win was in a small manufacturing plant in a traditionally non-union area. The election unit was approximately 100 employees. The union won by a margin of less than ten votes. This was a case in which top management stood neutral in the campaign and shop level management was also, at least officially, neutral. Wages at *Basil* were the lowest of any of the company's operations. Our data in this case include results from a telephone survey of 34 of the approximately 100 unit employees, interviews with six employees (five union supporters, one opposed to the union), and interviews with several organizers.

TABLE 1  
**Employee Perceptions**  
**Percentage by Case**  
**Union Wins**

	<i>Case Anne</i> (N = 406)	<i>Case Basil</i> (N = 34)	<i>Case Clara</i> (N = 46)	<i>Per Case</i> <i>Average</i>
<b>INDIVIDUAL READINESS STAGE</b>				
<i>Deprivation Condition</i>				
Pay Deprivation	56* (4) <sup>a</sup>	62 (14)	82* (9)	67
Respect Deprivation	65* (4)	27 (12)	63* (12)	52
Security Deprivation	68* (4)	40 (13)	54 (12)	54
<i>Path and Readiness Conditions</i>				
Pre-Union Activity	20 (3)	29 (12)	63* (12)	37
Anger	49 (4)	24 (12)	40 (12)	38
Calculation	96* (2)	82* (11)	73* (11)	84
<b>COLLECTIVE ACTION STAGE</b>				
<i>Facilitating Conditions</i>				
Solidarity – Employees	94* (2)	94* (7)	96* (5)	95
Solidarity – Supervisors	20* (3)	71 (12)	41 (12)	44
Instrumentality	61* (4)	79* (11)	80* (10)	73
Saliency-Event	80* (3)	38 (13)	59 (12)	59
Saliency-Leaders	43 (4)	62 (13)	56 (12)	54
<i>Inhibiting Conditions</i>				
Punishment Fear	32* (4)	32* (13)	51 (12)	38
Unions Wrong	5* (2)	24* (12)	4* (5)	11

<sup>a</sup> Number in parenthesis is 95% confidence interval, indicating the percentage points greater or lesser than the observed *sample* percentage within which one can be 95% confident that the *population* percentage lies.

\* 95% confident that 51% in case have predicted perception. In Union Wins, the prediction is the *presence* of a general perception that the element is present except for Supervisor Solidarity, Punishment Fear, and Unions Wrong.

TABLE 2  
**Employee Perceptions**  
**Percentage by Case**  
**Union Losses**

	<i>Case David</i> (N = 413)	<i>Case Evelyn</i> (N = 181)	<i>Case Frank</i> (N = 114)	<i>Per Case</i> <i>Average</i>
<b>INDIVIDUAL READINESS STAGE</b>				
<i>Deprivation Condition</i>				
Pay Deprivation	48 (4) <sup>a</sup>	56 (7)	54 (9)	53
Respect Deprivation	32* (3)	25* (6)	33* (8)	30
Security Deprivation	39* (4)	40* (7)	38* (8)	39
<i>Path and Readiness Conditions</i>				
Pre-Union Activity	23* (3)	35* (6)	44 (9)	34
Anger	31* (3)	32* (6)	32* (8)	32
Calculation	54 (4)	73 (6)	67 (8)	68
<b>COLLECTIVE ACTION STAGE</b>				
<i>Facilitating Conditions</i>				
Solidarity – Employees	75 (3)	91 (4)	90 (5)	85
Solidarity – Supervisors	49 (4)	57 (7)	51 (9)	52
Instrumentality	42* (4)	48 (7)	41* (9)	44
Saliency-Event	27* (2)	42* (7)	41* (9)	37
Saliency-Leaders	46* (4)	53 (7)	34* (8)	44
<i>Inhibiting Conditions</i>				
Punishment Fear	39 (4)	28 (6)	32 (8)	33
Unions Wrong	25 (3)	29 (6)	29 (8)	28

<sup>a</sup> 95% confidence interval.

\* 95% confident that 51% in case have predicted perception. In Union Losses, the Prediction is the *absence* of a general perception that elements are present except for Supervisor Solidarity, Punishment Fear, and Unions Wrong. Calculation may or may not be absent in Union Losses.

Looking at Table 1, we conclude that this case meets all of the conditions for a cool win — the Path and Readiness conditions being met by the evidence of calculation, and the Facilitating Conditions being met by the instrumentality perceptions. Our interview evidence shows a lack of employer opposition, thereby supporting this interpretation.

*Case Clara.* This union win involved a 150 employee unit in a service organization. The employees worked in multiple locations. The union won the election by a substantial margin. Data gathered in this case include responses to our telephone survey from 46 employees and interviews with five employees (all union supporters) and several organizers.

Looking at Table 1, the most conservative interpretation of *Case Clara* in terms of our model would be that the Deprivation Condition is met as to pay and respect; that the relevant path as to the Path Condition is that of Calculation, since the pre-union activity did not lead to anger on the part of a majority of the employees; that there is evidence of Calculated Readiness to meet the Readiness Condition; that the Facilitating Conditions of solidarity as to fellow employees and supervisors were as predicted, as was instrumentality, but that there is insufficient evidence of saliency; and that as to the Inhibiting Conditions, fear may be *opposite* the predicted direction, and perceptions of unions being wrong are as predicted, thereby meeting the Inhibiting Conditions only as to perceptions of unions being wrong in principle.

As may also be true in *Case Anne*, we believe that the substantial presence of anger is worth noting and considering as to its possible importance. Here, we are 95 per cent confident that between 28 and 52 per cent of employees experienced anger. The importance of this is supported by the presence of pre-union activity, which had the potential for producing frustration and anger.

### *Union Losses*

*Case David.* This case involved a union loss in a manufacturing plant with an election unit of approximately 1,000 employees. The union received a little over 40 per cent of the vote. The data in the case include returns from a telephone survey of 413 of the approximately 1,000 employees in the unit, interviews with 14 employees (9 union supporters, 5 union opposers), and interviews with organizers.

Looking at Table 2, we conclude that what most clearly distinguishes *Case David* from the wins is the failure of a majority of the employees to perceive that the union would be instrumental for them. This is the one break in the flow of the model in which we can have the required degree of confidence.

*Case Evelyn.* This was a union loss in a manufacturing plant with an election unit of approximately 1,100 employees. The union received a little over

40 per cent of the vote. Data for this case consist of 181 responses to our telephone survey.

Viewing Table 1, we find that the results in this case are less clear than in the other union losses. We believe that a conservative reading shows the results in *Case Evelyn* to be inconclusive with respect to being either consistent or inconsistent with our model.

*Case Frank.* This case involved a unit of approximately 1,000 employees in a manufacturing plant. According to an organizer, prior to the campaign insurance premiums had been raised substantially, a wage increase had been given that was less than expected by some employees, and there were rumors of changes in the retirement plan. This was a relatively narrow union loss, with the union receiving approximately 45 per cent of the votes. Our data for this case consist of 114 responses to the telephone survey and interviews with union organizers.

Looking at Table 2, we conclude that the most conservative reading of this case would be that the only clearly missing link is instrumentality perceptions. With respect to other Conditions in the model, the results are at best unclear. Saliency is also missing, but it, unlike instrumentality, may also have been missing in one of the hot wins (*Case Clara*), leading us to have less confidence in it as a necessary condition.

### Variable-by-Variable Analysis

For a somewhat different perspective on the data, we will consider each variable separately.

*Deprivation.* In two of the three union wins — those that we would characterize as hot wins — deprivation as to either pay, respect or job security was present for a majority of employees. Table 3 compares hot wins and losses. This may be more meaningful than a comparison between losses and all wins, since we expect cool wins to differ from losses only as to instrumentality perceptions. Table 3 does reveal some rather interesting differences. First, as to deprivations, there are much higher levels of respect deprivation (34 percentage points) and job security deprivation (22 percentage points) in hot wins than in losses. It also appears from Table 2 that in none of the losses did a majority of employees suffer either of these types of deprivation. There is a smaller but still substantial (16 percentage point) difference between hot wins and losses on pay deprivation. It seems that the contrast between the absence of clear evidence of any kind of deprivation in losses and the cool win, compared to clear evidence of it in the hot wins, may be one of the more interesting results. Also, the hot wins share strong and clear respect deprivation. This is consistent with

the conventional wisdom of union organizers that it is respect related issues that provide the emotion that drives employees to organize.<sup>5</sup>

TABLE 3  
**Employee Perceptions**  
**Percentage Holding Perception in**  
**“Hot” Union Wins versus Union Losses\***

	“Hot” Wins	Losses
Pay Deprivation	69	53
Respect Deprivation	64	30
Security Deprivation	61	39
Pre-Union Activity	42	34
Anger	45	32
Calculation	86	65
Solidarity – Employees	95	85
Solidarity – Supervisors	31	52
Instrumentality	71	44
Saliency – Event	70	37
Saliency – Leaders	50	44
Punishment Fear	42	33
Unions Wrong	5	28

\* “Hot” Union Wins are *Case Anne* and *Case Clara*. Union losses are *Case David*, *Case Evelyn*, *Case Frank*.

*Paths to Readiness.* Our evidence on the paths is mixed. As to the Calculation Path, a majority of employees in all of the wins said that they made a calculation. Comparing all wins to losses, we find calculations more prevalent in the wins (84 per cent versus 65 per cent). This is consistent with the model. However, also in two of the three losses a majority of employees said that they made a calculation. Although this is not inconsistent with the model, because the calculation could have been made and come out against the union, this leads us to doubt the degree of practical significance of our findings on this variable.

*Solidarity.* Although, as predicted, there is *solidarity among rank-and-file employees* in union wins, this is also true in union losses. Looking at Table 3, we see that, as expected, in hot union wins *solidarity with supervisors* was not perceived to be present by a majority of employees (*Case Anne* — 20 per

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that we chose a conservative strategy for testing the effects of deprivation by looking for effects of each type of deprivation separately rather than analyzing whether the majority of employees in a case suffered *any* of them.

cent; *Case Clara* — 41 per cent), averaging only 31 per cent. In contrast, in union losses, solidarity with supervisors may or may not have been present for a majority of employees, and averaged 52 per cent per case among the respondents.

*Union Instrumentality.* The results are clearest with respect to this variable. As appears in Table 1, in *all* union wins there were positive union instrumentality perceptions by a majority of employees (*Case Anne*, 61 per cent; *Case Basil*, 79 per cent; *Case Clara*, 80 per cent), whereas this was clearly absent for a majority of employees in two of the losses, and may have been absent in the other (*Case Evelyn*). On average, 73 per cent of the employees in the wins perceived the union to be instrumental, compared to 44 per cent in losses.

*Saliency from event or leaders.* Events or leaders that provided saliency were clearly present for a majority of employees in one of the two union hot win cases (*Case Anne*), and may have been present in the other one (*Case David*), and in the cool one (*Case Basil*).

Looking at Table 3, we see that 70 per cent of employees in hot wins believed that the union was made salient by an event, whereas only 37 per cent had this perception in losses. As to saliency being provided by leaders, 50 per cent in hot wins perceived this to be present, while only 44 per cent in losses held this view.

*Fear of punishment for supporting union.* In two of the union wins, as expected, this was not perceived by a majority of employees. However, in one of them, *Case Clara*, there was evidence of fear by 51 per cent of respondents, and it may or may not have been present for a majority of the employees. Furthermore, it should be noted that, contrary to our expectations, when one looks across Tables 1 and 2 it is apparent that there is *more* evidence of fear of punishment in union wins than in union losses.

*Beliefs unions wrong.* In none of the wins did a majority, or even a substantial minority, of employees believe that unions were wrong *per se*. It also appears that in the two hot wins the incidence of a belief that unions were wrong was quite low (5 and 4 per cent in *Case Anne* and *Case Clara*, respectively). Looking at Table 3, we see that the hot win average of 5 per cent differs substantially from that in union losses of 28 per cent.

## CONCLUSIONS

The evidence in support of our model is mixed. We do find the union wins to have unbroken chains of our Conditions, as predicted. It should be noted, however, that as to paths and readiness there is clear evidence only as



to the Calculation path and Calculated Readiness. In all of the losses but one, *Case Evelyn*, there are, as predicted, identifiable breaks in the chain. Even in *Case Evelyn*, the pattern may follow our expectations.

The variables that find the greatest support appear to be all three types of deprivation, calculation, instrumentality and the belief that unions are wrong. Event induced saliency was important in one case. There was evidence of anger, although not of it being held by majorities of employees, in the two hot wins. There was evidence of pre-union action in one of these.

There are two areas where we might expect the Wheeler theory to make a contribution: (1) by providing an analytical structure; and, (2) in identifying variables for analysis. As to the first, it appears to be only moderately helpful. This is because the expected chains of observations do hold up in both wins and losses, but do not amount to a confirmation of the kind of frustration-aggression effect that is a central part of the theory. As to identifying variables for future study, it may be more useful. The evidence on anger and pre-union activity is intriguing and seems worthy of further study. It is also useful, we believe, in suggesting and providing theoretical support for a distinction between hot and cool union wins.

Although our results do not speak to the effects of the same variables studied in the election level literature, they do connect with, and are generally supportive of, findings in the individual level literature. Our findings on deprivation match those on dissatisfaction (Wheeler and McClendon 1991: 59-60). Our results on beliefs about unions and union instrumentality are also consistent with research results in that literature (Wheeler and McClendon 1991: 62-63).

It is perhaps not too surprising that there are not more clear differences between wins and losses, given that in all of these cases at least 30 per cent of the employees (probably a much higher percentage) indicated an interest in union representation. Otherwise an election would not have been held. This means that what they have in common, as well as what separates them, is of some interest. Looking across Tables 1 and 2 we find that in all of these cases there was a good deal of deprivation, that calculation and anger were rather common, and that employee solidarity, union instrumentality perceptions, and fear of punishment by the employer were all at rather high levels.

The chief purpose of this study is to move toward a test of a theory. To do this we have applied a pattern-matching logic to a set of six cases, including both union wins and losses. It seems to us that this research may indeed be a step toward testing this theory. It does, we believe, show some of the opportunities and pitfalls that lie along the path to such an attempt, and also provides a test of the usefulness of a comparative case logic.

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## ***Une vérification de la théorie intégrative de Wheeler lors de six élections syndicales***

Aux États-Unis, la croissance syndicale se réalise ou non lors des élections pour fins d'accréditation. Cependant, nous n'avons pas encore bâti une structure théorique

acceptée pour comprendre et prédire tel phénomène. La présente étude tente de vérifier une théorie potentielle à cet égard en utilisant une méthodologie comparative de cas pour examiner six élections syndicales d'accréditation.

Il s'agit de la théorie intégrative du conflit industriel de Wheeler. Cette théorie propose trois chemins alternatifs pour expliquer la tendance pour des employés de recourir à l'action agressive afin d'atteindre leurs buts au travail. Deux de ces chemins trouvent leurs origines dans la privation. L'un d'eux, le chemin de la menace, est poursuivi lorsque les employés se voient privés de leurs récompenses existantes telle une coupure de salaire. L'autre, le chemin de la frustration, est utilisé par les employés qui ont entamé des actions pré-syndicales pour se soulager de leurs privations et voient leur employeur les en empêcher. Le troisième chemin implique un calcul rationnel seulement pour mener à l'action sans requérir de privation. Pour que cette action prenne la forme de la syndicalisation, il faut que certaines conditions facilitantes ou inhibantes soient présentes ou absentes.

À partir de la théorie, nous avons déduit un ensemble de propositions modèles qui seraient vraies si la théorie était correcte. Non seulement nous nous attendons à ce que chaque variable individuelle soit reliée de façon significative avec les gains ou les pertes des syndicats, mais également que différentes chaînes de variables soient présentes ou absentes dans de tels gains ou pertes. Nous distinguons entre les gains syndicaux « chauds » et « tièdes » et différentes attentes existent pour chacun d'eux.

L'échantillon est constitué de six cas d'élection d'accréditation dans la région sud-est des États-Unis. Il représente de façon égale des gains et des pertes et reflète une variété de taille d'unités et d'industries.

Les résultats sont présentés autant cas par cas que variable par variable. Quant au cas par cas, les résultats confirment à certains égards le modèle généré par la théorie, même si ces résultats sont quelque peu contradictoires. Dans deux cas de gains syndicaux, les résultats reflètent une tendance généralement compatible avec les gains « chauds ». L'autre cas s'apparente plus à un gain « tiède ». Dans deux des cas de pertes syndicales, la tendance inclut, comme prédit, une brisure dans la chaîne causale du modèle qui mènerait à un gain. Dans les deux cas, le lien manquant le plus clairement est la perception qu'un syndicat contribuerait à l'atteinte des buts et récompenses recherchés par les employés au travail. Dans le troisième cas de perte syndicale, les résultats ne permettent aucune conclusion.

L'étude variable par variable révèle que les plus importantes sont la privation (paie, respect et sécurité d'emploi), le calcul coûts-bénéfices de la syndicalisation par les employés, l'instrumentalité et la croyance que les syndicats ont tort en principe. Nous avons également observé la présence de haine et d'actions pré-syndicales dans certains gains. Il semble que la destination gains « chauds » et gains « tièdes » soit significative à la lumière de ces données.

Nous concluons que nous avons trouvé des résultats quelque peu contradictoires quant au modèle et fait un pas vers la vérification d'un modèle qui peut être utile à la compréhension et à la prévision du phénomène.