Dual Commitment in Aggressive and Protective Unions

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Utilisant la typologie de Walker et Lawler (1979a; 1979b) distinguant les syndicats "agressifs" des syndicats "protecteurs", l'étude présente évaluait le sentiment d'appartenance duale (appartenance à la fois au syndicat et à la compagnie-employeur), est plus probable dans les syndicats "agressifs" que dans les "protecteurs". La population consistait en 89 membres d'un syndicat "protecteur" et 93 d'un syndicat "agressif", les deux opérant dans la même mine sud-africaine. Le degré de corrélation (d'ordre zéro) entre l'appartenance envers le syndicat et celle envers la compagnie, était significativement plus important chez les membres du syndicat "protecteur" que chez ceux du syndicat "agressif", suggérant que le type de syndicat nuance l'appartenance duale. Cependant, quand les effets des facteurs différenciant les syndicats "agressifs" des "protecteurs" (statut professionnel, rôle dans les syndicats, climat des relations industrielles observées et satisfaction au travail), furent écartés, les corrélations entre les appartenances envers le syndicat et la compagnie ne différaient pas pour les deux types de syndicat. Ce résultat est présenté autant comme preuve de la réalité du concept de sentiment d'appartenance duale que comme un éphéméronème du type de syndicat.

Using Walker and Lawler's (1979a; 1979b) typology of "aggressive" vs "protective" unions, the present study assessed whether dual commitment

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(commitment to both the union and employing company) is more likely in protective rather than aggressive unions. The sample consisted of 89 members of a "protective" union and 93 members of an "aggressive" union, both operating in the same South African mine. The zero-order correlation between union and company commitment was significantly greater for members of the protective union compared to the aggressive union, suggesting that union type moderates dual commitment. However, when the effects of the factors differentiating between aggressive and protective unions (occupational status, union tenure, perceived industrial relations climate and job satisfaction) were partialled out, the correlations between union and company commitment for the two types of union did not differ. This finding is discussed as evidence for conceptualising dual commitment as an epi-phenomenon of union type.

INTRODUCTION

With few exceptions (e.g. Angle & Perry, 1986; Thacker & Rosen, 1986), most research on dual allegiance to company and union has been atheoretical and empirically driven, and there has been little consistent attempt to establish a conceptual basis for understanding dual allegiance. Instead, recent research on dual allegiance has focused on the specific conditions that render the appearance of dual commitment more likely. The data show that the relationship between company and union commitment is moderated by perceptions of the union-management relationship (Angle & Perry, 1986), work-related experiences (Fukami & Larson, 1984) and the status of the individual's union membership (Conlon & Gallagher, 1987). With one possible exception, there appears to have been no attempt to integrate the findings of these individual studies into a unified conceptual framework.

Walker and Lawler (1979a; 1979b) posited a typology of unions that distinguishes between "aggressive" and "protective" unions. These two types of union differ in terms of their emphasis on political vs economic objectives, the character of the collective bargaining relationship (distributive vs integrative),¹ and the nature of their membership. Aggressive unions draw their membership from "alienated employees who are relatively deprived and seek to establish greater group control" (Walker & Lawler, 1979a, p. 3), whereas protective unions consist of "employees who are relatively privileged and seek to protect their control in the face of actual or potential threats" (p. 3). Walker and Lawler (1979b) found higher levels of commitment to the employing organisation among members of a protective union than among members of an aggressive union.

¹Walton and McKersie (1965) have distinguished between distributive bargaining, which entails an adversarial negotiation over conflicts of interest, and integrative bargaining, in which parties negotiate common or complementary interests.
Subsequently, Martin (1981) argued that dual allegiance is more likely in protective unions consisting of privileged workers, rather than aggressive unions with members who are more alienated and deprived. Martin's conclusions, however, must be treated cautiously due to the small unionised sample surveyed \((n = 23)\), and the fact that he did not compare statistically dual allegiance between a protective and aggressive labour organisation. Rather, he focused on non-members and members of a union that was initially aggressive, but had become protective. It is hypothesised that dual commitment is more likely to emerge in protective than aggressive unions. To provide an adequate test of this hypothesis, it is critical that two separate unions be studied that faithfully reflect the aggressive vs protective dichotomy.

The distinction between aggressive and protective unions is clearly manifest in South Africa where two broad labour segments can be identified, each associated with different skill levels, employment conditions, racial groups and levels of alienation (Fullagar, 1986). First, there is a skilled labour sector consisting mainly of privileged, white workers who constitute a labour “aristocracy”. Secondly, there is a larger semi-skilled and unskilled labour market of black workers whose jobs are physically demanding, alienating and characterised by poor working conditions. The degree of alienation (vs privilege) manifested by these two groups has been shown to be significantly different (Fullagar & Barling, 1989).

This labour market segmentation has led to the development of two qualitatively and ideologically different types of union, which can be generally classified using Walker and Lawler's aggressive/protective typology. In this context, protective unions consist mainly of white craft unions operating within the independent skilled labour market; their main concern is protecting their members' status, security and privileges. These unions are similar to American “business unions”. Aggressive unions operate within the semi-skilled and unskilled labour market and consist mainly of alienated black workers. The collective bargaining agenda of these unions goes beyond job-related issues to encompass political demands for democratic and social justice, and greater control of the work process. The organising and bargaining style of these aggressive unions is more militant in comparison to their protective counterparts, and they have been termed “social movement” unions. These two types of South African union clearly illustrate the criteria inherent in the protective/aggressive typology. They differ in terms of (a) protective unions emphasising economic objectives and aggressive unions stressing political issues; (b) the character of the collective bargaining relationship, with protective unions being integrative, whereas that of aggressive unions is more distributive in nature; and (c) protective unions organising privileged members of the labour force, and aggressive unions having more alienated member-
ships. The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to test the hypothesis that dual commitment is more likely to emerge in protective rather than aggressive unions.

METHOD

Subjects and Setting
The protective union investigated in the present study was the Mine Surface Officials Association (MSOA), a white, craft-based trade union established in 1919 that represents white-collar workers of limited occupational range. The total membership of the union is approximately 18,000, and the union has always had an accommodating relationship with management to the extent that it has been labelled a “sweetheart union” by more militant labour organisations. At the company investigated, no MSOA-initiated work stoppages had been recorded.

The aggressive union studied was the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Established in 1982, the NUM is the largest union in South Africa (its membership is estimated at 360,000), and represents black semi-skilled and unskilled workers at the lowest end of the mining industry hierarchy. The union has always proclaimed its aims to be political as well as job-related (South African Labour Bulletin, 1985). Since its inception, the NUM has been involved in several disputes with management over a wide range of concerns including wages, working and living conditions, health and safety, discrimination, as well as overtly political issues.

An additional factor that distinguished the two unions studied was the nature of the union shop. The protective union (MSOA) operated under a closed shop contract, whereby union membership was a mandatory condition of employment. The aggressive union (NUM), on the other hand, supported freedom of association and voluntary membership.

The present study was conducted in a single gold mine in South Africa. The sample investigated consisted of 148 white workers and 198 black workers who were members of the MSOA and NUM, respectively. Questionnaires were distributed to all 346 union members. A total of 89 members (60%) of the MSOA and 93 (47%) members of the NUM responded, yielding an overall return of 182 usable surveys (53%). There were no overall significant differences between respondents and non-respondents in terms of age, educational level, company tenure and job level, indicating satisfactory representation in these areas (see Table 1).

Questionnaires
The questionnaires were divided into two sections. The first section consisted of measures of various demographic and work-related indicators
that have been found to correlate with both union and company commitment (Fullagar & Barling, 1989; Gordon et al., 1980; Mowday et al., 1982). These included indicators of age, company tenure, union tenure, educational level (number of years of formal education), occupational status, job satisfaction and industrial relations climate. Job satisfaction was measured using Warr, Cook and Wall’s (1979) 15-item Overall Job Satisfaction scale. This scale was developed specifically for use with blue-collar workers and assesses the individual’s satisfaction with both intrinsic and extrinsic features of the job. A 5-point response format was used (1 = “very dissatisfied”, 5 = “very satisfied”). Perceptions of the industrial relations climate were measured using Donald’s (1985) Incompany Industrial Relations Climate Scale, which was developed and validated specifically in the South African context. The scale contains 39 items assessing workers’ perceptions of the in-company grievance and disciplinary procedures, communications, worker representation, supervision and company policy. The scale also uses a 5-point response format (1 = “to a little extent”, 5 = “to a great extent”).

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of measures of union and company commitment. Union commitment was assessed using Ladd, Gordon, Beauvais, and Morgan’s (1982) 28-item version of Gordon et al.’s (1980) Commitment to the Union scale. The construct validity of this scale has been established in several studies (Fullagar, 1986; Ladd et al., 1982; Thacker, Fields, & Tetrick, 1989). Commitment to the employing company was measured by the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Porter & Smith, 1970). This scale consists of 15 items, and has been validated by Cook, Hepworth, Wall, and Warr (1981).

Gordon and Ladd (1989) suggest that any dimensional approach to understanding dual allegiance should initially ascertain the association between the two dimensions of commitment (company and union). Consequently, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation was computed using all 43 items measuring company and union commitment. Three components were extracted with eigenvalues greater than or equal to unity. The first rotated factor consisted of 24 of the 28 union commitment items and accounted for 39.8% of the variance. All 15 items of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire loaded on the second factor (loading ≥ 0.30) and accounted for 24.93% of the variance. The third factor consisted of the remaining four items of the union commitment scale. Because it only accounted for 3.71% of the variance, it was not considered in the subsequent analyses; overall, union commitment was

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2Occupational status was measured using Paterson’s (1972) Decision Band Method, which grades jobs on an 11-point scale according to the complexity, difficulty and importance of the decisions made in the job.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOSA (n = 89)</th>
<th>NUM (n = 93)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>36.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Educational level*</td>
<td>11.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Occupational level*</td>
<td>8.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Union tenure*</td>
<td>7.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Job satisfaction*</td>
<td>32.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. IR climate*</td>
<td>109.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Union commitment*</td>
<td>68.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Company commitment*</td>
<td>46.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There were significant differences between the samples on these variables (t > 2.60, P < 0.01).

*P ≤ 0.05; **P < 0.01.
calculated by summing the scores of those 24 items that loaded on the first factor.

All the above scales indicated satisfactory internal reliability. Means, standard deviations and reliability coefficients are presented in Table 1. All the scales in the questionnaire utilised a 5-point response format (5 = “strongly agree”, 3 = “unsure”, 1 = “strongly disagree”), and the possibility of response bias and monomethod bias was reduced using both negatively and positively phrased items (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Procedure

An anonymous questionnaire package, together with a covering letter from the respective unions, was sent to every union member at the company. The subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire after company hours, and to return it in a self-addressed, stamped envelope that accompanied the questionnaire. The questionnaires were translated into Afrikaans and Southern Sotho, the vernacular languages predominantly used by members of the MSOA and NUM, respectively. Accuracy of the translations was enhanced by following the “back translation” approach, whereby the translated version of the questionnaire was re-translated back into English by a different translator, and any discrepancies were corrected.

RESULTS

Before contrasting the correlations between company and union commitment in the two unions, it was necessary to ensure that the two unions differed as predicted. There were significant differences between the NUM and MSOA samples, which supported the aggressive/protective distinction between the two unions. For example, members of the aggressive union (NUM) were more alienated than their MSOA counterparts. They had lower occupational status \( r(180) = 19.70, P < 0.01 \), greater job dissatisfaction \( r(180) = 9.95, P < 0.01 \), a shorter history of union protection \( r(180) = 5.46, P < 0.01 \)^3 and expressed more dissatisfaction with the overall in-company industrial relations climate \( r(180) = 8.04, P < 0.01 \); see Table 1.

To further verify the validity of the aggressive/protective typology, a discriminant function analysis was conducted where the above variables were treated as predictors of membership in either the protective or aggressive union. The classification analysis indicated that the discriminant

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^3Black workers were only legally allowed to join labour organisations in 1981. Consequently, union tenure is, to a large extent, politically determined.
function could successfully predict union type 89.67% of the time. A loading matrix of correlations between the predictor variables in the discriminant function indicated that the primary variables that distinguished between aggressive and protective unions were occupational status (0.67), union tenure (0.58), educational level (0.43), job satisfaction (0.38) and industrial relations climate (0.31). After adjusting for all other demographic variables, occupational status \( F(1,176) = 28.63, P < 0.01 \), union tenure \( F(1,176) = 14.21, P < 0.01 \), industrial relations climate \( F(1,176) = 6.71, P < 0.05 \) and job satisfaction \( F(1,176) = 4.27, P < 0.05 \) were the only variables to significantly distinguish between union types.

There was a significant, positive correlation between union and company commitment among protective union members \( r(87) = 0.43, P < 0.01 \). The correlation between union and company commitment for aggressive union members, however, was significant and negative \( r(91) = -0.26, P < 0.05 \). These two correlations differed significantly from each other \( z = 4.84, P < 0.01 \), providing support for the importance of union type in predicting dual commitment.

A further test of the hypothesis that dual commitment is a function of union type was conducted. If the difference in correlations is a function of the factors that distinguish between protective and aggressive unions, the difference should disappear when these factors are controlled. When those predictor variables that reflect the protective/aggressive typology (occupational status, union tenure, industrial relations climate and job satisfaction) were controlled statistically, the difference between the union and company commitment correlations for members of protective \( r(83) = 0.12 \) and aggressive \( r(87) = -0.09 \) unions was no longer significant \( z = 1.39, P > 0.05 \). Furthermore, the mean company commitment of the protective union sample was higher than that of the aggressive union members \( r(180) = 14.38, P < 0.01 \). On the other hand, members of the aggressive union indicated higher levels of union commitment than their counterparts in the protective union \( r(180) = 14.61, P < 0.01 \).

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the present study confirm that the existence of dual allegiance is strongly dependent upon union type. Commitment to both company and union was found to be prevalent among members of a protective union, whereas members of an aggressive union indicated unilateral allegiance to their union. Consonant with Walker and Lawler's

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*The \( F \) statistic here refers to the \( F \)-to-remove, a partial multivariate \( F \) statistic that tests the significance of the decrease in discriminatory power when that variable is removed from the list of discriminant variables.*
(1979a; 1979b) definition, the aggressive and protective unions in the present study were distinguished in terms of their bargaining agenda (political vs economic), the nature of their relationship with management (distributive vs integrative) and the occupational status of their membership (privileged vs alienated).

The patterns of dual allegiance found in the present study partially support the findings of previous research. The fact that members of the protective and aggressive unions differed with respect to satisfaction with their jobs and perceptions of the industrial relations climate, corroborates earlier research that suggested that workers who are more satisfied with wages, working conditions and job security are more likely to hold favourable opinions of both the union and the employing company (Dean, 1954; Purcell, 1953). These findings also support more recent research which indicates that perceptions of the-ambient Labour-management relationship climate moderate the amount of dual commitment expressed by members of various bargaining units (Angle & Perry, 1986). However, both job satisfaction and perceptions of the industrial relations climate only accounted for a relatively small proportion of the variance in dual allegiance in the present study. When these two variables were partialled out, the partial correlation between union and company commitment was still significantly positive \( r(85) = 0.27 \) for members of the protective union, and significantly negative \( r(89) = -0.13 \) for aggressive union members \( (z = 2.35, P < 0.05) \). On the other hand, when the other factors that were associated with union type (occupational status and union tenure) were also partialled out, the partial correlations between union and company commitment for the aggressive and protective-samples were non-significant. The conceptual implication of these findings is that the previously identified moderators of dual allegiance (e.g. perceived labour-management relationship and work-related experiences) are necessary but insufficient to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature of union type.

There is some research that provides a partial explanation as to why the aggressive/protective typology should be a basic phenomenon underlying dual allegiance. Walker and Lawler (1979b) suggested that the emergence of dual allegiance within protective unions is due to their members' greater access to political processes within organisations. In the present study, white workers who were members of the protective MSOA had a history of freedom and access to both social and organisational political power. As noted above, these white workers constitute a labour aristocracy and can be classified as "affluent workers" (Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, & Platt, 1968) with relatively high incomes and living standards. Goldthorpe et al. (1968) showed that such workers tend to develop instrumental and calculative attachments to labour and employing organisations, with both
organisations being seen as economically instrumental for acquiring the income necessary to support a valued way of life. In line with Etzioni’s (1975) concept of “calculative involvement”, one would expect such workers to express “either a negative or a positive orientation of low intensity” (p. 10) to both the union and the organisation. The mean scores of the MSOA members on both union and organisational commitment scales were close to the midpoints of each scale (see Table 1).

Recently, Fullagar and Barling (1989) provided evidence indicating that, unlike their white counterparts, alienated black workers in South Africa are less likely to become attached to labour organisations because of an instrumental belief in trade unionism as a means of acquiring individual ends extrinsic to trade unionism. Instead, they become attached more as a result of an intrinsic belief in trade unionism and in the aims of trade unionism as a social movement. Inherent in Walker and Lawler’s typology is the concept that aggressive unions embrace political and social goals as well as economic goals. Fosh (1981) showed that active trade unionists indicate a greater sense of class consciousness. Within the South African context, it has been shown that black workers manifest a heightened class consciousness because of a shared history of migrant labour and uprootedness, their tenuous occupational position, and their membership in a class that is discriminated against both at work and in society (Fullagar & Barling, 1989). It is perhaps this concern with the political dimension of union organisation that facilitates a more “moral” (as opposed to a calculative) involvement in the union (Etzioni, 1975), where the goals of the labour organisation are seen as being ideologically incompatible with those of the employing company, and where dual allegiance is consequently an anathema. That moral involvement facilitates a more intense kind of commitment (Etzioni, 1975) was indicated in the present study by the significantly high levels of union commitment among black members of the aggressive union.

An additional factor that might possibly have contributed to the differences in union commitment between aggressive and protective members was the nature of the union shop. There is some evidence to suggest that voluntary and involuntary behaviours have different impacts on subsequent organisational commitment (Mowday & McDade, 1980; Salancik, 1977), with voluntary association generating higher levels of commitment. Consequently, because the aggressive union studied here favoured voluntary union association (as opposed to an emphasis on the closed-shop agreement by the protective union), one could expect higher levels of commitment to the union.

To conclude, the present research indicates that alienated individuals who are members of an aggressive union are more likely to develop a moral and unilateral attachment to the union than to exhibit dual alle-
giance. Privileged members of protective unions, on the other hand, develop more of an instrumental and calculative attachment to both the union and the employing company, and therefore dual allegiance is more likely. The relationship, therefore, between commitment to the company and commitment to the union appears to be moderated by union type, which in turn is strongly associated with different collective bargaining agendas, different perceptions of industrial relations, different kinds of membership and varying levels of union attachment.

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