

# What Have You Done for Me Lately?

Mobility and its effects on union commitment

OTM Team Meeting, June 1, 2015  
Jason Foster, Athabasca University

# Union Commitment

- ▶ Basket of attitudes including:
    - loyalty to the union
    - sense of responsibility to the union
    - willingness to exert extra effort for the union
    - belief in the goals of unionism generally
  - ▶ A key factor that leads to union participation
  - ▶ Building commitment is pathway to increased activism
- 

# Mobile Workers' Divergence

1. Greater Ambivalence
  2. Focus on instrumental gains
  3. Less belief in goals of unionism
  4. Want a narrower union role
- 

# Ambivalence

- “It is not that I am anti or pro union or I am not anti or pro company but I worked for this company that didn’t need a union , that had what was known as an open door policy ... If [employer] was more that way ...they wouldn’t need a union”
  - “I was against unions for the longest time. The union is coming into smaller companies, it always was just a money grabber.”
  - “If you wear a union hat or associate with the union you are a troublemaker”
- 

# Instrumentalism

- “We are for the union coming in because they [employer] are sitting up and listening now, that is what people needed.”
  - “[My support] would all depend on how much they are spending and where the money is going to.”
- 

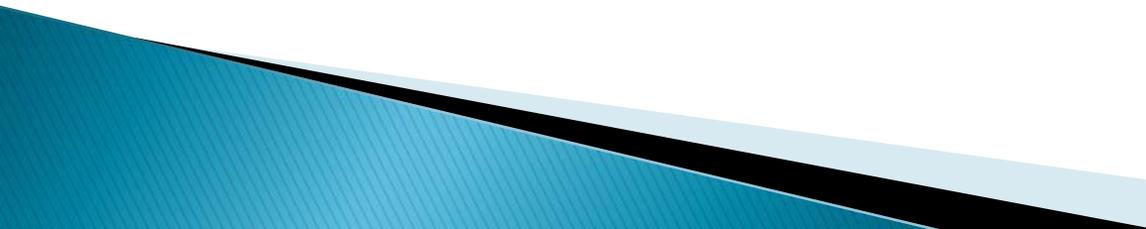
# Less Belief in Unionism

- “My opinion of the union is they drive up the cost of everything. My reason being, not that I have had direct dealings with unions before, but if my kids are not allowed to go to school because the janitor’s are on strike because they want \$28 an hour to sweep the floor it is ridiculous.”
  - “they are a business and they are forming a business and that is exactly what a union is today, not why it was started years ago but why it is today.”
- 

# Narrower Union Role

- “they should be about the union rather than going into politics.”
  - “The two things you don’t talk about with your friends are politics and religion. Two things that shouldn’t go hand in hand are unions and politics. That is my personal opinion. Because that is political and you are union. You are here to represent us, never mind the political aspect of it.”
- 

# Role of ERGM in Divergence

- ▶ Subtle consequence of ERGM
  - ▶ Lack of integration of work and life
  - ▶ Their engagement with the union is similarly un-integrated.
    - They can see the immediate benefits but don't extend to an overall commitment to unions
  - ▶ Union support due to “uniqueness” of their work situation
- 

# Consequence for Unions

1. Harder group of workers to organize and mobilize, requires different approaches
2. Potential of gaining support from anti-union workers

Nature of union-member relationship altered by ERGM

