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# Meatpacking workers' perceptions of working conditions, psychological contracts and organizational justice

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# MEATPACKING WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORKING CONDITIONS, PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS AND ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

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# PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS OF MEATPACKING WORKERS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

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What are Latino immigrants' beliefs about the obligations of their employers in the meatpacking industry? How fairly do they feel they are treated as workers? This study explores these questions in the context of U.S. meatpacking history and theories of psychological contract and organizational justice. Perceptions of informational justice, interpersonal justice, procedural justice, safety, satisfaction, and psychological contract of 429 line workers in five Nebraska communities were assessed. Differences by union status, gender, and work site were explored. Evidence of low procedural justice and high injury rates confirm reports of dangerous working conditions for both men and women. Advantages of union membership were found for some measures of justice. Similarly, working conditions and perceived fairness differed by work site. Findings provide a rare glimpse into the perceptions of these Latino immigrant workers. Survey measures of organizational justice can benefit workers and the industry in clarifying rights and contracts.

To Papi, Melchor W. Gaston. Your work with the 1957 ACU survey of Cuban agricultural workers amazed me. Gracias por tu amor e inspiración siempre.

I am very grateful for the on-going work of Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest and for their cooperation and support in all phases of this research; I am especially indebted to Gloria Sarmiento for her skill and dedication in obtaining the data for this study. Thank you also to my colleagues at the Creighton Center for Service and Justice, to my sons Luke, Martín, and Felipe, and to my husband, John Witchger for his help with the tables and for his endless encouragement. Finally, I wish to acknowledge a great teacher and mentor who has opened the doors of social science research to me; Thank you Dr. Wayne Harrison, for your steadfast wisdom and guidance throughout this project.

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# Chapter I

## Introduction

Slaughtering and butchering animals for human consumption is a huge business described by the USDA as "vibrant" (2005, p. 13). U.S. meat consumption exceeds 200 pounds per person per year (Collier Hillstrom, 2008). Over 503,000 workers are employed in this industry in the U.S., 105,000 as slaughterers and meatpackers (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). The beef industry would prefer to mechanize the entire process (H. Irizarry[1], personal communication, October 18, 2008), but due to the fact that cattle vary greatly in shape and weight, the industry remains dependent on human labor. Though meatpacking has long relied on immigrant labor, its dependence on Latino workers mounted in the 1990s (Stull & Broadway, 2004). Researchers link the 1990s increase of Hispanic migrants, especially in rural U.S. communities, with the industrial restructuring of meatpacking in the 1980s (Dobbins, 2009; Donato, Tolbert, Nucci & Kawano, 2007; Stanley, 1992; Stull & Broadway, 2004).

Currently, work in meatpacking plants is largely guided by a powered chain that moves the animals along a single disassembly line processing around 300-400 cattle per hour (B. Gonzalez[2], personal communication, July 27, 2011; Schlosser, 2001). Even though a variety of power tools are used, most of the work is still performed with hand-held meat hooks and sharp knives (Stull & Broadway, 2004). Many workers make a knife cut every two or three seconds, adding up to 10,000 cuts over an eight-hour shift (Scholsser, 2001). This kind of mechanistically designed (deskilled, formalized) work has negative attitudinal and physical consequences for workers (Mumford, 2006; Parker,

[1] Hugo Irizarry is a corporate manager with 26 years of experience in meatpacking.
[2] Benito Gonzalez (pseudonym) is an employee on the kill floor of the Cargill plant in Schuyler, Nebraska. On July 27, 2011, 2,695 head of cattle were killed during his 8-hour shift.)

2003). Worker exhaustion, high incidence of injury, and high rates of turnover are common (Grey, 1999).

Should the public care about these workers' experiences? Should consumers interested in food safety care about the safety, well-being, and fair treatment of the workers processing their food? Coalitions are being formed among environmentalists, animal welfare proponents, and worker justice advocates. Some speculate that consumers engage in compartmentalization in order to enjoy the low-cost burger guilt-free and not think of the high cost to nature and workers (Gouveia & Juska, 2002). But even if hearts are not moved, stomachs are being impacted, to echo Sinclair's statement about the reaction to his book *The Jungle* (1906) that first shed light on the horrible conditions in meat packing plants. After large recalls of tainted ground beef in recent years (Associated Press, 1997; Bjerklie, 1995; New York Times, 2010; Schlosser, 2001), the link between unsanitary production practices and worker safety and fairness has begun to be investigated. Some point to evidence of links between rapid line speed and bacterial contamination (Bjerklie, 1995; Schlosser, 2001). Growing concerns about health and food safety, working conditions, environmental contamination, and industry consolidation have raised questions about the impact of industrial restructuring in meatpacking (Broadway & Stull, 2010; Dickes & Dickes, 2003; Stanley, 1992; USDA, 2005). Ethnographic and economic research, case studies, journalistic accounts, legal articles, reports to congress, and advocacy reports in the past two decades (Dobbins, 2009; Grey, 1999; Griffin, Broadway, & Stull, 1995; Human Rights Watch, 2004; MacDonald Ollinger, Nelson & Handy, 2000; Schlosser 2002; Stanley 1992; Stull & Broadway, 2004; Whittaker, 2005; Worrall 2004) have publicized the dangerous working

conditions, the decline in unionization, the increases in use of immigrant workers and the coinciding sharp decline in real wages (MacDonald et al., 2000). No research found has investigated the expectations of workers entering into this kind of employment and their perceptions of fairness on the job.

The purpose of this study is threefold. I explore Latino meatpacking line workers' perceptions of organizational justice in their workplaces. The study also examines these workers' beliefs about the obligations of their employers in meatpacking, that is, their psychological contracts (Rousseau, 2005). Finally, the study investigates the quality and variability of working conditions in meatpacking plants.

**Historical Context**

In the 20th century, meatpacking workers built strong unions with master contracts that covered many plants. Workers fought hard for the 40-hour work week, benefits, overtime pay, and wages that reached 15% above the average manufacturing wage (Stull & Broadway, 2004). This was short-lived. It changed with what Stull and Broadway call the "IBP revolution," when old multi-floor plants were closed beginning in the 1960s and new, larger, single-floor plants were built in rural areas closer to cattle production and farther from urban union strongholds. Over 46,000 workers lost their meatpacking jobs between 1960 and 1990. Production in the modernized plants required less skill with an extreme division of labor, but entailed more work as the speed of the chain carrying the meat was maximized. The old meatpacking plants from the early 1900s in Chicago slaughtered about 50 cattle an hour; before the industrial restructuring the old plants in the High Plains slaughtered about 175 cattle an hour (Schlosser, 2001). The new plants, where some 400 cattle are slaughtered an hour, offer wages and conditions few U.S.-born

workers are willing to accept (Griffith, Broadway, & Stull, 1995). Some researchers contends that the industry restructuring with lower wages and increased injuries has led to the current very high turnover of workers which has made a large and continual flow of new workers necessary (Dobbins, 2009; Stanley, 1992).

**Immigrant Workers and Relevant Laws**

The industry has been able to hire thousands of immigrants from Mexico and Central America because these workers and their families are willing to move to U. S. rural communities for the promises of jobs with steady wages that require little training or English language skills, with paid vacations and health insurance (Dalla, Ellis & Cramer, 2005; R. Williams[3], personal communication, October 20, 2008). Some Mexican workers were able to obtain legal status through the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (Gouveia & Stull, 1995). Salvadoran and Guatemalan workers often work with permission from temporary asylum programs. Still it is estimated that 25% to 50% of meatpacking workers work without federal work authorization or means to obtain it legally (Dalla et al., 2005; Gabriel, 2004; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1998). Undocumented workers are often taken advantage of as a docile workforce (Longworth, 2008). They work for low wages and rarely file reports of injuries or complaints, fearing not only losing their jobs, but also deportation.

All workers regardless of immigration status are protected under international human rights and labor standards. The Human Rights Watch report (2002) and a recent book on wage theft (the underpayment or non-payment of workers' wages) (Bobo, 2009) present international conventions and U.S. laws that explain the rights of workers in the

[3] Rob Williams is an attorney with the Florida Bar Association specializing in immigration law and agricultural workers.

U.S. meat industry including the right to organize, the right to be paid minimum wage and overtime, the right to be free from discrimination, and the right to be safe on the job. The 1984 Supreme Court ruling of *Sure-Tan, Inc. v NLRB* affirmed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) recognition of undocumented workers as employees protected by U.S. labor law (Juson, 2003).

There was no federal law prohibiting employers from hiring undocumented immigrants until 1986 when the Immigration Reform and Control Act was passed and included employer sanctions for the first time in U.S. history (Gabriel, 2004). Employers became liable for knowingly hiring undocumented aliens and for failing to keep records regarding the immigration status of their workers. Some recount how in practice this led to increases in employers threatening to call federal immigration officials to verify immigration records as a means of intimidation of workers protesting conditions or organizing for union representation (Bacon, 2008; Gabriel, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2004; Schlosser, 2001). Immigration raids in meat plants further deteriorated worker trust in U.S. government protection of worker rights (S. Sosa[4], personal communication, November 20, 2008). The large worksite raids have more recently been replaced by I-9 audits that have led to quieter, internal "raids" affecting many.

In 2002, the Supreme Court ruled in *Hoffman Plastic Compounds v NLRB* that undocumented workers are not entitled to receive back pay even if they are unlawfully discharged for union organizing. Employers have been found trying to expand the scope of the *Hoffman* decision and threaten workers with dismissal if they complain about violations of minimum wage, overtime, or safety (Bobo, 2009; Human Rights Watch,

[4] Sergio Sosa is the Executive Director of the Heartland Worker Center in Omaha, Nebraska.

2004). The Department of Labor and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission state that they are committed to enforcing worker protection laws without regard to immigrant authorized status, but the *Hoffman* decision has greatly eroded the confidence of workers to vindicate their rights (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

**Industry Goals and Worker Perceptions**

The meatpacking industry states that their goals are safety, quality, productivity and loyalty (H. Irizarry, personal communication, October 18, 2008; Stull & Broadway, 2004). The industry views the industrial restructuring as having brought improved food safety and quality as well as progress in ergonomics, reducing injuries (Stull & Broadway, 2004). Critics say the industry continues to accept high levels of accidents and cumulative trauma disorder (most common is carpal tunnel syndrome) and rarely pays a living wage, enough for workers to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves and their families (Schlosser, 2001; Stull & Broadway, 2004).

**Meatpacking Industry and Laws in Nebraska**

The largest cattle slaughter plants (owned by Cargill, Tyson, and JBS Swift and Co.) are concentrated in Nebraska, Kansas, Eastern Colorado and the Texas Panhandle. They slaughter typically 4,000 to 6,000 cattle a day (Hord, 2008; MacDonald et al., 2000). In Nebraska, meat processing employs the largest number of manufacturing workers in the state and has a substantial and growing impact in the state's economy. The meat processing industry has shown a 3% growth in employment in the state while manufacturing in the rest of the United States has declined 19% (Thompson et al., 2008). Eighty percent (80.4%) of these workers in Nebraska are immigrants to this country (Decker, Deichert & Gouveia, 2008).

Nebraska is unique among the top beef-processing states in that its state government enacted a declaration of rights of meatpacking workers in 2000 called the Nebraska Meatpacking Industry Workers Bill of Rights (MWBR). It identifies 11 basic rights of workers employed in a meatpacking plant in the state of Nebraska including the right to a safe workplace, the right to complete information and to understand the information, the right to adequate equipment, the right to unionize, and the right to Workers' Compensation. In 2003, the state legislature adopted the Non-English-Speaking Workers Protection Act that raised a portion of the bill of rights to a statutory level (Human Rights Watch, 2004, p. 171). The law requires employers with significant numbers of workers who are not fluent in English to ensure that bilingual speakers are available in the workplace and that the terms and conditions of employment, including possible health and safety risks, are written in the employees' own language. The act also makes the position of coordinator of the implementation of the MWBR a permanent position.

In 2006, Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest led an evaluation of the impact of the legislation involving representatives of many sectors of the industry, legislators, worker advocates, academics, journalists, and workers' compensation attorneys. The study concluded that the MWBR had had a positive impact, but much more was needed to ensure the safe-guarding of these rights for meatpacking workers (Nebraska Appleseed, 2006). It was determined that the voice of line workers was not accurately represented because those who participated were interviewed in front of supervisors. A subsequent survey was developed to better assess workers' experience of four areas covered in the MWBR: safety on the job, access to information, benefits,

and freedom to organize unions. The theories of organizational justice and psychological contract offer helpful constructs to examine the data gathered from this hard-to-reach population.

**Organizational Justice and Its Four Dimensions**

Early interest in justice as an area of empirical research focused on the lack of access to resources experienced by large groups and the anger and destructive behavior that sometimes resulted in rioting. Social scientists became convinced that perceptions of justice are key to how people evaluate social situations and began to study social regulation (Tyler & Blader, 2003). In organizational contexts, researchers explored equity in social exchange, the development of rules emphasizing fairness of distribution of resources and rewards (Colquitt, Greenberg & Zapata-Phelan, 2005) and proposed the concept of relative deprivation that emphasizes the importance of subjective comparisons (Walker & Smith, 2002). The emphasis on the fairness of outcomes became known as distributive justice and dominated justice research from the mid-1950s until the early 1970s. Work in dispute resolution later helped distinguish the importance of subjective perceptions of fairness, both regarding outcomes and decision processes. Researchers discovered that apart from the results of decisions, people give great weight to fairness in *how* decisions are made. This emphasis became known as procedural justice. The insight that judgments of fair process affect how well decisions are accepted was applied to work settings, and brought about a shift in the importance of relational interactions. Procedural justice explained unique variance in organizational outcomes (e.g., satisfaction with leadership) beyond the effects of distributive justice and characterized thinking in the period from the mid-1970s until the early 1990s (Colquitt et al., 2005).

In the mid-1980s, a third conceptualization of organizational justice evolved beyond rules of fair process and decision-making procedures to include the fairness of interpersonal treatment and communication in work. Truthfulness, justification, respect and propriety were four rules for fairness in interpersonal treatment that surfaced in research on recruitment (Bies & Moag, 1986). This area was initially referred to as interactional justice. Later this was better understood as composed of two separate facets of justice. The dimension of fairness in interpersonal treatment was termed interpersonal justice and the truthfulness and access to essential information was termed informational justice (Colquitt et al., 2005). Each had its own source and outcomes, but there were measurement difficulties with some construct overlap. Colquitt (2001) worked to distinguish the dimensions of organizational justice. He conducted confirmatory factor analyses to develop and validate the four-dimensional measure of organizational justice that is widely used today. In 2001, Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter and Ng found support for the four-dimensional taxonomy in a meta-analysis of 25 years of organizational justice research.

**Consequences of Injustice**

Some organizational justice researchers have investigated the antecedents and consequences of experiences of injustice. The field has not reached clarity about what specific contexts generate fair or unfair treatment, but Colquitt and Greenberg (2003) speculate that injustice could be more common in contexts that are more complex, novel or stressful.

Fear, anger, hopelessness, and sadness have been associated with perceived injustice (Harlos & Pinder, 2000). Unfair treatment has been shown to lead to decreasing

levels of job commitment, job involvement and organizational citizenship (Konovsky, 2000). Exploring the context and practices that trigger judgments of unfairness represents one approach and perspective. In order to understand what promotes productive workplaces, other researchers have studied the elements that lead to judgments of fairness and accompanying positive behavioral outcomes. Researchers who have taken this approach have found that fair practices lead to support for organizational policies and procedures, increased organizational commitment, satisfaction, better performance, and an increased likelihood of engaging in organizational citizenship behaviors (Tyler & Blader, 2003). This motivating perspective evolved over the past 20 years led by group-oriented justice researchers.

**Group-oriented Conceptualizations of Justice**

In the first group-oriented theoretical model of organizational justice, the group value model, Lind and Tyler (1988) moved away from a self-interest model. Instead of viewing people as primarily concerned about distribution of resources and favorable results for themselves in organizational decisions, they emphasized the importance of how people evaluate fairness in relationships. In exploring how citizens react to encounters with police and judges, researchers found that people are very concerned with politeness and respect for rights (Tyler, 1988). Evidence accumulated that procedural justice had profound effects on perceptions of fairness even when separated from any impact it might have on outcomes (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Eventually researchers concluded that it is dominant in justice judgments (Tyler & Blader, 2000).

In the group value model, Lind and Tyler (1988) highlight the importance of procedures and voice in affecting outcomes. They recognize the power of participation

for what it communicates about people's value as people, and for how it affects judgments about the fairness of a group. Lind and Tyler (1988) refer to this as the "value-expressive enhancement of procedural justice" (p. 229). People seem to be interested in learning about their own social identity and value in their experience in their groups. Voice is valued even if participation in a decision-making process does not change the final decision -- even if the decision was already made before the participation was solicited (Lind, Kanfer, & Early, 1990) Procedures acquire symbolic value that communicate worth to members of a group (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Because of this symbolic value, procedures take on greater importance than that of how well they lead to goal attainment. An emphasis on minimizing disharmony or negative reactions to procedures is still evident in these years, but interest in how procedures affect more positive outcomes was emerging.

**Relational Model of Authority**

In researching reactions to decision-making procedures and treatment by decision makers during group processes, people were found to be concerned primarily about their relationships to leaders in the group implementing the decisions (Tyler & Lind, 1992). People care about trust, about neutrality, and about their position within a group (their standing) as these three give information on whether a person will be treated fairly and valued by a group using a particular procedure. Trust relates to beliefs about intentions of leaders. The emphasis is not on the results of decisions, but on the ethics of the people in authority, how much they can be trusted as a person, how safe it is to enter into relationship with them. Neutrality had been important earlier in organizational justice theories in attention to resource allocation rules, but here neutrality is seen as important

not for how it affects outcomes, but for how it relates to treating others without bias. When authorities treat subordinates with politeness and dignity this leads to judgments that one has good standing in the group, to trust in the neutrality, benevolence, and legitimacy of leaders (Tyler & Lind, 1992). This leads to voluntary compliance with rules (see Figure 1). This relational model of authority emphasized that procedural justice is central to judgments of the legitimacy of leaders and this leads to positive group outcomes. Tyler and Lind highlighted that more variation in justice judgment is based on relational concerns and less on outcome concerns and advocated for the recognition of this relational emphasis in the field of justice research.

**Group Engagement Model**

The shift in focus from self-interest to group identity and relational concerns also leads to a change in focus from preventing negative behavior to motivating positive engagement and cooperation. Lind and Tyler (1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992) and Tyler and Blader (2000; 2003) develop and adjust an overall conceptual framework investigating the question of why people cooperate in groups. Tyler and Blader (2000) sampled a heterogeneous group of 404 employees. To maximize variation in the degree to which people were invested in their work environments, they sampled individuals through a variety of methods. They sent some surveys through the mail and gave many surveys to workers in public areas that included train stations, parks, and areas outside of office buildings. Participants were male and female, part and full time employees receiving low and high wages. They included executives, technical staff, and employees in small offices and multinational companies. The median size of the companies for which participants worked was 250 employees and the workers had an average tenure of two years. The

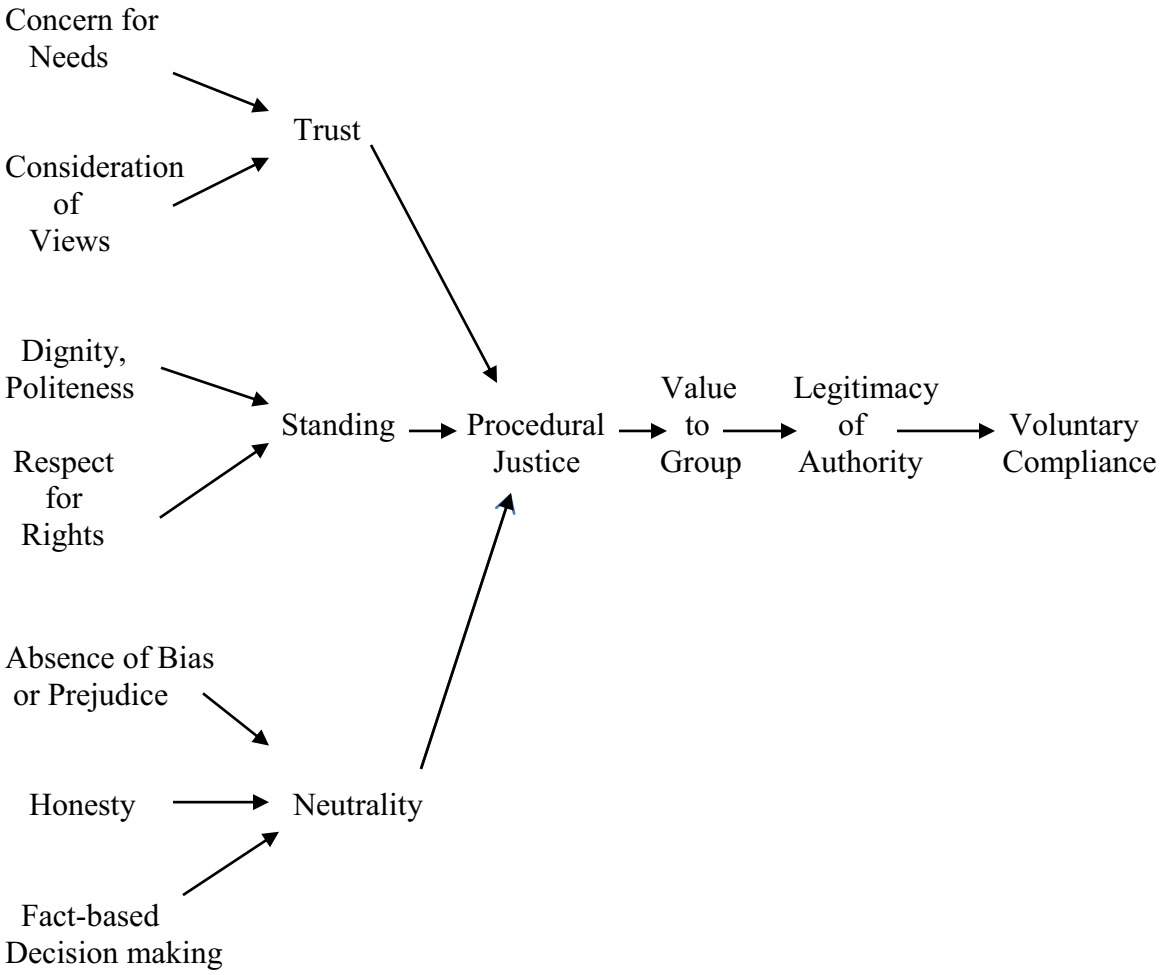


*Figure 1*: Relational Model of Authority in Groups. From "A relational model of authority in groups," by T. R Tyler and E. A. Lind, 1992, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 25*, p. 159.

questionnaire contained over 150 questions assessing attitudes, values and behaviors related to the current employment of the participants. The measure of cooperative behavior was a subjective self-report measure because they were interested in the perceptions rather than the objective functioning of the workers, seeking to test whether feelings and thoughts shape behavior of individuals in groups. They state that the work setting provides a challenging test for their procedural justice theory as people are not thought to be as concerned about justice at work as much as in the courts or in the community.

In this broad study, they widen the focus of justice studies, exploring the many variables and their relationships found in their developing group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Among the relationships they investigated were the effect of group rules and decisions on status judgments; the effect of evaluations of pride, respect, and identification on status judgments; the effects of rewards, incentives, and sanctions on instrumental judgments; and the effect of status judgments on attitudes and values on mandatory and discretionary behavior. Their central finding was that people care most about identity-related issues in groups (Tyler & Blader, 2000). The thrust of their group engagement model is that justice fosters positive identity judgments which lead to psychological engagement and this leads to cooperative behavior.

Cooperative behavior includes both the performance of desirable behavior that promotes group goals and also the limiting of undesirable behavior that can harm a group. Tyler and Blader (2000) describe cooperative behavior as either being mandated or discretionary. Mandated cooperative behavior (following of rules, etc.) is associated with instrumental or self-interested concerns; it may be motivated by incentives or by

sanctions. Discretionary behavior, on the other hand, flows from internal motivation based on people's attitudes and internal moral values that is a consequence of feelings of the trust in leaders and a sense of obligation and commitment to the group. Resource judgments can motivate compliance with rules (mandatory cooperative behavior), but it is attitudes and values that lead to commitment and loyalty to groups (discretionary cooperative behavior) (Tyler, 2005).

Based on the results of their research program, Tyler and Blader (2003) refined the concepts and relationships in the group engagement model and developed their social identity mediation hypothesis (see Figure 2). Their key argument in the group engagement model is that "cooperation is driven by the motivation to create and maintain favorable identity" (Tyler & Blader, 2003, p. 356). They integrate insights from the group value model and the relational model of authority which builds on social exchange theory and social identity theory. They recognize evidence of the important effects of resource-based judgments (about distribution, favorable outcomes, the importance of the tangible benefits people receive through their cooperation with others and how that affects their pride in the particular group), but they see stronger implications in the findings that politeness and dignity in interpersonal interaction with authorities lead to feeling valued as a member of the group. Being treated fairly by leaders also makes one want to identify with the group. The theory proposes that this identification (from judgments of pride and respect) in turn powerfully influences attitudes, values and cooperative behavior in groups. Their findings confirm the direct influence of procedural

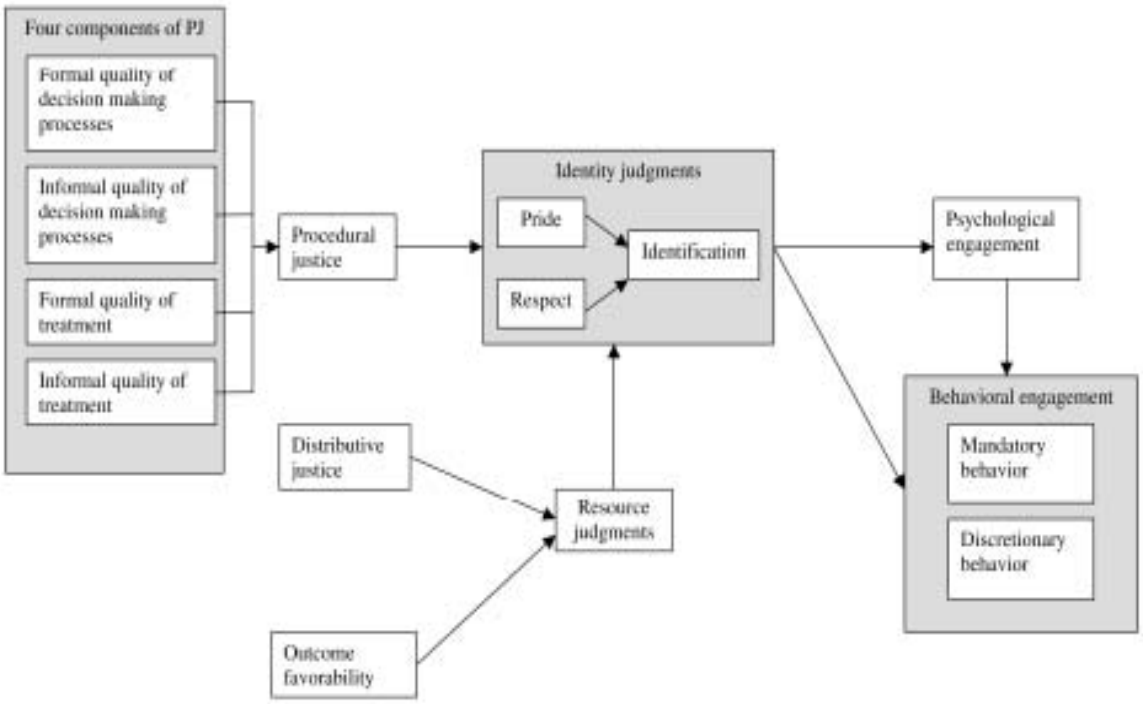


*Figure 2*: The Group Engagement Model. From "The group engagement model: Procedural justice, social identity and cooperative behavior," by T. R. Tyler and S. L. Blader, 2003, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *7*, pp. 349-361.

justice on attitudes and values and of procedural justice on discretionary behavior (Tyler, 2005). These findings shift understanding of what motivates people's behavior from the traditional thinking that people are oriented toward gain and against loss (informed self-interest), that Tyler and Blader (2000) say has dominated the social sciences, to the view that people cooperate in groups primarily out of identity concerns and the experience of being valued and valuable.

**Psychological Contract Theory**

In exploring what affects people psychologically at work in the meatpacking industry, another relevant theory is that of psychological contracts, the unwritten expectations between an employee and an employer or organization. Information about implied obligations can come from agents of a company, from peers, and from structural cues. Rousseau's definition emphasizes that a psychological contract is about beliefs based on implied or clearly stated promises regarding an agreement between a worker and an employer. She highlights the importance of mutuality of commitment and the incomplete nature of the contract in the beginning of the employee-employer relationship.

> A major feature of a psychological contract is the individual's belief that an agreement exists that is mutual; in effect, his or her belief in the existence of a common understanding with another that binds each party to a particular course of action. Since individuals rely upon their understanding of this agreement in the subsequent choices and efforts they take, they anticipate benefits from fulfilled commitments and incur losses if another fails to live up to theirs, whatever the individual interprets another's commitments to be. (Rousseau, 2005, p. 193)

An important assumption of this psychological contract theory is that people are free to participate in the exchange.

Rousseau (2005) perceived an effect of social context on the negotiation of terms and conditions of the psychological contract. Together with an international group of researchers, she found evidence of psychological contract across all of the countries that they surveyed (all described as stable democracies). The countries differed in how much flexibility individuals and employers had in determining terms and conditions of the psychological contract. She notes that there are relatively few government regulations on employers in the United States (labor laws are weak in comparison with Europe), which leaves more up to bargaining between the employer and the employee.

As psychological contract theory has evolved, more research is identifying antecedents and consequences, mechanisms that influence worker beliefs about work obligations and factors that impact the experience of the contract being violated or fulfilled (Rousseau, 2010). In a recent study of 757 Latino business professionals, 38.8% reported having experienced discrimination in the work place (Blacero, DelCampo, & Marron, 2007). Their experience of discrimination was negatively related to perceived psychological contract fairness. Another smaller study of Latino business professionals (*N*=122) also examined the relationship between discrimination and psychological contract. The researchers found that employee perceptions of discrimination were positively related to psychological contract breach, but this was moderated by strength of ethnic group identification (DelCampo, Rogers, & Jacobson, 2010). No previous research was found exploring the psychological contracts of lower status Latino workers.

Studies of non-Latino populations have further investigated psychological contracts. Van den Bos and Lind (2002) found that procedural justice can affect psychological contracts positively through helping to lessen ambiguity and uncertainty in work situations. Practicing fairness in the workplace was found to be negatively associated with employee perceptions of violations of the psychological contract (Flood, Turner, Ramamoorthy, & Pearson, 2001; Tekleab, Tekeuchi, & Taylor, 2005). Dabos and Rousseau (2004, as cited in Rousseau, 2005) examined whether the social status of workers and who they interact with regularly influences what they believe they are owed by an employer. The results of their research, controlling for demographics and position in social structure, showed that people in less central positions in networks saw themselves as being owed less by an organization than people with more central positions.

Questions arise applying organizational justice and psychological contract theories to the context of meatpacking labor: Does the group engagement model apply to low status workers? Do even very low status workers expect their needs and views to be taken into consideration, and expect to be treated with dignity and respect for rights? What is the nature of the psychological contracts of meatpacking workers? Is there evidence that some conditions promote the fulfillment or breach of the psychological contract in meatpacking? To begin to explore these complex questions, more specific questions guide the analyses in this study: What expectations do line workers in meatpacking plants have of their employer? What are their working conditions like? Do they experience variation in procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice? Does it make a difference if they are male or female, unionized, or work for different companies?

# Chapter II

# Method

## Participants

Four hundred and twenty-nine participants were recruited through workshops and by word of mouth in five Nebraska communities with meatpacking plants. Only those who worked on the line in meatpacking plants were invited to participate in this study (G. Sarmiento[5], personal communication, November 19, 2008). Thirty-four percent of the participants reported that they belonged to a union. As described below, there were two versions of the questionnaire. The following demographic data are from Version 2 of the instrument as this was not collected for Version 1 respondents. Sixty percent of the participants were male and 40% were female**.** Forty-six percent identified as Mexican, followed by 25% Guatemalan, 11% Salvadoran, 9% identified as "Hispano," 4% as USA/Latino, 2% as Honduran, 1% from Nicaragua, 2% from Sudan and Ethiopia, and 2% other. In response to an open question about their jobs in the meatpacking plants, 37% describe their work as cutting or de-boning with knives, 27% work in packing, 17% describe using a circular "whizard" knife, 12 % said they worked on the "kill floor" or *matanza*, with a few who describe themselves working as skinners or other processing jobs.

## Procedure

An outreach worker of Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, herself a Honduran immigrant, administered surveys to all participants. Version 1 was administered in 2007 and Version 2 in 2008. As part of her work in the Immigrant

[5] Gloria Sarmiento is an outreach worker with Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest.

Integration and Civic Participation Program of the Center, the staff person offered workshops throughout the state, often with other members of the Latino Outreach Consortium in Nebraska. It was after these workshops or through referrals from participants in these workshops that she recruited participants for this research. The questionnaires were administered in churches, community centers, and homes.

Participants were told that the purpose of the survey was to better understand the current conditions for workers in meatpacking in Nebraska (G. Sarmiento[v], personal communication, November 19, 2008). Participants were also told that their participation was appreciated, but totally voluntary. They were assured that no identifying information would be gathered and that their responses would be kept confidential. English and Spanish versions of the survey were available. For the most part, participants completed the questionnaire independently; the associate read the questions aloud to the few who were not literate. On several occasions people expressed fear of being observed completing the questionnaire and worried that they would be fired if a supervisor found out about their participation. Several requested that the outreach worker visit them at home to administer the questionnaire or collect the completed survey.

**Questionnaire**

The questionnaire "Meatpacking Worker Survey" (see Appendix C) was developed with consultation by the staff of the Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest. The instrument was developed and administered in two stages. Version 1 was administered in the summer of 2007. Five questions were added to Version 2 to obtain demographic data on gender and nationality and some additional data on worker perceptions. As so many workers wrote comments in the margins of Version 1, an open

question was added to the end of Version 2 and a blank page was attached. Table 1 describes Version 2 of the instrument completed by the majority of the participants.

**Measures**

The Meatpacking Worker Survey was not designed with measures of organizational justice or psychological contract in mind. Still, various items in the survey seem conceptually related and were chosen as promising elements for measures of informational justice, interpersonal justice, and procedural justice, as well as perceptions of safety, satisfaction, and psychological contract. Table 2 presents the questions initially identified as proposed items for scales and individual item measures of these constructs. The decision was made to analyze the quantitative measures and not the open-ended questions at this time. Frequencies and histograms were obtained for the quantitative variables of interest in the data set. Values that were inappropriate (e.g. "does not apply") were changed to missing values. All items for consideration for inclusion in measurement scales were reviewed for suitability, especially for sufficient variance. Items that were highly skewed or not sensitive were not considered further as possible measures.

**Informational Justice.** The aspect of organizational justice known as informational justice relates to truthfulness and access to essential information. Learning the number of hours one will be working and one's starting pay (before beginning work) were two items in the Meatpacking Survey that were selected and summed to form an informational justice scale labeled Terms of Contract ($\alpha$= .83). Two additional items, whether information regarding Workers Compensation was received during orientation (Workers Comp Info) and whether union or organizing information was presented

*Table 1*

*Description of "Meatpacking Worker Survey" (Version 2)*

| | Topic | # of Questions | Subtopics |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Access to information | 11 | Policies; work hours; starting pay; worker rights |
| 2 | Freedom to organize | 5 | Union membership; interest in joining a union; helpfulness of the union representative; valence of employer information about organizing or unions |
| 3 | Safety on the job | 32 | Areas of safety training provided; provision of adequate equipment; supervisor compliance with safety policies; perception of supervisor concern about employee safety; supervisor ability to communicate effectively; if pay or reprimands are given for stretching at work; if personnel are rotated; perception of changes in: general safety, numbers of staff on the line, line speed |
| 4 | Accidents and injuries | 19 | Fear and consequence of reporting injuries; incidences being sent to company doctor; awareness of right to choose own doctor; incidence of company payment of medical bills |
| 5 | Benefits and Workers' Compensation | 18 | Reception of information on workers' compensation; list of benefits |

positively (Union Info Positive) were initially considered together with the Terms of Contract items and examined as a 4-item scale, but the reliability was found to be low, α= .41. The latter two were also examined as a two-item scale and found to have an acceptable reliability of .65, but they are logically different enough that they were retained as single-item measures of informational justice. Two additional items were also retained as representing important issues of information access, whether workers had heard of the Meatpacking Workers' Bill of Rights (Heard of Rights Bill) and whether workers knew they had the right to choose their own doctor when injured (Choose Own Doctor).

**Interpersonal Justice.** The relational aspect of fairness that focuses on interpersonal treatment (in contrast to information or procedural issues) is termed interpersonal justice. Three questions in the survey were selected to shed light on this aspect of organizational justice in meatpackers' experience. Two questions inquire about interpersonal communication with supervisors: "I feel comfortable talking with my supervisor about work conditions and/or safety" and "My supervisor can talk to me in my own language." (While supervisors are not required to be bilingual, some ability to communicate in the worker's own language greatly facilitates respectful treatment. Companies are required by Nebraska law to have bilingual personnel available if needed by sufficient numbers. Over 80% of meatpackers in Nebraska are immigrants, of which most are Latinos.) These two items were summed to form a scale labeled Comfort with Supervisor Communication (α = .77). The third item chosen asks if workers have any fear of reporting accidents or injuries (Fear to Report). Fear to report injury represents the opposite of confidence in interpersonal respect and fair treatment from a supervisor.

When the three items were considered together, the scale reliability was unacceptably low (α = .52). Inter-item correlations showed that "Fear of reporting accidents" correlated poorly with the other two items, but it was retained as single-item measure of interpersonal justice as it is logically different, has good variance as an item, and also captures a valuable dimension of interpersonal justice.

**Procedural Justice.** A third and vital dimension of relational fairness emphasizes the fairness of work procedures. The procedural justice items selected from the Meatpacking Workers' Survey relate to the provision of equipment to conduct one's job properly (Adequate Equipment), attitudes toward and application of safety policies (a two-item scale, Supervisor Safety Concern, α = .78), perception of the speed of the dis-assembly line, which is a central procedural decision affecting all work in the plant (Line Speed Faster), staffing numbers which impact job load (Staff Decrease), and rotation of personnel, a safety practice to lower fatigue and lessen injury (Rotate Personnel).

**Safety.** Two items are used to measure worker perception of safety in general. One asks about worker perception of change in safety (Workplace Less Safe). The other asks workers to state if they have themselves been injured at work in the last year (Injured).

**Satisfaction.** Five questions (from the subset of respondents who were injured) relate to worker satisfaction with treatment after an accident or injury. These five items summed together form the scale, Satisfaction Post-Injury (α =. 92).

**Psychological Contract.** It seems likely that immigrant meatpackers enter into their new work situation with a sense of their responsibility to work hard and with expectations of fair treatment and compensation. The terms of the implicit relational

obligations, the psychological contract, may be very basic. Survey questions were examined to see if they were suitable as measures of psychological contract fulfillment or violation. One question in the survey seemed to fit as a global measure of how the unwritten expectations and implied obligations and commitments were met or not met in the experience of these workers. The question, “Do you know you have rights as a worker?” (Know Have Rights) gets at the implicit obligations of employers. Someone who has no rights can expect nothing from a person in power. Someone who knows they have rights, usually has accompanying expectations for those rights to reach some level of fulfillment. The accompanying question “If yes, do you feel those rights have made a difference to you?” allows for examination of fulfillment of workplace expectations that is at the core of psychological contracts (Rights Make a Difference).

*Table 2*

*Proposed Measures for Variables of Interest in Study of Psychological Contract and Experiences of Meatpackers*

| Variable | Wording of the Question | Response choices |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Interpersonal Justice | 24b. I feel comfortable talking to my supervisor about work conditions and/or safety | Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree |
| | 24c. My supervisor can talk to me in my own language | SA, A, D, SD |
| | 24d. My supervisor really cares about employee safety issues | SA, A, D, SD |
| 2. Procedural Justice | 24e. I am provided with adequate equipment to do my job | SA, A, D, SD |
| | 24a. My supervisor applies the company's safety policies all the time | SA, A, D, SD |
| | 36b. Did you get to choose your own doctor? | Yes, No, Does not apply |
| 3. Informational Justice | 5. What information did the company give you about their workplace policies when you started working? | Safety, Attendance, Benefits, Other, I don't remember, They didn't give me any information. |
| | 6. When did you first find out how many hours you would work? | When they offered me the job, After I started working, Other, and a blank line for a written response |
| | 7. When did you first find out about the starting pay you would receive? | When they offered me the job, After I started working, Other, and a blank line for a written response |

Table 2 *(continued)*

| Variable | Wording of the Question | Response choices |
|---|---|---|
| 3. Informational Justice (cont.) | 40. In orientation, did you receive information on worker's compensation? | Yes, No and Don't know |
| | 16. My employer has talked to me about organizing unions | (Yes or No) If yes, participants are given the choices Very positive, Somewhat positive, Somewhat negative, and Very negative. |
| | 17. What has your employer said about organizing unions? | Please explain. |
| 4. Psychological Contract | 8a. Do you know you have rights as a worker? | Yes or No |
| | 10. What is the most useful information you have received about worker rights? | Open question |
| | 36d. After your accident at work: "Do you know you have the right to choose your own doctor? | Yes, No, Does not apply |
| | 32. Do you have any fear of reporting accidents or injuries? | Not at all, Somewhat, Very Much |
| | 35b. If you were injured but did not report it, why not? | Open question |
| 5. Psychological Contract fulfillment or violation | 8b. If you know you have rights as a worker, do you feel those rights have made a difference to you? | Yes or No |
| | Why or Why not? | Open question |
| 6. Physical Health | 34. Have you been involved in an accident at work in the last two years? | Yes or No |
| | If yes, what kind of injury/injuries? | |

Table 2 *(continued)*

| Variable | Wording of the Question | Response choices |
|---|---|---|
| 7. Satisfaction | 37. If you were injured and received medical payment from the company how satisfied are you? | Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied, and Very Dissatisfied |
| 8. Safety Perception | 26. Are there ways your workplace has become less safe in the past two years? | Open question |
| | 27. Do you think injuries have increased or decreased in the last 24 months? | Decreased a lot, Decreased somewhat, Stayed the same, Increased somewhat, Increased a lot |
| | 28. Do you think the line speed has changed? | Slower, Stayed the same, Faster, Don't know |
| | 29. In the past 24 months, during your shift has the number of staff on your line… | Decreased a lot, Decreased somewhat, Stayed the same, Increased somewhat, Increased a lot |
| 9. Work Attitudes | Final Question. Is there anything else you would like to add?" | Open question |

# Chapter III

## Results

Percent agreement with each of the individual items used in dependent variable measures are presented in Table 3. Response scales for individual items were dichotomous or were recoded accordingly.

**Informational Justice.** Most workers surveyed learned the number of hours they would be working and their starting pay before they began working. However, the other informational justice items have lower base rates. Two-fifths of workers stated they did not receive information during orientation about Workers' Compensation and the great majority of workers did not know they had the right to choose to see their own doctor if injured. Though organizing is enumerated as a right in the Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights, half of the workers stated that they received negative information about unions from the company and had not heard of the Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights.

**Interpersonal Justice.** Although the majority of respondents reported being comfortable talking to their supervisor, over half stated that their supervisor did not speak their language. Nearly two-fifths indicated being afraid to report accidents.

**Procedural Justice.** Relatively few workers perceived that their supervisors care about employee safety or apply safety policies. Half stated they are not provided with adequate equipment to do their jobs. Few stated that personnel are rotated during their shift. Half perceived that staff numbers have decreased and two-thirds believed that the line speed has increased.

**Safety and Satisfaction.** Nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported being injured in the past year and many perceived the workplace to have become less safe as

Table 3

*Percent Agreement with Individual Items in Dependent Measures*

| Measure | *N* | Percent Yes | Percent No |
|---|---|---|---|
| Informational Justice | | | |
| Terms of Contract | | | |
| Learned hours after began work | 388 | 14 | 86 |
| Learned starting pay after began work | 384 | 12 | 88 |
| Received Workers Compensation information during orientation | 244 | 60 | 40 |
| Union information positive | 229 | 47 | 53 |
| Heard of Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights | 403 | 51 | 49 |
| Knowledge of the right to choose own doctor | 188 | 17 | 83 |
| Interpersonal Justice | | | |
| Comfort with Supervisor Communication | | | |
| Comfortable talking with supervisor about work conditions | 312 | 55 | 45 |
| Supervisor speaks worker's language | 311 | 44 | 56 |
| Fear of reporting accidents | 320 | 38 | 62 |
| Procedural Justice | | | |
| Supervisor Safety Concern | | | |
| Supervisor cares about employee safety issues | 310 | 20 | 80 |
| Supervisor applies safety policies | 314 | 25 | 75 |
| Company provides adequate equipment | 311 | 50 | 50 |
| Line speed increased (in past year) | 306 | 65 | 35 |
| Staff numbers decreased (in past year) | 307 | 49 | 51 |
| Rotate personnel (during shift) | 300 | 21 | 79 |

Table 3 *(continued)*

| Measure | *N* | Percent Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| Safety | | | |
| Injured in the past year | 387 | 64 | 36 |
| Workplace less safe (past year) | 310 | 44 | 56 |
| Satisfaction Post-Injury | | | |
| Satisfaction Post-Injury | | | |
| Satisfied with amount of recovery time | 201 | 16 | 84 |
| Satisfied with doctor's diagnosis | 176 | 22 | 78 |
| Satisfied with medical care | 176 | 22 | 78 |
| Satisfied with medical payment from company | 171 | 35 | 65 |
| Satisfied with job post-injury | 183 | 25 | 75 |
| Psychological Contract | | | |
| Know have rights | 420 | 90 | 10 |
| Rights make a difference | 351 | 28 | 72 |

well. Just over one-third of workers were satisfied with the medical payment received after an injury on the job. Fewer than one-third of workers were satisfied with the diagnosis or medical care they received after a work injury, with the amount of time they were given to recover, or the job they were placed in after the injury.

**Psychological Contract.** Though the vast majority of workers surveyed agreed that they possess rights, nearly three quarters stated that these make no difference in their lives.

The measures of the three types of relational justice, as well as safety, satisfaction, and psychological contract are next explored for differences associated with union membership, gender, and work site. Independent sample *t*-tests, chi-square tests, and one-way analyses of variance were conducted and effect sizes were computed. Means and percent agreement of each of the dependent variables by each of the independent variables of interest are reported in Table 4 (Union Membership), Table 5 (Gender) and Table 6 (Work Site).

**Union Membership**

**Informational Justice.** Workers who are union members differ from workers who are not on one of the five measures of Informational Justice. Workers described the information given to them by the company about organizing and unions as significantly more positive if they were members of unions. The effect size statistic indicates greater than a two standard deviation difference in mean information valence.

**Interpersonal Justice.** Workers who are members of unions experienced higher interpersonal justice as measured by the Comfort with Supervisor Communication scale. No significant difference was observed in the second measure,

Table 4

*Differences by Union Membership for Measures of Organizational Justice, Safety, and Psychological Contract*

| Measure | Union $N = 145$ | Non Union $N = 276$ | Test Statistic | $p$ | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Informational Justice | | | |
| Terms of Contract (two items summed, 1=*After I started working*, 2=*When they first offered me the job* response scales, α = .83) | | | | | |
| *M* | 3.68 | 3.75 | $t(370) = 1.00$ | .11 | $d = .32$ |
| *SD* | .17 | .95 | | | |
| Worker's Comp Info Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 68 | 60 | $\chi^2(1, N = 258) = 1.61$ | .21 | $\phi = .08$ |
| No | 32 | 40 | | | |
| Union Info Positive (1 = *Very Negative* to 4 = *Very Positive* response scale) | | | | | |
| *M* | 3.03 | 1.89 | $t(236) = 9.77$ | .00 | $d = 2.04$ |
| *SD* | .17 | .95 | | | |
| Heard of Rights Bill Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 50 | 53 | $\chi^2(1, N = 394) = .23$ | .63 | $\phi = .07$ |
| No | 53 | 47 | | | |
| Know Right to Choose Own Doctor | | | | | |
| Yes | 34 | 35 | $\chi^2(1, N = 194) = .01$ | .92 | $\phi = .01$ |
| No | 66 | 65 | | | |
| | | Interpersonal Justice | | | |
| Comfort with Supervisor Communication (two items summed, 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree* response scales, α = .77) | | | | | |
| *M* | 5.43 | 4.87 | $t(302) = 3.89$ | .00 | $d = .51$ |
| *SD* | 1.09 | 1.10 | | | |
| Fear of Reporting Injury (1 = *Very Much* to 3 = *Not At All* response scale) | | | | | |
| *M* | 2.63 | 2.57 | $t(313) = .84$ | .40 | $d = .11$ |
| *SD* | .51 | .57 | | | |

Table 4 *(continued)*

| Measure | Union $N = 145$ | Non Union $N = 276$ | Test Statistic | $p$ | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Procedural Justice | | | |
| Supervisor Safety Concern (two items summed, 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree* response scales, $\alpha = .78$) | | | | | |
| *M* | 4.57 | 4.33 | $t(321) = 1.96$ | .05 | $d = .24$ |
| *SD* | .923 | 1.04 | | | |
| Adequate Equipment (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree* response scale) | | | | | |
| *M* | 2.97 | 2.71 | $t(306) = 1.84$ | .07 | $d = .25$ |
| *SD* | .85 | .91 | | | |
| Staff Decrease (1 = *Decreased a Lot* to 5 = *Increased a Lot* response scale) | | | | | |
| *M* | 2.47 | 2.54 | $t(301) = .71$ | .48 | $d = .10$ |
| *SD* | .62 | .76 | | | |
| Line Speed Increased Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 61 | 67 | $\chi^2(1, N = 300) = .84$ | .36 | $\phi = .05$ |
| No | 39 | 33 | | | |
| Rotate Personnel Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 39 | 16 | $\chi^2(1, N = 294) = 17.7$ | .00 | $\phi = .25$ |
| No | 61 | 84 | | | |
| | | Safety | | | |
| Injured Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 52 | 69 | $\chi^2(1, N = 378) = 10.78$ | .00 | $\phi = .17$ |
| No | 48 | 31 | | | |
| Workplace Less Safe Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 36 | 51 | $\chi^2(1, N = 327) = 5.57$ | .02 | $\phi = .13$ |
| No | 64 | 49 | | | |
| | | Satisfaction | | | |
| Satisfaction Post-Injury (five items summed, 1=*Very Dissatisfied* to 4=*Very Satisfied* response scales, $\alpha = .92$) | | | | | |
| *M* | 10.61 | 9.73 | $t(156) = 1.76$ | .08 | $d = .28$ |
| *SD* | 2.92 | 3.26 | | | |

Table 4 *(continued)*

| Measure | Union $N = 145$ | Non Union $N = 276$ | Test Statistic | $p$ | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Psychological Contract | | | |
| Know Have Rights Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 91 | 90 | $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = .14$ | .71 | $\phi = .02$ |
| No | 9 | 10 | | | |
| Rights Make a Difference Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 37 | 24 | $\chi^2(1, N = 343) = 5.90$ | .02 | $\phi = .13$ |
| No | 63 | 76 | | | |

Table 5

*Differences by Gender for Measures of Organizational Justice, Safety, and Psychological Contract*

| Measure | Male $N = 202$ | Female $N = 139$ | Test Statistic | $p$ | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Informational Justice** | | | | | |
| Terms of Contract (two items summed, 1=*After I started working*, 2=*When they first offered me the job* response scales, α = .83) | | | | | |
| *M* | 3.96 | 3.90 | $t(276) = 1.84$ | .21 | $d = .07$ |
| *SD* | .22 | .36 | | | |
| Worker's Comp Info Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 73 | 67 | $\chi^2(1, N = 207) = .956$ | .33 | $\phi = .07$ |
| No | 27 | 33 | | | |
| Union Info Positive (1 = *Very Negative* to 4 = *Very Positive* response scale) | | | | | |
| *M* | 2.84 | 2.68 | $t(231) = 1.24$ | .21 | $d = .17$ |
| *SD* | .96 | .95 | | | |
| Heard of Rights Bill Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 62 | 52 | $\chi^2(1, N = 309) = 3.25$ | .07 | $\phi = .10$ |
| No | 38 | 48 | | | |
| Know Right to Choose Own Doctor | | | | | |
| Yes | 30 | 38 | $\chi^2(1, N = 96) = .76$ | .38 | $\phi = .09$ |
| No | 70 | 62 | | | |
| **Interpersonal Justice** | | | | | |
| Comfort with Supervisor Communication (two items summed, 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree* response scales, α = .77) | | | | | |
| *M* | 5.03 | 5.02 | $t(297) = .12$ | .90 | $d = .01$ |
| *SD* | 1.12 | 1.14 | | | |
| Fear of Reporting Injury (1 = *Very Much* to 3 = *Not At All* response scale) | | | | | |
| *M* | 2.62 | 2.56 | $t(309) = .88$ | .38 | $d = .09$ |
| *SD* | .53 | .74 | | | |

Table 5 *(continued)*

| Measure | Male $N = 202$ | Female $N = 139$ | Test Statistic | $p$ | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Procedural Justice | | | |
| Supervisor Safety Concern (two items summed, 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree* response scales, $\alpha = .78$) | | | | | |
| *M* | 4.41 | 4.36 | $t(296) = .43$ | .67 | $d = .05$ |
| *SD* | .98 | 1.10 | | | |
| Adequate Equipment (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree* response scale) | | | | | |
| *M* | 2.72 | 2.87 | $t(301) = 1.36$ | .18 | $d = .17$ |
| *SD* | .88 | .91 | | | |
| Staff Decrease (1 = *Decreased a Lot* to 5 = *Increased a Lot* response scale) | | | | | |
| *M* | 2.57 | 2.43 | $t(296) = 1.63$ | .10 | $d = .19$ |
| *SD* | .67 | .80 | | | |
| Line Speed Increased Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 64 | 69 | $\chi^2(1, N = 296) = .84$ | .36 | $\phi = .05$ |
| No | 36 | 31 | | | |
| Rotate Personnel Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 18 | 27 | $\chi^2(1, N = 291) = 3.26$ | .07 | $\phi = .11$ |
| No | 82 | 73 | | | |
| | | Safety | | | |
| Injured Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 69 | 76 | $\chi^2(1, N = 279) = 1.83$ | .18 | $\phi = .08$ |
| No | 31 | 24 | | | |
| Workplace Less Safe Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 46 | 49 | $\chi^2(1, N = 327) = .26$ | .61 | $\phi = .03$ |
| No | 54 | 51 | | | |
| | | Satisfaction | | | |
| Satisfaction Post-Injury (five items summed, 1=*Very Dissatisfied* to 4=*Very Satisfied* response scales, $\alpha = .92$) | | | | | |
| *M* | 10.83 | 10.77 | $t(79) = .09$ | .93 | $d = .03$ |
| *SD* | 3.17 | 3.46 | | | |

Table 5 *(continued)*

| Measure | Male $N = 202$ | Female $N = 139$ | Test Statistic | $p$ | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Psychological Contract | | | |
| Know Have Rights Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 96 | 90 | $\chi^2(1, N = 311) = 4.58$ | .03 | $\phi = .12$ |
| No | 4 | 10 | | | |
| Rights Make a Difference Percent Agreement | | | | | |
| Yes | 27 | 24 | $\chi^2(1, N = 283) = .21$ | .65 | $\phi = .03$ |
| No | 73 | 76 | | | |

Table 6

*Differences by Work Site for Measures of Organizational Justice, Safety, Satisfaction, and Psychological Contract*

| | Site | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| Measure | *N* = 77 | *N* = 69 | *N* = 93 | *N* = 114 | *N* = 76 | Test Statistic | *p* | Effect Size |
| | | | | Informational Justice | | | | |
| Terms of Contract (two items summed, 1 = *After I started working* to 2 = *When they first offered me the job* response scales, α = .83) | | | | | | | | |
| *M* | 3.35 | 3.34 | 3.97 | 3.89 | 3.97 | $F(4, 375) = 24.78$ | .00 | $\eta^2 = .21$ |
| *SD* | .87 | .89 | .23 | .39 | .16 | | | |
| Worker's Comp Info Percent Agreement | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 68 | 24 | 86 | 22 | 14 | $\chi^2(4, N = 243) = 93.15$ | .00 | $\phi = .62$ |
| No | 32 | 76 | 14 | 78 | 86 | | | |
| Union Info Positive (1 = *Very Negative* to 4 = *Very Positive* response scale) | | | | | | | | |
| *M* | – | 2.00 | 1.02 | 2.99 | 2.98 | $F(3, 228) = 497.51$ | .00 | $\eta^2 = .89$ |
| *SD* | – | .05 | .15 | .32 | .37 | | | |
| Heard of Rights Bill Percent Agreement | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 31 | 57 | 50 | 58 | 54 | $\chi^2(4,N = 402) = 12.03$ | .00 | $\phi = .62$ |
| No | 69 | 43 | 50 | 42 | 46 | | | |
| Know Right to Choose Own Doctor | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 37 | 50 | 29 | 22 | 28 | $\chi^2(4,N = 199) = 7.54$ | .11 | $\phi = .27$ |
| No | 63 | 50 | 71 | 78 | 72 | | | |

Table 6 *(continued)*

| Measure | Site 1 $N = 77$ | 2 $N = 69$ | 3 $N = 93$ | 4 $N = 114$ | 5 $N = 76$ | Test Statistic | $p$ | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Interpersonal Justice** | | | | | | | | |
| Comfort with Supervisor Communication (two items summed, 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree* response scales, $\alpha = .77$) | | | | | | | | |
| *M* | – | 5.69 | 4.26 | 5.25 | 5.31 | $F(3, 304) = 26.70$ | .00 | $\eta^2 = .21$ |
| *SD* | – | .89 | .89 | 1.10 | 1.00 | | | |
| Fear to Report | | | | | | | | |
| *M* | - | 2.79 | 2.54 | 2.58 | 2.57 | $F(3, 315) = 1.937$ | .12 | $\eta^2 = .02$ |
| *SD* | - | .41 | .60 | .56 | .53 | | | |
| **Procedural Justice** | | | | | | | | |
| Supervisor Safety Concern (two items summed, 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree* response scales response scales, $\alpha = .78$) | | | | | | | | |
| *M* | – | 4.12 | 4.20 | 4.54 | 4.59 | $F(3, 302) = 3.65$ | .01 | $\eta^2 = .03$ |
| *SD* | – | 1.57 | .83 | 1.00 | 1.03 | | | |
| Adequate Equipment (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 4 = *Strongly Agree* response scales) | | | | | | | | |
| *M* | – | 3.80 | 2.08 | 3.04 | 2.77 | $F(3, 307) = 57.42$ | .00 | $\eta^2 = .36$ |
| *SD* | – | .53 | .56 | .81 | .82 | | | |
| Staff Decrease (1 = *Decreased a Lot* to 5 = *Increased a Lot* response scale) | | | | | | | | |
| *M* | – | 2.66 | 2.27 | 2.67 | 2.53 | $F(3, 302) = 5.98$ | .00 | $\eta^2 = .06$ |
| *SD* | – | .64 | .75 | .68 | .71 | | | |

Table 6 *(continued)*

| Measure | Site 1 $N = 77$ | 2 $N = 69$ | 3 $N = 93$ | 4 $N = 114$ | 5 $N = 76$ | Test Statistic | $p$ | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Line Speed Increased Percent Agreement | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | – | 86 | 56 | 47 | 94 | $\chi^2(3,N = 305) = 54.91$ | .00 | $\phi = .42$ |
| No | – | 14 | 44 | 53 | 6 | | | |
| Rotate Personnel Percent Agreement | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | – | 29 | 9 | 35 | 12 | $\chi^2(3,N = 299) = 25.44$ | .00 | $\phi = .29$ |
| No | – | 71 | 91 | 65 | 88 | | | |
| | | | | Safety | | | | |
| Injured Percent Agreement | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 46 | 49 | 91 | 62 | 68 | $\chi^2(4,N = 386) = 40.68$ | .00 | $\phi = .32$ |
| No | 54 | 51 | 9 | 38 | 32 | | | |
| Workplace Less Safe Percent Agreement | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | – | 82 | 45 | 40 | 31 | $\chi^2(4,N = 309) = 48.20$ | .00 | $\phi = .29$ |
| No | – | 18 | 55 | 60 | 69 | | | |

Table 6 *(continued)*

| | Site | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| Measure | *N* = 77 | *N* = 69 | *N* = 93 | *N* = 114 | *N* = 76 | Test Statistic | *p* | Effect Size |
| | | | | Satisfaction | | | | |
| Satisfaction Post-Injury (five items summed, 1 = *Very Dissatisfied* to 4 = *Very Satisfied* response scales, $\alpha = .92$) | | | | | | | | |
| *M* | 9.76 | 9.45 | 8.48 | 10.56 | 12.28 | $F(4, 155) = 6.04$ | .00 | $\eta^2 = .13$ |
| *SD* | 2.75 | 3.73 | 2.40 | 3.98 | 2.05 | | | |
| | | | | Psychological Contract | | | | |
| Know Have Rights Percent Agreement | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 86 | 83 | 96 | 92 | 95 | $\chi^2(4,N = 419) = 11.82$ | .02 | $\phi = .17$ |
| No | 14 | 17 | 7 | 8 | 5 | | | |
| Rights Make a Difference Percent Agreement | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 35 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 27 | $\chi^2(4,N = 350) = 1.38$ | .85 | $\phi = .06$ |
| No | 65 | 75 | 74 | 73 | 73 | | | |

*Note.* The Version 1 questionnaire used at Site 1 did not contain all measures included in Version 2.

Fear to Report.

**Procedural Justice**. Two measures of procedural justice evidenced differences between union and non-union members: Personnel Rotated and Supervisor Safety Concern. Union members reported more rotation during line shifts and greater concern with safety by their supervisors.

**Safety.** Both safety measures indicate differences between the experience of union and non-union workers. More than two-thirds of non-union workers stated they were injured or involved in an accident in the past year, compared with union workers, about half of whom reported being injured. Fewer union members felt their workplace had become less safe in the past year.

**Psychological Contract.** No differences were found between union and non-union members regarding knowledge of having rights, but they did differ in whether they felt that those rights made a difference in their lives.

**Gender**

A significant gender difference was revealed on only one measure in this study, the psychological contract measure of whether workers stated that they knew they had rights $\chi^2(1, N = 311) = 4.58$. A lower percentage of women than men stated that they knew they had rights, but both genders exceeded 90% agreement.

**Work Site**

**Informational Justice.** Work sites differed significantly on four of the five measures of Informational Justice. Note the large differences in the percentage of workers who state they received information regarding Worker's Compensation.

Workers at Site 3 appear to have been given negative information about unions in contrast to Sites 4 and 5. One-third of workers in Site 1 reported knowledge of the Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights in contrast to about half at other sites. Although the differences were not statistically significant between injured workers in different sites stating that they had knowledge of their right to choose their own doctor, still it is interesting to observe that in Site 2, half of respondents knew of this right, but in three other sites, less than 30% reported this knowledge. Thus, there is considerable variability by plant regarding information and knowledge received by the workers.

**Interpersonal Justice.** Comfort with Supervisor Communication varied across work sites with Site 3 scoring notably lower. The other interpersonal justice measure, Fear of Reporting Injuries, did not show variance.

**Procedural Justice.** Sites differed on all five measures of Procedural Justice. Note that workers from work Site 3 rated it lowest in adequate equipment, staffing levels, and rotation of personnel. A high percentage of workers at Site 2 and 5 report line speed increases with nearly half of the other two sites also reporting increased speed. Nearly a third of workers reported experiencing rotation of work at Sites 2 and 4, with close to ten percent at Sites 3 and 5. No work sites stood out as procedurally more just. It may be that different procedures are in place at the different sites, impacting justice perceptions.

**Safety and Satisfaction.** There is considerable variability across plants in measures of safety and the post-injury satisfaction scale. A high percentage of workers at all five sites reported being injured or involved in an accident in the past year. More than a third of workers at all sites perceived the workplace to be less safe. On the 5-item satisfaction scale, workers who had been injured at all sites reported

dissatisfaction with their experiences or treatment after an injury (M of 15.0 would represent a response of satisfied). Workers at Site 3 reported the greatest dissatisfaction.

**Psychological Contract.** Of the two measures, Knowledge of Rights showed site variability, although workers at all locations reported reasonably high agreement. Though no variability is evidenced in the answer to the question if their rights have made a difference to them, the high negative percentages are notable.

# Chapter IV

## Discussion

These data, from a difficult-to- reach population, provide a rare window to view how a large group of Latino immigrant workers perceive their conditions and treatment in an important sector of the food industry. Participants provided the data in their native language through small group meetings and one-on-one interviews in their rural communities. Though the questions, written by Nebraska Appleseed staff members, were not ideal for my purposes, much can be gained from the analysis of the data reported from this sample, a much larger sample than what has previously been investigated.

The survey results indicate considerable room for improvement in the working conditions and organizational justice experienced by Latino meatpacking workers in Nebraska. Half of the workers stated that they are not provided with adequate equipment to do their jobs. Three-quarters perceived that their supervisor does not apply safety policies all of the time and does not care about employee safety. Two-thirds reported increases in line speed in the past year and nearly half perceived the workplace to have become less safe. Over one-third stated they were afraid to report accidents and close to half stated they were uncomfortable speaking with supervisors about work conditions. Only half have heard of the Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights and few knew that they have the right to choose their own doctor if they are injured. Half of the surveyed workers state that they received negative information about unions from the company and one-third report that they did not receive information about Workers' Compensation during orientation. Assessment of the psychological contract showed a low level of agreement (one-quarter of respondents) that employee rights made any difference.

There was some evidence that unionization is associated with better outcomes. Workers who are members of unions reported greater fairness and safety in the workplace. They were also somewhat more likely to believe that employee rights made a difference. Union workers expressed greater comfort with supervisor communication and were more likely to experience rotation of personnel on their shift. Fewer were injured and fewer perceived worsening of safety conditions. These are important differences between unionized and non-unionized workers.

Many differences were apparent across work sites: line speed, provision of adequate equipment, rotation of personnel, comfort with supervisor communication, information provision about unions and Workers' Compensation. However, half or more workers from all sites reported having been injured in the preceding year.

Why are these findings important? Meatpacking is an important industry in Nebraska and in the U.S. with growing exports overseas. It thrives in the water and corn-rich region of the Ogallala aquifer and is dependent on human labor due to the size variability of the animals being processed. The industry is dominated by a few, very large companies that implement a flexible and transnational labor strategy, recruiting non-English speaking Latinos, many with no path to legal status under current immigration laws. These workers are vulnerable and often keep out of the public light. We are rarely able to learn about their experiences. This study confirms reports that workers are suffering injustice and physical harm. State, U.S. and international laws intended to protect worker safety and promote organizational justice are apparently inadequate or insufficiently enforced. Although there is a state law in Nebraska that workers must be provided information in a language they can understand (Non-English-Speaking Worker

Protection Act, LB 418), much communication is problematic. If they were informed, for example, about their right to list a family doctor upon beginning employment, many workers did not understand this right and the consequences of not listing one if they are injured (e.g. being sent to the company doctor). The worker perceptions reported in this study contrast with the industry view that industrial restructuring has brought improvements for workers. It lends weight instead to perspectives that assert that the industry continues to foster conditions that lead to high levels of line-worker injury.

**Implications for Theory and Practice**

What does this study tell us about the psychological contract of Latino workers in industrial meatpacking in Nebraska? Employers expect hard work and loyalty. It is difficult to determine clearly from our findings what the line-workers believed their employer owed them. We do not know from the data why 12% did not know their hours or pay until after they began working. Do the low rates of satisfaction with treatment after injury imply they expected better treatment? Can we presume that workers believed that their employer would want to keep them safe so that they could be productive? Did workers expect that adequate equipment would be provided? Perhaps this is true for those who know this is part of labor law stipulated in the Nebraska Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights. What are the consequences for the psychological contract of the 50% who said they did not receive adequate equipment to do their jobs? For the quarter to one-half of the line workers who are undocumented and thus limited by lack of legal work authorization, their status may well impact their own and their social network's beliefs about what an employer owes them as workers. Is it possible that when they are silent, workers are implying agreement with the conditions they face? The assumption of

psychological contract theory that people are free to participate in the exchange that is paid work is certainly compromised in this context of great unequal power. Many questions remain to be further investigated. To this end, the measures in this study help to operationalize the constructs of organizational justice for employers and workers in this industry and to facilitate exploring the elements of the psychological contract of immigrant workers in industrial meatpacking.

Results offer direction for community organizations and unions to consider in structuring content for rights and assertiveness trainings. Results also offer the public, advocacy groups, and policy makers information needed to press for worker treatment reforms.

**Limitations**

Several limitations of this study are important to note. As mentioned earlier, the survey instrument was not designed to assess organizational justice or psychological contract. The findings seem to add evidence to the perspective that justice judgments are based largely on relational concerns, but I was not able to compare with judgments based on outcome concerns. The survey included no measures of perception of pay fairness, organizational commitment, turnover intention, or positive discretionary behaviors of workers. The sample did not include members of other cultural groups who are also employed in meatpacking and it did not inquire about immigration status. The data did not provide information regarding how workers see themselves, in particular, if they see themselves as people with pride and meriting respect. Nor did the survey provide data on psychological engagement or explicit attitudes toward the company. Thus I was not able to explore whether the group engagement model applies to these low status workers or

whether their experiences of justice affect their identity judgments and thus their attitudes and behavior in the workplace.

**Future Research**

Investigating objective measures at the plant and industry level would shed further light on our questions of interest. If variation exists in plant size, location (U.S. and other countries), output, ethnicity of company leaders, levels of mechanization, line-speed, employee turnover, injury rates, meat contamination and recalls, might these correlate with worker safety, perceptions of fair treatment and psychological contract fulfillment? Are there identifiable differences in company views toward turnover? How do companies with policies to reduce turnover differ in worker fairness perceptions, productivity, injury rates, and actual turnover from companies which hold expendable labor policies? Differences between unionized and non-unionized workers need to be further investigated.

In this time in U.S. history of growing concern about bacterial contamination in meat and general consumer re-engagement with their food supply, this study brings a missing piece –worker voice – to the evaluation of safe and healthy food. If technology now exists to trace the sources of contaminated ground beef back to the plants where the cattle were processed, we have an opportunity to investigate the possible links between line-worker justice and food safety. Will concern for food safety lead the public and public servants to attend to worker conditions and consider standards for worker safety where none presently exist? In a growing anti-immigrant civic climate, and a time of economic crisis leading to increasing workloads, the fate of these largely Latino immigrant workers becomes even harder to attend to. It leaves in doubt the possibility of

fulfilling not only the rights of workers, but also the right of eaters to obtain justly processed beef under the current industrialized meatpacking system.

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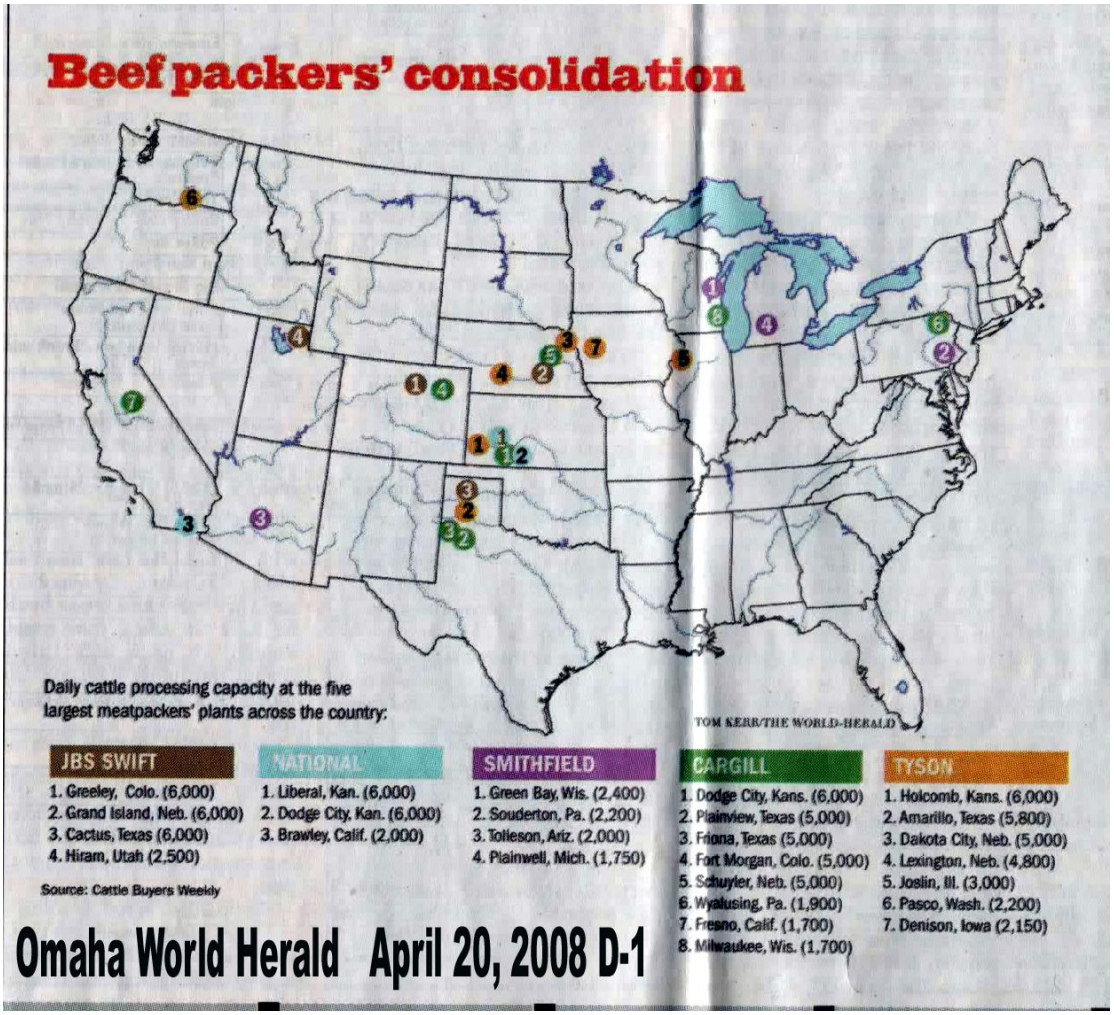
Appendix A


Beef packers' consolidation
Daily cattle processing capacity at the five largest meatpackers' plants across the country:
TOM KERR/THE WORLD-HERALD
JBS SWIFT
1. Greeley, Colo. (6,000)
2. Grand Island, Neb. (6,000)
3. Cactus, Texas (6,000)
4. Hiram, Utah (2,500)
NATIONAL
1. Liberal, Kan. (6,000)
2. Dodge City, Kan. (6,000)
3. Brawley, Calif. (2,000)
SMITHFIELD
1. Green Bay, Wis. (2,400)
2. Souderton, Pa. (2,200)
3. Tolleson, Ariz. (2,000)
4. Plainwell, Mich. (1,750)
CARGILL
1. Dodge City, Kans. (6,000)
2. Plainview, Texas (5,000)
3. Friona, Texas (5,000)
4. Fort Morgan, Colo. (5,000)
5. Schuyler, Neb. (5,000)
6. Wyalusing, Pa. (1,900)
7. Fresno, Calif. (1,700)
8. Milwaukee, Wis. (1,700)
TYSON
1. Holcomb, Kans. (6,000)
2. Amarillo, Texas (5,800)
3. Dakota City, Neb. (5,000)
4. Lexington, Neb. (4,800)
5. Joslin, Ill. (3,000)
6. Pasco, Wash. (2,200)
7. Denison, Iowa (2,150)
Source: Cattle Buyers Weekly
Omaha World Herald April 20, 2008 D-1

Appendix B

Appendix B

NEBRASKA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

# NEBRASKA MEATPACKING INDUSTRY WORKERS BILL OF RIGHTS

**Preamble**

Workers in the meatpacking industry are entitled to certain fundamental rights. The following enumeration of these rights is for the purpose of establishing minimum workplace guidelines for workers in the meatpacking industry. These rights are in addition to all other rights provided by state or federal law.

**1. The Right to Organize**

Nebraska is a right-to-work state and Nebraska employees have the right to choose whether they want to join together for collective bargaining purposes. Employees in the meatpacking industry shall have the right to meet together for the purpose of organizing themselves without fear of harassment or reprisals.

**2. The Right to a Safe Workplace**

Employees in the meatpacking industry are entitled to the safest possible working conditions. The State of Nebraska commits itself to work with all appropriate governmental agencies to accomplish this goal. Employers are committed to accomplishing this goal. In this regard, employers commit to the following actions:

2.1 To establish a management/employee safety committee to meet on a regular basis to examine safety practices, to include but not be limited to safety issues arising out of line speed, and implement the best safety practices for all employees in accordance with federal and state laws.

2.2 Employees shall have the right to file complaints with the plant safety committees without fear of reprisal in order to make the safety committee aware of safety concerns. The committee shall act promptly to assist the employer in addressing safety and health dangers by making recommendations regarding corrective measures and notify the employee of the action taken. An employee shall also have the right to refer safety concerns to the appropriate state and/or federal agencies without fear of reprisal.

**3. The Right to Adequate Facilities and the Opportunity to Utilize Them**

The employer agrees to provide to employees:

3.1 Adequate and working restroom facilities
3.2 Adequate room for meal and rest breaks
3.3 Adequate locker facilities
3.4 Adequate time for necessary restroom breaks

**4. The Right to Adequate Equipment**

Functional and adequate equipment is necessary for a safe work environment. Each employee shall be entitled to use equipment that is adequate to perform the job task assigned. The failure to provide adequate equipment shall be cause for the safety committee to make recommendations for corrective action by the employer.

**5. The Right to Complete Information**

Each employee should be entitled to receive an employee manual at the time of hire that contains:

5.1 A copy of the Meatpacking Industry Workers Bill of Rights
5.2 A complete description of the salary plan and benefits plan
5.3 A job description of the employee's position
5.4 A description of leave policies
5.5 A description of the work hours and work hours policy
5.6 A description of the occupational hazards known to exist for the position

**6. The Right to Understand Information Provided**

An employee is entitled to understand his or her rights and obligations. The employer shall provide an explanation in the employee's native language of that employee's rights and duties as an employee either person to person or through written materials.

**7. The Right to Existing State and Federal Benefits and Rights**

Certain rights are already afforded to employees under the Nebraska Workers' Compensation Act, the Nebraska Workplace Safety Consultation Program, and the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Act. Employees have a right to understand for themselves, or through a representative, their rights and obligations under these Acts. The employer, through a written document or training, shall provide to the employee information to inform and educate the employee's relative to the employee's rights and duties under these laws.

**8. Right to be Free from Discrimination**

Everyone has the right to respect and protection against discrimination. This includes, but is not limited to, the right to equal employment opportunity without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or disability all in an environment free of sexual and physical harassment. Employers should treat their workers with respect. Existing protections against harassment, discrimination and intimidation should be enforced.

**9. Right to Continuing Training Including Supervisor Training**

Employers should provide on-going training opportunities to employees for enhanced skill development and industry changes. Supervisors should be provided with opportunities to enhance their language skills in order to be conversant in the identified non-English language.

**10. Right to Compensation for Work Performed**

Every employee has the right to expect payment of wages owed for work performed by the employee. The employer shall pay all wages due to its employees. Employees have the right to contact the Nebraska Workforce Development-Department of Labor for assistance in determining their rights under the Nebraska Wage Payment and Collection Act.

**11. The Right to Seek State Help**

The State of Nebraska commits itself to protecting the rights of employees in the meatpacking industry. Trained Labor Law Program staff is available to assist employees and employers with information concerning a variety of labor-related issues, including:

Discrimination Law (Right to Work Law)
Health and Safety Regulations
Lunch Period Law
Medical Examination Law
Non-English Speaking Employee Law
Wage & Hour Act (Minimum Wage Law)
Wage Payment & Collection Act
Workplace Safety Consultation Law

**For more information or questions regarding this Bill of Rights, please contact Jose Santos, Nebraska Meatpacking Industry Bill of Rights Coordinator, at (402) 595-1217 or 1-800-627-3611 (outside Omaha) or e-mail at jsantos@dol.state.ne.us.**

Signed this 28th day of June 2000.

Mike Johanns,
Governor

Appendix C

# MEATPACKING WORKER SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey of what it is like to work at a meatpacking factory. We hope that what we learn from this survey will help improve working conditions for meatpacking workers.

Your responses to this survey are confidential. No one will be able to identify you if you complete this survey; you will not be asked to give your name and no one will be able to identify you. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS SURVEY.

Completing this survey is voluntary. This means that you do not have to take the survey. You may skip any question that you do not want to answer and you may stop at any time. Thanks again for completing this survey.

If you have questions, please contact Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest at (402) 438-0263. PLANT WHERE YOU WORK _____ CITY _____

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1. How did you hear about your current job?
   Employment Agency O Family member O Friend O From the company O Other O
2. What is your job in the plant? _____
3. Did you have to pay someone to get an interview for your current job? Yes O No O
4. What is your gender? Male O Female O Race/Country? _____

## *Access to Information*

5. What information did the company give you about their workplace policies when you started working?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Safety | O | Other | O |
| Attendance | O | I don't remember | O |
| Benefits | O | They didn't give me any information | O |

   Please give some examples: _____

6. When did you first find out how many hours you would work?
   When they offered me the job O After I started working O Other O _____
7. When did you first find out about the starting pay you would receive?
   When they offered me the job O After I started working O Other O
8. Do you know you have rights as a worker? Yes O No O
   If NO, go to question #9.
   If YES, do you feel those rights have made a difference to you? Yes O No O
   Why or why not? _____
9. Where have you received information about workers' rights? Please check all that apply:
   My employer O A union O A community organization (for example, a church or community center) O Friend O Co-worker O Other? O
10. What is the most useful information you have received about workers' rights? _____
11. Have you heard of the Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights? Yes O No O
12. Have you heard of Jose Santos, the Coordinator of the Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights? Yes O No O

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13. Is the Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights posted in your plant?..... Yes O No O Don't know O

14. I learned something new about my rights from the Meatpacking Workers Bill of Rights.
Strongly Agree O Agree O Disagree O Strongly Disagree O Don't knowO

## *Freedom to Organize*

15. Do you belong to a union?..... Yes O No O
If NO, are you interested in joining a union?..... Yes O No O
If YES, is your union representative helpful?..... Yes O No O

16. My employer has talked to me about organizing or unions..... Yes O No O

If NO, go to question #18
If YES, was the information ..... Very positive O Somewhat positive O Somewhat negative O Very Negative O

17. What has your employer said about organizing or unions? Please explain:

_____

_____

## *Safety on the Job*

18. How many meatpacking companies in Nebraska have you worked for?

_____

Please list the companies that you have worked for and the years and months you worked:

| Company name | # years/months (ex.: "1 year, 3 months") | Which Years? (ex.: "2001-2003") |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

19. If you have worked for more than one factory, do you think the factories are different...
a. In safety conditions?.....Yes O No O Not applicable O If yes, please explain:

_____

b. In how well they train workers?..... Yes O No O Not applicable O If yes, please explain:

_____

20. Please check if you have been trained in:

| | Yes | No | Don't Know | Does not apply |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Hygiene practices..... | O | O | O | O |
| b. Safety equipment..... | O | O | O | O |
| c. Lock out – tag out..... | O | O | O | O |
| d. Confined space..... | O | O | O | O |
| e. Blood borne pathogens (contamination with human blood)..... | O | O | O | O |
| f. Respiratory protection..... | O | O | O | O |
| g. Hazcom/MSDS (information about working with chemicals..... | O | O | O | O |
| h. Ergonomics (repetitive motion injuries and stretching)..... | O | O | O | O |
| i. Ammonia..... | O | O | O | O |
| J. Knife use, sharpening, saws or the "Wizard" knife..... | O | O | O | O |
| k. Other safety training?..... | O | O | O | O |

Please explain:

_____

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21. Do you stretch at work? ..... Yes O No O
If YES, how many minutes a day do you stretch at work? _____ minutes.
Are you paid for exercise time?..... Yes O No O
Have you been disciplined for exercising?..... Yes O No O

22. Does your company provide any incentives or bonuses to promote workplace safety?..... Yes O No O
If YES, do you think it helps make the workplace safer?..... Yes O No O
If NO, go to question #23.

23. Do they rotate personnel on your line during your shift?..... Yes O No O

24. Do you agree or d sagree with the following statements:

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| My supervisor applies the company's safety policies all the time..... | O | O | O | O |
| I feel comfortable talking to my supervisor about work conditions and/or safety..... | O | O | O | O |
| My supervisor can talk to me in my own language..... | O | O | O | O |
| My supervisor really cares about employee safety issues..... | O | O | O | O |
| I am provided with adequate equipment to do my job..... | O | O | O | O |

25. Are there ways your workplace has become *more* safe in the past two years? Yes O No O
Please explain: _____

26. Are there ways your workplace has become *less* safe in the past two years?.. Yes O No O
Please explain: _____

27. Do you think injuries have increased or decreased in the last 24 months?

| Decreased a lot | Decreased somewhat | Stayed the same | Increased somewhat | Increased a lot |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| O | O | O | O | O |

Please explain: _____

28. Do you think the line speed has changed?
During the last two years... Slower O Stayed the same O Faster O Don't know O
During the last 5 years..... Slower O Stayed the same O Faster O Don't know O
How do you know?..... _____

29. In the past 24 months, during your shift has the number of staff on your line.....

| Decreased a lot | Decreased somewhat | Stayed the same | Increased somewhat | Increased a lot |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| O | O | O | O | O |

30. What would you suggest to make your workplace safer?
_____

31. Have you ever been sexually harassed by your supervisor or co-worker?..... Yes O No O Don't know O
If NO, go to question #32.
If YES, did you report it?..... Yes O No O
What happened when you reported it? _____

## *Accidents & Injuries*

32. Do you have any fear of reporting accidents or injuries? Not at all O Somewhat O Very Much O
Why or why not? _____

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33. Since you started working in meatpacking plants, how many times have you been injured on the job? _____

34. Have you been injured or involved in an accident at work in the last two years?..... Yes O No O
If NO, go to question #38
If YES, what kind of injury/injuries?

The next several questions ask about what occurred *after you were injured*. If you have been injured more than once in the past year, please answer questions for the *most serious injury you had*.

35. Did you report the accident or injury?..... Yes O No O
If NO, why not?
If you did not report the accident or injury, please skip to question #38

If YES, what happened when you reported your accident or injury? Mark all that apply.

- O I reported the accident to supervisor
- O I was sent to the nurse
- O I was sent to the doctor
- O I was sent to the hospital
- O I was sent home
- O The company gave me a warning
- O My supervisor and/or the safety director wrote a report
- O I was transferred to another job
- O I was fired by the company

| | Yes | No | Does Not Apply |
|---|---|---|---|
| 36. Did you have to go to a doctor because of your accident or injury?..... | O | O | O |
| Did you get to choose your own doctor?..... | O | O | O |
| Did you have to go to the company doctor?..... | O | O | O |
| Do you know you have the right to choose your own doctor?..... | O | O | O |
| Did your company pay for your medical bills?..... | O | O | O |
| If you did not go to work for more than 7 days after the injury, were you paid for the days starting on the 7th day? | O | O | O |

| 37. How satisfied were you.... | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Does not apply |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| With the amount of time you had to recover..... | O | O | O | O | O |
| With the doctor's diagnosis of your injury..... | O | O | O | O | O |
| With the medical care you received after your injury..... | O | O | O | O | O |
| With the medical payment made by your company..... | O | O | O | O | O |
| With the job you went back to after your injury..... | O | O | O | O | O |

***Benefits and Worker's Compensation, the system that pays for your medical care and part of your salary while you recover from an on-the-job injuries***

38. What benefits does your company pay for? Check all that apply.
- O Life Insurance
- O Dental Insurance
- O Short Term Disability
- O Family Medical Leave
- O Sick Pay
- O Retirement Benefits
- O Employee Assistance Program (emotional, metal health services, etc.)
- O Health Insurance
- O Vision Plan
- O Long Term Disability
- O Vacation
- O Funeral Leave
- O Child care
- O Other

39. When do you qualify for benefits? After _____ months.

40. In orientation, did you receive information on worker's compensation? Yes O No O Don't know O

Is there anything else you would like to add?