

# **THE CAUSAL TEXTURE OF TRADE UNION ENVIRONMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper is an attempt to fill an important gap in the existing literature on trade unions by providing a more adequate theoretical formulation of trade union environments. The discussion suggests that unlike the environment of business and related organisations whose causal texture is understood in terms of uncertainty, complexity, instability and turbulence that of trade unions needs to be understood in terms of hostility. In the capitalist state, environmental hostility denotes the existence of a set of subjective and objective barrier conditions that are consciously erected and sustained for the purpose of limiting labour's self-conscious and self-liberating understanding and actions. These barrier conditions vary in range, density, and scope. Different combinations of levels of density, range and scope of barrier conditions lead to different levels of hostility in the environment which may range from the mildly hostile, through the hostile to the deeply hostile. The discussion also attempts to indicate the set of conditions that lead to the existence of one rather than another type of trade union environment and the implications that these should have for trade union action.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Granted the strategic importance of trade unions in the evolution and functioning of modern societies, a large and growing number of studies have been undertaken into their history, growth, organization, and action. Thus the ideological basis of trade union action has been examined (Iyayi, 2003a, 1986a; Mohammed, 1989; Sandbrook and Cohen, 1975) as have the legal framework of industrial relations and hence of trade union action (Amadi, 1999; Esan, 1987; Iyayi, 1985; Ubeku, 1983; Emiola, 1982). Particular attention has been focused on the incidence and patterns of union strike activity whether official or unofficial (Iyayi, 2001; Otobo, 1987; Korpi, 1981; Obisi, 1996; Fashoyin, 2002); on dispute resolution mechanisms (Iyayi and Nwabuko 2001; Evans, 2001; Murphy, 2001; Watson, 2001; Jones, 2001; Armstrong, 1982; Yesufu, 1968, 1984; Fashoyin, 2002); on gender issues and relations in trade unions (Aremu, 1995; Dandirep, 1995; Onaeko, 1995); and on regional and international comparisons of industrial relations systems and union organisation and action (Kochan and Wever, 1991).

However, in spite of the critical importance of trade union environments for trade union action and hence outcomes, very little of the existing discussion has focused on the subject. Where it has been undertaken, discussion has failed to advance beyond the point of conceptualising the environment as being made up of a number of sectors. Thus some discussions have attempted to situate trade unions within the context of developments in the national and international economy. Examples of such developments which have been related to trade union organisation and action are the World Bank / IMF driven Structural Adjustment Programmes in Third World countries (Imoisili, 1987; Onimode, 1998), globalisation (Iyayi, 2003b; Jenkins, 1987; Suskind, 2002); changing structure of industrial ownership, employment and the labour force (Fashoyin, 2002). However, as Fashoyin (2002:15) has admitted, 'the choice of the developments selected not only tends to be eclectic' when it comes to trade union environments, the discussions have usually failed to attain the level of conceptual depth and sophistication that is provided in elaborations on the environment of business and economic organisations. Indeed, as the organisational

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literature has shown, though useful, the delimitation of the environment into a number of sectors represents but the most rudimentary form in which environments may be understood and analysed. The more sophisticated and by implication, more useful approach is to conceive of the environment in terms of a number of variable states which organisational leaders are then required to perceive, interpret and enact. If it is recognised that perceptions of environmental conditions play a crucial role in organisational decision making (Sutcliffe and Weber, 2003) and that such decisions impact greatly upon organisational structures, processes and outcomes, then it follows that appropriate theoretical formulations of the environment of trade unions are needed for understanding, predicting and pronouncing upon requisite trade union action and effectiveness.

This paper is an attempt to fill an important gap in the existing literature on trade unions by providing a more adequate theoretical formulation of trade union environments. The discussion provides concepts not only for understanding but also for classifying trade union environments. It is suggested that unlike the environment of business and related organisations whose causal texture is usually understood in terms of uncertainty, complexity, instability and turbulence that of the trade unions needs to be understood in terms of hostility. Environmental hostility denotes the existence of a set of subjective and objective barrier conditions that are consciously erected and sustained by the (capitalist) state, its agents or other agents of capital, which seek to limit labour's self-conscious and self-liberating understanding and actions. The paper shows that barrier conditions may vary in range, density, and scope. On the basis of different combinations of density, range and scope of barrier conditions, it is shown that trade union environments range from the mildly hostile, through the hostile to the deeply hostile. The discussion then attempts to delineate the range of theoretically possible trade union actions in the environments.

### **Previous Literature on Organisations and Environment**

Previous discussions on the organisation – environment relationship have stressed the crucial need for organisational decision makers to pay attention to their environments. Some of this discussion has come to labeled environmental determinism because of its insistence that the environment not only shapes organisational

behaviour but also organisational structures, processes and outcomes. Although environmental determinism has been roundly attacked (Child, 1972, Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980), the consequence has been to point to the crucial role that the environment plays in shaping organisational outcomes.

These discussions define the environment as the subset of actors, factors and conditions that lie outside of the focal organization but which impact upon the performance of the focal organisation. A general and a task environment are often further demarcated, the latter including the subset of actors, conditions and factors with which the focal organization has direct interactions in its task performance, the former including all other actors and factors outside of this 'task' zone. Further, when it comes to the analysis of the actual factors and conditions that impact upon the organisation, two different approaches are taken.

One approach, 'the sectoral approach', analyses the environment in terms of a number of sectors. Usually, the differentiation is between an economic, a political, a legal, a socio-cultural and even a technological environment. Recent discussions of the environment inspired by the globalisation phenomenon have paid particular attention to the socio-cultural environment and the ways in which practices across cultures are becoming increasingly integrated. These discussions have also tended to emphasise the astronomical pace of change in economic relations and the collapsing of boundaries occasioned by the revolution in information and communications technology, the new revolution in management thinking and practice with their emphasis on quality and lower costs through outsourcing, subcontracting and downsizing. For example, the emergence of giant transnational corporations and the rise of a neo – liberal capitalist ideology have been shown not only to be the defining characteristics of globalisation but also to have great implications for trade unions (Susskind, 2002; Jenkins, 1987). In sum total, the sectoral analysis of the environment focuses attention upon the ways in which organisations need to acknowledge and respond to certain discrete economic, political, socio-cultural and technological developments in the environment.

The second approach, 'the variables approach', acknowledges the importance of discrete factors and conditions but focuses attention upon the ways in which those conditions are perceived and interpreted by decision makers in organisations. For decision makers, the rise of

new technologies, the entry of new firms into the market, the introduction of new products into the market, the enactment of new legislation, the availability of faster ways of relating with clients or a worsening in a number of macro – economic indicators at the level of the entire economy may translate into more or less uncertainty, complexity, stability, turbulence and competitiveness in the environment.

The variables approach demonstrates that organizational environments not only differ in several respects as a result of the amount of variation that organisations face in the identified variables but also that such variation has normative implications for organizations and their leaders. For example, it is held that organizations in certain and stable environments require mechanistic styles of management while those in uncertain, unstable or dynamic environments require organic management approaches. Uncertainty is usually defined as a perceptual problem for organizational leaders while environmental dynamism is seen as a condition of rates of change in certain environmental factors such as level of competition, prices of outputs and inputs, demand for products, customer preferences and technologies.

The influential study by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) further showed that different levels and types of integration and differentiation are required for optimal firm performance in different environments. More complex and uncertain environments require both higher levels of integration and differentiation. Integrative mechanisms also differ in these environments; while organisations in simple and stable environments needed individual integrators, those in the more complex and uncertain environments needed whole departments for optimal performance. Three crucial points may be made about these studies. The first is that they have been shown conclusively, through the large number of studies and continuing discussions that they have inspired, to have more analytical power and relevance for strategic action and behaviour in organisations. The second is that they tend to demonstrate that those organisations, whose leaders better understand the causal texture of their environments and align their actions and structures with that better understanding tend to be far more effective than those organisations whose leaders do not. The third critical point is that the existing literature on organization-environment relationships not only indicate the importance of understanding trade

union environments but also the way in which such an understanding needs to be pursued.

### **Trade union environments**

Taken together, the overall concern of the existing literature on organisation – environment relationships has been with economic or business and related organisations. This means that other categories of organisations such as trade unions have not been considered in the analysis. Thus, while it makes sense to talk about environmental variability in terms factors such as uncertainty, complexity, stability, etc, for economic and related organisations, the kind of variability which trade unions face in their environments is qualitatively different. What is more, this difference in variability is not only in terms of degree but also in terms of essence and hence manifestations. For example, for economic and related organisations, environmental variability springs largely from the system of market relationships, with which the organizations must, to a large extent, be in congruence (Weber, 1947). It also springs partly from the ways in which such organizations seek to elaborate and exploit rather than oppose the rules provided by the system of market relationships.

By contrast, the variability faced by trade unions in their environments springs from the basic contradiction in the capital / labour relationship. Several writers (Marx and Engels, 1976; Simmel, 1971; Braverman, 1974; Hyman, 1975; Iyayi, 1986b) have noted that this contradiction is realised in the struggle between capital and labour for control over social life. While this contradiction is always resolved in capitalist society in favour of capital, that it is so resolved necessarily invokes further and continuous challenge from labour (Gouldner, 1954; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980). Several studies (Crozier, 1964; Pettigrew, 1973) have shown that in a situation in which the balance of power is permanently tilted in favour of one of the parties but is under continuous challenge, the dominant party in the power relation necessarily has to evolve and elaborate a variety of methods for either accommodating or excluding the opposition in ways which leave the original unequal power relationship unchanged. All such methods therefore involve the reproduction of domination for the dominant party and subordination for the dominated party.

In capitalist societies, it is the state that comes to assume overall responsibility for reproducing the subordinated status of labour

within the capital / labour relation. Hence, a key and indeed, the defining element in the environment of trade union comes to be represented by the characteristic orientations of the state towards labour in general and the trade unions in particular. It is important to note further that the character of these orientations has to be inferred not only from what is theoretically attributable to the state in capitalist society but especially from what the state actually does when mediating the capital / labour relation. It is only through such an approach that, for example, the idea that the state is a neutral agent concerned with reconciling countervailing interests in capitalist society (Dunlop, 1971), can be shown conclusively to break down. Thus several examinations of the role of the state in the formulation of labour laws (Iyayi, 1985), the conduct of industrial relations generally (Otobo, 1995, Iyayi, 2002; 1986; Hyman, 1975) and in the regulation of socio-economic and political relations at the level of the entire capitalist society (Braverman, 1974) have shown and revealed its permanent and historical bias in favour of capital.

Such bias may be openly and directly expressed (as when a state orders its troops to charge a picket line, engages in the mass arrest and detention of labour leaders, passes repressive labour laws or cuts the wages and salaries of workers while allowing hyperinflation) or indirectly and subtly demonstrated (e.g. through the various instruments of propaganda and the ideological manipulation of workers and their leaders). Whether directly or subtly expressed, such bias will manifest itself in a number of barrier conditions that are consciously erected by the state and employers against the free and self-interested operation of labour in society. Such barrier conditions may be objective (in specific labour laws) or subjective (in the ideological conditioning or manipulation of labour). As in conditions of war when enemies confront each other, the objective of the barrier conditions is either to prevent labour from engaging in actions that serve its historical interests or to encourage it to act in the interest of its continued subordination to capital. We shall use the term *environmental hostility* to denote the existence of a set of subjective and objective barrier conditions that are consciously erected and sustained by the capitalist state, its agents or other agents of capital, which seek to limit labour's self-conscious and self-liberating understanding and actions. Thus hostility is the basic causal texture of trade union environments

serving also to define the condition across which trade unions experience variability not only over time but also across industrial and service sectors.

Except in one significant respect, the hostile environment is rather similar to the situation captured by Emery and Trist (1965) when describing the behaviour of firms in the disturbed-reactive environment: "the part of the environment to which (each organization) wishes to move itself in the long run is also the part to which the others seek to move. Knowing this, each will wish to improve its own chances by hindering the others, but also that each knows this." The major difference between trade unions in the hostile environment and firms in the disturbed-reactive environment is that while in the former case the environment is enacted for trade union organisations, in the latter case, it is the interaction between the organisations themselves that creates the disturbed-reactive field. In the case of trade unions, the environment functions, to borrow Thompson's (1967) phrase as both a "limiting" and a "constraining" norm. In the case of business organisations, the environment exists as a field of opportunities in which firms with the better tactics, operations and strategies realize the largest spoils, including power. In the one case, interaction is based upon subordination, in the second case it is based upon interdependence.

### **Demarcating barrier conditions**

The suggestion that barrier conditions can be objective or subjective indicates that they can take several forms. Thus objective barrier conditions can be categorized into (i) economic (ii) political-legal and (iii) social barrier conditions, while subjective barrier conditions would principally take the form of ideological barrier conditions. *Economic barrier conditions* indicate the range of economic policies, decisions and regulations enacted by the state which seek to limit the freedom of action and hence power of trade unions. The fiscal and monetary policies of the state as well as specific economic decisions and measures put in place by the state would be examples of such economic barrier conditions. *Political - legal barrier conditions* describe the range of political – legal actions including policies and regulations enacted by the state for the purpose of limiting the effectiveness and power of trade unions. All forms of labour legislation would be examples of such barrier conditions. Also policies, pronouncements and decisions by the state that seek to prevent labour from organising

and acting as an independent political force would be other examples of political – legal barrier conditions. *Social barrier conditions* are measures of a social nature enacted by the state that also seek to restrict the ability of labour to achieve its interests. In Third World countries, the attack on public spending which cut jobs and lower wages as well as the standard of living of workers and the privatisation and commercialization of social services are some illustrative examples of social barrier conditions. *Ideological barrier conditions* define those actions undertaken by the state which are directed towards (a) making opaque for labour the reality of existing conditions and (b) altering the consciousness of labour in a direction that makes the interests of labour as a class not only in it self but also for itself. The adoption and active promotion of the neo-liberal ideology of a globalising capitalism has major implications for the self-understanding and self-definition of workers. As Susskind (2002:2-3) has documented, even ‘in the US neo-liberal policies dismantle social welfare systems and force poor women (who are the majority of welfare recipients) into “workfare” programs at below minimum wages, thereby driving down wages in general. These policies bolster prisons as a for-profit industry and a means of social control, outlaw affirmative action and in general, discredit the idea that governments have a responsibility for the welfare of their people.’ In underdeveloped societies, these consequences tend to be much worse.

In Table 1 an attempt has been made to present examples of all categories of barrier conditions based upon our experience of the trade union environment in Nigeria. Although the list is by no means exhaustive, it is clear that the capitalist state may rely on some or all forms of barrier conditions at different periods.

Table 1: Examples of Barrier Conditions

Barrier Conditions	Examples
<b>Economic:</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of a low wage regime</li> <li>• Non payment of wages and salaries to workers</li> <li>• Wage cuts and wage freezes</li> <li>• Adoption of public policies that encourage inflation in the economy and high levels of unemployment</li> <li>• Devaluation of national currency</li> </ul>

- Privatisation of state – owned enterprises to promote efficiency rather than welfare
- Adoption of IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment programmes

#### Legal / Political:

- Promulgation of labour and other laws that limit union action and organisation
- Pronouncements and declarations that ban mass protests / action
- Assassination, arrest and detention of labour leaders
- Dismissal of union leaders and activists from their jobs
- Use of soldiers, police and secret service personnel against unions, civil rights and popular organisations
- Seizure of union dues; stoppage of the payment and collection of check-off dues
- Promulgation of laws that make it illegal, impossible or difficult for unions and union members to engage in political activity or establish political parties
- Massive rigging of elections / use of state and private agencies of terror and violence in elections
- Dictatorship or / and massive corruption in governance
- Active involvement by the state in the internal politics of trade unions

#### Social:

- Cuts in public and social spending
- Introduction of levies on working people
- Closure of key social institutions, e.g. educational and health institutions
- Mass retrenchment of workers
- Increases by the state in the prices of basic social services to promote efficiency rather than welfare

#### Ideological:

- Anti-democratic pronouncements by the state and its agents
- Introduction of reactionary and repressive ideologies by the state with the attendant efforts to indoctrinate or socialize workers, trade union leaders and members of civil society on the basis of the repressive ideologies
- Reinforcement of traditional values by the state
- Generalised mobilization of civil society against organized labour

- Encouragement and training of labour 'renegades'.
- Banning of political education for union members by union leaders
- Promotion of public consciousness which sees labour in largely negative terms such as labour is a 'nuisance', 'subversive', 'too powerful' 'wants to take overthrow the government', etc.

The sheer range of barrier conditions indicates that they can be further differentiated along the dimensions of density, range and scope. The *density* of barrier conditions refers to the actual number of related measures existing at any particular period. This number, and therefore density, may be low or high. *Range* on the other hand concerns the variety of the measures in existence – whether they include economic, political, social and ideological measures all at the same time. Again, the range of barrier conditions may be low or high. *Scope* deals with the coverage of the measures, that of whether the measures have narrow or wide application.

### **Types of Hostile Environment**

The combination of different levels of density, range and scope of the erected and existing barrier conditions provides a basis for differentiating between different levels of hostility in the trade union environment. For example, it can be hypothesized that the wider the scope, the higher the density and range of barrier conditions, the greater will be the hostility in the trade union environment. On the basis of a combination of different levels of density, scope and range of barrier conditions, trade union environments can be further differentiated into the *mildly hostile environment*, the *hostile environment* and the *deeply hostile environment*.

### **The Mildly Hostile Environment**

In the mildly hostile environment, the density, range and scope of the existing barrier conditions are low. At worst, only one of the dimensions of the barrier conditions may be characterized as low to average. The state pursues policies, which allow trade unions to organize and take actions to improve working conditions and the rewards of work for their members. The state may even initiate actions to encourage trade union growth and effectiveness. Generally, the ideological conditioning of labour is to ensure that it sees itself as "a partner in progress". Indeed the mildly hostile environment is further characterized by a period of relative

expansion in the economy. The primary emphasis of employers of labour is upon the adequate supply of qualified labour and the maintenance of enlightened labour practices by individual employers.

As an example of the mildly hostile environment, we may take the 1978 – 82 period of state – labour relations in Nigeria. This was a period of relative economic growth and stability in Nigeria. The industrial relations policy of the state favoured the emergence of strong and virile trade unions. Decree 22 of 1978, which gave birth to the present trade union structure and the mandatory automatic check-off system for the unions were introduced during this period. It was also during this period (1981) that the labour movement in Nigeria won the struggle for legislation on the national minimum wage. Rather than rely on legal – political and economic barrier conditions for maintaining the subordination of labour to capital, the state relied more on the erection of ideological barrier conditions. It was during this period that the Jaji Declaration of the Obasanjo military government (1978) and the Ethical Re-orientation programme of the Shagari government (1981), were articulated and propagated.

### **The Hostile Environment**

The hostile environment is one where one or more of the dimensions of density, range and scope of barrier conditions is average. No single dimension is high although there could be different combinations of average and high scores on any of the three dimensions; however, only one of the dimensions of the barrier conditions may be characterized as average to high. In the hostile environment therefore, the density, range and scope of existing barrier conditions have recorded a moderate increase over what obtained in the mildly hostile environment. The economy is in a period of decline and the state pursues measures that are designed to cut labour incomes and prevent organized labour from making any effective response. Consequently, existing economic, political - legal, social and ideological barrier conditions are reinforced and new ones are also introduced. The state declares its readiness, "to deal ruthlessly with subversive elements"; labour leaders are monitored by security agents; and the mass media is also mobilized against labour.

Again, the year 1983 – 1984 and the 1999 - 2001 periods in Nigeria provide excellent examples of a hostile environment. The 1983 – 84 period was

one of economic decline when according to Nigeria's Central Bank, "the index of industrial production fell by 10.2 percent in 1984" alone. The economic policies of the state favoured general anti-working class measures such as the non-payment of wages and salaries to workers, mass retrenchment of workers, the imposition of a wage freeze and a ban on strikes. At the political level, threats were constantly issued by the state and its agents against organized labour and by the middle of 1983, efforts were being made by the government to split Nigeria's central labour organization, the Nigeria Labour Congress, into two factions. At the ideological level, the state promoted a view of Nigerian workers as lazy and unproductive (Odiaka, 1990). At the same time, it mobilized the people around a reactionary, anti-working class programme, called War Against Indiscipline from early 1984. In the 1999 – 2001 period, the state attacked the collective bargaining system, outlawed strikes through the 'No Work, No Pay' policy, and began a massive programme of privatisation. It also continually raised the prices of products and services provided by state owned companies while encouraging the downward slide in the value of the national currency. It effectively promoted World Bank and IMF policies in the management of the economy and social services.

### **The Deeply Hostile Environment**

The deeply hostile environment represents the stage in which all or any of the dimensions of the density, range and scope of existing barriers conditions is high. At best, only one of the dimensions of the barrier conditions may be characterised as average to high. In practical terms, barrier conditions are not only multiple; additional ones are frequently being introduced. In this type of environment labour in general and organized labour in particular are under siege. The attendant situation in the economy is one of acute crisis and the whole strategy of managing the crisis is to prevent a change, whether from the left or from the right, in the system. Therefore, the total set of economic and social strategies that are being pursued have political undertones.

Resistance on the part of organized labour is approached by the state in military terms; it is as if the state were engaged in a war against external aggression. Consequently, the labour movement or important segments of it may become immobilized through legislation, which proscribe them. Leaders of organized

labour are frequently arrested and detained, some are even physically eliminated, and civil society is militarized in order to maintain the general state of intimidation and fear. Apart from the maintenance of a wage freeze, the salaries and wages of workers are directly cut; the mass retrenchment of workers continues while massive cuts are made in social spending, social services and public property are privatized. The ideological orientation of the people against labour and working class values in general is stepped up. The aim of the state's ideological posturing is to destroy the self-confidence and self-consciousness of labour. The totality of a deeply hostile environment is that the gains won in the past by labour are largely eroded.

The period from 1984 to 1998 and 2002 to 2007 in Nigeria provides an example of the deeply hostile environment. Against the background of the acute and worsening crisis in the economy, the Nigerian state moved decisively to maintain, consolidate and even deepen the capitalist penetration of the economy and to prevent the fall of the profit rate in all areas of capitalist activity. The capitalist penetration of agriculture received a new emphasis with the seizure by the state of community lands and their reallocation to private capital. To prevent a change in the economic and political relations in society, the state also moved decisively against labour. Existing anti-labour legislation were reaffirmed, the state frequently accused the labour movement of attempted or actual subversion, sections of organized labour (e.g. NMA ASUU Pilots Association) that embarked on strikes were either proscribed or had their leaders detained. Many leaders of the trade unions in the public service either had their appointments terminated or were dismissed outright from their jobs. A few trade union leaders were provided with huge bribes in order to make them 'defect' to the platform of the state. In October 2003, the state made a determined effort to proscribe central labour organisations and strike actions. In *An Act To Amend The Trade Unions (International Affiliation) Act 1996 As Amended And For Matters Connected Therewith*, the Obasanjo government proposed new legislation to the National Assembly that when passed into law would outlaw strikes, make membership of industrial unions voluntary, enable employers and the state seize union funds, replace the central labour organisations with hundreds of federations of trade unions and make trade union leaders personally liable, in case of breaches of the law to heavy fines and

even imprisonment. For example, Section 14 of the proposed new legislation provides that, '*No trade union or registered federation of trade unions, by whatever name called, shall embark on a strike action*'. Sections 15 to 18 of the proposed new legislation seeks to increase the financial penalties for breaches of the provisions from the existing levels of N10.00, N50.00 and N200.00 to N2000.00, N10,000.00 and N40,000.00 respectively.

### **Implications for trade union action**

There is no doubt that the existence of different types of environment has major implications for trade union action. One implication is the need that it places on trade unions to interpret the conditions in their environments as a strategic input into their action plans. Such interpretations are likely to be of strategic importance especially in periods of crisis when the trade union may need to confront employers or the state. However, as the organisational literature has also shown, it is not enough to interpret the environment; the interpretation must be correct in the sense that it truly represents existing conditions in the environment (Steers, 1977).

One major precondition for the correct interpretation of the environment is the existence of a theoretically adequate understanding of the environment. For example, those trade unions that interpret the environment only in terms of economic, political and social dimensions or in terms of uncertainty, complexity and instability are likely to miss the point about the true texture of their environment. As we have argued, hostility constitutes the causal texture of the environment of trade unions. Thus only those trade unions that understand their environment in these terms are likely to arrive at the correct interpretation of the state of affairs in their environment.

It is equally important that trade unions are able to interpret the degree of hostility in their environment and therefore, the specific type of environment (for example, whether it is only mildly hostile, hostile or deeply hostile) in which they are operating. Those trade unions that read more or less hostility that is different from the actual level of hostility in their environment are likely, other things being equal, to be less effective in their environment.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Understanding trade union environments is an important prerequisite not only for

understanding trade union action but also for determining the effectiveness of trade union action. This discussion has provided concepts for understanding and classifying trade union environments. We have suggested that while hostility is constitutive of the causal texture of trade union environments, these environments range from the mildly hostile, through the hostile to the deeply hostile. However, while representing a significant contribution to the understanding of trade union environments, there is need for further discussions that seek to link trade union environments to those actions that promote trade union effectiveness in each of the environments. For example, what kinds of actions should trade unions pursue in each of the environments? Indeed, what kinds of actions are theoretically possible that trade unions could adopt in each of the environments for the purpose of enhancing their effectiveness? It is our hope that future discussions and research will aim in the direction of answering these and other questions so that further theoretical refinement and a much more robust understanding of this vital area of industrial relations life can be achieved.

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