

New Unionism in Hong Kong and Toronto: A Model of Union Loyalty in the Hotel Industry

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Abstract

This is a comparative study on the labor unions in the hotel industry in Hong Kong and Toronto. Hong Kong and Toronto could be argued to hold semi-peripheral positions of the ideological dimensions compared to their respective giant neighbor: China and the United States. Historically, Hong Kong exhibits passive unionism, characterized by the open-shop model and *lassiez-faire* economy. In contrast, trade unionism in Toronto has maintained to be strong due to its closed-shop model. In view of the declining membership of trade unions worldwide following neoliberalism, this study sheds light on the legitimacy of trade unionism and organizational learning. A model of union loyalty is devised to analyze the antecedents to union loyalty, which consists of multiple levels of analysis. Using this model, this study aims to examine the extent to which new unionism has what it takes to survive over time. The subtopics include (i) the comparison between old unions and new unions on union loyalty and (ii) the examination of the characteristics of 'new generation' union members. Three hotel unions would be studied in each city, where there are one right-wing and two left-wing unions, respectively. The topic of the hotel industry is worthwhile as the industry has been traumatized by the poor occupancy rate due to the coronavirus pandemic. The nature of the hotel industry is vulnerable to labor disputes due to its general orientation to personnel redundancies and layoffs. Ultimately, this study seeks to reveal the underlying determinants of union loyalty and new union revitalization patterns within the hotel industries.

This study argues that the coronavirus pandemic and the political upheaval should enable strategic opportunity structures for a renewed vision for unionism. A mixed method approach is utilized to offset the weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative paradigms. A two-phase approach is employed for this sequential exploratory design. While empirical findings of union loyalty antecedents remain inconclusive, minimal studies have been conducted about socio-political beliefs. The findings should contribute to the literature on union loyalty, new unionism, and the practical implication of union leadership on members recruitment, retention, and union sustainability. Human resources management should benefit as companies strive to reduce labour activism. Further, higher transparency should be revealed about the hotel industry.