



## Article Summary

### *Summary*

In an investigation of individual personality differences and attitudinal variables, a variety of variables are suggested as strong predictors of union membership. These authors argue that employees with high external locus of control (described below), high extroversion, and low emotional stability are more inclined to rely upon union organizations. Further, those employees with a propensity to be dissatisfied with their job and less committed to the organization are also more susceptible to the promises of union organizers. In addition to union susceptibility, employees with these profiles are also more likely to be disengaged from their job and more likely to engage in counter-productive work behaviors.

### *Why this Article is Important*

As many industry stakeholders are aware, the likelihood of unionization within the restaurant industry is an increasingly ominous possibility for the near future. As such, the hiring decisions that managers and directors are now making are likely to be the same employees that may face the decision of whether to join a union or not within the near future. This article helps both researchers and practitioners understand the specific personality characteristics and attitudes within individuals that are most predictive of voluntary union membership.

### *Major Findings*

From a large body of research on the predictive power of personality variables, we know that with some accuracy, we can predict job performance, the likelihood of engagement, and now, susceptibility to union membership. This particular study is unique in that the researchers were able to obtain personality information through questionnaires of same-company employees that were faced with the decision of voluntarily union membership. Using a large sample (N=624) of governmental employees, this study utilized advanced statistical methods to compare those that joined the union to those that did not. Group personality differences emerged to demonstrate that neuroticism, locus of control and extroversion (to a lesser extent) are strong predictors of union membership.

- **Emotional Stability.** Those low in emotional stability are more likely to join a union. As compared to workers that chose not to join a union, those that joined were more prone to psychological complaints and dissatisfaction with their environment. Those with low emotional stability also tend to be worrisome about job security, status, pay, and work conditions (Herzberg, 1966). Additionally, highly unstable individuals show less desire for motivational achievements, personal growth, and a need for recognition (Furnham et al., 1999)
- **External locus of control.** Having an external locus of control can be described as the belief that one has little to no control over his/her future and the occurrences that happen to you. This belief in a lack of control is also positively related to union membership. Intuitively, it makes sense that those that feel their efforts would make little difference tend to rely upon a larger, group effort (such as a union) to ensure they are treated in a fair manner. Union membership may be seen by these individuals as one means of obtaining the support they need (Shore et al., 1994).

## Article Summary

- **Extroversion.** The study also found that in and of itself, extroversion is not associated with union membership. However, there was a demonstrated interaction (i.e., combination) of extroversion and neuroticism that did predict union membership. These researchers found that those that are both low in extroversion and low in neuroticism are less likely to join a union. In other words, when people are emotionally stable and introverted in nature, they are less likely to feel the need to join others or depend on a union.

### *Further Findings*

Further, the article’s researchers suggest that personal attitudinal variables such as commitment to the company and job satisfaction are also strongly associated with union membership. From the literature, and BHI’s own extensive research, we know that a group of personality variables coined as “Core Self Evaluations” (Judge & Hurst, 2007) are largely predictive of these types of attitudes. These core self evaluations consist of self-esteem (one’s confidence), self-efficacy (belief in one’s abilities), belief in a just world (trust in others), and optimism (positive outlook). By assessing an individual’s core self evaluations, we can not only predict a person’s susceptibility to union membership, but also the likelihood that they will be engaged in their job, demonstrate commitment to their organization, and be satisfied with their work.

#### CORE SELF EVALUATIONS



### *Conclusion*

It is important to note that the variables highlighted in this study demonstrated predictive power over and above demographic and situational variables such as gender, age, tenure, marital status, and job level. Thus, incorporating personality measures into hiring decisions not only allows a company to select for the kinds of attributes they believe to be successful in a role, but it provides a legally defensible approach to identifying and avoiding candidates that are more likely to work against the company’s mission, vision and goals. By assessing personality variables such as locus of control, emotional stability, self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, etc., companies can be proactive in the fight against unionized workforces while simultaneously building more engaged, highly motivated work force.



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### *Reference*

**Personality and Attitudinal Variables as Predictors of Voluntary Union Membership.** by K. R. Parkes & T. D. Razavi of the University of Oxford. *Personality and Individual Differences*; v. 37; 2003; pages 333-347.