

CHAPTER 1

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF ASSESSING OCCUPATIONAL STRESS: A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT WITH LABOR

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A few years back we conducted an extensive mail and telephone survey of occupational stress reduction programs for non-managerial employees (Neale, Singer, Schwartz and Schwartz, 1982; Singer, Neale, Schwartz, and Schwartz, 1986). In the process we learned that corporate and labor definitions of occupational stress were widely divergent. Stress, according to our corporate respondents, was primarily a question of maladaptive personal lifestyles and poor "person-environment fits." Alternatively, labor representatives portrayed stress as the product of organizational conditions that promoted loss of control, work overload, or underload.

In practice, these definitions often led management and labor to take quite separate paths in stress reduction programs. The corporate approach placed responsibility for managing stress on the individual, who was encouraged to relax, exercise, diet, and modify "Type A" behavioral patterns. Virtually all of these corporate stress management programs were linked to medical departments or to organization-wide health promotion campaigns, reflecting additional corporate priorities to reduce health care costs and to improve productivity. Labor's response to stress emphasized strong health and safety contract language and active health and safety committees to enforce written agreements. Any effort, including organizing, grievance procedures, or employee involvement, that effectively increased the worker's control and autonomy at the shopfloor or office level was considered a stress reduction strategy.

In our summary of these findings, we emphasized that the term "stress" had become part of a political rhetoric that allowed each camp, labor or management, to choose a meaning which was friendly to its cause. We highlighted some maverick companies and unions that had crossed "enemy lines" to develop stress reduction programs that included both personal and organizational approaches within the same intervention. Finally, we proposed a systems perspective, drawn from our research and clinical work in biofeedback and psychophysiology (Schwartz, 1982a, 1982b), as a potential integration of these diverse definitions of stress.

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Systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968; Miller, 1978) posits a hierarchical organization of biological, psychological, and social systems, or levels, each possessing unique resources, demands, and constraints. These systems are interrelated such that disharmony or change at one level of the hierarchy almost inevitably influences behavior at other levels. With respect to the work setting, the most obvious interaction takes place between an individual and the organization. In the literature on stress, French, Rogers, and Cobb (1974), Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, and Snoek (1964), and Harrison (1978) have described this interaction as an issue of "person-environment fit." However, a systems orientation would also include other levels at which the fit of demands and resources might be out of balance (i.e., a specific work group and its physical setting, management policies and the entire organization, the organization and its relationship to other organizations in its particular industry, etc.). A systems assessment concerns itself with individual perceptions of strain, but also looks at pressures and changes in work groups and organizations over time.

In this view, exclusively corporate or labor definitions of occupational stress place a narrow focus on selected levels of the systems hierarchy. The corporate stress reduction effort might be successful at helping the employee to exercise but, if it does nothing about toxic fumes in the physical environment, it may make little difference. Similarly, a union representative who wins a reduction of overtime hours for an employee and then stands by while he or she uses the new free time to increase his/her drinking, also does a partial job.

To promote comprehensive and collaborative assessments of occupational stress by corporations and unions, we proposed a systems-driven assessment device, the Occupational Stress Evaluation Grid (OSEG) (see Table 1.1). The OSEG is a seven-by-three matrix that orders stressors and responses to stressors in a hierarchy going from physical dimensions to sociocultural levels of analysis. It enables us to plot the types of stressors operating at each level of the system, as perceived by those involved, and the impact of various stress reducers. Additionally, by separating interventions into formal and informal categories, the OSEG allows us to gauge the amount of personal and organizational control inherent in each of these potential adaptive reactions.

The remainder of this chapter describes our first attempt to test the practical utility of the OSEG as an assessment instrument in a work setting. While we had hoped that our assessment would serve as a starting point for labor-management collaboration in battling stress across each level of the OSEG's hierarchy, our initial effort was limited by pending contract negotiations and the inevitable constraints of field research. Due to management's refusal to participate in our project and our decision to pursue an assessment

TABLE 1.1 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS EVALUATION GRID (OSEG)

<u>Levels</u>	<u>Stressors</u>	<u>Interventions</u>	
		<u>Formal</u>	<u>Informal</u>
Sociocultural	Racism; Sexism Ecological shifts Economic downturns Political changes Military crises	Elections Lobbying/political action Public education Trade associations	Grass roots organizing Petitions Demonstrations Migration Spouse employment
Organizational	Hiring policies Plant closings Layoffs, Relocation, Automation, Market shifts, Retraining Organizational priorities	Corporate decision Reorganization New management model Management consultant inservice/retraining	Social activities Contests; Incentives Manager involvement & ties with workers Continuing education Moonlighting
Work Setting	Task (time, speed, autonomy, creativity) Supervision Co-workers Ergonomics Participation in decision making	Supervisor meetings Health/safety meetings Union grievance Employee involvement Quality circles Job redesign Inservice training	Slow down/speed up Redefine tasks Support of other workers Sabotage, theft Quit, change jobs
Interpersonal	Divorce, Separation Marital discord Conflict, family/friend Death, illness in family Intergenerational conflict Legal/financial difficulties Early parenthood	Legal/financial services Leave of absence Counseling, Psychotherapy Insurance plans Family therapy Loans/Credit unions Day care	Seek social support/ advice Seek legal/financial assistance Self-help groups Vacation/sick days Child care
Psychological	Neurosis, Mental illness Disturbance of Affect, Cognition or Behavior Ineffective coping skills Poor self-image Poor communication Addictive behavior	Employee assistance (referral/in house) Counseling, Psychotherapy Medication Supervisory training Stress Management Workshop	Seek support from friends, family, church Self-help groups/books Self-medication Recreation, leisure Sexual activity "Mental health" days
Biological	Disease, Disability Sleep, Appetite disturbance Chemical dependency Biochemical imbalance Pregnancy	Preplacement screening Counseling Medical treatment Health education Employee assistance Maternity leave	Change sleep/wake habits Bag lunch Self-medication Cosmetics Diets, exercise Consult physician
Physical/ Environmental	Poor air, climate Noise exposure Toxic substance exposure Poor lighting Radiation exposure Poor equipment design Bad architecture	Protective clothing/ equipment Climate control Health/safety committee Interior decoration Muzak Union grievance	Own equipment, decoration Walkman, radio Consult personal physician Letters of complaint

with labor sponsorship, the data we obtained were somewhat skewed toward stressors in the work setting, organization, and physical environment. While we did assess some personal, emotional, and physical variables, we learned little of home life and lifestyle patterns that might increase or complicate an individual's stress.

With these reservations stated, this chapter presents the mechanics of how to assess workplace stress using the OSEG. It provides a hands-on account of how to (and how not to) do an assessment of occupational stress in collaboration with a union. Our focus will be on such traditional community and organizational psychology issues as entry, the consultant's role, establishing trust and allies, group dynamics, organizational structure, reciprocity, and follow-up. The actual data of the assessment will be summarized briefly, but are reported extensively elsewhere (Neale, Singer, and Schwartz, 1987). Throughout, we emphasize that the OSEG assessment procedure involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative information. Both one-on-one interviews and organization-wide surveys are employed. Additionally, since the OSEG grows out of a systems perspective, it is only one part of a larger assessment strategy that draws on systems principles of hierarchy of levels, dynamic process, differentiated input and output, and feedback (Miller, 1978). Each of these principles will be discussed at length in the course of our description of the actual assessment.

PUTTING THE OSEG INTO ACTION: AN ASSESSMENT OF A HOTEL DURING CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

To pursue an assessment of occupational stress that would involve labor and management, we felt it necessary to begin with a unionized work force. Consultants on occupational stress have traditionally worked with managerial level employees or with nonunionized populations (Huszczko, Wiggins, and Currie, 1984; Singer, Neale, Schwartz, and Schwartz, 1986). Accordingly, these consultants' stress programs and assessments in work settings have tended to neglect organizational and workplace stressors of most concern to unions. Hired by management and not necessarily with employees' previous approval, these consultants may seek to perform a fair and participative assessment with extensive employee feedback about stressors and responses. Still, the employees' attitudes toward this type of intervention may often be guarded, particularly if the results suggest changes in personal lifestyle, but not in organizational conditions.

By working with a union on our assessment, we could address some of the problems faced by the management-employed stress consultant. First, we reasoned that the structural organization offered by a labor union would assure us of employees' prior approval of and subsequent involvement in the assessment. Union input into the content and format of the assessment would necessarily include organizational

aspects of stress not often studied in the workplace. Second, we could make an effort to redress the imbalance in psychological services provided to unions, as compared to corporations. An alliance between a union and psychologists on the issue of occupational stress might offer a small step in building better faith between the two groups (see Huszczo et al., 1984). These two opportunities convinced us of the desirability of collaboration with a union and the need to follow through on that collaboration, regardless of management's decision to work with us or not. In other words, if we could get a union to agree to work with us on an assessment of stress we would perform the assessment, even if it did not fit our ideal plans for how the OSEG should be implemented.

Our one stipulation was that we would not work with a union unwilling to collaborate with management in the assessment. Joint collaboration, we felt, would provide us with access to all employees, credibility with both salaried and hourly staff, and a better overview of the setting. While a collaborative effort might raise concerns among respondents about potential uses of our assessment findings, we felt that the potential for setting-wide feedback and multilevel interventions far outweighed these issues. We also realized that such a collaboration would be difficult to accomplish in most settings, given the traditional adversarial relationship of labor and management. Any union we contacted would have to play down their side of this antagonism for the collaborative assessment to work. By the same token, management would need to take a role equal to the union in both the assessment and dissemination of results.

The above explanation is important since it dictated what our point of entry would be (with whom we would first meet) and what our ultimate goals were (not just to test the OSEG, but to build better ties between psychologists and labor). With this agenda laid out, we considered settings that would fit our OSEG framework and that possessed unionized work forces. Hospitals, schools, and hotels all seemed like appropriate choices due to their relatively self-contained nature and variety of occupational and organizational levels. With aid from some community contacts, we settled upon the hotel industry and set up an appointment with an international representative of a large hotel workers' union.

First Contact with the Union

In a meeting to prepare for our initial discussion with union representatives, we outlined what we wanted to accomplish and what we felt we had to offer to the union. From our perspective, we wanted to show that stress was not a unitary concept with clear cut effects. By dividing the hotel into levels of the OSEG, we hoped to demonstrate that stressors at different levels of the grid would produce discrete patterns of stress and well-being. If this hypothesis were confirmed, it would present a strong case against generic stress management

programs that apply the same set of interventions to any group of employees without a systematic assessment of their actual stressors. Since unions were not sponsors of these "fix-all" programs in the first place, we knew our interest in this question would not be a selling point to entice the hotel union's involvement.

Our second major goal was to bridge the gap between labor and management definitions of stress through a collaborative stress assessment. With labor and management involved, both lifestyle and organizational aspects of stress would be covered. Since much of any union's organizing is accomplished through an adversarial relationship with management, collaboration did not promise to be much of an enticement either (we later saw the union take creative advantage of our interest in collaboration). A third goal, to produce a case study of stress assessment for this manual, might give the union some free publicity, but we were so vague about who would see the manual that we could not make this possibility sound very compelling.

There was, of course, another much more practical goal, and this one offered common ground. We could quantify for the union complaints of poor conditions, overwork, or arbitrary supervision. At the same time, our interviews and surveys would serve an educational purpose; individuals would be asked to think about problems or conflicts at work that they might have previously left unnoticed or reluctantly accepted. In the name of the union (and potentially of management as well), we might raise employee consciousness about what they deserve or should expect from bosses, fellow employees, and themselves at work (and we would do this all for free). While it might not be helpful to raise employees' awareness of stressors without offering alternatives to reduce them, we felt comfortable that the union structure could turn our findings into a vehicle for organizational change. Moreover, our very presence would provide concrete evidence to union members of the union's interest in their welfare. Even if we could tell the union leadership nothing new about their workplace, we could function as an effective organizing tool in the union's effort to solidify its ranks. Acknowledging our potential to become a political vehicle for the union, we reasoned this might be our best offer, especially since our other selling points might not be immediately attractive.

At the start of our meeting, the hotel union representative made it clear that health and safety issues were not a major bargaining concern in an era where unions face take-backs and work force reductions. No major time or labor could be diverted from organizing efforts around wages, benefits, and job security in order to help us with our stress project. He underscored this point with a story about a previous research group that had done a stress questionnaire with his union. After investing many hours of shop stewards' time, the union had never heard a word about the results. They had felt used and were naturally a bit wary of any new project.

On the other hand, a major hotel in our area was having serious problems with stress. As the union representative described the situation at this hotel, we began to realize that labor-management interactions had grown tremendously in sophistication. The employee-manager relationship was no longer a shopfloor phenomenon, but was dictated by multinational corporate decisions that cut across each level of the OSEG hierarchy. The hotel was part of a large corporate chain that had recently been taken over by an even larger conglomerate. Its policies were dictated by the chain's international headquarters, which prescribed as much standardization and time accountability as possible. The consequences of this standardization at the managerial level included expectations of company loyalty, little room for informal or flexible arrangements within a given hotel's policies, and extensive managerial rotation (to help train managers to be interchangeable as needed).

The hotel in question, we were told, had been run in a rather disorganized and informal manner for most of the nine years it had been open. A year previously, with the hotel in the red, the international headquarters had sent in a new management team drawn from other hotels in the chain. The stated purpose of this new management was to get the hotel back into shape and to standardize its practices and routines in line with more successful chains. Even though it was the best situated and equipped of the three major downtown hotels, it had not yet fulfilled its earning promise. Under a new general manager, who had taken up residence in the hotel, this corps of "outsiders" had initiated sweeping changes in hotel policy and organization, most notably staff reductions and new work schedules. The union, organized shortly after the hotel opened, reacted quite negatively to the management changes. Members believed their performance was judged unfairly by a group of strangers, and that inefficiency at the hotel was due to management's abuse of perquisites and lavish after-hour parties. Union members resented the new stricter policies instituted by management and also feared further lay-offs due to a push for higher productivity.

While these changes were occurring at the hotel, contract negotiations for all three downtown hotels were fast approaching. The union had managed to arrange the three locals' contract expiration dates to overlap within the same week. Reflecting a sophistication equal to that of management, the union's organizing effort for these new contracts would involve a three-pronged strategy. At the highest level, the union would go after the parent corporations that owned the hotels. This would mean research into the larger social policies and activities of each corporation. Key company leaders would become the focus of letter-writing campaigns, demonstrations when they spoke in public, and visits from politicians sympathetic to the union. This "corporate campaign" would also challenge the public image of civic commitment these companies projected to the city. Newspaper advertisements and rallies would question the depth of their

humanitarian spirit. How could these companies have civic pride if they didn't treat their own employees well? The final prong of the union strategy, and always the most important, was the willingness of the three locals to stand by each other and take to the streets. Paid staff and shop stewards at each hotel would be responsible for building a strong committee structure that would define contract proposals, elect a negotiating committee, and, if necessary, form the nucleus of picket captains.

Once he finished his description of how all these elaborate forces would come into play within the next nine months, the union representative suggested where our assessment might fit into this scenario. The paid union staff for the three hotels consisted of two full time organizers and a part time clerical worker. The senior organizer of the two was also covering hotels in the neighboring state for another staffer who was helping out at a significant strike in Las Vegas. Our project might keep the union in the minds of the membership as the other organizer struggled to lay the groundwork for a committee structure at the three hotels. As long as we did not make many time demands on either organizer, we could aid in the educative process necessary to the contract negotiations. Our assessment might help employees to articulate dissatisfactions and demands that they might later express during the contract proposal meetings. Additionally, we might be able to document quantitatively the effect of top level corporate decisions as they trickled down and affected the individual employee. Perhaps, the information we collected could be used during negotiations either through the media or to support requests for better contract language at the bargaining table. The union representative did not, however, express much confidence in these possibilities.

Our assessment had already begun with this 1 1/2 hour meeting. In terms of the OSEG, we were operating at the highest social/political level. Our assessment of a union work force's occupational stress was to take place on the battleground of a modern union-management struggle. The players were no longer a bunch of immigrant workers and a grizzled boss, who had come off the boat only a few years earlier than the workers. Instead, the bosses were unidentified corporate decisionmakers, who relied on computer projections and standardization. The workers were led by college-educated, full-time organizers who orchestrated contract negotiation drives like commando assaults. It became very clear to us that a major goal would be to document how these higher level strategies (which were only then commencing) would produce specific effects on employees' lives and perceptions at the time of our full-scale assessment.

First Contact with the Paid Staff of the Hotel Union

To follow up our first meeting, we arranged a meeting with the two organizers for the three downtown hotels. The object of this meeting was to present our project to them and, if they were interested, to confirm that we would do an assessment of the hotel named by the international representative at our prior meeting. We ended up meeting only with the senior organizer since the other organizer, who was directly responsible for servicing the hotel in question, was involved in a member's grievance hearing. His absence foreshadowed just how tightly his time would be scheduled during our assessment efforts. The senior organizer re-emphasized much of what we had previously heard about the corporate style of management at the hotel and the excesses of past managers. He made it clearer that the organizing campaign for the contract would not be centrally focused on wages, but rather on working conditions. The employees would present their demands in the context of "dignity and justice on the job." What they wanted most was respect from the new managers and recognition of their professionalism.

The senior organizer also offered us a first glimpse of specific stressors we might want to investigate at the hotel. Besides the difficulty with management, he felt we might look for evidence of short-staffing, abrupt schedule changes, and lack of information about policy changes. At the response level, he pointed out that hotel employees tended toward alcohol and substance abuse (partly due to the subculture of parties and extravagance that a hotel breeds). While he presented the hotel employees as basically a good union membership, he mentioned it would help him if he could learn more about what the union members saw as positive benefits to being in the union. This knowledge could be extended to organizing drives for non-union hotel employees.

Since he seemed willing to let us do the assessment, we raised the issue of soliciting management's collaboration. Without much hesitation he agreed to this, but for reasons we had not expected. He was so convinced that management would refuse our request that he saw their refusal as an organizing opportunity. He could promote the union as willing to aid health professionals in helping the membership, while the hotel management didn't seem to care. When questioned about what he would do if they did agree, he replied that conditions were so stressful at the hotel that the management would still be forced to make concessions. If they didn't change conditions once the stressors had been identified, they would look even worse than if they hadn't participated in the assessment; which is why, he pointed out, they would never accept our offer in the first place -- they had no interest in making changes that might upset their standardization.

The First Stage of the Assessment

With the assessment now a tangible project, we developed a research strategy that would blend the application of the OSEG with a larger systems outlook (see Table 1.2). As Table 1.2 indicates, the first step of the research strategy was to contact labor and management representatives. After contacting labor representatives, we wrote a lengthy letter to the general manager of the hotel. We offered a list of reasons for our choice of his particular hotel as a focus of our assessment including its proximity to Yale, its highly professional staff, its blend of autonomy with support from a world wide corporation, its competition with other downtown hotels, and its established union work force. The letter went on to describe the mechanics of the assessment (interviews and a survey), our financial needs (none), and our strong commitment to a labor-management collaboration. To assure him that we were interested in a balanced collaboration and to underscore our bipartisanship, we indicated that the same letter had been sent to the two organizers for the union. We expressed from the outset that we were working under contract for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and that our purpose was to involve labor and management in a collaborative and comprehensive assessment of stress.

During this time, we also made direct efforts to contact someone in the parent corporation, such as a medical director or human resources officer, who might be supportive of our proposed assessment. We hoped their approval might lead to a "top down" decision to collaborate in the hotel stress assessment. Unfortunately, and characteristic of many service corporations (see Singer et al., 1986), there was no such sympathetic figure to be found in this organization. Our conversations with health representatives of the corporation made it clear to us that stress programs or interventions, particularly at the level of non-salaried employees, were a low priority. After two weeks without a reply from the hotel's general manager, we began to leave messages with his secretary. Though he never returned our phone calls, we did finally receive a one paragraph note approximately three weeks later. The note explained that due to renovations, changes in management, and upcoming contract negotiations, the hotel administration would not find it possible to participate with us in this project. At this point, we kept to our original commitment to follow through on our agreement with the union, even though the assessment would not become a shared project between management and labor.

As a structure for our assessment, we returned to the four principles of systems theory listed earlier. The first systems principle, the hierarchical organization of work stress, would allow us to divide the hotel up into increasing levels of complexity. Each level, and each subsystem within it, could then be assessed for its contribution to employee stress. Accordingly, we would need to design questions that

TABLE 1.2 OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RESEARCH STRATEGY

1. Contact labor and management representatives for potential collaboration.
2. Define work units and organizational structure. Outline demographics.
3. Identify representatives within work units for interview.
4. Develop work history interview format. Select relevant survey items.
5. Interview work unit representatives about work experiences. Administer trial survey.

Feedback of results to work unit representatives for verification.

6. Finalize stressor survey based on interview data and representative input.
7. Contact employees and survey organization about work-related stressors.

Feedback of results to the entire organization.

8. Devise a stress response survey specific to work units and to identified stressors.
9. Survey work units about responses to work-related stressors.

Feedback of results to work units.

10. Compile stressor-response results and formulate profile of organization.
11. Identify stressful event for organization, using management and labor assistance.
12. Survey work units about stressors and responses related to stressful event, again using instruments specific to work units and identified stressors.

Feedback of results to work units and organization.

13. Devise interventions at work group level to deal with stressful events, based on survey responses.
14. Identify another stressful event for organization, this time implementing intervention strategy.
15. Survey work units about response to stressful event and effectiveness of intervention strategy.

Feedback of results to work units and organization.

16. Compare stressors-responses to both stressful events.
17. Attempt to establish this research-intervention strategy as an ongoing organization process, with individuals trained to implement it.

would assess the individual performing his/her work within a setting (physical environment), as part of a work group (interpersonal environment), which represented one component or subsystem in the hotel (organization). The hotel, in turn, was subject to local, national, and international market forces and to a variety of social, and political influences (Strand, 1983). Second, we sought to assess the dynamic process of stress in the workplace. Alterations in the organization (such as new management or contract negotiations) should lead to variation in levels of the OSEG at which stress is reported. Depending on particular factors salient in a workplace at a given time, employees' perceptions of stressors would actually sway from individual or job specific causes to organizational ones and back again.

Since the union leadership sought to capitalize on employees' apparent dissatisfaction with new management, we were curious at which levels employees would report the greatest stressors. If the union leaders' strategy proved effective, employees of the hotel at this time would increasingly view upper level management and treatment by the organization as significant stressors, perhaps even more so than the conditions of their work. Later, if we were to do a follow-up assessment after the contract was settled and organizing efforts reduced, we might find a shift away from an emphasis on management as a stressor. The dynamic concept of stress argues for repeated assessments over different moments in an organization's history. The number and location of stressors reported by employees might fluctuate not only with contract timetables, but even more frequently with peak and off seasons. Single administrations of stress surveys might encourage respondents to perform an averaging process that would mask temporal variation in their perception of stressors.

At all times during our assessment, we would attempt to differentiate moments when we provided input to the hotel's system or collected output from it. In other words, any questions or surveys we presented to the hotel would need to be understood as information we were offering to the employees about what issues seemed important or worth discussion. Similarly, their replies to our inquiries would be an opportunity for union members to inform us about what they, themselves, thought to be of actual relevance or importance. This distinction between input and output would also allow us to monitor how our questions might influence or shape employees' responses. To safeguard against this bias, we split the interview segment of our assessment into two parts. The first task of the interview involved employees' open-ended descriptions of "a typical day at work." Once interviewees had described their perceptions of the hotel in their own words, they answered items we had written.

Finally, we sought to apply the systems principle of feedback to the actual creation of our assessment instruments and strategies. This would mean, as Table II indicates, we would return to our original

sources of data (before a new data collection step was initiated) to confirm that we understood their communications and that our next step in the assessment conveyed their concerns.

First Contact with Hotel Employees

In a follow-up meeting with both organizers for the hotel, we laid out the basic components of the assessment. We wanted to interview representative employees from each department of the hotel. These interviews would provide us with a detailed sense of those stressors unique to specific jobs or departments in the hotel as well as information about stressors shared by all members of the hotel staff. Based upon this information, we would develop a survey for general distribution that would cover the diverse stressors raised in the interviews. At the same time, each survey would have additional questions aimed at the specific concerns of each department. We would analyze the results of the survey and prepare a written report in time for use in contract negotiations.

In order to choose a sample of union members for interviews and also to make sure the employees were interested in such an assessment, we requested a meeting with shop stewards from the different hotel departments. We cannot overestimate the importance of shop stewards to the success or failure of any attempted collaboration with labor. Shop stewards serve as ombudsmen, organizers, union officials, and psychotherapists. They are the conduit through which any outsider will reach a rank-and-file member. Consequently, a union's organization is only as good as its shop steward structure. In times of contract negotiations, shop stewards oversee contract proposal meetings and election of the negotiating committee. During strikes, shop stewards become picket captains and administrators of picket pay and strike funds.

All this noted, we should point out that the main goal and main headache for the organizer with whom we worked was to strengthen the shop steward structure at the hotel before the contract negotiations began. Our first meeting with the shop stewards conveyed to us the extent of the task that lay before them. Four of the eight stewards made it to the meeting. One steward's son had just been fired for stealing from a cash box and she interrupted our presentation intermittently to argue with the organizer about his handling of the incident. On top of this, since the meeting was held in the hotel, one or another steward was summoned away for minutes at a time. The scene itself was quite comic, given the diverse outfits of the union members (bellman coats, chef's hats, waitress aprons, and housekeeping uniforms) and the half-Spanish, half-English yelling match between the steward and the organizer. Still, the shop stewards present could not overemphasize the stress they had experienced at the hotel under the new management. They were very much in favor of whatever efforts we could offer to provide concrete evidence of this problem. They

promised to produce for us a list of 12 names of rank-and-file employees who could familiarize us with the workings and the particular stressors of each department. The most experienced steward, the head bellman, also indicated he would explain our project to the absent stewards and obtain the necessary names from them.

At this point we began to understand a warning the senior organizer had given to us about our assessment. He cautioned us that it would be easy for our assessment to become an evaluation of life in "the front of the house" of the hotel, meaning the bellmen, front desk clerks, waitresses, and bartenders. These individuals were usually the more articulate and often college-educated employees of the hotel. For our assessment to be valid and helpful to him, we needed to reach the "back of the house" in equal numbers (housekeepers, housemen, dishwashers, laundry workers, busboys). His point raises a larger issue in any assessment of a work organization. Each workplace has a subculture with its own class system and norms. If an assessment fails to account for this culture in the construction of its instruments, the result will most likely be skewed and inaccurate. We faced this problem with Spanish-speaking employees, as will be described later on.

As we waited for the stewards to produce a list of names, we realized that our assessment faced a long road ahead. The steward structure was by no means as organized as we had hoped (nor, you can bet, as the organizer had hoped). Practically, this meant that every step in our assessment strategy would take more time and effort on our part than we had anticipated. Additionally, it left the organizer little time to work with us in designing or implementing our project.

The Interview Process

With a list of employees finally in hand, we began the interview process (following along on Table 1.2, we were now up to Step 4). Our goal here was to perform a diagnostic occupational history, using our 12 union representatives to convey the general conditions of their particular departments (Step 5). In the first portion of the interview we recorded their previous work experience and the types of jobs they had performed at the hotel. We then asked each interviewee to take us step-by-step through a typical day and a particularly stressful day in their department. Their accounts were strikingly detailed and vivid; one laundry worker even drew a picture of the laundry room and narrow corridors to convey how much difficulty she had with her linen carts. A front desk clerk described how her responsibility for paperwork and finances (shift sheet, mail logs, events of the day, bank vault, outlet checks) conflicted with her interactions with guests at the counter. A pastry chef's assistant discussed the monotony and effort involved in rolling dough and spreading jam daily for 1000 turnovers.

Though these stressors were specific to discrete tasks within each department, an overarching theme of dissatisfaction with labor-management relations repeatedly surfaced. This theme was symbolized by complaints one might first dismiss as rather minor. First, every representative mentioned the poor quality of food served by the cafeteria. Since employees of the hotel were not allowed to leave the hotel during their shifts, many relied on the cafeteria for both meals and social life. The menu was dictated by whatever had been left over from the various functions catered by the banquet department. Second, the new management had removed the television from the cafeteria with the explanation that it had led to prolonged breaks and wasted work time. The food and, to an even greater extent, the abducted television, summed up in a powerful (if not visceral) way, the employees' sense that management treated them like children or, even worse, robots. The other impression communicated by interview participants was that workers could see an improvement in the hotel's quality and efficiency, but were asking themselves, at what or whose expense? Each could think of co-workers who had recently been laid off or who had had their hours cut, while a large dining room, closed ostensibly for renovations, lay dark and empty in the middle of the hotel.

The second portion of the interview consisted of an oral administration of a pilot version of our stress questionnaire, divided into the OSEG levels previously discussed. In addition to the items we had created, we drew questions from the "Quality of Employment Survey" (1977), the "Office Workers: Health and Well-being Survey" (Gordon, Stellman, and Snow, 1982), and the "CWA Local 1180 Stress Questionnaire" (Love, 1983). The list of items ranged from the temperature in the restaurant kitchens to the level of competition with other hotels in the city.

We found this trial run of our eventual questionnaire extremely helpful. We learned how to reword certain items to make them clearer and more neutral. Additionally, we were able to delete questions that were uniformly irrelevant across the departments of the hotel. Most importantly, we realized that to assess both stressors and responses to stressors in the same survey would be too demanding on employees' time. To satisfy properly the different levels of the OSEG, from physical environment through work demands on up to organizational factors, we had already created a 10 page questionnaire. For this reason, we decided to restrict our initial efforts to the study of stressors and not employee responses to the stressors. With the contract expiration date drawing closer, we agreed to limit our subsequent assessment efforts to the patterns of stressors we could identify (Steps 1-7). We could then take up employees' characteristic responses to stressors in a subsequent assessment. Though this decision was necessary, it troubled us to know that we might raise employees' awareness of problems at the hotel without also raising

their awareness of solutions to these stressors. We took some comfort that the union leaders were using their organizing campaign to address practical solutions to many of the concerns raised by our interviewees.

The interviews were conducted in the union hall and lasted 2-3 hours. Though we paid \$10 per interview, we had a difficult time pinning down the 12 representatives to meet with us. Much of this difficulty had to do with the odd scheduling shifts that are part of hotel work. Some of their reluctance and spotty attendance might also be attributed to the awkwardness of the task or to unfamiliarity with the union office.

Union members' unfamiliarity with the location of the union office could be interpreted in two ways. Either the union's shop steward structure was so effective, rank-and-file members had no cause to go the office, or the union's organization was not as firmly entrenched as we had thought. In a sense, both possibilities were true; it simply depended on the effectiveness of each department's shop steward. Still, the union office was housed in the third floor of a dentist's office on a leafy, almost suburban street two miles from the hotel. The primary reason was the cost of downtown rents, but we came to feel the extent of its inconvenience for members was costly as well.

The Stress Survey

With the interviews completed, we generated a new OSEG tailored to stressors present at the hotel (See Table 1.3, columns 1 and 2). Based on the organization of the new OSEG, we produced a stress survey specifically for the hotel (Step 6). This effort provided our first output to the union members. We went back to the shop stewards and asked them to read and fill out the survey. We wanted to know if we had listened well and picked up on the main concerns faced by employees in the hotel. Their feedback helped us to clarify wording once more and to shorten the questionnaire even further. The head bellman proved to be extremely helpful again in making sure all the stewards completed the pilot survey and returned it to us.

The final questionnaire covered the organizational, work setting (interpersonal, job characteristics, and physical environment), and individual (psychological and biological) levels of the OSEG. Among the work setting items, we embedded 20 of Karasek's (1979) questions concerning the level of demands and control attached to a particular job. For our psychological and physical items, we used a list of emotions in a typical day at work and a list of physical symptoms from the Symptom Checklist 90 (Derogatis, 1975). As mentioned earlier, we added an additional page of questions (color-coded by department) that focused on stressors specific to each department of the hotel. We hoped these questions would help differentiate patterns of stressors unique to work groups across the hotel. The questionnaire ran 10 pages and took between 15 to 30 minutes to complete.

TABLE 1.3 OSEG ASSESSMENT OF AN URBAN HOTEL

<u>OSEG Levels:</u>	<u>Sample Stressors:</u>	<u>Subscale Labels:</u>
Sociocultural	Gender or race discrimination Economic downturn/recession Seasonal business cycle National labor relations climate	
Organizational	Corporate ownership/structure Labor negotiations Staffing and hiring policies Layoff/reclassification Management ethos	JOB SECURITY SATISFACTION WITH MANAGEMENT POLICY SATISFACTION WITH MANAGEMENT PRACTICE COST-CUTTING
Work Setting: Interpersonal	Multiple supervision Management style/competence Work group structure/norms "Outsiders"	UPPER MANAGEMENT POSTIVIE UPPER MANAGEMENT NEGATIVE LOWER MANAGEMENT CO-WORKER RELATIONS
Job Characteristics	Unpredictable scheduling Conflicting demands Time pressure High demands/additional duties Low decision latitude Inadequate supplies/equipment Heavy lifting and pushing	SCHEDULING JOB OVERLOAD AUTONOMY EXTERNAL CONTROL
Physical Environment	Climate extremes Poor ventilation Hazardous situations Poor recreational facilities Poor quality food Uncomfortable positions	PHYSICAL DEMANDS
Family/Social	Schedule interference Child care responsibilities Financial difficulties Dual-career or blended families	
Individual: Psychological	Emotional experience of work Mood/memory changes Career/job expectations Lack of control/helplessness Motivation	POSITIVE EMOTION NEGATIVE EMOTION
Biological	Substance use/abuse Tension/pain Sleep difficulties Digestive problems Hypertension	MUSCLE TENSION AND PAIN SLEEP DISTURBANCE

With the questionnaire set, the next major hurdle was its distribution to the approximately 200 hourly employees of the hotel. At a meeting with the organizers, we saw clearly how protective they were of the time of both stewards and rank-and-file members. With the negotiations looming, there would be many requests for meetings, rallies, and votes. The organizers did not want to increase this load. The significance of management's nonparticipation weighed heavily at this point. Without management approval, the possibility of group administration or any use of work time was out of the question. We considered a mailing, but the union's poor return rates for their own surveys through the mail ruled out that option. Also, the union's lists of addresses and phone numbers for members was neither up-to-date nor complete. Finally, we decided to distribute the questionnaires at the contract proposal meetings and that each questionnaire would have a stamped envelope attached. In this way we could be sure that we, or a steward, had made personal contact with anyone who received a questionnaire. If respondents did not want to mail the questionnaire back, they could pass it on to the steward from their department. We stapled a cover letter to each questionnaire describing our research group and assuring confidentiality of responses. If an employee did not attend the meetings, the shop stewards were to keep track and present them with a questionnaire at a later date.

The contract proposal meetings were held in three large assemblies to overlap with each of the three shifts. Not only did we distribute the questionnaires, but we gained an invaluable check on the value of our survey and of our assessment up to that point. Perhaps of greatest interest, we could see the same union strategy first articulated to us by the international representative now laid out for the rank-and-file members by the junior organizer. At each of the meetings, the organizer made a brief speech about how the hotel unions represented an exception to the national trend of givebacks and union-busting. He outlined the same three-pronged (corporate-community-committee) strategy that was used in the Las Vegas hotel workers strike and by clerical workers at Yale to win certification of their union. Finally, he pointed out the need for active participation of the rank-and-file members in a contract proposal committee, an organizing committee, and a negotiating committee. With these structures in place, he felt certain they could obtain reasonable advances without (though, if necessary, with) a strike.

Over the course of the three proposal meetings, the familiar triad of wages, benefits, and working conditions was often raised, but it was clear that the last dominated the first two (with the exception of repeated requests for better sick day and disability provisions). Concern about working conditions emerged in many different ways; over- and under-staffing, misallocation of hotel resources, poor meals, uniform costs, scheduling, arbitrary decisions by management, extreme variation of temperature in the hotel lobby, etc. In the midst of

this clamor of dissatisfaction, the organizer skillfully returned each group's attention back to the management's lack of respect for and obvious underestimation of the union's strength.

At the beginning of each meeting, one of our investigators made a short speech to explain the survey, urging the audience to fill it out and mail it to the union. The organizer and one of our interviewees also spoke briefly in favor of the project. In all, we handed out 100 questionnaires in the course of that day and another 150 through shop stewards' efforts in the weeks following the contract proposal meetings.

Listening to the organizer train the stewards and rank-and-file members in the same program we had heard described by the international representative and the senior organizer, we realized our assessment had taken on a purpose different from, but not incongruent with, our original goal. We were about to provide the union with quantifiable feedback about the effectiveness of their organizing. In other words, if the organizer's committee structure and message took hold, the dominant stressor identified by our respondents should be the employees' relationship with management. According to the hotel OSEG (Table 1.3), our assessment should locate the greatest stress at the work setting/interpersonal level and, above that, at the organizational level (see Table 1.3 column 2, for specifics of these levels).

Before any analyses could be performed, we had the imposing task of retrieving a respectable number of questionnaires. Management's non-involvement had hindered distribution of surveys, but the effect was much worse for survey collection. In the beginning, we were completely dependent on the overextended organizer and shop stewards to prod and remind members to complete and return questionnaires. Shop stewards varied greatly in their commitment to the distribution and collection of questionnaires. When a shop steward failed to pass out our surveys or gave them out without explanation or follow-up, we could be set back for several days or weeks. Finally, another steward would carry the ball for the less helpful one and we would begin to see returns. Sometimes, the nature of the department itself influenced the number of respondents. Educational background, language differences, amount of satisfaction in a department, and relationships with superiors all influenced the rate of response in a given work group.

Here is where the senior organizer's warning about the "back of the house" and the "front of the house" was particularly salient. The front desk department responded most enthusiastically, due most likely to their higher educational level and to the head bellman's effectiveness as a steward. Also, their returns indicated they perceived themselves as extremely stressed due to high demands, understaffing, and lack of supervision. The other "up front"

positions like waiters and waitresses also showed a high response rate, though their steward was much less experienced and helpful. On the other hand, we simply were not getting back surveys from the "back of the house" members of the union. This problem affected our returns both in the food and beverage department and in the housekeeping department of the hotel.

It soon became clear that we faced two large problems with the "back of the house" employees. First, they were hardly strangers to poor working conditions or to stress, but they were skeptical about the usefulness of a questionnaire. They already knew all they needed to know about what was bothering them. Second, we had underestimated the number of Spanish-speaking employees, particularly among the housemen and maid staff. We had originally offered to produce a Spanish version of the questionnaire, but the union staff assured us that this would not be necessary except for 6 to 12 employees. Our subsequent interactions led us to feel that we might have lost more than a dozen employees to a language barrier.

Faced with these two obstacles we were still determined to fulfill our promise of an assessment for all classes of hourly employees at the hotel. To overcome the skepticism of the housekeeping and dishwashing staff, we decided we needed to speak with them personally about why the survey could be useful to them. With the aid of a few shop stewards, we began to spend time at the employee cafeteria during afternoon shift changes and breaks. We would introduce ourselves to a maid or houseman, give them a questionnaire (if they had not yet received one), and generally lobby for the usefulness of filling it out. We also recruited Spanish-speaking stewards to introduce us and to convey our message to a group of Hispanic workers. Often, these members would bring the questionnaire home and have their sons or daughters help to translate the questions. While this kind of personal interaction helped tremendously to increase returns, it required extensive time and labor, as well as being a little anxiety-provoking (we never knew how a security guard or manager would react to our presence in the hotel). Toward the end of the collection period, we were also aided by a banquet waitress who was taking part-time courses in psychology and took an interest in our project.

Our unorthodox style of data collection raises two difficult issues. First, we may have appeared to be union representatives to prospective respondents. This appearance could have biased our actual respondents to be more pro-union and less pro-management. However, in our presentation of surveys to employees, we emphasized that all types of replies were valuable, not simply negative ones. Second, our clandestine invasion of the cafeteria was not altogether ethical and we would certainly not recommend this technique as a standard data collection procedure.

At the same time that we were struggling to obtain returns, the organizer for the hotel was pushing stewards to hand out and collect a one page survey about the contract proposals. This survey increased the demands and confusion among union members another notch. Sometimes rank-and-file employees would ask, upon presentation of the survey, if the questionnaire came from the "union." Their question clearly implied that they saw themselves and the "union" as separate entities, even though the entire bargaining unit were members. It also expressed a certain psychological distance between the paid staff, shop stewards, and the rank-and-file members.

In long moments while we waited for an employee to enter the cafeteria, we fantasized about how different the operation could have been if management had provided us with an identified space in the hotel. Employees could have dropped in throughout the day. Similarly, we would reflect on how much richer the assessment would have been if we had been allowed to follow a maid or bellman through the course of a workday.

Results of the Survey

Since we wanted to produce results that would be ready when contract talks began, we suspended the data collection approximately two weeks before the contract expired. Considering the chaotic conditions of the survey collection, the return rate (42%) was respectable. Table 1.4 presents the demographics of the sample, broken down by department. It is not the purpose of this chapter to review the results of the assessment, but we will point out one or two of the most relevant findings. The major question we examined through the survey was whether stressors at different levels of the OSEG would be correlated in different and systematic ways with employees' perceived well-being. More precisely, could we demonstrate that during a time of union organizing around management practices (i.e., a period of management changeover and contract negotiations), reported psychological and physical discomfort would be most related to the organizational level, as opposed to all the other levels of the OSEG we were able to sample?

In order to answer this question, we factor analyzed the questionnaire into subscales that corresponded to different levels of the hotel OSEG. The names of the subscales that emerged from the factor analyses are listed at their appropriate level in column 3 of Table 1.3. As one might note, the subscales of most interest to our predictions were "satisfaction with management policies" and "dissatisfaction with management practices." If we were to regress these two scales (along with the other subscales) on the positive and negative emotion subscales, we would expect them to emerge the strongest predictors of subjective well-being. By and large, the multiple regressions showed this result. The strongest predictors of

TABLE 1.4 RESPONSE RATES AND DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOTEL SAMPLE

Total hotel staff	240 (approx.)
Unionized employees	196
Response rate (hotel)	82/196 (42%)
Response rate (by department)	
Banquet	12/25 (48%)
Engineering	2/7 (29%)
Food and Beverage	33/82 (40%)
Front Desk	14/32 (44%)
Housekeeping	21/57 (37%)
Respondent characteristics	
Age:	Mean= 37.7 years S.D.= 13.45
Sex:	Male 43% Female 57%
Education:	Mean = 12 years S.D. 3.40
Race:	White 68% Black 21% Hispanic 10% Asian 1%
Marital status:	Married 43% Single 37% Divorced/Separated 19% Widowed 1%
Children	None 41% One 9% Two 23% Three or more 27%
Job Tenure:	Mean = 5.80 years S.D.= 4.80
Tenure at hotel:	Mean = 5.78 years S.D. 3.43

positive emotion at work were employees' feelings about upper management and its workplace policies (i.e., did management provide good training, treat employees like experts, and make efforts to improve employees' worklife?). The strongest predictor of employees' negative emotion at work was their dissatisfaction with managements' practices (including understaffing, lack of promotions, and unfair pay). No other subscale, including those that looked at job demands, physical environment, job security, and even scheduling, showed the same relationship to union members' emotions at work. Whether the relationship of management's policies and practices to perceived stress was particular to these hotel workers at a special moment in their work history, and whether our finding would generalize to other hotel workers (or other workers) are crucial questions. While the circumstantial evidence is compelling, we cannot conclude from these regressions that the organizing drive or the new management's policies caused the hotel workers to link their dissatisfaction to organizational factors.

On the other hand, these findings confirmed in an objective and quantitative way what we had already heard in our interviews and observed at the contract proposal meetings. The descriptive statistics on the survey showed that employees felt stressed by both job demands and management practices (working fast, skipping breaks, and having little control in the workplace). The inferential statistics revealed that at this particular juncture of rising tension over contract negotiations, their emotional well-being was more linked to feelings about management than any other aspect of the worksite. These results validated the organizers' and shop stewards' impressions about the employees' experience of the hotel climate. At the same time, the findings also gave them feedback that their efforts to intensify this climate may have worked.

The Impact of the Assessment

Our stress assessment, like the OSEG it employed, ended up with an influence on many different levels of the hotel's system. Most immediately and pragmatically, it actually played a role for the union in negotiations. During a discussion of the need for more employee input, the union negotiating committee raised the fact that they had some strong survey results about management practices and stress. The hotel negotiating committee expressed surprise that the survey had been completed after their initial refusal to participate (we were sure they knew all about us in the cafeteria). This exchange was linked to others at the bargaining table that eventually produced new contract language about monthly employee participation meetings between shop stewards and upper management of the hotel. Management has subsequently expressed interest in the results of the study and even raised the possibility of a collaborative follow-up. This development is probably the most gratifying of all, since it holds out the opportunity that we could perform a truly comprehensive

assessment. A jointly-sponsored project would allow us to look at employees' lifestyles and health habits. We could also have access to more employees, including supervisors and upper management. In this way, we could avoid the more polemical aspects (falling into a good guy - bad guy mind-set) that are inevitable when one works for only one side of a dispute.

The political flavor of our assessment and our role as assessors needs further thought and discussion. Working with shop stewards and union organizers, our analysis of the conditions at the hotel was, without question, biased. Still, the actual questionnaire data offered a more independent test of our initial biases. One could argue that only ardent union supporters answered the questionnaire, but an examination of open-ended responses left us fairly confident that the sample was a fair cross-section of opinion at the hotel. A more probing question might be whether we should have allowed ourselves to become part of a conscious strategy to organize the union work force. We believe there are three arguments in favor of our decision to do so. First, we saw our role for the union as functionally equivalent to that of a stress consultant for management. The stress consultant, who asks questions about diet and exercise and offers training in relaxation, promulgates a certain "management" conception of what stress is and how it should be treated. In the same vein, we asked questions about job characteristics, organizational policies, and working conditions. These questions encouraged employees to conceive of organizational stressors that they might not have considered previously. The fact that our approach seems unorthodox and politically-slanted may be more a statement about the lack of labor-oriented stress consultants than an indictment of our method.

Second, unions have agendas just as corporations do. No manager would hire a stress consultant who did not promise to improve the productivity and lower the health costs of employees. Similarly, a stress consultant for labor must offer a tangible service that will add to organizing efforts by unions during membership drives or contract negotiations. The bottom line for the union is how this project will help or hinder the advantage the union seeks in solidarity or negotiation.

Third, our project with the union allowed us to look at an area that is extremely under-researched in psychology - namely, strikes and their impact on employees and settings. We were able to trace an organizing campaign from its inception nine months before contract negotiations to the actual day of the strike deadline. Our conversations with organizers and shop stewards permitted us a more subtle understanding of the attributions employees make about working conditions and stressors during a period of contract negotiations.

A final related point is that our assessment reached workers whose stressors are seldom documented by corporate stress management programs. We allowed the opinions of maids, laundry workers, and dishwashers about what makes their work stressful to enter the stress literature alongside the air traffic controllers' and executives' complaints. For this data, we are grateful to the senior organizer, who was adamant about our inclusion of the "back of the house."

Since the assessment, the Food and Allied Services and Trades (F.A.S.T.) department of the AFL-CIO has requested copies of the OSEG, questionnaires, and results. They have plans to apply the assessment strategy to some organizing campaigns in non-union hotels. In fact, at a recent convention of hotel union organizers, they presented our model as potential organizing strategy, while one of the organizers with whom we worked listened in the audience. He assured us it sounded better in description than it looked while we were doing it.

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STRESS MANAGEMENT IN WORK SETTINGS

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