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Health and Safety Representatives'
Contributions to Occupational Health and Safety:
Case Studies from New Zealand's
Metal Manufacturing Sector

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Abstract

This study focuses on the contributions that health and safety representatives make to occupational health and safety in New Zealand workplaces. It investigates how they and other organisational actors conceive the role purpose, how representatives interpret and enact their roles and how they impact on occupational health and safety.

The study comprises two business cases of organisations in the metal manufacturing sector. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews with eight representatives and 23 other organisational actors known to influence the health and safety representatives' role, including the representatives' managers, co-workers, health and safety managers, senior managers and a union representative. The interview data was thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and triangulated to attain a more accurate picture of reality (Mathison, 1988). The Danish National Working Environment Authority's (2002) impact ladder was used in a novel way to systematically evaluate the representatives' impacts.

Consistent with overseas findings, health and safety representatives also contribute to the improvement of workplace health and safety in New Zealand. Yet, representatives have different interpretations of their purpose, which influences role enactment. To characterise these differences, a typology was developed that included a range of 'types' into which representatives can be grouped: administrators, workshop inspectors, problem solvers and craft experts.

Commonly, all types of health and safety representative foster positive labour relations, and nearly all in this study were perceived by workers to improve health and safety by providing a legitimate avenue of redress. Otherwise, contribution differed among the types; administrators contributed by implementing and maintaining health and safety management systems; workshop inspectors improved workers' attitudes towards health and safety; problem solvers facilitated improvements to production from a health and safety perspective; and craft experts influenced the development of standards and procedures for the management of hazards at the strategic level. Factors influencing health and safety representatives' role enactment and impact appeared to relate to how the purpose of the role is defined and communicated at the workplace, the representatives' expert power bases and abilities, and the nature of their job role.

The study identifies the implications of these findings for health and safety policy, training and further research. Finally, it highlights the value of a cross-perceptual approach to enrich understanding of the multifaceted nature of representatives' contributions to workplace health and safety.

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Table of contents

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Abstract..... | i |
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| List of figures | v |
| List of tables | vi |
| List of appendices | vii |
| Glossary of acronyms | viii |
| Chapter 1: Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 The significance of employee participation in OHS | 1 |
| 1.2 Dimensions of employee participation defined..... | 2 |
| 1.3 Background and research question | 3 |
| 1.4 Thesis structure | 5 |
| Chapter 2: Background..... | 7 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 7 |
| 2.2 Legislating for HS representatives: New Zealand’s historical context | 7 |
| 2.3 New Zealand’s legislative framework for employee participation in OHS | 12 |
| 2.4 Facilitating employee participation in OHS: HS representative training | 15 |
| 2.5 Conclusion | 17 |
| Chapter 3: Literature review | 19 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 19 |
| 3.2 Social and political conditions that impact on employee participation in OHS..... | 21 |
| 3.3 Businesses’ contextual conditions and factors: The implications for employee participation in OHS..... | 27 |
| 3.4 Conditions within firms influencing the role of the HS representative: The commitment of management, trade unions and the role of the inspectorate | 30 |
| 3.5 Conditions influencing HS representatives: Sources of power and influence | 36 |
| 3.6 Activities and strategies of HS representatives..... | 43 |
| 3.7 Impact of representative OHS employee participation on workplace health and safety.... | 50 |
| 3.8 Conclusion | 55 |
| Chapter 4: Research design | 59 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 59 |
| 4.2 Background and research question | 59 |
| 4.3 Research design | 60 |
| 4.4 Data analysis | 71 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 4.5 Ethics..... | 73 |
| 4.6 Conclusion | 73 |
| Chapter 5: Business A's results..... | 75 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 75 |
| 5.2 Business organisation and management..... | 75 |
| 5.3 Trade union organisation and commitment to OHS | 76 |
| 5.4 Management commitment and responsibility for OHS | 76 |
| 5.5 OHS employee participation system | 77 |
| 5.6 HS representative 1: Shannon | 79 |
| 5.7 HS representative 2: Chrissie..... | 88 |
| 5.8 HS representative 3: Robert | 95 |
| 5.9 HS representative 4: Glen..... | 102 |
| 5.10 Business A's results summarised | 105 |
| Chapter 6: Business B's results..... | 111 |
| 6.1 Introduction..... | 111 |
| 6.2 Business organisation and management..... | 111 |
| 6.3 Trade union organisation and commitment to OHS | 112 |
| 6.4 Management commitment and responsibility for OHS | 113 |
| 6.5 OHS employee participation system | 113 |
| 6.6 HS representative 1: Nick | 118 |
| 6.7 HS representative 2: Jack..... | 126 |
| 6.8 HS representative 3: Doug..... | 133 |
| 6.9 HS representative 4: Barry..... | 140 |
| 6.10 Business B's results summarised | 145 |
| Chapter 7: Discussion | 151 |
| 7.1 Introduction | 151 |
| 7.2 HS representatives' contributions to OHS..... | 151 |
| 7.3 Comment | 172 |
| Chapter 8: Conclusions and recommendations..... | 173 |
| 8.1 Introduction | 173 |
| 8.2 Limitations of the study..... | 174 |
| 8.3 Conclusions | 175 |
| 8.4 Recommendations..... | 178 |
| References | 181 |

List of figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1. Number of attendees at approved HS representative training courses | 16 |
| Figure 2. Theoretical model of conditions and factors impacting on the activities and strategies of HS representatives and the occupational health and safety outcomes..... | 20 |
| Figure 3. Theoretical framework to profile the activities of OHS practitioners | 46 |
| Figure 4. Impact ladder | 51 |
| Figure 5. Business A's enterprise structure and employee count | 76 |
| Figure 6. Shannon's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder | 87 |
| Figure 7. Chrissie's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder | 94 |
| Figure 8. Robert's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder | 101 |
| Figure 9. Glen's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder | 105 |
| Figure 10. The activities of four of Business A's HS representatives in relation to the activities in which they were expected to participate..... | 107 |
| Figure 11. Business B's organisational structure | 112 |
| Figure 12. Business B's hierarchy of HS representatives | 116 |
| Figure 13. Business B's health and safety committee structure | 116 |
| Figure 14. Nick's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder | 125 |
| Figure 15. Jack's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder..... | 132 |
| Figure 16. Doug's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder..... | 139 |
| Figure 17. Barry's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder..... | 145 |
| Figure 18. The activities of four of Business B's HS representatives in relation to the activities in which they were expected to participate..... | 147 |
| Figure 19. HS representatives' dominant OHS strategies classified according to Brun and Loiselle's (2002) framework..... | 157 |

List of tables

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 1. EMA and NZCTU HS representative training course content: Stage 1 - 3 | 16 |
| Table 2. OHS activities in which attendees of stage one and two of the NZCTU and EMA HS training courses reportedly participated..... | 44 |
| Table 3. A description of Business A's participants | 66 |
| Table 4. A description of Business B's participants | 67 |
| Table 5. Perspectives of Shannon's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results..... | 83 |
| Table 6. Shannon's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate (legislative requirements and OHS manager's expectations)..... | 85 |
| Table 7. Perspectives of Chrissie's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results..... | 90 |
| Table 8. Chrissie's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate (legislative requirements and OHS manager's expectations)..... | 92 |
| Table 9. Perspectives of Robert's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results..... | 97 |
| Table 10. Robert's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate (legislative requirements and OHS manager's expectations)..... | 99 |
| Table 11. Summary of Glen's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impacts..... | 103 |
| Table 12. Glen's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate (legislative requirements and OHS manager's expectations)... | 104 |
| Table 13. Perspectives of Nick's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results..... | 121 |
| Table 14. Nick's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate according to the Health and Safety Participation Agreement.. | 123 |
| Table 15. Perspectives of Jack's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results..... | 128 |
| Table 16. Jack's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate according to the Health and Safety Participation Agreement.. | 130 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 17. Perspectives of Doug’s purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results..... | 135 |
| Table 18. Doug’s activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate according to the Health and Safety Participation Agreement.. | 137 |
| Table 19. Summary of Barry’s purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact | 142 |
| Table 20. Barry’s activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate according to the Health and Safety Participation Agreement.. | 143 |
| Table 21. HS representatives’ OHS impacts in relation to the impact ladder | 159 |
| Table 22. HS representatives’ power bases..... | 164 |
| Table 23. Summary of the key points from the discussion in relation to each HS representative type..... | 171 |

List of appendices

| | |
|--|-----|
| Appendix A: A snapshot of New Zealand’s metal manufacturing sector | 193 |
| Appendix B: E-mail invitation to OHS managers..... | 197 |
| Appendix C: Example of an information sheet for participants | 200 |
| Appendix D: Participant consent form | 202 |
| Appendix E: Interview schedule for senior managers | 203 |
| Appendix F: Interview schedule for OHS managers | 205 |
| Appendix G: Interview schedule for line managers of HS representatives | 209 |
| Appendix H: Interview schedule for HS representatives..... | 213 |
| Appendix I: Interview schedule for co-workers of HS representatives | 217 |
| Appendix J: Interview schedule for union convenors..... | 219 |
| Appendix K: Business B’s Health and Safety Participation Agreement | 221 |

Glossary of acronyms

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| ACC | Accident Compensation Corporation |
| ACOSH | Advisory Committee for Occupational Safety and Health |
| BusNZ | Business New Zealand |
| ECA | Employment Contracts Act 1991 |
| EMA | Employers and Manufacturers Association |
| EPMU | Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union |
| ERA | Employment Relations Act 2000 |
| HSE Act | Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 |
| HSE Amendment Act | Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002 |
| HSE Amendment Bill | Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Bill |
| HS representative | Health and safety representative |
| NZCTU | New Zealand Council of Trade Unions |
| OHS | Occupational health and safety |
| OHS committee | Occupational health and safety committee |
| OSH Bill | Occupational Safety and Health Bill |
| PPE | Personal protective equipment |
| WERS | Workplace Employment Relations Survey |
| WIRS | Workplace Industrial Relations Survey |
| WSMP | Workplace Safety Management Practices programme |

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study contributes to the growing understanding of employee participation in occupational health and safety (OHS) by focusing on the role of health and safety representatives within New Zealand's metal manufacturing sector.

1.1 The significance of employee participation in OHS

Since the 1970s, reform of OHS legislation and government policy throughout many Western industrialised countries has recognised the importance of ensuring employees participate in matters concerning their health and safety (Bryce & Manga, 1985). Today, participative OHS management is not only a requirement in the statutes of economies such as Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand, but is also embedded in international covenants, such as the European Union Framework Directive 83/391 and ILO Convention 155 (D. Walters, 2005). Health and safety representatives (alternatively referred to as HS representatives, representatives or colloquially as 'reps') are commonly seen as the primary formal mechanism to facilitate employee participation in OHS, and are generally regarded as workers mandated to represent workers' interests in relation to health and safety (Menéndez, Benach, & Vogel, 2008). Fundamentally, the purpose of any form of employee participation is to allow workers to "exert some influence over their work and the conditions under which they work" (Strauss, 1998a, p. 15).

Legislative provisions for employee participation in OHS are rationalised on the basis of the unitarist ideology, which assumes that employers and workers share common interests and can collaborate to achieve higher standards of health and safety management (Bohle & Quinlan, 2000; Slappendel, 1995; D. Walters & Frick, 2000). This theoretical perspective gained prominence as a result of the landmark British Robens Report, which drew inspiration from developments in Scandinavia (Great Britain Committee on Safety and Health at Work, 1972). The findings of this report contributed to an international paradigm shift in OHS regulatory philosophy in that many countries abandoned external systems of health and safety regulation in favour of "self-

regulation” (p.14). The implication was that working conditions could be improved if employers, workers and unions worked together to “determine and implement their own internal rules and procedures to fulfil the regulators policy objectives” (Fairman & Yapp, 2005, p. 493). Employee participation is perceived to be fundamental to this system because workers’ practical knowledge of the production process can contribute to the effective management of hazards, while their cooperation is seen as vital for OHS changes to be implemented successfully (Frick & Sjostrom, n.d.; Gunningham, 2008; D. Walters & Frick, 2000).

The participation of workers in matters affecting their health and safety has traditionally been critical from a pluralist perspective because it allows workers to act as a ‘check and balance’ on management to protect their interests (D. Walters & Frick, 2000). According to Dwyer (2000), the introduction of worker health and safety inspectors in Belgium in 1897 is the oldest form of institutionalised employee participation in OHS. Worker inspectors were deemed necessary to promote the interests of workers in a context of high levels of industrial accidents, which were attributed to management’s unilateral control of the work environment and prioritisation of the profit motive over the wellbeing of the workforce.

Given that worker participation in OHS is rationalised on the basis of both unitarist and pluralist ideologies, the purpose of the HS representative is perceived to be dual. Representatives should represent the interests of workers, and assist management to achieve higher standards of OHS (Hovden, Lie, Karlsen, & Alteren, 2008; Menéndez et al., 2008; Milgate, Innes, & O’Loughlin, 2002; Seppala, 1995; D. Walters & Frick, 2000).

1.2 Dimensions of employee participation defined

Employee participation in OHS does not just occur via representative channels, but encompasses a wide variety of practices and behaviours that are important to acknowledge and define. For analytical purposes, participation can be grouped into two main categories: informal and formal participation. Informal participation refers to situations where there are no explicitly defined mechanisms for workers to participate,

so they influence management decisions via ad hoc channels, such as consultation in the course of a management 'walk around' or during breaks (Bohle & Quinlan, 2000). On the other hand, formal participation describes workplace arrangements whereby employee involvement is planned and occurs via legitimate systems or procedures (Shearn, 2005).

Formal worker participation can either be direct or via a representative. Direct participation describes arrangements whereby workers have immediate and personal involvement in decision making processes by interacting directly with management (Shearn, 2005; D. Walters & Nichols, 2007). In contrast, representative participation occurs when workers' views are channelled collectively through an elected or appointed spokesperson. Representative worker participation is typically prescribed and supported by a series of rights in the OHS legislation of many advanced market economies, which commonly promote HS representatives and committees (Bohle & Quinlan, 2000; Menéndez et al., 2008). Occupational health and safety committees (OHS committees) are broadly defined as "a forum in which management and workers can come together to identify, discuss and resolve workplace health and safety matters" (Milgate et al., 2002, p. 282). In practice, the direct involvement of employees in OHS matters is enhanced where there are mechanisms for employees to participate via representative channels (D. Walters & Frick, 2000).

1.3 Background and research question

My interest in representative participation in the New Zealand context was driven by the relatively recent introduction of the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002 (HSE Amendment Act), which promotes HS representatives as the primary formal mechanism for worker participation in OHS. Paul Harris (2004) recognised the significance of this legislative amendment by claiming that it "breaks new ground for New Zealand" (p.9) because, for the first time, workers had an enforceable right to participate in OHS beyond the traditional domain of collective bargaining. In effect, this development helped to align New Zealand's OHS legislation with that of other Western

industrialised countries that legislated for workers' rights to participate in OHS via representative channels from the 1970s (Bryce & Manga, 1985).

The delay in conferring New Zealand workers similar rights was attributable to the significant class conflict between capital and labour that dominated political debate intermittently from the 1980s. The trade union movement and its political ally, the Labour Party, advocated for legislative-based HS representatives from the early 80s as a means of protecting workers' interests. Yet, employers' associations, in coalition with the National Party, were ideologically opposed to compulsory HS representatives because of their perceived potential to encroach on managerial prerogative. Consequently, when the National Government significantly reformed the country's OHS legislation in the early 90s, the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 (HSE Act) contained no provisions for HS representatives, and the few rights that employees were given to participate in OHS were unenforceable (Wren, 1997).

When the fifth Labour Government (1999-2008) came to power at the 1999 general election, the opportunity was seized to strengthen the HSE Act's provisions for employee participation in an effort to reduce the country's high level of occupational injury and illness (M. Wilson, n.d.). The HSE Amendment Act introduced HS representatives for the purposes of representing the views of workers on health and safety matters in order to enhance the management of OHS (HSE Amendment Act, s.19). To facilitate the role, representatives were granted the rights to resources and to prevent undue harm, and the government agreed to subsidise HS representative training courses (New Zealand Government, n.d.).

Despite this support for the HS representative role, surprisingly little is known about how workers who are appointed to this position participate in health and safety in New Zealand workplaces. The subject has received scant academic attention aside from a commentary on the background of the HSE Amendment Act and its implications for the trade union movement (Harris, 2004). Government agencies, under the fifth Labour-led Government, expressed greater interest in the topic and commissioned social marketing research agencies to conduct two large-scale surveys. The Department of Labour

contracted Colmar Brunton Research Agency (2004) to assess the prevalence and forms of employee participation in OHS while the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) commissioned an assessment of the effectiveness of HS representative training courses delivered by the largest government subsidised providers (Johnson & Hickey, 2008). This assessment primarily evaluated HS representatives' ability to recall course content, but did little to determine the contributions that HS representatives make to the achievement of OHS improvements in the workplace. This study addresses some of the shortcomings in New Zealand's current research agenda by posing the question: *What contributions do HS representatives make to occupational health and safety?*

1.4 Thesis structure

To gain insight into how HS representatives participate in OHS within New Zealand workplaces, this study focuses on a number of related themes organised into the following structure. Chapter 2 is the first of several 'contextual' chapters and describes the context of the HS representative system in New Zealand. Chapter 3 reviews the scholarly literature to assess what is known about representative employee participation in OHS in New Zealand and abroad, and identifies areas that require further research. Chapter 4 outlines the research design used to study HS representatives in two metal manufacturing businesses. Chapters 5 and 6 present the results of the interview data collected from Businesses A and B respectively, and Chapter 7 discusses the findings in the context of the current scholarship. Finally, Chapter 8 presents the study's conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Background

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 established the framework for this study and outlined key definitions. This chapter provides the contextual background of New Zealand's formal HS representative system. Prior to the enactment of the HSE Amendment Act, New Zealand's OHS legislation was noted for its conspicuous absence of rights in relation to HS representatives and committees (Lamm, 1994; D. Walters, 2005). This chapter explores the reasons for the exclusion of workers' rights to participate in OHS via representative channels historically, and the rationale for the recent inclusion of these rights in the country's principal OHS statute. The chapter further outlines the HSE Amendment Act's provisions for worker participation, and how the role of the representative is supported by the government's subsidy of HS representative training courses.

2.2 Legislating for HS representatives: New Zealand's historical context

The HSE Amendment Act represented a significant victory for the union movement and its political ally, the Labour Party. The union movement had advocated for legislative-based HS representatives since the early 1980s as a means of reducing occupational injury and illness. Yet, employers, in coalition with the National Party, adopted a unitarist stance on the issue. They supported the concept of representative employee participation, but were ideologically opposed to the notion of legislative-based HS representatives because of their perceived potential to encroach on managerial prerogative.

Political conflict over the matter of legislative-based HS representatives took place in the context of OHS regulatory and administrative reform when New Zealand abandoned an external system of state regulation in favour of self-regulation (Wren, 1997). This section describes the three key periods in the reform process where conflict over HS representatives was heightened:

- 1985-1991 was the period of the Labour Government's Advisory Committee for Occupational Safety and Health and the Occupational Safety and Health Bill;
- 1991-1999 saw the passing of the National Government's Health and Safety in Employment Act; and finally,
- 1999-2003 was the period in which the fifth Labour Government's Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002 was passed.

1985-1991: The Labour Government's Advisory Committee for Occupational Safety and Health and the Occupational Safety and Health Bill

The ideological conflict over the issue of legislative-based HS representatives first manifested when the Labour Government initiated a major review of the country's OHS legislation and administration. In 1985, the Advisory Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (ACOSH) was established as a platform for government, union and employer representatives to participate in the review (Wren, 1997). Although the Committee had a broad scope, union members' proposed introduction of compulsory HS representatives and committees dominated the agenda for the first 18 months (Harcourt, 1996). The most contentious issue related to how representatives would derive their status and authority. Unions wanted the role and rights of representatives to be recognised in the legislation, but employers fiercely resisted the notion of legal compulsion, preferring arrangements to be voluntarily determined in the workplace subject to employer discretion to protect managerial prerogative (Wren, 1997).

The chairman of ACOSH, Michael Cullen, appeased both parties by stipulating the introduction of a voluntary code of practice for HS representatives and committees that would become mandatory if uptake was limited. In 1987, the Department of Labour issued the *Code of Practice for Health Safety Reps and Committees* (or ACOSH code) to all registered factories employing more than 10 staff (Mullen, 1990). This code suggested a series of functions and rights for HS representatives and provided guidance on OHS committees (Department of Labour, 1987). Despite contributing to the content of the ACOSH code, the Employers Federation simultaneously released its own code that minimised the role of unions and the functions of HS representatives (Mullen, 1990).

Accounts suggest that the codes were not willingly or widely adopted. For example, of the 427 factories that Moir (1989) surveyed, 51% reported making no changes in response to the codes, while Mullen's (1990) results from a sample of 385 factories revealed that only 30% of factories were willing to adopt the codes on a voluntary basis.

Union demands for compulsory HS representatives and committees appeared to be satisfied when significant legislative and administrative reform was proposed via the Occupational Safety and Health Bill 1990 (OSH Bill). The OSH Bill was underpinned by Robens' philosophies and included provisions for compulsory HS representatives (Wren, 1997). Essentially, the union movement had successfully influenced the Labour Government. When Wren (1997) interviewed a union official about the OSH Bill some years later, the official declared that "The OSH Bill really was the union agenda, that was our Bill, that was what we wanted" (p.116).

However, the union movement's celebrations were short-lived. The OSH Bill was withdrawn by the National Government after the Party's victory at the 1990 general election. This shifted the influence on legislative reform from unions in favour of employer interests (Campbell, 1995). National enacted the HSE Act, the content of which was shaped by the interests of large business representatives (Wren, 1997).

1991-1999: The National Government's Health and Safety in Employment Act

The HSE Act remains the country's principal statute regulating OHS and in many ways is similar to what the OSH Bill proposed. This legislation replaced numerous statutes and enforcement agencies with one act and one central administrative authority. A policy of external regulation was abandoned in favour of self-regulation, which obliged employers to manage the risks created in the course of business activity with guidance from regulations, approved codes of practice and industry standards and codes (Allen & Clarke, 2006; Gunningham & Johnstone, 2000). However, the HSE Act deviated significantly from the OSH Bill in that workers were conferred few rights to participate in these processes.

The HSE Act contained no legal requirements for HS representatives or committees as they were perceived to be inconsistent with the philosophy of the government's main piece of industrial relations legislation, the Employment Contracts Act 1991 (ECA). The ECA was underpinned by a neo-liberal ideology and intervention of third parties in the employment relationship, particularly unions and the state, was considered unproductive (Jeffrey, 1995; Lamm, 1994). Provisions perceived to interfere with this relationship, and obfuscate managerial prerogative, were omitted from the HSE Act (Anderson, 1991), including compulsory HS representatives and committees (Wren, 1997). According to the Minister of Labour at the time, Bill Birch, this was because a system of representatives and committees:

assumed a conflict model for industrial relations which is not appropriate in the environment created by the Employment Contracts Act. The responsibility for workplace safety should rest with employers. Modern workplaces cannot be run by the committees on the factory floor. (Birch, 1991, p. 19)

Employers were obliged to provide employees with opportunities to assist with the identification and control of hazards, including the development of emergency procedures. Yet, these provisions were unenforceable (Harcourt, 1996).

1999-2003: The Labour Government's Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act

When the Labour Party returned to government in 1999, they raised serious concerns about the efficacy of the HSE Act to protect workers given New Zealand's high rate of occupational illness, injury and fatality relative to other developed countries (Harris, 2004; M. Wilson, n.d.). The Labour Minister, Margaret Wilson, and leadership of the country's peak union body, the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU), attributed the poor health and safety record to deficiencies in the HSE Act, particularly the omission of strong rights for employee participation in OHS (Harris, 2004).

Consequently, in 2001, Margaret Wilson introduced the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Bill (HSE Amendment Bill). Notably, more extensive rights for workers to participate in OHS were proposed, including provisions for elected HS representatives and committees (Harris, 2004). This was based on the rationale that employee participation reduces the incidence of injury (M. Wilson, n.d.). Wilson used

the findings of Reilly, Paci and Holl's (1995) controversial British study (see Chapter 3) to justify that "legislated employee participation, in the form of health and safety representatives and committees, reduces the overall costs and incidence of injury by up to 50 percent" (M. Wilson, n.d., p. 3).

The amendment of the HSE Act was also intended to facilitate the aims of the Labour Government's key piece of industrial relations legislation, the Employment Relations Act 2000 (ERA, which repealed the ECA). The ERA's objective is: "To build productive employment relationships through the promotion of mutual trust and confidence in all aspects of the employment environment and of the employment relationship" (M. Wilson, 2004, p. 16). Increasing employee participation in OHS was perceived to be a way of fostering labour relations by increasing communication and cooperation (Peppard, 2007).

However, reaction to the HSE Amendment Bill did not suggest a wide social support base, particularly for legislated HS representatives. Business NZ (BusNZ) (2002) stated that the need for the amendment was "perplexing" (p.2) given the downward trend in workplace accidents since the introduction of the HSE Act. In addition, 38% of public submissions on the HSE Amendment Bill opposed HS representatives and a further 17% gave them conditional support (M. Wilson, n.d.).

Despite this apparent lack of support for HS representatives, the HSE Amendment Bill was enacted as the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002, and contained statutory provisions for HS representatives for the first time in New Zealand's history. According to Harris (2004), Wilson made the legislation palatable for employers by reaffirming managerial prerogative, and ensuring the legislation could accommodate employee participatory schemes already in operation.

2.3 New Zealand's legislative framework for employee participation in OHS

According to the HSE Amendment Act, employers are responsible for the wellbeing of employees, but employee participation is fundamental to this process as it ensures that all people with relevant knowledge can contribute to improving OHS (s. 19A). To support this co-operation, the law created a general duty on employers to involve employees in health and safety matters and, in certain circumstances, to create an employee participation system.

The HSE Amendment Act requires employers to “provide reasonable opportunities for...employees to participate effectively in ongoing processes for improvement of health and safety” (s.19B[1]). These “processes” are those referred to in sections six to 13 of the HSE Amendment Act (s.19B [2]) and give employees the right to:

- ensure their employer takes practicable steps to provide a safe working environment so that employees are not exposed to hazards, which includes the development of procedures for dealing with emergencies (s.6).
- participate in the systematic identification and assessment of hazards, including the recording and investigation of accidents (s.7).
- participate in the control of significant hazards with reference to the hierarchy of control. In the first instance hazards should be eliminated (s.8) or alternatively isolated (s.9). At the last resort, hazards should be minimised (s.10) by, for example, the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- results of workplace monitoring in relation to OHS (s.11).
- information provision on emergency procedures, hazards and how they are controlled (s.12).
- training and supervision in the use of plant, objects, substances and PPE (s.13).

When determining how employees participate in these processes, employers should consider the contextual variables of the workplace (s. 19[B]), such as the nature of hazards, whether employment contracts are permanent or temporary, the number of worksites and their geographic proximity as well as staff numbers. The employee count

is an important variable because it determines whether an employee participation system is required.

One of the significant changes introduced by the HSE Amendment Act, is the obligation on employers to negotiate with their employees and any relevant union(s) to determine an employee participation system (Hay, 2003). If a business employs fewer than 30 staff, an employee participation system only needs to be developed at the request of at least one employee or representative union(s). It is compulsory for businesses with more than 30 staff to have an employee participation system. Parties to the employment relationship have to co-operate in good faith to determine, implement, maintain and review a system that allows employees to participate in OHS. The notion of good faith aligns the HSE Amendment Act with the ERA, and implies that the consultative process be characterised by information sharing, cooperation and mutual trust (M. Wilson, 2004).

Other than these requirements, the HSE Amendment gives employers, employees and unions the freedom to determine the nature of their employee participation systems (s.19C). Parties can decide whether employees will participate in OHS directly with management or via representative channels, such as HS representatives, committees, or both. They also have the scope to determine the role and functions of the representatives and committees (Department of Labour, 2002).

Schedule 1A of the HSE Amendment Act provides guidance on what *may* be included in an employee participation system, which is commonly referred to as the 'default system'. Parties can choose to adopt certain aspects of this system, but must implement the entire system if they cannot agree on how employees will participate (s.19D).

The HS representative is central to the model of employee participation outlined in the default system. The HSE Amendment Act defines a HS representative as "an employee elected, as an individual or as a member of a health and safety committee or both, to represent the views of employees in relation to health and safety at work". The default system specifies:

- that at least one representative should represent a particular type of work or grouping as an individual or part of an OHS committee (Schedule 1A[1][a]).
- that employees must be elected to the position of HS representative via a secret ballot, and the outcome determined by the will of the majority of voters. An election is not required if there is only one nominee for the position. If there are no nominees, the position is considered vacant (Schedule 1A [6] and [7]).
- that the employer, employees and union(s) should establish processes to facilitate regular communication on OHS issues (Schedule 1A [1] and [b]).
- the functions of HS representatives. Taken verbatim from Schedule 1A of the HSE Amendment Act (Schedule 1A [2]), representatives are:
 - a) to foster positive health and safety management practices in the place of work:
 - b) to identify and bring to the employer's attention hazards in the place of work and discuss with the employer ways that the hazards may be dealt with:
 - c) to consult with inspectors on health and safety issues:
 - d) to promote the interests of employees in a health and safety context generally and in particular those employees who have been harmed at work, including in relation to arrangements for rehabilitation and return to work:
 - e) to carry out any functions conferred on the representative by –
 - i. a system of employee participation; or
 - ii. the employer with the agreement of the representative or a union representing the representative, including any functions referred to in a code of practice.

The code of practice referred to in section e) ii does not exist, as the content could not be agreed upon. In 2004, the Minister of Labour appointed a tripartite committee to develop a code (R. Wilson, 2005), which was made up of representatives from BusNZ, NZCTU and the Department of Labour. After a series of meetings, members lost “goodwill” and the committee dissolved in 2005 as parties struggled to agree on the content. Disagreement centred on when the default system should become mandatory and whether HS representatives appointed by management were legitimate (Bob White, senior policy analyst, Department of Labour, personal communication, 8 May 2009).

Regardless of whether HS representatives' functions are derived from the default system or negotiated, they have rights under both the HSE Amendment Act and the ERA. To facilitate their role, the HSE Amendment Act gives representatives the right to:

- access information about OHS systems and issues (s.12 [2]);
- make recommendations in relation to health and safety matters to which the employer must implement or provide a written explanation as to why the proposal will not be adopted (s.19B [4]); and
- two days paid leave per year to attend approved HS representative training courses (s.19E).

Representatives also have rights to prevent undue harm. They can advise workers to refuse to perform work that is likely to cause serious harm (s.28), and issue their employer a hazard notice (s.46). This should describe a hazard and list possible solutions for its control. It should only be issued if the employer fails to address a hazard that the representative has previously raised in an attempt to facilitate a resolution.

The HSE Amendment Act recognises that employers may discriminate against HS representatives if they exercise these rights. Therefore, representatives can access personal grievance proceedings if they perceive they have been disadvantaged because of their HS representative activities (ERA s.104, 107).

These statutory rights provide HS representatives with a degree of authority, but are not intended to be used arbitrarily. Rights related to the prevention of undue harm are only extended to HS representatives who have attended approved training courses. 'Approved' means that the course content has been certified by the Employment Relations Education Authority on behalf of the Minister of Labour.

2.4 Facilitating employee participation in OHS: HS representative training

Training courses are intended to facilitate the role of the HS representative by providing general information about OHS legislation, management systems and processes. The

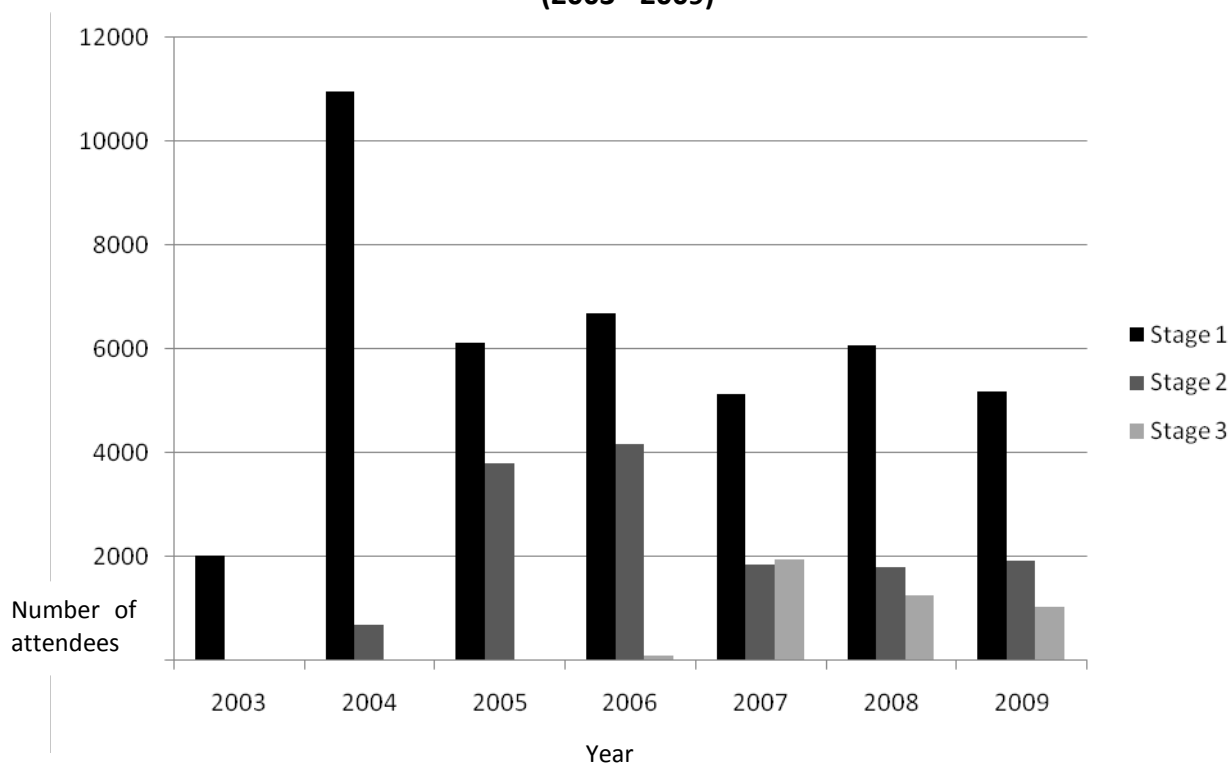
content of the courses offered by the largest approved providers, the Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA) and NZCTU, is briefly outlined in Table 1. These providers offer three two-day courses.

Table 1. EMA and NZCTU HS representative training course content: Stage 1 - 3

| Stage | Content |
|--------------|--|
| One | Provides an overview of the role of the HS representative, OHS legislation and the components of an OHS management systems (Johnson & Hickey, 2008). |
| Two | Stage two focuses on the accident investigation process (Johnson & Hickey, 2008). |
| Three | This stage focuses on measuring health and safety outcomes, how to 'sell' recommendations for OHS improvements to management and the role of the HS representative in relation to rehabilitation (EMA, n.d.; NZCTU, 2007). |

Figure 1 presents data on the number of attendees at approved HS representative training courses from stage 1 - 3 from 2003 - 2009.

Figure 1. Number of attendees at approved HS representative training courses (2003 - 2009)



Source: Paul Fitzgerald, Employment Relations Education Authority Administrator, Department of Labour, personal communication, 12 February 2010

Figure 1 indicates that the HS representative model of employee participation has made traction in New Zealand workplaces. Attendance figures for stage one courses have remained steady at between 5000 - 6000 participants after dramatically peaking the year after the HSE Amendment Act was passed. However, only a small portion of attendees' progress to the advanced stages. The reasons for this are unclear.

Attendance figures for training courses are likely to decline further following the ACC's decision to channel its funding for training to high risk industry sectors. The ACC had primarily subsidised training for representatives who attended courses offered by the largest approved providers, but from the 2008/09 funding year, ACC only subsidises courses run by the EMA, NZCTU and Impac. Funding is based on the condition that 80% of course participants come from high risk industry sectors, including metal manufacturing, agriculture, construction, forestry, meat processing, public health and road transportation (Paul Fitzgerald, personal communication, 3 December 2008).

The justification for this funding is embedded in the Department of Labour's *Workplace Health and Safety Strategy to 2015* which regards employee participation in OHS as a major injury prevention strategy (New Zealand Government, n.d.). The theory is that the training will increase representatives' capacity to participate in OHS management in the short term, which will reduce accident and injury rates over the long run (Johnson & Hickey, 2008).

2.5 Conclusion

For the first time, the HSE Amendment Act gave New Zealand workers an enforceable right to participate in OHS via HS representatives. Representatives were introduced to help reduce the country's high level of occupational injury and illness and to foster labour relations. While the HSE Amendment Act affirms that managers are responsible for workplace health and safety, it signals that the role of the HS representative is to represent the views of workers on OHS matters. More broadly, the purpose of employee participation in health and safety is to ensure that all people with relevant knowledge can contribute to the improvement of OHS. The legislation allows parties to

the employment relationship to decide on the structure of their employee participation systems and functions of the HS representatives, but recommends that representatives' foster OHS management, assist with hazard management and represent employees' interests, particularly in relation to the rehabilitation process.

The HSE Amendment Act supports the role by giving HS representatives the rights to prevent undue harm, to access personal grievance proceedings and resources, such as information on their company's OHS management systems and training. Further, the government subsidises the training of representatives from high risk industry sectors, including the metal manufacturing sector.

New Zealand history suggests these supports are necessary given the opposition, and perhaps apathy, of many toward the role. This was made evident by the significant political opposition employers expressed to legislated HS representatives for twenty years prior to the enactment of the HSE Amendment Act. Employers' organisations feared that representatives would encroach on managerial prerogative. The limited uptake of the voluntary codes of practice for HS representatives and committees in the late 1980s further suggested there was apathy toward HS representatives at the grass roots. In spite of this, attendance figures at HS representative training courses demonstrate that the HS representative model of employee participation has made traction in New Zealand workplaces post the HSE Amendment Act.

Given the controversy surrounding the introduction of legislated HS representatives, as well as the resources that are channelled into training workers who assume the role, it is important to assess whether HS representatives are indeed able to participate in, and contribute positively to, the management of OHS in New Zealand workplaces. The next chapter reviews what is known about the role of the HS representative in New Zealand and abroad, the methods others have used to study representative employee participation in OHS and what is yet to be discovered.

Chapter 3: Literature review

3.1 Introduction

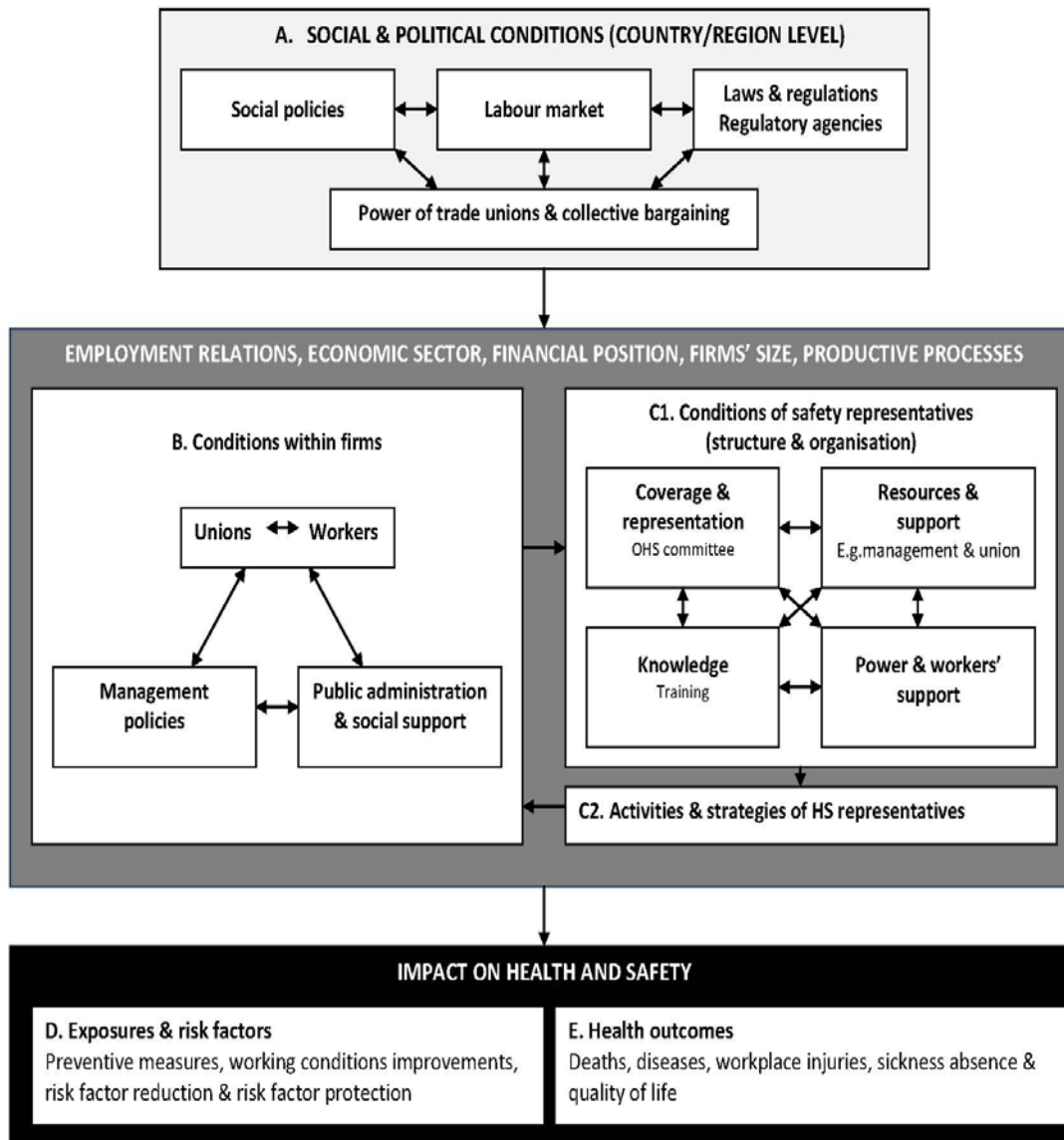
The previous chapters established that the provisions for employee participation in OHS contained in the HSE Amendment Act, which was only enacted in 2002, are basic rights which workers in most other Western industrialised countries have been entitled to for over 30 years. During this time, an extensive international scholarly literature on representative participation in OHS has developed. The purpose of this chapter is to review what is known about the role of the HS representative in New Zealand and internationally, the methods others have used to study representative employee participation in OHS, as well as the gaps in knowledge yet to be addressed.

This review is based on literature published in English, which focuses primarily on the role of the HS representative in Britain, North America, Australia and numerous countries in the European Union, such as Spain, where employee participation in OHS is of increasing interest. Non-English language research publications are excluded. This omission is a limitation of the review given that, for example, the Nordic countries have a strong tradition of employee participation. Where possible, secondary English language sources have been used to access major theoretical and research findings from these milieus.

The chapter is organised according to a holistic theoretical model (see Figure 2) developed by Menéndez, Benach and Vogel (2008) for the multi-national project, *The Impact of Safety Representatives on Occupational Health: A European Perspective*. The project was coordinated by the European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education, Health and Safety in collaboration with a group of individuals who have made scholarly contributions to the field of employee participation in OHS, such as David Walters and Allan Hall. Figure 2 is one of the main outcomes of that project, and was developed with reference to the international literature on employee participation in OHS. The model is simply intended “as a means of visualising the many conditions and factors that may

play into the effectiveness of safety reps' health and safety activities" (Menéndez et al., 2008, p. 11).

Figure 2. Theoretical model of conditions and factors impacting on the activities and strategies of HS representatives and the occupational health and safety outcomes



Source: Menéndez et al., 2008

The top layer of Menéndez et al.'s (2008) model ('A. Social and political conditions') considers how a range of macroeconomic factors interact to influence the establishment and operation of employee participation in OHS at the workplace, including: social policies, the labour market, laws and regulatory agencies and the power of trade unions (see section 3.2). The next layer down further shows that the prevalence and nature of

employee participation is influenced by the contextual factors of the workplace, such as the economic sector that the business operates within (see section 3.3). Subsequently, the mid-layer of the model focuses on how the organisation's internal political environment can support and constrain HS representatives' ability to participate in health and safety matters. Firstly, box B ('B. Conditions within firms') looks at how the three main actors can strategically influence the role of the HS representative within the workplace, which includes management, unions and regulatory enforcement (see section 3.4). Secondly, box C ('C1. Conditions of safety representatives') depicts the different power bases that the individual HS representative can potentially access to enable participation in, and influence over, OHS outcomes (see section 3.5). These conditions influence 'C2. Activities and strategies of HS representatives', which focuses on how HS representatives enact the role based on the activities in which they participate, and the strategies they use to facilitate improvements to OHS (see section 3.6). Finally, the bottom layer of the model considers the outcomes, or impact, of representative participation on health and safety outcomes (boxes D and E, see section 3.7). This chapter expands on these key factors that are pertinent to the role of the HS representative.

3.2 Social and political conditions that impact on employee participation in OHS

The top level of Menéndez et al.'s (2008) model outlines multiple macroeconomic or structural industrial relations factors that impact on representative worker participation in OHS. These include: laws and regulations supporting joint arrangements and their active enforcement by regulatory agencies, social policies, the labour market and the power of trade unions. Attention is drawn to these factors and I also introduce the concerns that numerous analysts have about the effectiveness and sustainability of employee participation in OHS given the undermining of these structural supports.

Legislation commonly promotes HS representatives as the primary mechanism to facilitate employee participation in OHS by conferring rights to workers who assume the role. Participative OHS management is embedded in international covenants such as the

European Union Framework Directive 83/391 and ILO Convention 155, and is also a requirement in the OHS statutes of many Western industrialised economies, such as Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand (D. Walters, 2005). The specific rights for workers' to participate vary according to jurisdiction, but at a minimum typically give HS representatives the right to: be elected by workers, protection from discrimination, paid time off to attend training and perform OHS-related activities, obtain information, consult with employers on OHS matters and the use of OHS specialists, investigate worker complaints and accompany or consult OHS inspectors (D. Walters & Frick, 2000).

These rights legitimise HS representatives, thereby encouraging parties within the workplace to accept and institutionalise the role. A number of studies demonstrate how legislation stimulates the establishment of representative participatory structures (Glendon & Booth, 1982; Leopold & Beaumont, 1982; Lewchuk, Robb, & Walters, 1996). For example, following the introduction of British regulations for HS representatives and committees, 82% of the 970 businesses surveyed had a health and safety committee. Of these, only 44% existed prior to the introduction of the regulations (Leopold & Beaumont, 1982). Further evidence suggests that committees which existed on a voluntary basis were reorganised and revamped in response to the regulations (Glendon & Booth, 1982). These changes to representative institutions were unlikely to have occurred without legal compulsion (Leopold & Beaumont, 1982; D. Walters, 2005).

Legislation, as a supporting condition for employee participation, has only recently been satisfied in New Zealand with the introduction of the HSE Amendment Act. Colmar Brunton (2004) attempted, but failed, to determine if the HSE Amendment Act had a similar stimulatory effect on arrangements for employee participation. Of a national sample of 600 employers, 81% reported that arrangements for employee participation in OHS were introduced prior to May 2003, when it was compulsory for businesses to have established a participation system. Yet, it was impossible to determine from their results whether these systems existed voluntarily prior to the HSE Amendment Act or came about in response to it. Course attendees at approved HS representative training courses suggest, however, that the HSE Amendment Act did have a stimulatory effect as attendance numbers peaked a year after the legislation came into force.

In addition to legislation's stimulatory effect, rights for representative employee participation have also been found to facilitate the role of the HS representative. For example, the law typically provides parties within the workplace guidance on the role and functions of the representative (D. Walters, 2005). Rights also legitimise HS representatives' claims to resources thereby facilitating their role, such as the right to attend training and to consult with management (D. Walters, 2006). Regulatory agencies, via the labour inspectorate, have a role to play in actively enforcing compliance with these rights thereby supporting employee participation (Bryce & Manga, 1985; James & Kyprianou, 2000; Ochsner & Greenberg, 1998; D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990).

Menéndez et al.'s (2008) model further recognises that social policies, particularly labour regulations, facilitate worker engagement in matters affecting their health and safety by providing a foundation for the participatory process. Workers who are legally entitled to minimum employment conditions, such as rights to tenure and minimum wages, are more likely to raise concerns and challenge managerial decisions without fearing that it may disadvantage or jeopardise their employment (D. Walters & Frick, 2000). Ultimately, this improves the labour market position of the individual worker (D. Walters, 2006).

Further, the structure of the external labour market is perceived to impact on the propensity of management to accept and willingly engage in employee participation initiatives. Management tend to be more receptive to the views of employees that have qualifications and skills in demand on the external labour market (Jensen, 1997). Frick and Walters (2000) attributed the rise in worker participation in Sweden between 1945 - 1990 to labour shortages, which meant that labour had greater economic power to compel management to enter into joint arrangements. Accordingly, employee participation schemes ebbed in the 1990s as unemployment increased. However, the longevity of such schemes is likely to be sustained if participation is supported by unions (Eaton, 1994; D. Walters & Frick, 2000).

Workers have traditionally organised into trade unions to collectively improve their employment conditions, including occupational health and safety. One of the main strategies employed by unions to redress workers' OHS concerns is to support employee participation in the matter. Research emphasises how fundamental this support is in facilitating the operation of representative employee participation. Unions provide this support internally within the workplace and externally at sectoral, regional and national levels (D. Walters & Frick, 2000).

Unions outside the workplace indirectly support employee participation in OHS via political lobbying for the regulatory maintenance and improvement of social policy, OHS laws and regulations. Improvement of labour regulations, such as the right to tenure, provides the security necessary for employees to engage in the participatory process (Johansson & Partanen, 2002; Quinlan & Mayhew, 2000). Commonly, union representatives at a national level also participate in decisions on OHS (Glendon & Booth, 1982; Ochsner & Greenberg, 1998) and advocate for participative rights (D. Walters, 2005). The New Zealand union movement provides a good example of this, as the NZCTU advocated for the introduction of the HSE Amendment Act, including rights for HS representatives.

Unions further indirectly support employee participation in OHS by providing information and training programmes for HS representatives (D. Walters, 2006). A cluster of Australian studies found that HS representatives primarily sourced information on OHS from trade union centres external to their workplaces (Biggins & Phillips, 1991; Biggins, Phillips, & O'Sullivan, 1988; Gaines & Biggins, 1992). In addition, trade unions are recognised as major providers of HS representative training in numerous countries, such as Britain and New Zealand (D. Walters, 2005). According to Walters et al. (2001), training offered by workers' organisations is particularly beneficial because it educates representatives about OHS concepts as well as their role as representatives of the workforce. It would arguably be difficult for other training providers, particularly employers' organisations, to provide this type of "worker-centred approach to health and safety" (Walters et al., 2001, abstract). Indeed, commentators, such as Vivienne Walters (1985), caution that it is likely that employers' organisations depoliticise

employee participation in OHS by minimising conflicts of interest, which may ultimately minimise the likelihood that representatives will challenge managerial decisions.

Menéndez et al. (2008) argue that the greater the power of trade unions in terms of their collective bargaining coverage, the more resources they are likely to have to deliver training courses and other forms of support for employee participation. As the New Zealand situation demonstrates, power can also be derived from a political coalition with the government, as the country's union membership has hovered at only 21% since 1998 (Feinberg-Danieli & Lafferty, 2007). Despite this, trade unions were able to make significant gains when their political ally, the Labour Party, was in government (see Chapter 2).

Numerous analysts have expressed concern that the structural supports for employee participation in OHS are being undermined (e.g. James & Kyprianou, 2000; Ochsner & Greenberg, 1998; Quinlan & Mayhew, 2000; D. Walters, 2005). The following discussion provides a brief overview of how this is occurring by the non-implementation of employee participation legislation and the lack of enforcement, the declining power of unions and the rise in precarious employment.

Although legislative rights for employee participation in OHS are recognised as an important external support, their effectiveness is dependent on the propensity of parties within the workplace to give them affect. A number of studies, particularly from Britain, indicate that HS representatives have limited access to resources and to participate in activities that they are legally entitled (e.g. Istituto Per Il Lavoro, 2006; James & Kyprianou, 2000; Trade Union Congress, 2006; D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990). For example, the large scale Trade Union Congress (2006) survey of British HS representatives (n=3339), found that 62% were dissatisfied with their involvement in risk assessment; an activity in which they are legally entitled to participate. It seems that legislative rights for HS representatives are not treated as a minimum standard for workplaces to build on, but rather a list of items to choose from (D. Walters, 2005). This may be because employers want to avoid implementing rights perceived to undermine managerial prerogative or may be due to a lack of awareness of the rights of HS

representatives (Frick & Sjoström, n.d.; James & Kyprianou, 2000). Either way, there is typically little external pressure to motivate employers to comply with legislative provisions for employee participation in OHS.

Evidence suggests that the external enforcement of legislative employee participation provisions is limited or non-existent across jurisdictions (Garcia, Lopez-Jacob, Dudzinski, Gadea, & Rodrigo, 2007; D. Walters & Frick, 2000). In relation to the British context, Walters (2005) suggests this may be because participative rights were intended to be treated as an industrial relations concern as distinct from enforceable OHS standards. Therefore, the extent of their application is likely to depend on the will of management and pressure from trade unions to redress worker interests. Grievances are therefore directed to industrial relations dispute resolution (D. Walters, 2006), which is what occurs in New Zealand. Even though Department of Labour inspectors have authority to enforce participative clauses in the HSE Amendment Act (Department of Labour, 2008), disputes are treated as breaches of good faith and referred to mediation (Bob White, senior policy analyst, Department of Labour, personal communication, 8 May 2009).

This 'hands off' approach by those with the power of regulatory enforcement increases reliance on trade unions to redress worker interests, but widespread decline in union representation limits the support these institutions can provide. Anglo-American countries have experienced significant decreases in union density over the last 30 years. Between 1980 - 1995 union density decreased by 46.1% in Britain, 39.4% in Australia and in New Zealand, a 27% decrease was recorded between 1990 - 1999 (Haynes, Boxall, & Macky, 2005). The subsequent decline in membership and resources available to unions potentially limits their capacity to support employee participation in OHS at both the political level and within the workplace (Ochsner & Greenberg, 1998; D. Walters, 2006). Without unions to support employee participation it is likely that representatives will be "denied their legal rights and have no means of obtaining redress" (James & Kyprianou, 2000, p. 60). This is often a reality in economic sectors that are characterised by precarious employment; a broad term used to describe jobs that are short-term and insecure, such as sub-contracting, labour hire and short-term contracts (Johnstone, Quinlan, & Walters, 2005).

In summary, there are numerous macroeconomic conditions and factors that promote worker participation in OHS. Legislated support for HS representatives legitimises their role and access to resources, while the labour inspectorate can play an important part in enforcing these rights. Further, workers are more likely to engage in the participatory process when their skills are in demand on the labour market and in the context of the security provided by labour regulations. Unions also play an indirect role in facilitating employee participation by lobbying for improved regulations at the political level as well as via the provision of information and training for HS representatives. Yet, a number of commentators caution that these structural supports are being undermined by the decline in trade unions in Anglo-American countries, non-enforcement of legislative provisions for employee participation by the OHS inspectorate and an increase in precarious employment.

The implication of this research is that macroeconomic factors have an influence on the role and impact of the HS representative within the workplace. Walters and Frick (2000) suggest that the differences between the nature of structural variables in different national industrial relations contexts helps to account for the diversity in participatory behaviours and OHS outcomes. It is therefore important to explore the role of the HS representative within their particular context, such as New Zealand where the legal provisions for HS representatives are relatively new, in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of how the role is enacted.

3.3 Businesses' contextual conditions and factors: The implications for employee participation in OHS

The mid-layer of Menéndez et al.'s (2008) model focuses on how employee access to formal OHS participatory structures varies across economic sectors. The ensuing discussion identifies contexts where employee participation is most and least prevalent, and why.

International studies indicate that formal OHS participation is most prevalent within the production, manufacturing and public sectors. For example, British industries with the

highest percentage of HS representatives include energy and water, transportation, metal and chemical manufacturing. The latter sector also had the highest incidence of OHS committees (D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990). Similarly, a recent Italian survey indicated that HS representatives were most prevalent in the metal, chemical and public sectors (Istituto Per Il Lavoro, 2006). In Australia, representatives were also found to be concentrated in the public sector, particularly in health care and education (Vanderkruk, 2003).

Employee participation tends to be widespread in sectors that are either high risk, highly unionised and/or have higher proportions of larger businesses. In practice, these factors are interrelated. For instance, workers in high risk environments may be more inclined to join collectives to protect their interests (Beaumont, Coyte, & Leopold, 1981). A number of studies confirm organisations operating in high risk environments with high union densities, such as metal manufacturing, have a greater propensity to implement formal OHS participation voluntarily (Eaton & Nocerino, 2000; Leopold & Beaumont, 1982). Beaumont and Deaton (1981) suggest that the higher the rate of industrial accidents, the more willing unions and employers are to engage in joint problem solving.

In addition, representative participation is overwhelmingly more prevalent in larger than smaller organisations. This is evident from research across multiple countries, such as Australia (Vanderkruk, 2003), Britain (e.g. Hillage, Kersley, Bates, & Rick, 2000), Italy (Istituto Per Il Lavoro, 2006), Spain (Garcia et al., 2007), Sweden (Tragardh, 2008) and New Zealand (Colmar Brunton Social Research Agency, 2004). For example, in New Zealand, 13% of businesses with fewer than 30 employees had an OHS committee compared to 59% of those with more than 30 staff (Colmar Brunton Social Research Agency, 2004). British research indicates that arrangements for employee participation tend to be more developed in larger firms, as HS representatives often have greater access to legal rights compared to counterparts in smaller firms, particularly training and information (D. Walters, 1987, 1996).

There are a variety of reasons why formal employee participation in OHS is more prevalent and developed in larger businesses. Most obviously, they typically have more

resources to establish and sustain formal structures and procedures (Jensen, 1997; Robinson & Smallman, 2006; D. Walters, 1987). Further, legislation often requires larger organisations to establish representative structures by law where as smaller workplaces are often exempt (Quinlan & Mayhew, 2000). Large businesses also have higher union densities; institutions which help establish and facilitate employee participation in OHS (Leopold & Beaumont, 1982; D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990).

Conversely, formal employee participation in OHS is lowest in sectors where trade union organisation is minimal, particularly in smaller organisations and where precarious employment is high. This tends to be in the service sector, particularly hotels and restaurants (Hillage et al., 2000; Istituto Per Il Lavoro, 2006), but also in construction and agriculture (Tragardh, 2008; D. Walters & Frick, 2000). This is because unions typically have difficulty organising workers in these sectors, and legislative rights for employee participation often do not extend to small businesses or short-term labour hire (Quinlan & Mayhew, 2000). It can also be challenging to give precarious workers opportunities to participate. For example, those working irregular hours may not be able to attend OHS committee meetings (Tragardh, 2008). To enhance the ability of workers to participate in health and safety, some European countries, particularly Sweden, and the United Kingdom have introduced the concept of the regional or roving HS representatives, who are trade union based representatives that represent workers in small businesses in a defined area or sector (D. Walters, 1998).

The uptake of employee participatory mechanisms in OHS by industry sector in New Zealand is unknown. Anecdotally, the trends are similar to those observed internationally as HS representative training providers cite low attendance figures from the construction, transport and on-hire sectors, but have otherwise failed to collect sectoral data on attendees (Allen & Clarke, 2006).

In summary, arrangements for employee participation in OHS are more prevalent in the public and manufacturing sectors, which tend to be high risk and/or highly unionised, and have higher proportions of large businesses. This is because workers in high risk environments may be more inclined to join collectives to protect their interests. In

addition, the higher the rate of industrial accidents, the more willing unions and employers are to engage in joint problem solving. Larger organisations often have the resources to establish and sustain formal structures and procedures for employee participation. In contrast, arrangements for employee participation in OHS tend to be least developed in the service, agriculture and construction sectors. In these sectors, employment is precarious, so the presence of unions is minimal, legislative provisions for employee participation are not extended to these workers and it can be difficult to provide practical opportunities for workers to participate interactively in matters relating to their health and safety.

Having focused on the macroeconomic conditions and contextual factors of businesses that support and constrain employee participation in health and safety, I now focus on the internal political environment within the organisation that influences the role of the HS representative.

3.4 Conditions within firms influencing the role of the HS representative: The commitment of management, trade unions and the role of the inspectorate

When Menéndez et al.'s (2008) model refers to the 'Conditions within firms' they are actually hinting at how the organisation's internal political environment can support and constrain HS representatives' ability to participate in OHS. Given that the model implicitly refers to power relations and to the sources of power of the HS representative, I briefly introduce the broad concept of power and politics before focusing on how management, local trade unions and regulatory enforcement have been found to influence the role of the HS representative within the context of the workplace.

Traditional concepts of power focus on how people behave in organisational decision making processes (D. Walters & Frick, 2000). Hasle and Sorensen (In press) assert that fundamentally, "decision-making is a political process, in which groups and individuals fight for their agendas, and decisions emerge in the resulting compromises". This recognises that organisations are made up of groups of individuals who have diverging, but also converging interests. Fundamentally, all actors have an interest in securing the

survival of the industrial organisation by ensuring it meets its core objective to profit from the production and sale of goods and services (Dawson, Poynter, & Stevens, 1984). Yet, divergence often occurs because different actors have diverse interpretations of how to achieve this core goal; reflecting their different positions and interests (Hasle & Sorensen, In press).

The position of HS representatives and other OHS practitioners, whose primary goal should be to ensure that core business goals are achieved without sacrificing health and safety, is important, but not central to the core operation of the business (Brun & Loiselle, 2002; Dawson et al., 1984; Jensen, 1997). The ability of HS representatives to influence the policies and strategies of the core management in relation to preventative health and safety is therefore considered to be low (Hasle & Sorensen, In press; D. Walters, 2005). OHS practitioners, who represent workers' and managers' interests, often have limited formal authority to make decisions about working conditions or direct access to senior management; the key decision makers. Their ability to improve OHS is further compromised because limited organisational resources are channelled into investments that assist with the achievement of its core objectives rather than peripheral OHS concerns (Dawson et al., 1984; Hasle & Sorensen, In press). Yet, in organisations where management perceives that health and safety adds value to the core business, HS representatives will undoubtedly find it easier to facilitate improvements to working conditions.

The commitment of management to OHS and employee participation is widely recognised as fundamental to the effective operation of representative employee participation (e.g. Biggins & Phillips, 1991; Hillage et al., 2000; Kochan, Dyer, & Lipsky, 1977; Leopold & Beaumont, 1982; D. Walters & Gurlay, 1990). Jensen (1997) asserts there is little need for research to certify this, given that management has the prerogative to manage. However, within the context of declining union membership and a lack of external enforcement, the effectiveness of HS representatives is increasingly dependent on the motivation and capacity of management to engage with, and facilitate, participatory OHS management (D. Walters, 2005).

Walters and Nichols's (2006) five case studies in Britain's chemical industry, provide a good illustration of how management's commitment to OHS and employee participation impacts on the conditions and facilities available for HS representatives. The study's authors concluded that in two of the businesses where management was visibly committed to OHS, the role of the HS representative was most supported: HS representatives were provided with resources such as time, training, access to internal OHS experts; they participated in a range of OHS management activities and were able to engage in dialogue with management.

In contrast, where OHS and employee participation were not priorities for management, as presented in Walters and Nichols's (2006) other three case studies, the authors concluded that the HS representatives were not as well supported. These organisations did not manage OHS in a systematic or comprehensive way, which was linked in the analysis to management's lack of understanding of OHS and overreliance on the OHS manager. Employees at these organisations reported that they had minimal to no opportunities to participate in OHS. Mechanisms for employee participation were not well developed as some employees did not have access to HS representatives and committees met infrequently. HS representatives were also less likely than their counterparts in supportive workplaces to be provided with basic resources, such as time and training.

The reasons for the differences in manager's attitudes towards OHS and employee participation are sometimes associated with manager's levels of OHS education. Managers who have participated in OHS training are more likely to understand their legal obligations to ensure the safety of workers and the value of OHS and employee participation in the matter. Yet, HS representatives have often been found to have higher levels of OHS training than managers, particularly middle management (Beaumont, Coyle, & Leopold, 1982; Beaumont & Leopold, 1982; Jensen, 1997), which is why increased OHS training for management is advocated (Warren-Langford, Biggins, & Phillips, 1993). However, senior management, who have a role in setting OHS policy and allocating resources, have argued that OHS training for managers is unnecessary because health and safety is the responsibility of the OHS manager (Beaumont et al.,

1981). In reality, line managers are responsible for the daily health and safety of employees (Seppala, 1995) and have been found to impact on the HS representatives' role. Research suggests the impact is often negative as HS representative's report that their immediate managers undermine their efforts to improve safety by demanding increases in production or failing to co-operate with their requests for change (Hillage et al., 2000; D. Walters, Kirby, & Daly, 2001; V. Walters, 1985).

While management at all levels has been found to have a significant impact on participation, trade unions or other workers' organisations also play a role in facilitating employee participation. Possibly one of the more important roles played by unions is that they provide a form of social security for workers and their representatives. Due to their economic vulnerability, workers may be reluctant to raise OHS concerns or advocate for better working conditions (Ochsner & Greenberg, 1998). Unions often protect outspoken workers against management thereby giving them a degree of power that may increase the likelihood that they will challenge managerial decisions that may not be in the OHS interests of workers (Quinlan & Mayhew, 2000; Strauss, 1998b; D. Walters, 2006).

Additionally, the presence of trade unions at the workplace impacts on compliance with OHS legislation and regulation. OHS compliance tends to be considerably higher in unionised workplaces than non-unionised establishments (D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990; D. Walters & Nichols, 2006). Indeed, unions often provide processes that facilitate the election of HS representatives by workers (Warren-Langford et al., 1993) while OHS committees organised by unions are more compliant with regulations in comparison to those organised by management (Weil, 1999).

However, research also suggests that unions are only likely to foster employee participation in OHS if they are committed to improving the health and safety of workers (Kochan et al., 1977; D. Walters, 2006; V. Walters, 1985). For instance, Walters' (1985) interviews with HS representatives revealed that many were aggrieved that their local union leadership prioritised the negotiation of wages and benefits in collective agreements instead of advocating for improved health and safety conditions.

Further, the labour inspectorate theoretically has an important role in moderating the relationship between managers and unions within workplaces to ensure compliance with regulations. As Jensen (1997) notes, the inspectorate:

cannot bring about changes in the work environment activities without one or more internal actors, who are willing to take the development process in hand, and are in the position to act in accordance with these intentions. (p.1084)

I indicated earlier that the likelihood of the inspectorate intervening in relation to the enforcement of legislative provisions for employee participation is low. However, organisations may commit to comply with legislation for other reasons, such as their ethical standpoint or Human Resource Management policies (Jensen, 1997).

In some contexts, regulators attempt to foster organisational commitment to employee participation in OHS by allowing parties to the employment relationship to negotiate a local OHS employee participation agreement. OHS legislation generally provides a basic framework for representative employee participation systems. However, countries such as New Zealand and Denmark allow management and worker representatives to negotiate their own regulations governing the structure and function of employee participation systems to suite the context of the workplace (Sorensen, Hasle, & Navrbjerg, 2009). The outcome of such negotiations is what is known as an OHS employee participation agreement. Menéndez et al. (2008) do not include these agreements as a variable in their model, but the limited research suggests these agreements have a positive impact.

For example, Sorensen et al. (2009) found that the local agreements made in Danish public (n=16) and private (n=33) sector organisations improved representative employee participation and commitment to OHS. Data from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with union and management representatives involved in local agreement negotiations revealed that most companies reduced HS representative numbers, but increased their status by granting greater access to time, training opportunities and meetings with senior managers. The participation of senior managers in the negotiation process was also perceived to have raised the profile of OHS and increased the likelihood that they prioritised health and safety improvements. Overall, the

participants perceived that, in addition to improving safety outcomes, the process of formulating the local agreement increased collaboration between management and workers as well as their commitment to the system.

However, Sorensen et al. (2009) suggest that positive outcomes are attainable because Denmark's industrial relations system is built on a tradition of co-operation. They also signal the importance of qualified and experienced negotiators, and for the outcome of the negotiations to represent a win-win for managers and workers for the participation agreement to be accepted. For instance, if workers perceive that management has gained more from the negotiations, they may use their collective power to ignore the terms of the agreement. Although this research provides valuable insights into the outcomes of local employee OHS participation agreements in the Danish context, the impact of such agreements in New Zealand workplaces is yet to be considered.

In summary, I defined power in relation to how individuals and groups within organisations influence decision making processes. Decision making was conceptualised as a political process in which different interest groups attempt to promote their agendas in the resulting decisions. It was found that OHS practitioners, including HS representatives, generally have difficulty influencing core decision making processes because they typically have limited formal authority, no direct access to decision makers and OHS is often peripheral to the core function of an enterprise. Yet, the role of the HS representative is facilitated where management and unions prioritise OHS and employee participation in the matter. In organisations where management is committed to health and safety, representatives are better supported with resources, such as time, access to management and training. Further, unions were found to provide a form of social security to protect outspoken workers while those committed to health and safety play a role in securing compliance with OHS legislation and regulations. The inspectorate potentially has a key role to play in moderating relations between management and unions, but research suggests those with the power of enforcement are often unwilling to intervene in disputes.

The next section considers the different sources of power available to individual HS representatives to influence the core decision making processes of organisations.

3.5 Conditions influencing HS representatives: Sources of power and influence

The next part of Menéndez et al.'s (2008) model considers the conditions within the workplace that directly facilitate or constrain the roles that HS representative's take or are required to fulfil. The model acknowledges the influence of the structure of the representative employee participation system (coverage of HS representatives and committees) and HS representatives' access to resources, knowledge and support from key stakeholders (Menéndez et al., 2008). However, all of these variables are essentially forms of power that enable representatives to participate in, and influence, the decision making processes of an organisation. The following discussion focuses on HS representatives' access to sources of power and influence identified by Menéndez et al. (2008), as well as by other researchers of OHS (Brun & Loiselle, 2002; Dawson et al., 1984; Hasle & Sorensen, In press), and includes HS representatives' resources, expert knowledge, legitimate power, personal qualities and access to internal and external coalitions.

At a basic level, HS representatives need resources to engage in the participatory process. For instance, they require access to OHS information about hazards that workers are exposed to. Without this, Walters' (1985) cautions that the ability of workers and their representatives to organise around OHS issues is limited because the communication of information is the foundation upon which the participatory process is built. To facilitate the interaction of workers on health and safety issues, representatives need opportunities to interact with colleagues as well as management with decision making authority (Milgate et al., 2002; D. Walters, 2005). They also require time to conduct OHS activities in addition to their normal employment duties.

Yet, representatives do not always have access to such resources. For example, findings from studies on representatives' perceptions of whether their access to time is sufficient

are contradictory. McNally (2006) reported that 85% (n=620) of the representatives surveyed had at least enough time to conduct activities. While only 37% (n=1,200) of representatives surveyed by Garcia and Rodrigo (n.d.) had sufficient access to time. 'Time poor' HS representatives tend to work in core areas of the production process that require continuous manning (D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990; D. Walters & Nichols, 2006). To cope with excessive time demands, James and Kyprianou (2000) found that 20% of HS representatives in Britain undertake OHS activities outside of work hours. Ultimately, HS representatives' resources are not only a form of power, but their access to them may be contingent upon their other power bases (Hall, Forrest, Sears, & Carlan, 2006).

One of the key sources of power and influence for the HS representative is their expert knowledge (Hall et al., 2006; D. Walters & Frick, 2000). HS representatives are likely to derive this expert power base from a combination of sources including their formal skills and qualifications, recognised job competencies, workplace experience and OHS knowledge (French & Raven, 2001, a republished version of their seminal work from 1959). One could speculate that the greater the HS representatives' expert power, the more likely they are to influence decision making processes in relation to OHS. Even the perception of their expertise factors in as a power base. For example, evidence suggests that management are more willing to share decision making power with workers if they perceive them to have competent knowledge of OHS, which is often enhanced by their attendance at HR representative training courses (Leopold & Beaumont, 1982).

Indeed, a number of studies have found that union officials, employers and HS representatives perceive that health and safety training improves representatives' ability to participate in OHS management (Biggins & Phillips, 1991; Garcia & Rodrigo, n.d.; Hillage et al., 2000; Vanderkruk, 2003). While it is often unclear what this training entails, it is claimed that HS representatives' attendance at courses assists them to investigate worker complaints, source and utilise OHS information, engage with managers and represent co-worker interests, thus assisting them to improve their impact on OHS.

Studies using objective methods to evaluate the outcomes of HS representative training courses confirm its beneficial impact. For example, Culvenor, Cowley and Harvey (2003) assessed how representatives' attendance at HS representative training courses impacted on their perceptions of accident causation and the preventative actions taken. The nature of the training was unspecified, but appeared to educate attendees about OHS statutory requirements in the state of Victoria, Australia. The authors found that, although representatives have a tendency to attribute accidents to individual behaviours, the more training they had completed the more likely they were to attribute accidents to wider systematic failures, and to opt for solutions higher up the hierarchy of control. Other studies have found that trained representatives expressed more confidence in their abilities (Culvenor, Cowley, & Else, 1996), carried out a wider range of activities and were more willing to challenge management's decisions (Garcia et al., 2007; Vanderkruk, 2003).

However, these training benefits are not sustained. Research indicates that the affects of training diminish over time post-training as HS representatives' activities decrease (Garcia et al., 2007; D. Walters et al., 2001), and they revert back to attributing accidents to the carelessness of workers, which is a minimisation strategy that falls at the lower end of the hierarchy of control (Culvenor et al., 2003). Paradoxically, HS representatives themselves perceive that their OHS knowledge and capacity to deal with health and safety concerns increases over time (McNally, 2006). This is probably because the longer they remain in the role, the more likely they are to have built up OHS knowledge, personal contacts and gained experience in managing OHS issues. This contradictory evidence suggests that, although it is preferable to minimise HS representative turnover in order to enable the development of expertise, it is important for HS representatives to attend frequent refresher training to maintain knowledge of OHS concepts (Hillage et al., 2000).

Even having attended OHS training, it can be difficult for representatives to use their expert knowledge base to achieve change because of the difficulties convincing management or workers of the significance of OHS issues or in fact, whether they even exist. Walters and Frick (2000) draw attention to this problem when they note that OHS

“is a complex scientific and social concept. There are wide opportunities for disputes and to question the social constructions of what is OHS “reality”” (p.52). They draw on Nelkin’s (1985) work to illustrate how conflicts can centre on the significance of risks, how to evaluate and quantify risk and the validity of purported health effects. Under such circumstances, it may be necessary for the HS representative to draw on other avenues of influence, such as their legitimate power, to compel management to make OHS improvements.

Legitimate power is formal authority originating from an individual’s appointment or election to a position of responsibility (French & Raven, 2001). Most obviously, when workers become HS representatives their primary source of legitimate power is derived from their legislative rights that legitimise access to resources and participation in OHS activities (Frick & Sjostrom, n.d.; Menéndez et al., 2008). The HS representatives also bring to their OHS responsibilities the formal authority of their dual roles: their level of responsibility by way of their HS representative appointment, but also their position on the hierarchy in their primary employment role (Dawson et al., 1984).

A further source of power and influence derives from the personal qualities of the HS representative (Dawson et al., 1984). This informal basis of power can be thought of as complementary, but also an enhancement of other power bases. For example, the charm, approachability or charisma of the HS representative can be a clear factor in encouraging and sustaining coalitions that support their endeavours to initiate improvements to OHS (Hasle & Sorensen, In press).

The formation of coalitions with actors internal and external to the workplace is yet another basis of power for the HS representative to influence, or gain access to, those with decision making authority. The following discussion draws attention to the possibilities, as well as the obstacles, that HS representatives face in building coalitions with management, workers, trade unions, the internal OHS organisation as well as external actors in the OHS context.

Regardless of whether the official managerial position on employee participation in OHS is favourable or not, HS representatives can potentially form alliances with individual managers who are willing to support their efforts to improve health and safety. For instance, a HS representative might find that a senior manager is willing to endorse a new code of practice or initiative that they have developed (Dawson et al., 1984).

In situations where representatives find it difficult to convince management to address OHS issues, they have been found to rely on the collective support of workers to influence negotiations with management. Workers' support for HS representatives tends to be strongest in situations where they, too, perceive that management fail to adequately address OHS issues of concern (V. Walters & Haines, 1988). In practical terms, representatives report that workers provide support by passing on information about hazards and suggesting control options (Beaumont, 1981).

Fellow workers, on the face of it, can therefore be a powerful coalition partner, but a number of studies found that workers do not always provide the support that representatives expect. HS representatives express frustration at co-workers for their apparent lack of interest in OHS (Beaumont & Leopold, 1984; V. Walters, 1985), and failure to follow correct safety protocols (Johnson & Hickey, 2008; D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990). Additionally, representatives report feeling that workers are resentful of them for encouraging compliance with rules that increase inefficiency and jeopardise the earning of bonuses, which is perhaps a criticism best directed at the organisational reward system (Beaumont & Leopold, 1984; Garcia & Rodrigo, n.d.; Safeguard, 1990). These findings are surprising given that the purpose of the HS representative is to represent the interests of workers, but workers' perceptions of the purpose of the HS representative role and the value they add to the workplace are not prominent in the literature on representative employee participation in OHS. If representatives perceive that they cannot rely on workers for support, they have one less power base to draw on to foster OHS improvements.

This social isolation of the representative from their constituencies is attributed to a number of factors. Commonly, representatives' perceptions of workers' lack of interest

in OHS is attributed to their differentials in health and safety education (Glendon & Booth, 1982; Leopold & Beaumont, 1982). Representatives that have attended OHS training are likely to have more interest and knowledge of health and safety issues beyond what their membership could reasonably be expected to comprehend (D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990). Additionally, representatives are often not elected to the position by fellow workers, suggesting that representatives may or may not have the support of colleagues. For example, Hillage et al. (2000) found that of the British representatives surveyed (n=200), only 33% were elected by workers while 10% had been appointed by management, 32% chosen by unions and 35% volunteered (multiple response question). Elections are necessary when multiple candidates contest the role, but this rarely occurs. This has been attributed to workers' apathy toward OHS, particularly in low risk sectors, and perceptions that the HS representative role is time consuming and increases workload (Hillage et al., 2000; Hovden et al., 2008; Tragardh, 2008). Finally, representatives often have limited access to forums to communicate and develop a rapport with the workers (Hillage et al., 2000), especially in contexts where there is no or minimal trade union organisation (D. Walters, 2005).

HS representatives in workplaces that have some degree of union organisation potentially have the benefit of being able to form coalitions with union delegates. Walters' (1987) found that in printing establishments with high levels of trade union organisation, representatives used collective bargaining channels to resolve OHS issues directly with management. Even in New Zealand, unions were found to play a supportive role, as 70% (n=290) of the representatives surveyed by Johnson and Hickey (2008) agreed they felt supported by union delegates who directed co-worker OHS complaints to them, addressed issues that they felt incapable of resolving independently and supported them in dealings with management.

In other contexts, union delegates are not always as supportive. For instance, some of the representatives interviewed by Walters (1985) were surprised to find that when they turned to local union representatives for support in resolving OHS matters, delegates actively discouraged the pursuance of health and safety concerns because it could threaten workers' job security.

Another source of power and influence for the HS representative can be found in their alliances with the health and safety organisation. HS representatives perceive fellow representatives to be an important source of moral support and guidance (D. Walters et al., 2001). Similarly, while OHS managers are also called on for advice, they play an important role in raising the profile of the HS representative at the workplace and initiating meetings between representatives and management (Garcia et al., 2007; Leopold & Beaumont, 1982). Further, HS representatives can gain access to the core decision making structures of an organisation when they attend OHS committees along with senior management. Even though OHS committees have been criticised for rarely allowing genuine joint decision making (V. Walters, 1985), these forums give representatives an opportunity to raise workers' concerns and suggest solutions thereby giving them some degree of influence (Brun & Loiselle, 2002; Dawson et al., 1984).

In addition to the internal OHS organisation, HS representatives can draw on the support of external actors to influence OHS outcomes. Dominant among the external actors in relation to health and safety include the OHS service and labour inspectorate (Dawson et al., 1984; Jensen, 1997). While the OHS service can be useful for providing information and advice, the inspectorate should facilitate the resolution of ongoing health and safety issues. For instance, if management fails to control significant hazards, HS representatives can ask the inspectorate to visit the workplace to help facilitate a resolution (Dawson et al., 1984). In practice, Walters (1985) found that representatives perceived the inspectorate to be an unwilling ally because of their reluctance to challenge or penalise management for violating legal OHS obligations.

In summary, this section revealed insights into the power bases that HS representatives can potentially draw on to influence workplace health and safety. Fundamentally, representatives require resources to participate in OHS, such as time, information and opportunities to communicate with workers and management. Management were found to be more willing to engage, and share decision making power, with representatives who are perceived to have expert knowledge. This power derives from a combination of the representatives' formal skills and qualifications, job competencies, work experience and OHS knowledge, which is enhanced by their attendance at

specialist HS representative training courses. Yet, it can be difficult for representatives to draw on their expert power base because there is often wide scope for debate about the significance and nature of OHS risks. Still, HS representatives have some degree of legitimate power to compel management to deal with issues by way of the rights they are conferred by their HS representative appointment, as well as their position on the organisational hierarchy in their primary employment role. Further, the personal qualities of representatives potentially enhance these powers, helping them to gain access to internal and external coalitions that may support their endeavours to improve OHS. It is important that representatives understand the different sources of power they have available and when to draw on these to facilitate change. In this respect, Walters' (1985) suggests that the HS representatives' role is ultimately:

strategic because it is their responsibility to identify or pursue issues raised by workers, to prioritize issues, to present a case to management, and to strategize where necessary – deciding, for example, when to draw on broader union support and other resources, whether to publicize an issue and when to approach the Ministry of Labour. (p.62)

The next section looks at what is known about how HS representatives enact their roles by the nature of the activities in which they participate and how they use political strategies to facilitate OHS improvements.

3.6 Activities and strategies of HS representatives

The role of the HS representative is generically defined as a worker mandated to represent workers' OHS interests, and to assist management to achieve higher standards of OHS management. A number of studies have sought to determine how HS representatives go about achieving these dual and inherently conflicting objectives. Firstly, I present what is known about how HS representatives participate in OHS in New Zealand workplaces, and draw attention to areas that require further investigation. Subsequently, the focus turns to the international literature where I review what is known about the activities of the HS representative, and the methods others have used to investigate how the role is enacted.

In New Zealand, very little research has been conducted into how HS representatives participate in OHS aside from a recent survey conducted by Johnson and Hickey (2008) on behalf of the ACC. To assess the effectiveness of HS representative training courses offered by the country's two largest providers, 290 attendees (n=192 stage one, n=98 stage two) of the NZCTU and EMA's HS representative training courses were surveyed via telephone to evaluate their participation in OHS. The activities that participants reportedly undertook are presented in Table 2, which shows that most facilitated the identification of hazards and communicated OHS information to workers. Participation in the review of OHS policies, induction training and the rehabilitation process was more limited.

Table 2. OHS activities in which attendees of stage one and two of the NZCTU and EMA HS training courses reportedly participated

| Activities in which HS representatives reportedly participated: | % of participants | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| | Stage 1 (n=192) | Stage 2 (n=98) |
| Encouraged workers to report pain and discomfort. | 88 | 90 |
| Identified hazards. | 82 | 77 |
| Held meetings or ran courses related to OHS. | 58 | 68 |
| Informed workers about OHS policy changes. | 61 | - |
| Erected posters about hazard controls. | 58 | - |
| Helped create or review OHS policies. | 44 | 51 |
| Conducted OHS induction training. | 43 | 48 |
| Supported workers in the rehabilitation process. | 27 | 39 |
| Conducted an accident investigation. | 37 | 30 |
| Recruited members of OHS committees. | 32 | - |

Source: Johnson & Hickey, 2008

One of the limitations of Johnson and Hickey's (2008) study is that it does not place the activities of the HS representatives in context. The workplace context is an important variable to consider, particularly in New Zealand, because the HSE Amendment Act gives workers and managers a degree of freedom to determine the role that representatives will serve. Yet, this study provides no indication as to how the purpose of the representative is interpreted by management and workers, and framed within the OHS employee participation agreements of New Zealand workplaces. Greater insight into the

role could be gained by evaluating the HS representatives' activities in relation to the purpose they are intended to serve. This presents an opportunity for this study to investigate the purpose of the HS representative role.

Further, while Johnson and Hickey's (2008) survey provides a broad indication of the types of activities in which New Zealand HS representatives participate, it does not explain the nature or extent of the representatives' participation in these activities. In fact, there is a dearth of research into the lived experiences of HS representatives to illustrate how workers who assume this position perceive and enact their roles. The current study has the opportunity to address this shortcoming by exploring how HS representatives interpret and enact their roles.

Internationally, there are also few studies that explore the role of the HS representative in-depth, as researchers seem to favour taking 'snapshots' of what large samples of representatives do via questionnaire survey. Survey findings from different countries show that representatives tend to participate in day-to-day operational activities, but their focus at the operational level varies according to context. This variation may be attributable to the different ways in which the survey questions are framed, but could also reflect the differences in expectations of the representatives in different environments. For example, a cluster of Australian surveys found that representatives mainly ensured that workers acted safely by encouraging the use of PPE and compliance with safety rules (Biggins & Phillips, 1991; Biggins et al., 1988; Gaines & Biggins, 1992). In contrast, a large sample (n=200) of British HS representatives spent the majority of their time identifying and reporting hazards (Hillage et al., 2000). A more recent survey of Spanish HS representatives indicated that they acted as information conduits by consulting with workers, trade unions and the health service about OHS issues (Garcia et al., 2007).

In order to characterise the work of health and safety representatives in a more holistic manner, Brun and Loiselle (2002) created a theoretical framework that allows for the activities of OHS practitioners to be profiled according to the level (operational or strategic) and dimension (organisational, technical or human) that they concentrate

their preventative efforts (Figure 3 depicts the framework and provides examples of the activities that fall into each dimension). Their analysis of a survey of worker safety representatives (n=134) in Canada, further confirms that representatives perform activities that primarily fit within the operational level in the technical dimension.

Figure 3. Theoretical framework to profile the activities of OHS practitioners

| | Organisational dimension | Technical dimension | Human dimension |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| Strategic level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop OHS policies. • Develop annual prevention budget. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence strategic decisions via the provision of technical advice. • Develop standards for the use of equipment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster worker participation in OHS. • Make senior management aware of workers' OHS concerns. |
| Operational level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate accidents. • Ensure OHS policies and procedures are correctly applied. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research ways of resolving technical OHS issues. • Conduct risk analyses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train workers in safe work methods. • Discuss OHS issues with workers. |

Source: Brun & Loiselle, 2002

There are a couple of international studies that provide greater insight into how HS representatives participate in, and facilitate improvements to, OHS. These studies use semi-structured interview schedules to collect rich data on how representatives enact their roles, which has led to the categorization, or creation of typologies, of representatives based on their purpose and activities (Wright & Spaven, 1999) as well as their use of political strategies (Hall et al., 2006).

Wright and Spaven's (1999) focus on HS representatives within one industry sector allowed the authors to explore how the representatives' context influences the roles they assume. The United Kingdom's offshore oil and gas industry offered a unique focus. The industry has negligible union membership, so OHS regulations stipulate that management has to consult the workforce on health and safety matters via HS representatives instead of unions, which is the norm onshore. It was found that the multiple companies that make up this industry created an industry definition of the role and functions of the HS representative. Specifically, representatives were given partial responsibility for OHS management and were expected to communicate and act as

champions of safety policy. Under these conditions, the 83 HS representatives that were interviewed were categorised as 'proactivists', 'traditionalists', 'disillusioned' and 'reactivists' based on their stated purpose and activities.

Proactivists (n=30) were the largest group who focused on fulfilling their obligations as defined by management. They primarily implemented and enforced safety policies by conducting incident inspections, safety drills and encouraging workers to abide by safety rules. Proactivists were more likely to be employed in relatively senior positions and were described as having a greater allegiance with management.

In contrast, the traditionalists perceived that the activities of the proactivists were inappropriate for worker representatives. Instead, they attempted to protect the interests of workers by assuming a traditional union delegate role by insisting that hostile or apathetic managers adhere to OHS legislation. The authors speculate that this conflict approach is a difficult strategy to take because legislative compliance is hard to judge as OHS legislation becomes increasingly non-prescriptive, especially when the inspectorate is reluctant to intervene in disputes. Indeed, traditionalists were most likely to become disillusioned representatives who were characterised by their scepticism of the HS representative system to genuinely improve the health and safety of workers.

When the last group of HS representatives, the reactivists (n=18), learnt of workers' safety concerns, they reacted by informing management. Reactivists were mainly employed as contractors in ancillary services, and reported that their ability to participate in OHS was limited by their lack of understanding of the company's approach to health and safety management and OHS concepts more generally.

Wright and Spaven's (1999) study suggests that the roles that HS representatives choose, or feel obligated to take, are shaped by their understanding of purpose, the expectations of the role as defined by the workplace, their positions within the organisation, their allegiances and expert knowledge. Wright and Spaven (1999) also

speculate about the effectiveness of the political strategies that the HS representatives use, but do not explicitly consider strategies as a variable in their analysis.

Indeed, as the previous section on power suggested, it is important to analyse the representatives' political strategies to understand how they are able to participate in, and contribute to, OHS. The political strategies of HS representatives are broadly characterised by conflict, cooperation, or a combination of the two (D. Walters & Frick, 2000). According to Walters and Frick (2000), the approach that HS representatives take is dependent on the "actions (or inactions) of management" (p.56.). If representatives perceive that they are achieving the same objectives as management, their role is one of consultation. If they perceive a conflict of interest, their role is likely to be one of negotiation. A recent study by Hall et al. (2006) found that representatives were more likely to facilitate OHS improvements if they challenged managerial decisions by pursuing a cooperation rather than conflict strategy.

An investigation of the political strategies that HS representatives use to facilitate OHS changes, led Hall et al. (2006) to categorise representatives based on the nature of their strategies and the associated improvements to health and safety. Based on their findings from semi-structured interviews with representatives (n=27) in Canadian auto manufacturing plants, representatives were characterised as 'technical-legal' and 'political-activists', which included a sub-group of 'knowledge activists'.

Representatives classed as technical-legalists operated within the status quo and rarely challenged management. This category of HS representative tended to communicate OHS issues identified by themselves or their constituencies to management, and occasionally facilitated the resolution of minor faults that hindered production, such as leaks or broken machinery.

In contrast, politically active representatives went beyond simply identifying and reporting hazards, by advocating for fundamental changes to the work process (i.e. policy or production system) thereby posing more of a challenge to management. These representatives recognised that they had to engage in political processes to advance

their agenda by calling on fellow workers or the inspectorate to pressure management to improve working conditions. However, politically active representatives generally reported difficulties convincing management, workers and the inspectorate of the need for change.

The sub-group of politically active representatives called knowledge activists were found to be most effective at convincing management to accept their proposals to improve working conditions by substantiating their claims for change with evidence. Knowledge activists pursued a subtle cooperative approach by independently searching for information from the internet, personal and professional contacts. They used this information as evidence to construct cases to put to management demonstrating the significance of hazards and possibilities for control that encompassed potential cost savings, productivity and quality improvements. Although this was a time consuming process, the payoff was that knowledge activists were able to achieve major OHS improvements, such as the instillation of a multimillion dollar ventilation system. Hall et al. (2006) suggest that this strategy is only likely to succeed in a unionised setting because of the economic security unions provide, but further research is yet to substantiate this proposition. Elsewhere, it has been claimed that business cases are not always successful because, while it is often difficult to calculate cost-benefit ratios, management has limited resources to dedicate to OHS (Hasle & Sorensen, In press).

In summary, the ways in which HS representatives enact their roles are primarily explored by questionnaire survey. Findings from different countries indicate that representatives tend to engage in operational rather than strategic OHS activities, but their focus at this level varies according to context. However, these surveys fail to explain the nature, or depth, of the individual HS representative's participation in OHS at the workplace. The few qualitative studies that use semi-structured interviews to gather data provide greater insight into the role by illustrating the variety of approaches that representatives take to improve OHS outcomes. Representatives have been typecast on the basis of their stated purpose and activity profiles as well as the nature of their political strategies. The nature of the HS representatives' political strategies has been found to be an important determinant of their OHS impact. Specifically, those who use

a knowledge-based strategy facilitate the greatest improvements. Aside from a couple of studies, there is a dearth of research, particularly in New Zealand, that drills down into the lived experiences of HS representatives themselves, as well as the experiences of those who impact on, and are impacted by, the role within the workplace. Therefore, there is clearly an opportunity to build on the international research by exploring the qualitative dimension of how the purpose of the HS representative role is interpreted and enacted within the context in which they operate.

The next section focuses on the final part of Menéndez et al.'s (2008) model by considering what is known about how representative employee participation in health and safety impacts on OHS.

3.7 Impact of representative OHS employee participation on workplace health and safety

A number of international studies have assessed how HS representatives and other forms of representative participation in OHS affect workplace health and safety. The evidence from these studies will be systematically presented according to the different levels in which OHS interventions can impact on the work environment according to the Danish National Working Environment Authority's (2002) "impact ladder". After explaining the impact ladder and its background, evidence will be presented in relation to how representative worker participation in OHS has been found to impact on health and safety.

The impact ladder (see Figure 4) is a generic model that systematically conceptualises how OHS interventions affect health and safety outcomes. The model was developed by a group of practitioners and academics with expertise in relation to impact measurement as a tool for the Danish National Working Environment Authority to assist with the planning and evaluation of OHS interventions. The impact ladder shows that an OHS intervention can have an impact on various levels ranging from changes in people's knowledge (rung 1) and attitudes (rung 2), improvements in a company's approach to health and safety management (rung 3), better production processes from a health and

safety perspective (rung 4), reduced stressors and exposures (rungs 5), reduced accidents and disorders (rung 6) and improved health (rungs 7). The rungs of the ladder are not sequential. For example, it is not necessary for an OHS intervention to alter knowledge before it changes people's attitudes (Danish National Working Environment Authority, 2002). Overall, the model represents a useful framework for systematically organising the evidence for how HS representatives, which are one type of OHS intervention, impact on health and safety.

Figure 4. Impact ladder

| | |
|--|---|
| | |
| | Rung 7: Improved health. |
| | Rung 6: Reduction in accidents and disorders. |
| | Rung 5: Reduction in stressors or exposures. |
| | Rung 4: Better production processes from an OHS perspective. |
| | Rung 3: Improvements in the company's approach to OHS management. |
| | Rung 2: Changes in attitudes. |
| | Rung 1: Changes in knowledge. |

Source: Danish National Working Environment Authority, 2002, p.5

The top two rungs of the impact ladder indicate that the ultimate goal of any OHS intervention is to improve health. The following discussion focuses on the findings of the more recent (mid-1990s onward) research from Britain and North America that attempted to objectively assess the impact of representative employee participation in OHS on health by investigating basic proxy indicators, such as injury rates. Firstly, I present the findings of the British studies that used quantitative approaches before reviewing the North American studies that triangulate quantitative and qualitative data in an attempt to gain more reliable insight into how employee participation in OHS affects occupational health.

British research uses data from the national employment relations surveys (*Workplace Industrial Relations Survey* [WIRS] renamed *Workplace Employment Relations Survey*

[WERS]) to examine the relationship between joint arrangements for the management of OHS and health outcomes. Notably, Reilly, Paci and Holl (1995) established a positive relationship between workplace injury rates, HS representatives and committees in Britain's manufacturing sector. By conducting econometric modelling on the 1990 WIRS data set, they estimated an injury rate of 10.9 per 1000 employees in workplaces where management unilaterally managed OHS. Comparatively, establishments with committees comprised of HS representatives chosen by unions had 5.7 fewer injuries per 1000 employees. These findings were cited as evidence to rationalise the introduction of HS representatives in New Zealand's HSE Amendment Act (M. Wilson, n.d.), but the study's validity is questionable.

Numerous studies have failed to replicate Reilly et al.'s (1995) findings. Instead, they confirm that estimated injury rates are lower in workplaces with joint arrangements for OHS management compared to those without, but the magnitude is not as great. For example, Nichols, Walters and Tasiran (2004) replicated Reilly et al.'s (1995) method to estimate 5.1 injuries per 1000 in workplaces with no joint arrangements (compared to 10.9), while businesses that had committees where all HS representative members were chosen by unions had 4.5 fewer injuries per 1000 (compared to 5.7) indicating a less significant difference (0.6 per 1000 instead of 5.2). The difference in findings between studies was attributed to the sensitiveness of Reilly et al.'s analysis: they studied too many variables (40) within a relatively small sample (436 workplaces). Consequently a number of studies made slight improvements to Reilly et al.'s method using the 1990 WIRS (Nichols et al., 2004) and 1998 WERS (Hillage et al., 2000; Robinson & Smallman, 2006) data sets, but the same pattern emerged.

In contrast, Fenn and Ashby's (2004) more sophisticated regression analysis contradicted the findings of these studies revealing that workplaces with higher union densities and OHS committees had higher rates of injury and illnesses. However, the author's caution that the direction of causality is difficult to determine. Union presence may encourage greater reporting, but at the same time employees may be more compelled to join the collective where there is greater risk of injury and illness.

The reviewed quantitative studies provide contradictory evidence as to whether representative employee participation in OHS improves health. To increase the reliability of findings, methodological triangulation of macro and microeconomic data sources is recommended (Bryce & Manga, 1985; Nichols et al., 2004).

Numerous North American studies that use methodological triangulation provide some evidence of a link between representative employee participation in OHS and reduced injury rates. For example, a Canadian study compared data on lost-time frequency rates for workers' compensation claims held by the state with arrangements for the management of OHS at the micro level (Shannon et al., 1996). Specifically, businesses in the manufacturing sector were stratified into those that had high, medium and low workers' compensation claims. Questionnaires were sent to management and workers at these businesses to identify factors that could account for the differences in claim rates. Businesses with lower lost time rates were characterised by managerial concern for OHS, greater worker influence in decision making processes and the OHS committees tended to resolve issues internally without the need for external mediation.

Similarly, Eaton and Nocerino (2000) triangulated macro and microeconomic data to establish that OHS committees reduce injury and illness. Data from injury and illness records held by the state were matched with survey responses from workers and management about OHS committee structure and their perceptions of the committee's effectiveness at reducing accidents and health hazards. The workplaces that had fewer reported illnesses and injuries had OHS committee meeting agendas that were influenced by workers.

Overall, these studies provide contradictory evidence as to whether representative participation in OHS improves injury and accident rates, but broadly indicate that employee participation is more desirable than management's unilateral control of the work environment. Even so, the findings have to be interpreted cautiously due to significant methodological limitations. The first, as Shearn (2005) draws attention to, is that "accident and injury data tend to be limited and subject to distortion and variability in the propensity of people to report" (p.15). It is also difficult to determine which

factors are associated and whether they are cause or an effect (D. Walters, 2005). Furthermore, the findings do not focus solely on the impact of the HS representative, but broadly assess the impact of various forms of representative employee participation in combination. Studies that use the interview as a tool to collect qualitative data on HS representatives' contributions to health and safety appear to provide greater and more reliable insight into the OHS impacts of HS representatives.

Moving down to the lower levels of the impact ladder, there is evidence to suggest that representatives' facilitate changes that improve production processes (rung 4), and potentially reduce workers' exposure to stressors and exposures (rung 5). During interviews, British HS representatives reported isolating hazards by encasing cables running across the floor, and eliminating the use of hazardous chemicals. A number of representatives also facilitated the enhancement of workers' basic conditions by improving toilet facilities and access to drinking water (D. Walters et al., 2001).

Further, HS representatives have been found to impact on rung 3 of the ladder by facilitating improvements to small enterprises' approaches to health and safety management. According to Shaw and Turner (2003), worker safety advisors, a type of roving HS representative in the United Kingdom, were perceived by employers and workers at the small businesses they visited to have significantly enhanced health and safety. Three-quarters of the employers (n=88) stated that the safety advisors initiated the development and review of OHS policies, formalised responsibility for health and safety, introduced OHS training schedules and improved communication. Indeed, managers and workers alike agreed that safety advisors stimulated communication about OHS issues, and that discussions were more frequent, but also more in-depth.

There is also evidence to show that HS representatives' impact on the lower levels of the impact ladder by initiating changes in attitude and knowledge (rungs 1 and 2). Recent reviews asserted that representatives improve workers' and managers' awareness and attitudes towards health and safety, but did not elaborate further (Milgate et al., 2002; D. Walters, 2005). In addition, British HS representatives perceived that they had increased workers' knowledge of manual handling procedures (D. Walters et al., 2001).

While the findings of these qualitative studies, primarily from Britain, suggest that representative worker participation in OHS improves health and safety on a variety of levels, there are no studies which cast light on how New Zealand's representatives impact on OHS. This is important to consider because the government pledged legal support for the HS representative and invests in training to facilitate their participation in OHS management in the short term to reduce accidents and injuries over the long run (Johnson & Hickey, 2008). The current study has the opportunity to address this shortcoming by exploring what impacts HS representatives have on OHS in their workplace.

In summary, there is an extensive body of literature that broadly indicates that representative OHS employee participation improves health and safety. Despite this, there is no evidence to demonstrate how representatives' impact on the work environment in New Zealand workplaces. Given that New Zealand introduced representatives to reduce accidents and injuries, it would be preferable to adopt a quantitative approach to assess whether representatives' fulfil this objective. Yet, the relationship between representative employee participation in OHS and injury rates is difficult to accurately measure because of significant methodological limitations associated with complex cause-and-effect relations and variations in reporting standards. The limitations associated with quantitative approaches suggest that it is more valuable, particularly for an exploratory study, to investigate how representatives contribute to OHS qualitatively by focusing the impact measurement on rungs 1 - 5 of the impact ladder. Overseas research demonstrates that qualitative assessments of HS representatives' OHS impacts provide more valid and insightful information, particularly when the perceptions of the workers and employers who interact with the representatives are considered.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the extensive international literature on the role of the HS representative primarily within the British, North American, Australian, European and New Zealand milieus. Menéndez et al.'s (2008) model provided a useful framework for

holistically conceptualising the plethora of factors that influence the role of the representative and their OHS impacts. Specifically, the model emphasised the influence of contextual factors at the workplace and at the sectoral and macroeconomic levels.

The review described multiple factors in the macroeconomic industrial relations context that support workers' participation in matters affecting their health and safety. Notably, legislative provisions for employee participation in OHS provide a role definition and legitimise representatives' position and claim to resources. Labour laws provide economic security enabling workers to speak out about OHS concerns, but employers may be more receptive to the views of workers whose skills are in demand on the labour market. Yet, the state, particularly the OHS inspectorate, has a role to play in supporting workers' participation in OHS by enforcing legislation. Unions at the national level also play an indirect role in facilitating employee participation by lobbying for improved regulations and supporting representatives within the workplace via the provision of information and training. Indeed, arrangements for employee participation in OHS are most prevalent in sectors that are highly unionised, high risk and/or have higher proportions of larger businesses, such as the manufacturing sector. Overall, it is suggested that the divergence between these general macroeconomic factors in different national industrial relations contexts means that representatives operate in different conditions, which helps to account for the diversity in the forms and outcomes of employee participation in different milieus.

The review further explained that there are multiple organisational factors that affect the role of the representative and ultimately, the contributions they make to OHS. In general, the improvement of working conditions was conceived as a political process whereby actors use their power bases to promote their particular interests in the decision making processes of the organisation. It was found that OHS practitioners, including HS representatives, have difficulty influencing core decision making processes because OHS is often peripheral to the core functions of an enterprise, they have minimal formal authority and limited direct access to decision makers. However, the role of the HS representative is facilitated where management and unions are committed to OHS and employee participation in the matter. In organisations where

management perceives that health and safety and worker participation adds value to the business, representatives are better supported with resources, such as time, access to management and training. Unions that are committed to improving workers' OHS, play an important role in encouraging managerial compliance with legislative provisions for employee participation, and providing workers with economic security. Theoretically, the labour inspectorate has an important role in moderating the relationship between management and unions, but in reality those with the power of enforcement are often unwilling to intervene in disputes.

Further, the review found that representatives potentially have a number of power bases that enable them to participate in, and influence, the decision making processes of an organisation to improve working conditions. At a basic level, HS representatives need resources to engage in the participatory process, such as information about risks and opportunities to interact with workers and management. HS representatives' resources are not only a form of power, but their access to them may be contingent upon their other power bases. A key source of power for HS representatives is their expert knowledge, whether real or perceived, which is derived from a combination of sources, including their formal skills and qualifications, recognised job competencies, workplace experience and OHS knowledge. Additionally, representatives have legitimate power by way of their HS representative appointment and their position in the organisational hierarchy in their primary employment role. A further source of power and influence derives from the personal qualities of the HS representative. The charm, or charisma, of the representative can facilitate the development of internal and external coalitions that support their endeavours to improve OHS.

The activities of HS representatives are largely explored by questionnaire survey, which indicate that representatives engage in operational rather than strategic activities. However, surveys do not explain the nature, or depth, of the individual HS representative's participation in OHS or their impact. The few international studies that explore how HS representatives enact their role via semi-structured interview provide more insight into the role of the representative. Findings indicate that workers who assume this role take different approaches to improve OHS by nature of their activity

profiles and political strategies. The latest research suggests that those representatives who use an information-based strategy to convince management of the necessity of managing hazards have the greatest impact on OHS.

The review showed that representatives positively impact on OHS, particularly in Britain and North America. The studies that attempted to objectively measure the impact of representative employee participation on health using basic proxy indicators, such as injury rates, broadly indicate that employee participation is more desirable than management's unilateral control of the work environment. However, the review indicated that caution should be exercised in making claims about the impact of employee participation on health because the relationship is difficult to measure due to limitations associated with complex cause-and-effect relations and variations in reporting standards. The findings of qualitative studies on representatives' OHS impacts are more valid and show that representatives potentially reduce exposures, enhance approaches to OHS management and improve knowledge and attitudes toward OHS.

Overall, this review focused on the international scholarship because so little is known about HS representative participation in New Zealand, which is not surprising given that the country only recently pledged legal support for the role. The study showed that one of the obvious short-comings in New Zealand, and abroad, is the dearth of research illustrating the lived experiences of HS representatives in relation to how they, and other organisational actors, perceive the role purpose and how they participate in, and impact on, OHS. These deficiencies present an opportunity to explore, from a qualitative perspective, how the purpose of the role of the representative is interpreted and enacted at the workplace and how workers who assume the position improve OHS.

The next chapter outlines the research question emerging from this analysis of the literature, and the research approach design I adopted to address this question.

Chapter 4: Research design

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters established the significance of investigating how HS representatives contribute to occupational health and safety in New Zealand workplaces. This chapter explains the approach employed to explore this issue. Firstly, the background and research question are presented and the overall research design is outlined. Subsequently, I explain and justify the case study approach, data collection methods and procedures. Before concluding, I describe the participants, the semi-structured interviews and how the data were analysed.

4.2 Background and research question

Chapter 2 outlined how New Zealand's primary OHS statute, the HSE Act, was amended in 2002 to make provision for HS representatives. HS representatives were introduced with the backing of the union movement to reduce the country's high level of occupational injury and illness. However, employers' organisations opposed this move by claiming that representatives would encroach on managerial prerogative. There appeared to be a perception that representatives could potentially contribute negatively to the workplace by inciting conflict and hindering productivity. Yet, the legislation states that the purpose of the HS representative is to represent the views of workers thereby assisting to improve the management of OHS. The legislation gives the parties to the employment relationship the ability to determine the nature of their OHS employee participation systems, including how HS representatives will enact the role to fit the context of the workplace.

Chapter 3 demonstrated that there is little in-depth research that focuses on how HS representatives participate in and impact on OHS outcomes within New Zealand workplaces. Internationally, there are also few studies that explore the lived experiences of HS representatives in their organisational settings. There remains a need to clarify how the purpose of the role of the representative is interpreted at the

workplace in the context of an organisational employee participation system, how the role is enacted and how workers who assume the position impact on OHS outcomes. Therefore, the overarching question guiding this study is:

What contributions do HS representatives make to occupational health and safety?

The following sub-questions are also posed:

1. What is the purpose of the HS representative role?
2. How do HS representatives interpret and enact their roles?
3. What impact do HS representatives have on OHS in their workplace?

4.3 Research design

To address this study's central question and associated sub-questions, I opted for a qualitative design by conducting case studies of two businesses in New Zealand's metal manufacturing sector, and collecting data via semi-structured interview. Interviewees included HS representatives and key organisational actors that are known to influence the role of the representative and/or who would know about how representatives contribute to the workplace. These included the representatives' managers, co-workers, OHS manager, senior manager and union representative. I also obtained a copy of an organisation's OHS employee participation agreement. The rationale for these decisions is progressively explained.

4.3.1 Case study approach

A case study approach was considered most appropriate for investigating the central research question. The main strength of a case study, which sets it apart from other research methods, is that it allows for phenomenon to be investigated within their natural context. Indeed, by definition "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomena in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Therefore, a case study approach enabled the role of the HS representative to be explored within the bounds of an organisational OHS employee participation system, which other research strategies did not allow. For instance, surveys are commonly used to investigate how HS representatives participate in OHS,

but Yin (2009) maintains that this data collection method has an extremely limited scope to investigate context.

A multiple case study strategy was chosen to present diverse perspectives of how HS representatives enact the role in different organisational contexts. The selection of multiple cases is advantageous because investigating phenomena under a variety of conditions ultimately increases understanding of them (Mathison, 1988). Yet, when conducting case study research, it is preferable to minimise the number of cases to attain sufficient depth and detail from each case, as Stake (1995) claims: “we don’t study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case” (p.4). I chose to conduct case studies of two organisations to show some variation in how the role of the HS representative is interpreted and enacted, but also to facilitate the collection of sufficiently detailed data from each case within the time I had available.

To meaningfully compare the findings across organisational contexts and draw more robust conclusions, the variability of the cases was limited by seeking businesses in the same industry sector. This decision reflected the findings of the international literature review which demonstrated that employee participation in OHS occurs differently across sectors of economies because of diverging industrial relations conditions, such as the extent of precarious employment and the presence of trade unions (Quinlan & Mayhew, 2000).

A number of authors suggest that while case studies are often criticized because the narrow focus limits the generalisability of findings across populations, it is still possible for findings to be generalized to theoretical propositions (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Yin, 2009). However, the selection of critical cases, as opposed to representative or random cases, can increase the generalisability of case study findings across populations. According to Creswell (1998), critical cases permit “logical generalizations and maximum application of information to other cases” (p.119). In addition, critical cases yield richer more in-depth information which is important when the number of cases is restricted (Flyvbjerg, 2001). I sought critical cases, defined as companies with good OHS management practices in relation to employee participation, because it was anticipated that these

organisations would have an interest in participating in this study and the HS representatives were likely to be active. I would therefore, potentially, be able to gain more information from participations than if I were to study individuals within organisations that were apathetic to employee participation in OHS.

A further rationale for adopting a case study approach was that it allowed for the integration of various methods and data sources that, in combination, present a more comprehensive and valid picture of reality (Sands & Roer-Strier, 2006). Thus I could incorporate relevant documentary data alongside the qualitative interview data. Clearly, HS representatives were the focal subjects recruited for the study, but the case study allowed for the inclusion of a number of other participants with different positions and relations to the representatives who could potentially cast greater light on aspects of the HS representative system and role. These including a senior manager, union representative, OHS manager, line managers and workers (the rationale for the recruitment of these participants is provided below).

4.3.2 Data collection methods

The primary method of data collection was via face-to-face semi-structured interview (King, 2004) to enable the exploration of participant's perceptions. This method was chosen for its inherent flexibility because, although it has some degree of structure, it allowed me to probe issues, to pose more complex questions and to clarify meaning, which is not possible with more structured data collection methods, such as questionnaires (Barriball & While, 1994). For instance, when the HS representatives acknowledged that they participated in hazard identification, the semi-structured interview allowed me to gain further information about the methods that the representative used to identify hazards and the actions they took to facilitate hazard control. This two-way interactive process is useful to build rapport and trust to increase the quality of the information and self-disclosure from participants, particularly about sensitive matters relating to conflicts or unsafe work practices (Collins & Hussey, 2004).

One of the disadvantages associated with semi-structured interviewing is that they yield large amounts of rich data that can be overwhelming to organise and make sense of (King, 2004). To overcome this, I minimised the sample sizes and collected company

documents that pertained to the OHS employee participation system. The collection of documents minimised the time spent interviewing participants, and was useful because it represented data that was likely to have been created with careful consideration (Creswell, 2009).

4.3.3 Data collection procedures

This section outlines why I selected the metal industry as the focus, how I selected the cases and gained access to each of the businesses and finally, the rationale for the recruitment and selection of participants.

Selection of industry sector

The metal manufacturing industry was chosen as the focus for this study because key stakeholders in this sector perceive HS representatives to be an important OHS preventative intervention (refer to Appendix A for a snapshot of New Zealand's metal manufacturing sector). Particular advocates of HS representatives include the ACC, which subsidises training courses for representatives based in the metal manufacturing industry, as well as the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union or EPMU (Fritz Drissner, EPMU OHS co-ordinator, personal communication, 12 September 2008). Metal manufacturing also provides a useful focus for this study because businesses within this sector tend to have relatively advanced arrangements for employee participation in OHS internationally (Eaton & Nocerino, 2000; Istituto Per Il Lavoro, 2006; Leopold & Beaumont, 1982).

Selection of businesses

To identify businesses, I sought the assistance of the ACC's Metal Manufacturing Safer Industry Group. The group meets periodically to discuss how to reduce the sector's high levels of occupational disease and injury, and its membership includes representatives from the ACC, Department of Labour, Heavy Engineering Research Association, Competenz, the EPMU and EMA (ACC, n.d.). The chairperson of the group distributed an e-mail to members on my behalf asking them to recommend companies with good OHS management practices, particularly in relation to employee participation.

Gaining access to businesses

Invitations to participate in the study were e-mailed to the OHS managers at four of the businesses recommended by members of the Safer Industry Group (see Appendix B for a copy of the correspondence). One of the managers immediately declined participation. The second OHS manager withdrew the business from the study two weeks before interviews were due to commence because of economic and time constraints. The other two businesses accepted the invitation to participate.

Selection and recruitment of participants

In addition to HS representatives, I sought the participation of a number of organisational actors who were shown to influence the role of the representative in Chapter 3. Specifically, the participation of a senior manager was required to provide contextual information about the business as well as management's commitment to OHS and employee participation. From a local union representative, I wanted to gain an understanding of the union's organisation, commitment to OHS and employee participation, the union's role in the negotiation of the employee participation agreement, as well as how the union supported the HS representatives. The purpose of including the health and safety manager as a participant was to enhance understanding of the organisation's OHS management system, particularly the HS representative system in relation to its development, purpose, structure, function and resourcing. Line managers were included so that I could gain their perceptions of the purpose of the HS representative, the OHS activities in which they participated as well as how they contributed to OHS. Given that the purpose of the HS representative is to represent workers' interests, it was also necessary to gain workers' perspectives of the purpose of the HS representative role, how their representative participated in OHS and impacted on health and safety.

As the focal subjects of this study, I selected four HS representatives at each business in order to highlight variations in how different individuals interpreted and enacted the role. For every HS representative selected, I intended to interview each of their managers and two of their co-workers, but both businesses only allowed me to select the managers and colleagues of three of the representatives. Therefore, at each

business I gained access to six workers and three line managers, which gave multiple insights into how the role of the HS representative is perceived, but limited the likelihood that the interviewing process would adversely impact on production due to staff absence. In addition, I selected one senior manager, an OHS manager and a union convenor to participate because only one person typically occupies these roles within an organisation, and I could gain sufficient information from each interviewee.

To assist with recruitment, information sheets about the study, tailored for each of the different target participants, were provided to the OHS managers to distribute. The document enabled potential participants to make an informed decision about whether to participate in an interview (see Appendix C for an example of an information sheet).

The OHS managers coordinated the recruitment of the senior managers, union representative and HS representatives. They were asked to select HS representatives who were perceived to have an ability to participate in an interview and who approached the role differently by nature of the activities in which they participated. I also explained that the choice of representative would determine the manager and group of co-workers eligible to participate. The HS representatives recruited their direct managers and colleagues. The representatives chose workers who they had a rapport with or who were available during the times I was onsite due to time restrictions.

4.3.4 Description of participants

A brief background of the two businesses that agreed to participate in this study is presented as well as more detailed descriptions of the participants from each of the organisations.

Business A: The managing director of the first business chose to participate because he wished to foster closer relations with Massey University. The business was composed of five small to medium sized units scattered across the lower North Island, which collectively specialised in the fabrication, surface treatment and erection of structural steel products for the domestic market. It employed 120 non-unionised staff; predominately tradesmen and labourers (see Chapter 5 for further information).

The characteristics of the participants recruited at Business A are described in Table 3. The majority of the 15 participants were male, with the exception of the three females with administrative roles. Most of the interviewees had been employed at the business for five years or less with some exceptions. One of the managers had been employed at Business A for 18 years and while the senior manager did not state his exact tenure, he implied that he had been employed at the organisation for decades. The participants represented a cross-section of the main job roles at Business A, as I interviewed six managers, two administrators, three labourers and four tradesmen/apprentices. Given that none of the employees belonged to a collective, there were no union representatives to interview.

Table 3. A description of Business A's participants

| Unit & employee count | Participant group | Role(s) | Gender | Tenure (Years) |
|--|-------------------|---|--------|----------------|
| Head office (n=80) | Senior manager | Managing director | M | - |
| | OHS manager | OHS manager (half-time) & administrator (half-time) | F | 0.5 |
| | HS representative | Fitter welder | M | 5 |
| Structural steel fabricators (n=12) | HS representative | Administrator | F | 3 |
| | Manager | Manager | M | 1 |
| | Co-worker 1 | Foreman | M | 2 |
| | Co-worker 2 | Labourer | M | 2 |
| Farming shed manufacturing (n=6) | HS representative | Administrator | F | 1 |
| | Manager | Manager | M | 18 |
| | Co-worker 1 | Labourer | M | 2 |
| | Co-worker 2 | Welder fabricator | M | 4 |
| Structural steel fabricators (n=12) | HS representative | Labourer | M | 5 |
| | Manager | Manager | M | 4 |
| | Co-worker 1 | Fitter welder | M | 3 |
| | Co-worker 2 | Apprentice fitter welder | M | 4 |

Business B: The second business was a comparatively larger organisation that was divided into functional divisions. The company specialised in the manufacture of metal products for the construction industry domestically and abroad, and employed over 500 staff. Most were blue collar workers who were highly unionised and primarily affiliated

with the EPMU (see Chapter 6 for further information). OHS management agreed to participate because they wanted to use the study's findings to improve their HS representative system.

Table 4 describes the characteristics of the 16 participants recruited at Business B. Like Business A, most of the participants were male. However, more of Business B's interviewees had trade-based qualifications and their length of tenure was significantly higher (range 2-35 years). Nearly all participants had been at the business for 11 years or more, but four of the participants were employed for less than, or equal to, three years.

Table 4. A description of Business B's participants

| Division & employee count | Participant group | Role(s) | Gender | Tenure (Years) |
|--|--------------------------|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| Human Resources Division | Senior manager | Director of human resources | M | 2 |
| | OHS manager | OHS manager | F | 25 |
| | Union representative | Union convenor | M | 35 |
| Metal Coating Section (n=20) | HS representative | Line operator | M | 3 |
| | Manager | Production superintendent | M | 2 |
| | Co-worker 1 | Foreman | M | 17 |
| | Co-worker 2 | Line operator | M | 19 |
| Subdivision of Maintenance Services (n=3) | HS representative | Instrument serviceman | M | 31 |
| | Manager | Team leader | M | 14 |
| | Co-worker 1 | Instrument serviceman | M | 25 |
| | Co-worker 2 | Instrument serviceman & union delegate | M | 20 |
| Subdivision of Maintenance Services (n=10) | HS representative | Electrician | M | 12 |
| | Manager | Team leader | M | 2 |
| | Co-worker 1 | Electrician | M | 14 |
| | Co-worker 2 | Fitter welder & union delegate | M | 11 |
| Subdivision of Maintenance Services (n=16) | HS representative | Electrical service technician | M | 21 |

4.3.4 The semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interview schedules were used to guide the interviews with each of the different target groups of participants. I primarily used the findings from the international literature review to determine the themes that each of the schedules included. The only exception was that the specific questions about the HS representatives' activities were formulated with reference to the New Zealand context. Specifically, I sought guidance from the HSE Amendment Act's default section as well as sections 6 - 13 that outline the OHS processes in which all employees are entitled to participate (see Chapter 2.3). I also attended the EMA and NZCTU's HS representative training courses to gain an understanding of the activities in which representatives should participate, and sought guidance from the training manuals. The interview questions, in relation to the HS representatives' activities, focused on how representatives' participated in the:

- identification, assessment and control of hazards;
- provision of OHS-related information to workers and managers;
- training and supervision of workers;
- reporting and investigation of accidents;
- planning and management of emergencies;
- rehabilitation process; and
- OHS committee meetings.

Specific questions about how the HS representatives participated in relation to these activities were located in the latter part of the interview schedules for the OHS managers, HS representatives and line managers. The other participants were asked about the activities of the HS representatives in more general terms to minimise the interview time, but also because they were unlikely to be able to answer specific questions about the activities in which the representatives participated. The front part of all the schedules contained more open ended questions to encourage participants to share their own experiences and perceptions about their HS representative's role.

Before the interviews commenced, the content of the information sheets was explained. Those with unique roles were informed that their anonymity could not be guaranteed.

Participants signed a consent form (see Appendix D) acknowledging that they agreed to the conditions in the information sheet, and could indicate if they wanted to amend their interview transcripts.

The interviews began with the gathering of basic demographic data relative to the participant's background at the business (e.g. job role, tenure). From this point, the content of the interviews with the different participant groups varied to take into account their different positions in the organisational hierarchy and formal relationships with the HS representatives. The main themes from the interviews with each group are outlined below.

Senior managers (see Appendix E): Senior managers were interviewed about the characteristics of the organisation (e.g. establishment, products, services, organisation, staff and union presence). They were also asked to comment on the organisation's motivation and commitment to OHS and employee participation in the matter.

OHS managers (see Appendix F): OHS managers were asked to provide a broad overview of the OHS management system and how responsibility was delegated. Subsequently, they were invited to outline the nature of the employee participation system before being probed about the HS representative system. Specifically, I sought information about how and why the system was established, the purpose of the HS representatives, how workers acquire the position, the activities that representatives are expected to undertake and the resources they are allocated. OHS managers were also asked for copies of documents about the OHS employee participation system.

Line managers (see Appendix G): The main themes from the interview related to the characteristics of the department and employees they supervised, how responsibility for OHS was delegated as well as the purpose of the HS representatives. Additionally, line managers were asked about the specific activities in which their representative participated, their perceived impact on OHS and the factors that facilitated and hindered the representative's role.

HS representatives (see Appendix H): Information was sought on participants' backgrounds as representatives (e.g. tenure, acquisition of the role, motivations and constituencies), their purpose, aims, priorities and activities. The HS representatives were also interviewed about their perceived OHS impacts, and the factors that hindered and facilitated their roles.

Workers (see Appendix I): The co-workers of the representatives were asked to describe the OHS risks they experience, how they deal with health and safety issues and how they interact with their HS representative. Additionally, they were asked to describe their perceptions of their representative's purpose, activities, impact and the factors that hindered and facilitated their ability to conduct the role.

Union convenor (see Appendix J): Specific information was sought about how the unions participated in the formulation of the employee participation agreement, the purpose of the HS representatives and the union's patronage of the HS representative system.

All of the participants were given an opportunity to raise further pertinent issues at the conclusion of their interviews.

The interview process

I personally conducted all of the interviews and found that indeed, the initial open ended questions prompted many of the participants to 'tell stories' about their experiences, which I allowed them to do because the information could be gleaned from their narratives. This inconsistency that semi-structured interviewing accommodates can limit the reliability of the findings (Collins & Hussey, 2004). Therefore, to maintain a degree of consistency, I used the interview schedules as a checklist to ensure participants had addressed each of the questions. I also posed specific questions from the schedules to participants to ascertain whether they had a different perspective on the subject.

The semi-structured interview approach also led to considerable variation in the time taken for the interviews. At Business A, interviews ranged from 10 minutes to just over

one hour. Occasionally, I did not have sufficient time to conduct the interview at depth because the unit's managers would only grant 10-15 minutes of their time. Two of the managers were also present during parts of the interviews with the HS representatives. The presence of management led to the choice to omit certain questions that the representative may have felt uneasy answering in front of their managers.

In comparison, individual interviews at Business B were conducted confidentially in meeting rooms at the Human Resources Section. Interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to two hours. The interview times were limited on three occasions.

4.4 Data analysis

To make sense of the large volume of data obtained from the interviews, I chose to apply a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this method is widely used to analyse qualitative data because of its simplicity. It allows for a systematic and insightful analysis without the need for in-depth knowledge of technical and theoretical concepts, which other qualitative approaches, such as conversational analysis, often require. To analyse the data, I followed the basic structured method commonly recommended by qualitative researchers (e.g. Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Data analysis began during the interviewing stage. After conducting the interviews at each unit/department, I documented and shared the key themes with my supervisors. Subsequently, the audio recorded interviews were transcribed and verified for accuracy, which gave me an opportunity to reflect and re-familiarise myself with the data.

My approach was to use the interview data obtained from the senior managers, OHS managers and union convenor to describe the contextual characteristics of each of the case studies. To do this, I extracted information from the transcripts, as well as Business B's participation agreement, pertaining to the business organisation and management, trade union organisation and management, management commitment and responsibility for OHS and the health and safety employee participation system.

Subsequently, I focused on each of the individual HS representatives. I used the data from the representatives' interviews to create vignettes illustrating how they enacted their roles by focusing on what they told me about their purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and OHS impacts. A summary of the interview data relating to each of these themes was tabulated alongside relevant data from the interviews with the representatives' respective managers and co-workers. The perceptions of these individuals, in relation to the key themes, was compared and contrasted. This form of data triangulation was used to minimise misrepresentation and misunderstanding, but more importantly, to present a truer picture of how HS representatives contribute to the workplace in reality (Mathison, 1988).

Additionally, the activities in which the representatives reportedly participated were assessed in relation to the expectations of the representatives as defined by the company and HSE Amendment Act. Further, the interviewees' perceptions of the representatives' impacts, as well as what I could interpret from the interview data, was organised according to rungs 1 - 5 of the Danish National Working Environment Authority's (2002) impact ladder.

In the discussion, a typology was developed to illustrate how the HS representatives contributed to OHS. The representatives were typecast on the basis of the similarities and differences between their purposes and activity profiles. These profiles emerged by analysing the HS representatives' activities in relation to Brun and Loiselle's (2002) theoretical framework. This allowed for the activities of the representatives to be categorised in relation to the level (operational versus strategic) and dimension (organisational, technical, human) that they primarily worked. The impact ladder was also used to evaluate and differentiate between the OHS impacts of the different 'types' of representative identified.

4.5 Ethics

A high risk ethics application was submitted to Massey University's Human Ethics Committee: Southern B and approval was granted (16/12/08) prior to the recruitment of participants.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the aim of this study and the design of the investigation of how HS representatives' contribute to OHS in two businesses from New Zealand's metal manufacturing sector. Case studies enable multifaceted information to be solicited on the role of HS representative within the context of the workplace. Semi-structured interviews provide the basis for rich, qualitative insights into how HS representatives and their organisational colleagues perceive the OHS contributions of the representative. The chapter also provided the rationale for the use of thematic analysis, and how it was applied to the current research. Part of the analysis involved triangulation of the data obtained from the different groups of participants to create a more accurate picture of reality.

Over the following chapters, the results of this study are progressively presented. Chapters 5 and 6 present the results of the interviews at Businesses A and B respectively. Chapter 7 pulls together the themes from both case studies to address the research question and associated sub-questions in the context of the current scholarship.

Chapter 5: Business A's results

5.1 Introduction

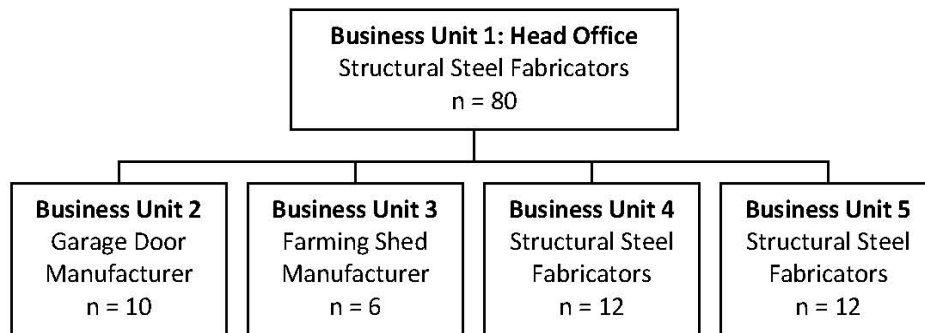
This chapter presents results from interviews at Business A, the smaller of the two metal manufacturers. The first part of the chapter outlines the contextual characteristics of the business in relation to its organisation and management, trade union organisation and commitment to OHS, management's commitment and responsibility for health and safety and the OHS employee participation system. The second part of the chapter illustrates how a sample of four HS representatives participated in health and safety. Finally, key features of the case are summarised.

5.2 Business organisation and management

Business A began operating in the early 1960s as a small steel fabrication outfit. Over recent years the business had rapidly expanded by increasing staff numbers and purchasing small fabrication firms scattered across the lower North Island. At the time of the interviews, Business A composed of five separate units trading under different names, but each unit specialised in the fabrication, surface treatment and erection of structural steel for the domestic market. Products ranged from multi-level buildings to garage doors, sheds, tanks and silos.

The business employed approximately 120 staff across its five units (see Figure 5 for the enterprise structure and employee counts). Business Unit 1 was the original business and head office where the directors were located. At each of the units, a male manager had been appointed with the right to make operational decisions, but an effort had been made to align OHS policy and practice across the units. The managers were assisted by part-time female administrators who dealt with finance, personnel and the foremen responsible for managing production. Production workers were male and included tradesmen (such as fitter welders), apprentices and labourers. The workforce was predominantly full-time with a low turnover and work hours were regular from Monday to Friday.

Figure 5. Business A's enterprise structure and employee count



5.3 Trade union organisation and commitment to OHS

There were no trade union members in Business A. The director believed this was because management had an “*open door*” policy and provided good employment conditions.

5.4 Management commitment and responsibility for OHS

The managing director asserted that the organisation was strongly committed to OHS. This sentiment was shared by numerous interviewees who described the business as a leader in health and safety based on their industry experience. The director perceived that the company's commitment to health and safety had increased significantly over the last decade and was demonstrated by the employment of a half-time OHS manager, who was also the administrator at the head office, and by the implementation of a formal OHS management system.

This increased commitment to OHS was driven primarily by economic incentives. The OHS manager stated that the business began implementing a formal OHS management system in the early 2000s to achieve a basic ‘primary’ standard under the Workplace Safety Management Practices (WSMP) programme to secure a 10% reduction in ACC levies. Three of the five units had achieved accreditation. The director recognised that these systems were also important to minimise injuries, which he affirmed were unproductive in the context of industry skill shortages.

The director confirmed that managers had no formal responsibility for OHS. According to the OHS manager, the HS representatives were primarily responsible for the implementation and operation of the OHS management systems at each unit because they attended HS representative training courses and had greater OHS knowledge than the managers. Therefore, employee participation was fundamental to Business A's approach to OHS.

5.5 OHS employee participation system

The OHS employee participation system was determined unilaterally by the previous OHS manager, so there was no employee participation agreement as required by the HSE Amendment Act. Specifically, workers were encouraged to raise OHS issues directly with management informally and at staff or *"toolbox"* meetings, held monthly at each unit. Meetings gave managers an opportunity to communicate information to workers, such as progress on work orders or new OHS policies, and for workers to raise issues. The company further tried to foster worker engagement by mandating that workshop staff take turns auditing machinery with the guidance of a checklist (the 'equipment checklist'). Since the HSE Amendment Act came into force, workers also had the opportunity to raise OHS issues via HS representatives. The OHS manager asserted that nominations or volunteers for the role were rarely forthcoming, so she implied that management offered the position to a worker who they perceived to be responsible.

Business A had seven HS representatives, which equated to roughly five percent of the workforce. Four of the units had one representative because they had so few employees, but with an employee count of 80, head office had two HS representatives: one for each of the main types of work (fabrication and finishing). The seventh representative was based with the mobile erection crew.

Business A's HS representatives had a dual purpose. They were expected to take responsibility for the operation of the health and safety management system at each unit, and to act as a point of contact for workers wanting to raise concerns. To illustrate this point, the OHS manager stated:

If workers have any problems, or see any possible hazards, they have got someone to talk to about it, so that they're not feeling like they have to come and see the boss or see their foreman or whatever and feel like they're complaining... [Additionally] the reps know they are responsible for the safety and well being of everybody on site or wherever they are.

Given that the employee participation system was developed without the agreement of the workforce, the functions of the HS representatives originated from the default section of the HSE Amendment Act. Therefore, the representatives should foster OHS management practices by:

- identifying and informing management of hazards;
- discussing ways to control hazards with management;
- consulting with inspectors on health and safety issues; and
- promoting the interests of employees in health and safety, including in relation to arrangements for rehabilitation and return to work.

The OHS manager also asked the HS representatives to agree to:

- monitor workers' compliance with safety policies and inform management of breaches;
- report and investigate accidents;
- update emergency evacuation information; and
- attend the OHS committee meeting.

The OHS committee was established in response to the HSE Amendment Act as a forum to facilitate discussion of the company's OHS issues. The OHS manager chaired the committee, which was open to management and HS representatives, but only five representatives regularly attended. The OHS manager emphasised that the meeting was an important forum for representatives to discuss their functions, the outcome of accident investigations, OHS policy and hazard management. Recommendations arising from the committee were forwarded to the managing director to consider. The director asserted that recommendations were assessed based on cost and practicality. To assist with this assessment, the opinions of the unit's managers were sought and the final decisions communicated back to the committee. The HS representatives were responsible for informing management of any changes in policy and practice.

HS representatives were entitled to spend as much time as required conducting OHS activities, and could attend the EMA's HS representative training courses and first aid. Each representative received a copy of the company's health and safety management folder, which documented the components of the OHS system and provided tools and templates, such as accident investigation guidelines.

The remainder of this chapter illustrates how a sample of four of Business A's representatives, fictitiously named Shannon, Chrissie, Robert and Glen, participated in health and safety. It focuses on the representatives' roles, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and OHS impacts based on the perceptions of the representatives, their managers and two of their co-workers.

5.6 HS representative 1: Shannon

Shannon had been an administrator at Business A for three years. Soon after she was employed, the manager asked her to be the HS representative for the unit's 11 tradesmen and labourers because no one else wanted the position. She accepted the role because she wanted to maintain the wellbeing of people, to learn about OHS and gain additional qualifications. She had attended all three of the EMA's HS representative training courses.

Shannon perceived she had a dual purpose as the unit's HS representative: to operate the unit's OHS management system, and to provide workers with an avenue of redress if their health and safety was in jeopardy, as she commented:

If management overlooks something, the workers can say 'oh, I'm not going to do that, I'm going to show the rep'... I'm also responsible for the workings of the [OHS] system...making sure that the paper work is done and that things [OHS issues] have been discussed.

There was a paper-based OHS management system when she took on the role, but Shannon described it as *"lip service"*. She subsequently outlined the areas for which she took responsibility to facilitate the achievement of her overarching aim to prevent accidents.

Training was a key area that she administered. Shannon checked that the foreman completed paperwork verifying that new employees were informed of emergency procedures and protocols for the use of equipment. She also organised workers' attendance at Site Safe (construction industry training organisation) OHS courses, which she perceived gave workers crucial hazard management skills.

Shannon confirmed that the foreman and workers were responsible for hazard management, but she ensured that they met their obligations. Before working on new sites, workers had to show her the documented hazards and control measures. If she learned of non-compliance with the controls, corrective action was discussed with the foreman. For instance, she recalled:

The guys didn't cone an area off properly onsite or put them out at all. The manager said they should know to do that because they've done the training, but they seem to forget. In those circumstances, my job is to ask 'why aren't you doing that'. I get the foreman and we discuss what we're going to do about it.

Shannon also recruited the foreman to assist with the accident investigation process. The manager informed her when an accident occurred and requested an investigation into the cause. Shannon verified the event was logged in the accident register and interviewed workers about the occurrence using the guidelines in the OHS management folder. While the guidance was helpful, she perceived that workers' reluctance to contribute to discussions hindered the process, so Shannon relied on the foreman to discuss preventative intervention. She felt that her ability to propose controls was limited by her lack of industry experience while the foreman's knowledge of the work process enabled him to determine appropriate action. Yet, Shannon was adamant that she contributed by presenting ideas and asking questions. For instance, she recalled:

A guy got hit in the face with the grinder, so we [foreman and Shannon] had a big discussion. It's my job to ask 'did he know how to hold the grinder properly?' So he [the foreman] went back to the toolbox meeting and said, 'This is how you hold the grinder properly'. I present the ideas to the foreman and he should go over it again with the guys.

In addition to determining preventive action post-accident, Shannon oversaw the rehabilitation of workers seriously injured in accidents. She liaised with the ACC in relation to compensatory wage payments and kept in contact with the injured worker.

Shannon updated the OHS committee of OHS-related events at the unit and recognised that the meetings provided an opportunity to seek advice from the OHS manager and discuss the outcome of accident investigations, as well as hazard control. Shannon reported that her manager was updated on the meeting outcomes, and that information which workers needed to know about was conveyed to the foreman to relay at toolbox meetings. Her interaction with workers was limited because of her part-time status, but Shannon tried to give them opportunities to raise OHS issues. She asked workers to complete the equipment checklist and approached them at tea breaks to enquire of their concerns even though she was uncertain whether they would confide in her. Shannon implied that her relationship with the workers was difficult, as she commented:

The guys [workers] think I'm a bit of a dragon. I don't take crap and they can do that. I won't be walked over or manipulated. I go and talk to them, but whether they want to talk or not is up to them.

Shannon indirectly solicited information about workers' concerns by asking the foreman to allow workers to raise OHS issues at toolbox meetings and reporting his findings back to her.

Shannon further fostered workers' participation in emergency management by verbally testing workers' knowledge of the location of fire alarms, fire hoses, extinguishers, and their operation. In addition, she organised fire drills and training for the fire wardens.

Despite helping the unit gain primary accreditation under the WSMP programme, Shannon was adamant that she had not improved OHS conditions. Her annual analysis of the accident statistics revealed a reduction in the accident rate, but she attributed this to the new manager's commitment to OHS. Overall, Shannon perceived that management's commitment to health and safety was the most critical source of support for her role. She described her experiences as a HS representative under the previous and current managers of the unit to illustrate her point:

With the previous manager, I would ask for information and for tasks to be done and they were just never done. You'd follow up and follow up and that's where you get to the point where you want to issue a [hazard] notice. The [current] manager's a role model and he's planted himself and said 'this is the standard I want' and now they're [workers] working to that standard. That's the difference of having a manager that comes on board and drives health and safety. If you

haven't got the top people driving it, like the manager and foreman, it's a waste of time.

Shannon refrained from issuing a hazard notice to the previous manager because she thought the inspectorate would have to be informed and was apprehensive that the business would face punitive action, which could also jeopardise her job. She asserted that at the time, she experienced a dilemma between protecting workers' wellbeing and protecting her own interests, as she stated: *"you've got to be able to stand up if you think something is not right and that's quite hard when you're an employee. You sometimes may be putting on job at risk"*.

Shannon questioned whether workers supported her and felt it was more appropriate for one of the workshop staff to take over the role. Yet, she felt that workers refrained from volunteering because they perceived the role as being *"too academic"* and expressed concern about how those with limited literacy skills would cope at HS representative training. She felt the courses were vital for representatives to attend because they provided a broad overview of the role and understanding of OHS systems and legislation. She found further information on these topics by using her office computer to access the websites of Department of Labour, Site Safe and ACC.

Table 5 summarises the data from Shannon's interview and presents her manager, the foreman and a co-worker's perspectives of her purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impacts on OHS at the unit. The key features of the table are subsequently explained.

Table 5. Perspectives of Shannon's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results

| | Shannon's perspective | Manager's perspective | Foreman's perspective | Co-worker's perspective |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent accidents by managing the OHS management system and solving issues that concern workers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure the business complies with OHS obligations as specified by head office and externally. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate the resolution of the unit's OHS issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help resolve workers' OHS concerns. |
| Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and enforce workers' compliance with safety rules. Attend OHS committee meetings and inform the manager of agenda and foreman of policy changes. Organise and verify workers are inducted and trained (Site Safe). Report, investigate accidents and discuss hazard control with foreman. Manage rehabilitation process. Encourage workers to raise OHS issues in person, via toolbox meeting and equipment checklist. Organise fire drills, fire warden training and test workers' knowledge of procedures. Check workers document hazards and controls at new sites. Analyse accident statistics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor workers' behaviour for non-compliance with policy and inform foreman. Attend OHS committee meetings and report back the agenda. Produce induction training forms. Discuss hazard control with the foreman. Record and investigate accidents. Liaise with ACC as part of the rehabilitation process. Source information on regulations, e.g. when to wear harnesses at height. Organise equipment maintenance and certification. Implement a 'sign-in' procedure for visitors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings. Help resolve the unit's more serious OHS issues. Complete OHS-related paper work, e.g. induction training forms. Organise Site Safe training. Report and investigate accidents. Organise equipment maintenance. Encourage workers to raise OHS issues at tea break. Inform of OHS information that needs to be raised at toolbox meetings, e.g. reinforcing safety rules. Source information on regulations relating to harnesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform workers when they are not following rules, e.g. not wearing earmuffs. |
| Role facilitators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management e.g. setting and enforcing OHS standards. Information and guidance from the OHS manager and OHS committee. EMA's HS representative training. Access to information (internet) and tools (OHS management folder). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management support. Time to complete administration. Personally motivated to improve OHS. Office background allows her to interpret legislation. Efficiency as the administrator. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time to complete administration. Personally motivated to improve OHS. Proficiency at completing paperwork. "Credibility". | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management support. Personally motivated to improve OHS. Workers listen to her. |
| Role barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of worker support. Limited knowledge of production. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A |
| Impacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact on work environment. Facilitated the accreditation of the unit to a WSMP programme primary standard. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased workers' knowledge of hazards and allowed them to raise OHS issues at toolbox meetings. OHS is managed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers have some OHS training, which is likely to reduce harm. Raised workers' awareness of OHS. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers have another avenue to raise OHS issues if management is unwilling or slow do remedy concerns. |

Purpose: There were two distinct perspectives of the purpose of the HS representative role. Shannon's colleagues agreed that her purpose was to facilitate the resolution of OHS concerns, while her manager suggested that her role was akin to a compliance officer. He implied that Shannon's purpose was to administer the OHS management system in accordance with the guidelines set out by the head office and as defined by OHS legislation. Shannon's stated purpose suggested that she tried to fulfill the expectations of management and colleagues. Specifically, she claimed that her duty was to reduce the unit's accidents by administering the OHS management system and helping to solve OHS issues that concerned workers.

Activities: The interviewees observed that Shannon actively participated in a range of OHS activities. Table 6 organises these activities in relation to the activities in which HS representatives were expected to participate. The table indicates that, while Shannon had not interacted with the inspectorate, she participated in all of the activities she was expected to and often went beyond the minimum requirements.

In relation to hazard identification, Shannon primarily relied on workers to communicate OHS concerns via the direct systems of employee participation. Otherwise, she personally identified hazards by examining accident data. Accidents and policy breaches prompted Shannon to discuss hazard management with the foreman and advocate for immediate preventive intervention. She also engaged in the hazard management process in an administrative capacity on behalf of her manager by organising Site Safe training, equipment maintenance, completing paperwork post-accident and sourcing information on regulations.

In addition to her administrative duties, Shannon tried to represent workers' OHS interests. She attempted to understand workers' OHS concerns so that she could facilitate a resolution, and attended the OHS committee as a worker representative. She also should have supported workers in the development of plans for their rehabilitation, but while she did encourage and support injured workers, she ultimately acted as her manager's agent by liaising between the ACC and injured worker on his behalf.

Table 6. Shannon's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate (legislative requirements and OHS manager's expectations)

| How HS representatives are expected to participate: | | Yes/ No | How Shannon participates: |
|---|--|------------|---|
| OHS manager's expectations | Legislation | | |
| | Identify and inform management of hazards | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse unit's accident statistics. Identify hazards from accident reports. Check workers complete paperwork outlining hazards before starting work on new sites. Get workers to complete the equipment check list and ask them about hazards they identify. Ensure workers can raise OHS issues at meetings. |
| | Discuss ways to control hazards with management | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate discussions about hazard control, after accidents or breaches of safety policy, by asking questions and posing scenarios. Check workers document hazard controls before working on new sites. Organise equipment maintenance. Implement a sign-in procedure for visitors. Source information on hazard control regulations, e.g. working at height regulations. Organise Site Safe training. Ensure new workers are inducted (includes safety components) by completing documentation. |
| | Consult with inspectors | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not perceive a need to interact with the inspectorate. |
| | Participate in the rehabilitation and return to work process | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with ACC in relation to compensatory wage payments. Keep in contact with injured workers to enquire after their wellbeing and encourage visits to the site. |
| | Monitor workers' compliance with safety policies | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach workers and inform them of observed safety rule non-compliance or ask foreman to enforce safety policy. |
| | Report and investigate accidents | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report accidents. Interview workers about the causes of the accidents and complete investigation paperwork. |
| | Update emergency evacuation information | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise mock fire drills and fire wardens' training. Test workers' knowledge of emergency procedures and use of equipment. |
| | Attend OHS committee meetings | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as a communication conduit between the OHS committee: report the unit's OHS issues and relay information about policies to management and workers. |

Key: ✓ - Activities in which the HS representative participated.
✗ - Activities in which the HS representative did not participate.

Facilitators/barriers: The interviewees identified a number of factors they perceived facilitated Shannon's ability to perform her HS representative role. Notably, her job role gave her access to basic resources, such as information and time. Additionally, the manager and foreman perceived that Shannon's administrative expertise supported her capability to enact her OHS responsibilities, particularly to complete paperwork and interpret legislation. Shannon recognised that her attendance at HS representative training enhanced her expert knowledge of OHS systems and legislation, but that her lack of insight in relation to the production process limited her ability to engage in hazard management. She overcame this constraint by using the OHS committee as a way of gaining ideas about hazard management, but more crucially formed a coalition with the foreman, who had expert knowledge of production and decision-making authority. The manager's commitment to OHS, via the setting and enforcement of OHS standards, also facilitated her efforts. The manager, foreman, and co-worker were ultimately willing to engage with Shannon because of her personal credibility and motivation to improve OHS. Yet, earlier in her tenure when she felt she could not rely on the support of co-workers or management to facilitate OHS improvements, she considered issuing a hazard notice and informing the inspectorate, but her economic vulnerability as an employee prevented her from pursuing this strategy.

Impact: Shannon's impact on OHS was positively evaluated. Figure 6 presents her impact in relation to the impact ladder and indicates that she has had the greatest impact at the systems level. Shannon and her manager emphasised how her actions ensured that the unit had a functional OHS management system. In spite of this, Shannon felt that she had not contributed to the improvement of the unit's working conditions. Yet, the other interviewees perceived that she improved the OHS management system by creating opportunities for workers to participate. For instance, the foreman asserted that the Site Safe training organised by Shannon increased workers' abilities to engage in the hazard management process. She was further perceived to have enhanced workers' knowledge and awareness of hazards, provided additional channels for workers to raise issues, and offered an avenue of redress if management were indifferent to workers' concerns.

Figure 6. Shannon's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
| Rung 5: Reduction in stressors or exposures | |
| Rung 4: Better production processes | |
| Rung3: Improvement to OHS management system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Ensured functionality of hazard identification systems, e.g. workers documented hazards before working on new sites, equipment checklist completed. ← Facilitated the control of hazards, e.g. implemented a system to manage visitors, ensured workers abided by the company's prescribed hazard controls and that hazards were managed post-accident. ← Provided workers with another avenue to raise and redress OHS concerns. ← Administered the accident reporting and investigation system. ← Administered the rehabilitation of injured workers. ← Administered and maintained the emergency management system. ← Administered the OHS training system to verify that workers were inducted and attend Site Safe training. ← Facilitated the communication of OHS related information between management, workers and the OHS committee. |
| Rung 2: Changes in attitudes | |
| Rung 1: Changes in knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Manager and foreman perceived Shannon increased workers' knowledge and awareness of hazards. |
| | |

5.7 HS representative 2: Chrissie

Chrissie was the part-time administrator at a small unit that only had a manager and four workshop staff. She became the unit's HS representative four months before being interviewed. Shannon asked her to take on the role because there was no HS representative at the unit. She had been interviewed by both Shannon and the manager to assess her appropriateness for the position. Chrissie accepted the role because she could manage the extra work and was concerned that, while the workshop was a hazardous environment, the OHS management system only partially functioned.

Chrissie stated that her purpose was to maintain the safety of workers and visitors by managing the OHS management system, as she explained: *"it's really about putting systems and processes in place to prevent accidents"*. She outlined a number of areas upon which she concentrated to minimise the likelihood of an accident. One of her key focus areas was the implementation of procedures and controls to manage visitors. Chrissie organised signage for the shop frontage directing the public to report to the office. In the workshop, she made disposable ear plugs available and arranged for floor markings designating access areas. Chrissie stated that she facilitated these changes by asking the manager: *"Can we set that up? Can we do this?"*

In relation to preventative action for workers, Chrissie's priority was to induct new staff. She informed new employees that she was the representative, outlined emergency procedures, and organised for the manager to inform them about hazard management. Chrissie implied that she found it difficult to participate in hazard management because of her isolation and lack of understanding of the production process, as she commented:

At this stage, I'm relying on my boss for that [hazard management]. A lot of the machinery I don't know the correct operation for. It's all written down, but it's still too new... It's also hard for me to be in here [the office] doing administration and to know what's happening in the workshop.

Despite this, Chrissie provided a number of examples of how she contributed to the hazard management process. She ensured workers identified hazards associated with certain tasks on the workshop's whiteboard and encouraged workers to wear PPE.

Additionally, she implemented emergency procedures by demarcating an external assembly point, organised mock fire drills, and ensured that there were first aid kits.

Post-incident, Chrissie reported and investigated the event. The latest accident occurred when a spark blew up under a worker's welding helmet and into his eye. Chrissie interviewed the worker, completed the accident investigation form and discussed how to prevent a reoccurrence. Chrissie and the worker decided the event was a freak accident because he was wearing PPE and took no preventative action. Had the worker been more seriously injured, Chrissie would not participate in the development of plans for his rehabilitation or return to work as she perceived that this fell beyond the scope of her role. Post-investigation, Chrissie informed the OHS committee and workers about incidents at toolbox meetings by presenting a body chart indicating where injuries had been sustained as a way of reminding workers to be cautious.

Chrissie was confident that she improved the work environment by facilitating the purchase of a cage to securely store gas bottles outdoors and marking a walkway for visitors in the workshop. Yet, she expressed a sense of frustration that she could not initiate further improvements. She wanted to purchase a chemical storage unit, but understood that in the context of an economic downturn, the business had to spend conservatively and perceived no need to issue a hazard notice or pursue the matter.

Chrissie recognised that she was growing accustomed to her responsibilities and felt that, although the first stage of the EMA's HS representative training course provided a basic understanding of her role, further training would increase her OHS knowledge. In the mean time, she used the OHS committee meetings to clarify her responsibilities and exchange ideas about hazard management and often phoned Shannon for guidance on, for instance, where to access forms and templates on the internet. Chrissie had never considered seeking advice from the inspectorate nor had she perceived the need to.

Table 7 summarises the data from Chrissie's interview and presents her manager and two co-worker perspectives of her purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impacts on OHS at the unit.

Table 7. Perspectives of Chrissie's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results

| | Chrissie's perspective | Manager's perspective | Co-worker 1's perspective | Co-workers 2's perspective |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent accidents by administering the OHS management system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To take responsibility for OHS and administer the OHS paperwork to satisfy head office. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help solve workers' health and safety issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To listen to workers' OHS related concerns. |
| Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the possibility of purchasing safety equipment with manager. Encourage workers to wear PPE. Attend OHS committee meetings. Designate emergency assembly point, organise fire drills, purchase and restock first aid. Report and investigate accidents and determine preventive action by discussing solutions with workers. Inform workers about accidents. Establish procedures and controls to manage visitors – erected signage, marked access areas on workshop floor and made ear plugs available. Verify workers have identified hazards on workshop's whiteboard. Conduct part of induction training and arrange equipment training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the purchase of safety equipment or items. Encourage staff to wear the correct PPE. Attend OHS committee meetings and report back the agenda. Designate an emergency evacuation assembly point. Purchase and restock first aid kit. Report and investigate accidents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase safety equipment. Encourage workers to report OHS issues at toolbox meetings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order health and safety related supplies for workers. Encourage workers to wear PPE. Encourage workers to raise OHS issues at toolbox meetings. |
| Role facilitators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMA's HS representative training. Support from workers and other representatives at the OHS committee. Access to OHS guidance (internet). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative role facilitates her ability to complete administration. Management support, e.g. discuss OHS matters with her, provides time. OHS committee's guidance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proficient at purchasing supplies as the administrator. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and safety knowledge. |
| Role barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolation and lack of understanding of production limited participation in hazard management. Lack of finance, OHS expertise. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inexperienced as the HS representative. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A |
| Impacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiated the purchase of a cage for gas bottles to be stored externally. Organised floor markings indicating access areas for visitors in the workshop. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formally managed OHS. Organised floor markings in workshop and signage for visitors. Introduced welding helmets, vests and first aid kit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiently purchased PPE. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased a cage to secure gas bottles outdoors. Increased the number of items of PPE that workers wear. |

Purpose: There were two main interpretations of the purpose of the HS representative role at this unit. Chrissie and her manager agreed that her purpose was to administer the unit's OHS management system, but had different understandings of the necessity of this system. While Chrissie stated that her role was to manage the system to prevent harm, the manager implied that the system had to be administered so that the unit complied with its OHS-related obligations as defined by the head office. In fact, the manager suggested that he had delegated responsibility for OHS to Chrissie in claiming that she was *"like the boss when it comes to health and safety."* In contrast, the workers believed the purpose of the HS representative was to act on their behalf by listening to their OHS concerns and facilitating a resolution.

Activities: Table 8 organises the activities in which Chrissie was reported to have participated. The table indicates that Chrissie participated in most of the activities expected of her and, at times, went above the minimum requirements.

In relation to hazard identification, Chrissie primarily relied on workers to raise OHS issues via the direct systems of employee participation. The only way she personally identified hazards was through her administration of the accident reporting and investigation process. Accidents, in particular, prompted Chrissie to facilitate discussions about hazard management. She discussed the merits of specific hazard controls with workers and represented workers' ideas to management if the proposed solution was likely to require financial outlay. Further, Chrissie went beyond the minimum requirements of the HS representatives by acting in an administrative capacity. For instance, she administered the induction training system and procured supplies.

Chrissie also tried to ensure she represented workers' interests. She attended the OHS committee as a worker representative and attempted to solicit information from workers about hazards, so that she could argue a case to management for their resolution. However, while none of the workers had been absent from work due to an occupational injury, Chrissie perceived that she could not represent their interests in a

formal capacity as this fell beyond the scope of her role. In addition, Chrissie had not had the opportunity, or perceived the need, to interact with the inspectorate.

Table 8. Chrissie's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate (legislative requirements and OHS manager's expectations)

| How HS representatives are expected to participate: | | Yes/No | How Chrissie participates: |
|---|--|--------|--|
| OHS manager's expectations | Legislation | | |
| | Identify and inform management of hazards | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verify workers identify and document hazards on the workshop's whiteboard. Identify hazards from accident reports. Encourage workers to report OHS issues at toolbox meetings. Workers inform her of hazards. |
| | Discuss ways to control hazards with management | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss possibilities for purchasing safety equipment to control hazards with the manager. Implement procedures and controls for managing visitors, e.g. marking access areas, erecting signage. Purchase OHS related supplies, e.g. PPE. Facilitate discussions with workers about how to control hazards post-accident. Conduct OHS inductions and arrange for manager to conduct equipment training. Inform workers about accidents to prevent reoccurrence. |
| | Consult with inspectors | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No opportunity or perceived need to interact with the inspectorate. |
| | Participate in the rehabilitation and return to work process | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No opportunity to participate in this process as yet, but Chrissie also perceived that it fell beyond the scope of her role. |
| | Monitor workers' compliance with safety policies | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage workers to wear PPE if non-compliance was observed. |
| | Report and investigate accidents | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report accidents in the register. Interview workers about the circumstances of accidents and complete investigation paperwork. |
| | Update emergency evacuation information | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise fire drills and an assembly area. Purchase and restock first aid kit. |
| | Attend OHS committee meetings | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committees to raise the unit's OHS issues on behalf of workers and management. |

Key: ✓ - Activities in which the HS representative participated.
 ✗ - Activities in which the HS representative did not participate.

Facilitators/barriers: The interviewees suggested that one of the main factors that supported Chrissie's ability to function as a HS representative was her administrative role. It was implied that it was 'natural' for Chrissie to take responsibility for OHS paperwork and the procurement of safety supplies because these functions were part of her duties as the administrator. Additionally, the position gave her time to organise and implement health and safety changes, complete paperwork and access the internet to source OHS information. However, Chrissie recognised that her position was also a barrier because her isolation from the workshop compromised her ability to participate more actively in hazard management.

Further, Chrissie believed that her lack of knowledge of OHS and the production process compromised her ability to enact the role. While her attendance at the EMA's HS representative training course enhanced her understanding of health and safety, she overcame perceived knowledge deficiencies by networking with experienced HS representatives at the OHS committee, and drawing on the manager's and workers' knowledge of production to facilitate the management of hazards. While she was perceived to have made improvements to OHS, she implied her ability to initiate further change was hindered by her lack of decision making authority in relation to the allocation of resources.

Impact: Chrissie mainly contributed to the improvement of the unit's OHS management system as her impact ladder indicates (see Figure 7). The manager perceived that Chrissie ensured the unit operated a formal OHS management system and recognised that prior to her appointment, OHS was managed in an ad hoc manner and focused on the use of PPE.

The manager disputed that the implementation of an OHS system improved working conditions, but all interviewees provided examples of how Chrissie improved health and safety via, for instance, the introduction of new PPE and relocation of gas bottles to a secure external cage. The purchase of the cage demonstrated that Chrissie provided workers with an avenue of redress, as the manager stated:

One of the boys came to me with an issue about the gas bottles and I said 'oh nah, it's all right', but then they said something to her [Chrissie] and she said something to me and I thought 'oh shit, okay then, I better do something about it.'

Figure 7. Chrissie's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder

| | |
|---|---|
| Rung 5: Reduction in stressors or exposures | |
| Rung 4: Better production processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Facilitated isolation of hazards by purchasing a cage to securely store gas bottles externally. ← Facilitated risk minimisation by initiating marking of walkways, purchasing ear plugs, signage and new PPE. |
| Rung 3: Improvement to OHS management system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Ensured functionality of hazard identification systems, e.g. workers identified and documented hazards on workshop's whiteboard. ← Facilitated the control of hazards, e.g. ensured workers wore correct PPE, implemented a system to manage visitors and made sure hazards were managed post-accident. ← Provided workers with an avenue to raise and redress OHS concerns. ← Administered the accident reporting and investigation system. ← Administered and maintained the emergency management system. ← Procured PPE and OHS related supplies. ← Administered the OHS induction training system. ← Facilitated communication of OHS related information between management, workers and the OHS committee. |
| Rung 2: Changes in attitudes | |
| Rung 1: Changes in knowledge | |
| | |

5.8 HS representative 3: Robert

Robert had been a full-time labourer and HS representative for a workshop, which was host to 10 permanent tradesmen as well as contractors. At the time of the interview, it had been five years since management asked Robert to take on the role and sent him on the first stage of the EMA's HS representative training course. This was because it was less disruptive for a labourer to participate in OHS activities as opposed to a tradesman. Robert had offered to stand down, but none of the other workers expressed any interest and he retained the role because he enjoyed participating at OHS committee meetings.

Robert's stated purpose was to act as the workshop's representative on the OHS committee. Specifically, his duty was to inform the committee of the workshop's safety issues and relay to workers the committee's expectations of their behaviour. He recalled that one of the recent issues related to non-compliance with safety policy mandating the use of overalls in the workshop. Workers observed that contractors repeatedly entered the workshop without overalls while permanent employees were described as being "*lax*" for removing the top half of the garment in warmer weather. Robert informed the committee of the issue and was told by the OHS manager that the policy had to be enforced. He subsequently reminded his colleagues to wear their overalls correctly at a toolbox meeting and dealt with non-compliant contractors by asking them to leave or instructing his manager to enforce the policy on his behalf. While Robert felt it was important for workers to conform to rules to avoid disciplinary action, he expressed a sense of frustration that colleagues expected him to enforce compliance.

Robert acknowledged that he did have particular responsibilities in relation to hazard management. He used a checklist to induct new workers so they were aware of hazards and controls, and ensured colleagues conducted a hazard analysis on new machinery. Robert stated that he ensured workers' awareness of the hazards and controls was maintained by giving each an opportunity to conduct annual inspections with the guidance of a checklist. Workers were also expected to inform him of any OHS concerns, such as damaged cables, detected during the course of their work. Once

defects were identified or brought to his attention, he asked the administrator to arrange maintenance or procure new PPE. Robert never perceived the need to issue a hazard notice or consult with the inspectorate.

Another key area of Robert's responsibilities was accident reporting and investigation. He often reminded workers to document near misses and accidents because management refused to accept compensation claims if there was no record of the occurrence. In the event of serious accidents, Robert oversaw the reporting process. For example, an apprentice recently crushed his fingers, so Robert filled in the accident investigation forms and, although the worker was on sick leave indefinitely, Robert stated that the rehabilitation process was management's responsibility.

Overall, Robert perceived that he had improved OHS by raising workers' awareness of the need to be vigilant of the safety of others. For instance, it had become "*second nature*" for workers to look around and modify their position before they used grinding tools to minimise the likelihood that others would be showered with sparks.

Robert emphasised that his ability to influence workers' behaviour was dependent on his manager's commitment to OHS, acknowledging that the manager:

Backs me up. If a health and safety issue comes up, he's quick to deal with it or support me, especially when it comes to someone doing unsafe practices.

Further, Robert recognised that the OHS organisation supported his role. The OHS committee was a forum to discuss his responsibilities while the OHS manager could always be telephoned for further guidance. However, Robert felt that his co-workers could be more supportive by consistently complying with safety rules. He speculated that his attendance at the advanced stages of the EMA's HS representative training courses would give him greater knowledge and respect from colleagues.

Table 9 summarises the data from Robert's interview and presents his manager and two co-worker perspectives of his purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and OHS impacts.

Table 9. Perspectives of Robert's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results

| | Robert's perspective | Manager's perspective | Co-worker 1's perspective | Co-workers 2's perspective |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent the unit's OHS issues at the OHS committee and inform workers of the committee's expectations of their behaviour. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To attend the OHS committee meetings, supervise workers by monitoring OHS policy compliance and resolve workers' concerns. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To listen to workers' OHS related concerns and help resolve them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help resolve workers' concerns, particularly by enforcing the workshop's safety rules. |
| Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend the OHS committee meetings to raise the unit's OHS issues and inform workers of safety policies. Enforce safety rules. Conduct OHS induction training. Encourage reporting of minor accidents, report and investigate serious accidents. Discuss policy breaches with manager. Procure PPE. Facilitate completion of equipment checklist and documentation of hazards/controls for new machinery. Identify hazards during production. Arrange equipment maintenance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings. Observe workers and inform them of safety policy breaches, especially use of PPE. Induct new staff and contractors. Record and investigate accidents. Discuss workers' non-compliance of safety rules. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings and feedback information to workers about safety rules. Inform workers when they breach safety rules. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings. Inform workers of safety rules. |
| Role facilitators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management support, e.g. backup with enforcement of safety rules. Support from OHS manager and committee. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management supports, e.g. support him if he raises issues, especially in relation to workers' use of PPE, and grant him time to attend OHS committee meetings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management support, e.g. allow him to conduct OHS activities. His job allows him to monitor the work process. |
| Role barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers did not consistently abide by safety rules. Limited OHS education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacks understanding of how to operate workshop equipment, so is perceived to work unsafely. Lacks interest in enforcing rules. Unconcerned about workers' exposure to paint fumes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacks motivation to enforce rules. He is a poor role model for apprentices because he does not wear PPE when painting or buffing steel. |
| Impacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised workers' awareness of the need to be cautious of other's safety. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No data. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represented workers' concerns about non-compliance with rules to the OHS committee. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers can speak openly to him about issues. Improved workers' use of PPE. |

Purpose: The interviewees had different perspectives of the purpose of the HS representative role. Robert suggested that his purpose was to act as a communication conduit between the OHS committee and the workforce by informing the committee of the unit's OHS issues and relaying information about OHS policies back to workers. The manager agreed that it was Robert's role to represent the unit at the meetings, but he should also monitor workers' compliance with OHS policy and help resolve minor issues that concerned workers. The workers understood that the purpose of the HS representative was to listen to their OHS concerns and help address them.

Activities: The OHS activities in which Robert was reported to have participated are organised in Table 10. Although he appears to be active in relation to OHS, he did not update emergency management information or interact with the inspectorate. Further, he did not represent the interests of a colleague in the rehabilitation process because he was unaware that this was part of his role.

However, the table suggests that Robert represents workers' interests in other ways. For instance, he attended the OHS committee meetings on behalf of workers, encouraged colleagues to comply with health and safety policies to protect them from disciplinary action and to secure their entitlement to accident compensation.

Further, Robert participated in OHS management by encouraging workers to identify hazards by direct systems of employee participation, and independently identified hazards by observing the production process. He engaged in hazard control by discussing workers' non-compliance with safety rules with management. In addition, Robert facilitated the management of hazards by arranging for equipment maintenance, procuring PPE, ensuring workers abided by safety policies, and communicating information about hazard management to workers (on emergency procedure, hazards, controls and safety policies). He also had an administrative role filling in paperwork after accidents.

Table 10. Robert's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate (legislative requirements and OHS manager's expectations)

| How HS representatives are expected to participate: | | Yes/ No | How Robert participates: |
|---|---|------------|--|
| OHS manager's expectation | Legislation | | |
| | Identify and inform management of hazards | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verify workers identify hazards associated with new equipment. Ask workers to complete the equipment check list. Identify hazards during production and workers bring concerns to his attention on the shop floor. |
| | Discuss ways to control hazards with management | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss breaches of safety policy with manager. Ensure workers document controls for new equipment. Procure PPE. Enforce safety rules, e.g. wearing of PPE. Arrange equipment maintenance. Induct employees and contractors, including equipment training. Communicate information to workers about safety rules/hazard controls and emergency procedures. |
| | Consult with inspectors | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not perceive a need to interact with the inspectorate. |
| | Participate in the rehabilitation and return to work process | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitation perceived to be a managerial responsibility. |
| | Monitor workers' compliance with safety policies | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind workers to wear correct PPE or asks manager to enforce safety policy. |
| | Report and investigate accidents | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage workers to report near misses and accidents and oversee the reporting process if a worker is seriously injured. Completes accident investigation paperwork for serious accidents. |
| | Update emergency evacuation information | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of participation. |
| | Attend OHS committee meetings | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meeting to raise the unit's OHS issues and report back the committee's expectations of workers' behaviour. |

Key: ✓ - Activities in which the HS representative participated.
✗ - Activities in which the HS representative did not participate.

Facilitators/barriers: Robert recognised the OHS organisation was instrumental in supporting his ability to enact the role. While the OHS committee was a forum to clarify his responsibilities, the OHS manager provided OHS related advice and tools to assist

him to carry out his duties. Further, a number of the interviewees agreed that Robert's ability to participate in OHS was facilitated by his manager's commitment to health and safety. The manager was perceived to support Robert by reinforcing workers' obligations to comply with OHS policies and by giving him time to attend OHS committee meetings. One of the workers also stated that Robert's job role allowed him time to participate in OHS activities because, as the labourer, his skills were not essential to the production process.

However, the workers felt that Robert's lack of expert production knowledge limited his credibility. At times, workers did not take Robert's requests seriously because he was unaware of how to operate some of the workshop's equipment and was described as *"the most unsafe person in the workshop"*. Both workers expressed further concern at Robert's apparent lack of understanding of the health effects associated with exposure to paint fumes because he failed to wear PPE when painting or act on workers' concerns about the fumes. The workers were dissatisfied with Robert, but refused to elect a new representative because they did not want to upset him even though they had little respect for him and vice versa. Robert felt that workers were problematic given their non-compliance of and lack of assistance to enforce safety policy. He acknowledged that further OHS training would enhance his credibility.

Impact: Robert's impact ladder (see Figure 8) indicates that he helped to ensure that the unit's OHS management system was functional. The workers perceived that he had improved the system by giving them an avenue to raise OHS issues, particularly if other workers were not complying with safety rules. Despite this, there were more significant issues that he could have focused on, such as facilitating the management of workers' exposure to toxic fumes. Indeed, the workers suggested that Robert had a negative impact on OHS because his failure to wear PPE while painting indoors set a poor example to the apprentices, which also brings into question his suitability as the induction trainer. It was further evident that Robert may have negatively impacted on OHS and productivity by insisting that workers wear overalls correctly when in fact, workers claimed that they removed the garment to cope with heat stress in order to function efficiently.

Figure 8. Robert's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder

| | |
|---|--|
| Rung 5: Reduction in stressors or exposures | |
| Rung 4: Better production processes | ← Potentially a negative impact by insisting that workers wear overalls that cause heat stress, which compromises their ability to concentrate. |
| Rung 3: Improvement to OHS management system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Ensured functionality of hazard identification systems, e.g. workers assess new equipment for hazards and complete equipment checklists. ← Provided workers with another avenue to raise OHS concerns. ← Facilitated the control of hazards, e.g. ensured that company's prescribed controls were adhered to by workers, and equipment repaired. ← Procured PPE for workers. ← Administered the accident reporting and investigation system. ← Conducted OHS induction training. ← Facilitated the communication of OHS information between management, workers and the OHS committee. |
| Rung 2: Changes in attitudes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Workers were more cautious of the safety of others and more willing to wear PPE. ← Potentially a negative impact on workers' attitudes toward the OHS organisation. |
| Rung 1: Changes in knowledge | |
| | |

5.9 HS representative 4: Glen

Glen had been a full-time fabricator welder in the workshop at the head office for five years. Four months prior to being interviewed, the OHS manager asked him to be the HS representative for 30 of the workshop staff. Glen speculated that he was offered the position because he was perceived to be responsible, and accepted the role to enrich his job and gain additional qualifications. He attended first aid training, but his attendance at HS representative training was being arranged.

Glen stated that his purpose was to maintain the safety of workers by observing the production process and ensuring that workers complied with safety rules. If he noticed a breach, he approached workers to remind them of the safety rules. For example, he stated:

When you loop the chain around something you're supposed to choke it. Sometimes people just loop it right onto the chain because it's faster, but it only takes five seconds to choke it. So it's just reminding people to do that.

Another ongoing issue related to poor housekeeping standards. Glen was certain that the issue could be ameliorated by marking areas for walking and areas for the placement of tools on the shop floor. This idea would need to be raised and discussed at the OHS committee meeting, which he felt was a useful forum to exchange ideas about hazard management.

Glen acknowledged that he mainly attended OHS committee meetings and monitored compliance with safety rules. He stated that the OHS manager onsite was responsible for emergency management, rehabilitation and accident reporting and investigation. However, in the event of an accident he expected to assist with the process.

Glen stated that as a result of his efforts, workers were more compliant with safety rules. He perceived that his capacity to create a safer work environment would increase after he attended HS representative training.

In the interim, Glen acknowledged that his ability to perform the role was supported by the OHS manager and previous HS representative who both provided encouragement

and guidance. Specifically, the workshop's previous representative alerted him when workers violated safety rules, provided guidance on how to deal with the situation, and shared his frustrations about how he had to continually remind workers to comply with the rules.

Table 11 provides a summary of Glen's interview results.

Table 11. Summary of Glen's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impacts

| | Glen's perspective |
|--------------------------|---|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain the safety of workers by encouraging compliance with safety rules. |
| Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify hazards during the course of production. • Observe the production process and remind workers of safety rules if breached. • Attend the OHS committee meeting. |
| Role facilitators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OHS committee meetings provide a forum to discuss hazard management. • OHS manager provides guidance on the role. • Previous HS representative provides moral support and guidance on the role. |
| Role barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No OHS training. • Inexperience in the role. |
| Impacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers are more compliant with safety rules. |

Purpose: Glen perceived that the purpose of his HS representative role was to protect the safety of workers by encouraging compliance with safety rules.

Activities: Table 12 outlines the activities in which Glen reported participation. The table indicates that while he participated in a fraction of the activities expected of him, he did facilitate the hazard management process. Notably, he identified hazards as they came to his attention during production and attempted to manage hazards by ensuring that workers complied with safety policies. He further acted as a worker representative by attending the OHS committee meetings to raise the workshop's OHS issues.

However, there was no evidence that he discussed hazard control with management, but this was something he planned to do. He did not interact with the inspectorate or participate in emergency management or rehabilitation because these were the OHS manager's responsibilities. Additionally, he recognised that while accident reporting and investigation were also primarily the responsibility of the OHS manager onsite, it was his duty to assist her with this process.

Table 12. Glen's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate (legislative requirements and OHS manager's expectations)

| How HS representatives are expected to participate: | | Yes/ No | How Glen participates: |
|---|---|------------|--|
| OHS manager's expectation | Legislation | | |
| | Identify and inform management of hazards | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify hazards in the course of production. Workers alert him to hazardous scenarios. |
| | Discuss ways to control hazards with management | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of this, but it was apparent that he considered how to manage hazards when he referred to his idea to maintain housekeeping standards. |
| | Consult with inspectors | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No opportunity or perceived need to interact with the inspectorate. |
| | Participate in the rehabilitation and return to work process | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No participation as perceived to be OHS manager's responsibility. |
| | Monitor workers' compliance with safety policies | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe the production process and remind workers of safety rules if breached. |
| | Report and investigate accidents | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No opportunity to participate, but expected to participate in the event of an accident. |
| | Update emergency evacuation information | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No participation as perceived to be OHS manager's responsibility. |
| | Attend OHS committee meetings | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings. |

Key: ✓ - Activities in which the HS representative participated.
 ✗ - Activities in which the HS representative did not participate.

Facilitators/barriers: Glen perceived that his ability to improve OHS was limited by his relative inexperience as a HS representative and lack of health and safety knowledge. Attendance at the EMA's HS representative course was being arranged. Meanwhile, Glen relied on the OHS committee, OHS manager and his predecessor to gain an understanding of his role. The previous HS representative appeared to be particularly influential, and coached Glen on the role that he should play in the workshop.

Impact: Figure 9 presents Glen's impact in relation to the impact ladder. Notably, he improved OHS by increasing workers' willingness to comply with safety rules. It was also apparent that he contributed to the OHS management system's rung by ensuring that the company's prescribed controls were adhered to.

Figure 9. Glen's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder

| | |
|---|---|
| | |
| Rung 5: Reduction in stressors or exposures | |
| Rung 4: Better production processes | |
| Rung 3: Improvement to OHS management system | ← Facilitated the control of hazards, e.g. ensured that company's prescribed controls were adhered to by workers. |
| Rung 2: Changes in attitudes | ← Increased workers' willingness to comply with safety rules. |
| Rung 1: Changes in knowledge | |
| | |

5.10 Business A's results summarised

Business A specialised in the production of structural steel products for the domestic market. It employed 120 non-unionised staff, predominately tradesmen and labourers, across five small to medium sized units remotely located. The units operated semi-autonomously, but an effort had been made to align OHS policy and practice.

Senior management asserted that the organisation was strongly committed to OHS, which was reflected by the employment of a half-time OHS manager and implementation of formal OHS management systems. Responsibility for OHS had been delegated to the HS representatives at each unit because they attended the EMA's HS representative training courses and were perceived to have greater OHS knowledge than the managers.

The HS representative system was developed in response to the HSE Amendment Act and driven 'top down' by management. The OHS manager created the system without consulting the workforce, so there was no participation agreement as required by the legislation. The system was designed so that each of the units had at least one HS

representative, which equated to roughly five percent of the workforce. Four of Business A's seven representatives participated in this study. Their tenure as representatives ranged from three months to five years. Two were administrators, one a labourer and the other a tradesman. They represented 4 - 30 workers and were elected by management because of a lack of volunteers.

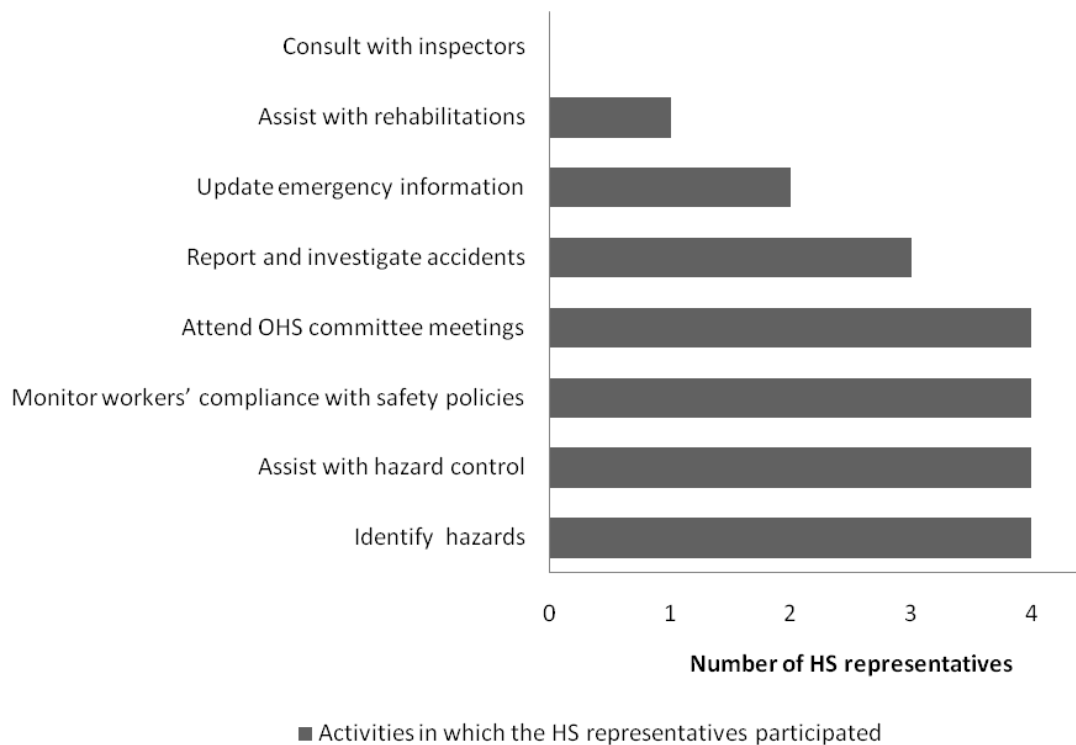
There were two primary conceptions of the purpose of the HS representative, which was reflective of the differences in interviewees' positions and interests. The OHS manager captured both of the two main interpretations asserting that the purpose of the representative was to act as a point of contact for workers to raise OHS concerns, and to administer the OHS management system at their respective units. The managers emphasised the latter purpose, arguing that the role of the representative was to facilitate compliance with OHS policy. Specifically, two of the managers expected the representatives to act on their behalf to ensure their unit's complied with their health and safety obligations, while the third manager expected the representatives to monitor workers' compliance with safety policy, and help workers' resolve minor OHS issues. The worker interviewees believed that the representatives should represent their interests by listening to their concerns and facilitating a resolution. However, the HS representatives' understanding of purpose aligned more with managerial as opposed to worker interests. The administrators perceived that their purpose was to administer the OHS management systems, while the workshop based representatives believed their role was to communicate and reinforce the company's OHS policies.

The representatives were expected to participate in the activities in the default section of the HSE Amendment Act, and undertake routine surveillance and compliance on behalf of management. The OHS manager asked the representatives to monitor workers' compliance with safety policies, update the emergency evacuation information and report and investigate accidents.

Figure 10 illustrates the activities in which the HS representatives participated as well as those they did not. Notably, participation in relation to some of activities contained in the default section of the HSE Amendment Act was minimal, as none of representatives

perceived the need to interact with the inspectorate, and only Shannon participated in the rehabilitation process as an agent of management. The others refrained from participating, perceiving that it was not part of their role. The representatives with administrative roles updated the emergency information, and most ensured that accidents were reported and the investigation paperwork completed. Similarly, all four HS representatives attended OHS committee meetings, facilitated compliance by monitoring workers' adherence to safety policy and participated in the hazard management process. However, there were notable differences and similarities in the way in which the representatives participated in hazard management.

Figure 10. The activities of four of Business A's HS representatives in relation to the activities in which they were expected to participate



The workshop based representatives' detected hazards during production while the administrators could only identify risks by examining accident reports or statistics. All of the representatives were alerted to hazards via the direct systems of employee participation. Most of them also encouraged workers to document hazards.

The administrators primarily engaged in the control of hazards in an administrative capacity. They completed paperwork verifying that workers had been inducted, organised OHS improvements and sourced information on regulations. In addition, accidents or breaches of safety policy prompted the administrators to act as facilitators by encouraging colleagues to consider how hazards could be controlled to prevent further incidents. In contrast, the workshop representatives participated in hazard control by acting as communication conduits. The inexperienced representative primarily communicated information about safety policies to workers, but the more experienced workshop based representative also provided information about hazards and controls to new workers via induction training, communicated OHS management's expectations to workers at toolbox meetings, and informed the administrator to arrange maintenance to resolve minor OHS issues that hindered production. Similarly, none of the representatives perceived a need to compel management to control hazards by issuing a hazard notice.

There were a number of factors that hindered the representatives' ability to enact their roles, which related to the representatives':

- *Economic constraints:* Two representatives refrained from advocating for OHS improvements because of financial constraints or the fear that a challenge to management's authority may affect job security.
- *Limited knowledge of OHS concepts and the production process:* This hindered the representatives' ability to participate in hazard management.
- *Lack of support from workers:* Two of HS representatives perceived their colleagues to be a hindrance because of their unwillingness to participate in hazard management.
- *Job role:* The administrators, in particular, perceived that their physical isolation from the workshop limited their ability to detect hazards.

The factors that facilitated the representatives' capacity to enact their roles, included:

- *OHS organisation:* The OHS committee provided an opportunity to network with the OHS manager and other representatives to discuss hazard management and clarify their responsibilities.

- *Management's commitment to OHS:* The representatives found that it was easier to maintain OHS standards where management was committed to OHS and willing to discuss health and safety issues.
- *Workers' support:* A number of the representatives consulted with colleagues about how to manage hazards.
- *Nature of the HS representatives' job role and skills:* The HS representatives' job roles provided access to resources, especially time and information. Further, interviewees perceived that it was 'natural' for the administrators to take responsibility for OHS paperwork, procurement and organisational activities because this was part of their job role and they were skilled at it.
- *HS representative training:* The administrators perceived that their attendance at the EMA's HS representative training courses improved their understanding of their role, OHS legislation and management systems.

Overall, the representatives were perceived to have a positive impact on OHS, particularly by improving their respective unit's OHS management systems. Aside from the newest HS representative who was co-located with the OHS manager, all the representatives ensured that the correct procedures and processes were in place and adhered to by workers and management to ensure the efficient functioning of the OHS management system. Notably, the interviewees perceived that the representatives had enhanced the system by giving workers another channel to raise and redress their health and safety related concerns. In addition, the workshop based HS representatives increased workers' safety consciousness and willingness to comply with safety policies suggesting the representatives helped bring about an attitudinal shift. One of the workshop based representatives also had a negative impact on OHS for not 'walking the talk' and modelling positive behaviours. This representative was perceived to do a disservice to OHS by setting a poor example by violating safety policy and encouraging workers to wear PPE that caused significant discomfort.

The next chapter illustrates how four other HS representatives participate in, and impact on, OHS in a significantly larger unionised metal manufacturing business.

Chapter 6: Business B's results

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents results from interviews at Business B, the larger of the two metal manufacturers. Firstly, the contextual characteristics of the business are outlined in relation to its organisation and management, trade union organisation and commitment to OHS, management's commitment and responsibility for health and safety and the OHS employee participation system. The second part of the chapter illustrates how a sample of four HS representatives participated in health and safety. Finally, key features of the case are summarised.

6.2 Business organisation and management

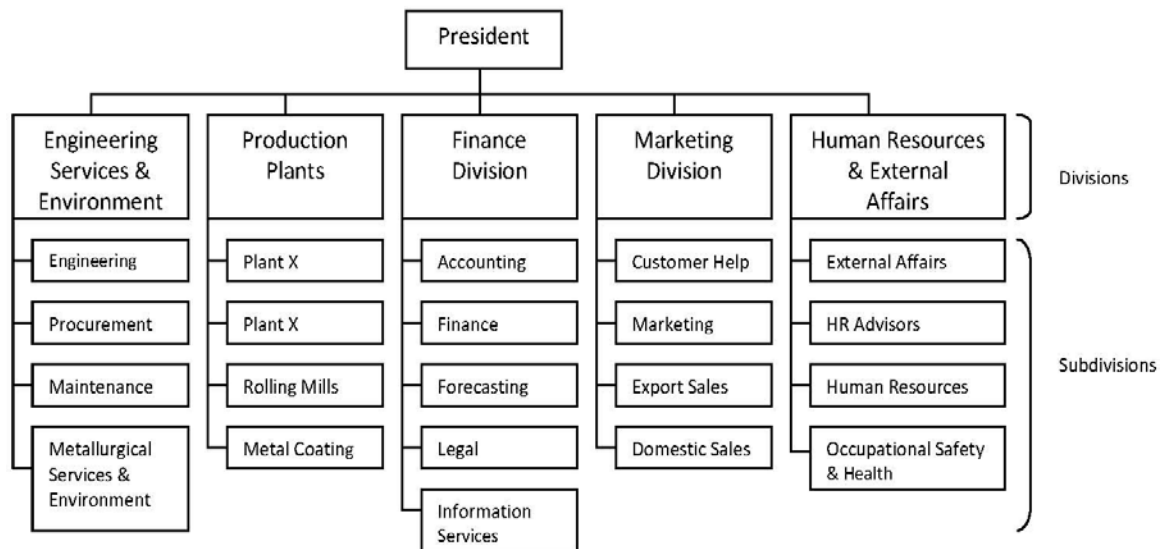
Business B was established in the 1960s and became a subsidiary of a multi-national organisation in the early 1990s. It produced metal products for the construction industry in New Zealand and abroad.

When the fieldwork was conducted, the business employed over 500 full-time permanent staff. Around 25% of these were trades people, including apprentices; 50% were skilled labourers; and the remaining 25% were in managerial support functions, such as finance and human resources. The workforce was male-dominated and tenure generally stable.

Business B was organised into functional areas (see Figure 11) with a hierarchical management structure. Vice-presidents were appointed to manage each of the main functional divisions, which were made up of a number of departments. Responsibility at the departmental level was delegated to a superintendent to whom a number of supervisors reported. Each supervisor was responsible for a workgroup of between 10 to 20 workers. The plants operated continuously and were staffed by four workgroups that worked on a 12 hour, four days on, four days off shift rotating between day and

night. In the Maintenance Subdivision, where most of the interviewees originated, the groups mainly worked regular hours.

Figure 11. Business B's organisational structure



6.3 Trade union organisation and commitment to OHS

Business B's workforce could be classified as highly unionised as approximately 83% of employees belonged to the collective agreement. The EPMU was the largest union on site representing 90% of all members, particularly trades and production workers, but there were also smaller unions representing auxiliary staff, such as the National Distribution Union. A combined union site committee, led by a union convenor, had been formed to facilitate inter-union cooperation.

According to the convenor, OHS was traditionally a key priority for the unions. He commented:

The union has always seen that we could have some influence in health and safety. It's not just about negotiating wages and conditions. There are always things that affect people, like the environment they work in.

As part of this commitment to OHS, union members began electing HS representatives in the late 1960s. From the union's perspective, the purpose of the representatives was to represent workers' interests in matters relating to their health and safety.

6.4 Management commitment and responsibility for OHS

One of Business B's fundamental values, as articulated in the company's bond, is for its employees to "work in a safe and satisfying environment", which established a strong commitment to OHS. In fact, the company promoted itself as an industry leader in OHS globally. There were a range of organisational characteristics designed to facilitate a high level of safety performance. For example, Business B's parent company mandated that all of its operations implement an advanced health and safety management system. The business was accredited to a tertiary OHS management standard, which was the highest level attainable under the WSMP programme and indicated that the system was comprehensive and based on best practice (ACC, 2008).

Further, Business B had established formal responsibility for OHS. According to the OHS manager, the Health and Safety Department was responsible for the formulation and delivery of health and safety policies, procedures, systems and performance measures. This Department had a number of dedicated staff, including an OHS manager, two safety advisors, an industrial hygienist, a doctor and two nurses. Additionally, all OHS training was contracted to a specialist training provider.

The OHS manager confirmed that every manager had OHS responsibilities in their job descriptions and safety was a key performance indicator. All managers were responsible for the safety performance of their subordinates, and their performance was assessed in relation to the company's goal of "zero harm" and levels of incident reporting and "*safety auditing*", which was a form of direct employee participation.

6.5 OHS employee participation system

Business B's OHS employee participation system included mechanisms for workers to participate via direct and representative channels. The senior manager emphasised that the direct system of participation was the most important because it facilitated the involvement of *all* workers. Notably, the parent company mandated that workers had to complete monthly safety audits, which were defined in the company's induction handbook as "a proactive way of identifying potential incidents and taking action before

someone gets [sic] injured". Additionally, workers were encouraged to raise concerns with management informally and at daily staff or "*toolbox*" meetings, which had OHS as the first item on the agenda.

Further, workers could participate in OHS via representative channels, including HS representatives and "improvement teams" or committees. While a representative OHS employee participation system had operated for decades, the HSE Amendment Act prompted the formalisation of this system in the company's "Health and Safety Participation Agreement" (see Appendix K for a copy) that was signed by representatives of OHS management, employees on individual agreements and the union. While the OHS manager implied that the process had been collaborative and interactive, the union convenor asserted that the OHS Department drafted the agreement and, although they had requested written feedback on the content from the parties to the agreement, the OHS Department ultimately had decision making authority on the content.

The agreement expanded the HS representative system beyond the unionised workforce to employees on individual employment agreements. All workgroups had to elect a representative, so approximately 13% of the workforce occupied a HS representative role.

The Participation Agreement stipulated that the HS representatives should act as an OHS "resource" for their workgroups. In contrast, the OHS manager had a slightly different understanding, as she stated that the purpose of the representatives was to enhance the hazard management process:

They [the HS representatives], better than anyone else, know what the issues are. They are the first ones to see hazards... They're really to help that information to come out of the workgroups into whatever part of the system it needs to be in so that we can deal with it and manage it... Their role is largely influencing because they don't have authority.

The Participation Agreement listed the activities in which the HS representatives should participate, but it became evident that these expectations were not communicated as only three of the 16 interviewees were aware that the Agreement existed. This lack of awareness was particularly apparent at the HS representatives' committee meeting

when a new representative stated that he was unsure of what to do. A senior HS representative referred him to the HSE Amendment Act for guidance. In accordance with the default system, Business B's representatives were expected to foster positive OHS management by:

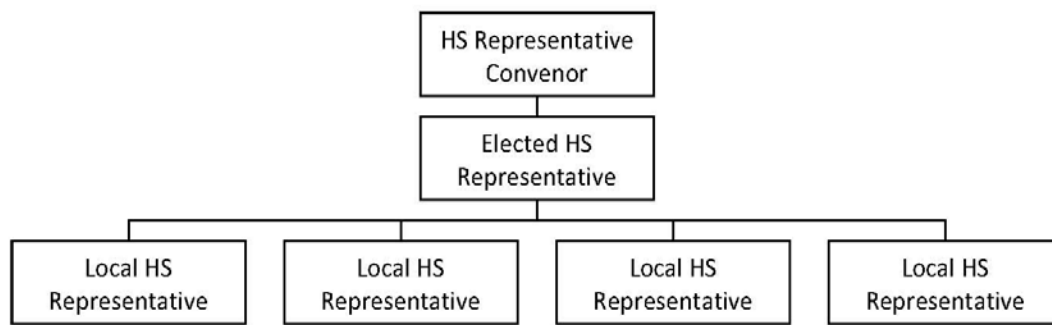
- identifying and informing management of hazards;
- discussing ways to control hazards with management;
- consulting with inspectors on health and safety issues; and
- promoting the interests of employees in health and safety, including in relation to arrangements for rehabilitation and return to work.

However, the HS representatives were also expected to carry out functions conferred by the employee participation system, including:

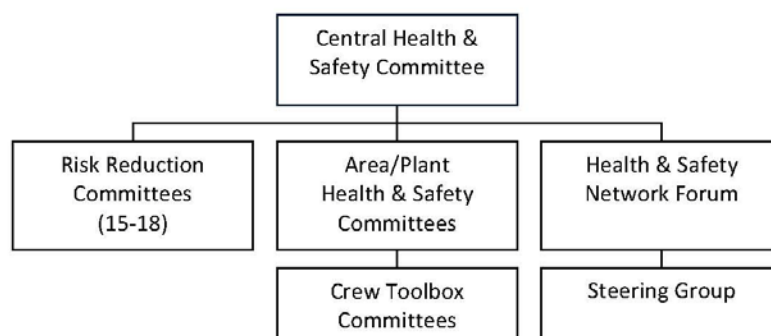
- facilitating the networking of OHS information;
- leading and supporting high quality safety audits;
- assisting in the investigation of accidents and incidents;
- contributing to local OHS projects or initiatives*;
- assisting in the development and review of OHS objectives and policy* ; and
- attending OHS committee meetings.

To facilitate the HS representatives' attendance at the OHS committee meetings, Business B developed a HS representative hierarchy (see Figure 12). Representatives elected by their workgroups were defined as "local" representatives in the Participation Agreement because they only attended local OHS committee meetings. The local HS representatives in an area were eligible for the position of "elected health and safety representative" to represent workers at committee meetings beyond their work areas. These HS representatives, who were elected at the same time as the union delegates, then chose one of their own to be the HS representative convenor.

* The HS representatives' participation in these activities was not specifically assessed due to the OHS manager providing a copy of the agreement after the interviews had been conducted.

Figure 12. Business B's hierarchy of HS representatives

Business B had a comprehensive structure of OHS committees that allowed HS representatives to engage with management (see Figure 13). The committees in the middle column of Figure 13 were central to the OHS organisation, while the others played a supportive role.

Figure 13. Business B's health and safety committee structure

Every employee attended their crew's or workgroup's daily toolbox and monthly OHS committees. HS representatives and supervisors communicated major issues arising from these meetings to their monthly area or plant OHS committees. Recommendations or issues arising from these meetings were forwarded to the Central Health and Safety Committee. This committee strategically focused on Business B's site policy and standards and was attended by the president, OHS management, union convenor, area managers and HS representatives.

These core OHS committees were supported by 15 to 18 risk reduction committees. Each dealt with a specific hazard, such as cranes or electrical standards, and focused on the review and development of policy. A senior management "champion" led each risk

reduction committee, which was composed of six to 10 subject experts, including HS representatives.

Additionally, management and HS representatives could participate in the monthly Health and Safety Network Forum chaired by the HS representative convenor and OHS management. This forum was introduced at the request of the union site committee to facilitate information exchange. Peripheral to this group was the Steering Group, which allowed the president to discuss strategic OHS issues with the union and HS representative convenors.

The Participation Agreement stipulated that the HS representatives had to attend committee meetings, but any other time for OHS duties had to be approved by supervisors. Further, the agreement gave elected representatives the right to attend the NZCTU HS representative courses, but there were no provisions for local representatives to attend. The OHS manager stated that their *“learning should be through coaching with their supervisor and contact with their elected rep.”* The OHS manager asserted that all representatives had access to information to facilitate their role. The electronic OHS management system was a significant resource for the representatives and included, for instance, safety audits, accident reports and legislation.

The remainder of this chapter illustrates how a sample of four of Business B's representatives, fictitiously named Nick, Jack, Doug and Barry, participated in health and safety. It focuses on the HS representatives' purposes, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impacts based on the perceptions of the representatives, their managers and co-workers.

6.6 HS representative 1: Nick

Nick worked in the metal coating section as a plant operator. Prior to being employed at Business B, he gained qualifications and work experience in the health sector and emergency services. Nick affirmed that his interest and background in health and safety motivated him to accept the position of local representative when his workgroup of 18 workers nominated him. At the time of the interview, Nick had held the role for six months, but had previously been a representative in the health sector for five years.

Nick's avowed purpose was to motivate workers to participate in health and safety. He seemed frustrated that workers discussed hazards amongst themselves instead of reporting them in the OHS management system. To encourage reporting, Nick discussed workers' OHS concerns at toolbox meetings and asked workers to submit incident reports or audits if he overheard discussions about OHS issues. To persuade workers he not only argued, but demonstrated, that reporting created an evidence base to justify the management of hazards, as Nick stated:

There was an issue some time back when people said 'there's no point [reporting], they [management] don't take any notice'. I sat down with them and went back through all the audits, fault event reports and incidents, and gathered all of the documents over the last two years. I put them all into one audit to say it was reported on these audits, and these fault event reports, and was an incident at this point. The situation was fixed in two days.

Nick implied that he was motivated to address OHS issues that workers repeatedly raised. He investigated possibilities for their resolution by consulting with workers and managers. Nick presented his recommendations for hazard control and the supporting evidence to management in a report for consideration. Management recently adopted Nick's proposal to modify the automated system that straps bands around rolls of flat sheet metal. Nick described the modifications that were made:

There's a gun that tightens up the band and seals a clip to hold it in place. We used to have a system where we used wide and narrow banding and there were different sized clips for each. There was a lot more moving and lifting and trip hazards, so I was pretty instrumental in getting that changed. Now we only use one type of banding so we don't ever have to change the guns, which are quite heavy to pull off the pulley systems. We got rid of three dispensers, the storage racks for the wide banding, and don't have to move any of the wire banding anymore. The wire banding is a lot harder for people to use and that increased the risk of injury with wrists and hands.

Nick suggested that his proposal was adopted because it was framed to appeal to managerial interests. He explained that when drafting the report:

I put myself in management's shoes. I thought, well, what's going to convince them to change this? When you look at health and safety improvements, you've got to look at costs and profit and prevention of injuries, so as long as you encompass that sort of thing in any report you do there's a good chance that they'll [management] see the value of it.

The report presented evidence on the strength of different banding widths, roll security, servicing costs, and the likely reduction in tripping, lifting and twisting injuries.

Nick acknowledged that the satisfaction gained from facilitating improvements motivated him, but other proposals were rejected because of limited finances or because management did not perceive the hazard to be as significant as workers did. Nick accepted these were genuine reasons and perceived no need to issue a hazard notice or consult with the inspectorate on the matters.

Further, Nick recognised that the other major part of his role involved attending OHS committee meetings. He endeavoured to attend the monthly Health and Safety Network Forum, a risk reduction committee and plant safety committee, but was unable to if meetings were scheduled when he was on nightshift. Nick stated that if he learned of information that the crew needed to know about, he informed workers at their safety meetings.

Nick also acknowledged that he advised workers to refrain from tasks likely to cause harm. If he observed a worker doing a task unsafely, he raised his concerns with them and discussed how they could modify their behaviour. Workers also approached him for confirmation about how to conduct particular tasks.

Nick confirmed that he had assisted in a review of the plant's emergency management plan. Specifically, he trialled and reviewed the plant's evacuation procedure for his shift. Nick acknowledged that there were other activities in which he had not yet participated, but which he expected to in future, such as accident investigations and supporting colleagues in plans for their rehabilitation or return to work.

Nick perceived that his ability to participate in OHS, particularly to research and facilitate change, was hindered by the plant's tight production schedule. Instead, he researched at home, used some of the time he was given to dedicate to a special project outside the plant to do research, and, while in the plant, carefully managed his work. For example, he remarked:

When I'm doing my normal job, if I'm on a 12 hour shift and I've got a job to do, I'm timing that 12 hours. You have to really dedicate yourself to do something that's quite difficult so you end up with five or 10 minutes here and there. Some things might take three months just to find time to contact people.

Nick stated that other employees were his main information source, but that it was time consuming and difficult to determine who in the organisation could be called on to offer advice or help resolve certain issues. His informal networks of colleagues provided advice about hazard management while OHS committee meetings provided a further opportunity to interact with others to "*solve problems*". He felt it would be easier to determine how to manage hazards if he could access the internet in the course of his job.

Overall, Nick perceived that in the context of resource constraints, his success in facilitating changes could be credited to his personal attributes. He referred to his motivation to improve the work environment as well as his "*communication skills*" as factors that facilitated his ability to conduct activities, particularly his capacity to network with colleagues, work cooperatively with others and negotiate with management. Management also supported his role by allowing him to go to the second stage of NZCTU HS representative training, which provided a general understanding of the role.

Table 13 summarises the results from Nick's interview. It also presents his superintendent and co-workers' perspectives of his purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impacts on OHS. The key features of the table are subsequently outlined.

Table 13. Perspectives of Nick's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results

| | Nick's perspective | Superintendent's perspective | Foreman's perspective | Co-worker 2's perspective |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage workers to report information about OHS concerns in order to facilitate a resolution. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage workers to raise OHS issues and help management find ways to resolve them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assist management to find ways of controlling hazards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help determine "<i>preventive measures</i>" to control hazards that concern workers. |
| Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings and inform crew of pertinent information. Research how to manage hazards and present reports to management recommending control measures. Discuss how workers can modify behaviour if likely to cause harm. Encourage auditing and accident reporting. Trial and review emergency plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings. Research how to control hazards, e.g. consult the internet and workers for information. Encourage workers to audit and articulate information about hazards. Trial and review the emergency evacuation procedure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings to raise non-urgent OHS issues. Liaise with management about how to control hazards if they pose an immediate risk to workers' safety. Investigate how to resolve issues. Inform workers when their behaviour is likely to cause harm. Educate workers about chemical exposure and protective measures. Detect hazards during production. Receive worker information on hazards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings and update workers on OHS information. Investigate how to resolve issues raised by workers. Inform workers when their behaviour is likely to cause harm. Educate workers about chemical exposure and protective measures. Receive worker information on hazards. |
| Role facilitators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OHS committees provide a forum to exchange information and ideas. Motivation to improve OHS. Ability to communicate, network, cooperate, negotiate and build collegial relationships. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation to improve OHS prompts him to research and find innovative ways of solving problems. Rapport with colleagues, so workers are willing to interact with him. Understanding of production processes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualifications and work experience – workers trust his judgment. Intimate knowledge of chemicals. Rapport with workers. Persuasive communicator. Workers cover him, so he can network during production. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal motivation to improve OHS. Qualifications and work experience – workers trust his judgment and are willing to listen to him. Workers cover him, so he can network during production. |
| Role barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift work limits time to research and attend committee meetings. Limited knowledge of organisational contacts. No internet access. Limited decision making authority. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A |
| Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-engineering of the automated banding system reduced manual handling tasks, trip hazards and eliminated the risk of injuries to hands and wrists. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an informal channel for workers to raise OHS issues and ideas about hazard control, e.g. changes to procedures or PPE. There are more OHS issues being raised from the shop floor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers have another avenue to raise OHS issues. Workers are more cautious and wear PPE when handling chemicals. Workers are willing to go into areas that they had avoided because they felt "<i>uneasy</i>" around chemicals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers more willing to report OHS concerns because Nick will do something about them. Changes to the banding system reduced manual handling tasks. Workers take more precautions when handling chemicals. |

Purpose: The interviewees agreed that Nick's overarching purpose was to facilitate the hazard management process. Specifically, Nick and his superintendent asserted that representatives should encourage workers to articulate information about hazards, while all the interviewees agreed that it was crucial for Nick to help management determine how to control hazards.

Activities: Indeed, Nick was particularly active in relation to hazard management as Table 14, which outlines his activities in relation to the OHS employee participation agreement, indicates. He personally identified hazards by observing the production process, but also motivated workers to articulate information about hazards via the direct systems of employee participation. Once issues came to his attention, Nick acted in the interests of his colleagues by facilitating the hazard control process. If workers' health and safety was in immediate jeopardy, he discussed control options with management and negotiated a resolution. On other occasions, he adopted a problem solving approach by actively researching possibilities for controlling hazards and putting together a case to persuade management to adopt his recommendations based on a 'best interest' argument. In addition, Nick participated in the hazard control process by empowering workers with information about how they could protect themselves from harm. For instance, he imparted knowledge about the effects of chemical exposure and protective measures. He also facilitated the networking of OHS information by attending the Health and Safety Network Forum, his plant's safety committee and a risk reduction committee. While it is likely that the risk reduction committee facilitated Nick's participation in the development and review of OHS policy, he certainly contributed to the review of OHS policy in relation to the emergency procedures in his plant.

Nick perceived that it was unnecessary to interact with the inspectorate, but did expect to participate in accident investigations, contribute to formal local projects (although it could be argued that he takes the initiative to start his own local projects) and the rehabilitation process. However, the superintendent stated that the rehabilitation process was a matter for only management and the company doctor.

Table 14. Nick's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate according to the Health and Safety Participation Agreement

| How HS representatives are expected to participate: | | Yes/ No | How Nick participates: |
|---|--|------------|--|
| Health and Safety Participation Agreement | Legislation | | |
| | Identify and inform management of hazards | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify hazards during production. Listens to workers' concerns about hazards. Encourage workers to report hazards in OHS system. Learn of hazards via toolbox meetings and reporting systems, e.g. safety audits, accident reports. |
| | Discuss ways to control hazards with management | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with management about how to control hazards if they pose an immediate risk to workers. Research how to manage hazards and present reports to management recommending controls. Discuss how workers can modify their behaviour if it is likely to cause harm. Educate workers about consequences of chemical exposure and protective measures. |
| | Consult with inspectors | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No perceived need to consult with the inspectorate. |
| | Participate in the rehabilitation and return to work process | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expects to participate, but management would not invite participation. |
| | Attend OHS committee meetings | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend the Health and Safety Network Forum, a risk reduction committee and plant's safety committee. |
| | Facilitate networking of OHS information | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform workers of important information from OHS committee meetings. |
| | Lead and support safety auditing | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage workers to complete safety audits and accident reports. |
| | Assist with investigation of accidents | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expects to participate, but no opportunity as yet. |
| | Contribute to local OHS projects or initiatives | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of participation. |
| | Assist in the development and review of OHS policy | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trial and review the plant's emergency evacuation procedure. |

Key: ✓ - Activities in which the HS representative participated.
✗ - Activities in which the HS representative did not participate.

Barriers/facilitators: Nick's job role as a shift worker in a production plant constrained his ability to participate because he had limited time to research, had no access to the internet and could not attend all OHS committee meetings. His ability to improve OHS

was also compromised by his lack of decision making authority. Yet, his personal motivation to improve OHS prompted him to find alternative ways of accessing resources by researching after hours, using a temporary deployment to a job outside the plant to access the internet and network with colleagues for information. Nick's ability to use people as a resource was supported by his communication skills and aptitude for developing collaborative relationships. Further, Nick's colleagues allowed him to leave production to network because they trusted him and believed in his ability to improve the work environment, perceiving him to have OHS expertise given his qualifications and work experience.

Impact: Nick contributed significantly to OHS at multiple levels, as his impact ladder indicates (see Figure 14). Notably, the re-engineering of the banding system improved the production process from an OHS perspective by reducing workers' exposure to manual handling injuries. However, the others perceived a more general far reaching impact. Nick increased workers' engagement in relation to OHS. Specifically, he enhanced workers' knowledge of the health effects associated with chemical exposure and the protective measures available to them. Consequently, workers were willing to wear PPE and were more confident about being in proximity to chemicals. This suggests that he improved the psychosocial work environment. Nick also enhanced the hazard management system by improving workers' attitude toward reporting, encouraging the reporting of information about hazards and contributing ideas about hazard control.

Figure 14. Nick's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder

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| Rung 5: Reduction in stressors or exposures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Eliminated the lifting of heavy objects, trip hazards and the risk of injury to hands and wrists at the banding section. ← Workers were more comfortable being near chemicals, suggesting an improvement to the psychosocial work environment. ← Workers handled chemicals more cautiously and carried extra PPE, potentially minimising exposure to chemical substances. ← Advice to workers to modify their behaviour potentially minimised the likelihood of harm, but no examples were given. |
| Rung 4: Better production processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Engineering alterations increased the efficiency of the automated banding system. |
| Rung3: Improvement to OHS management system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Workers were more likely to raise OHS concerns, complete audits and report incidents. ← Provided workers with another avenue to raise and redress OHS issues. ← Facilitated the control of hazards, e.g. provided management with ideas about how to control hazards. ← Ensured the emergency management system functioned effectively. ← Facilitated networking of OHS information between management, workers and OHS committees. |
| Rung 2: Changes in attitudes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Workers were more willing to complete safety audits and accident reports because they could see their benefit. They previously perceived it to be a pointless exercise. ← Workers' attitude toward chemicals was more positive. |
| Rung 1: Changes in knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Increased workers' knowledge of health effects associated with chemical exposure and protective measures. |
| | |

6.7 HS representative 2: Jack

Jack was an electrician based in the Maintenance Subdivision, but spent most of his shift in the production plants. He became the local HS representative for his workgroup of 10 tradesmen when a colleague asked him to fill the vacancy. Jack agreed to stand to give workers another avenue to raise issues and to *“proactively make a difference”* to health and safety. At the time of the interview he had been a representative at Business B for six months, but had been a representative at his previous workplace after management instructed him to attend stage one of the NZCTU's HS representative training course.

Jack stated that his purpose was to facilitate the prompt resolution of health and safety issues, particularly those that concerned workers, as he asserted: *“If someone raises an issue, you do something about it. You go to who you think could deal with it or who should be informed about it.”* Jack provided a number of examples of how he facilitated the resolution of issues. For instance, a worker alerted him to acid leaking from a pipe in a production plant, so he approached a technician in the area and discussed how it could be repaired. The technician subsequently isolated the valve at a point where the flange could be fixed without being exposed to acid. Further, Jack described seeking assistance from colleagues to remedy a personal concern about dim lighting in an area of the plant:

When I had a problem with poor lighting, I got the production involved and one of the guys I work with. He loves projects like that so you'd say 'right, what light do we need for down here?' And he'd get the [suppliers] book out [and find a light]. He actually sorted that.

Jack stated that the facilitation of OHS improvements was satisfying, but implied that one of his challenges was to ensure that management acted on workers' concerns. At toolbox meetings, Jack recorded workers' concerns and updated his supervisor on the matters that had been resolved and those that were outstanding. He felt it was important to continually remind management to address issues because *“each time you give them [management] a prompt, it gets them closer to doing something about it”*.

Jack spoke at length of his efforts to encourage management to address the hazards associated with his workgroup's lack of lifting equipment. He was concerned that workers could be injured by bending to repair machinery and driving forklifts into the

workshop to lift equipment. Jack reported representing workers' concerns at OHS committee meetings, but management claimed it was economically unviable to purchase a crane. As a compromise, he proposed that workers be trained to use the crane in the adjoining workshop after his co-workers approved the idea. Jack perceived this to be a cost-efficient solution and expressed a sense of frustration at the delayed resolution. He implied that the reason was because management failed to prioritise, as he commented: *"I think we should knock them off [hazards] one at a time rather than do a bit here and there and not achieve anything"*.

Even though it appeared a resolution was far from imminent, Jack did not issue a hazard notice but would continue to remind his supervisor to organise the training and raise the issue at OHS committee meetings. He acknowledged that while he was unable to attend meetings if they were scheduled when he was on shift, he endeavoured to represent his group's interests at meetings and inform his colleagues of important information.

Jack did not participate in safety auditing, the rehabilitation process, or accident investigations because he perceived these to be managerial responsibilities. He wanted to contribute to investigations, but felt that management's unwillingness to disclose information signalled that worker participation was unwelcome.

Jack asserted that he would be more effective at engaging in OHS activities if he attended training that focused on the company's OHS system, procedures and OHS-related contacts. He seemed frustrated that he was unsure of who to contact or how to resolve certain issues. Jack perceived that his ability to participate in OHS was supported by his understanding of work processes, which gave him insight into hazard management. He also asserted that it was beneficial to cooperate to resolve OHS issues:

You have to have a pleasant disposition. They've [management] got to trust you. You don't want to be barking at the manager because somebody doesn't like the way the door locks. Speak to people the way you like to be spoken to.

Table 15 provides a summary of Jack's interview as well as his manager's and co-workers' perspectives of his purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impacts.

Table 15. Perspectives of Jack's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results

| | Jack's perspective | Manager's perspective | Co-worker 1's perspective | Co-worker 2's perspective |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate the prompt resolution of OHS issues that concern workers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To communicate workers' OHS concerns to management and assist with the problem solving process. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To act as a liaison by facilitating the resolution of issues that concern workers, but which management is slow or indifferent to addressing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To serve as a point of contact for workers to raise OHS issues if they perceive their concerns are not resolved satisfactorily by management. |
| Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings to represent workers' concerns and feedback information to colleagues. Facilitate the control of hazards by seeking assistance from colleagues or encouraging management to resolve issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings. Assist management with resolution of the group's OHS issues, e.g. lack of lifting equipment in the workshop. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings. Help resolve issues that workers' express concern about, e.g. lack of lifting equipment in the workshop. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings. Provide updates at toolbox meetings on progress with resolution of issues (e.g. lighting) or current issues (e.g. electrical re-registration certificates). |
| Role facilitators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persisting and keeping workers' concerns on the OHS agenda. Understanding of the production process provides insight into possibilities for hazard control. Cooperating with management. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate and cooperate well with peers and management. Understands rationale and intent behind company's OHS rules and legislation. Management support, e.g. encourage him to participate in OHS committee meetings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivated to improve OHS. Cooperative, non-confrontational approach. Safety is a priority for management, so it is easier to make OHS improvements. Workers provide technical expertise. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personally motivated to improve OHS and persists until an issue is resolved. Provide guidance from a union perspective on whether certain issues are worth pursuing. |
| Role barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of training on internal OHS management systems and knowledge of key personnel. Limited time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited OHS training. Training would improve confidence to participate in the development of policy. Limited decision making authority, especially economic. Shift work limits participation at committee meetings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A |
| Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No data. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an avenue for workers to raise OHS issues if they feel uncomfortable speaking to management. Encourage workers to comply with OHS rules and reduce risk taking behaviours. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficial for the workgroup to have an OHS spokesperson. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No improvement to work environment. Workers have an alternative channel to raise OHS issues if they feel uncomfortable speaking to management, particularly if management is slow to deal with workers' concerns. |

Purpose: The purpose of the HS representative role was to facilitate the hazard management process. Specifically, Jack was expected to act as a point of contact for workers to raise OHS issues, convey these concerns to management and help determine a resolution. The workers considered the HS representative to be a form of 'back up' as they would only refer issues to Jack if they perceived management were slow or indifferent in addressing their concerns.

Activities: Indeed, Jack primarily engaged in the hazard management process as Table 16 indicates, which outlines his activities in relation to those in which he was expected to participate. Specifically, he identified hazards during the course of production, but also relied on workers to bring issues to his attention via the direct systems of employee participation. He was able to improve the production process by facilitating the management of multiple hazards by building coalitions with workers with the technical expertise or willingness to problem solve. For the more significant issues that fell beyond workers' control, he represented their concerns at OHS committee meetings and discussed hazard control with management. It was evident that he was committed to representing his co-workers because he lobbied management to adopt solutions that his workgroup had approved. After the committee meetings, he disseminated information to workers by updating them on the progress of issues.

There were a number of activities in which Jack had not participated. He wanted to assist with an accident investigation, but refrained because he felt that management were unwilling to cooperate with the HS representatives. Yet, Jack's manager expressed a sense of regret at not involving him in his recent accident investigation as well as the rehabilitation process. In contrast, Jack perceived that the rehabilitation process was management and the company doctor's responsibilities. Further, he did not want to consult with the inspectorate or encourage safety auditing, perceiving these functions to be an inefficient use of his time.

Table 16. Jack's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate according to the Health and Safety Participation Agreement

| How HS representatives are expected to participate: | | Yes/ No | How Jack participates: |
|---|---|------------|--|
| Health and Safety Participation Agreement | Identify and inform management of hazards | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to workers' concerns about hazards. • Identifies hazards during production. • Learns about OHS issues at toolbox meetings. |
| | Discuss ways to control hazards with management | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss ways of controlling hazards associated with lifting equipment with management at OHS committee meetings. • Facilitate the control of minor hazards by seeking assistance from colleagues with specialist technical skills and enthusiasm. |
| | Consult with inspectors | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No perceived need to consult with the inspectorate. |
| | Participate in the rehabilitation and return to work process | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived to be management's responsibility. |
| | Attend OHS committee meetings | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend electrical risk reduction committee meetings. |
| | Facilitate networking of OHS information | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform OHS committee of his co-workers' concerns, e.g. in relation to lack of lifting equipment. • Update colleagues on progress in managing hazards or other important OHS information at meetings. |
| | Lead and support safety auditing | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived to be management's responsibility. |
| | Assist with investigation of accidents | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He wanted to assist with an investigation, but felt that management tried to exclude the HS representatives by their apparent unwillingness to share information or invite participation. |
| | Contribute to local OHS projects or initiatives | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of participation. |
| | Assist in the development and review of OHS policy. | ? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear, but the electrical risk reduction committee is likely to provide a forum to facilitate participation. |

Key: ✓ - Activities in which the HS representative participated.
 ✗ - Activities in which the HS representative did not participate.
 ? - Not enough information to determine if the HS representative participated.

Facilitators/barriers: One of the obvious barriers that prevented Jack from improving OHS was his lack of decision making authority. Yet, the interviewees agreed that Jack's genuine commitment to OHS motivated him to persist until workers' concerns were

resolved. Jack could rely on the support of workers to exchange ideas and to facilitate the management of hazards. Management also provided support by encouraging attendance at OHS committee meetings and arranging his attendance at HS representative training, even though it was an entitlement for elected representatives only. The manager suggested that Jack built collaborative relationships because he communicated effectively and because others respected him for modelling positive health and safety behaviours. While his expert knowledge of OHS could be enhanced via training, he perceived his knowledge of work processes facilitated his participation in hazard management, but shift work prevented him from attending OHS committee meetings, and he had limited time to dedicate to the role.

Impact: Jack's impact ladder (Figure 15) shows that he facilitated improvements to the production process via the installation of lighting and repair of a leaking pipe. Despite these changes, the other interviewees felt that Jack had not improved OHS conditions, but recognised that he improved the OHS management system. He gave workers more opportunities to raise and redress OHS issues and ensured that workers interests, in relation to OHS issues, were represented to management. Additionally, the manager believed that the HS representatives encouraged workers to act safely, as he remarked: *"Most people still continue to take risks if the boss isn't around. [The HS representatives] know what's really going on so there's always that peer pressure thing of 'hey, don't do it like that'."*

Figure 15. Jack's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder

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|---|--|
| | |
| Rung 5: Reduction in stressors or exposures | |
| Rung 4: Better production processes | ← Improved lighting in an area of a plant. ← Facilitated the repair of a leaking pipe isolating exposure. |
| Rung 3: Improvement to OHS management system | ← Provided workers with another channel to raise and redress OHS issues. ← Facilitated management of hazards, e.g. lifting equipment and lighting. ← Facilitated networking of OHS information between management, workers and OHS committee meetings. ← Provided workers' perspectives on the management of specific hazards at strategic level. |
| Rung 2: Changes in attitudes | ← Increased workers' acceptance and compliance with safety policy. |
| Rung 1: Changes in knowledge | |
| | |

6.8 HS representative 3: Doug

Doug had worked at Business B as an instrument serviceman for 31 years. He became a HS representative 12 years ago because none of his colleagues expressed an interest in the role. During that time, he attended three stages of the NZCTU's HS representative training. He represented two colleagues as a local representative, and implied that it was unnecessary for the group to have a representative. Yet, he retained the position because OHS was an integral part of his job, and the role did not impact on his work.

Doug asserted that his purpose was to act as a *"safety guidance person...to help people work safely."* His priority was to participate in the rail, crane and fire safety risk reduction committees, so that he could share his trade-related expertise. Doug implied that he attended committee meetings which focused on subjects that fell within his expertise in order to contribute to discussions about hazard management.

Doug also provided examples of how he provided OHS-related guidance to workers. For instance, he described meeting informally with plant operators to identify hazards and controls for new equipment by asking them questions. Further, he approached workers to discuss their actions if he perceived they were likely to cause harm. Doug acknowledged that this rarely occurred given his colleagues had a high standard of OHS practice, but they approached him for compliance-related advice, as he commented:

A lot of them [colleagues] aren't fully aware of all the implications of the [HSE] Act or legalities, so I get questions like 'is this actually the right way to do this?' I help them out or point out who could help.

Further, Doug asserted that he acted as a source of guidance to other representatives because of his *"seniority"*. Newly appointed HS representatives approached him for clarification on the company's OHS rules, and he recalled supporting a representative who contemplated issuing a hazard notice to a contractor for allowing sand to spill on the railway lines for over a year. He had never personally perceived the need to issue a notice or interact with the inspectorate preferring to cooperate with management, as he stated: *"with a quiet approach you can work with people and they'll get things done and suddenly you realise that it was the best way of doing it."*

Additionally, Doug regularly read the incident reports and safety audits to identify OHS issues. When he identified issues, he immediately attempted to ameliorate the situation. For example, if he heard an incident occurred, but noticed that it was not reported, he reminded his manager that the report was outstanding. A recent audit identified that an untidy workshop was creating hazards, so he organised housekeeping.

Doug was willing, but did not have an opportunity, to participate in the rehabilitation process or accident investigation. This was because there were other HS representatives in the area to assist management, but he felt that it was difficult for HS representatives to participate in investigations because management did not make information about the event available or solicit the participation of the representatives.

Despite his efforts, Doug felt that as an individual he had no impact on OHS because of the effectiveness of the company's OHS management system. He commented:

Under the way the company is operating now and the health and safety requirements onsite, I don't think my presence makes a big difference...It is the whole system that works to create a safer environment.

Overall, Doug described his role as *"easy"* compared to other HS representatives because he represented so few workers who had the capacity to resolve OHS issues independently, his section was relatively low risk and he had sufficient access to time to conduct OHS activities. Doug asserted that local management support enabled him to enact his role, but OHS management were perceived to be unsupportive. Doug stated:

It's like there's a wall above management around our health and safety people... Instructions are getting fed down, but problems are not really getting back up.

Doug suggested that HS representatives' access to information was further constrained by the lack of managerial attendees at the Health and Safety Network Forum. Specifically, representatives received less feedback on OHS issues and discussions lacked *"balance"*.

Table 17 summarises Doug's interview as well as his manager's and two co-worker perspectives of his purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impacts.

Table 17. Perspectives of Doug's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact: A summary of the interview results

| | Doug's perspective | Manager's perspective | Co-workers 1's perspective | Co-worker 2's perspective |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide OHS guidance to workers to assist them to work safely. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assist with the <i>"dissemination of OHS information right to the bottom"</i> so that workers understand their OHS obligations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To act as OHS <i>"service providers"</i> by providing workers with OHS information or equipment that they need to work safety. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure. |
| Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in OHS committee meetings to share trade expertise. Meet with plant operators to help identify hazards and controls for new equipment. Discuss how workers can work safely if likely to cause harm. Provide guidance to workers on regulations. Mentor other HS representatives. Identify hazards via incident reports and safety audits. Facilitate management of hazards, e.g. by arranging housekeeping. Encourage management to ensure accidents are reported. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings. Encourage safety auditing. Assist workers to complete incident reports. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure of what Doug did because he never interacted with him as a HS representative. He claimed the workgroup had no need for a HS representative because their laboratories were low risk and workers could manage hazards independently because all were well qualified and trained. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure of what Doug did because he never interacted with him as a HS representative. He claimed the workgroup had no need for a HS representative because workers could manage hazards independently or with recourse to management. |
| Role facilitators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient time to conduct OHS activities. Management support. Role was perceived to be easy because high number of representatives in area and workers independently resolved OHS issues. Cooperative approach in dealing with management. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job role gives him time to conduct OHS activities. Models positive OHS behaviours. Motivation to improve OHS. Good understanding of company's OHS management system. Management support, e.g. willingness to engage to solve problems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure. |
| Role barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited feedback on OHS issues from OHS management and management in general at the HS representatives' forum. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited rapport with workers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure. |
| Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More <i>"buy in"</i> from workers and willingness to comply with safety rules, e.g. wearing PPE. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact. |

Purpose: The interviewees believed that the role of the HS representative was to act as a source of guidance to workers on OHS matters. While the manager suggested this guidance was ultimately to ensure workers' complied with the company's OHS policy, Doug and co-worker 1 agreed that it was to maintain the safety of workers. However, it was striking that the worker interviewees perceived there was no need for a member of their workgroup to serve this purpose. They claimed that this was primarily because they were highly trained specialists who were able to deal with OHS issues independently or directly with management.

Activities: Doug's activities, in relation to those in which he is expected to participate, are outlined in Table 18. His priority was to participate in OHS at the strategic level. He participated in risk reduction committees which, by nature, focus on the development and review of policy to manage specific hazards, but he also actively participated in OHS within his local area. He identified hazards via accident reports and safety audits and encouraged management and workers to submit information to these reporting systems. He also claimed that he took a proactive approach by identifying hazards associated with new equipment and helped to determine methods of controlling the risks. Doug further facilitated the hazard management process by ensuring production flowed smoothly by organising housekeeping. Further, Doug held that he mentored workers in relation to the hazard management process by advising workers to modify their behaviour if they were likely to cause harm, by supporting a HS representative contemplating issuing a hazard notice and helping workers to understand their OHS obligations.

There were a number of activities in which Doug did not participate. Notably, he refrained from participating in accident investigations and rehabilitation processes to give other HS representatives an opportunity to assist management, but still expressed a willingness to help if he were asked to do so. Finally, he perceived it was unnecessary to interact with the inspectorate.

Table 18. Doug's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate according to the Health and Safety Participation Agreement

| How HS representatives are expected to participate: | | Yes/ No | How Doug participates: |
|---|---|------------|---|
| Health and Safety Participation Agreement | Legislation | | |
| | Identify and inform management of hazards | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the identification of hazards associated with new equipment. Identify hazards via accident reports and audits. |
| | Discuss ways to control hazards with management | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the management of hazards at risk reduction committees. Facilitate the identification of controls for new equipment. Discuss how workers can modify their behaviour if it is likely to cause harm. Facilitate the management of hazards, e.g. by arranging housekeeping. |
| | Consult with inspectors | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No perceived need to consult with the inspectorate. |
| | Participate in the rehabilitation and return to work process | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were always other HS representatives available to assist. |
| | Attend OHS committee meetings | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Health and Safety Network Forum and risk reduction committees (rail, crane and fire) |
| | Facilitate networking of OHS information | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance to workers on internal and external OHS regulations. |
| | Lead and support safety auditing | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage safety auditing and the reporting of accidents. |
| | Assist with investigation of accidents | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were always other HS representatives available to assist, but management did not release information or invite representatives to participate. |
| | Contribute to local OHS projects or initiatives | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of participation. |
| | Assist in the development and review of OHS policy. | ? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear, but likely that the risk reduction committees provide a forum to facilitate participation. |

Key: ✓ - Activities in which the HS representative participated.
 ✗ - Activities in which the HS representative did not participate.
 ? - Not enough information to determine if the HS representative participated.

Facilitators/barriers: Doug's specialist job in a laboratory was cited one of the main factors that supported his role. It allowed him time for OHS activities, as he was not under the same production pressure as HS representatives in the plants. Doug also had fewer activities in which to participate because of the high ratio of representatives to workers in his area, and his colleagues had the ability to resolve OHS issues

independently. The manager felt that, while workers were unlikely to interact with Doug because they did not have a strong rapport, Doug's motivation to improve OHS and knowledge of the company's OHS rules supported his ability to model positive health and safety behaviours and provide guidance. His trade related expertise facilitated his participation in the management of OHS, particularly at risk reduction committees. However, Doug felt that management's non-attendance at the Health and Safety Network Forum, coupled with OHS management's perceived unwillingness to provide feedback on OHS issues, limited HS representatives' ability to influence decisions and access information. In contrast, local management were supportive in their willingness to engage and allow him to attend training to which only HS representatives were entitled.

Impact: The interviewees perceived that Doug had a negligible impact on OHS. Only his manager believed that Doug contributed by modelling positive behaviours, which encouraged workers to comply with safety policies. The workers were unable to evaluate Doug's impact as they did not interact with him. What was surprising was that Doug, too, felt he had a negligible impact despite actively participating in OHS. Yet, when his activities are plotted in relation to the impact ladder (see Figure 16), it is evident that he positively contributed. Notably, he facilitated the hazard management process at the strategic level by acting as an expert at risk reduction committees. He further helped to improve the OHS management system by ensuring that the reporting system was operational and that the new machinery was subject to hazard analysis and control processes.

Figure 16. Doug's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder

| | |
|--|---|
| | |
| Rung 5: Reduction in stressors or exposures | |
| Rung 4: Better production processes | |
| Rung3: Improvement to OHS management system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Encouraged management to ensure accidents were reported and safety audits were completed. ← Helped workers to understand their OHS obligations. ← Facilitated hazard control at the local level, e.g. discussed how workers could modify their behaviour if it was perceived to cause harm, and helped organise housekeeping. ← Provided workers' perspectives on the management of specific hazards at the strategic level. |
| Rung 2: Changes in attitudes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Increased workers' compliance with safety rules. |
| Rung 1: Changes in knowledge | |
| | |

6.9 HS representative 4: Barry

Barry had worked at Business B for 21 years as a full-time electrical services technician. He became a HS representative by “*default*” because of a lack of volunteers and had represented his workgroup of 12-15 colleagues for eight years. Barry took on the role because, although he appreciated the company’s efforts to manage the hazardous environment, he felt that communication needed to be improved to ensure the safety of workers. During his tenure, he had attended all three stages of the NZCTU’s HS representative training courses.

Barry described his purpose was to act as a “*communication conduit. At my workgroup that is getting the information to them [workers] and the other way up [from workers to management] if they have concerns*”. However, he suggested that in the first instance, workers had to attempt to resolve their OHS concerns. Barry explained that when he became a representative, workers often expected him to resolve their issues, but he was unable to do so because of time constraints. Consequently, Barry informed workers to only approach him if they were unable to facilitate a resolution, and felt that he had progressed to a point where workers were able to deal with issues independently. For instance, he stated:

We had a housekeeping issue...and I discussed it with one of our fitters about how we were going to deal with it. I didn’t take it any further although there was something I was going to do, but within an hour he came back and said to me ‘I’ve dealt with that and I’ve done an audit’. I didn’t have to do anything and that’s really how I expect things to happen.

Barry also facilitated the resolution of personal concerns by informing management of his observations. For instance, he noticed a fire extinguisher was missing in the workshop and was unsure whether management were aware of the matter. He informed his supervisor who agreed to resolve the matter. Barry stated that it was not necessary to compel management to remedy hazards by issuing a hazard notice or consulting with the inspectorate because it was easier to achieve positive outcomes by cooperation rather than conflict.

Barry stated that his key priority was to attend OHS committee meetings, particularly the Health and Safety Network Forum, his area's OHS committee meeting, as well as the electrical and isolations risk reduction committees. Barry described the risk reduction committees as a personal "*passion*". He joined the committees because he conducted the electrical isolation training and while the training had since been contracted out, he kept attending because of his genuine interest in participating as a subject expert. The meetings provided an opportunity to collaborate with management and to review incidents as well as to develop and evaluate policies regulating electrical workers. Barry felt that the experience was so beneficial that he encouraged other HS representatives to attend risk reduction committees.

If Barry learned of information at the meetings that he perceived was important to his workgroup, he asked the supervisor to update workers at toolbox meetings. Additionally, he informed workers about policy changes by posting documents on notice boards.

Additionally, Barry assisted management with an accident investigation by interviewing workers and gathering evidence. However, he had not participated in the rehabilitation process or encouraged reporting perceiving these to be managerial responsibilities.

Overall, Barry felt that, as a result of his activities, he had contributed to improving the work environment. However, he did not give a specific example.

Barry perceived that his ability to enact the role was supported by management, particularly because they shared common interests in relation to OHS. He remarked:

I've got a really supportive management team. They don't make my job difficult so I think that helps a lot. We're all after the same thing so in that respect I enjoy that... I know that no matter what, I can always go to my direct supervisor or up further knowing that our whole organisation is going in the right direction.

Barry further implied that his technical knowledge facilitated his participation in OHS. He only participated in the resolution of issues that fell within his expertise, so that he

could positively contribute in OHS meetings and feel that his opinions were “valued” by management.

Further, Barry recognised that the NZCTU's HS representative training courses had developed his understanding of the role. He commented that the training created opportunities to learn how HS representatives from other businesses operated.

Yet, Barry repeatedly emphasised that one of the disadvantages associated with being a HS representative was the time the role took inside and outside of work hours.

Table 19 summarises Barry's interview results.

Table 19. Summary of Barry's purpose, activities, role facilitators, role barriers and impact

| | Barry's perspective |
|--------------------------|---|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To act as a communication conduit by informing workers of OHS information and communicating their OHS related concerns back to management. |
| Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage workers to control hazards or resolve OHS issues independently. Facilitate the resolution of minor OHS concerns, e.g. initiate replacement of missing fire extinguisher. Attend OHS committees (Health and Safety Network forum, area OHS committee, and risk reduction committees (electrical and isolations) and update workers on important information. Contribute to the development and review of OHS policy at risk reduction committees. Encourage other HS representatives to participate in risk reduction committees. Post information about policy changes on notice boards. Assist management with accident investigation by interviewing workers and collecting evidence. |
| Role facilitators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade qualifications facilitate participation at risk reduction committees. NZCTU's HS representative training provided understanding of the role. Management's commitment to improving OHS. Cooperative approach in dealing with management. |
| Role barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited time to conduct OHS activities during work hours. |
| Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A positive impact, but no examples provided. |

Purpose: Barry believed that his purpose was to facilitate the communication of OHS information between his colleagues and management by informing workers of pertinent information and to represent their OHS concerns to management.

Activities: Table 20 documents the activities in which Barry participated alongside the activities in which he was expected to participate.

Table 20. Barry's activities in relation to activities in which HS representatives are expected to participate according to the Health and Safety Participation Agreement

| How HS representatives are expected to participate: | | Yes/No | How Barry participates: |
|---|--|--------|--|
| Health and Safety Participation Agreement | Legislation | | |
| | Identify and inform management of hazards | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listens to workers' concerns about hazards. Observes the work environment and detects anomalies. |
| | Discuss ways to control hazards with management | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assert technical expertise at risk reduction committees to control specific hazards. Encourage workers to control hazards and resolve OHS issues independently. Facilitate the resolution of minor OHS concerns, e.g. initiate replacement of missing fire extinguisher. |
| | Consult with inspectors | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No perceived need to consult with the inspectorate. |
| | Participate in the rehabilitation and return to work process | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived to be management's responsibility. |
| | Attend OHS committee meetings | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend OHS committee meetings (Health and Safety Network Forum, area OHS committee and electrical and isolations risk reduction committees). |
| | Facilitate networking of OHS information | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post information about policy changes on notice boards. Inform workers of important information raised at OHS committee meetings. |
| | Lead and support safety auditing | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived to be management's responsibility. |
| | Assist with investigation of accidents | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist with investigation by interviewing workers and helping to collect evidence. |
| | Contribute to local OHS projects or initiatives | ✗ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of participation. |
| | Assist in the development and review of OHS policy. | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the development and review of OHS policy at risk reduction committees. |

Key: ✓ - Activities in which the HS representative participated.
 ✗ - Activities in which the HS representative did not participate.

With regard to hazard identification, it was evident that Barry observed the work environment for risks, but workers also informed him of hazards informally. Barry emphasised individual responsibility for hazard management and encouraged colleagues to remedy their own concerns. He, too, facilitated the resolution of minor OHS concerns

by asking his manager to remedy the issue. The risk reduction committees also provided a forum for him to discuss the management of specific hazards with management, and contribute to the development and review of OHS policy. From the committees, he disseminated information to workers, particularly about policy changes. Additionally, Barry had assisted management to investigate an accident by interviewing workers. However, he did not encourage safety auditing or participate in the rehabilitation process as he perceived these to be managerial responsibilities. While he recognised that representatives could interact with the inspectorate, he had no reason to.

Facilitators/barriers: Barry suggested that his trade qualifications mainly facilitated his ability to participate in OHS at committee meetings and that management valued his opinions because they regarded him as an expert. He further perceived that his attendance at the NZCTU's HS representative training courses enhanced his expertise and enabled him to engage in OHS management, but found that management's commitment to improving OHS meant that he was able to undertake OHS activities and facilitate improvements. While management accommodated Barry's activities to a certain extent, he did not have adequate time to conduct OHS activities and subsequently completed work at home and encouraged workers to try to resolve their OHS issues.

Impact: Barry was unable to specify the exact nature of his contribution, but his impact ladder (see Figure 17) shows that he helped to improve the OHS management system. Notably, he facilitated the hazard management process at the strategic level by acting as an expert at risk reduction committees. He further improved the system by facilitating the management of hazards by networking OHS information and assisting with the accident investigation process.

Figure 17. Barry's impact on OHS in relation to the impact ladder

| | |
|---|--|
| | |
| Rung 5: Reduction in stressors or exposures | |
| Rung 4: Better production processes | |
| Rung 3: Improvement to OHS management system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ← Facilitated the accident investigation process. ← Facilitated the communication of OHS information between management and workers, e.g. distributed information about policy changes or updated toolbox meetings on developments. ← Facilitated hazard control at local level, e.g. discussed how workers could control hazards. ← Provided workers' perspectives on the management of specific hazards at strategic level. |
| Rung 2: Changes in attitudes | |
| Rung 1: Changes in knowledge | |
| | |

6.10 Business B's results summarised

Business B was a large established organisation that produced metal products for the construction industry in New Zealand and abroad. It employed over 500 full-time permanent employees, most of whom were unionised tradesmen and skilled labourers.

Senior management asserted that the business was strongly committed to OHS. This commitment was evident by the establishment of a comprehensive OHS management system, a dedicated OHS department that employed numerous specialists and the inclusion of health and safety responsibilities in manager's job descriptions that were aligned to key performance indicators.

The combined union site committee also expressed commitment to OHS. As part of this commitment, the unionised workforce began electing HS representatives in the late 1960s.

Business B traditionally had a comprehensive representative OHS employee participation system of HS representatives and committees, but the HSE Amendment Act prompted the formalisation and expansion of this system beyond the unionised workforce. The nature of the system was documented in an employee participation agreement, which was signed by representatives of OHS management, unions and workers on individual employment agreements.

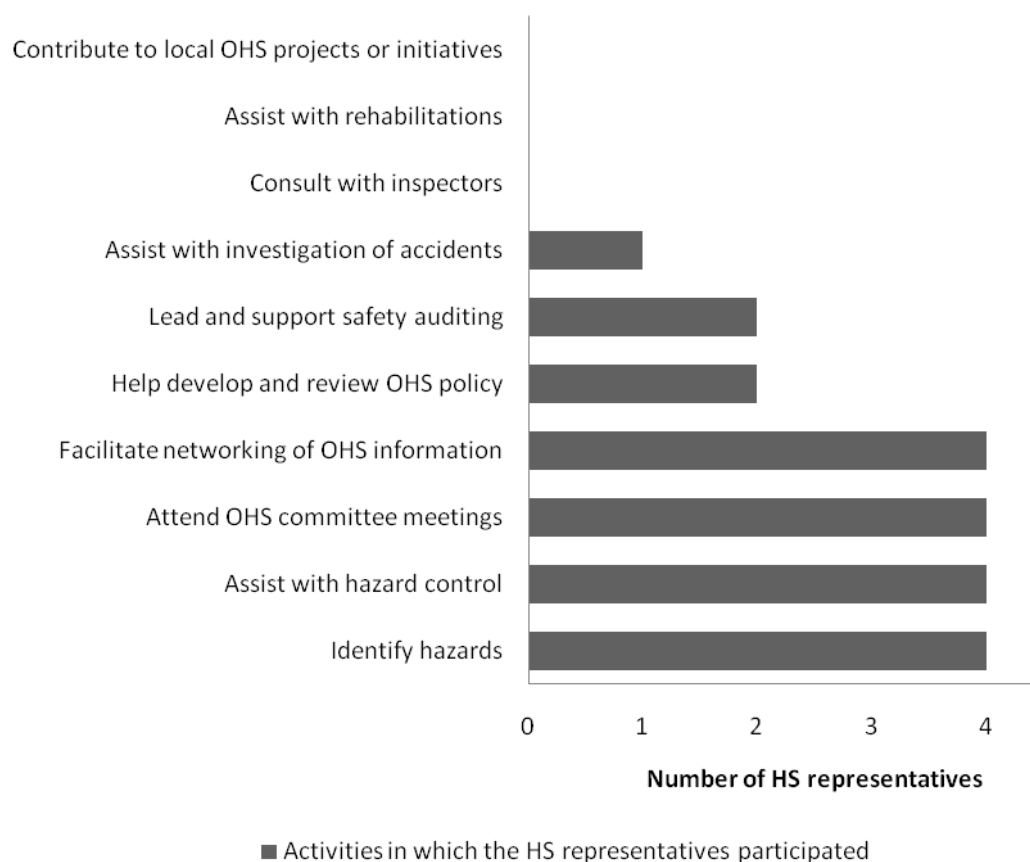
The system was designed so that each workgroup had at least one HS representative, so representatives comprised about 13% of the workforce. Four of Business B's representatives participated in this study, and were all experienced with tenures ranging from three to 12 years, but two of them had only been representatives at Business B for six months. One of the representatives was a plant operator, but had previously worked in health care and the emergency services, and the other three were electrical tradesmen. They represented 2 - 18 workers and either volunteered for the role or elected by colleagues.

The Participation Agreement stipulated that the HS representatives should act as an OHS "resource", but interviewees had diverse perspectives of the purpose of the HS representatives. One of the prominent interpretations was that the representatives should facilitate the hazard management process. Specifically, the OHS manager, two of the HS representatives and their respective managers and co-workers agreed that the representatives should facilitate the transfer of information about hazards to management, and help determine controls. A number of workers suggested that the HS representative was a 'back up' for them to call on to facilitate the resolution of OHS issues in instances where management was slow or indifferent in addressing their concerns. In contrast, the third HS representative, his manager, and colleagues believed that the representatives should act as guides by providing workers with tools and information to work safely and, as the manager emphasised, to abide by their OHS

obligations. The fourth HS representative had a slightly different interpretation of his role, suggesting that his purpose was to act as communication conduit by informing workers of OHS information and communicating their concerns to management.

The specific activities in which the HS representatives were expected to participate were based on the default section of the HSE Amendment Act, but the Participation Agreement stipulated that the representatives should also assist management by encouraging workers to complete safety audits, help with the accident investigation process, facilitate the networking of OHS information and assist with the development and review of policy at OHS committee meetings. However, the contents of the Agreement did not appear to be communicated as very few interviewees recognised it existed. Figure 18 indicates that the representatives only participated in a fraction of the activities expected of them.

Figure 18. The activities of four of Business B's HS representatives in relation to the activities in which they were expected to participate



Notably, none of representatives had participated in local projects, the rehabilitation and return to work process, or consulted with the inspectorate. Only one of the representatives had assisted management to investigate an accident and two had perceived it to be important to encourage workers to submit audits. Similarly, all four HS representatives facilitated the networking of OHS information, attended OHS committee meetings to facilitate the hazard management process at a strategic level and participated in the hazard management process within their local areas. The representatives tended to identify hazards by observing the production process or learnt about them via the direct formal systems of employee participation.

There were notable differences in the way that the representatives' participated in the control of hazards. Two of the representatives tended to act like problem solvers by actively finding ways to control hazards that concerned workers. In contrast, the other two representatives primarily participated in the hazard management process at risk reduction committee meetings.

There were a number of key factors that facilitated the HS representatives' capacity to enact their roles, which included:

- *Management's commitment to OHS:* Management were willing to engage and discuss OHS issues, encourage attendance at OHS committees and arrange for the representatives to attend HS representative training, even though most were not formally entitled to do so.
- *Cooperation:* All of the representatives believed that it was more productive to cooperate with management rather than engage in conflict.
- *Education and skills:* The qualifications that the representatives brought to the position were perceived to facilitate participation in hazard management.
- *Personal motivation to improve OHS:* Many of the interviewees believed representatives' were able to improve OHS because they were personally motivated to do so.
- *HS representative training:* Training was perceived to give the representatives a greater understanding of the role.

- *Worker support:* Most of the representatives relied on workers to bring OHS issues to their attention, and for technical advice about hazard control. One of the representatives relied on workers to cover his position so he could conduct OHS activities.
- *Effective communication skills:* The representatives' with effective communication skills were able to build collitions with workers and managers to faciliate hazard control.
- *Understanding of company's OHS management system:* Managers felt that HS representatives' understanding of the company's rules and intent gave them credibility and allowed them to model positive OHS behaviours.
- *OHS committees:* The OHS committees provided a forum to exchange information.

There were also a number of factors that hindered the representatives' ability to enact their roles:

- *Time:* Most of the representatives felt they had inadequate time to dedicate to OHS activities and two of them reported conducting work at home. Two refrained from conducting activities, particularly safety auditing, which they perceived to be an inefficient use of their time.
- *Shift work:* Limited the HS representatives' ability to attend OHS committee meetings.
- *Limited knowledge of internal OHS management systems and key personal:* The newer representatives reported that it was challenging to determine who to contact to facilitate the control of hazards.
- *Limited decision making authority:* The representatives who advocated for changes that required financial outlay found it difficult to faciliate OHS improvements. Management did not perceive hazards to be as significant as the representatives and would not allocate resources to fund improvements.
- *Lack of managerial support:* OHS management was perceived to be uncooperative for not providing feedback on health and safety issues. There was limited managerial attendance at representatives' meetings and managers did

not actively invite HS representatives to participate in activities, particularly rehabilitation or accident investigations.

Overall, the HS representatives were perceived to have a positive impact on OHS. Commonly, they all improved the OHS management system by facilitating the networking of health and safety information, increasing workers' compliance with OHS policies and facilitating the hazard management process. Notably, the representatives were perceived to provide workers with another channel to raise and redress issues relating to their health and safety. Further, two of the representatives improved the production process from an OHS perspective. For example, they initiated the installation of new lighting and increased the efficiency of the automated banding system via engineering modifications. The other two representatives contributed primarily by facilitating the hazard management process at the strategic level by acting as subject experts at risk reduction committees.

The following chapter discusses the results from the interviews at Businesses A and B in the context of the current scholarship.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 illustrated how a sample of eight HS representatives interpreted their purpose, enacted their roles and impacted on OHS at two metal manufacturing businesses. Both businesses were considered industry leaders in OHS with expressed commitments to employee participation, but otherwise provided diverse contextual settings by virtue of the size and degree of the unionisation of their workforces as well as the formalisation and comprehensiveness of their OHS management systems. This chapter draws together the key themes from both case studies to address the research question and associated sub-questions in relation to the current scholarship on HS representatives and employee participation in OHS.

7.2 HS representatives' contributions to OHS

7.2.1 The purpose of the HS representative role

In relation to sub-question 1, the HSE Amendment Act sets out that the purpose of the HS representative is to represent the views of employees in relation to health and safety in order to contribute to the improvement of OHS (HSE Amendment Act, s. 19A). However, the role purpose of the HS representative is not consistently interpreted and enacted in New Zealand workplaces. Businesses A and B had diverse interpretations of the purpose of the HS representative, which seemed to be because the definition of the role was shaped by different organisational actors who held somewhat divergent views of the purpose.

In case study A, the purpose of the representative was shaped primarily by managerial interests. The OHS manager determined the purpose of the HS representative and communicated her expectations of the role at OHS committee meetings. Additionally, the representatives were exposed to a managerialist interpretation of their purpose by attending training courses delivered by an employers' association (EMA). Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that the HS representatives' conceived that their roles

were to undertake compliance and monitoring functions. This aligned with management's interpretations of the role rather than their co-workers who understood that the representatives should act as an advocate by resolving OHS issues on their behalf. Similarly, Wright and Spaven (1999) found that representatives were likely to have a managerialist interpretation of their purpose in contexts where management formulated the HS representatives' role definition and communicated their expectations to the representatives.

In contrast, Business B made no concerted effort to communicate the organisation's official interpretation of the purpose of the HS representative role as outlined in the OHS employee participation agreement. The purpose of the representatives' role was shaped through a negotiation process between management and unions, and documented in a formal agreement. Yet, the content of this agreement was not communicated to employees, and appeared to have no influence on the interviewees' conceptions of the representatives' purpose. The reason for this non-communication is unclear, but Sorensen et al. (2009) found that the content of local agreements had to be accepted by both management and workers to be accepted and carried out in practice. My impression was that the union may not have been entirely satisfied with the terms of the agreement, so set it aside.

Even though there was no formal guidance on the role, the interviewees implicitly expected the representatives to support rather than take responsibility for the management of health and safety, but the managers and workers alike had different interpretations of the role that the representatives should play. A common perception that aligns with the HSE Amendment Act was that the representatives should facilitate the hazard management process. More broadly, representatives were also perceived to have roles as conduits of health and safety information and representatives of workers' OHS interests.

Indeed, the representatives appeared to implicitly understand that their purpose was to primarily service worker rather than managerial interests. This is likely to be the case because Business B's representatives were exposed to workers' interpretations of role

purpose. Notably, the representatives gained a sense of purpose from attending training courses delivered by a workers' organisation (NZCTU). Indeed, research has shown that representatives' attendance at training courses offered by workers' organisations is critical in developing a worker-centred approach to the role (D. Walters et al., 2001). It is also likely that the representatives' interpretation of purpose was influenced by the implicit traditions of how one should act as a worker representative (Frick & Sjostrom, n.d.), shaped by a long history of employee representation that emerged under union auspices. However, it was further apparent that the HS representatives' conceptions of purpose were shaped by the perceived deficiencies in their organisation's OHS management system.

Next, I look more closely at how the HS representatives' interpreted and enacted their roles (sub-question 2).

7.2.2 Role interpretation and enactment

The results demonstrated that all of the HS representatives wanted to improve health and safety, but there were marked differences, as well as similarities, between how the representatives' interpreted their purpose and enacted their roles. Others have used typologies to capture various characteristics of how HS representative's conceived and enacted their roles (Hall et al., 2006; Wright & Spaven, 1999). On the basis of the similarities and differences found in my New Zealand study, it was possible to cast the HS representatives into four broad role categories that I have labelled 'administrators', 'workshop inspectors', 'problem solvers' and 'craft experts' to reflect their *dominant* OHS strategies; the strategies they use to prevent injuries and improve health and safety. The distinctions between their strategies was made by analysing the HS representatives' activities in relation to Brun and Loiselle's (2002) theoretical framework that allows for the work of OHS practitioners to be profiled according to the level (operational or strategic) and dimension (organisational, technical or human) in which they concentrate their preventative efforts. The HS representative 'types', which I will characterise in greater detail in the ensuing discussion, do overlap, but are intended to show that the representatives tend toward certain activities more strongly than others.

Administrators

Administrators are HS representatives that are characterised by their focus on the implementation and operation of OHS management systems. Shannon and Chrissie from Business A can be classed as administrators because they perceived that their purpose was to improve health and safety by preventing accidents and attempted to do this by administering their unit's OHS management systems. They enacted their roles by participating in activities that primarily fell within the organisational dimension at the operational level of Brun and Loiselle's (2002) framework. Research indicates that it is rare for activities of worker representatives to be classified in the organisational dimension, and more common for the activities of employer safety practitioners to be characterised in this way (Brun & Loiselle, 2002). Yet, this type of HS representative is similar to Wright and Spaven's (1999) 'proactivist', which was the dominant form of representation observed in the United Kingdom's offshore oil and gas industry where management had defined the purpose of the HS representative.

Indeed, it seemed that both administrators primarily acted as agents of management, rather than worker representatives. They enacted their roles by taking responsibility for the application of OHS policies (e.g. ensuring that workers identified and documented hazards and that management conducted OHS induction training), investigating accidents, compiling internal OHS statistics, gathering information on OHS legislation and representing management in the rehabilitation process. Notably, Shannon was the only representative to participate in the rehabilitation process, but as a representative of management rather than workers. Even though this is a key duty of the HS representative in the default section of the HSE Amendment Act (Schedule 1A [2]), few representatives or their respective managers recognised this. This confirms, and perhaps explains, Johnson and Hickey's (2008) finding that only a minority of New Zealand based HS representatives participate in the rehabilitation process.

Further, the administrators' secondary prevention strategy involved facilitating the control of hazards. To do this, they strategically collaborated with management or workers to determine prevention mechanisms, suggesting that their activities also fall within the human-operational dimension.

Workshop inspectors

Business A's other two HS representatives, Robert and Glen, were classified as workshop inspectors because, in a similar way to an OHS inspector, they perceived that their purpose was to inform workers of their OHS obligations and to play a role in monitoring compliance. An analysis of the workshop inspectors' activities indicated that they primarily worked at the operational level in the human dimension of Brun and Loiselle's (2002) model. Notably, they adopted a behavioural modification approach to hazard control by focusing on workers' use of PPE and work safety methods. For instance, they ensured that workers linked chains around metal beams correctly and wore overalls in the workshop. Further, in a more minor capacity, the workshop inspectors conducted a number of activities which fell within the organisational dimension at the operational level in that they investigated accidents and ensured that OHS policies and procedures were correctly applied. Even so, the workshop inspectors' dominant OHS strategy was to improve health and safety by informing workers of their obligations and monitoring compliance. While other studies have not labelled the activities of HS representatives in this way, Australian questionnaire surveys of representatives across multiple industries suggest that it is common for representatives to undertake such activities (Biggins & Phillips, 1991; Biggins et al., 1988; Gaines & Biggins, 1992).

Problem solvers

Nick and Jack from Business B were categorised as problem solvers. They both implied that their purpose was to improve working conditions and interpreted that the best way to achieve this was to find practical solutions to control hazards. Therefore, their dominant prevention strategy focused on the technical dimension at the operational level, which Brun and Loiselle (2002) found was the most common activity profile of the HS representative. They suggested that this was because HS representatives work close to sources of risk on the shop floor, and are more likely to have an understanding of hazards and practical prevention solutions. Yet, the problem solvers did not necessarily assert their personal expertise of the production process to control hazards, but involved other employees at both a strategic and operational level to facilitate resolutions. The problem solvers interacted with workers informally and at toolbox meetings to discuss their concerns and foster participation in matters affecting their

health and safety. Subsequently, the representatives strategically formed coalitions with management and workers who had the expertise and technical skills to remedy safety problems or provide advice that the representatives could use to inform a case to put to management arguing for the adoption of a particular control. Broadly, the label 'problem solver' describes a representative that primarily focuses on improving OHS by finding technical solutions to manage hazards.

Craft experts

In contrast, Business B's other two HS representatives, Barry and Doug, were categorised as craft experts. Both representatives stated that their purpose was to act as conduits of information or OHS guides, but their dominant prevention strategy was to assert their specialist craft-based expertise at risk reduction committee meetings to influence the development of standards and procedures for the management of specific hazards. The implication is that their activities fall primarily within the strategic-technical dimension (Brun & Loiselle, 2002). It is unusual to find representatives' acting in such a strategic and proactive manner. In a more typical fashion, these representatives also conducted a number of activities at the operational level within the human dimension by meeting with workers to provide OHS related advice about how to resolve OHS issues or conduct hazard analyses on new equipment. The craft experts also mentored (D. Walters et al., 2001) other representatives by encouraging their participation at OHS committee meetings and providing moral support to those contemplating using a conflict strategy to compel management to control hazards. This may be a consequence of their long tenures as representatives. Overall, the label 'craft expert' describes HS representatives who predominantly use their technical knowledge of the work environment to influence strategic OHS decisions.

Comparing role interpretation and enactment across HS representative types

A comparison of the activity profiles of the HS representative types shows that the representatives predominately enacted their roles at the operational as distinct from the strategic level. Yet, Figure 19 indicates that there are subtle differences between the profiles of representatives from different businesses.

Figure 19. HS representatives' dominant OHS strategies classified according to Brun and Loiselle's (2002) framework

| | Organisational | Technical | Human |
|-------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Strategic | | Craft experts (B's Barry & Doug) | |
| Operational | Administrators (A's Shannon & Chrissie) | Problem solvers (B's Nick & Jack) | Workshop inspectors (A's Robert & Glen) |

Business A's representatives orientated toward the organisational and human dimensions while Business B's representatives worked primarily within the technical dimension. The differences in activity profiles seems to be related to how the purpose of the HS representative role is interpreted at each business, which is associated with how responsibility for OHS is delegated within the organisations. None of Business B's representatives performed activities that fell within the organisational dimension because management were expected to undertake organisational activities, and their performance of these duties was formally assessed. In comparison, the HS representatives at Business A operated in the organisational dimension because they were allocated formal responsibility for tasks that management would ordinarily be expected to undertake (Brun & Loiselle, 2002).

Similarly, all of the HS representatives worked to some degree in the human dimension at the operational level. HS representatives' focus at the operational level was a theme that emerged in Johnson and Hickey's (2008) New Zealand study as well as numerous international studies (Brun & Loiselle, 2002; Gaines & Biggins, 1992; Hillage et al., 2000). Brun and Loiselle (2002) suggested that it was typical for worker representatives to concentrate on operational activities because their location on the shop floor allowed them to detect threats to workers' health and safety, and that ultimately, "the urgency of dealing with dangers ... takes precedence over activities involving strategy" (p.533). It did appear that most of the representatives reacted to OHS issues rather than proactively identify hazards. However, my impression was that both organisations managed hazards reactively by primarily relying on workers to observe and articulate their concerns via the direct systems of OHS employee participation. For instance, when the HS representatives were asked how they identified hazards, most asserted that it

was typical for workers to raise issues at toolbox meetings or via the audit systems. Given that the organisations reactively managed hazards, it is perhaps not surprising that the representatives do the same.

The next section looks at the outcome of the HS representatives' participation in OHS by addressing the third sub-question, that is, what impact do HS representatives have on OHS in their workplace?

7.2.3 HS representatives' OHS impacts

The representatives' OHS impacts were evaluated in relation to the Danish National Working Environment Authority's (2002) impact ladder. The ladder was useful because it provided a number of indicators on which to evaluate impact based on changes to knowledge, attitude, improvements to the OHS management system, production processes and the reduction in stressors and exposures. OHS impact was evaluated based on the perceptions of the representatives, their managers and co-workers. The choice to solicit multiple perspectives proved to be a strength of the study's design, demonstrated by the range of impact assessments elicited. As it transpired, a number of the representatives were found to be remarkably modest in their assessment of their own impacts, whereas their managers and co-workers felt that they had greatly improved OHS.

Table 21 presents the HS representatives' OHS impacts in relation to the impact ladder. The shaded areas indicate the levels of the ladder where the HS representative had the greatest impact based on my interpretation of the results. Generally, the representatives located within the same type had similar OHS impacts. Further, a comparison of OHS impact across types reveals that each seemed to impact on different levels of the ladder, but there were also some similarities across types.

Commonly, the workers and some of the managers perceived that the representatives offered workers another channel to raise and redress OHS issues. Similar to the findings of Walters and Haines (1988), workers had not necessarily raised OHS concerns directly with their representatives, but felt it was beneficial to have access to a representative as

a form of 'back up' if management was slow to address their concerns or if they felt uncomfortable speaking to management.

Table 21. HS representatives' OHS impacts in relation to the impact ladder

| Impact ladder categorisations | Problem solvers | | Craft experts | | Workshop inspectors | | Administrators | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | <i>Nick</i> | <i>Jack</i> | <i>Doug</i> | <i>Barry</i> | <i>Robert</i> | <i>Glen</i> | <i>Shannon</i> | <i>Chrissie</i> |
| Reduce exposures, risk factors | + | | | | | | | |
| Improve production | + | + | + | | ⊖ | | | + |
| Improve OHS management | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Change attitude | + | + | + | | + | + | | |
| Increase knowledge | + | | | | | | + | |

Key: + Positive impact on this rung of the impact ladder.
 ⊖ Negative impact on this rung of the impact ladder.
 Shaded area – impact most significant.

Further, this study finds that all of the representatives appeared to foster positive labour relations, a finding that builds on other studies such as Shaw and Turner (2003), which found that HS representatives' increased communication between management and workers on OHS issues. Indeed, one of the main intentions behind the introduction of legislative based HS representatives was that they should improve cooperation between labour and management in New Zealand workplaces (M. Wilson, n.d.). The findings clearly demonstrate that the representatives acted in good faith by facilitating the sharing of information and working cooperatively to enhance the interests of both management and workers. This finding should be reassuring to the employers' organisations who anticipated that representatives would undermine managerial prerogative (Wren, 1997). Despite these apparent similarities in impact, each of the representative types generally impacted on different levels of the ladder. Next, I discuss these apparent differences in more detail.

Problem solvers' OHS impacts

The problem solvers contributed to OHS primarily by improving the production process from a health and safety perspective, and had impact on the highest level of the ladder compared to the other types. Notably, Nick eliminated the need for workers to lift heavy objects thereby reducing the risk of musculoskeletal injury at the banding section by initiating engineering modifications. Jack also improved production by facilitating the installation of new lighting in an area of the plant.

Nick's impact was estimated to be far greater than Jack's and indeed all of the other HS representatives, as he impacted on every level of the ladder. The workers perceived that Nick improved their attitudes toward auditing and incident reporting. Additionally, he increased their knowledge of the health effects associated with chemical exposure and control measures. In this respect, it seemed that Nick was attempting to compensate for management's non-compliance with the HSE Act (managers are technically responsible for educating workers about hazards and controls under section 12 of the HSE Act). By empowering workers with knowledge about chemicals, the workers further suggested that Nick improved the psychosocial work environment by reducing workers' anxiety about the chemicals used in the production process.

Administrators' OHS impacts

The administrators had the greatest impact on the OHS management systems level of the impact ladder. Specifically, they facilitated the implementation and operation of health and safety management systems as frameworks for improving health and safety performance in what were essentially small businesses that had traditionally managed OHS in an informal and ad hoc manner. Similarly, Shaw and Turner (2003) found that HS representatives were instrumental in facilitating improvements to small business's approaches to health and safety management. Notably, the administrators' efforts allowed for their unit's OHS management systems to be accredited to a primary standard under the WSMP programme thereby reducing their unit's ACC levies. The administrators indirectly contributed to the improvement of the work environment, but there was no evidence to suggest that they directly reduced or eliminated workers'

exposure to hazards. Rather, they tended to opt for minimisation strategies to control hazards (e.g. training, procuring new PPE).

Craft experts' OHS impacts

The craft experts' OHS impacts were comparatively more difficult to evaluate compared to the other types. One of the reasons for this is that neither of the representatives characterised as craft experts could provide insight into how they affected OHS outcomes. Yet, an analysis of the representatives' personal narratives clearly showed that they positively contributed to health and safety by advising management and workers about legislation, the company's OHS management system and the technical aspects of hazard control. However, the OHS impact of these activities is largely indeterminate and invisible. At a minimum, their actions are likely to enhance the efficiency of the OHS management system as Table 21 indicates. Although the administrators also primarily impacted on this level of the ladder, the nature of the craft experts' impact is quite different, but the impact ladder categorisations are not sensitive enough to make this distinction. Rather than implementing and operating an OHS system, the craft experts influenced the development of standards and procedures for the management of specific hazards at a strategic level thereby integrating OHS considerations into the technical system.

The OHS impacts of the craft experts is potentially greater than at the systems level because in theory, the representatives' influence at the strategic level enhances the quality of decisions made by managers thereby improving working conditions (Brun & Loiselle, 2002). A more in-depth study of representatives' participation at the risk reduction committees would provide greater insight into their impact. It is somewhat paradoxical that while these HS representatives work to prevent workers' exposure to hazards, their impact ladders appear to be modest compared to the other representatives who primarily reacted to workers' concerns about hazards. This is because it is difficult to demonstrate the effects of preventative activities and comparatively easier to decipher an impact when the HS representative identified a particular issue and facilitated tangible improvements.

Workshop inspectors' OHS impacts

The workshop inspectors mainly impacted on the lower rungs of the impact ladder in that they perceived, and were perceived by colleagues, to have improved workers' attitudes toward OHS by increasing safety consciousness and willingness to comply with safety policy. This impact is consistent with overseas research, which found that HS representatives improve workers' attitudes to health and safety (Milgate et al., 2002; D. Walters, 2005). Paradoxically, Robert's co-workers further suggested that he had a negative impact on attitudes as workers felt that his personal violation of safety policies set a poor example to the apprentices and harmed the image of the OHS organisation. This hints that workers have strong implicit expectations of their representative to model appropriate safety behaviours. Additionally, one could speculate that Robert also increased exposure to hazards and reduced the efficiency of the production process by insisting that workers wore overalls that caused heat stress and compromised their ability to concentrate. This apparent negative impact on health and safety is one that has not, so far, been captured in the literature.

7.2.4 HS representatives' power bases and associated political strategies

Like their counterparts in Britain and North America (Hall et al., 2006; Shaw & Turner, 2003; D. Walters et al., 2001), New Zealand based HS representatives also positively impact on OHS, but some of the representatives are more adept at facilitating OHS improvements than others (Hall et al., 2006). It was anticipated that the representatives would find it challenging to influence the core decision making processes of their organisations given that they have minimal formal authority and limited direct access to decision makers (Dawson et al., 1984; Hasle & Sorensen, In press). Yet, as the research suggested, the HS representatives' power bases were a critical factor in shaping the roles that they assumed and their OHS impacts. The following discussion focuses on the representatives' power bases and associated political strategies that they used to facilitate OHS improvements.

Table 22 presents the power bases of each of the HS representatives that were gleaned by interpreting the interviewees' perceptions of the representatives' role barriers and facilitators. The power bases featured in the table were extracted from the literature

review and focus on the power that the HS representatives' potentially derive from the wider organisational context, coalition partners and from their individual attributes. The expert knowledge category was refined to reflect the types of expertise that the interviewees identified as being pertinent to the role of the HS representative. The HS representatives' individual power bases will be explored more closely following a discussion about how the organisations' internal political environment supported and constrained the representatives' ability to participate in OHS.

Focusing on the 'organisational context' level in Table 22, it is apparent that the political environment in which the representatives operated was favourable for them to facilitate OHS improvements given the commitment of management and unions (at Business B) to health and safety. Notably, management in both case studies expressed commitment to OHS and employee participation in the matter, which is widely recognised as fundamental to the effective operation of representative employee participation (Biggins & Phillips, 1991; Hillage et al., 2000; Kochan et al., 1977; Leopold & Beaumont, 1982; D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990).

The international research further indicated that in organisations visibly committed to OHS, HS representatives tend to be well supported with resources (D. Walters & Nichols, 2006). Resources are a form of power for the representative, enabling them to perform OHS activities (Hall et al., 2006). Indeed, both case studies provided the representatives with resources that they were legally entitled to enact OHS activities (e.g. information on internal OHS systems, time to attend HS representative training and OHS committee meetings).

Table 22. HS representatives' power bases

| Power bases | | Administrators | | Workshop inspectors | | Problem solvers | | Craft experts | |
|------------------------|---|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| | | <i>Shannon</i> | <i>Chrissie</i> | <i>Robert</i> | <i>Glen</i> | <i>Nick</i> | <i>Jack</i> | <i>Doug</i> | <i>Barry</i> |
| Individual attributes | Expert knowledge | Administrative expertise | + | + | | | | | |
| | | OHS systems expertise | + | + | | | | | |
| | | Technical expertise | ⊖ | ⊖ | ⊖ | + | + | + | + |
| | | Occupational health expertise | | | ⊖ | + | | | |
| | Personal qualities | Charisma/likeability | | | | + | | | |
| Established coalitions | Management | | + | + | | | | + | + |
| | Workers | | + | | | + | + | | |
| | OHS organisation | + | + | + | + | + | | ⊖ | |
| | Union | | | | | | | | |
| | OHS inspectorate | | | | | | | | |
| Organisational context | Management support | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| | Union support | ⊖ | ⊖ | ⊖ | ⊖ | + | + | + | + |
| | Access to HS representative training courses | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| | Job role of the HS representative | + | + | + | + | ⊖ | ⊖ | + | ⊖ |
| | Time to conduct OHS activities | + | + | + | + | ⊖ | + | + | ⊖ |
| | Access to information on internal OHS system | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| | Access to OHS information from external sources | + | + | | | ⊖ | | | |

Key: + Representatives have this power base.
 ⊖ Representatives showed no evidence of this potential power base.

The nature of the representatives' job roles seemed to be a significant organisational factor that determined whether they were able to access these resources in practice. For instance, it was difficult for Nick to access OHS information and conduct OHS activities in the course of his normal job because he worked on the production line and was subjected to tight production pressures. It is not unusual to find that representatives based in production plants are 'time poor' (D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990) and that representatives, in general, have to conduct OHS activities after hours (James & Kyprianou, 2000). In contrast, the administrators located within an office environment, and removed from production pressures, had time to conduct activities and had access to the internet to source external OHS information.

However, the HS representatives at Business B probably had a greater advantage than A's because they had the indirect support of a union that was committed to OHS. Research demonstrates that unions play a fundamental role in facilitating employee participation in OHS at the workplace (D. Walters, 1987; D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990; Warren-Langford et al., 1993). In practice, the unions at Business B supported the HS representative role by contributing to the content of the OHS employee participation agreement and advocating for the introduction of the Health and Safety Network Forum. The representatives also potentially benefited from the economic security that unions are often shown to provide (Quinlan & Mayhew, 2000).

Further, Table 22 shows that there are marked differences between the HS representatives' personal power bases arising from their individual attributes and coalition partners, but perhaps unsurprisingly, there is convergence between the power bases of the representatives located within the same type. The following discussion provides insight into the HS representatives' power bases according to type, and I describe how the HS representatives' power bases, or lack of, shape the political strategies that they use to make OHS improvements.

Administrators' power bases and political strategies

Shannon and Chrissie took an administrative based prevention strategy because, as the administrators of their respective units, they possessed the expertise and resources to

manage systems and complete paperwork not unlike French and Raven's (2001) expert power. The representatives' focus on administration was reinforced by OHS management and their managers who delegated to them the responsibility for managing their unit's OHS management systems. Indeed, it seemed 'natural' for the representatives to take on this responsibility because their job role was to assist their managers to administer the organisation's affairs, and they were granted the time to do so. Additionally, management perceived them to have greater OHS expertise as they had attended the EMA's training courses. In this instance, managements' perception of the representatives' OHS expertise factors in a real power base (Leopold & Beaumont, 1982).

Yet, the representatives' lack of technical expertise limited their ability to participate in hazard management; a fundamental part of the HS representative role. To compensate, their (implicit) strategy was to engage in political processes by forming internal coalitions with workers and supervisors who had the technical expertise to provide advice about hazard management and authority to enact change.

However, the administrators encountered situations where they wanted to enact further change, but refrained from lobbying for OHS improvements due to the economic constraints (V. Walters, 1985) of which they were acutely aware because of their formal organisational roles. My interpretation is that while the representatives' role as administrators was beneficial as it allowed them to access resources, it also inhibited them from challenging management to invest in OHS improvements or subject the business to economic penalty. This is likely because they had insight into the firm's finances and were responsible for maintaining prudent financial management to ensure the viability of the units.

Workshop inspectors' power bases and political strategies

Overseas literature points out that the OHS organisation is known to be a potential coalition partner from which the HS representative can derive influence and support (Garcia et al., 2007; Leopold & Beaumont, 1982). Consistent with this view, Table 22 indicates that the workshop inspectors were primarily reliant on the OHS organisation, particularly the OHS manager, for their role description and coaching. Given this dependence on management, it is hardly surprising that neither representative challenged managerial decisions. Instead,

both carried out OHS activities that were defined by management instead of taking the initiative to consider how they could act to improve OHS from the workers' perspective. However, there was evidence to suggest that Glen, the inexperienced workshop inspector, was starting to recognise hazards and draw on his technical expertise to consider options for hazard control.

In contrast, Robert lacked credibility and had little referent or expert power (French & Raven, 2001), which potentially minimised his OHS impact. Workers expressed reluctance to raise issues with Robert because they perceived that his lack of technical knowledge compromised his ability to conduct tasks safely, which undermined his credibility. It was further evident that Robert had minimal understanding of how workers' exposure to hazards, particularly chemical substances, affected health, so he was unable to advocate for the improvement of controls to reduce or eliminate exposure. Yet, Robert was able to enact his purpose because he derived power from the support of his manager who he could rely on to ensure that workers' abided by safety rules. He otherwise expressed frustration at workers for not consistently complying with safety rules, which is a complaint that has been expressed by other New Zealand based HS representatives (Johnson & Hickey, 2008) as well as those abroad (D. Walters & Gourlay, 1990).

Problem solvers' power bases and political strategies

One of the key power bases of the problem solvers was that they had the support of workers, which may be related to the fact that they were the only HS representatives who were elected to the position by colleagues. Both representatives gained power from informal networks of workers who they used to provide technical advice or skill to physically alter the work environment. Workers have been found to support HS representatives in a similar way internationally (Beaumont, 1981). Additionally, Nick used the goodwill of his workmates to get time off to research how to manage hazards.

However, if hazards required financial outlay to remedy, the problem solvers' ability to facilitate a resolution was hindered by their lack of economic power (V. Walters, 1985), and potentially, the differences in risk perception between management and workers (D. Walters & Frick, 2000). This was demonstrated by the fact that both problem solvers had difficulty

convincing management of the significance of hazards and necessity of investing in higher level controls, but both were willing to challenge management. Jack was unsuccessful in his endeavour to solicit lifting equipment for his colleagues by attempting to influence decision making processes at OHS committee meetings, and continuously badgering his manager to resolve the matter.

In contrast, Nick had greater success in facilitating improvements. Nick's sheer motivation to improve working conditions prompted him to overcome significant resource constraints and draw on an apparent analytical and tactical ability to search for information, which he used to construct business cases to compel management to accept his claims for change. These characteristics suggest that Nick is what Hall et al. (2006) would describe as a knowledge activist. Nick's strategy prompted the improvement of the banding system from an OHS perspective, but on other occasions was unsuccessful as management declined Nick's proposals on the basis that they had alternative priorities and finite resources; arguments which are often used to dismiss business cases (Hasle & Sorensen, In press).

Additionally, Nick was able to have an impact on the lower levels of the ladder because of his expert knowledge (French & Raven, 2001) by virtue of his formal qualifications and experience in the health sector and emergency services. It was clear that his knowledge of chemicals and health facilitated his participation in the hazard management process. His qualifications and experience, combined with his seemingly charismatic personality, meant that workers perceived him to be credible, which is perhaps why they expressed a willingness to be influenced by him. Indeed, a number of international studies suggested that the charisma of the HS representative would support their endeavours to improve OHS (French & Raven, 2001; Hasle & Sorensen, In press).

Craft experts' power base and political strategies

The craft experts derived their power from their specialist technical knowledge that management was dependent upon to control the risks associated with particular hazards at risk reduction committee meetings. In this respect, both representatives strategically used the OHS committee meetings as an avenue to influence those with decision making authority in the organisation (Brun & Loiselle, 2002; Dawson et al., 1984). The craft experts

perceived that they had the same interests as management, and felt that the support of management was crucial in facilitating the enactment of their roles in a similar way to that found overseas (D. Walters & Frick, 2000).

HS representatives' personal power bases and political strategies across types

In general, the HS representatives' personal expertise, by virtue of their formal qualifications, OHS knowledge and job skills, was an important factor that influenced how they contributed to OHS as the literature suggested it would (Dawson et al., 1984; Leopold & Beaumont, 1982). The HS representatives' job roles were also an important determinant. Wright and Spaven's (1999) study hinted that the job role of the HS representative would influence how they participated in OHS, but this study establishes an explicit link between job role and the way that the HS representative role is enacted. Job role not only determined the representatives' access to resources, but their place within the organisational hierarchy had implications for how they were expected to participate in OHS. For instance, it appeared to be acceptable for the administrators to improve the OHS administration system and for the problem solvers, who were production workers, to assist with the resolution of problems with the production process.

All of the representatives had some degree of power to facilitate improvements, such as the purchase of PPE or equipment maintenance, but their capacity to facilitate change was curbed by their lack of economic power (V. Walters, 1985). There appears to be an economic threshold at which point it becomes difficult for representatives to assert their knowledge to convince management to make OHS improvements. Nick was the most effective representative at overcoming this obstacle by strategically providing management with evidence for the benefits of change, which enabled him to impact on the highest level of the ladder. This finding supports Hall et al.'s (2006) theory that the HS representatives who tactically use knowledge (knowledge activists) to convince management of the necessity and cost-effectiveness of hazard management have the greatest OHS impact.

Most of the representatives accepted that they were unable to facilitate certain improvements to protect the health and safety of workers. Notably, none of them chose to draw on external support by summoning the OHS inspectorate. Previous research suggests

that the inspectorate would be reluctant to get involved in mediating conflicts (V. Walters, 1985), but the default section of the HSE Amendment Act stipulates that representatives have the right to interact with inspectors (Schedule 1A [2]). Even so, most of the representatives implied that liaison with the inspectorate was synonymous with a conflict strategy. Although the representatives could take a strategy that was characterised by conflict, cooperation or a combination of the two (D. Walters & Frick, 2000), none of them were willing either implicitly or explicitly to engage in conflict, as they perceived a better outcome by cooperating with management. Only Shannon had considered issuing a hazard notice, but her case suggests that representatives may be inclined to resort to external intervention if they are unable to garner support for OHS improvements from internal coalitions.

All of the HS representatives were dependent on internal coalitions to enact their roles, particularly the OHS organisation, management and workers. One of the striking aspects of both case studies is that, even though a number of the HS representatives did not have a close rapport with workers, the transparent and comprehensive nature of the direct employee participation systems at both businesses (toolbox meetings and auditing systems) meant that the representatives were aware of the OHS issues that concerned workers, so that they could act on their behalf and facilitate a resolution. While Walters and Frick (2000) asserted that the direct participation of employees is enhanced where there are channels for representative worker participation, this study finds that the direct systems of participation play a major role in supporting representative participation structures. Therefore, the direct and representative systems of employee participation in OHS are mutually supportive.

Table 23 provides a summary of the key points from the discussion in relation to each HS representative type.

Table 23. Summary of the key points from the discussion in relation to each HS representative type

| 'Type' of HS representative | Characterisation of purpose and role enactment | Activity profile (according to Brun & Loisel, 2002) | Key power bases | Main OHS impact |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Administrator | To prevent accidents by focusing on the implementation and efficient operation of health and safety management systems. | Organisational-operational. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration job role and skills. • Low technical knowledge. • Management support. • Low worker interest. • Time for OHS activities. • Access to OHS information. • Coalitions with foremen/managers. • Role defined by management. | Improvement of OHS management system. |
| Workshop inspector | To improve OHS by informing workers of their health and safety related obligations and monitoring compliance. | Human-operational. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low expert knowledge. • Role defined by management. • Time for OHS activities. • Coalitions with management. | Improvement of workers' attitudes toward OHS. |
| Problem solver | To improve working conditions by finding practical solutions to control hazards. | Technical-operational. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical expertise. • Internal coalitions. • Worker support. | Improvement of production processes from an OHS perspective. |
| Craft expert | To act as information conduits at OHS committee meetings by using their technical knowledge of the work environment to influence strategic OHS decisions. | Technical-strategic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical expertise. • Management support. No strong worker relations. | Influence development of OHS procedures and standards at the strategic level. |

7.3 Comment

This chapter weaves together the key findings of my New Zealand study with the current international scholarship on the HS representative. The international studies ranged widely in relation to their focus on representative employee participation in OHS. This was earlier demonstrated (Chapter 3) via the use of Menéndez et al.'s (2008) model, which conceptualised the abundance of factors influencing the role of the HS representative and their OHS impacts. My discussion shows that there are New Zealand parallels with overseas experience. It also demonstrates new insights into the role of the representative that may or may not be unique to New Zealand's industrial relations context. In the next and final chapter, I outline the new insights gained from this study and reflect on these findings based on the strengths and limitations of the research design. I also consider the implications of this study for New Zealand OHS policy, for future research and for HS representatives and their managers.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This study addressed the question: *What contributions do HS representatives make to occupational health and safety?* I chose to approach the question by gaining access to two businesses that were committed to OHS within New Zealand's high risk metal manufacturing sector. These two cases formed the basis of the case study analysis. In-depth interviews from a range of organisational actors, including managers, co-workers and the HS representatives themselves enabled me to develop a multifaceted picture of a complex role by illuminating the purpose of the HS representative role; the ways that HS representatives interpret and enact their roles; and the perceived impacts that HS representatives have on OHS in their workplaces.

Tackling the subject of the roles of HS representatives in New Zealand seemed, at the start of the study, a fairly straightforward undertaking. The legislation had set out a broad purpose of the HS representative as well as guidance on the functions that representatives should undertake. Furthermore, the published research to date presented a number of useful explanations and models (Menéndez et al., 2008) that, in turn, could be used to explore the phenomenon of the HS representative.

A close reading of the international literature exposed a multitude of factors and conditions that were likely to impact on the role of the HS representative, and a range of approaches to studying health and safety activities at work. However, this backdrop also revealed gaps in the knowledge-base, offering an opportunity for a comprehensive exploration of the qualitative dimensions of HS representatives' lived experiences within the context of their organisation's OHS employee participation systems.

The New Zealand context provided a unique setting for the study, yet many of the findings from my study reflect those of overseas researchers. This chapter comments on

the study's constraints, and highlights the major conclusions. Chapter 8 closes with recommendations for the future.

8.2 Limitations of the study

As already mentioned, this study provides a number of new insights into the role of HS representatives in New Zealand, but the findings must be considered in relation to the strengths and limitations of the research design. Here, I focus on the characteristics of the case study method, the nature of the data collection process and the analysis.

Consistent with a case study approach, in-depth information about the role of the HS representative was attained from a relatively small sample of representatives. Limiting the focal sample to eight, however, provided the opportunity to gather an extended range of perspectives on the HS representative roles from interviews with their managers and co-workers. Thus, the generalisability that might be claimed from research using a larger sample was sacrificed to gain a more comprehensive, multi-faceted insight into the roles of a few representatives.

In terms of the broader application of the research findings, it is important to note that the HS representatives drawn on in this study operated within New Zealand businesses that are committed to employee participation in OHS within an industry sector that is generally supportive of the role of the HS representative. Therefore, while this design was beneficial in that it allowed for rich insight into the contributions of the representatives, acceptance of the findings must be tempered by the knowledge that they are likely to reflect best New Zealand HS representative practice rather than the 'norm'. Additionally, the implication of my choice of research sites (i.e. those businesses overtly supportive of employee participation and where OHS is arguably a more central concern within a 'sympathetic' industry) is that the HS representatives investigated here are likely to display greater OHS impacts than those operating in other metal manufacturing firms or indeed within businesses in other sectors of New Zealand's economy.

The previous observation suggests that the characteristics of the individual HS representatives that participated in the study may potentially open the study to criticism. Further, the selection method for individual participants meant that they were not necessarily representative of HS representatives as a population. Specifically, the selection process, as with most organisationally situated studies, was dependent on management cooperation. Thus the eight focal HS representatives were ‘hand-picked’ by OHS management, and it is likely that they were chosen precisely because they were considered to be making an effort to improve health and safety (particularly by attending and participating in OHS committee meetings). I was aware that one OHS manager did not ask those representatives who she perceived to be inactive or disinterested in the role to participate in an interview.

Choices made regarding the number of interviewees and other aspects of the data collection process could also be considered limitations. The sample size of eight HS representatives is conservative, but I interviewed as many representatives within the time constraints and appreciate that a larger sample of representatives is needed to confirm the patterns observed in this study. As it stands, the representatives’ impacts are likely to reflect what they were doing in the lead up to their interviews, and involvement in this study might influence ongoing participation in OHS.

Limitations associated with the analysis of the interview data are those common to all qualitative studies. I focused on the experiences of the individual participants, and my analysis unavoidably required an element of subjectivity. Data triangulation was employed to make the analysis more robust, but the nature of qualitative analysis means that other, different interpretations might evolve from other researchers with different knowledge bases and orientations towards the data.

8.3 Conclusions

This study contributes to the growing understanding of employee participation in health and safety by focusing on the contributions that HS representatives make to OHS within New Zealand’s metal manufacturing sector. I employed a cross-perceptual approach

within the case study method. Findings from the study provide the basis from which I offer a number of original insights into the role of the HS representative, propose a new way of categorising different approaches to the role and highlight some areas that can be addressed in the future.

Positive contribution

The key finding is that HS representatives in New Zealand do make a positive contribution to OHS, and they are perceived to play a valuable organisational role. There were diverse conceptions of the purpose of the HS representative as different organisational actors held different views of the role. Viewed as a continuum, the workers at one end tended to conceive the HS representative as a figure to represent their OHS interests. At the other extreme, management perceived that the representative was a tool to help achieve compliance with internal and external OHS obligations. There appears not to be a 'correct' way of defining the role, especially if the role definition is accepted by parties within the workplace.

Different role interpretation and enactment (new typology)

In practice, the HS representatives have markedly different interpretations of how to improve health and safety, which seemed to shape how they enacted their roles. To characterise these differences, I developed a new typology that included a range of 'types', or categories, into which HS representatives can be grouped: administrators, workshop inspectors, problem solvers and craft experts.

Benefits of a cross-perceptual study

This study demonstrates the value of using a cross perceptual approach to research the OHS contributions of the representatives. A rich and multifaceted picture of the representatives' roles and OHS impacts was achieved by triangulating the representatives' perceptions with those of their co-workers and managers.

Extended application of the impact ladder

The Danish National Working Environment Authority's (2002) impact ladder was applied in a novel way in this study to assess how HS representatives impact on OHS. The

impact ladder was a useful tool to systematically evaluate and differentiate between the impacts of the four main types of representative.

Nature of the HS representatives' OHS contributions

OHS impact was found to differ among the 'types' of HS representative identified. Unsurprisingly, however, some convergence was evident. Nearly all representatives were perceived by workers to contribute to OHS by providing an alternative legitimate channel to raise and redress health and safety concerns. Further, as a consequence of their participation in OHS, all of the representatives appeared to foster positive labour relations. Yet, overall the problem solvers had the highest impact. Their contribution was to facilitate improvements to the production process from a health and safety perspective. The administrators primarily contributed by implementing and maintaining the efficiency of OHS management systems. The craft experts also impacted on the systems level, but the nature of their contribution was different to the administrators in that they used their technical knowledge to influence the development of policies and procedures at a strategic level. The workshop inspectors had a comparatively low impact, but contributed by improving workers' attitudes toward OHS by increasing safety consciousness and willingness to comply with safety policy.

Factors influencing the HS representative role

The contributions made by HS representatives were found to be complex and multifaceted. In particular, the study found that the representatives' role enactment and impact is influenced by:

1. *How the purpose of the HS representative is defined and communicated at the organisational level. Important factors related to:*
 - whose interests (management, workers or both) influenced the definition of the role and functions of the HS representative, and
 - the communication of the organisation's interpretation of purpose to employees.
2. *HS representatives' expert power and abilities, particularly their:*
 - OHS knowledge;
 - organisational knowledge (e.g. of the internal OHS management system);

- formal skills and qualifications (e.g. trade based technical qualifications), which are associated with the representatives' recognised job competencies (e.g. the ability to administer paperwork); and
- capacity to form coalitions.

3. *The HS representatives' job roles.*

- Job role determines the HS representatives' access to resources.
- The HS representatives' position in the organisational hierarchy, relative to managers and workers, determines the types of activities in which it is acceptable for them to participate.

8.4 Recommendations

Notwithstanding the perceived success of the contributions made by HS representatives, and acknowledging the limitations of the current research, the following recommendations are proposed. These are intended to provide practical directions that may lead to optimization of the positive contributions that representatives make to OHS in New Zealand workplaces.

1. *Policy initiatives (government and industry)*

- Continue to protect the status of the HS representative role through the HSE Amendment Act.
- Develop a code of practice to support the provisions for employee participation in OHS contained in the HSE Amendment Act. This will provide workplaces with guidance on the implementation of OHS employee participation systems, and the roles and functions of the HS representative.

2. *Education and training*

- Enhance the current HS representative training schedule to one that:
 - provides representatives with a greater understanding of the nature of hazards within their sector and best practice control measures.

- fosters a knowledge activist orientation by educating representatives about how to research and build cases to justify the control of hazards, particularly in the early stages of training.
 - informs HS representatives about the political dimensions of their role, including their sources of power and how they can use these to influence organisational decision making processes to improve OHS outcomes.
- Encourage the OHS training of line management that specifically educates them about their health and safety responsibilities.

3. *Future research*

- Broaden the focus of New Zealand's research agenda on representative participation in OHS to:
 - investigate how HS representatives in businesses and industry sectors that are less committed to OHS and employee participation enact their roles and impact on health and safety.
 - conduct longitudinal studies that assess HS representatives' OHS impacts overtime and other influences on the role, such as training.
 - explore the impact of OHS committees and how worker representatives contribute at these fora.
- Conduct research in other international industrial relations contexts to establish the broader relevance of the current findings for the development of effective OHS strategy.

A 'final word'

Ultimately, this study shows that HS representatives play a vital role in facilitating occupational health and safety improvements in New Zealand workplaces. Further research is required to determine the longitudinal impact of HS representatives' participation in OHS. However, my research evidence suggests that HS representatives make a valuable, and possibly key, contribution to New Zealand's overall strategy for improving the health and safety of New Zealand workers.

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Appendix A: A snapshot of New Zealand's metal manufacturing sector

This section provides a brief overview of New Zealand's metal manufacturing sector in relation to production, employment, trade union activity, occupational hazards and injuries.

Production

The metal manufacturing industry sector includes:

- alumina production;
- aluminium rolling, drawing, extrusion and smelting;
- ammunition manufacturing;
- architect aluminium product manufacture;
- basic iron and steel manufacture;
- basic non-ferrous metal manufacture;
- copper, silver, lead and zinc smelting and refining;
- fabricated metal product manufacture;
- hand tool and general hardware manufacture;
- iron and steel casting and forging;
- metal coating and finishing;
- metal container manufacturing;
- non-ferrous metal casting, metal rolling and pipe fitting manufacture;
- nut, bolt, screw and rivet manufacture;
- sheet metal product manufacture;
- spring and wire product manufacture;
- steel pipe and tube manufacture; and
- structural metal product manufacture and fabrication (John Skudder, chairman of ACC's Metal Manufacturing Safer Industry Group, personal communication, 25 February 2009).

Employment

The metal manufacturing sector employs 29,380 workers or approximately 2% of New Zealand's workforce (Statistics New Zealand*). The sector's labour force is predominately full-time (Statistics New Zealand, 2008) and metal manufacturing has a fairly low turnover rate of 9.1% (Statistics New Zealand*). This indicates that although the sector is relatively small, employment is stable.

Trade union activity

New Zealand's manufacturing sector, which includes metal manufacturing, has traditionally had relatively high levels of union membership (Deeks & Rasmussen, 2002). Manufacturing has a union density of 31.3% compared to 21.7% for the whole economy (Feinberg-Danieli & Lafferty, 2007). The EPMU is the country's largest private sector union and has high membership levels in the manufacturing and engineering sectors (EPMU, 2008).

Occupational hazards

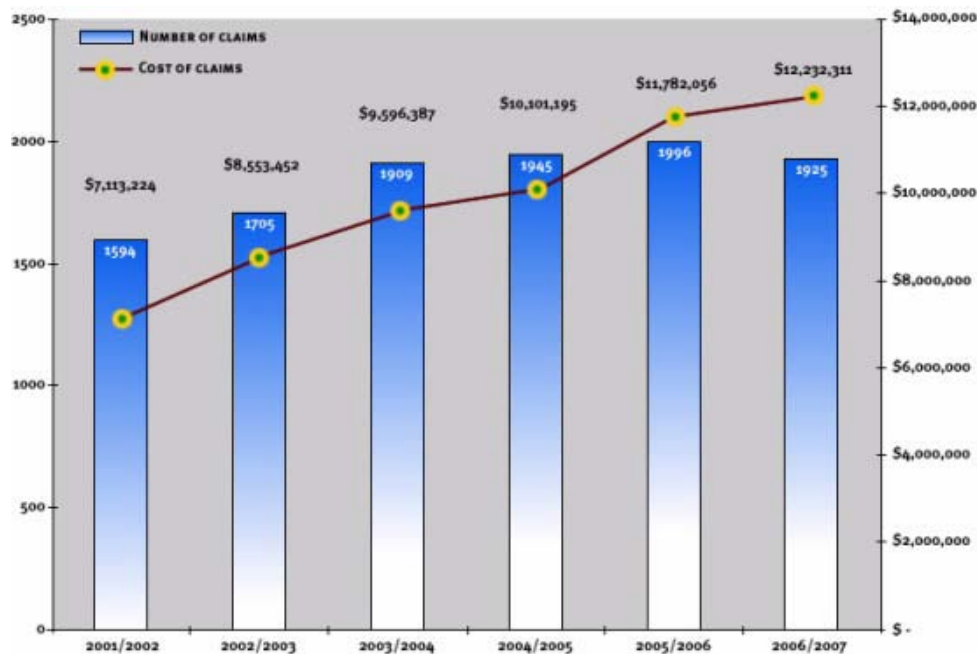
Metal manufacturing is recognised as a physically hazardous industry sector. A diverse range of activities are performed in metal manufacturing establishments, such as welding, fabrication, metal casting, machining and fettling. These processes expose workers to an extensive range of physical hazards, particularly manual handling, noise, chemicals, dust, hot work, electricity, work-at-heights and sharp objects (ACC, 2007).

Occupational injury

The number of injuries in the metal manufacturing sector has increased dramatically in recent years. From June 2002-2007, the sector recorded a 21% increase in new ACC claims. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of this increase and indicates the significant financial cost of these claims.

* Based on statistics from the March 2008 quarter sourced via Statistics New Zealand's 'Table Builder' tool from the data set "LEED Measures by Industry (based on ANZSIC06)". The dynamic nature of the tool means that a year or URL cannot be provided.

Figure 1. The number and cost of new ACC claims for the metal manufacturing sector 2002-2007



Source: ACC, n.d.

No reasons have been given for the upward trend in new claims for injuries that include a wide range of diagnoses. The bulk of claims are for soft tissue injuries (e.g. sprains and strains), noise-induced hearing loss, amputations, lacerations, puncture wounds, fractures and dislocations (ACC, 2009).

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Appendix B: E-mail invitation to OHS managers

E-mail

Hi (name of health and safety manager)

I'm currently doing a master's thesis on the role of health and safety representatives in the metal industry. The purpose is to provide a better understanding about how representatives contribute to the workplace and what factors hinder and facilitate their role. Please see the attached information sheet for more details.

I'm contacting you to ask if you will simply consider whether (name of business) might like to participate in this study. I'd be happy to visit you to talk more about the study, what participation will entail, and what you'd like to get out of the study should you choose to participate. I will telephone you early next week to speak with you more about it.

Your workplace was recommended to take part in this study by member(s) of ACC's *Metal Manufacturing Safer Industry Group* on the basis that the business has an interest in involving employees in health and safety.

Your business will potentially be one of three in the metal product manufacturing industry that will be participating. At each business, I would like to interview three health and safety representatives as well as those they interact with, including: their manager, two co-workers, the OHS manager, a senior manager and union members. A diagram of who I'd like to interview, plus interviewing times, is also attached. I do recognise that the number of people who participate is dependent on the circumstances of the business and that access to participants will need to be negotiated with management.

All of the information that I gather from the businesses will be treated confidentially and no business or persons will be identified in the published results.

Please feel free to e-mail me if you have any questions in the mean time.

Thank you kindly for your time and consideration.
I'll be in touch shortly.

Kind regards,
Leigh-Ann Harris

E-mail Attachment



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The Role of the Health and Safety Representative in Metal Product Manufacturing Businesses in New Zealand

INFORMATION SHEET

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of health and safety representatives in metal product manufacturing businesses. This first in-depth study of the role of representatives in New Zealand workplaces is being conducted by Leigh-Ann Harris and will contribute to the completion of a Master of Business Studies. This document provides more information about the study.

Project description

Health and safety representatives are considered a vital part of an occupational health and safety management system, but little is known about what they contribute to the management of health and safety in New Zealand workplaces. This is important to understand given that many workplaces have made a commitment to establishing and facilitating the role of the representative and because the government invests significant resources in their training.

To find out more, case studies will be conducted in three businesses involved in metal product manufacturing. At each business, an interview will be conducted with a maximum of three health and safety representatives as well as those they interact with, including: their manager, three of their co-workers, the OHS manager, a senior manager and a union delegate. The interview will not be about a specific individual, but rather the role the health and safety representatives in a general sense. This will provide a multiple perspective on representatives' activities in relation to health and safety management and representation of co-workers, plus the factors that hinder and facilitate the role.

Participant identification and recruitment

Businesses invited to participate in the research were recommended by member(s) of the *Metal Manufacturing Safer Industry Group*. The Group was asked to nominate businesses that are large, medium and small within the context of the metal industry who are perceived to be supportive of employee involvement in health and safety.

Each business that chooses to participate will be visited by the researcher. Access to the participants will be negotiated with management. In return for participation, a general summary of the findings from all three businesses will be provided. Information about the effectiveness of specific employee participation systems will be provided if interest is expressed. If interviews take place outside of work hours, participants will be compensated with a \$10 gift voucher or item of similar value.

Project procedures

Participants will be invited to take part in an individual interview with the researcher, which will be audio recorded. The amount of time that participants will engage with the research is expected to be: two hours for the health and safety manager; one hour for the general or senior manager, line manager, and the health and safety representatives; and 30 minutes each for the co-workers and union delegate.

Data management and confidentiality

The audio recorded interviews will be summarised in writing and sent back to the participant to correct misinterpretations and to add further comments. The information gathered from the interviews will only be used to help the researcher write the final report. The results will be published in such a way that no person or business is identifiable. All of the information obtained will be treated confidentially. The audio tapes and corresponding transcripts will be coded so that they do not disclose the name of the participating businesses or individuals. The audio tapes will be stored securely at Massey University that only the researcher and supervisor has access to.

Rights of participants

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- ask for the audio recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Contact details

If you have any questions about the project, you are welcome to contact the researcher, Leigh-Ann Harris, or supervisor, Dr Kirsten Olsen.

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | <i>Leigh-Ann Harris</i> | <i>Dr Kirsten Olsen</i> |
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Appendix C: Example of an information sheet for participants



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The Role of the Health and Safety Representative in Metal Product Manufacturing Businesses in New Zealand

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SENIOR MANAGERS

Greetings, my name is Leigh-Ann Harris. I'm currently doing a master's thesis on the role of health and safety representatives in the metal industry. The purpose of the study is to find out how representatives contribute to the workplace and what factors hinder and facilitate their role.

More about the study

Your business is one of three in the metal industry that has agreed to participate in this study. At each business, I will be interviewing three health and safety representatives and some of the people they interact with, including: their manager, some co-workers, the OHS manager, a senior manager, and a union delegate. The interviews will be about the role and activities of the representative; not necessarily about an individual person. This will provide a fuller picture of representatives' activities at each business and across all three businesses.

How you can be involved

You are invited to take part in an individual interview with me that will take about 30 minutes. This is an opportunity for you to share information about the business and how it's organised so that I can understand how employee participation, in relation to health and safety, works in context of how the business operates. I would like to audio-record the interview, which will help me to write up a report later on.

Data management and confidentiality

I'll make every attempt to ensure your anonymity. For example, your name and that of your business will not be published. Your responses will be described in more general terms and combined with other managers. You'll also have an opportunity to read and make amendments to a summary of the interview.

Information from interviews will be treated confidentially. Your responses will not be shared with others at the business. The audio recordings and interview summaries will be

coded so that they do not disclose the names of businesses or individuals, and they will be stored securely at Massey University in a file that only I have access to.

Your rights

You do not have to agree to participate in an interview. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- ask for the audio recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Ethical assurance

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 08/68. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz

Contact details

If you have any questions about this study, you're welcome to contact me or my supervisor, Dr Kirsten Olsen.

| | <i>Leigh-Ann Harris</i> | <i>Dr Kirsten Olsen</i> |
|---------------|--|--|
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Appendix D: Participant consent form



DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT
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The Role of the Health and Safety Representative in Metal Product Manufacturing Businesses in New Zealand

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.
My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask
further questions at any time.

I agree to the interview being audio recorded: Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to read a summary of the interview: Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: Date:

Full Name - printed

Appendix E: Interview schedule for senior managers

Background

1. How long have you worked here for?
2. During that time, what has been your main role at the business?
3. Do you have a back ground in OSH in terms of any previous work experience, training or qualifications?

Business organisation

4. Can you give me a brief background and overview of the business?
 - When established
 - Products/services
 - Ownership structure
 - Work organisation
 - Staff
 - Skill level
 - Permanent/full-time
 - Contractors

Trade union presence

5. Do you have union member's onsite?
6. Which unions have member's onsite?
7. Approximately how many union members are there?
8. How would you describe the businesses relationship with the union?

Health and safety management

9. What are the main health and safety issues for the business?
10. What are the factors that motivate the organisation to deal with OHS?
11. Can you briefly outline who has responsibility for health and safety and what their responsibilities are?
 - Management/workers/ reps
12. How are management encouraged to deal with health and safety?

OHS employee participation system

13. Can you tell me about the businesses health and safety employee participation system?
14. When was this system created?
15. Who had a role in creating it?

Health and safety representative system

16. When were HS representatives introduced to the business?
17. Why was it that they were introduced?
18. What is the purpose of having health and safety representatives in the workplace?
19. What kind of support does the organisation provide for reps to carry out functions?
 - Time allocation?
 - Forums for communicating?
 - With management?
 - With co-workers and other reps?
 - Training? How much training are they entitled to and is it used?
 - Access to information?

Conclusion

Do you have any other comments you would like to add about health and safety reps?

Appendix F: Interview schedule for OHS managers

Background

1. How long have you worked here for?
2. During that time, what has been your main role at the business?
3. Do you have a back ground in OSH in terms of any previous work experience, training or qualifications?
4. What is your role in relations to the HS representatives?

Health and safety management

5. What are the main health and safety issues for the business?
6. Is the business part of the ACC Partnership programme or accredited under Workplace Safety Management Practices or ACC Partnership programme?
 - What level has the business achieved?
7. Can you briefly outline who has responsibility for health and safety and what their responsibilities are?
 - Management/workers/ reps?
 - Part of formal job description/role?
8. How are management encouraged to deal with health and safety?
 - Is management's health and safety performance evaluated?

Employee participation system

9. Can you tell me about the organisation's health and safety employee participation system?
10. When was this system created?
11. Who had a role in creating it?

Health and safety reps: Background

12. When were health and safety representatives introduced?
13. Why was it that they were introduced?
14. How many reps are there in total?
15. What is the rationale for having that many?
16. What is the purpose of having health and safety representatives in the workplace?

17. How do workers become reps?

18. When workers become reps, how was it decided what they would be responsible for doing?

- If had reps prior to 2002, how did the legislation change what reps do?

Health and safety rep activities

19. What are the most important areas of health and safety management that the reps are expected to be involved with?

Hazard management

20. Can you tell me about how they should participate in hazard management?

- Identification of hazards?
- Do they participate in assessing if likely to cause significant harm?
- Recommend ways of controlling hazards?
- Are they involved in making decisions about what solutions will be adopted and implemented?

21. Has the business ever been issued a hazard notice by a rep?

- Yes - can you tell me what happened?

Information to co-workers

22. Do you rely on the representatives to communicate health and safety information between staff and management?

- If so, what kind of information?
- What opportunities do they have to communicate the information?

Supervision & training

23. Do the representatives have responsibility for supervising co-workers or being another 'pair of eyes' on the shop floor?

24. How are the reps involved in training e.g. facilitating training or conducting it themselves?

Reporting accidents & near misses

25. What is the role of the reps in relation to the reporting of accidents and near misses?

Investigating accidents & near misses

26. What role do reps have in relation to the investigation of accidents and near misses?

Emergency planning

27. How are the health and safety representatives involved in emergency planning or management?

Contact with inspectors

28. Has the business been visited by a health and safety inspector while you've been the health and safety manager?
- Yes – where the health and safety representative involved in that visit? How?
 - No – if you were visited by an inspector, would the health and safety representative be involved?

Rehabilitation

29. If an employee is injured at work, how are the health and safety reps expected to be involved in plans to assist them back into their work?

Committees

30. What opportunities are there for the reps to participate in OHS committees?

31. How do you expect the reps to contribute at the OHS committee meetings?

Other

32. Are reps responsible for carrying out any other activities?

Contribution

33. Overall, as a result of their contributions to health and safety management, do you think the work environment has improved?
- Could you give some examples of how?

Barriers & facilitators

34. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having health and safety reps in the workplace?

35. What kind of support does the organisation provide for the reps?

- Time allocation?
- Forums for communicating with management, co-workers and other reps?
- Training? How much training are they entitled to and is it used?
- Access to information?

36. How do people in the workplace support the reps?

- Management, co-workers, union delegates?

37. Do you perceive the health and safety representatives to be influential in the organisation?

- Yes – in what way? Why do you think they are able to be influential?

- No – why not?

Conclusion

Other comments you would like to add about health and safety reps?

Appendix G: Interview schedule for line managers of HS representatives

Background

1. How long have you worked here for?
2. During that time, what has been your main role at the business?
3. What is your role in relations to the health and safety representative?
4. Do you have a back ground in OSH in terms of any previous work experience, training or qualifications?

Department organisation

5. Can you tell me about the department that you manage?
 - Production process
 - Work organisation
 - Staff
 - Number, skill level, permanent/full-time, contractors, union members

Health and safety management

6. What are the main health and safety issues in your department?
7. Can you briefly outline who has responsibility for health and safety in the department and what their responsibilities are?

Health and safety reps: Background

8. How many reps are there in the department?
9. What is the purpose of having health and safety representatives in the workplace?
10. How do workers become reps?
11. When workers become reps, how is it decided what they will be responsible for doing?
12. What is it to be an effective or good health and safety rep versus one that is ineffective?

13. If you think of what is it to be an effective rep versus ineffective, where would you place your rep(s) on that scale?

Ineffective

Effective

Why don't they meet expectation?
What could help them to meet expectations?

Why are they able to meet expectation?
What is it that sets them apart from other reps?
What are some of the factors that support or help the rep to be effective?

Health and safety rep activities

14. What are the most important areas in terms of health and safety management that the reps should be involved with?

Hazard Management

15. Can you tell me about how the reps participate in hazard management?
- Identification of hazards?
 - Do they participate in assessing if likely to cause significant harm?
 - Recommend ways of controlling hazards?
 - Are they involved in making decisions about what solutions will be adopted and implemented?
16. If reps make a suggestion about hazard management, how do you respond?
17. Have you ever been issued a hazard notice by a rep?
- Yes - can you tell me what happened?

Information to co-workers

18. Do you rely on the representatives to communicate health and safety information between staff and management?
- Yes – what kind of information?
 - What opportunities do they have to communicate the information?

Training and supervision

19. Do the representatives have responsibility for supervising co-workers or being another 'pair of eyes' on the shop floor?
20. Are reps involved in training e.g. facilitating training or conducting it themselves?

Reporting of accidents & near misses

21. What is the role of the reps in relation to the reporting of accidents or incident?

Investigating accidents & near misses

22. What role do reps have in relation to the investigation of accidents and near misses?

Emergency planning

23. How are the health and safety representatives involved in emergency planning and management?

Contact with inspectors

24. Has your department been visited by a health and safety inspector while you've been the manager?

- Yes – how was the health and safety representative involved in that visit?
- No – if you were visited by an inspector, would the health and safety representative be involved?

Rehabilitation

25. Have you had an employee injured and on ACC while you've been a manager here?

- Yes – was the health and safety rep involved in plans to assist the injured worker back into their work? How?
- No - would the health and safety reps expected to be involved in plans to assist them back into their work?

Other

26. Are reps responsible for carrying out any other activities?

Contribution

27. Overall, as a result of their contributions to health and safety management, do you think the work environment has improved?

- Could you give some examples of how?

Representation

28. What is the relationship like between the rep and people they represent?

- Do they raise issues with the rep?
- How are issues raised? Why via those routes?

Barriers & facilitators

29. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having health and safety reps in the workplace?

30. What kind of support is provided to reps?

- Time allocation?
- Forums for communicating with management, co-workers and other reps?
- Training? How much training are they entitled to and is it used?
- Access to information?

31. How do people in the workplace support the reps?

- Management, co-workers, union delegate?

32. Do you perceive the health and safety representatives to be influential in the organisation?

- Yes - in what way? Why do you think they are able to be influential?
- No - why do you think that is?

Conclusion

Do you have any other comments you would like to add about health and safety reps?

Appendix H: Interview schedule for HS representatives

Background

1. How long have you worked here for?
2. During that time, what has been your main role at the business?

Health and safety rep: Background

3. How long have you been a health and safety representative?
4. Do you have a back ground in OSH in terms of any previous work experience, training or qualifications?
5. What motivated you to become a rep?
6. How was it that you become a health and safety representative?
7. How many people do you represent?
8. What is the purpose of having health and safety representatives in the workplace?
9. What do you consider your role to be as a health and safety rep?
10. How did you come to understand what you would do as a health and safety representative?
11. What is it to be an effective or good health and safety representative?
12. If you think of what is it to be an effective rep versus ineffective, where would you place yourself on that scale?

Ineffective

Effective

What could help you to be more effective?

What factors help you to be effective?

Health and safety rep activities

13. Can you tell me about the areas that you consider are most important for you to deal with?
14. How much time do you spend on your role as health and safety rep a week?
15. What do you mainly spend your time on?

Now I have some specific questions to ask you about the activities that you could be involved with as a health and safety rep.

Hazard management

16. Could you tell me about how you get involved in hazard management?
17. What method(s) do you use to identify hazards?
 - Who else is involved?
 - Who usually raises health and safety issues?
18. Do you participate in assessing whether the hazard is likely to cause significant harm?
19. Can you give me one example of when a hazard that you raised was resolved successfully and an example where nothing happened.
20. If you make a suggestion about hazard management, how do management respond?
 - Does management provide reasons why controls can/can't be adopted?
21. Have you ever issued a hazard notice?
 - Yes - can you tell me what happened?
 - No - have you ever considered issuing a hazard notice?
22. Have you ever given advice to co-workers to not do work likely to cause serious harm?
 - Yes - can you give an example?

Information to co-workers

23. Do you communicate health and safety information between staff and management?
 - Yes - what kind of information?
 - No - how is health and safety information communicated to you and your work mates?

Training & supervision

24. Are you involved with supervising co-workers or being another 'pair of eyes' on the shop floor for the manager?
25. Are you involved in training e.g. planning training, making sure that co-workers are trained or even conducting some training yourself, keeping training records?
- Yes – can you tell me more about this?

Reporting of accidents & near misses

26. What is your role in relation to the reporting of accidents?

Investigating accidents & near misses

27. Are you involved in investigations of incidents or accidents?
- Yes - can you give an example of an incident or accident and describe how you were involved?
 - No – would you like to be involved? In what way? What would help you to be more involved?

Emergency planning

28. Are you involved in planning for emergencies, such as a fire or earthquake?
- Yes - can you tell me more about your involvement?
 - No - why is that?

Contact with Department of Labour inspectors

29. Has your work area been visited by a health and safety inspector while you've been a health and safety rep?
- Yes - could you tell me more about how you were involved/not involved?

Rehabilitation

30. Has a co-worker been injured while you have been a health and safety representative?
- No - if someone was harmed, would you be involved in assisting or supporting them to get back into their work?
 - Yes – how did you get involved in plans to help them get back to work?

Health and safety committee

31. Are you a member of a health and safety committee?
32. Can you tell me more about the purpose of the committee and what your role is at meetings?

Contribution

33. As a result of your contributions to health and safety management, do you think the work environment has improved?

Yes - could you give some examples of how?

No - why do you think that is?

Barriers & facilitators

34. Are there things that you'd like to do as a rep, but that you can't for some reason?

35. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a rep?

36. What supports are there to help do your activities as a rep?

- Time allocation?
- Forums for communicating with management/co-workers/other reps?
- Training?
- Access to information?

37. How do people in the workplace support you?

- Management, co-workers, union delegates?

38. Do you perceive yourself to be influential in your role as rep?

- Yes – in what way? Why do you think they are able to be influential?
- No – why not?

Conclusion

Do you have any other comments you would like to add about your role as a health and safety rep?

Appendix I: Interview schedule for co-workers of HS representatives

Background

1. How long have you worked here for?
2. During that time, what has been your main role at the business?
3. Do you have a back ground in OSH in terms of any previous work experience, training or qualifications?

Health and safety participation

4. What are some of the main health and safety issues/risks that you experience in your work?
5. Have you ever been concerned that you or others might be injured or hurt while at work e.g. while using a certain piece of equipment or from noise levels in the workshop?
 - Yes - What action did you take?
 - No - if you were concerned, what would you do?

Representation

6. Do you ever raise issues with the rep(s) or go to them for support?
 - No – why is that?
 - Yes – could you give an example of an issue that you raised with the representatives and what the outcome was?
7. How do the reps communicate with you on health and safety issues?

Health and safety reps: Background

8. Did you have a say in who was chosen to be your health and safety rep?
9. What is the purpose of having health and safety reps in the workplace?
10. Do you have a say about what the rep does?
11. What is it to be an effective or good health and safety rep versus one that is ineffective?

12. If you think of what is it to be an effective rep versus ineffective, where would you place your rep(s) on that scale?

Ineffective

Effective

Why don't they meet expectation?
What could help them to meet expectations?

Why are they able to meet expectation?
What is it that sets them apart from other reps?
What are some of the factors that support or help the rep to be effective?

Health and safety rep activities

13. What are the most important areas in terms of health and safety that the reps should be involved with?
➤ Are they able to do this?
14. Can you tell me more about what your representative does in terms of health and safety?

Contribution

15. As a result of having reps in the workplace, do you think the work environment has improved?
➤ Could you give some examples?

Barriers & facilitators

16. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having health and safety rep in the workplace?
17. What kind of support do you provide your representatives?
18. Do you perceive the health and safety representatives to be influential in the organisation?
Yes – in what way? Why do you think they are able to be influential?
No – why not?

Conclusion

Do you have any other comments you would like to add about health and safety reps?

Appendix J: Interview schedule for union convenors

Background

1. How long have you worked here for?
2. During that time, what has been your main role at the business?
3. Do you have a back ground in OSH in terms of any previous work experience, training or qualifications

Trade union presence

4. Can you tell me about the union at the workplace?
 - Number of union's onsite
 - Number of union members and skill level
 - Union organisation
5. How would you describe the union's relationship with the management?

Health and safety management

6. What are the main health and safety issues for the business?
7. What motivates the union to deal with health and safety issues?
 - Is health and safety a priority area for the union?

Employee participation system

8. Can you tell me about the businesses health and safety employee participation system?
 - What mechanisms are there for employees to participate?
 - Who participates?
 - What is the purpose?
9. When was this system created?
10. Who had a role in creating it?
11. How was the role of the health and safety rep determined?

Health and safety reps

12. When were health and safety representatives introduced?
13. Why was it that they were introduced?
14. What is the purpose of having health and safety representatives in the workplace?

15. How do workers become reps?
16. When workers become reps, how is it decided what they will be responsible for doing?
 - If had reps prior to 2002, how did the legislation change what reps do?
17. What are the most important areas in terms of health and safety management that the reps are expected to be involved with?

Contribution

18. Overall, as a result of their contributions to health and safety management, do you think the work environment has improved?
 - Could you give some examples of how?

Barriers & facilitators

19. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having health and safety reps in the workplace?
20. What supports are provided to help the reps carry out their activities?
 - Time allocation?
 - Forums for communicating with management, co-workers and other reps?
 - Training? How much training are they entitled to and is it used?
 - Access to information?
21. How do people in the workplace support the reps?
 - Management, co-workers?
 - How do the union delegates encouraged to support the reps?
22. Do you perceive the health and safety representatives to be influential in the organisation?
 - Yes – in what way? Why do you think they are able to be influential?
 - No – why not?

Conclusion

Do you have anything you'd like to add about health and safety reps?

Appendix K: Business B's Health and Safety Participation Agreement

1. Scope

This Health and Safety Participation Agreement provides opportunities for Business B employees to participate effectively in the processes for improvement of health and safety in the workplace. Natural workgroups will have the opportunity to elect a Health and Safety Representative. These Representatives are recognised as an OSH resource to the workgroups they represent and contribute to and support safety objectives. A structure of Health and Safety Improvement Teams (Safety Committees) provides forums for active engagement in continuous safety improvement. The parties to this agreement agree that the practices described below shall be the worker participation system for the purposes of Part 2A of the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1999 [sic].

Note: In addition to the elected representatives referred to in this document there are many people acting as a local safety resource and spokesperson for a smaller work team or shift group. These employees attend their own department or plant meetings in that capacity.

2. Training

Elected Health and safety representatives will receive OSH training on Business B safety systems as provided from time to time that will enable them to effectively undertake their role. Training will include the courses developed by the ACC/CTU, as provided for in the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1999 [sic] and within the Employment Relations Education Leave Provisions.

3. Elections

Health and safety representatives may be nominated from any position within a defined work group. If there is only one nominee, there is no need to hold an election and that person shall automatically fill that position. Casual vacancies created by resignation may be filled by election as they occur, for the balance of the term. The term of office is normally for 2 years.

4. Role of health and safety representatives

The functions of the elected Health and Safety Representative include those specified in Part 2 of Schedule 1A of the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002 and:

- To represent the members of their work group in matters relating to health and safety including attending safety team meetings. The chart attached in Appendix 1 outlines the meeting structure at Business B for plant operations. Service

areas will have a similar structure depending on the nature of their logical workgroups.

- To participate in the continuous improvement OHS objectives of the company and employees.
- To demonstrate visible commitment to the improved understanding of and use of OSH processes and procedures used on site. Specifically, the Company expects the Health and safety representatives to participate in:
 - Hazard management – assisting in identifying and rating hazards, and then working with the plant/department safety team to prioritise actions to eliminate or reduce the risk on key hazards.
 - Auditing – leading and supporting high quality health and safety audits, including systems audits, in the workplace on a regular basis.
 - Incident investigation – contribute as a member of investigation teams determining root cause and appropriate corrective actions and follow up.
 - Health and Safety Improvement Team meetings – as provided for the Safety Meeting Structure.
 - Local Health and Safety Initiatives – projects or themes as implemented within own area.
 - Safe Work Practices – reviewing Standard Operating practices and Critical Safety procedures.
- To provide information to colleagues about safety systems, standards and resources available within Business B and across the parent company.
- To assist with the effective development and networking (communication) of OSH information in immediate work areas and across Business B.
- To assist as required in the resolution of safety issues raised by work group members or other person using proper processes and site systems. Assist in providing appropriate feedback to the parties concerned and seeking resolution of outstanding OSH issues in good faith with line management and subject matter experts.
- To assist with the rehabilitation of injured employees as appropriate.
- To assist in the development of Business B OSH policy.

5. Resources and availability

Resources and allocation of time for health and safety representatives to carry out their duties will be by approval of the local manager. For scheduled meetings, best endeavours will be made to allow the representative to attend.

The representatives will make themselves accessible to participate in health and safety matters with their workgroup and management.

Health and safety representatives will be given access to email.

The safety representatives elected convenor will be provided access to resources e.g. email, filing, desk, by arrangement with their manager.

6. Health and safety committees

- Safety committees are known at Business B as Health and Safety Improvement Teams. The meeting structure is attached in Appendix 1.
- Crew briefings, including safety content, may be carried out for a workgroup or for individuals on each shift.
- Crew/workgroup, plant/department, area and the Central Health and Safety Improvement Team will meet no less than once every 6 weeks.
- Meeting schedules and copies of minutes will be available to employees, excluding shift briefings. Any item from a shift briefing that needs to be circulated can be communicated through the supervisor or the daily plant meeting.

7. Risk reduction committees

Each year the site safety plan will identify specific topics that require the attention of a dedicated Risk Reduction Committee. Each Committee will have a senior management team member as sponsor and a nominated leader. Each safety representative will be offered the opportunity to become a member of a Risk Reduction Committee. Other members, including subject matter experts, will be selected as required.

8. Health and safety network forum

The value of sharing information, learning and best practice across the site is recognised within the Health and Safety Network Forum where elected health and safety representatives, managers, supervisors and safety coordinators may attend an open monthly meeting.

The parties agree to develop a charter to provide further information on the role and functions of the health and safety representative and the network forum.

9. Health and safety steering group

At least twice a year the president of Business B will meet with the health and safety manager and site union convenor and a health and safety convenor to discuss longer-term strategic matters relating to health and safety.

10. Review

This health and safety participation agreement will be subject to a review process commencing no later than one year after the signing of this document and thereafter every three years.

Associated Documents:

- Health and Safety in Employment Act, its Amendments (2002) and associated Regulations
- Business B Safety Regulations
- The Business B Health and Safety Policy
- ACC Partnership Programme
- EPMU Occupational Health and Safety Handbook, "Your Roles and Responsibilities"
- Occupational Health and Safety Handbook, "Your Roles and Responsibilities"
- Business B Safety Management System

Signed byrepresenting Business B **Date**

Signed byrepresenting contractors **Date**

Signed byrepresenting the unions **Date**

Signed byrepresenting the collective agreement employees **Date**

Signed byrepresenting the individual agreement employees **Date**

APPENDIX 1

BUSINESS B HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENT TEAM – MEETING STRUCTURE

| SAFETY COMMITTEES | Crew Toolbox Meetings and H & S Improvement Team | Plant/Work Group Health & Safety Improvement Team | Area Health & Safety Improvement Team | Central Health & Safety Improvement Team | Risk Reduction Committees |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|
| | Local decisions Recommendations to plant | Local decisions Recommendations to area | Local decisions Recommendations to CHSIT | Site policy & standards | Specific topic related objectives |
| WHO | Crew members Team leader Others at work Maintenance etc. | Manager H & S rep One per crew PMT/Technical etc. Supervisor | Area manager Plant/local managers H & S rep Area coordinator Supervisors etc. | President Senior management team + 1 rep each Safety manager Area coordinators Site Convener | Sponsor, leader Team members 1 H & S rep |
| WHEN | On shift & monthly | Monthly | Monthly | Monthly | As scheduled |
| WHAT | Hazard review Incident investigation Subject matter experts Safe behaviour | Safety plan Safety performance Training & awareness Safety systems | | Best practice Recognition Safety themes Resources | Policy development Partnership programme (audits/self assessment) |

SUPPORTING HEALTH & SAFETY FORUMS

Steering Group:

President, Health and Safety Manager, Site Union Convener and H & S Reps Convener meeting at least twice per annum – high level direction/strategic issues including union. Feedback to CHSIT and Safety Network Forum

Health and Safety Network: H & S representatives, site union convener, health and safety manager, subject matter experts, managers, supervisors.
Purpose: Communication and information sharing – safety initiatives, best practice, roles and responsibilities.
Recommendations to any Safety Improvement Team
Open forum – monthly – 2 hours.