Reviewer’s report

Title: Effects of De-industrialization on Unemployment, Re-employment, and Work Conditions in a Manufacturing Workforce

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Version: 1 Date: 5 Nov 2001

Reviewer: Prof Johannes Siegrist

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after revision, which I do not need to see

The purpose of research presented in this manuscript is the illustration of long term effects of de-industrialization on occupational careers and quality of work in a cohort of workers, as exemplified by a transformation process of sawmill industry between 1979 and 1999 in a province of Western Canada. The research design provides an opportunity of reconstructing the employment careers of a cohort of some 1885 sawmill workers (62.9% of a random sample described on p13), as documented in a retrospective analysis conducted by structured interviews in 1999.

In addition to occupational data information on health, health behavior and utilization of health services was collected. The main results of this report focus on differences in the prevalence of physical and psychosocial work conditions between 'survivors' in the sawmill industry and workers who were re-employed outside this sector following downsizing. They indicate that 'survivors', in general, exhibit slightly less favourable quality of work compared to those working outside this sector. This holds particularly true for less skilled workers. The paper does not present data on health or health care utilization, and selected health behaviors are analysed in one of the tables only.

1. The Introduction is clearly written and points to open questions in the research field of labor market and health. While adverse effects of long-term unemployment are well documented respective health effects of those who 'survive' downsizing are not well documented. Similarly, little is known about health effects of differential job trajectories outside the original work setting (here: sawmill industry).
2. The Method's section provides relevant information on the sample (although sample attrition would need more comments) and on the methods used. However, authors give no justification for this missing almost all health-related data from this report. In view of their repetitive emphasis on the relevance of de-industrialization for health this seems a major shortcoming of this paper.
3. Results are well presented in terms of language and tables. Statistical procedures are adequate. However, in tables 6 and 7 authors should give additional information on the range of reported adjusted mean work scores. These figures are difficult to interpret without some reference data.
4. Authors are requested to address the following questions:
   a) What are the typical (or mainstream) employment sectors of those who were re-employed outside of
sawmill industry? Without this information reported differences between the two groups are hard to interpret.
b) What is the relevance of statistically significant differences concerning job control, job support, job demands? In view of a large sample size one may not wonder about statistical significance. Clearly, concerning noise, there are rather substantial differences.
5. The Discussion part, in my view, is too much repetitive whereas the critical issues of generalizibility of reported findings and of their significance in the framework presented in the Introduction are not addressed with adequate intensity.
6. Minor point: Several typing errors and missing words need to be addressed.

**Competing interests:**
None declared.