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Perceptions of Representational Efficacy in Local and National Teacher Unions

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PERCEPTIONS OF REPRESENTATIONAL EFFICACY IN LOCAL AND
NATIONAL TEACHER UNIONS

by

Steven Lash

has been approved

June, 2006

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Steven Lash

A Research Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Specialization: Language and Communication

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

While the majority of teachers are affiliated with a union, the quality of representation is unclear. Historically, trade unions have served as a medium for workers to collectively interact with management and, thus, they have served as the primary means of communication between two entities. However, management is diverse for educators; both local administrators and national politicians alike are able to influence a teacher's work. Teachers rely on unions not only for contract negotiation within their own districts, but as an advocate on national educational issues, such as the recent No Child Left Behind Act (2002, as cited in National Education Association [NEA], 2005). The ability for unions to represent affiliates on this broad spectrum occurs through the division of local and national representation. Modern educational unions have become increasingly involved with professional and educational concerns, in addition to the traditional *industrial* issues of pay and benefits. Kerchner and Cauffman (1993a) termed this shift, "professional unionism" (p. 19) and defined the new role of the union as balancing the self-interests of teachers with the larger interests of the profession as a whole. They suggested that union leaders take a more cooperative role with all levels of management, and that this, in turn, benefits individual members. "First, unions are discarding beliefs about the inherent separateness of labor and management, teaching and administration" (p. 9).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers, who support their union, may perceive the local and national mediation of the union differently. While they may believe they receive what they paid for at a local level (e.g., a negotiating body which fights for specific conditions), they may receive more than they expected as their increasingly collective voice is focused beyond their individual needs. Also, teachers may feel that union representation in regard to the state and national stages diminishes their local significance.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project will be to explore educators' current perceptions of how effectively their interests are represented by their unions at the local and national levels. Teachers' perceptions will be assessed in regard to the quality by which their individual interests, such as salary and benefits, are represented by their local and national unions, and on the level to which they understand and agree with the stances taken by the union on broader educational issues. This researcher will attempt to determine whether the expansion of teacher unions, from the industrial model to the professional association model, affects respondents' perception of their union positively or negatively.

Chapter Summary

In summary, it is this researcher's position that educators have different views in regard to their local and national union representation. As education unions are a strong model of the departure from purely industrial union representation, this researcher will

attempt to determine whether the current model of professional unionism is perceived positively or negatively.

In Chapter 2, a review of literature is presented to illustrate the current state of educational unions and provide a context for the understanding of issues considered in the current study. In Chapter 3, the methods for data collection and analysis are presented. Results from the survey are detailed in Chapter 4, and the implications of these data are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project will be to assess how educators perceive the effectiveness of union representation locally and nationally. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how unions have grown and changed since they first began in the 19th C. Current problems with education unions will be explored, and studies which have examined educators' perceptions toward their unions will be presented.

The History of Teacher Unions

The complicated role of teacher unions began with the establishment of two teacher unions in the 19th C. (Scott, 2000b). This history was detailed by Levin in a PBS documentary, *Only a Teacher*, and some information in this section was taken from the PBS website which complemented the program. While the National Education Association (NEA), founded in 1857, was primarily a policy making organization for higher education for the first half century, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) grew out of teacher dissatisfaction over wages and professional control. Initially formed in 1897 as the Chicago Teachers Federation, the original focus of the AFT was to raise teachers' wages and pensions; at this time, most teachers earned less than unskilled workers (Scott). Haley, one of the founding members of the AFT, became a leading voice in educational politics, and the first to define the teacher's union as having a twofold role (Naylor, 2002). "She promoted a more professional approach to teaching, including improved teacher education

and teacher involvement in school management. But Haley also fought for traditional bread-and-butter issues: pensions, salary increases and other benefits for teachers” (Scott, 2000a, p. 1). Haley accomplished this, in large part, by forcing leaders of the NEA to shift focus from administrators and presidents of schools to the needs of grade school teachers. Also, she achieved the first pension plan for teachers in Illinois (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2005a).

This division of responsibilities held by teacher unions was unique from the inception of these organizations (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988). These were not the traditional *industrial* unions because they served a professional work force and because the scope of union work lay beyond the self-interest of the workers. Kerchner and Mitchell pointed out that industrial unions seek to control the conditions of work, not the specific duties assigned to various workers. During the ensuing years, the conditions of work were not easily separated from the specific duties assigned to teachers, because, unlike most industries, the educational product is not easily distinguishable from the work of employees (Kerchner & Mitchell; Poole, 2000; Steelman, Powell, & Carini, 2000). “Teaching is a mixture of labor, craft, art, and professional approaches to task definition and supervision” (Kerchner & Mitchell, p. 17).

By the turn of the 20th C., members of the NEA turned their interests increasingly toward the needs of *common schools* (Keck, 2002). Haley’s (1904, as cited in Scott, 2000a) landmark speech, “Why Teachers Should Organize,” was the occasion of the first woman and teacher to speak from the floor at an NEA meeting. Haley’s close friend, Young, who was a student of John Dewey’s and a firm believer in the need for a democratic school system, became president of the NEA in 1910. Young’s presidency was

largely honorary, as the predominantly Anglo American male leaders of higher education still had the most decision making power in the union, yet their traditionally conservative views were to be challenged for the first time. “At first ambivalent on the question of collective bargaining for salaries, [Young] changed her position after watching the cynical disregard with which the all male school board greeted salary requests from delegations of its female teachers” (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988, p. 56). Indeed, the issue of gender inequality played a notable role in the forming of educational union ideals.

By the 1920s, the leaders of the NEA were concerned with numerous professional issues that surrounded teaching, including academic freedom, tenure, and due process (Keck, 2002). This concern for teachers resulted in the creation of the representative assembly, which was comprised of delegates sent from state and local affiliates. A rapid growth in NEA membership occurred shortly after the formation of the representative assembly (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2005b). Over the next 30 years, the union would become increasingly influential in the definition of teaching work (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988). As it represented the gamut of public school education, from teachers to superintendents, the organization became the voice for education, and, of equal importance, it “regularized the relationships between local, state and national organizations” (p. 59).

Meanwhile, members of the AFT continued to fight for more traditional teacher interests and, in so doing, began to initiate collective bargaining with local school boards by the 1940s (Scott, 2000b). At this time, the two predominant national teacher unions represented the two major roles perceived in unions today: they were the champions for teachers’ self-interests of pay and improved working conditions, and they were concerned with the larger issues of education. Interestingly, the NEA had a far larger membership at

this time, although it represented the broader educational ideals more than the self-interests of individual teachers.

The role of teacher unions came to the national forefront in 1962 as three key events changed teaching and labor in the United States (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988). In this year, President John F. Kennedy “signed executive order 10988 giving federal workers the right to organize and bargain, although it explicitly forbade strikes, and forbade negotiations over the ‘mission of the agency’” (Kerchner & Mitchell, p. 61). Also, in 1962, the NEA adopted the beginnings of collective bargaining at its Denver convention while, in New York, some 5,000 teachers from the United Federation of Teachers went on strike on April 11 (Kerchner & Mitchell). Neither the NEA members’ adoption of “professional negotiation” (p. 61) nor the New York strike were the first of their kind, but their combined effect set the stage for union/management relations in education for the next several decades. “Widespread teacher unionism ranks among the most powerful educational policy interventions in the last half century” (Kerchner & Cauffman, 1993a, p. 1).

Today, the NEA is a confederation of affiliated local and state associations. National representatives are elected by delegates from these affiliated associations (National Education Association, 2005b). Also, education associations have been brought together under international forums, such as the World Confederation of Organization of the Teaching Profession, in order to help the leaders of these associations to address broader educational issues with legislators and other political leaders (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2005c).

Membership

Membership in the NEA grew notably from 8,500 members in 1917 to more than 200,000 in 1940 (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988). This growth reflected the commitment of the association to represent teachers, while they continued to advocate for their managers, including administrators and superintendents. With the advent of collective bargaining, teacher affiliation with unions exploded through the 1960s and 1970s. By 1975, about 90% of teachers, who worked in districts of 1,000 or more students, worked under some kind of collective bargaining agreement (Kerchner & Mitchell). By the 1990s, over 60% of school districts are covered by a formal bargaining agreement, and 80% of teachers are members of an AFT or NEA affiliate (Bascia, 1994). The NEA claims membership of 2.7 million, while the AFT claims 1.3 million (NEA, 2005; AFT, 2005). In the NEA, national membership is broken down into smaller representative bodies, in order to more closely represent teachers' interests in their own schools. Currently, the NEA consists of 51 state affiliates and more than 14,000 local affiliates (NEA).

Teacher unions continue to grow and gain political strength in the U.S., while membership in other labor unions have diminished (Steelman et al., 2000). Unionized workers declined from 12.9% in 2003 to 12.5% in 2004; this decline continued from a high of 20.1% in 1983, the first year such data were available (Union Membership 2003, 2004). There has been increasing debate about the efficacy of trade unions. In recent years, generally, pay raises for nonunion workers have exceeded those for unionized workers (Fiorito, Jarley, & Delaney, 1995). Still, unions insist they are more important than ever, since the number of workers with paid pension plans, insurance plans, and overall wages in real dollars have all fallen over the past three decades (Reilly, 1995).

Effectiveness of Teacher Unions

How, in a time of crumbling union support, have educator unions managed to remain as robust organizations? Certainly, they have been the target of much political negativity, and they remain at odds with politicians over major educational reforms currently being implemented, such as the No Child Left Behind act (2002, as cited in Cardinal & Linebaugh, 2005). When Dole (1996, as cited in Steelman, Powell, & Carini, 2000) accepted the nomination of the Republican party in 1996, he pledged, “To the teachers unions I say, when I am president, I will disregard your political power, for the sake of our children, the schools, and the nation” (p. 438). In recent decades, Poole (2000) stated that the assumptions of “lack of accountability in education, teacher incompetence, and the diminishing quality of education [have done] much to erode public support for teachers” (p. 112).

Meanwhile, it is debatable how effectively unions have addressed the individual needs of teachers. Bacharach and Mitchell (1983) explained that, in most studies, the findings show small economic benefits and some improvement in working conditions (Flango, 1976; Hall & Carroll, 1973; both cited in Bacharach & Mitchell), and findings by Bascia (1994) and Poole (2000) demonstrated that, at best, teachers are mixed in their feelings toward their unions. Poole explained that part of the problem that unions face is that bargaining powers for teacher unions are fundamentally limited by law in a way which does not translate clearly from business to education. “Teacher unions have a right to bargain the impact of such decisions on teachers’ working conditions but do not have a right to bargain the substance of the decisions” (p. 95). In education, this is problematic because the work of employees *is* the product that the organization provides.

Also, the findings from research on the effectiveness of teacher unions provides an unclear overall picture. Kurth (1987, as cited in Nelson & Rosen, 1996) reported that students' SAT and ACT scores negatively correlated with teacher unionism. However, Steelman et al. (2000) found that, in highly unionized states, students' standardized test scores were higher. Steelman et al. included controls for the selectivity of test takers and other sociodemographic factors, which were not considered in the Kurth study. While Steelman et al. did not show that teachers' union membership was responsible for the higher test scores, it does refute the original contention that unionized school districts had a negative effect on students. The relationship between unions and student success has been linked to national statistics as well. "Union leaders frequently point out that teachers are highly unionized in industrial countries whose students outperform American children" (Bradley, 1996, p. 4).

The disparity between support for education unions and the efficacy of the organizations themselves cannot be adequately explained without consideration of the many, occasionally opposing roles that the union must play in order to represent teachers (Naylor, 2002; Poole, 2000). The unions of today are not the same as those of the 19th and early 20th C.s, members and leaders of these groups have continued to change the scope and vision of these organizations in order to keep them productive in a changed educational climate.

The Dual Identities of Teacher Unions

In the conduct of their study, Kerchner and Mitchell (1988) interviewed one teacher who said, "Unions were started for the right reasons in the nineteenth century, but

they've gotten out of hand. Teachers are professionals; they don't belong in unions" (p. 97). The sentiments of this individual illustrate the basic conflict inherent to these organizations.

The first and often most easily identifiable responsibility of unions is to secure *industrial* concerns for members (Bascia, 1994; Naylor, 2002). Industrial concerns are those most closely related to the individual's work and, typically, include salary, benefits packages, definitions of the work day, and job security, to name a few (Naylor, 2002; Poole, 2000). Most commonly, these are concerns addressed by collective bargaining agreements between local union affiliates and school district administrators.

Industrial union concerns appear to remain the top priority of teachers who pay union dues. In the studies conducted by Bacharach and Mitchell (1983) and Poole, these authors found that the individual economic interests of teachers tended to be the most common reason to join unions. Bascia pointed out that these issues remain salient and relevant, and identified not only economic concerns, but job protection (e.g., workload, health and safety, and legal representation) as primary concerns. In addition, Poole and Bascia identified professional development opportunities, including teaching resources and training opportunities, as primary motivations for joining.

Still, individual economic concerns are not the only reason that teachers organize. Teachers are becoming increasingly concerned with *professional* education issues, which work more toward the improvement of education for children (Naylor, 2002; Poole, 2000). Departing from the narrower self-interests of industrial era union concerns, teachers have found the need to define and address the method and content of their

teaching through unions, to have a greater say in the work they do (Kerchner & Caufman, 1993a). Also, such union activity is seen at the state and national levels, where educational policy is discussed directly with lawmakers (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988). Thus, professional union concerns simultaneously impact individual teachers, schools, and the whole of education in the U.S. As stated by Kerchner and Caufman (1993a), “Teachers have expanded their conception of their work, taking responsibility for school improvement” (p. 7).

Teachers’ responsibility for school improvement has come largely through various shared decision making models, many of which are protected under union bargaining agreements (Kerchner & Koppich, 1993b). In some school districts, management has turned away from the traditional top down model, as *site-based management* has been implemented in schools with high levels of union/management cooperation (Kerchner & Koppich). In such models, teachers have a direct influence in the way that their individual schools are managed, while they have a more immediate influence with district administrators through faculty advisory committees (Bascia, 1994). Unions maintain importance in these managerial shifts by helping to facilitate the changes and the negotiations. “Teachers contacted a union representative when they perceived that a decision made by someone else interfered with their ability to work in accordance with their conceptions of good practice” (Bascia, pp. 84-85).

Issues, which traditionally have been considered industrial, have become less distinct in the current managerial climate in public schools (Hendricks-Lee & Mooney, 1998). “The issue of class size, which normally is considered part of working conditions, [is now] framed as a means of improving education for students” (Hendricks-Lee &

Mooney, p. 2). Even issues of teacher pay and benefits packages have become somewhat convoluted, as it has been argued that increased teacher pay improves schools, in that, teacher productivity is increased because of higher satisfaction (Naylor, 2002). Also higher quality teachers are attracted with better salary and benefits packages (Kozol, 1991). Thus, the duality between personal and professional union goals further complicates the decision making process among union leaders.

As issues in education continue to appear on the national stage and have become important political issues, the union leaders have responded in an attempt to represent the interests of members politically and through taking positions on policies which impact schools. Poole (1999) identified six specific techniques utilized by union leaders to influence education policy:

1. consultation with the U.S. Department of Education,
2. hold government accountable in regard to educational policymaking,
3. political action,
4. membership in targeted political parties,
5. collective bargaining, and
6. development of external support.

Several of these roles rest primarily with state or national level education unions. While members of local affiliates do become politically involved, they tend to represent the interests of their national offices, and work closely toward similar goals. In order to balance industrial and professional goals, union leaders segment these goals, leaving local affiliates to address different issues than the national groups (Naylor, 2002). While the national unions have much greater political influence and the ability to deal with

broad educational policy, “industrial-style unionism remains the norm at the state and local levels” (Poole, 2000, p. 96).

This apparent duality in union goals may be the cause of some criticism in recent years. Unions have been accused by outside groups of trying to sway political issues unfairly and of inflating the cost of education through unreasonable teacher contracts, while union members have complained that the union lacks focus (Naylor, 2002). Poole’s (2000) study was focused on this dual nature of unions, and it was found that while paradoxical, the conflicting interests of teachers, along with the more overarching needs of the educational field, are interdependent and complementary. “To accuse teacher unions of promoting their self-interests at the expense of education quality is to misunderstand the dynamics of the relationship between these apparently paradoxical interests (p. 117). Still, the dual nature of unions, seen in the national and local structures, and through individual and collective interests, has introduced problems which may not be so simply resolved.

Problems with Teacher Unions

Often, dichotomies are grounded in conflict, and the current dualities present in teacher unions are no different.

Some researchers have envisioned this dichotomy as a sort of trade off, the question being the conditions under which teachers might be willing to exchange traditional concerns such as security and protection and economic gains for more professional items such as expanded opportunities for staff development. (Bascia, 1994, pp. 75-76)

As with any organization, unions are not able to represent infinite needs, so researchers assume that any amount of work put into professional concerns necessarily detracts from those considered traditional or industrial. When teachers have been asked about their

interests in representation, the tension between industrial and professional goals becomes clear and opens the broader debate of whether the organization should be a *professional association* or an industrial union (Poole, 2000). Meanwhile, those who study unions (Bascia, 1994; Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988; Kerchner & Koppich, 1993b; Poole; Fiorito et al., 1995) maintain that organizational change is necessary for unions to retain relevance.

As mentioned earlier, union leaders have tried to address this dichotomy by the relegation of industrial work to local affiliates, while the focus of the national organizations is on professional goals. While this organizational structure would seem to solve the problem, it raises two additional problems. First, Bradley (1996) pointed out that, often, centralization leads to excessive bureaucracy, which may make individual members feel that their needs cannot be addressed. Fiorito et al. (1995) explained the second problem as: “Workers may know little or nothing about the characteristics of the national union that seeks their initial or continued support” (p. 617). Union members may know very little about what their national representatives work on, or worse yet, they may disagree with the messages that come from the national union. While typically, the union leaders will try to represent the interests of the majority, nevertheless, their influence is constrained when internal lack of consensus makes a clear message impossible (Poole, 2000). Still, Fiorito et al. pointed out that a union which is more centralized is more likely to be successful in promotion of the general will of the membership.

Lack of consensus among members is only one level of conflict experienced by unions. By nature, these organizations are born of conflict, and the fact that unions have long been the advocate that fights for workers’ rights may hinder the possible

development of a generally positive image (Bascia, 1994). Even as unions have split to represent the industrial and professional needs of teachers, discord has remained a constant at all levels. Whether in opposition to school district administrators or national politicians, traditionally, union leaders have considered it their job to take an *us against them* stance. As unions are constrained to represent members, conflict can become ideological and not practical, as evidenced when union lawyers fight to retain the jobs of mediocre or poor-performing teachers (Reilly, 1995). While union leaders try to alleviate reactive stances toward existing policies by their influence on policy before it is written, nevertheless, the perception that unions are combative remains (Poole, 1999).

Most new ideas in union direction have come from leaders being aware of these problems and understanding these complicated relationships. “Even though they are adversaries, unions are utterly dependent on school districts for meaning and purpose” (Kerchner & Cauffman, 1993a, p. 2). While the relationship may seem oppositional, union leaders can work only through school districts and legislative bodies to represent teachers. It is from this idea that the most recent models of unionism have been conceived.

New Models of Teacher Unionism

Union leaders have made notable changes to union structures over the past few decades to better address each of the problems discussed (Kerchner & Koppich, 1993b). New models of unions are designed after innovative, business based concepts, the first of which states that organizational reform requires a commitment to marked change (Koppich, 1993).

Kerchner and Mitchell (1988) described the evolution of unions in terms of

generations, each of which resulted in a historical shift in union work. The first generation established the right of teachers to organize as workers, while the second generation brought about *good faith bargaining* and gave teachers the ability to represent their own interests. The third generation of unionism is still under way, and it is characterized by the acknowledgement of all parties, including the general public, that teacher negotiations are not entirely based in self-interest, but directly concern the management of schools as well. Furthermore, Kerchner & Mitchell argued that the current generation will certainly not be the last.

Fiorito et al (1995) referred to the general trend in union reform as a move from a *service model* to an *organizing model*, in which unions centralize the organization of affiliates, but shift most decision making processes down to more local groups and individual members. “More innovative unions appear to have had greater success in organizing than less innovative unions” (p. 632). Similar innovation was found by Kerchner and Koppich (1993b), who suggested the idea of *professional unionism*. “First, unions are discarding beliefs about the inherent separateness of labor and management, teaching and administration” (p. 9). Professional unionism, according to Kerchner and Koppich, is based on three main goals:

1. Working together. In essence, this concept changes the *us against them* concept of bargaining to a collaborative, interest based discussion. Primarily, this is accomplished by decentralization of control to local management, and thus, the sweeping, all-or-nothing goals of industrial unionism are alleviated. Currently, in many school districts, there is some type of shared decision making process in place. The role of unions under

such models shifts from the enforcement of rules to monitoring and supporting the decision making process;

2. Bargaining for the same goals. “Bargaining becomes more of a continuous problem-solving process and less of a periodic tournament” (Kerchner & Cauffman, 1993a, p. 16). This precept reinforces the previous goal and keeps negotiations centered around general improvement for everyone involved. Members of the unions and management broaden the scope of discussions from labor to the entire system of schools, and all decisions are made with the improvement of education as a final goal; and
3. Balancing public good and teacher interest. The duality of educational unions is addressed by a balance between the legitimate individual interests of teachers with the interests of the field of teaching and the institution of education in mind. In this model, teacher interests are considered, but only so far as not to harm schools in the process. Schools are recognized as truly being *public* institutions, and it is understood that no decision is positive if it proves harmful to public opinion.

These goals were echoed by other researchers (Bacharach & Mitchell, 1983; Naylor, 2002; Reilly, 1995), who emphasized that negotiation is strengthened through enhanced communication both between union leaders and their memberships, and between unions and external groups. Also, collaborative relationships between union leaders and management have been identified as the primary means for unions to better represent constituents and provide positive outcomes for all involved parties (Bascia, 1994). Finally, representation of professionals, such as teachers, should necessarily

maintain a professional focus, and concentrate on the field beyond the individual (Naylor, 2002).

Likely, the next phase of union empowerment will come from a loosening and lessening of union influence and power, and by a balance of teacher rights with obligation to the public good. “Professional unions begin to link strength with professional responsibility” (Koppich, 1993, p. 195). Among the major shifts suggested by researchers (Bascia, 1994; Koppich, 1993) is the need to keep politics at bay, and thus, the endorsement of specific political candidates and policies is discouraged under the guise of professional unionism.

Another reform movement, termed *social justice unionism*, is aligned with many of the tenets of professional unionism, but differs on the topic of political involvement (Peterson, 1999). “Simply put, this third approach builds on the best of industrial unionism, embraces essential concepts of professional unionism, and adds a vision of social justice” (Peterson, p. 11). In social justice unionism, the majority of professional union concepts are embraced, but these groups are called upon to exert political and public influence over social concerns which systematically impact public schools, such as racial and gender inequity. Leaders of this movement believe that union leaders, while they work to improve public schools and the institution of education, cannot ignore the social and political arenas in which schools operate. They maintain that meaningful educational reform, as championed by professional unionism, cannot be accomplished without broadening beyond the scope of schools, because educational inequality comes not just from schools, but from a vast array of disproportions in social structures (National Coalition of Education Advocates, 1999). In order to accomplish these goals,

social justice unionists call for union leaders to advocate for “radical restructuring of American education” (p. 130), including drastic reduction in class sizes and implementation of increased teacher collaboration and evaluation; also, they should make teachers the center of educational reform.

Researchers (Bascia, 1994; Kerchner & Koppich, 1993b; Naylor, 2002; Poole, 2000) tend to agree on the next steps which would best improve the efficacy of teacher unions. Professional unionism and social justice unionism differ primarily in their ends, but not the means. Do the teachers who pay dues to these organizations agree? While much educational reform must be grassroots in the opinions of those who study unions, it is not clear that the *roots* agree with these ideas.

Perceptions of Teacher Unions

As with any large organization, satisfaction in the group may vary greatly between the local and national levels; therefore, the issue of centralization is of great concern in the consideration of teachers’ perceptions of their unions. Bascia (1994) cited Johnson (1983, 1984) and McDonnell and Pascal (1988) who demonstrated that teachers’ commitment to union affiliation may decrease as the organization grows increasingly removed from their daily lives. A teacher in Bascia’s study said, “the union is almost like a political party. There are so many concerns and needs among its constituents that it’s difficult” (p. 38).

Poole (2000) and Bascia (1994) found that the majority of teachers believe that industrial, individual interests remain the top priority of their unions, and they expect this trend to continue. While teachers seem to accept the addition of professional concerns, nevertheless, they expect vigilant representation in matters of job protection and

economic welfare. When the leaders of teachers' associations become less clear in their support for the needs of their constituents, their ability to serve as a collective voice diminishes and, thus, simultaneously weakens their influence with the broader issues (Bascia). While teachers may retain their membership in such unions, they may care less about the work being done. Naylor (2002) cited Weiner (1999) and stated that "Many teachers view the union as irrelevant to their teaching and pay little attention to its affairs" (p. 2). Such apathy could affect teacher unions negatively, because the ability of the association to represent the unified voice of teachers would be questionable.

Also, perceptions toward unions can be affected by a respondent's position in the school district. Bacharach and Mitchell (1983) found that nearly 90% of surveyed teachers were either satisfied or very satisfied with their local union. The respondents considered the union to be the sole vehicle by which to further economic and work condition gains. School principals' responses were similar to teachers in support of the local union, but they tended to believe that the association should have less involvement in building level decisions, such as class size, preparation time, and nonteaching duties.

Also, Bacharach and Mitchell (1983) found that superintendents and school board members tended to support the existence of the union, but as with the principals, they felt the union should have less say in areas directly related to their jobs, such as district management and policy making. In addition, they tended to disagree with union involvement where it could potentially increase district costs. However, this group of respondents agreed that the union serves an important role as a single body which could be utilized to communicate district objectives to all teachers.

Still, the picture presented by Bacharach and Mitchell (1983) may not tell the

entire story. Their study was conducted when the focus of most unions was still on industrial issues, so the positive response from teachers could reinforce Bascia's (1994) conclusion that industrial issues remain most important to members. The positive responses to issues which would now be considered part of a professional union structure might have changed since 1983, because these issues are now a larger focus of union activity. Also, currently, the perceptions of national unions held both by members and the general public are not clear.

Research Needs

As teacher unions have undergone notable change in recent years, the measurement of success has not been fully explored. This researcher identified a gap in the perceptions between researchers of unions and members in regard to the appropriate focus for these organizations. Whether teachers agree with a union focus on professional goals and influence on governmental policy remains to be seen. While professional goals might be in the best interest of teachers, theoretically, it is unclear whether teachers understand and embrace this idea.

Also, Fiorito et al. (1995) and Naylor (2002) showed that teachers' perspectives on the efficacy of their unions may be different between the local and national levels. As has been shown, local unions tend to be more closely associated with industrial unionism, while national associations seem to embrace the professional union model. It remains unclear whether teachers approve of the work done by one faction more than the other, and it has not been established if members agree with the current structure of union work. Research should be conducted to establish how teachers want industrial and professional issues to be addressed locally and nationally.

Chapter Summary

The history of teacher unions was outlined in this chapter, and current membership statistics were given. The duality of representation between traditional industrial union concerns and innovative professional concerns was illustrated, and the problems that face modern unions were considered. New models of teacher unionism were explored in response to these problems. A summary of research in regard to teacher perceptions toward their unions was presented. Finally, the need for future research were suggested in this chapter. In Chapter 3, the methods and procedure used for the current project will be detailed.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions held by public school employees in one metropolitan Denver school district in regard to the current work being done by local and national union chapters and to determine how unions should represent these employees in the future. This research study was conducted within the Adams 12 Five Star School district by use of an online survey.

Participants

All of the participants in this study were certified employees in the Adams 12 Five Star School district in Northglenn, Thornton, and Westminster. These certified employees included teachers, administrators, counselors, and other licensed education workers, such as library media specialists and psychologists. Certified employees were the focus of this study because they are most likely to be affected by union activity and are most likely to be union members. Employees from all levels of education were invited to participate, because perceptions of the union and the impact of union work could vary in different types of schools.

The participants were employees who voluntarily respond to the online survey. Names of participants were omitted to preserve their anonymity.

Permission to Conduct Study

Permission to conduct this study via district email was obtained from Principal Randy Swanson and the Adams 12 Five Star School district superintendent Mike Paskewicz (see Appendix A). Also, permission to work with human subjects was obtained from the Regis University Human Subjects Review Board (see appendix A). Participant consent was implied by their response and return of the survey, and this was stated on the invitation email.

Procedures

The data were collected from the participants in regard to their perceptions of current and future union activity. Union activity has been divided between the *industrial* union model and the *professional association* model (Bascia, 1994; Kerchner & Koppich, 1993b; Poole, 2000). The industrial union model is focused on member interests, such as salary and benefits, while the association model is concerned with broader educational issues, legislation directed at public education, and improvement of the quality of public schools. Participants had the opportunity to respond to issues about both industrial and professional association concerns, and to consider both their local union chapter and the National Education Association. For the purpose of this study, each union model was addressed in specific areas understood by all public education employees (Bacharach & Mitchell, 1983; Naylor 2002; Poole 2000). Terminology of union types, as used by researchers of unions, was not used. The focus of the industrial model items were:

1. personal economic concerns, including benefits packages;
2. professional development opportunities; and
3. working conditions, including class sizes and preparation time.

The association model items were:

1. promotion of quality education, through research and standards development;
2. attention to broader education policy directed at all public schools; and
3. attention to social issues relevant to schools, including poverty and racial equality.

Participants were asked to address these issues both in terms of how they are currently addressed by their local and national union chapters and how they could better represent these interests. While the majority of the data collected was quantitative, respondents had the opportunity to write brief comments to clarify their responses or suggest ideas not presented on the survey instrument. Also, participants were asked to provide basic demographic information for the purpose of categorizing types of responses. The major categories addressed were:

1. gender, age and teaching experience;
2. union involvement; and
3. school level and occupation.

The survey instrument utilizes a 5 point Likert response scale for participants to give their responses. The Likert scale is appropriate because it is an efficient method which allows respondents to address a broader array of questions in a reasonably short amount of time. In addition to these questions, participants were asked to provide short written answers to four questions, to provide clarification on their responses. The survey was developed as an online instrument with use of the phpESP program, available and approved for use from the researcher's school district (see Appendix B). The survey was

distributed via the Adams 12 Five Star School district email program; participants were able to follow a link in the email to the online survey. Use of the online survey helped to guarantee anonymity and streamlined the response and collection processes.

The survey was distributed to a pilot group of 15 educators from Horizon High School, and this initial response was taken into consideration in the design of the current instrument. The survey was distributed to teachers for a 6 week period, from May to July of 2005.

Issues of Anonymity and Confidentiality

All participants in this study were guaranteed anonymity. Respondents' names were not required on the survey instrument, and all individual responses to the survey are assigned a number by the software program.

Information collected in the survey was held strictly confidential. The data were collected in the aggregate and reported in group form. Direct quotations from individual qualitative responses are used only to represent the belief of a larger group. These direct quotations were not connected to names or any other demographic feature which could compromise anonymity.

Data Analysis

This researcher analyzed the collected data to determine the level of satisfaction reported by respondents in regard to their local and national union representation. The data were analyzed by qualitative and quantitative procedures.

The data collected from the online survey were analyzed for quantitative comparison of answers for specific questions by use of descriptive statistics (i.e., number

and percent). The Likert scale responses of strongly disagree/somewhat disagree and strongly agree/somewhat agree may be combined in the explanation of results, but will be accompanied by graphs to show the specific breakdown of responses.

In addition to quantitative and comparative statistics, elements of qualitative response are available, as well. Responses to open ended questions were analyzed in two ways. First, when applicable, these responses were organized into groups of similar responses. For example, in one of the open ended questions, participants were asked to list the three top priorities unions could work on to serve their needs. Responses with similar meanings, such as *pay*, *salary*, and *compensation*, were categorized together. Also, infrequent mention of any of the six industrial and association model items was noted. Longer responses to other open ended responses were analyzed for trends in response that reinforce or supplement the quantitative data. For example, respondents were invited, but not required, to provide any additional perceptions they had toward education unions. These responses were content analyzed to identify recurring thematic patterns, and the content and frequency of responses were noted. While qualitative responses were categorized and analyzed, the use of data collected in this process was restricted to provision of insight and further explanation for qualitative results.

Chapter Summary

This researcher was given permission to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on perceptions held by educators toward their local and national association chapters to form an updated picture of how changing patterns in union organization is received by members. The process of data collection by way of online survey was detailed, as were the procedures for analysis of results. Analysis of these data were used to determine the

efficacy of current union models, and to provide insight as to how these organizations might improve representation.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this project was to determine how educators currently perceive the effectiveness of representation by local and national unions, and to discover what issues they believe should be addressed in the future. To accomplish this, an online survey was developed to gather opinions from certified educators in a metropolitan Denver school district. Also, the survey instrument was designed to measure the participants' industrial and professional concerns about local and national unions (see Appendix B for a copy of the instrument).

Sample

The participants in the sample for this study were certified educators from the Adams 12 Five Star School district in Northglenn, Thornton, and Westminster. An invitation to participate in the survey was widely broadcast within the school district; an email that contained a link to the online survey was sent to the known email addresses of approximately 2380 certified employees. The respondents numbered 127; 90 were females, 35 were males, and 2 did not report. Current teachers represented 64% of respondents, and the remaining 46 individuals were: (a) counselors, (b) administrators, (c) deans of students, (d) special education certified staff, (e) librarians, (f) technology specialists, and (g) coordinators. There were: (a) 33 (26%) respondents from kindergarten and elementary schools, (b) 28 (22%) from middle schools, (c) 59 (46.5%)

from high schools, and (d) 5 (3.9%) from charter and alternative schools. For number of years teaching: (a) 21 with under 5 years, (b) 58 with 6-15 years, (c) 29 with 16-25 years, and (d) 18 with more than 25 years. Also, 111 respondents (87.4%) reported that they were currently members of an education association, while 15 (11.8%) were not members, and 1 did not report. Of the participants, 87 agreed or strongly agreed with the concept of labor unions, 16 disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 24 reported mixed feelings.

Instrumentation

This researcher designed the survey instrument for online use, with use of the phpESP software program, approved and made available by the Adams 12 Five Star School district. The first 18 questions, which address current perceptions of union activity, were designed as multiple choice Likert scale responses, and the second section was changed to a five point Likert scale with shorter question stems, in order to increase ease of use and to prevent the entire survey from having a redundant appearance.

In the phpESP program, responses to certain questions are mandatory in order to complete the survey, and 15 of the 21 first questions, essential for data collection, were made mandatory. If a survey was submitted with no marks for these questions, the website that hosted the survey automatically redirected the respondent back to the unanswered question before the survey could be submitted. In order to guarantee anonymity, the third section of the survey, which asked for personal and demographic information, was not mandatory.

After the survey was designed, it was posted at a unique website. Respondents were only able to access the survey with a link to the website, which was provided in the

invitation email. Once respondents accessed the link in the invitation email, they were brought directly to the first page of the survey. Each section of the survey was completed and submitted before the respondents were able to access the next section. The invitation was approved to be sent no more than two times, and it was broadcast on May 31, and repeated on June 26.

Results from the Survey

Based on studies by Bascia (1994), Kerchner and Koppich (1993), and Poole (2000), participants were asked to record their perceptions of both industrial and professional association goals. The focus of the industrial model items were:

1. personal economic concerns, including benefits packages;
2. professional development opportunities; and
3. working conditions, including class sizes and preparation time.

The professional association model items were:

1. promotion of quality education, through research and standards development;
2. attention to broader education policy directed at all public schools; and
3. attention to social issues relevant to schools, including poverty and racial equality.

In addition to these items, the respondents were asked to share their perceptions of communication issues within unions, including how well unions communicate objectives to members, and how effectively they help to create a positive public image of schools and education.

Participants were asked to address the current quality of union activity in regard to these measures in the first section of the survey. They were then asked to prioritize which measures they believed should be addressed in future union work in the second section.

Results for industrial, professional association, and communication goals are presented in tables and narrative, both in terms of current perceptions and future needs. Discussion and interpretation of the results will follow in Chapter 5.

Current Perceptions of Industrial Goals

Results from the industrial model goals (Bascia, 1994; Naylor, 2002) are presented in the three categories that were addressed in the survey; the results shown are the responses given for local and national unions. The three categories were: (a) Personal Economic Concerns, (b) Working Conditions, and (c) Professional Development. Participants had five response choices: (a) Strongly Disagree, (b) Somewhat Disagree, (c) Mixed Feelings/Not Sure, (d) Somewhat Agree, and (e) Strongly Agree. The findings for these categories are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3, in descriptive statistics for the sample.

For Personal Economic Concerns, participants were asked to respond to two statements:

1. The local union plays an important role in guaranteeing my salary, benefits package, and other economic concerns.
2. The national union plays an important role in guaranteeing my salary, benefits package, and other economic concerns.

Table 1

Personal Economic Concerns

Union Level	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Mixed	Agree	Strong Agree
Local	4 (3.1%)	5 (3.9%)	6 (4.7%)	28 (22%)	84 (66.1%)
National	8 (6.3%)	22 (17.3%)	52 (40.9%)	33 (26%)	12 (9.4%)

For Working Conditions, participants were asked to respond to two statements:

1. The local union plays an important role in protecting working conditions, such as class size, preparation time, and job security.
2. The national union plays an important role in protecting working conditions, such as teacher to student ratios, quality school facilities, and job security.

Table 2

Working Conditions

Union Level	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Mixed	Agree	Strong Agree
Local	4 (3.1%)	10 (7.9%)	9 (7.1%)	41 (32.3%)	62 (48.8%)
National	12 (9.4%)	17 (13.4%)	38 (29.9%)	41 (32.3%)	16 (12.6%)

Note. 1 respondent did not answer for Local; 3 respondents did not answer for National.

For Professional Development, participants were asked to respond to two statements:

1. The local union fosters professional development for teachers through training, conferences, or inservices.
2. The national union fosters professional development through training, conferences, or inservices.

Table 3

Professional Development

Union Level	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Mixed	Agree	Strong Agree
Local	9 (7.1%)	27 (21.3%)	47 (37.0%)	30 (23.6%)	13 (10.2%)
National	12 (9.4%)	20 (15.7%)	49 (38.6%)	34 (26.8%)	11 (8.7%)

Note. 1 respondent did not answer for Local; 1 respondent did not answer for National.

Current Perceptions of Professional Association Goals

Results from the professional association model goals (Kerchner & Koppich, 1993; Poole, 2000) are presented in the three categories that were addressed in the survey. The results shown are the responses given for local and national unions. The three categories were: (a) Promotion of Quality Education, (b) Attention to Social Issues, and (c) Attention to Broader Education Policy. Participants used the same five response choices. All findings are presented in Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 in descriptive statistics.

For Promotion of Quality Education, participants were asked to respond to two statements:

1. The local union has good ideas about how to improve educational quality in our school district.
2. The national union has good ideas about how to improve educational quality in America's public schools.

Table 4

Promotion of Quality Education

Union Level	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Mixed	Agree	Strong Agree
Local	3 (2.4%)	8 (6.3%)	20 (15.7%)	57 (44.9%)	39 (30.7%)
National	7 (5.5%)	12 (9.4%)	33 (26.0%)	52 (40.9%)	23 (18.1%)

For Attention to Social Issues, participants were asked to respond to two statements:

1. The local union works to guarantee educational equality for all students by addressing relevant social issues in our community.
2. The national union works to guarantee educational equality for all students by addressing relevant societal issues.

Table 5

Attention to Social Issues

Union Level	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Mixed	Agree	Strong Agree
Local	6 (4.7%)	16 (12.6%)	43 (33.9%)	40 (31.5%)	22 (17.3%)
National	8 (6.3%)	16 (12.6%)	46 (36.2%)	41 (32.3%)	16 (12.6%)

For Attention to Broader Education Policy, participants were asked to respond to four statements. The first two statements address the current importance of unions being politically involved, while the next two determine how closely unions represent the participant's own beliefs in regard to education issues (see Tables 6 and 7). Examples of issues were given in the statements to clarify what was meant by the term, education issues.

1. It is important that the local union actively work to influence the state legislature.
2. It is important that the national union actively work to influence the national legislature.
3. The local union accurately represents my beliefs regarding state and local education issues, such as CSAP testing, educational funding, and schools of choice.
4. The national union accurately represents my beliefs regarding national education issues, such as No Child Left Behind, standardized testing, and schools of choice.

Table 6

Attention to Broader Education Policy: Importance of Political Involvement

Union Level	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Mixed	Agree	Strong Agree
Local	3 (2.4%)	2 (1.6%)	9 (7.1%)	21 (16.5%)	92 (72.4%)
National	7 (5.5%)	1 (0.8%)	8 (6.3%)	24 (18.9%)	87 (68.5%)

Table 7

Attention to Broader Education Policy: Representation of Respondents' Beliefs

Union Level	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Mixed	Agree	Strong Agree
Local	3 (2.4%)	15 (11.8%)	23 (18.1%)	54 (42.5%)	32 (25.2%)
National	7 (5.5%)	18 (14.2%)	34 (26.8%)	54 (42.5%)	14 (11.0%)

Current Perceptions of Union Communication

Respondents were asked to report their perceptions of communication issues within education unions, and the results are presented in the two categories that were addressed in the survey. The results shown are the responses given for local and national unions. The two categories were Communicating Objectives to Members and Communicating Positively with the Public; and participants answered with the same five response choices. See Tables 8 and 9, respectively, where the findings for the descriptive analysis of the data are presented.

To assess communication goals, participants were asked to respond to four statements. The first two statements address the issue of internal communication, and the last two address the issue of communication with the public.

1. The local union is clear in communicating what objectives and issues are being worked on to members.
2. The NEA is clear in communicating what objectives and issues are being worked on to members.
3. The local union is successful in helping to create a positive attitude toward schools in our community.
4. The NEA is successful in creating a positive attitude toward America's public school system.

Table 8

Communicating Objectives to Members

Union Level	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Mixed	Agree	Strong Agree
Local	2 (1.6%)	9 (7.1%)	7 (5.5%)	43 (33.9%)	66 (52.0%)
National	5 (3.9%)	13 (10.2%)	21 (16.5%)	62 (48.8%)	26 (20.5%)

Table 9

Communicating Positively with the Public

Union Level	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Mixed	Agree	Strong Agree
Local	5 (3.9%)	10 (7.9%)	35 (27.6%)	51 (40.2%)	25 (19.7%)
National	7 (5.5%)	27 (21.3%)	35 (27.6%)	46 (36.2%)	11 (8.7%)

Note. 1 respondent did not answer for Local; 1 respondent did not answer for National.

Perceptions of Future Needs for Industrial Goals

Respondents were asked to provide rankings for how they prefer future union work to be prioritized, and the results for local and national unions are presented in the three categories that were addressed in the survey. The three categories were: (a) Working Conditions, (b) Personal Economic Concerns, and (c) Professional Development. Participants ranked the priority for each category with the use of a five point scale: (a) Highest Priority, (b) Moderately High Priority, (c) The Same Priority Currently Given, (d) Moderately Low Priority, and (e) Lowest Priority. In the results reported here, the Highest Priority and Moderately High Priority rankings were combined, as were the Moderately Low Priority and Lowest Priority rankings, in order to clarify the findings, and to determine which objectives were the most often prioritized in comparison to each other.

The participants were asked to assess each union goal, and each included specific, understandable examples which varied slightly between local and national descriptions.

For instance, the examples for Working Conditions in the local prompt listed examples of class sizes and preparation time, while the national prompt for Working Conditions listed class sizes and quality of facilities. The findings for these three categories are presented for local and national unions in Tables 10 and 11, respectively, in descriptive statistics.

Table 10

Future Local Union Needs for Industrial Goals

Union Goal	Higher Priority	Same Priority	Lower Priority
Working Conditions	108 (85%)	7 (6%)	12 (9%)
Economic Concerns	105 (83%)	12 (9%)	10 (8%)
Professional Development	65 (51%)	50 (39%)	12 (9%)

Table 11

Future National Union Needs for Industrial Goals

Union Goal	Higher Priority	Same Priority	Lower Priority
Working Conditions	85 (67%)	23 (18%)	19 (15%)
Economic Concerns	83 (65%)	24 (19%)	20 (16%)
Professional Development	58 (46%)	49 (39%)	20 (16%)

Perceptions of Future Needs for Professional Association Goals

Respondents were asked to provide rankings for how they prefer future union work to be prioritized in regard to professional association goals, and the results for local and national unions are presented in the three categories that were addressed in the survey. The three categories were: (a) Promotion of Educational Quality, (b) Education Policy, and (c) Social Issues Relevant to Education. The participants ranked the priority for each category with the use of the same five point scale described above. The results were combined in the same way, and the examples given for each were similarly varied to suitably describe local and national goals.

The findings for these three categories are presented for local and national unions in Tables 12 and 13, respectively. Descriptive statistics were used for the analysis.

Table 12

Future Local Union Needs for Professional Association Goals

Union Goal	Higher Priority	Same Priority	Lower Priority
Educational Quality ^a	80 (63%)	33 (26%)	13 (10%)
Education Policy	89 (70%)	27 (21%)	11 (9%)
Social Issues	66 (52%)	50 (39%)	11 (9%)

Note. ^aOne participant did not respond for Educational Quality.

Table 13

Future National Union Needs for Professional Association Goals

Union Goal	Higher Priority	Same Priority	Lower Priority
Educational Quality	89 (70%)	26 (20%)	12 (9%)
Education Policy	92 (72%)	20 (16%)	15 (12%)
Social Issues	87 (69%)	26 (20%)	14 (11%)

Perceptions of Future Needs for Communication and Representation Goals

In addition to the issues of professional and industrial union concerns, respondents were asked to prioritize other union goals, in regard to communication and representation. The results for local and national unions are presented in the four categories that were addressed in the survey. The four categories were:

1. Communicating Clearly with Union Members,
2. Balancing Needs of Individual Teachers and Schools,
3. Gathering Public Support for Schools, and
4. Broadening Focus to Include Teachers with Varied Political and Social Interests.

Participants ranked the priority for each category with the use of the same five point scale listed above. The results were combined in the same way, and the examples provided for each were similarly varied to suitably describe local and national goals.

The findings for these three categories are presented for local and national unions in Tables 14 and 15, respectively. The data are analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics.

Table 14

Future Local Union Needs for Communication and Representation Goals

Union Goal	Higher Priority	Same Priority	Lower Priority
Communicating Clearly	70 (55%)	46 (36%)	11 (9%)
Balancing Needs	73 (57%)	34 (27%)	20 (16%)
Gathering Public Support	90 (71%)	23 (18%)	14 (11%)
Broadening Focus	55 (43%)	37 (29%)	35 (28%)

Table 15

Future National Union Needs for Communication and Representation Goals

Union Goal	Higher Priority	Same Priority	Lower Priority
Communicating Clearly ^a	66 (52%)	49 (39%)	11 (9%)
Balancing Needs	51 (40%)	55 (43%)	21 (17%)
Gathering Public Support	94 (74%)	23 (18%)	10 (8%)
Broadening Focus	52 (41%)	48 (38%)	27 (21%)

Note. ^aOne respondent did not report for Communicating Clearly

Qualitative Responses

In addition to the quantitative responses, participants were given the opportunity to write their thoughts in four qualitative responses. These questions were focused on the specific issues that respondents felt unions should address, comments about local and national unions, and explanations why they chose to join the union, or chose not to join. While these qualitative responses were not the focus of this research, trends and common themes were identified. In some direct quotations, wording changes which did not alter the original intent of meaning were made, and these are included in parentheses. Respondents had the opportunity to respond to these questions, and because they were not required to do so, these observations do not represent the entire surveyed group.

First, respondents were given the opportunity to list the three most important issues the union should address to fulfill their needs. Responses were gathered from the online survey and analyzed, and then categories were identified based on the frequency

of responses. This researcher grouped topics which were similarly worded together; for example, references to CSAP, No Child Left Behind, and lobbying government or influencing legislation were grouped under Legislative Issues. However, the specific stance on these issues, in particular, was not always consistent. For example, while one respondent called for “doing away with CSAP,” another felt the union should be “helping teachers understand the effects and importance of CSAP.” Still another called for “becoming a player in Washington on the teachers’ behalf.” Such divergent viewpoints were grouped together, but should illustrate that, while the following analysis refers to the number of responses in regard to a certain issue, the feelings in regard to that issue could be varied.

In 84 responses, the following trends in identifying the most important union issues were noted:

1. 49, Pay/Benefits;
2. 44, Class size;
3. 38, Legislative issues, including CSAP and No Child Left Behind;
4. 19, Public image, or gaining more support from the public;
5. 15, Social issues.

Class size was the second most commonly answered issue, which was included as Working Conditions throughout the rest of the survey. Also, in the responses grouped together as Legislative issues, there were 20 specific mentions of No Child Left Behind and 23 specific mentions of CSAP.

In the next item, participants were invited to include any other comments they had in regard to their perceptions of the NEA or the local union. A total of 45 participants

chose to respond, and the answers varied from single sentence responses to a few who composed multiple paragraphs. These answers were not analyzed and grouped together in the same way as the last item, because the general nature of the question yielded a vast array of responses.

A noteworthy trend found in this question was a tendency to reiterate the importance of public opinion both toward the union and toward public education. At least 15 of the 45 responses made some mention in regard to the public image of education. The responses included:

1. “To the general public, the union comes across a bit poorly;”
2. “Education should be POSITIVE;”
3. “I think education unions are currently seen as bullies by many in the public and legislatures;”
4. “[I] would like to see more public attention drawn to education issues;”
5. “The NEA has become a radical left group centered only on their agenda;”
and
6. “Public opinion (is) that the union is only there to protect the teacher, not that it also protects the needs of the children the teachers work with.”

Also, several respondents mentioned the conflict of union representation, between the teachers and the schools and system in which they work, which was discussed in this report. At least 8 respondents made specific mention of balancing the needs of teachers with those of schools. The responses included:

1. “[I] have never really been a union person because their interests are not in the best interest of students or schools, but in the individual as a worker;”

2. “I feel the Central Adams UniServe (local union) does a great job responding to individual concerns as well as overall district issues;”
3. “I feel like our (local) union is interested only in the needs of teachers. I feel the needs of students are considered more at the national level;”
4. “Our local union does a huge service in protecting teachers’ rights and views;” and
5. “(Unions are) not really supportive of students and school, (and) what is really best for kids.”

Beyond these specific issues, some respondents chose to report whether they view the union positively or negatively. While some responses, such as “I think the union for district 12 is excellent,” clearly illustrate the participant’s opinion, these opinions are not included here as they refer to unions in a general way, and this researcher found that participants’ opinions toward the unions are better characterized in the quantitative data.

In the third qualitative item, respondents were asked why they chose either to join the union or not to join, and 99 responses were collected. While the responses varied greatly, the researcher noted that 27 respondents specifically referred, in some way, to legal protection for teachers. Another 7 respondents noted that they joined because of family history with unions. Finally, 5 respondents reported that they did not join the union, or ceased their memberships, due to the political actions taken by the union.

The final qualitative question gave respondents the opportunity to share any other thoughts they felt relevant, and 30 participants chose to respond. However, these responses were either widely varied or repeated other issues, and the findings were not recorded here.

Chapter Summary

Demographic information about the survey participants was detailed. The results for 9 current perceptions of local and national union activity and 10 future goals for these organizations were presented in tables with accompanying narrative. Also, the qualitative responses were categorized and presented with examples of direct quotations. Interpretation and discussion of these results, along with implications for further research, are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The intention of this project was to ascertain how educators perceive the efficacy of representation from their local and national union chapters, and to determine which issues they believe are most important for unions to address in the future. While researchers, including Bascia (1994), Kerchner and Cauffman (1993), and Poole (2000) have identified less confrontational professional unionism as the most effective new model for these organizations, the perceptions of educators who are not necessarily aware of these ideas remain unknown. For this current study, 127 educators in a metropolitan Denver school district responded to an online survey, which was intended to measure the participants' opinions about their local and national union representation.

Implications of Findings

As has been discussed, historically, union members have viewed unions as groups that fight for their individual benefit, particularly in terms of pay and benefits. Although they may not be generalizable, findings from this study indicated that this perception remains intact, as 112 respondents (88%) agreed that the local union plays an important role in the guarantee of these economic concerns. Similarly, 103 respondents (81%) agreed that the role of the local union in protecting working conditions is also important. Those surveyed had similar beliefs in regard to future local union work; 108 respondents (85%) affirmed that working conditions should receive a higher priority, and

105 (83%) had the same view about economic concerns (see Table 10). Thus, while those who study unions agree that traditional, industrial goals should no longer be the focus of union work, current members do not appear to fully agree with this idea. The majority of those surveyed in this study continued to believe that a primary function of their local union is to guarantee their: (a) job security, (b) benefits packages, and (c) salaries.

Qualitative data from this study further support these findings. On question 21 of the survey, respondents were asked to list the three most important issues the union could work on to fulfill their needs. In 89 responses, pay and benefits were listed as the most common priority among educators. Clear references to pay and benefits occurred in 49 responses (55%), while references to prioritizing class sizes occurred 44 times (49%). Another notable reference to the role of unions in regard to benefits to teachers occurred in question 33 of the survey, which asked participants to discuss why they chose in favor of or against joining their union. In 99 responses, 37 participants (37%) made clear reference to legal representation and protection offered by the union.

Interestingly, however, when given the opportunity to discuss specific opinions qualitatively, few respondents explained or expanded upon the expected role of the national or local union in regard to salary and benefits. Although pay/benefits was the most commonly listed priority, respondents believed the union should continue to address, ideas or suggestions as to how this should be accomplished were varied. The only specific reform, mentioned in four responses, called for changes in pay structure, specifically *merit pay* rather than a concrete pay schedule based on tenure. A slightly more common trend among responses was an expression of concern over the public

perception of teacher pay. One respondent wrote, “I fear that the public perception of teachers has suffered because of disputes over wages.” Still, as will be illustrated later, other union priorities were commonly given explanation and detail in the qualitative responses; thus, this lack of explanation could further show that educators continue to perceive clear cut industrial goals as an integral reason for the payment of dues.

While respondents in this study clearly associated their local union with industrial goals, they reported differing opinions about the national union. While a clear majority associated the local union with guaranteeing salary and benefits, only 45 (35%) agreed that the national union is important in this sense, while 30 (24%) disagreed and 52 (41%) had mixed feelings. Those who agreed that the national union plays an important role to protect working conditions increased in number to 57 (46%). According to Poole (2000) working conditions at the national level include the improvement of school facilities and reduction of teacher to student ratios, both of which can be interpreted ambiguously (e.g., either as industrial or professional concerns), and this could explain why a discrepant number of respondents agreed with these statements.

Also, respondents were less consistent in their report of a need for future national union work on industrial, economic and job related concerns; 85 (67%) favored working conditions, and 83 (65%) favored economic concerns. As these statistics are lower than those for the local union, this could mean that respondents were more satisfied with the work being done at the national level, or that they wanted other emphases at the national level. In the comparison of the responses for lowering the priority of industrial concerns at the local and national levels, nearly twice as many respondents preferred that the national union make these industrial goals a lower priority. Therefore, these findings

indicate that the local union remains more commonly associated with industrial union goals. As this has been the traditional division between the local and national chapters of teacher unions, it appears that the union members in this school district did not perceive or desire significant changes in union structure, particularly in terms of this issue.

Political Involvement

While the participants in this survey reported perceptions about industrial union goals which were consistent with the traditional division of local and national unions, they were more consistently vocal about the need for political involvement from both levels. Notably these were the most common statements to which respondents strongly agreed; 92 respondents (72%) strongly agreed with the need for local unions to work to influence legislature, while 87 (69%) strongly agreed with the same need nationally. All respondents who agreed with these statements numbered 113 (89%) for local political involvement, and 111 (87%) for national political involvement. Therefore, this was the most consistently agreed upon current role of local and national unions in this study. This could represent a notable shift in perception from traditional industrial unionism, but it must be noted that more respondents believed future union work at the local level should focus on industrial goals.

There was a discrepancy between the perceived need for political involvement and the actual representation of participants' beliefs. As noted above, the majority of participants strongly agreed that both local and national unions should be politically involved, but they were much less likely to agree strongly that these groups currently represented their personal beliefs. Taken together, 86 respondents (68%) felt the local union represented their beliefs, but only 32 (25%) strongly agreed. The responses for the

national union showed an even greater gap; 68 respondents (44%) agreed that the NEA represented their beliefs, and only 14 (11%) agreed strongly. For both the local and national unions, respondents were much more likely to feel these organizations did not represent their beliefs, or they had mixed feelings.

Most likely, this discrepancy points to three possible interpretations. First, participants may have believed that political activity within their unions goes against their particular beliefs. This possibility is less likely due to the low percentage of respondents who strongly disagreed with the representation of their political beliefs. Second, they may have felt the legislation currently supported, while it addresses issues they agreed with, was not strong enough. Otherwise, the 41 participants (32%) who disagreed or had mixed feelings in regard to the local union, as well as the 59 individuals (46%) who reported similarly for the national union could feel that the union represents them well in some ways but not in others. Each of these interpretations could explain the difference in support for political involvement and current representation of beliefs.

The nature of desired political involvement was commonly expanded upon in qualitative responses. Most notably, of the 89 qualitative responses to personal union needs, 38 respondents (43%) made specific reference to the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) and/or the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act. Those participant who expanded on this answer uniformly made reference to the reform of these pieces of legislation, with terms such as curtailing, rethinking, eliminating, and improving used in responses. Other respondents made more general reference to political involvement, but also felt the union should advocate for educational interests. For example, one respondent wrote that unions should be “standing strong against anti-

education and anti-democratic elements in the legislative and executive branches of our government.” As responses such as these made up the clear majority of qualitative responses, they indicated that the increased interest in union political involvement among educators is to have greater political influence than is currently perceived. It is important to note that while they were less frequent, responses were made that criticized the tendency of unions to support political candidates of the Democratic party. These respondents consistently addressed the NEA, but were echoed by others who emphasized that political involvement should strive to be non partisan. It is not entirely surprising that the role of unions in legislative issues is contentious, even though it is not equally balanced.

Considering the qualitative and quantitative data together, these educators did not generally feel misrepresented by their local and national unions, but they may feel that the work of unions does not consistently support their beliefs. This is not surprising, as representative bodies seldom match the values of their members exactly. Based on the varied responses to this issue, part of this misalignment can be explained by educators who desired stronger representation on current goals. Thus, the results from this study supported the conclusion that unions cannot improve representation of educators by decreased political influence.

The common references to the reform of current legislation, which directly affects education, supported Kerchner’s (1993) contention that professional unions should actively take part, even politically, in the development of educational policy. Yet the findings indicated that it is still common for educators to perceive the relationship as “us against them,” rather than as a shared decision making partnership, as conceived by

Kerchner. Also, while the majority of qualitative responses indicated an adversarial relationship between unions and politicians, others emphasized the importance of a balance of teacher interests with those of the state and federal governments.

It is impossible to ignore the current political climate in the U.S. at the time this study was conducted. As was explained in Chapter 2, currently, educators operate in a climate where their jobs have become increasingly politicized, and where the predominating opinion is not whether education needs to be reformed, but rather how best to accomplish it. In order to get a clear picture of how educators perceive the importance of political involvement by their unions, similar studies would need to be conducted over larger periods of time and the findings compared. While the current study did not focus on a clarification of the political goals that unions should address, it clearly supports the idea that educators believe it is the job of unions to be politically involved.

Issues that Support Educational Quality and Social Justice

The concept of educational quality, as explained by Kerchner and Cauffman (1993a), addresses the need for unions, in their support of teachers, to improve the educational system and schools at the same time. Generally, the participants in this study believed that both the local and national unions represented these issues well, and 96 (76%) and 75 (59%) agreed or strongly agreed, respectively. Comparing the perceptions of the local and national unions on this issue, most of the divergence can be found in the number of respondents who reported mixed feelings about whether the national union had good ideas about how to improve education. While this data could indicate that participants in this study have more faith in their local unions to improve schools, 70% of

respondents felt this should be a higher priority for the national union, which made it the third highest priority for national work, while it was given a much lower priority for future work at the local level.

In the assessment of educators' perceptions, often, educational quality is difficult to separate from legislative issues, and it is more difficult still to isolate from some of the working conditions of teachers. In Chapter 2, this was illustrated with the example of class size, because it has been found that smaller numbers of pupils in a class increases student achievement and lessens teachers' work load (Hendricks-Lee & Mooney, 1998). In this study, 44 of 89 respondents (50%) listed class size as a top priority for union work, which was the second highest response to this item. That the issue of reduced class size benefits both educators and students, and that the findings in this study showed general support for work on this issue, it can be concluded that unions would benefit if class size was made a central priority at both the local and national levels.

Social issues, as discussed in Chapter 2, are those with broad implications in society, but which may impact schools directly. These issues can be general societal problems, such as poverty or racism, but some, such as equal access to quality schools, are more specifically related to education. The findings for this issue showed the largest gap between current union focus and need for future work, specifically at the national level. While 57 respondents (45%) agreed that the national union addresses social issues relevant to education, 87 respondents (69%) believed this should be a higher priority in the future.

In the 89 qualitative responses, in which respondents listed their top three priorities for union work, there were 15 (17%) clear references in favor of addressing

social issues, while 4 (5%) were clearly against them. While the wording varied, 13 responses in favor referred to educational equality, particularly directed toward low income schools and families. For example, one participant called for “adequate resources for schools in low income areas” while another advocated for “economic development in impoverished areas” of the district. The participants who objected to union involvement in social issues, felt that such goals were too far reaching for union work, as was explained in one response: “(The) NEA seems to be pursuing a slightly hidden social-action, welfare-type agenda, which I personally support but which I consider outside the purview of public education.” Social justice unionism is still a relatively new idea, and while the findings were far from conclusive on this issue, it is apparent that these ideas are no longer viewed entirely separate from union work.

Public Perception of Unions and Internal Communication

Education unions are unable to function as insulated entities, and act only in favor of paying members while they remain free from public influence. A portion of this study was focused on the communication and public face of education unions, because much of the literature (Poole 2000; Steelman, Powell, & Carini 2000) described an erosion of public support. Certainly, effective communication begins with clarity and openness within an organization, so the respondents for this study were able to provide insight as to how well unions communicate with members.

While a majority of respondents agreed that both the local and national unions are clear in their communication of objectives to members, far fewer (20.5%) reported strong agreement in regard to the national union, as compared to the local union (52%). This discrepancy is likely explainable by the function of union representatives within schools.

These individuals, together with district union representatives, were described in several qualitative responses as working on behalf of the local union alone. Although these individuals solicit union membership, and therefore represent both the local and national unions, participants in this study did not perceive them as representation of both organizations equally, if at all. In 49 qualitative responses in which participants were free to comment on either the NEA of the local union, 10 statements (20%) included reference to personal interaction with union representatives; each of these comments addressed local issues such as grievances within buildings or organized teacher rallies at the State Capitol. Meanwhile, at least 3 responses described NEA communication as derived entirely from the monthly newsletter. These perceptions could help to explain the divergent responses to the quantitative items. It is important to note that the percentage of participants who did not feel the national or local unions communicated objectively were both low, and 14.1% and 8.7% reported disagreement, respectively.

Bascia (1994) contended that larger, national union structures face difficulty in order to maintain member commitment equal to that of smaller union structures. In Bascia's study, it was found that unions which had local chapters within larger organizations were perceived as being able to better represent individuals within the organization. The findings in the current study appear to be consistent with Bascia's conclusions, based on the diminished strength in agreement on the topic of internal communication. This conclusion is limited, however, because this researcher did not ask participants whether they specifically favored one organization over the other.

While, generally, the respondents reported that local and national unions communicated clearly with members, they did not feel either organization was as

effective in regard to communication with the general public or in generation of support for public schools. Notably, only 25 participants (19.7%) strongly agreed that the local union successfully establishes a positive image of schools, while even fewer participants (8.7%) answered similarly for the national union. Based on the qualitative responses, the participants commonly perceived a gap between the reality of what unions work for and what the public perceives. One participant wrote, “As a teacher, I understand the goals of the union, however, to the general public, the union frequently comes across a bit poorly—seeming to just be protecting its existence.” Another participant wrote, “Public opinion [is] that the union is only there to protect the teacher, not that it also protects the needs of children.” Other qualitative responses included terms such as awareness and involvement in discussion of public perception, which indicates that participants believe it is more important for unions to clearly inform the public of what goals educators currently prioritize, rather than to change focus entirely.

While the respondents believed gathering public support for education and schools was an important future need at both union levels, it is interesting to note that 94 respondents (74%) believed this issue should be given higher priority, making it the top future priority at the national level. However, a discrepancy exists between these data and the 84 qualitative responses in which participants wrote what they would prefer the union to work on, because only 19 (23%) mentioned the development of public relations. Respondents may have been less likely to list public support in the qualitative response, because such a goal may not be perceived as fulfilling their personal needs.

Unions, being largely in the business of communication, have a duty not only to members, but to the general public as well. As these groups generally serve as a

representative of educator interests, which moderate with other groups, it is clear that educators believe part of this representation must focus on the public at large. Certainly, as much public debate has been focused, often negatively, on public education, this study illustrated that educators believe it is the job of the union, particularly the national chapter, to ensure that the public is aware of their goals, and ideally, to generate public support as well.

Conclusions

This author set out to explore how those involved in education might perceive their local and national unions. Overall, the participants perceived local and national unions differently; they tended to associate the local union more with industrial goals and the national union more with professional goals. While this perception supported Kerchner and Koppich's (1993b) description of professional unionism, two important distinctions must be considered. First, while the local union was strongly connected with industrial concerns, it was almost equally associated with professional goals, particularly that of political involvement. Second, there was some evidence that the educators were interested in the pursuit of nonadversarial relationships with management and with those who oversee educational policy, but most of the evidence from this study suggested otherwise, particularly in regard to legislation and political involvement. The nonadversarial, win win situation described by Kerchner and Koppich in the development of professional unionism has either not progressed or has actually taken backward steps.

In regarding the fundamental question in this project, these educators expected more from their unions than simply a collective negotiation body for their own interests, yet they may not entirely support the professional union model as illustrated by Kerchner

and Koppich (1993b). As was anticipated, the educators still believed that, in paying union dues, the top priority for these organizations should be their personal needs, followed closely by advocacy for educational issues in the political realm. Yet educational unions continue to undergo change. It is important to note that social justice unionism (Peterson, 1999), still a relatively new idea, has become recognizable among some educators, who find these issues harder to separate from their teaching. Strong political involvement is advocated in social justice unionism, and because this study found a strong desire for such action, it could follow that this type of unionism is becoming more relevant. This change in unions and the role they play in education raises interesting questions. As educators are clearly willing to pay dues not only for industrial benefits, but for professional improvement, does this shift impact the overall effectiveness of these organizations? Could this help to explain why education unions alone have managed to avoid losing membership and influence?

Another question posed in the introduction to this project was focused on the effectiveness of unions in relation to organizational size. There was some support in the responses for Bascia's (1994) contention that commitment to unions diminishes as organizational size increases. These respondents, who rated the effectiveness of the local and national unions in numerous areas, tended to rank the local union more positively across all questions. Additionally, there was a general perception that local unions should work on all issues, both industrial and professional in nature, but they did not perceive the national union as being adaptable in this manner, particularly in terms of industrial issues.

The issue of reduced class sizes was heavily supported by the respondents in this

study, and it could continue to bridge the gap between local and national unions while the collective organization is moved toward the professional association model. Such an issue, which supports both working conditions for teachers and educational quality as a whole, could be a worthy goal for unions to bring into the national discussion of education. If unions, management, and legislators were able to work together to improve a specific goal, such as this, it is the opinion of this researcher that all groups would benefit, and as the issue of class sizes is ambiguous in terms of being an industrial or professional goal, it could suitably set the groundwork for future cooperative efforts.

As is the case with numerous organizations, the interconnectedness of one element to a separate or larger whole can no longer be ignored. Hendricks-Lee and Mooney (1998) referred to complexity theory as they identified the possible roles for teacher unions in educational reform, which is directly related to systems theory. Local and national unions may not be perceived as distinct entities as they once were; there seems to be a trend toward a network than a hierarchical function.

According to Kerchner and Cauffman (1993a), unions rely not only on their members, but on school boards and school districts for meaning and purpose. Without these organizations, unions would cease to exist. As teachers, through their unions, maintain a strong position in the U.S. educational system, it seems that their strength will be used best when cooperation becomes the norm. Of course, it is not unions alone, but managerial and legislative groups, which must accept this relationship as well. Much as most school districts now function amiably in a professional union relationship, lawmakers must accept that as they enter the world of education and make policy, they must accept that, ultimately, everyone works toward the same goal. As has been shown

in this study, education unions, with considerable member support, have made strides to move beyond the simplistic representation of teachers alone.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

As an initial inquiry into the comparison of teacher perceptions in regard to local and national unions, this author found several avenues for further research. However, a number of limitations to this study should be addressed in the conduct of further research on this subject. First, the data and subsequent implications in this study are based on descriptive, rather than empirical statistics. This author did not attempt to isolate independent and dependent variables in the assessment of teacher perceptions. Descriptive statistics were used to provide general comparisons between qualitative data, which provide no statistical significance.

A specific limitation to the data collected in this study arose in the future needs for union work, because an inordinate number of respondents called for higher priority in each topic; few called for a lower priority. A future survey should be based on a numerical ranking for future priorities, rather than a Likert scale.

While, typically, the results for local and national unions were distinct, several respondents commented that it was difficult to differentiate the two entities, and others did not have specific ideas in regard to one or the other. A more accurate assessment of participants' knowledge about their unions could alleviate this lack of clarity. However, it remains important to collect data from a wide range of union members. Since some of these union members reported that they did not know much about union activity suggests a need for stronger communication, or it may be an indication of member apathy.

Finally, and most importantly, future researchers should work to collect data from

larger groups of respondents. For the purpose of this project, the study was limited to a single school district, and an online survey was selected because the teachers in all of the schools could be reached efficiently. Solicitation to participate in the survey was done through a time-limited mass email; however, the number who chose to participate was lower than expected, and 127 participated across the district. In future studies, there should be a larger number of participants within a single district, and more districts should be included. Based on the limited scope of this study, there is no certainty that the findings were specific to this district, or that those who chose to participate in the survey represented a different demographic than that of all teachers. The findings from this current study can suggest directions for future research projects of this type.

Based on the findings reported here, future researchers could focus on clarification in three key areas. First, while some of the union goals in this survey were basically clear, such as the concept of pay and benefits, others were ambiguous, and could be explored with the use of more specific questions. In particular, the issues of work conditions, educational quality, and social issues could be expanded upon in more focused studies. Also, because these current findings for political involvement were arguably the most unique representation of a new trend in educator perceptions, a study could be conducted to identify specific political goals. This could provide a great deal of knowledge for both union leaders and politicians alike. The political landscape of educational policy is still being formed, and while the findings from this study pointed to a need for political involvement, the exact issues which are most contestable remain unclear. Further differentiation of political involvement between the city, the state, and the federal government might produce more clarity, because there seems to be a lack of

consensus as to where the strongest political impact can be made on varied issues. For example, in Colorado, standardized testing policy is affected by each level of government, and a focused study could explain the types of policy representation educators desire from their unions.

Based on the findings that suggested a need for stronger connections with the public, two possible avenues of further research could be explored. The first would be to collect data from the public in regard to education unions, rather than from educators. It would be useful to know how individuals who are not involved with education perceive education unions, as well as how they developed their opinions. This information could help union leaders to develop a strategy for public support. The second avenue could be focused on new models for *systemic educational reform*, based on a cooperative model. “The term ‘systemic educational reform’ indicates that reform must be a concerted effort from all systems relevant to education” (Hendricks-Lee & Mooney, 1998, p. 3). Research of this type would be based on the model of system theory and would focus on consensus building between teacher unions, legislations, school board members, administrators, and public groups. The concept of professional unionism, as detailed in this study, illustrates a dramatic reorganization of an age old institution. Systemically, such an evolution cannot exist without complementary change from the interconnected organizations. As educators no longer seem to view their unions as insulated entities, a study such as this could examine the role of these organizations in a new environment.

Project Summary

In summation, the analysis of the findings from this study suggest that education unions are shifting toward a professional union model, though educators continue to

prioritize industrial union goals above all others. In addition to these traditional goals of unions, the respondents in this study desired increased political involvement and more attention to increased public awareness and support of education issues which affect all involved in schools. Teachers continue to rely on their unions for a broad range of needs, which they tend to perceive as being managed more successfully at the local union level.

Further research in this area would include more educators, to represent a broader spectrum, and ideally in more than one school district. Also, research could be focused on types of legislative policy that most need union work, or on strategies to involve and inform the general public more fully on educational issues.

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APPENDIX A

Letters of Approval to Conduct Study

X

X

APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument

Comparison of National and Local Unions

Educator Perceptions of Union Efficacy

Questions marked with a * are required.

Educators are represented by different unions/associations at the local and national levels. This survey concerns perceptions of how the local and national education unions are each able to represent your interests. The local organization refers to Central Adams Uniserve, and the national organization refers to the National Education Association. Each question in the survey asks for your feelings about particular aspects of local or national union concerns. It is NOT necessary that you be an association member to respond. Please answer all questions. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

PART ONE: HOW TEACHER UNIONS CURRENTLY MEET MY NEEDS: Please note that each issue is addressed separately for local and national unions.

***1.** The local union plays an important role in guaranteeing my salary, benefits package, and other economic concerns.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***2.** The national union plays an important role in guaranteeing my salary, benefits package, and other economic concerns.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***3.** The local union has good ideas about how to improve educational quality in our school district.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***4. The national union has good ideas about how to improve educational quality in America's public schools.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***5. The local union accurately represents my beliefs regarding state and local education issues, such as CSAP testing, educational funding, and schools of choice.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***6. The national union accurately represents my beliefs regarding national education issues, such as No Child Left Behind, standardized testing, and schools of choice.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***7. The local union works to guarantee educational equality for all students by addressing relevant social issues in our community.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***8. The national union works to guarantee educational equality for all students by addressing relevant societal issues.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. The local union plays an important role in protecting working conditions, such as class size, preparation time, and job security.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

10. The national union plays an important role in protecting working conditions, such as teacher to student ratios, quality school facilities, and job security.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***11 It is important that the local union actively work to influence the state legislature.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***12. It is important that the national union actively work to influence the national legislature.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

13. The local union fosters professional development for teachers through training, conferences, or inservices.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

14. The national union fosters professional development for teachers through training, conferences, or inservices.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***15. The local union is clear in communicating what objectives and issues are being worked on to members.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

***16.** The NEA is clear in communicating what objectives and issues are being worked on to members.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

17. The local union is successful in helping to create a positive attitude toward schools in our community.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

18. The NEA is successful in creating a positive attitude toward America's public school system.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

PART TWO: HOW TEACHER UNIONS COULD BETTER MEET MY NEEDS: Please note that the first question addresses the local union, and the second addresses the NEA.

1 = Highest Priority.....2 = Moderately High Priority.....3 = The Same Priority Currently Given.....4 = Moderately Low Priority.....5 = Lowest Priority

***19.** Please rate the priority your LOCAL UNION should give to the following work-related issues.

	1	2	3	4	5
Working conditions (such as class sizes and preparation time)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal economic concerns (such as pay and benefits)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional development (such as special training and inservices)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promotion of educational quality (such as defining reasonable educational standards)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State/District educational policy and legislation (such as CSAP and bond issues)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social issues relevant to schools (such as racial equality and community improvement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating clearly with union members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balancing teachers' individual needs with those of the school district	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gathering public support for schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broadening focus to include teachers with varied political and social interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 = Highest Priority.....2 = Moderately High Priority.....3 = The Same Priority Currently Given.....4 = Moderately Low Priority.....5 = Lowest Priority

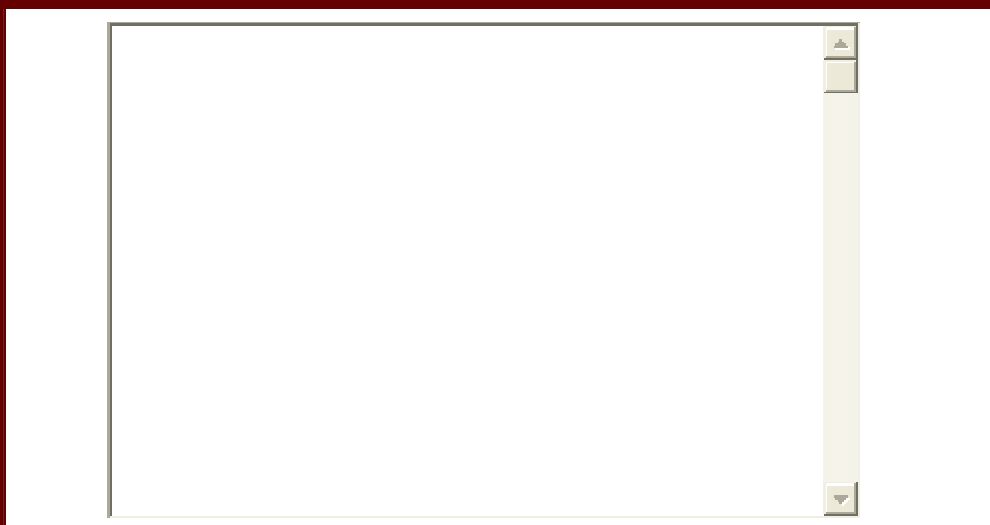
***20.** Please rate the priority the NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION should give to the following work-related issues.

	1	2	3	4	5
Working conditions (such as class sizes and quality of facilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal economic concerns (such as pay and benefits)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional development (such as special training and inservices)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promotion of educational quality (such as defining reasonable educational standards)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National educational policy and legislation (such as No Child Left Behind and educational funding)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social issues relevant to schools (such as racial equality and poverty)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating clearly with union members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balancing teachers' individual needs with those of the public school system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gathering public support for schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broadening focus to include teachers with varied political and social interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21.

Please list the three most important issues the union could work on to fulfill your needs.

22. Please include any other comments you might have regarding your perceptions of the NEA or your Local Organization.



PART THREE: ABOUT MYSELF: It would be helpful to know a bit about you personally. These responses are optional and will be used only for statistical tabulation.

23. In general, I tend to agree with the concept of labor unions.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

24. I tend to support the actions carried out by my local union.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

25. I tend to support the actions carried out by the National Education Association (NEA).

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

26. I consider myself actively involved in my local and/or national union.

- Strongly Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Mixed Feelings / Not Sure
- Somewhat Agree
- Strongly Agree

27. Your gender:

28. Your approximate age:

29. Your number of years in education:

30. Type of school where you work:

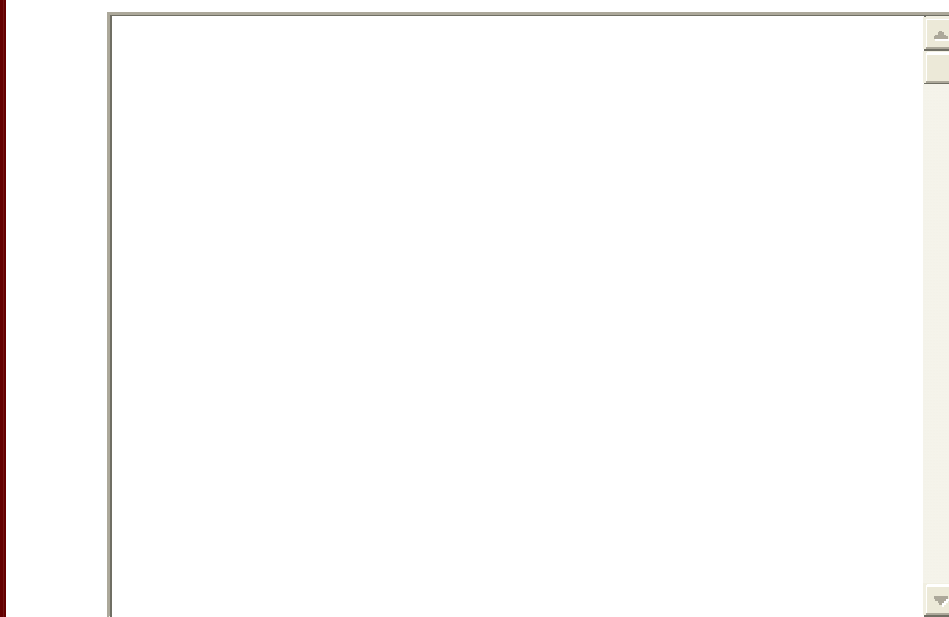
31. Your specific occupation:

32. Are you a member of an education association?

Yes

No

33. Why did you join the union, or why did you choose not to join?



34. Your comments on any other factors that might impact your perceptions of the national and local teacher associations would be appreciated.

