After the Dust Has Settled
Enduring Teacher Unionism

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Abstract

The question this article attempts to answer is, how can teacher unions take advantage of the opportunities afforded by their organizational structures while minimizing the factors that have stood in the way of educational and societal change? Drawing from examples of teacher unions' strategies from studies of several organizations outside of the United States, it provides examples of how teacher unions have "crafted coherence" between their inner dimensions and outward-looking strategies, and contributes to the advancement of critical education by recommending ways that teacher organizations can more effectively support social justice and social change.

In the past decade, we have seen significant changes in teacher unionism in the United States: internal struggles and leadership challenges; the emergence of caucuses of like-minded teachers that challenge unions' status quo; a renewed emphasis on working relationships with parents and community members; engagement with various reform efforts; strikes and other forms of political action in response to repressive educational policies – and sometimes all of the above. While these changes are not entirely without precedent, their sheer number, the attention they have received from the press, and above all their successes indicate a new era of union-involved teacher activism.

Once new union leadership has taken office, previously marginalized teacher voices have been legitimized (Hilgendorf, 2013; Weiner, 2012), and/or political action has made some inroads (Dyke & Muckian Bates, 2019), it is critical that teachers and their organizations find ways to channel and sustain the energy that fueled that recent collective action. How can a teacher union ensure the enduring engagement of teachers with diverse commitments and perspectives? How can it keep from falling into the same bureaucratic traps that isolated the old organization from so many of its members? How can it provide effective structures that support, rather than impede, teachers' social movement and social justice efforts while supporting teachers' traditional workplace concerns? In this paper, we suggest that the way to sustain vitality as a teacher union is to attend to the inside of the organization and its relationships with the outside world in ways that are mutually reinforcing.

For all of their foibles (which are legion), teacher unions are critically important organizations for teachers, for the health of educational systems, and for society writ large. Because these organizations represent many or all teachers, depending on the jurisdiction, they possess the capacity to mobilize large numbers of members and sizeable financial resources in support of political action. And as long as teachers are situated at the bottom of a steep educational hierarchy, with limited decision-making authority and ever-expanding job expectations, they need organizational conduits for representation. Finally, the hierarchical structure of education systems also necessitates that insight about the realities of teaching and learning can be taken into account as system-wide policy decisions are made, and unions are one of the only avenues that can provide it (Bascia, 2015). If teacher unions did not exist, they would have to be (re)invented.

Many educators believe that teacher organizations themselves have been responsible for some of the problems that necessitated recent teacher activism, by failing to recognize the full range of teachers' concerns, including but not exclusively their commitments to social movement unionism. The question is: how can teacher unions take advantage of the opportunities afforded by their organizational structures while minimizing the factors that have stood in the way of educational and societal change?

This paper provides the conceptual scaffolding we believe is necessary for enduring teacher unionism by considering some aspects of organizational theory. We argue that the organizational characteristics of unions provide the infrastructure necessary to "craft coherence," or build bridges, between their internal and external domains (Honig & Hatch, 2004), and that it is these bridges that will enable unions to support more of teachers' social *and* occupational concerns. The paper draws examples of teacher unions' strategies from our studies of several organizations outside of the United States, emphasizing the necessary connections between internal and outside-facing features of social movement unions. This paper provides examples of how teacher unions have "crafted coherence" between their inner dimensions and outward-looking strategies. At the same

time, it contributes to the advancement of critical education by recommending ways that teacher organizations can more effectively support social justice and social change.

Organizational Studies of Teacher Unions

There is a growing, rich, and increasingly diverse body of research on teacher unions. Much of the literature on teacher unions has been written from the perspectives of policy makers and traditional union foes, and is largely critical about what it perceives as their negative impacts on educational system goals (e.g., Lieberman, 1997; Moe, 2011; Winkler et al., 2012). But the research more sympathetic to teacher organization describes their fights against neoliberal government reform (see for example Bascia & Stevenson, with Maharaj, 2016; Bocking, 2020; Compton & Weiner, 2008; Poole, 2015; Stevenson & Mercer, 2015), teachers' union socialization (e.g., Pogodzinski, 2015), public activism (Swalwell, 2015), sponsorship of teacher learning (Naylor, 2015) and, most recently, dynamics between activist teachers and more traditional teacher unionists (e.g., Maton,, 2016, 2018). But there has been little attention paid to the internal organizational contexts of teacher unions, a topic we believe should receive greater consideration.

One of the few studies that does examine organizational structure is Rottmann's (2008) Canadian research, which describes the internal organizational natures of unions with a stated commitment to social justice. She notes that 16 of the 20 Canadian teacher federations whose websites she surveyed appeared to have a social justice, human rights, or diversity committee that was responsible for coalition building with local community groups; developing international solidarity projects; organizing equity-oriented divisions and committees; providing justice-minded professional development; structuring leadership opportunities for traditionally under-represented groups; generating inducements for local social justice initiatives; issuing equity audits of organizations; or devising internal policies on controversial issues. While these activities are clear instances of social movement work, Rottmann suggests that the impact of that work across Canadian organizations is minimal:

> the few organizations that [did] indicate the funding for this function [tended] to list it at 3 to 5 per cent of the unions' operating budget. . . .it is clear that the majority of teachers' unions do not prioritize social justice over other organizational functions (p. 993).

Where they exist, Rottmann argues, given the limited resources allocated to non-traditional union work, the presence of social justice units does not in itself guarantee a high degree of organizational effort or impact. Rottmann notes, further, that "With bureaucratization, opportunities for social justice work tend to decrease (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Karumanchery & Portelli, 2005)" (p. 990). In an organization where sub-units are isolated from one another, the work of each may be less effective than if there were conduits for integrated efforts. In other words, even where teacher organizations have made a deliberate commitment to social justice unionism, other organizational characteristics can work against it.

Service and Organizing Models of Teacher Unionism

Historical accounts suggest that teacher and other union organizing in England, Canada, and the United States has tended to arise in conjunction with broader social movements to improve the lives of the disenfranchised (e.g., Hyman, 2001; Smaller, 2015). During more progressive social and political eras, unions have made inroads in improving living and working conditions for

their members and for society more broadly. In the US, however, starting in the 1950s, the public orientation towards unions cast them as "special interest groups" (Taylor, 1978). Since then, teacher unions have been criticized – by politicians, researchers, the media, and by teachers themselves – as undemocratic in their practices, excessively centralized, and unwilling to innovate (Bascia, Stevenson with Maharaj, 2016; Bascia & Osmond, 2012; Fiorito et al., 1995). Governments and educational authorities in various parts of the world have embraced US-style economic policies, stringent labour laws, and union avoidance strategies that have resulted in "a race to the bottom for every aspect of the employment relationship" (Bronfenbrenner & Hickey, 2003, p. 32). This neoliberal agenda has placed downward pressure on workers' pay and working conditions (Fairbrother, 2015; McCarthy, 1988). Employers increasingly have demanded concessions, and managers have attempted to define workplace change in ways that undermine collective worker organization (Kumar & Murray, 2003).

In recent years, despite their social movement origins, many teacher organizations have primarily focused on achieving gains with respect to teacher salary, benefits, and working conditions at the bargaining table. This is largely due to the fact that state labor laws limit union purview to these dimensions. But "service unionism" often came at the expense of working towards broader social and political change (Fairbrother, 2015). While some union leaders worked to reform their organizations to increase their responsiveness to member concerns, many continued to be organized hierarchically. This structural formation has left most union members only passively involved and union leaders impervious to member accountability (Fairbrother, 2005; Yates, 2003). The recent challenges by teachers to their unions described at the beginning of this paper can be seen at least in part as a groundswell of opposition to union bureaucracy and centralization.

Hyman (2001) contends that trade unions are essentially caught in a conundrum between the pressure to exist as service organizations, where the emphasis is on a narrow understanding of collective bargaining gains, and "organizing" unions, where members are engaged in the work of social and educational improvement. One side of this apparent contradiction, the service organization side, prioritizes maintaining organizational structure and resources, and its emphasis is the organization itself, distinct from its surrounding environment. These notions of service unionism parallel the underlying assumptions of traditional organizational theory, which tends to support maintenance of the status quo. Social movement theory, in contrast, is centered on the more diffuse, organic processes of emergent, informal organizations, and on the socio-political realities of people with divergent positions and power, particularly those who have been disenfranchised. The challenge of bringing these paradigms together seems consistent with the necessary work that is at the heart of social movement teacher unionism.

Engeman (2015), however, argues that the business-organizing distinction is a false dichotomy. She notes that some empirical studies of social movement organizations have uncovered important relationships between movements and organizational structures relevant to understanding social movement union activity. Morris (1984) maintains that organizations are better positioned to mobilize, "because they facilitate mass participation, tactical innovations and rapid decision-making" (p. 285). Rather than the antithesis of movement mobilization, organizational structures can shape movement dynamics, strength, and outcomes. These scholars argue that excluding organizations from analysis only limits the advancement of social movement scholarship.

Crafting Coherence: Organizational Bridging

According to open systems theory, a branch of organizational studies, organizations both influence and are influenced by their external environments (Buckley, 1967; Scott, 2012). Organizations can adapt to external conditions through modifications to their internal structures as well through the establishment of links with other external entities (Cook, et al., 1983). Fennell and Alexander (1987) outline two types of boundary-spanning activities that organizations may utilize to interact with the external environment, which they term "buffering," an attempt to protect the organization from environmental disturbances, and "bridging," which refers to creating linkages between the organization and its environment. Buffering can help protect the organization from environmental pressures that threaten to derail core practices. Ingle et al. (2015) note that American teacher unions have historically worked to buffer teachers from certain educational reforms (although, over time, the increased adoption of neoliberal educational change has eroded this capacity – see Nespor, 1997). Bridging, on the other hand, involves blurring the boundaries between the organization and the external environment. While bridging may involve a loss of organizational autonomy, there also can be benefits.

In this paper, we argue that more democratic teacher unionism requires organizational bridging in order to incorporate dimensions of teachers' broad social and occupational commitments and to link them with internal organizational characteristics. The cases presented in this section contribute to the literature by demonstrating how teacher unions work toward congruence between their internal structures and external facing projects – between supporting teachers' work lives and engagement with broader social issues. In the sections that follow, we draw on examples from some of our recent studies of teacher unions in jurisdictions outside of the United States (Bascia, 2008a; Bascia & Osmond, 2013; Bascia & Stevenson with Maharaj, 2016; and Maharaj, 2019): the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, *Colegio de Profesores de Chile*; and the Alberta Teachers' Association. These studies were undertaken to pursue a number of different questions: how organizational learning occurs in teacher organizations; how unions work to engender educational reform; how they are faring in the current neoliberal reform environment; and what their roles have been in crafting support for public education. Every study relied on extensive interviews with teacher union staff and leadership, union-active teachers, and with other people familiar with union actions and processes.

British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF)

Labor laws often restrict the domains in which teachers may bargain to issues of salary, benefits, and working conditions and expressly prohibit their involvement in the policy decision making realm. However, teacher organizations have extended their reach into policy areas by adopting a fairly liberal definition of working conditions and by arguing that teaching conditions are student learning conditions (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011), thus extending member commitment to include a broad range of teacher interests. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), which represents over 30,000 teachers in the province's publicly funded schools, exemplifies a union that chose to sacrifice the traditional economic agenda associated with collective bargaining to achieve improvements to teaching and learning conditions. When these improvements were threatened, the federation externally oriented itself by engaging directly with parents, labour groups, and communities around the province.

In 1994, British Columbia's new government leadership centralized both education funding and collective bargaining at the provincial level. In 1998, the BCTF agreed to a zero, zero, and two per cent wage increase over three years in exchange for enshrining significant reductions in K-3 class sizes, firm class size limits in other grades, increased special needs supports, and guaranteed specialist teacher ratios in their collective agreement. However, in 2002, a newly elected provincial government unilaterally removed from teachers' contract the class size and composition provisions and the requirement for schools to hire librarians, ESL teachers, counsellors, and special-education specialists. The government erased the improved working conditions that teachers had financially sacrificed to achieve.

In response, the BCTF launched what would become a 14-year campaign of member mobilization, community engagement, public relations, and industrial action aiming to "mobilize public opinion in opposition to government action that will adversely affect quality public education" (Maharaj, 2019, p. 37). As part of its Public Education Advocacy Plan, the union organized annual conferences for parents and parent groups (along with members and other grassroots organizations) around issues of mutual concern. The aim of these conferences was not just to raise awareness of educational issues, but for participants to craft advocacy plans to use when they returned to their local communities.

In addition to these efforts, the BCTF also invested in building capacity for locals to engage with school Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), and for individual teachers to engage directly with parents and the public. The BCTF sent materials to all schools, including a "Report to Parents" that summarized the provincial government's legislation and included cards with a section for teachers to fill out showing their class size before and after the reforms were implemented. Teachers were directed to post the materials in their schools and give the class size cards to parents during parent-teacher meetings. The rationale, according to a 2002 memo to its members, was that the BCTF believed:

> Teachers are the most credible source of information about schools and it is important that we inform parents and the public about the effects of the Liberal government actions on our students. We can inform parents through the parent advisory councils, school planning councils and during parent-teacher interviews. We can tell our stories by writing letters to newspapers, talking to service groups and contacting our MLAs.

During this time, the BCTF also launched a province-wide consultation process in the drafting of a Charter of Public Education. This involved the creation of a panel that travelled to 42 communities across the province and heard from thousands of people as well as reviewing over 600 written submissions. The Charter characterized public education as "a sacred trust" and committed the entire community to

> prepare learners for a socially responsible life in a free and democratic society, to participate in a world which each generation will shape and build. We promise a public education system which provides learners with knowledge and wisdom, protects and nurtures their natural joy of learning, encourages them to become persons of character, strength and integrity, infuses them with hope and with spirit, and guides them to resolute and thoughtful action.

The Charter also stated that the public education system "guarantee each First Nations learner the right to an education respectful of their history, language and culture." It called on the provincial government "to be responsible for fully funding all aspects of a quality education."

In 2003, the BCTF organized a "Caravan Against the Cuts," comprised of five school buses that drove across British Columbia collecting evidence of the effects of the government's reductions to education funding. In each community, teachers, students, parents, and other community members were encouraged to contribute their own artifacts, documents and messages. Regarding the purpose of the Caravan, BCTF President Neil Worboys remarked:

> The role the Caravan played was to bring our members out of their classrooms and also involve parents. The materials collected were not just from teachers but from parents, students, and community members. When we started unloading it all in front of the legislature, it actually rattled the government but most importantly it boosted the solidarity of teachers amongst themselves (in Dobbin, 2005, p. 10).

Another key aspect of the BCTF's Public Education Advocacy Plan involved strengthening ties with the broader labour movement. In 2002, the union joined the BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress. These efforts would eventually pay dividends. In 2005, when the BCTF launched an indefinite province-wide strike, the BC Federation of Labour, in a show of solidarity, announced that other unionized members working in the school system would not cross teachers' picket lines. Unions representing public sectors workers in the provincial capital of Victoria staged walkouts in support of the BCTF and joined teachers in a protest of 12,000 people in front of the BC legislature. There were even threats of a general strike from some public and private sector unions leaders unless the government agreed to talks with the BCTF (Ward & Cernetig, 2005).

In order to accomplish its objective of bridging more effectively with the public and other external stakeholders, the BCTF had to reallocate resources and reorganize its internal structure. At its 2002 Annual General Meeting, the BCTF voted to establish a Public Education Defence Fund, which paid for advertising and "campaigning to ensure the public hears (and supports) teacher concerns" (Steffenhagen, 2009, para. 3). Resources for the Public Education Defence Fund came from other areas of the BCTF budget, including staff and resources that had traditionally been allocated for collective bargaining. For example, notably, in 2008 the BCTF transferred $3,000,000 from its Collective Bargaining Defence Fund to the Public Education Defence Fund. The Collective Bargaining Defence Fund is what pays costs related to strikes and lockouts (i.e., strike pay), as well as contract enforcement. This shift in priorities was opposed by some BCTF members who questioned whether the union should be so focused on attempting to engage with the public, as opposed to its traditional functions. As one delegate to the 2009 BCTF AGM remarked, "We are a union, not a PR machine" (Steffenhagen, 2009, para. 4). While acknowledging this difference of opinion among its membership, BCTF leadership persisted with the realignment necessary to craft coherence between its internal structure and external organizational goals. By bringing teachers "out of their classrooms" and having them take the lead in its public advocacy, the BCTF viewed this process as a way to better engage its membership and build public support for its vision of a strong publicly funded education system.

This strategy ultimately proved successful at uniting virtually all major education stakeholders against the provincial government's degradation of classroom teaching and learning conditions. By 2005, the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, the BC Principals and

Vice-Principals Association, and the BC School Trustees Association, groups that had initially supported the provincial government's reforms, now publicly asserted that class sizes, class composition, and special-needs education were issues requiring urgent provincial attention. The government responded by conceding that these were issues of concern and announced an infusion of $150 million into the education system to address class size reduction and increased special need supports.

Colegio de Profesores de Chile

The largest Chilean teachers' organization, *Colegio de Profesores de Chile*, has a long history of involvement in social movements and of parallel political engagement within the union itself. It was active in organizing the social and political campaign that brought the Pinochet dictatorship down in 1989-91. Many of the projects put in place by the dictatorship, such as a free educational market, have persisted to this day, exacerbating economic disparities between the country's wealthier and poorer populations.

Ongoing dissatisfaction with the Chilean educational system erupted in 2006, in one of the largest protests in Chilean history, when hundreds of thousands of high school and university students took to the streets. These protests became known as the "penguin revolution," or the "march of the penguins," in reference to the students' school uniforms. What began as reaction against university entrance exam fees and bus fares eventually transformed to a call for equal access to a quality education. A key target was the Pinochet-era LOCE (*Ley Organica Constitucional de Ensenanza*) reform, which had increased the provision of public money to private schools, making it "possible for almost anyone to open a school and receive government funding without having to conform to any standard of quality" (Elacqua, 2009, p. 8). The reallocation of funding was widely perceived as having reduced the quality of public education. The "penguins'" calls for reform were met with widespread public support: nearly 90 percent of Chileans supported the protests (El Mercurio, 2006). The teacher union's participation in the revolution helped it gain its voice in the public sphere in relation to teachers' working conditions and salaries. The revolution placed education on the public agenda.

Many of the debates about education have played out within the *Colegio* itself. The union has a vibrant tradition of democracy, as vigorous debate and disputes are part of the union fabric. It is a testament to the union's democratic commitment that a culture of dissent is cultivated, as evidenced throughout the union's assembly meetings, sponsored projects, and elected leadership.

For example, from 2010-2014, the Chilean government initiated a reduction in teacher autonomy, increased educational privatization, and standardized test scores to determine teacher salary and retention. The union had worked against these initiatives until 2014, when the Communist Party (which had close ties to the union leadership) became part of the official government coalition. Because of this alliance, union leadership attempted to promote a pro-government position within the union, even while the government persisted in promoting neo-liberal educational policies. Internal disagreement came to a head when the union negotiated an agreement with the government in 2014. Many union members refused to sign it. The media called this disagreement "*la rebellion de las bases*." There was a national teacher strike led by a dissident faction within the union, and the government made some concessions, including improving teacher salaries and contracts.

In 2015, the government proposed the so-called teacher career initiative (*Proyecto de career docente*) to address issues related to teachers' working conditions, careers, and practice. The initiative was management-oriented, emphasizing teacher productivity, performance, and certification. While the union president supported the government's proposal, the dissident faction was adamant about asking teachers for their opinions. A consultation with teachers across the country led to a 97% rejection of the draft legislation. Union officials reluctantly accepted the dissident position and called for a teacher strike. The strike lasted a total of 57 days, ending in 2016. Public support for the strike was at 70% and resulted in open public debate about education. The dissidents started as an underground movement but won public support through their use of social media.

The *Colegio* recognized that in order to more effectively bridge with other democratic movements advocating for education reform, it would have to itself demonstrate a greater commitment to democratic practice by allowing space for the dissident faction to openly express its views within the union. For example, after the strike, both union officials and the dissident faction met collectively with the government to discuss the teacher career initiative. Since the strike, the dissident faction has worked to reorient the union towards taking a more critical stance and becoming part of a larger social movement around the quality of public education.

Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)

The Alberta Teachers' Association represents over 50,000 teachers and administrators in the province's public and Catholic schools. The ATA has served as the primary vehicle for Alberta's educators to organize and advocate for improvements to the teaching profession. In doing so, the ATA has charted its own path, sometimes working independently and sometimes in concert with the provincial government, but always moving forward with its own agenda: building capacity for educators to mobilize and take control of their practice; redirecting the discourse about public education; recognizing the diversity of its membership as workers; and reframing Association members as active leaders in various contexts across the province. Its internal organizational strategies ensure that staff and leadership have their finger on the pulse of teachers' realities across the province and that there is democratic "space" for teachers with divergent perspectives and realities.

In the early 1990s, Alberta's Progressive Conservative government adopted a neoliberal rhetoric of "global competitiveness" and initiated a range of neoliberal public-sector policy directions. Educational expenditures began to decline in real dollars. Alberta educators experienced a combination of "rising expectations and shrinking resources," shifting social conditions and greater expectations for schools in general and teachers in particular to be "social workers, psychologists and nurses" (Flower & Booi, 1999, p. 124), integrating students with special needs into most classrooms and providing individualized instruction and complex assessment. Teachers saw their salaries reduced by five percent. Educators experienced fewer opportunities for interaction, communication and feedback to provincial policy making, and reported having to "find money in alternative ways," including teachers' own pocketbooks, donations from parents, private sector involvement through activities such as advertising on school buses and computer screen savers, and user fees for students. The reduction of funding was accompanied by reduced time for teacher learning and preparing for newly mandated practices.

Operating within a conservative provincial context, the ATA response to the government's actions was initially cautious and reactive. But the ATA case suggests that particularly acute crises can provide the catalyst for organizational transformation, engagement, and action.

The ATA worked actively to understand what was occurring in the field of education. While it is easy for teacher organization staff, like administrators or educational bureaucrats, to quickly lose touch with classroom and school practice (and to be viewed by educators as out of touch), ATA staff spent approximately half of their time every week in the field, traveling around the province to get a feel for what was occurring across diverse educational contexts, ensuring that they were visible and that ATA programs did not all "look like [the provincial capital's school district]'s" initiatives.

Careful attention was paid to distributing field knowledge across the association through a range of organizational processes. The ATA worked against tendencies to privilege certain groups of educators and organizational sub-units over others by attending to intra- and inter-organizational dynamics: by supporting and encouraging a range of special interest caucuses which acted as lobby groups within the organization and interacted with the provincial government around curriculum change; by ensuring that staff from different sub-units such as teacher welfare and professional development were always on the leadership team simultaneously; by actively recruiting staff from across the province who had divergent views, orientations and skills; by creating complex portfolios so that individual staff members worked across organizational sub-units; by involving staff members from several units in the development of most initiatives and programs; and by fostering mutually respectful working relationships between elected officials and professional staff.

These internal dynamics allowed the ATA to bridge outside the organization in attempting to fill many of the substantive gaps in educational practice resulting from the decimated educational infrastructure. While other teachers' organizations have argued that it is the school system's responsibility to support teachers' work, the ATA perceived such gaps as opportunities to challenge the government by asserting its own orientation to teaching and schooling. For example, supporting the government's interest in site-based decision-making but finding neither models nor technical assistance forthcoming from the provincial Ministry of Education, the ATA developed information packets and professional development strategies for school staffs. When the government mandated individual growth plans, it was the ATA that "became the official source of information endorsed by the government" by seeking and winning the contract to develop workbooks and train administrators on their use, essentially defining their purpose and content. Similarly, when the government legislated school councils in 1995, the ATA chose to support the plan and developed the official resource manual and provided meaningful training for school council participants, essentially managing to determine the shape of this reform.

No single initiative or strategy is attractive, meaningful, and effective for a teaching staff or population of any diversity (Bascia, 1998a). But because of the costs involved in mounting any project and the intellectual challenge of articulating a complex yet coherent vision of educational practice, teacher organization staff often work with generic notions of teachers' occupational needs and interests, either choosing a strategy they hope will appeal to a majority of educators or selecting a splashy initiative based on its potential to attract media and public attention. The ATA's professional development offerings and other contacts with educators, however, were based on a recognition of members' diversity with respect to developmental needs, learning preferences, personal obligations (and therefore time for extra-classroom activities), social status (and therefore

opportunities for organizational participation), program and subject affiliation (and therefore goals or interests) as well as school, community, and school board contexts (and therefore policy pressures and workplace conditions). Rather than attempting to mount the one best program, the ATA attempted to fill a variety of needs. The Alberta Teachers Association represents a case of a teacher union working to craft greater coherence between its internal organization and its goals of fostering greater member engagement and improving learning conditions in schools.

Teachers' Organizations and Social Movement Unionism

Teachers and outsiders alike have criticized teacher unions for prioritizing organizational continuity over educational and/or social change, and for supporting a minority of teachers' values while ignoring the interests of the larger collective. The past few years have seen an increase in efforts by activist teachers to bring about educational change through their union engagement. But in order to do so in a sustained way, they must consider how organizational factors can support, and not constrain, union involvement in the greater social milieu.

The three cases above describe several different strategies to craft coherence, both to foster educational change and secure a broader representation of teachers' interests. In British Columbia, the BCTF moved beyond a narrow economic agenda of traditional collective bargaining by building bridges between a union's traditional concerns over working conditions with educational goals with which every teacher (and the public) could agree. In Chile, *El Colegio de Profesores* established practices that framed the union itself as a social movement that mobilized its members against workplace and wider social injustice and adhering to parallel democratic practices within the union, and in public engagement and in engagement with governmental discussions. In Alberta, the ATA developed internal mechanisms to ensure organizational responsiveness to a wide range of teacher realities and interests. In each of these cases, by creating bridges between the internal and the external, organizations increased their capacities for teacher member engagement.

The significance of this paper lies in its attempt to bring attention to the internal organizational features of teacher unions in conjunction with their outward-facing social movement goals, in order to attract and engage a broad coalition of teacher members. For teacher unionists, it provides some initial ideas to foster bridging structures. Its contribution to critical education lies in the demonstration of concrete ways that union organizations can be key to bringing about social change.

Mitigating the effects of the potential tensions between internal and external contexts requires taking a hard look at unions' centralizing, alienating tendencies. For teacher activists committed to advancing social justice, it requires taking seriously the value of union organization and supporting efforts to create bridges between the inside and the outside. To select particular strategies, it is necessary to take into account historical and sociopolitical contexts particular to the internal organization, as well as in the greater social milieu in which it operates. The cases provide some examples that can serve as a catalyst for other organizations that recognize the necessity of "crafting coherence," but activist teachers and union staff must ponder and brainstorm the possibilities that seem most germane in their own contexts. While potential differences between inside and outside work require frequent attention such that social movement unionism can remain a reality, it is necessary to recognize that these factors are in dynamic equilibrium. The work of maintaining social movement unionism is never finally finished.

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