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A qualitative study of the perceptions of public school teachers and administrators on the teachers' association and the collective bargaining process in an Iowa urban school setting

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL
TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS ON THE TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATION AND THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
PROCESS IN AN IOWA URBAN SCHOOL SETTING

An Abstract of a Dissertation

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Approved:

Dr. Victoria Robinson, Chair

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Dean of the Graduate College

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July 2016

ABSTRACT

Previous studies have looked at collective bargaining and teachers' associations and their impact on student achievement, but the results are mixed. Absent from the literature are studies that analyze data gathered after the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The focus of this study was to explore urban Iowa public school administrators' and teachers' current perceptions of the relationship between teacher associations and collective bargaining. It is the intent of this research to understand what the administrators and teachers in this study perceive about teacher associations and collective bargaining and why they maintain these perceptions.

For this study, semi-structured interviews were used to understand the perceptions of school administrators and teachers on collective bargaining and teacher associations in an urban Iowa school district. These interviews were designed to explain current teacher and administrative perception on this research topic.

The research offers a number of implications for educators at all levels. The data collected from this study could assist school administrators and public school teachers in understanding the perceptions of others prior to entering collective bargaining negotiations. The various groups could use this information to provide professional development for each group to support working together and ensuring actions that serve the best interest of the students, all while protecting their own professional interests.

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Dr. Nadene Davidson, Committee Member

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July 2016

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Amy, and to my three daughters, Grace, Ella, and Caroline. I could not have accomplished this goal without your support and patience throughout this arduous process. My children have never known their dad to be anyone other than a graduate student, and at the completion of this document that will be done.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving parents, Ken and Ruth Gjerde, who have always been a source of support throughout this process. I am certain that I would not have finished if it was not for my mother asking me every week for the last 14 months, “So how is that paper coming?”

Lastly, I would like to dedicate my dissertation to the other members of my family who played integral roles throughout my academic career. The first is my twin sister Erica, and the other two are my aunt Helen Peterson and my late uncle Norman Peterson. It is a constant regret that an individual who played such an important role in my success in academia and life, is not able to celebrate this ultimate accomplishment, but regardless, I am forever thankful for the time we had together.

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CHAPTER I

CONTEXT OF STUDY

Introduction

A full page advertisement in the *New York Times* on December 10, 2013, referenced a *Wall Street Journal* headline that read, “U.S. High-School Students Slip in Global Rankings.” This was in reference to the latest Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in which 15-year-old students from the United States continued to underperform in the subjects of math, science, and reading comprehension relative to their international peers. This advertisement was purchased by The Center for Union Facts and had a picture of the American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten and a note that said “Thanks Randi!” The body of the ad read:

We have fallen behind Latvia, Estonia, and Vietnam in science and math. The teachers union continues to protect incompetent teachers and refuses to reward outstanding teachers with merit-based pay. Randi Weingarten, head of the American Federation of Teachers, fights against reforms that would help fix our failing schools. *New York Times*, (American Federation of Teachers, 2013, p. C10).

The story from the *Wall Street Journal* and the advertisement in the *New York Times* are not isolated occurrences. We are seeing many examples of the media criticizing teacher unions, school reform efforts, and student achievement. This qualitative study investigated perceptions of administrators and teachers in regard to teacher unions and collective bargaining and how they are perceived to impact student achievement.

Background of the Study

Clashes between teacher union representatives, state governors, and state legislators made front-page news across the country in the early months of 2011.

Although Wisconsin garnered nearly all of the attention, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana also had their own battles with public employee unions with disputes regarding public employee contracts and bargaining. In the aftermath of these disagreements, one is left to wonder whether public employee collective bargaining should be reined in or expanded in education. A February 2011 USA Today Gallup Poll found that Americans strongly opposed taking away the collective bargaining power of public employees, including public school teachers. This poll found that 61% of those asked would oppose a law in their state if it was similar to Wisconsin's Act 10, which limited collective bargaining rights to most sectors of public employees (Keen & Cauchon, 2011).

The battles over collective bargaining have been waged in nearly every state house in the 37 states that have legislation in place for public sector employees (Eberts, 2007). The states' existing infrastructure does not take away the contention between school administrators and teachers when discussing this issue. Public school administrators and teachers have had very different perspectives on collective bargaining, with issues including school reform, teacher salary, benefits, and student achievement (Burroughs, 2008). Because the field of education is one of the most heavily unionized professions and school reform remains a hot topic in the media, it is important and relevant to understand the viewpoints of public school administration toward bargaining.

Historically, personnel issues in public schools had been handled by the boards of education and the administration of the school districts (Reed, 1990). However, on April 23, 1974, in the state of Iowa, a comprehensive public sector negotiations bill was signed into law. The passage of this bill, Iowa Senate File 531, Public Employees Relations Act,

ensured that bargaining took place on an equal and productive basis for both the board of education/administration and the teachers.

Iowa Senate File 531 went into effect July 1, 1975. That same year, Hill (1975) completed a study concerning collective bargaining prior to the adoption of the Iowa legislation. The findings of Hill's study indicated a polarization of feelings toward possible effects of the law. Hill found that teachers thought the law would be beneficial, whereas, school administrators considered the law harmful.

In 1978, William Jacobson completed a follow-up study of Hill's research. Jacobson (1978) found that there were differences in the perceptions of teachers and administrators concerning the effects of two years of experience with collective bargaining in 20 of Iowa's larger public school districts. More than 10 years later, Reed (1990) conducted a replication of Jacobson's study of the perceptions of public school teachers and public school administrators. Rather than conducting his research with 20 large school districts in Iowa, Reed chose to use the eight largest school districts in the state of Iowa, also known as the Urban Education Network (UEN). A secondary purpose of Reed's study was to determine if there were changes in perceptions of teachers and public school administrators in the 11 years from 1978 to 1989.

Reed's (1990) research showed that both teachers and administrators regarded collective bargaining in a positive light. Reed concluded that collective bargaining was working well because of the overwhelming positive attitudes of teachers and administrators toward the practice. Secondly, Reed found that the professional interaction of teachers and administrators had changed from somewhat adversarial to a direction of

congruence. Next, Reed found that the management style of administrators was a style of “introspection,” which was a shift from the previous 11 years. Lastly, Reed’s study found that perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding collective bargaining’s influence over the management styles of the administrative team and the daily human interaction of teachers and administrators had changed over the same 11-year timeframe. Much has changed in public education since Reed’s replication study in 1990. Since the introduction of the federal legislation No Child Left Behind, state and school budgets have been cut across the country and many schools and districts are being labeled, “In need of assistance.”

Statement of the Problem

Although previous studies have been conducted to examine the impact of teachers’ associations and collective bargaining, the findings have been mixed. Absent from the literature are studies that analyze data gathered after the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which placed increased demands for accountability on teachers and administrators alike. It is not known if and to what extent collective bargaining and teachers associations have an impact or influence on student achievement under the current teaching mandates. Because teacher associations and administrators need to work together in order to advance the achievement of all students, it is imperative that we understand any perceptions of teacher associations and collective bargaining that are standing in the way of this shared and desired outcome.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore urban Iowa public school administrators' and teachers' current perceptions of teacher associations and collective bargaining. It was the intent of this research project to understand what the administrators and teachers in this study perceive about teacher associations and collective bargaining and why they maintain these perceptions. This explanatory study ascertained whether there were similarities and differences among the administrators and teachers that might be influenced by systems or people within the school district. In addition, this study was aimed at exploring why individual administrators and teachers perceive teachers' associations and collective bargaining the way they do. The researcher also attempted to determine if certain conditions or situations, either formal or informal, at the building level or district level, have influenced these perceptions.

The data collected from this study can be used by school districts, teacher associations and bargaining teams to identify administrator and teacher perceptions of both teacher associations and collective bargaining that influence efforts to increase student achievement. By identifying these administrator and teacher perceptions and how the administrators and teachers developed these insights, a district or teacher bargaining unit might be able to develop a plan of action to address these views. An understanding of these perceptions could assist in making the relationship between the administration and teachers less troublesome in terms of bargaining. These data could help teacher associations and administration develop a professional development curriculum that could clear up misconceptions from both sides. These data could also pinpoint the ever-

changing challenges facing districts and teacher associations in the era of school reform and budget cuts.

Conceptual Framework

A social capital approach provided the theoretical and conceptual foundation for analyzing public school administrator and teacher perceptions with regard to teacher associations, collective bargaining, and student achievement. I will first define and then give a brief historical background of social capital, and finally frame my study in this theory.

It can be difficult and controversial to define social capital. Ahn and Ostrom (2008) argued that social capital can be a less confusing concept when defined as “a set of prescriptions, values, and relationships created by individuals in the past that can be drawn on in the present and future to facilitate overcoming social dilemmas” (p. 15). Robert Putnam (2000), a Harvard political scientist, offered a more concrete definition, stating, “Social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 139). Social capital can arguably be defined as the past connections and interactions one has made that can be used to one’s benefit in the future.

Social capital is both a new concept and one that has been rooted in centuries of debate. James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu are the initial major thinkers in modern social capital theory. Coleman and Bourdieu applied the theory of social capital originally in the fields of economics and education, but acknowledged the original theory is founded in the field of sociology (Garcia-Reid, 2007). “Social capital cuts across a

number of important dichotomies in social research, such as between individual and collective action, self-interest and concern for others, culture and structure, economy and society, and community and society” (Castiglione, Van Deth, & Wolleb, 2008). Often times the theory of social capital is used as a conceptual framework because of its applicability to a variety of research fields. However social capital does not come without controversy. There are some who claim that social capital does not possess the qualities of capital (Arrow, 2000), and others who view it as too vague (Solow, 2000). However, even though there are those who challenge the idea of social capital, David Hume, the eighteenth century philosopher wrote about social capital. In the following quotation Hume’s “society” is a general term for what we today call social capital. Hume argued that it is through an investment in society or social capital that people can elevate above their peers more so than those who only focus on the individual.

‘Tis by society alone he is able to supply his defects, and raise himself up to an equality with his fellow-creatures, and even acquire a superiority above them. By society all his infirmities are compensated; and tho’ in that situation his wants multiply every moment upon him, yet his abilities are still more augmented, and leave him in every respect more satisfied and happy, than ‘tis possible for him, in his savage and solitary condition, ever to become. When every individual person labours apart, and only for himself, his force is too small to execute any considerable work; his labour being employ’d in supplying all his different necessities, he never attains a perfection in any particular art; and as his force and success are not at all times equal, the least failure in either of these particulars must be attended with inevitable ruin and misery. Society provides a remedy for these three inconveniences. By the conjunction of forces, our power is augmented: By the partition of employments, our ability encreases: And by mutual succour we are less expos’d to fortune and accidents. ‘Tis by this additional force, ability, and security, that society becomes advantageous. (Hume, 1967, p. 485)

The reason I chose to frame my research in the lens of social capital stems directly from the definition both Hume (1967) and Putnam (2000) gave to social capital.

In essence, these authors claimed that isolated individuals cannot be as efficient or strong as a group of individuals working together, banking social interactions for future benefit. When it comes to teacher associations and school administration and bargaining, it seems that there is an always present “us versus you” mentality. Often times when teacher associations come to the bargaining table to discuss compensation, they will give an unrealistic request for total compensation increase. This requested compensation could be close to a 10% increase. The administration will then counter with an unrealistically low offer such as a 5% decrease in total compensation. Both groups do this knowing that ultimately they will need to sit down together and talk about what each are willing to concede and what each will list as priorities. It was interesting to discover administrators’ feelings with regard to relationship building and social capital deposits and whether social capital aids in the negotiation process. I also expect the lens of social capital to assist in framing administrators’ views of teacher associations and collective bargaining. I suspect that administrators who feel that they have made a social capital investment with the members of the teachers’ association will feel more positively toward the organization and what it is they are trying to accomplish.

Research Questions

The research issues of this study were explored through an in-depth look at the perceptions of public school administrators and teachers. The issues and focus of the study were presented in two questions:

R1: What are urban school administrators’ and teachers’ perceptions and experiences with regard to collective bargaining?

R2: What types of interactions between teacher associations and urban school administrators appear to expand or restrict the collective bargaining process?

The Significance of the Study

This study examined perceptions of public school administrators and teachers with regard to all aspects surrounding collective bargaining and teacher associations. The information presented in this study can be used to aid administrators and teachers in developing and implementing initiatives that promote and increase working relationships, enhance school climate, and make the collective bargaining process more efficient, which could ultimately increase student performance and academic success.

There has not been any research conducted on attitudes of teacher associations and collective bargaining in the state of Iowa since the study conducted by Reed (1990). Secondly, there has not been any research conducted on teacher associations and collective bargaining since the 2009 controversy between state legislators. It was the intention of this study to help bring clarity to misconceptions about teacher associations and collective bargaining that are currently held by public school administrators and teachers in the state of Iowa.

Assumptions

There are a number of assumptions to consider in this study. First, it was assumed that the administrators interviewed for this study were in a position to work with teachers who are members of the teachers' association. Second, it was assumed that the teachers interviewed for this study were in a position to work both with other teachers who are members of the teachers' association and with building/district administration. Third, it

was assumed that the administrators and teachers interviewed for this study had knowledge of the collective bargaining process. Fourth, it was assumed that the administrators and teachers wanted what was in the best interest of all students in their attendance centers. Lastly, it was assumed that the public school administrators and teachers who were interviewed in this study would tell their stories and answer questions with integrity and openness so that others can learn from their experiences.

Limitations

Every research study has limitations, and this study was no exception. Due to the qualitative interview procedures for this study, broad-based generalizations were affected. This study provided a concrete picture as to how administrators and teachers perceive teacher associations and collective bargaining. However, it did not explain the perceptions of all administrators and teachers and was specific to the particular district studied.

Data were gathered through semi-structured one-on-one interviews with public school administrators and teachers in an urban school district in the state of Iowa. Two administrators, both with at least five years of administrative experience, and four teachers participated in this study. Because of the limited size of the key informant group, the ability to generalize was greatly reduced.

Despite these limitations, this study addressed teacher and administrative perceptions toward teacher associations and collective bargaining. This study provided pertinent and needed information that could aid in the development of future research or professional development. Based on the time and energy that school districts and teacher

associations spend on bargaining, this study could bring clarity to and, in turn, help alleviate some troublesome misconceptions.

The Definition of Terms

The terms used in this study and their definitions are as follows:

Administrator: individuals authorized to serve as a principal of programs serving children from birth through grade 12, a supervisor to instructional special education programs with children from birth to the age of 21, and a supervisor of support for special education programs for children from birth to the age of 21 (Iowa Board of Educational Examiners, 2014).

Collective Bargaining: a process in which faculty and the school administration/school board designee interact as equals and negotiate wages, terms, and conditions of employment. This process results in a legally binding agreement that cannot be unilaterally changed, but may be changed in whole or in part if the parties mutually agree to renegotiate the agreement (National Education Association, 2014).

Teacher Association: organizations whose members include classroom teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses, and other professionals employed by K-12 school districts, area education agencies, community colleges, and state universities (Iowa State Teacher Association, 2014). This term is interchangeable with *Teacher Union*.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Over 50 years ago, in 1962, Wisconsin became the first state to enact legislation governing public sector bargaining that paralleled the language of the Labor Relations Act (NLRA) passed in 1935 and amended in 1947 (Eberts, 2007). Under the Wisconsin statute, local governments were required to “bargain in good faith with employee groups” and measures for administrative enforcement were written into the law (p. 178). The Wisconsin Public Employees Relations Board was entrusted with responsibilities for determining proper bargaining units, enforcing the prevention of prohibited tactics, fact finding, and mediating disputes. Historically, the Wisconsin law marked the national recognition that public employees had the right to engage in collective bargaining. By 1974, 37 states had legislation in place allowing collective bargaining by public sector employees.

The number of states with similar laws has not changed since 1974. However, there have been many changes to the climate in which they operate. Ironically, the state that pioneered the acceptance of collective bargaining rights by public sector employees is now the symbol of efforts to severely restrict them. Teachers’ unions are acutely aware of the powerful role of state legislatures in devising laws that impact the teaching profession. Cohen, Walsh, and Biddle (2008) pointed out that there is a common misconception that issues such as teacher contracts and pay are decided at the local level when union representatives and district administrators sit down to negotiate. In reality,

some of the most important issues are determined by laws and regulations created at the state level. The actions by Republican lawmakers in Wisconsin and other states to curb the power of public unions have been taken as a call to action by teachers' unions and by their supporters and opponents alike.

As Burroughs (2008) observed, "The role of collective bargaining in K-12 education inspires sharply different perspectives and heated debate" (p. 1). Burroughs framed the debate in terms of "profoundly different points of view" held by teachers and administrators, "a division which has colored much of the conversations on school reform" (p. 1). At the same time, he recognized that the controversy over teachers' unions is much more complex than pitting one group of education professionals against another. Many school principals and superintendents have had years of teaching experience (Cochren, 1998; Varkadoes, 2012). Surveys of teachers with regard to their views on unions, the teaching profession, and education reform have reveal a wide range of opinions (Cech, 2008; Duffett, Farkas, Rotherham, & Silva, 2008; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). Most teachers believe that unions are essential to their profession. Many also believe that teacher unions should be active players in education reforms (Cech, 2008).

Teaching is one of the most heavily unionized occupations; roughly three-quarters of American public school teachers are members of unions (Winkler, Scull, & Zeehandelaar, 2012). The introduction of bills to curtail collective bargaining rights in Idaho, Indiana, and Tennessee was interpreted by the unions in those states as "thinly veiled attacks on their very existence" (Sawchuk, 2011, p. 1). The unions immediately galvanized support from the National Education Association (NEA), the union's parent

organization in those three states. Wisconsin's successful effort to restrict collective bargaining power by teachers triggered an unprecedented wave of retirements among state teachers (Khadaroo, 2011). Some districts lost more than 10% of their teachers. While the proponents of the new law argued that the provisions curb soaring costs at the district level, opponents countered that the loss of veteran teachers' knowledge and experience, as well as the loss of potential mentors for novice teachers, far outweigh any financial benefits gained from the law. Some school districts have continued to collaborate with teachers on policy issues, while others have used their new authority to impose policies the majority of teachers oppose. In many districts the climate is even more adversarial (Khadaroo, 2011).

Teachers have reported feeling betrayed and angry by the drive to curtail the collective bargaining power their unions have had for years (Khadaroo, 2011; Sawchuk, 2011). Many teachers feel apprehensive, including those in states like Iowa, which has a fairly strong teacher union (Fluker, 2012). The Thomas B. Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now recently published a landmark study titled, *How Strong are U.S. Teacher Unions? A State-by-State Comparison*. As the title implies, it ranks the relative strength of each state's teacher union (Winkler et al., 2012). Ranked at number 27, Iowa is virtually in the middle of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Lead author Amber Winkler noted that most people were reluctant to undertake that type of union research, which she described as messy, complicated, and difficult (Sawchuk, 2012b). An array of diverse stakeholder groups provided input on how the research should be designed and then also responded to the ambitious study once designed and implemented.

The results highlighted the complex interaction of numerous factors that determine the strength of the union. One of the most significant findings (if not the most important) was that mandatory collective bargaining plays a powerful role in determining union strength.

This study is designed to add to the research of Reed (1990) and Jacobson (1978). The years between the two studies saw the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the scathing criticism of the United States public school system that spurred education reforms, and the effective schools movement of the 1980s. The 1990s marked the beginning of standards driven reforms and a call for a *new unionism* in which teachers' unions would form partnerships with administrators in a mutual quest to improve the schools and ensure that students were taught by competent teachers (Carini, 2008b; Cochren, 1998; Eberts, 2007; Kerchner, Koppich, & Weeres, 1998; Koppich, 2007; Sawchuk, 2012a; Weingarten, 2011). The views of teachers today are largely consistent with the model of a new unionism built on collaboration and commitment to improving student achievement. However, there are many different opinions on how this should be achieved. Teacher evaluation remains the most controversial issue in the juxtaposition of teachers' unions and education reform (Duffett et al., 2008; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

Numerous studies have examined the impact of teachers' unions and collective bargaining on students' academic achievement (Carini, 2008a, 2008b; Eberts, 2007; Eberts, Hollenbeck, & Stone, 2002; Hoxby, 1996; Lindy, 2011; Moe, 2009). The findings are mixed, which is not surprising given the various datasets and methodologies. The studies of Hoxby (1996) and Moe (2009) are widely cited for their negative conclusions. Other studies find the impact of unions negligible or positive. Carini (2008b) noted that

virtually no study analyzed data gathered after the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which placed increased demands for accountability on teachers and administrators alike. He also noted that there is limited research on the challenges principals are confronted with under collective bargaining. With the exception of case studies of specific schools and districts, the Iowa studies are among the few studies of collective bargaining that explore the views of school principals (Jacobson, 1978; Reed, 1990).

There have been many changes in education and bargaining since Reed's (1990) research was conducted. The state-by-state analysis highlighted the complex and dynamic interaction of various factors that affect the strength of teacher unions' collective bargaining power (Winkler et al., 2012). Although the restrictions on collective bargaining imposed by changes in state legislation have been attributed largely to Republican gains in a number of states in 2010, the conditions for limiting union control may have been building up for some time (Sawchuk, 2011). Even staunch supporters of teachers' unions have acknowledge that the criticism of unions as being obstacles to education reform is not entirely unwarranted (Moe, 2009). Indeed, the call for a new unionism was driven by recognition that a new model was needed to support genuine school improvement (Kerchner et al., 1998). The following section provides historical background for understanding the contemporary perspectives on teachers' unions and collective bargaining.

Background and Evolution

The two biggest teacher unions in the United States are the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The AFT dates back nearly a century to 1916, when it began helping teachers acquire control over their profession (Weingarten, 2011). At the time, the primarily female teachers were fighting for basic rights. In the new millennium, the teachers unions are fighting to transform their image from adversarial self-interest groups to organizations composed of teachers committed to improving the schools and helping all students learn.

The NEA and the AFT had very disparate beginnings. The NEA presented itself as a professional organization and refrained from collective action (Podgursky, 2011). NEA membership included education administrators and higher education faculty. In contrast, the AFT sought to align teachers with the principles of organized labor from its onset (Podgursky, 2011). According to Podgursky (2011), collective action was viewed as the primary channel for being recognized as an organization serving its members' interests. The AFT gained much of its power from its presence in large urban school districts, which are still the main AFT base; however, fueled by the success of its militant tactics during the 1960s, the AFT spread out to increasing numbers of schools and the NEA began to embrace union bargaining tactics (Podgursky, 2011).

The growth of collective bargaining by teachers' unions is generally attributed to four main events (Eberts, 2007). First, the enactment of state laws protected teachers' rights to collective bargaining (Eberts, 2007). Second, declining enrollment and soaring inflation during the 1970s jeopardized teachers' financial security (Eberts, 2007). Third,

rapidly changing social conditions and workforce demographics, combined with increasing social awareness and militancy created a climate conducive to union activity (Eberts, 2007). Fourth and finally, declines in union membership in the private sector led union organizers to view public sector employees as potential allies (Eberts, 2007). Rivalry between the two major teachers' unions increased their zeal.

Geographic and political influences on union organization affected the relative power and distribution of collective bargaining negotiations, which continue today (Burroughs, 2008). Advocates of unions point to the important role played by unions in boosting teachers' pay and benefits, improving working conditions, and enhancing their visibility and influence in the school system (Burroughs, 2008). Advocates argue that these conditions set the stage for high quality education. Critics contend that the powerful unions give precedence to the interests of teachers over the interests of students to the detriment of the nation's students (Burroughs, 2008). In reality, the relationships between collective bargaining, school improvement, and student outcomes are so complicated that both sides can produce ample support for their positions (Burroughs, 2008; Carini, 2008a, 2008b; Eberts, 2007).

Satisfaction with Unions

Collective bargaining has resulted in higher pay and benefits for teachers (Winters, 2011). Studies examining teachers' attitudes toward their unions and the associated effects on their work are typically conducted by organizational researchers rather than educational researchers. Supporting the arguments voiced by the unions,

teachers who are more satisfied with their pay are more satisfied with their district unions and also more satisfied with their work (Currall, Towler, Judge, & Kohn, 2005).

Using organizational level data for 6,384 K-12 teachers, Currall et al. (2005) found that the teachers' higher satisfaction was significantly linked with several major organizational outcomes, notably students' academic performance and dropout rates, and teachers' intentions to quit. These findings paralleled research on job satisfaction in the private sector, whereby higher satisfaction was linked with superior performance, stronger commitment, and lower turnover (Currall et al., 2005). Teacher tenure is routinely presented as a major impediment to genuine school improvement; however, high turnover caused by feelings of disempowerment and lack of support for new teachers is equally detrimental to students.

Two studies examined teachers' perceptions of union leadership, focusing on teachers' attitudes toward their building representatives (Friedman, Abraham, & Markow, 2009) and union presidents (Hammer, Bayazit, & Wazeter, 2009). Friedman et al. (2009) based their study on 7,372 K-12 teachers from 84 schools located in 29 U.S. school districts and focused primarily on teacher satisfaction with the perceived degree of support from their building representative. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, most of the factors that influenced the teachers' attitudes toward their representative were outside the union's control (Friedman et al., 2009). These included support from teaching colleagues, parental involvement in the school, the amount of gossip in the school, and the teachers' pride in the school.

Friedman et al. (2009) proposed an explanation that the teachers expressed their feelings toward the representative as an individual, rather than in his or her role in the union. Alternately, they might have viewed the representative as someone they could turn to for assistance, regardless of their particular problems. The findings suggested that the teachers gave more value to collegiality than they did to the instrumental role of the union representative. This might reflect the new unionism or professionalism unionism that many teachers prefer over the traditional industrial model (Duffett et al., 2008; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

The union president is much more removed than the building representative. In the study of Hammer et al. (2009), the leaders' instrumental role was found to be an important influence on teachers' attitudes toward their union. The data came from 3,871 teacher union members in 348 union locals. Satisfaction with pay combined with perceptions of fairness and justice and the belief that union leadership is working on their behalf influenced the teachers' loyalty toward and eagerness to work for the union. Analogous to the findings of Currall et al. (2005), this type of pattern is typically found in the private sector. From the inception of unions, fairness and justice were driving forces in organizing workers who were exploited, underpaid, and had no control over their work environment. Teachers may differ from their blue-collar counterparts in terms of their level of education, but their militancy was fueled by similar frustrations and perceptions of powerlessness (Hammer et al., 2009). After decades of collective bargaining and relentless waves of education reforms, teachers are turning toward a new model of unionism, but they are not about to relinquish their hard-won union protections.

Toward a New Unionism

Noggle (2010) declared, “In the vast majority of school districts, the collective bargaining process has evolved little during the past few decades” (p. 12). At the same time, Noggle recognized that the landscape is changing, albeit gradually. Growing numbers of school districts are starting to infuse their collective bargaining process with *collaborative* bargaining procedures. Although the movement toward a new model of unionism is just starting to gain momentum, it is actually not a recent phenomenon.

Over a long career in education, Cochren (1998) has observed the impact of teachers’ unions from the perspective of public school teacher, principal, superintendent, and ultimately, professor and researcher. He believes that teachers’ unions have traditionally resisted education reform efforts, declaring, “From the equity wave of the 1960s to the excellence movement of the 1980s,” the AFT and the NEA “have been followers, rather than initiators” (Cochren, 1998, p. 216). Cochren was one of many educators who were hopeful, yet somewhat skeptical, when NEA president Bob Chase proclaimed that there would be a new unionism during a speech to the National Press Club in February 1997 (Kerchner et al., 1998; Koppich, 2007). A study commissioned by the NEA formally acknowledged that the union was routinely portrayed as the foremost obstacle to improving the public schools. Mirroring the name of the report that decried the state of the nation’s schools, the NEA report was titled, “An Institution at Risk.” In Chase’s speech, titled “It’s Not Your Mother’s NEA,” he presented a vision of a new union that would work collaboratively with administrators, strive to improve school

quality, and help incompetent teachers improve their performance or be removed from the classroom.

To Kerchner et al. (1998), Chase's speech had a "poignant symbolism" (p. 21). Former AFT president, Albert Shanker, died the same month that Chase presented his speech. A decade earlier, in April 1985, Shanker expressed a similar vision in a conference address, calling for a "union of professionals" that would stir "a revolution beyond bargaining" and uphold peak professional standards (Kerchner et al., 1998, p. 21). To many teachers, Shanker's position on education reform came as a shock. They had expected Shanker to attack *A Nation at Risk* as an illustration of gratuitous "teacher bashing" (Koppich, 2007, p. 11). Instead, he openly recognized problems with the state of public education, advocating a number of changes that have since been espoused by many education reformers but have not necessarily been achieved. These include stricter standards for entry into the teaching profession and a test designed to evaluate each candidate's knowledge and skills; expanded school choice options for parents, students, and teachers; a professional teacher board to maintain high standards and eliminate teachers who fail to meet them; and a redesigned education system in which teachers would be transformed "from dispensers of knowledge to coaches for students, supervisors of novice teachers, and organizers of the school program" (Kerchner et al., 1998, p. 21).

At the time of Shanker's death, there was a good deal of conflict among AFT locals as to the extent that they would embrace change or improvement. Union leaders who attempted to promote reform often encountered resistance (Kerchner et al., 1998). Shanker's successor, Sandra Feldman, along with many other advocates of the new

unionism, felt it was essential for teachers' unions to support genuine school reform. At the same time, they recognized that changing an organization's deeply ingrained belief system would be challenging. According to Kerchner et al. (1998), it was essential that union leaders persuade their members that the future of the teaching profession and the future of public education as an American institution are intertwined; however, adopting an institutional perspective is a challenge for union leaders, whose members have a variety of grievances. To further complicate the issue, American education in the 1990s was undergoing massive upheaval; Kerchner et al. compared the situation to the 1910s, when the structures of most contemporary institutions were created.

One of the buzzwords of the 1990s was *knowledge workers*. By definition, teachers are knowledge workers; indeed, no profession embodies the concept of knowledge work more than education. As described by Kerchner et al. (1998), the new unionism meant "the demise of industrial organizations as the driving force in labor activism. Teachers as industrial workers became teachers as knowledge workers" (p. 23). As the workforce became more educated and sophisticated, organizations were becoming less hierarchical and compartmentalized (Kerchner et al., 1998). The concept of teachers as knowledge workers implied that most solutions to educational problems stem from the classroom upward, and should not be managed from the top-down (Kerchner et al., 1998). In Shanker's concept of a union of professionals, teachers are respected for their knowledge, dedication, and professional expertise and entrusted with authority and responsibility for education reform.

Kerchner et al. (1998) outlined their own vision of a new teacher unionism built on three key principles: organizing around quality, organizing around individual schools, and organizing around teaching careers. Organizing around quality denotes union commitment to professional learning, training, and development, high standards for professional competence, and above all, a system of peer review (Kerchner et al., 1998). The power of peer review lies in the fact that it is teachers who define, evaluate, and uphold the standards that guide their profession. Through a strong peer review system, teachers demonstrate their commitment to high professional standards not only by demonstrating their own professional expertise, but also by making decisions regarding removing underperforming teachers.

Organizing around individual schools means that teachers are actively involved in school decisions that affect their classrooms (Kerchner et al., 1998). For example, Kerchner et al. (1998) argued that teachers should be *required* to be involved in decisions related to resource allocation connected to student achievement. In their book, *Negotiating the Future: A Labor Perspective on American Business*, Barry and Irving Bluestone used the term *workplace compacts* (Bluestone & Bluestone, 1969). In education, schools would form compacts linking resources, work rules, and decision-making protocols to the school's improvement plan. By that system, the labor contract distributing the bulk of a school's resources would act as a "road map for educational achievement" (Kerchner et al., 1998, p. 24).

Organizing around teacher careers recognizes that teaching is not simply a job. For the last two decades, teachers' roles have been expanding with teachers serving in

leadership positions throughout school districts (Wells, 2012). Kerchner et al. (1998) advocated a teaching career ladder that smoothes the way for teacher's aides or assistants to become classroom teachers, as well as acknowledges more advanced roles for classroom teachers. The focus is on *career security* as opposed to *job security* (Kerchner et al., 1998).

Decades after the visionary speeches of Shanker and Chase, it is clear that their followers did not eagerly embrace the changes they viewed as essential to the future of teacher unions, the teaching profession, and the American public education system as a whole (Eberts, 2007; Sawchuk, 2012b). Chase's idea that unions would be in the vanguard of changes to the teaching profession was met with resistance by the NEA board of directors and staff and largely ignored by its members (Sawchuk, 2012a). In addition to teachers' negative or apathetic reactions, the school districts were unwilling to relinquish or share their authority over activities such as teacher evaluation with teacher unions. In a recent discussion, Jo Anderson, Jr., senior advisor to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, declared, "There's been a kind of rigidity set in place by management, by these bureaucracies. And the teachers' unions build systems to defense in response" (Sawchuk, 2012a, p. 11). In an interesting analysis using the concept of *threat-rigidity*, teachers became more uniform and homogeneous in their views toward pay, benefits, and school administration at the time of their district's contract negotiations compare to other points in the bargaining cycle (Griffin, Tesluk, & Jacobs, 1995).

Still, as the twentieth century came to a close, both the NEA and the AFT were aware that education reform had dramatically altered the stakes for teachers and students

(Koppich, 2007). School districts were confronted with escalating demands for stricter academic standards and evidence of improved student performance. Some unions began publicly acknowledging that they had an organizational investment over the academic achievement of the students within their districts. As a result, some unions moved toward an innovative new form of contract development labeled *reform bargaining* or *professional bargaining* that departed in form and substance from the bargaining of the industrial age (Koppich, 2007).

Traditional Bargaining Versus Reform Bargaining

Koppich (2007) outlined several key distinctions between the traditional industrial model of bargaining and reform or professional bargaining. In traditional bargaining there is a clear demarcation between labor and management; in professional bargaining the distinctions between the two groups are blurred (Koppich, 2007). In traditional bargaining, the relationship between the two groups is adversarial, whereas professional bargaining stresses collaboration (Koppich, 2007). Traditional bargaining has a limited scope of negotiations compared to the expanded scope of negotiations in professional bargaining. Finally, in traditional bargaining protections are centered on individual interests, while in professional bargaining, the focus is on teachers and teaching (Koppich, 2007). The term *collective* takes on new meaning as school administrators and unions work collaboratively in a professional partnership designed to achieve mutually decided collective goals.

Professional bargaining also aims to change teachers' traditional pay scale from the *single salary schedule* to some form of performance pay (Koppich, 2010). Both the

AFT and the NEA support a transition to performance pay, but with slight distinctions. Both unions support increased pay for superior knowledge and skills, teaching in difficult schools, and taking on added professional responsibilities, such as mentoring (Koppich, 2010). Both are opposed to connecting individual teacher pay to students' standardized test scores, although the AFT supports extra group pay based on schoolwide improvement derived from standardized test scores (Koppich, 2010). An additional difference is that the AFT believes that teachers should be paid extra for teaching difficult-to-staff subjects, while the NEA does not (Koppich, 2010). A majority of today's teachers agree that teachers should have performance incentives; in particular, they strongly believe that teachers should be paid more for teaching in underperforming schools in rough neighborhoods (Koppich, 2010). Changes in public school demographics during the 1970s, when teachers were abruptly faced with teaching students with academic and social problems, drove much of the union militancy during that era (Golin, 1998; Jacobson, 1978). Yet, most teachers remain adamantly opposed to linking performance pay to standardized test scores (Duffett et al., 2008; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

The main problem with performance pay is the challenge of deciding what measures to use to reward teachers for superior classroom performance. This challenge is intertwined with the controversy over teacher evaluation. Some districts have developed very successful programs for performance pay and teacher evaluation (Donaldson & Papay, 2012; Hamill, 2011; Koppich 2010; Weinberg, 2011). Notably, collaborative bargaining is typically the pivotal factor in their success.

An alternative model of bargaining is *interest-based bargaining* (Black, 2008; Paige, 2013). Interest-based bargaining is a type of collaborative bargaining that centers on determining the merits of a specific issue. Diligent data collection, problem-solving, and setting objective criteria for assessing solutions are the main elements of interest-based bargaining. The strategy has been adopted by organizations of various types. It begins by training the negotiating teams in the process and has ongoing assessment built into the process. In addition to being a non-adversarial approach to negotiations, interest-based bargaining can be used to resolve numerous problems, regardless of the stakeholder groups involved. School districts that have adopted the strategy have found that the groups reach mutual agreement quickly and efficiently (National Education Association, 2014). Interest-based bargaining has been proposed as an excellent way to resolve the issue of teachers' performance pay (Black, 2008).

It is clear that many changes have taken place since Jacobson (1978) and Reed (1990) conducted their research. With no high-profile conflicts, Iowa has not gained the media attention of states like Wisconsin or Indiana. However, for teachers within the state of Iowa, the direction of collective bargaining is no less important.

Iowa State Education Association

The Iowa State Education Association (ISEA) is affiliated with the NEA. The publication of *How Strong are U.S. Teacher Unions? A State-by-State Comparison*, which ranked Iowa as 27th among the states (Winkler et al., 2012), generated a debate among Iowa educators with regard to the future of teacher unions (Fluker, 2012). Winkler et al. (2012) posed the question of whether teacher unions should continue to operate

using an industrial style model. To Zeehandelaar (as cited by Fluker, 2012), a former self-described “frustrated teacher,” the answer is an adamant “no.” Zeehandelaar viewed the traditional industrial style union model as hopelessly outmoded. Labor educator Matt Glasson (as cited by Fluker, 2012) disagreed. To Glasson, who teaches at the University of Iowa’s Labor Center, government employees, including engineers, auditors, and attorneys, are in unions, as are professionals such as nurses and accountants. Glasson argued that across occupations, people encounter the same types of problems at work: they want to be treated with dignity; they want to see their work respected; and they want their pay commensurate with their skills. Although the skills and contexts differ, these basic desires are virtually universal, and unions can help their members be recognized (Fluker, 2012).

ISEA President Tammy Wawro commented that she initially dismissed the findings of the teacher union report, but later agreed that Iowa has a strong union, which she believes has a positive impact on students (Fluker, 2012). Wawro credited the union with creating a safe environment for students and teachers alike and noted that Iowa teachers are in the forefront on issues such as creating anti-bullying programs and working with English language learners. The overall result, according to Wawro, is that the unions are supporting student improvement.

Ranking State Union Strength

Sawchuk (2012b) described the study of teacher union strength as “a long-awaited analysis,” noting that the factors underlying the strength and status of state teachers’ unions are multifaceted and interrelated (p. 8). For their complex undertaking, Winkler et

al. (2012) collected and synthesized state level data on 37 variables from five broad areas, which included (a) resources and membership (area 1), (b) involvement in politics (area 2), (c) scope of bargaining (area 3), (d) state policies (area 4), and (e) perceived influence (area 5). Hawaii topped the states with the highest overall rank, while states located in the South (southeast and southwest) ranked the lowest in union strength (Winkler et al., 2012). At number 27, Iowa was virtually in the middle of the 51 locales (including the District of Columbia), ranking just above Kentucky and sharing Tier 3 (or Average) with Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, North Dakota, Nevada, Nebraska, Kentucky, Wyoming, New Hampshire, and Indiana (in descending order from 21 to 31). Highlighting the complexity of the analysis, an individual state could have substantial variation in rank among the five categories.

Overall, Winkler et al. drew four key conclusions from the analysis. First, mandatory bargaining plays a prominent role in creating a stronger union (Winkler et al., 2012). States with optional or outlawed bargaining tend to be categorized as weak. Second, resources—money and members—make a significant difference. Higher revenues give state unions advantages in lobbying and advocacy, and also enhance their capacity to support the activities of union locals. Having more members translates into greater political clout and expands the participant pool for rallies and campaigns, as well as the amount of money drawn from member dues.

Third, the scope of bargaining makes a substantial difference, and so does the right to strike. Collective bargaining is a powerful tool for protecting teachers' interests,

especially in states with poorly defined or negligible state policies. In some cases, the protections gained by collective bargaining are embedded in state law.

Fourth and finally, strong state bargaining laws and union resources do not necessarily translate to union friendly policies. Though it may seem paradoxical, several states in the top two tiers have education policies that are not especially union-friendly, while others states without strong collective bargaining laws do have union-friendly policies. There are many factors involved.

Roughly three-quarters (73.3%) of Iowa teachers belong to unions (Winkler et al., 2012). A generous 57.3% of the state's K-12 spending is allocated to teachers' salary and benefits, ranking the state eighth in this category (Winkler et al., 2012). Analysis of the various factors that go into resources and membership gave Iowa a rank of 27th in this area. On area two, involvement in politics, the state was tied for 23rd (Winkler et al., 2012). The union has been fairly active in state politics for the last decade, and close to 17% of the delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions were teacher union members (Winkler et al., 2012).

Iowa dropped to 32nd on scope of bargaining (Winkler et al., 2012). The state is one of 32 states where collective bargaining is required; however, the unions are not allowed to automatically collect agency fees from non-members and strikes are forbidden (Winkler et al., 2012). Bargaining covers a broad scope, covering negotiations over pay, hours, grievance procedures, transfers, reassignments, and layoffs, evaluation protocols and instruments, insurance benefits, fringe benefits, and leave. In fact, pensions and retirement benefits are the only items explicitly left out of negotiations.

Iowa ranked 11th in the area of state policies (Winkler et al., 2012). Education policies are largely congruent with the traditional interests of teachers' unions: student achievement is not a factor in teacher evaluations, state law does not endorse performance pay, and pseudo-tenure is virtually automatic after three years of teaching (Winkler et al., 2012). Policies governing charter schools are generally restrictive. Although there is no cap on the number of charter schools, all charters must be conversions of local schools and authorization requires approval by both a local school board and the state board of education (Winkler et al., 2012). In addition, all charter school teachers have to be certified and all charter schools are required to participate in district collective bargaining agreements (Winkler et al., 2012).

On perceived influence, Iowa ranked 31st, implying that influence on education policy is rather limited (Winkler et al., 2012). According to survey respondents, the union has slightly more influence than the association of school administrators, the school board association, and education advocacy groups, but slightly less than the state board. Although it may seem that the unions have a substantial degree of influence, the respondents noted that state education leaders do not necessarily ally with the priorities of the teachers' union and the unions frequently compromise (Winkler et al., 2012). Furthermore, Winkler et al. (2012) reported that during the most recent legislative session, the policies proposed were largely not aligned with union priorities, while the policies that were enacted were no more than somewhat aligned.

State policies and perceived influence, which are heavily interrelated, were the most dynamic of the areas analyzed for the study by Winkler et al. (2012). Factors

affecting state policies include state leadership (past as well as present), federal policy, economic conditions, the influence of various stakeholder groups, and state level politics (Winkler et al., 2012). The social and political upheavals in the 1960s and early 1970s, the recent economic recession, and the drive by several states to curtail the collective bargaining power of teacher and other public sector employee unions underscore the dynamic and sometimes unpredictable climate in which teachers' unions operate.

Perspectives of Iowa Teachers and Administrators

To provide some historical background to the impact of union collective bargaining in Iowa, research from the latter 1970s during the dawn of teacher union collective bargaining in the state was reviewed. Jacobson (1978) conducted a study updating the research conducted by Hill (1975), in the year that Iowa's Public Employees Relations Act went into effect. Following the law's passage, collective bargaining spread quickly through the state's public school districts. Not unexpectedly, there were problems with the new law.

In 1978, the year Jacobson's study was carried out, the main challenge for Iowa school districts was securing funding for the union contracts (Jacobson, 1978). At the time, Iowa school districts were faced with declining enrollments (Reed, 1990). There was also an atmosphere of disillusionment that the education reforms of the 1960s and early 1970s were not achieving their goals (Jacobson, 1978). Still, the most problematic part of conducting research into union bargaining in that era was that it was a new phenomenon in the state (Hill, 1975). The first question addressed by Hill's study was

whether teachers would lose professional standing by being associated with industrial style collective bargaining.

Jacobson (1978) built upon Hill's work, but framed his questions somewhat differently. The main issues examined by Jacobson included (a) the impact of bargaining on the daily professional interactions of teachers and administrators; (b) the management style practiced by school administration; (c) the impact of the contractual agreement on the development of school curriculum and instruction; (d) the impact of the grievance procedure on communication; (e) the rights and responsibilities of the parties; (f) the composition and experience of the negotiating team; (g) the impact of the Public Employment Relations Board rulings and court decisions on negotiations; and (h) the attitudes toward strikes and final arbitration procedures.

The sample consisted of 333 teachers and 276 administrators (principals, superintendents, assistant superintendents, and personnel directors) from Iowa's largest school districts (Jacobson, 1978). Perhaps because bargaining provokes strong emotions and opinions, the study had an unusually high response rate when comparing respondents to those asked to participate. The findings revealed significant differences between teachers and administrators on most of the items examined. Jacobson (1978) noted that the attitudes were not quite as polarized as they had been in Hill's (1975) study, but there were still major differences in the attitudes of the two groups.

An interesting distinction was that three-quarters of the teachers felt their status in the community had not been diminished by bargaining. More than half the administrators (55%) felt it had been diminished and 77% thought the public would view the teaching

profession in the same light as other labor unions (Jacobson, 1978). The teachers were more ambivalent on the second question; slightly more than half (52%) disagreed that their profession would be equated with other labor unions. The incongruence in the teachers' responses to the two questions suggests that some teachers might have had some concerns about being viewed as members of a labor union, but they recognized that from a practical standpoint collective bargaining enhanced their leverage as a professional group (Jacobson, 1978).

The administrators were more inclined to view collective bargaining as detrimental to their daily interactions with teachers, whereas most teachers perceived the impact as negligible (Jacobson, 1978). If administrators felt their authority over teachers was threatened, it is not surprising that they viewed bargaining as detrimental to their customary interactions with teachers. A majority of both administrators and teachers felt that a principal's bargaining unit would not damage the relationship between teachers and principals, although a somewhat higher proportion of administrators held this view (75% versus 59%). Jacobson (1978) concluded that collective bargaining had produced an adversarial climate between teachers and administrators, but the intensity decreased as the two groups became more experienced with negotiating.

An intriguing difference between the two groups was that nearly all the administrators (95%) felt that teachers had other channels than bargaining to take a more active role in the development of district policy, while only 60% of the teachers shared that perspective (Jacobson, 1978). In addition, teachers were more predisposed than administrators to feel they accepted greater responsibility for school management under

collective bargaining law. Teachers and administrators both disagreed with the idea that collective bargaining changed and improved the school district's management style (Jacobson, 1978). Interestingly, according to Jacobson (1978), a higher proportion of teachers than administrators agreed (32% versus 12%).

In general, industrial style bargaining does not improve management style (Malin & Kerchner, 2007). Bargaining grew out of the hierarchical bureaucracy with clear divisions between employees and management. Whether in union or non-union environments, schools have lagged behind organizations in other sectors in transitioning to a less hierarchical, more collaborative model of leadership (Malin & Kerchner, 2007).

There were mixed responses to questions related to the impact of grievance procedures on communication among school stakeholders (Jacobson, 1978). Substantial majorities of teachers and administrators concurred that the legal bargaining rules had improved the structure of negotiations and that negotiations had not hurt their working relationship; however, they disagreed on the question of whether negotiations offered more effective channels for communicating with the district (Jacobson, 1978).

Predictably, a majority of teachers, who had more leverage in voicing ideas or complaints to the district agreed, while a majority of administrators did not (Jacobson, 1978).

In the study by Jacobson (1978), the teachers were evenly divided on the question of whether the bargaining contract improved teacher evaluations; somewhat more than half the administrators (58%) disagreed. Teacher evaluation remains the most hotly debated issue in union and education reforms (Duffett et al., 2008; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). Advocates of a professional model of teacher unions strongly prefer peer review

(Kerchner et al., 1998; Malin & Kerchner, 2007; Weingarten, 2011). In 1978, the vast majority of teachers and administrators were opposed to strikes (Jacobson, 1978).

Teacher strikes are currently prohibited under Iowa state law (Winkler et al., 2012). Only 14 states explicitly prohibit strikes, but strikes generally have become less and less common over the years. From 241 teachers strikes in 1975, the number of teachers strikes nationwide dropped to 99 in 1991 and to only 15 in 2003 (Hess, 2005).

Jacobson's (1978) study provides interesting insight into the perceptions of teachers and administrators at the dawn of teacher union collective bargaining in Iowa. The overall pattern seems to be that most teachers recognized that collective bargaining gave them more leverage while not adversely affecting their professional status. The administrators in Jacobson's study were somewhat less positive on many issues, probably for the same reason that the teachers saw benefits; namely that bargaining altered the balance of power between the two groups. At the same time, there was a substantial degree of ambivalence on many questions. Jacobson attributed some of the mixed responses to the short time that bargaining existed, suggesting that there was not enough time to gauge the effects. In view of recent studies, it may simply be that there were differences of opinion within each group.

Reed's (1990) study was based on a sample of 400 teachers and 100 administrators from Iowa's largest school districts. The findings showed that both groups had much more positive attitudes toward the effects of collective bargaining in 1989 than their counterparts in 1978. Furthermore, the perceptions of the two groups had begun to converge over the course of 11 years, suggesting that there were incremental, positive

changes to their everyday professional interactions. Teachers had developed more organized channels of communication for expressing their concerns to school and district administration (Reed, 1990). In addition, evaluation of classroom teaching had become more standardized. However, teacher evaluation is still being disputed between the ISEA and the Iowa state legislation (Fluker, 2012).

Interestingly, the teachers in Reed's (1990) study felt that the administration team's management style had changed over the years, but the administrators thought it was still the same. Reed (1990) surmised that the management style might have changed slowly or subtly, such that the administrators were not aware of it, while the teachers who were affected by it were attuned to small changes. According to Reed, the administrators seemed to feel threatened by the idea of having to relinquish some of their power to teachers through participative leadership and teacher empowerment. In the more than two decades since Reed's research, participative management and teacher leadership are much more common. In 1989, school restructuring had barely begun and administrators were slow to adopt democratic leadership styles (Reed, 1990).

Reed (1990) concluded that changes evolve over time; as veteran teachers and administrators retire, the next generation brings with them a different perspective. This trend was evident in recent studies where veteran teachers had more traditional attitudes toward union bargaining, while younger teachers lean more toward a collaborative model (Duffett et al., 2008). However, teachers' unions do not exist in a vacuum. Reed (1990) noted that attitudes toward public sector unions in Iowa during the 1980s were generally favorable. In the last decade, there has been a marked shift in attitudes, and in the last few

years, teachers and other public employees have seen their collective bargaining rights eroded at the state level (Fluker, 2012; Khadaroo, 2011; Sawchuk, 2011; Weingarten, 2011). The ISEA and its supporters prevailed over changes proposed by the state legislation, but the battle is far from over (Winkler et al., 2012).

Flexibility in Collective Bargaining

Moe's (2009) California study found that the restrictiveness of the bargaining contract had a significant impact on specific districts and schools, namely larger districts, secondary schools (there was some effect for elementary schools, though not as pronounced), and high-minority schools. In view of the many conflicting views on collective bargaining, Frederick Hess investigated the practicalities of collective bargaining in 20 school districts (Hess, 2005). The findings belied the common assumption that negotiations are by nature adversarial and unions unduly rigid (Moe, 2009). Of the 20 districts, 17 were affiliated with the NEA and three were affiliated with the AFT. Seven districts had union protests and, in cases where strikes were threatened, none were actually carried out (Moe, 2009).

To examine the restrictiveness of the contrasts, Hess (2005) turned to a detailed analysis conducted in 2002 by Vanderbilt University economist Dan Ballou. Through his analysis of 40 Massachusetts school districts Ballou (as cited by Hess, 2005) observed an intriguing phenomenon. That is, on "virtually every issue of personnel policy," there existed "contracts that grant administrators managerial prerogatives they are commonly thought to lack;" however, "administrators do not take advantage of" that flexibility (Ballou, as cited in Hess, 2005, p. 33). Hess analyzed their own data and reached a

similar conclusion. Whether or not the states had mandatory collective bargaining laws, the overwhelming majority of contracts hovered at a median point of restrictiveness. Particularly with regard to the issues of class size, teacher transfers, and teachers' involvement in curriculum decisions, the average district score was at the midpoint on restrictiveness, if not lower. Many provisions seemed to be deliberately ambiguous, thus allowing for leeway while appearing superficially prescriptive.

The overall implication is that, rather than contracts restricting the actions of district administrators and board members, they chose not to fully exploit their managerial prerogatives. Proposed reasons included using a supposedly rigid contract as a convenient excuse for not taking actions, not wanting to antagonize teachers at the risk of losing competent teachers, seeking to avoid the high (financial and human) costs of grievance procedures, or because board members are wary of union influence over elections (Hess, 2005).

It is interesting that Hess (2005), who was with the conservative American Enterprise Institute, insisted that collective bargaining contracts are not the rigid impediments to school improvement that critics proclaim. Hess did favor a more aggressive role for district officials to ensure that the interests of unions do not conflict with the interests of students, but they also recognized that it is the role of unions to protect the best interests of teachers.

Strunk (2009) also observed that union contracts tend to be more flexible than routinely assumed. Strunk focused on California, reaching a similar conclusion to Moe (2009) in that contracts tend to be more restrictive in disadvantaged school districts. In

particular, the most restrictive teacher transfer policies were typically found in high-needs districts. However, in a study employing data from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the 2000-2001 Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS), Nelson (2006) concluded that high-poverty urban schools with collective bargaining did not have transfer rates that exceed other schools. In fact, the findings showed that in the absence of collective bargaining, high-poverty schools were much more likely to replace transferring teachers with inexperienced (first year) teachers than comparable schools with collective bargaining. In schools with collective bargaining, high-poverty and more affluent schools were equally likely to replace transfers with inexperienced teachers. Overall, the presence of a collective bargaining contract was linked with reduced teacher transfers within the district.

According to Strunk (2009), there are many California school districts with innovative and flexible collective bargaining contracts, but they are not distributed equitably throughout the state. With its huge multicultural public school population, California is the focus of numerous studies on education and educational reform. There seems to be general agreement that collective bargaining has not diminished inequities in staffing schools with credentialed, experienced teachers and may actually exacerbate staffing issues to the detriment of the students (Koski & Horng, 2007; Moe, 2009; Strunk, 2009).

In New York City, the uniquely powerful United Federation of Teachers (UFT) agreed to a contract that departed dramatically from traditional practices (Daly, Keeling, Grainger, & Grundies, 2008). First, the contract supports the rights of schools to select

teachers and hire teachers of their choosing, regardless of seniority. Second, the contract discarded the practice of “bumping” novice teachers in favor of veterans who claimed the position by virtue of seniority without opinions from principals or school staff. And third, it created a more open hiring process for teachers who were *excessed* (displaced due to declines in enrollment, budget decreases, program changes, or school closures).

Under the new contract, dubbed *mutual agreement*, teachers and principals have to agree on all teacher placements, thereby ending an outmoded system that was damaging to the schools, to effective teachers, and to students (Daly et al., 2008). The system is imperfect; resolving the problem of excessed teachers proved to be more of a challenge than expected. In fact, the innovative contract provisions might be more successful in a smaller system than the nation’s largest school system. Nonetheless, the new contract marked an improvement for a city notorious for adversarial bargaining and perennial problems with staffing. Giving precedence to effectiveness over seniority is a foremost concern in linking collective bargaining with school improvement initiatives (Behrstock & Coggshall, 2009).

Case Studies in Innovation

Similar to the novel hiring contract adopted by New York City schools, most accounts of innovative bargaining contracts come from case studies of specific school districts. In many cases, these innovations arise from projects funded by grant money (or affects to seek grant money). In Pittsburgh, for example, former school superintendent Mark Roosevelt worked collaboratively and intensively with Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT) President John Tarka on a project that ultimately earned them \$40

million in grant money from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and nationwide claim (Hamill, 2011). Bitter and unsuccessful contract negotiations led both sides to realize that a much better model was needed (Hamill, 2011). The frustrated teachers even revolted against their union. Ultimately, the teachers were central players in district improvement (Hamill, 2011). With specialized training, the teachers created a new school curriculum, and devised a superior feedback system for evaluating what they created. Teachers who had threatened to quit were revitalized and engaged (Hamill, 2011).

The project's most striking component was the Research Based Inclusive System of Evaluation (RISE), built on education consultant Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (Hamill, 2011). In an environment where teacher evaluation is fraught with challenges, the successful design and acceptance of a clear and coherent evaluation framework was remarkable. Prior to classroom observations, teachers engaged in discussion with the administrator, followed by self-evaluation, teaching the designated lesson, and then once again having discussions to resolve areas of disagreement (Hamill, 2011). Each teacher followed an individual improvement plan, which was arrived at by mutual agreement. At the end of the school year, the teachers were given a nuanced performance evaluation that placed them at one of four levels: distinguished, proficient, basic, or unsatisfactory. The teachers received a grade for each of the four domains and 24 rubrics within each domain. As evidence of the project's success, far more schools than expected opted to pilot RISE.

RISE was one aspect of a major collaborative effort that transformed the nature of bargaining and of education within the large urban district (Hamill, 2011). "Three Cs,"

namely *communication*, *collaboration*, and *commitment* were paramount in the success of the RISE initiative. The supportive environment empowered the players to take risks and experiment (Hamill, 2011). The overarching outcome was that the district, in which negotiations were typically conducted by lawyers, became marked by joint problem-solving and active involvement by the key stakeholder groups.

Case studies of the successful transformation of union bargaining tend to focus on teacher evaluation (Donaldson & Papay, 2012; Hamill, 2011; Weinberg, 2011); however, in a few cases, teachers' unions were involved in community-wide education reform efforts that include school families and community members (McAlister & Catone, 2013). In some instances, relationships had been so adversarial that community members had to be persuaded that it was in their best interests to collaborate with the teachers' unions (McAlister & Catone, 2013). Once the barriers were broken down, collaboration by all constituents helped to ensure that the positive changes are sustained (McAlister & Catone, 2013).

Giving precedence to seniority over performance is one of the most pervasive obstacles to successful school improvement (Hamill, 2011). Unlike the changes in Pittsburgh, which grew out of frustration and antipathy, the case study presented by Donaldson and Papay (2012) arose in a climate that had already moved toward extensive collaboration. In addition, the evaluation program team attributed their success to ongoing conversations among all constituents. The teachers praised the union for the way they communicated, noting that union officials kept emphasizing that the teachers were active players and reassured them that they would benefit from the changes (Donaldson

& Papay, 2012). A principal lauded the union for their “real clear messaging” that was carefully designed to clarify any possible misconceptions (Donaldson & Papay, 2012, p. 20).

Donaldson and Papay (2012) outlined six key program features beyond collaboration that contributed to its success. First, leaders on both sides stressed the potential of the reform effort to influence teachers’ performance through coaching, rather than using evaluation as a mechanism for termination. Second, student learning objectives, rather than value-added measures based on standardized test scores, were used as the basis for incorporating student achievement into teacher evaluation. Third, the district decided to evaluate teachers *and* administrators on an annual basis. Fourth, the district implemented evaluations for principals and district administrators were analogous to the teacher evaluation program. Fifth, an external evaluator was summoned in cases where teachers received either a “needs improvement” or an “exemplary” performance rating. Calling in an external evaluator enhanced the teachers’ confidence that the evaluation program was fair and was deemed especially crucial for teachers in helping underperforming teachers whose jobs were at stake. The last feature was the design of rubrics for guiding observation evaluations. The rubrics were essential to the success of RISE (Hamill, 2011).

Teacher Unions and Charter Schools

Teacher unions are routinely portrayed as opponents of charter schools; yet ironically, it was Albert Shanker, former president of the AFT, who first introduced the concept of charter schools in a 1988 speech (Weingarten, 2011). Speaking before the

National Press Club in Washington, D.C., Shanker called upon teachers who saw themselves capable of improving the schools to apply for charters to start their own schools. These schools would be built on three principles: (a) the schools would uphold high performance standards; (b) the schools would close if they failed to succeed in their goals; and (c) if the schools did succeed, they would be responsible for helping other schools become more effective. Shanker envisioned charter schools as a venue where excellent and enterprising teachers would be “empowered” to create innovative new programs, but with one condition: union approval (Malin & Kerchner, 2007, p. 889).

As president of New York City’s UFT, Shanker’s protégé and future AFT president Randi Weingarten, helped begin three charter schools (Weingarten, 2011). The AFT represents teachers in 150 charter schools. Iowa charter schools are required to be part of collective bargaining agreements (Winkler et al., 2012). In fact, Iowa has some of the strictest charter school policies in the U.S. The stringent policies may have the advantage of producing high quality charter schools. Malin and Kerchner (2007), who advocated a progressive union model as a mechanism for improving the performance of charter schools, were highly critical of how charter schools have evolved. In their opinion, “Charter schools have become managerially driven organizations” as opposed to the “community of professionals” Shanker imagined (p. 889).

To an extent the way Malin and Kerchner (2007) presented their case for unions in charter schools is like a microcosm of efforts to create a reform model of union bargaining in conventional public schools. The authors decried the traditional industrial model as outmoded and an impediment to turning charter schools into high performance

workplaces. In contrast to the rigid, industrial age bureaucracy, “A high performance workplace emphasizes flexibility, employee involvement, responsibility, accountability, and an incentive system of rewards” (Malin & Kerchner, 2007, p. 892). There is a strong emphasis on workforce training, which Malin and Kerchner contrasted with “the shameful level of non-assistance that most young teachers receive from their school districts or their unions” (p. 908). The authors cited a study by David Kauffman and his colleagues in which 50 teachers reported unanimously that, in their first year of teaching, they had no help or support from their union. Given that support from the district was minimal to none, the unfortunate consequence was that many teachers in the district leave within the first five years of teaching (Dostal, 2012). Turnover is especially high in subject shortage areas, such as special education, math, and science (Dostal, 2012).

As an illustration of the important role that forward thinking unions can have in education reform, Malin and Kerchner (2007) presented the example of the Teacher Union Reform Network (TURN), which is composed of both NEA and AFT members and dedicated to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Their innovation has started to center around several reforms connecting the four key components of peer review, teacher induction, professional development, and compensation reform with an index of how well students are performing academically (or not).

The adoption of peer review by teacher unions is not a novel phenomenon. The Toledo (Ohio) Federation of Teachers and the Toledo Public Schools have jointly conducted a peer review process since 1981 (Malin & Kerchner, 2007). Within a few years, more than 30 school districts across the U.S. had adopted a system of peer review.

Peer review embodies the professionalism intrinsic to the new unionism advocated by Chase and Shanker (Kerchner et al., 1998). Peer review is also the opposite of the traditional industrial model, in which labor relations employee evaluation is the province of management, which also has the power to discipline employees, direct them to improve their performance, and dismiss them if they fail to meet externally imposed standards (Malin & Kerchner, 2007). The union ostensibly protects employees from unfair termination and there is growing agreement among teachers that union contracts should *not* protect incompetent teachers (Duffett et al., 2008; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

Central to the Toledo, Ohio, model of peer review is an Internal Board of Review (IBR) composed of four district representatives and five union representatives (Malin & Kerchner, 2007). Novice teachers are required to take part in a two-year internship where they work with consulting teachers, setting mutual goals and attending follow-up conferences based on diligent observations (Malin & Kerchner, 2007). The consulting teachers are selected by the IBR. They serve for three years, during which they are out of the classroom. The IBR also sponsors an intervention program for teachers past probation whose performance falls far below acceptable standards, thus their only options are improving or leaving (Malin & Kerchner, 2007). Provided the teacher's principal and the building union representative agree to grant the teacher a place in the program, the underperforming teacher is assigned to work with a consulting teacher who draws up an improvement plan and regularly reports to the IBR to justify the actions being taken under the plan and evaluate the teacher's progress.

Malin and Kerchner (2007) were strong supporters of union-led peer review, which has a firm empirical base. Peer review surpasses induction in providing novice teachers with assistance and feedback and is effective for helping veteran teachers who need to improve their performance. A mechanism such as the IBR would be an ideal solution to two of the thorniest issues facing teachers who want to keep union protections and embrace education reforms: teacher evaluation and dealing with incompetent teachers (Duffett et al., 2008; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

Malin and Kerchner's (2007) concept of charter school labor law provides teachers with options of how they would like to represent themselves. Reform and professional unionism are their preferred models. However, while charter school teachers will continue to have greater autonomy than their colleagues in conventional public schools, reform oriented unions may be the future of teacher unions in general. Charter schools were originally supposed to be laboratories for innovation, and it is possible that they could become models for teacher- and union-led innovation, as Shanker envisioned (Weingarten, 2011).

Public school teachers are fairly evenly divided on their opinion of the charter school concept, with 42% in favor of the charter school model and 45% opposed (Duffett et al., 2008). The general public holds more favorable attitudes; 70% espouse the concept of charter schools, which are far more popular than school vouchers (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). Duffett et al. (2008) were surprised to find that most teachers are actually unfamiliar with charter schools. A higher percentage of teachers (34%) support the idea of having teachers' unions sponsor and manage charter schools than oppose it (26%), but

a plurality is uncertain (40%). Even in New York City, where the teachers' union is an active champion of charter schools, and in Milwaukee, with numerous charter schools, the public school teachers were unaware or apathetic. Charter schools would seem to be an excellent venue for reform oriented unions, but relatively few regular public school teachers seem to be aware or interested in the opportunities they present toward that aim.

Public Perceptions of Teacher Unions

The Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools is an annual survey of roughly 1,000 American adults. The 43rd annual survey included questions on teacher unions, along with charter schools, vouchers, digital learning, and preparing students for college and careers (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). Close to three-quarters of the respondents (71%) expressed confidence in the teachers in American public schools, the same proportion in 2011 as in 2010 (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). At the same time, more than half the respondents felt their local public school had a difficult time recruiting new teachers. On a positive note, fewer respondents expressed that opinion in 2011 (52%) compared to 2010 (61%). It is noteworthy that confidence in the nation's teachers did not seem to be adversely affected by the media: 68% said they heard mostly bad stories about teachers in the media, while only 20% said they heard mostly good.

Bushaw and Lopez (2011) noted that the survey was conducted in the wake of headlines reporting battles between teacher union representatives and state governors. The restrictions on teachers' collective bargaining in some states highlighted the state control over K-12 education, despite expanding federal power; however, the federal

power was evident in states that were granted Race to the Top funding. The funding came with its own stipulations, namely that states receiving federal money had to expand school choice options and incorporate students' academic achievement data into teacher evaluations. These events set the backdrop for the 2011 public opinion survey on teacher unions.

The issue of unions was introduced in 1976, when respondents were asked whether teacher unions helped, hurt, or made no difference in the quality of public education (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). Only 25% of respondents felt teacher unions had a positive impact, although 13% were undecided (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). In 2011, the percentage of people who perceived unions as helpful was virtually unchanged (26%). However, close to half the respondents (47%) believed unions hurt. A more detailed picture emerged when the opinions were matched to the respondents' political affiliation. Among Democrats, 43% felt unions helped, while only 12% of Republicans shared that opinion, along with 20% of Independents (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). Conversely, 68% of Republicans said unions hurt, along with 52% of Independents, and 23% of Democrats (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). The respondents were even more polarized in response to the question of whether they sided with the governors or the teachers' unions in states with high profile disputes. Specifically, 71% of Republicans sided with the governors while 80% of Democrats took the side of the unions; the Independents were evenly divided between the two (49% each; Bushaw & Lopez, 2011).

The general public seemed to share teachers' aversion to making students' standardized test scores an important factor in determining teachers' salaries (Bushaw &

Lopez, 2011). Of four factors examined, students' test scores received the lowest endorsement as being very important (29%), while academic degree, experience, and principal evaluations were all rated as very important by 38% of respondents (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). Very few respondents rated any of those factors as being unimportant. On the question of how important these factors should be in deciding which teachers are laid off first should the need arise to reduce the number of teachers, principal evaluations (37%) outweighed experience (33%) in the public perceptions (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011). The overwhelming majority of respondents preferred larger classes with more effective teachers to smaller classes with less effective teachers.

Overall, the public views teachers in a positive light. With respect to teacher unions, Bushaw and Lopez (2011) recommended, "While working to maintain hard fought gains in teacher salaries, benefits, and other working conditions that Americans still support, teacher union leaders should thoughtfully consider what actions they could take to improve their public image" (p. 24). Randi Weingarten (2011) titled her article "Voicing Concerns, Crafting Solutions: Unions in the Age of Teacher Bashing." In the article, Weingarten made a compelling case for collective bargaining, which she tied to education reform.

Weingarten (2011) also belied the common assumption that teacher unions are adversaries of charter schools. Most teachers today embrace both union membership and improving the schools to provide U.S. students with a high quality education. The popular media seems to call more attention to high-profile clashes over collective

bargaining rights than to excellent teachers and high-performing school districts where collaborative bargaining rules.

Teachers' Perspectives

The study, "Waiting to be Won Over: Teachers Speak on the Profession, Unions, and Reform," was conducted with a representative random sample of 1,010 K-12 public schools teachers in the fall of 2007 (Duffett et al., 2008). A questionnaire was developed with input from teachers in six focus groups held in five disparate locales. The survey was a follow-up to a 2003 survey conducted for Public Agenda. Duffett et al. (2008) noted that the findings dispel any assumption of teachers as a monolith with one view. The teachers presented diverse viewpoints and the title comes from the conclusion that today's teachers are "in play" in political jargon and "waiting to be won over by one side or another" (Duffett et al., 2008, p. 1). The authors expressed numerous frustrations with conditions affecting their work and the desire to see many changes, but there was no consensus on what those changes should be and how they should be accomplished. Highlighting the paradoxical nature of many responses, Cech (2008) described the majority of public school teachers as "unequivocally ambivalent about unions and education reform" and even more so since 2003 (p. 9).

More than half the teachers (54%) described unions as absolutely essential, representing an 8% increase since 2003, whereas only 11% viewed unions as unnecessary (Duffett et al., 2008). Roughly three-quarters of the teachers endorsed the view that "without collective bargaining, the working conditions and salaries of teachers would be much worse," which was a slight decline from 81% in the earlier survey (Duffett et al.,

2008, p. 8). Among union members specifically, 87% expressed that opinion (Duffett et al., 2008). Indeed, there were marked disparities in the responses of union members and non-members on several questions related to unions. The high proportion of union members raised the overall result, though a substantial proportion of non-union teachers concurred with the union members.

The dominant viewpoint was that unions protected the rights of teachers, especially in the face of unfair accusations by teachers or students, school politics, or abuses of power by administrators. The majority of the teachers (60% overall and 68% of union members) did not believe that a union diminishes teachers' professional reputations, similar to the perspectives of the Iowa teachers decades ago (Jacobson, 1978; Reed, 1990). Only 21% of the teachers felt that teachers would have more prestige if collective bargaining and lifetime tenure were abolished (Duffett et al., 2008).

Notably, many teachers reported that the union in their district was engaged in activities linked with education reform, including negotiating to keep classes small (55%), providing support and mentoring to new teachers (46%), negotiating for more authentic and effective modes of teacher evaluation (41%), and keeping teachers current on new instructional strategies and curriculum (41%; Duffett et al., 2008). One-third of the teachers said the union is expanding teachers' career ladders by negotiating new and varied roles and responsibilities and 38% reported the union provides teachers with high quality training and professional development (Duffett et al., 2008). To Malin and Kerchner (2007), these activities are consistent with the development of a high

performance workplace. The concept of helping new teachers contrasts sharply with the traditional neglect of novice teachers.

Close to two-thirds (63%) of the teachers endorsed the idea that their district unions or associations should take steps to make it easier to remove ineffective teachers from the classroom, and more than half (52%) expressed a similar role for the union or association in negotiating strategies for including teacher performance as a factor in deciding a teacher's pay (Duffett et al., 2008). At the same time, most teachers clearly wanted the union to protect *their* jobs and *their* pay (Cech, 2008). Removing incompetent teachers should raise the status and public image of teaching, not to mention the potential gains made by students whose ineffective teachers would be replaced by competent ones (Hanushek, 2011). Performance pay should also raise the prestige of teaching as a profession (Malin & Kerchner, 2007). However, even teachers committed to education reforms are also lulled by the security of traditional union collective bargaining, seniority, and tenure. The greater acceptance of reform-based bargaining by younger teachers may well be generational, but they also stand to gain more than veteran teachers by being paid for performance, rather than with years of teaching experience and generous pensions.

There was overwhelming support (80%) for the idea that teachers should be granted financial incentives for teaching in tough neighborhoods with underperforming schools (Duffett et al., 2008). In fact, the number of teachers who endorsed that view increased 10% since 2003. According to Duffett et al. (2008), there was also an 8% increase in teachers who opposed the idea of basing performance pay on standardized test scores (64%). Duffett observed that there is "consistent resistance to using standardized

tests to evaluate teachers,” adding that the teachers were not convinced it could be done fairly (Cech, 2008, p. 9). The American public is also skeptical of the value of using standardized test scores to evaluate teachers (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011).

A higher proportion of teachers (47%) view the relationship between the union and the district administration as marked by cooperation and trust than by distrust and conflict (33%), although the figures still mean that a substantial proportion of teachers see the relationship as adversarial (Duffett et al., 2008). The overall implication seems to be that the teaching profession is at a point where many teachers are trying to balance traditional union protections with changes—in some cases, dramatic changes—to improve the quality of public K-12 education. Both AFT President Randi Weingarten and Denver union representative Greg Ahrnsbrak, who participated in the study, viewed the connection between teacher unions and education reform as inevitable (Cech, 2008; Weingarten, 2011).

A follow-up to the 2008 survey was conducted in 2011 (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). The teachers in the later survey were both more union and reform oriented. Among teachers who were members of unions, 41% viewed the union as a source of pride and solidarity in addition to providing practical benefits, up from 31% in 2007; 38% said they were very involved in union activities, a marked increase from 24% in 2007 (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). Comparable numbers of teachers in both 2008 and 2011 felt that unions protected them from unfair accusations or abuses of power and that working conditions and pay would be much worse without collective bargaining (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

The contradictions in the teachers' opinions were evident when virtually equivalent proportions said that teachers' unions or associations should put more emphasis on issues such as improving teacher quality and student achievement (43%) or primarily stick to traditional union issues such as protecting teachers' salaries, benefits, and jobs (42%; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). However, when compared with the 2007 responses, there was a definite shift toward reform; the respective figures for more reform and traditional union issues were 32% and 52% in the earlier survey (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). The numbers of teachers describing the union's relationship with district administration as cooperative and trusting or adversarial and distrustful were virtually unchanged (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

Teacher evaluation is still an emotionally charged issue, but overall, the teachers had positive feelings about their last evaluation (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). The most positive reactions were expressed by teachers in low-income schools (66%), newer teachers (78%), and not surprisingly, teachers who reported a cooperative relationship with district administration (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). The teachers in these groups were most likely to view their evaluation as fair, relevant, and constructive. Support for performance pay is more ambivalent, mainly because there was no agreement on how performance for incentive purposes should be assessed (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

According to Rosenberg and Silva (2012), teachers were skeptical of standardized test scores and there was no clear-cut idea on what performance pay should be based. Support continues to escalate for rewarding teachers who work in tough neighborhoods and underperforming schools with higher pay. In the same way, teachers recognized that

if pay were based on standardized test scores, the teachers in those schools would be penalized (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

Most teachers are not willing to give up tenure, but at the same time, they recognize that keeping incompetent teachers in the classroom is detrimental to students and teachers alike (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). In fact, support for having the union lead in removing incompetent teachers increased between 2007 and 2011 (63% to 75%). This trend was most notable among the veteran teachers, who are also the strongest supporters of the job protections afforded by unions, increasing from 60% to 75%, and was especially marked among novice teachers whose support for removing incompetent teachers soared from 62% to 91% (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). The newer teachers' overwhelming support is not surprising given that under traditional seniority rules, they are the first to lose their jobs in cases of layoffs. Although only 10% of the teachers said their unions were actively involved in removing inferior teachers from the classrooms, more than one-third of those teachers (37%) believed they were carrying out the process effectively (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

Despite the numerous changes in public school education since the first teacher unions engaged in collective bargaining, the trends in the teachers' responses clearly show that teachers today, like their counterparts decades ago, want unions to serve their best interests and give teachers more clout (Bushaw & Lopez, 2011; Duffett et al., 2008; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). The perspectives of veteran and novice teachers in low-income and more affluent schools, and teachers with alternative certification are all aligned with practices that serve their respective interests (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012).

One reason the teachers desire to see unions leading reforms is that they are frustrated with having to continually keep up with changes beyond their control (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). Teachers feel that unreasonable demands are being imposed on them and that they have minimal say and inadequate compensation (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). The powerful unions have stepped up and the leaders have made unparalleled changes in their positions, endorsing dramatic changes and gaining prestigious support. United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan lauded AFT and NEA presidents Randi Weingarten and Dennis Van Roskel by proclaiming, “You have elevated the profession” (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012, p. 12).

Secretary Duncan’s praise of the union presidents is a far cry from the earlier assumption that unions would lower the stature of teaching; however, Rosenberg and Silva (2012) raised the question of whether the unions can simultaneously provide teachers with traditional benefits and protections while advancing major reforms. The authors wrote, “If they can, now is the time to do it. In the coming years, the viability of the union will be determined by whether teachers perceive them as being part of the problem or part of the solution for public education.” (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012, p. 12).

Rural Teachers

Although lacking some of the resources and supports available to schools in more populated locales, rural schools are nonetheless expected to provide students with the same quality education. According to Huysman (2008), “The most valuable and accessible resources located within a rural school district are the teaching staff” (p. 31). Yet, schools often fail to capitalize on the rich potential of teachers as valuable resources

(Huysman, 2008). Most teachers desire to play an active role in school decisions that affect their work (Huysman, 2008). As labor educator Matt Glasson observed, teachers are no different from individuals in other occupations in wanting to be treated with dignity, have their knowledge and expertise respected, and be compensated appropriately (Fluker, 2012). When these conditions are not met, job satisfaction declines (Huysman, 2008).

Huysman (2008) argued that understanding the factors involved in the satisfaction of rural teachers may be pivotal to retaining good teachers, creating and sustaining a positive learning environment, and improving student achievement. A mixed methods study was conducted with a rural Florida school district where all teachers worked under the same district administration, had the same contract terms, experienced the same shifting dynamics in rural education, and were part of the current strategy to expand the talent pool of rural teachers by “growing your own” (Huysman, 2008, p. 33). Out of 89 teachers, 85 agreed to participate in the study.

An important feature of the study was that the teachers were surveyed on their opinion of collective bargaining and contract negotiations (Huysman, 2008). Reflecting Glasson’s assertion about dignity and respect (Fluker, 2012), perceived lack of respect and recognition were major sources of dissatisfaction among the rural Florida teachers (Huysman, 2008). The teachers in the study projected this dissatisfaction on the district’s collective bargaining and negotiations processes, which the teachers viewed as the catalyst for unsatisfactory professional relationships with their colleagues and district administrators. Of all the factors examined in the study, the teachers expressed the

greatest dissatisfaction with collective bargaining, which was linked with dissatisfaction recognition, opportunities for advancement, organizational policies, coworkers, and compensation (Huysman, 2008).

Consistent with the two-factor, or motivator-hygiene, model of job satisfaction, the sources of dissatisfaction were primarily extrinsic, while the intrinsic factors of classroom teaching, interactions with students, and meeting creative challenges were highly satisfying (Huysman, 2008). The teachers were frustrated and disillusioned by bargaining that failed to recognize and respect their contributions, generating resentment among all parties (Huysman, 2008). The adversarial nature of negotiations added to the complexity of balancing their professional roles with their social roles in the community (Huysman, 2008). Among rural teachers, professional and social roles almost invariably overlap. The bargaining process was the most strained for the “homegrown” teachers who felt unappreciated by their own communities (Huysman, 2008).

It is important to note that Florida ranks at the bottom (i.e., 50th) in union strength (Winkler et al., 2008). Only Mississippi teachers rated their union as having less influence than Florida teachers (Winkler et al., 2008). The difference in union strength may make it difficult to generalize the perceptions of the Florida teachers to their rural counterparts in a state with a stronger teachers’ union like Iowa. Nonetheless, a substantial portion of Iowa teachers are located in rural communities where adversarial bargaining may affect their relationships with community members.

Superintendents' Perspectives

In a mixed methods study of 25 superintendents from a diverse array of school districts, Wells (2012) explored the superintendents' perceptions of teacher leadership. In part, the study was driven by the question of how superintendents work with teachers who are union members with expanding professional roles. Most of the superintendents (84%) had unions in their districts (Wells, 2012). In fact, the primary role in which the teachers exercised leadership was as a union representative; the next prevalent roles were department chair for secondary teachers and teacher mentors for elementary school teachers (Wells, 2012). Curriculum development was third for both groups of teachers (Wells, 2012). Wells viewed superintendents as transformational leaders who can engage teacher leaders as partners in working toward education reform. In the case of teacher leaders who are union representatives, this means that the teacher and superintendent embrace collaborative bargaining (Wells, 2012).

Varkados (2012) conducted a qualitative exploration of Washington State superintendents' experiences with collective bargaining. The overarching finding was that the superintendents tried their best to maintain positive working relationships with the various school stakeholder groups: teachers, principals, school boards, and different union groups (Varkados, 2012). The study was conducted in the midst of the economic recession and many superintendents were confronted with budget cuts and limited resources. Nonetheless, they were determined to work with each constituent group to create agreements related to pay cuts and working conditions that were perceived as fair

and equitable by all parties and they were committed to providing their students a high quality education (Varkados, 2012).

Conclusion

This study was designed to expand the research of Jacobson (1978) and Reed (1990) on Iowa teachers' and administrators' perceptions of collective bargaining. Jacobson's work was conducted two years after collective bargaining was enacted under state law and in the midst of a decade characterized by union militancy. Reed's study was conducted as schools were moving toward standards based reforms. In the 11 years between the two studies, relationships had grown less adversarial and there was greater acceptance of teachers' roles in negotiations. However, while the 1980s marked the beginning of waves of education reforms, it was a fairly placid era compared to the dynamic changes in both education and state political policy that have been shaping collective bargaining in the twenty-first century. There is a decisive trend away from the adversarial industrial model toward the collaborative professional model of bargaining. Teachers' attitudes toward unions and education reforms cover a wide spectrum, but most teachers view the mission of teachers' unions as leading school improvement initiatives while protecting the interests of teachers. How this will be accomplished presents a challenge, as it differs dramatically from traditional practices. Teacher evaluation is the most controversial issue, followed by performance pay. Both issues require innovative ways to determine effective teaching.

Some school districts have implemented innovative solutions. Their success is contingent on communication, collaboration, problem solving, and mutual goal setting

among the various stakeholder groups. It is possible that in the years since Reed's study, Iowa teachers and administrators have converged to the degree that they are ready for radical new approaches to collective bargaining and school improvement.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The focus of this study was to explore the perceptions of classroom teachers and district/building administrators of the teachers' association with regard to the action of collective bargaining. The two research questions that were addressed are:

R1: What are urban public school teachers' and administrators' perceptions and experiences regarding teacher associations and the impact of collective bargaining on student achievement?

R2: What types of interactions and relationships between teacher associations and school administrators appear to restrict or expand the capacity for student achievement?

This study was an exploratory qualitative study that examined a single case study. The single subject case study was an urban school district in Iowa with an enrollment of more than 5,000 students. Specifically, this inquiry looked at the differences and similarities between teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the impact teacher associations and collective bargaining have on student achievement. Of particular interest was an investigation into the development of relationships between administrators and teachers as they strive to provide a quality education to the students of the district. The study was situated and looked at through the lens of social capital theory (Ahn & Ostrom, 2008; Castiglione et al., 2008; Garcia-Reid, 2007; Putnam, 2000). In doing so, the researcher sought to uncover the interactions and relationships between teachers and administrators that appear to restrict or expand student achievement.

Methodological Standpoint

The purpose of all research in general is to be a “systematic process by which we know more about something than we did before engaging in the process” (Merriam, 2009, p. 4). One method of research is qualitative research. In the last 20 years, qualitative research has become a common field of study with its own conferences, journals, and literature (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research, rather than determining cause and effect, or predicting or describing the distribution of an attribute among a population, is interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved in order to attempt to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences (Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative research is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena. Qualitative research typically takes place in the natural world, uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic, focuses on context, is emergent rather than tightly prefigured, and is fundamentally interpretive (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009). A qualitative researcher understands that there is no single approach that will work, but that there are multiple truths, and that they are all valid (Merriam, 2009). The varied approaches include, but are not limited to, case studies, phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded theory, narrative analysis, and critical research (Merriam, 2009). The data and findings from qualitative research are richly descriptive and presented as themes and categories, and focus on meaning, understanding, and process (Merriam, 2009).

Biographical

It is necessary in qualitative research to situate the research with the researcher and discuss biases that may exist throughout the course of the study. I have just completed my tenth year of teaching in the public school system. I began my career teaching social studies in a rural district in Minnesota with a district population of 350 students. I worked there for only one year before being hired at a suburban school district in the state of Iowa. I worked four years at this suburban district, teaching both social studies and special education. This district had approximately 1300 students in the district during the time I was employed. I am currently employed by an urban Iowa school district, with a total population that exceeds 15,000 students. I have finished my fifth year in the same high school, teaching special education. I have been a member of the teacher's association every year of my employment in public education and have participated in collective bargaining every year but the first year in Minnesota.

I have an admitted bias that the current status of collective bargaining and the relationships between public school administration and teacher's associations in many cases is dysfunctional. This dysfunctional relationship leads me to make the claim that members of teacher associations and administrators must constantly be focused on building and maintaining a sense of trustworthiness between the two groups. If either group perceives a sense of mistrust or self-interest, collective bargaining and teacher associations will have a deleterious effect on student achievement. As a result, this bias may lead me to conclusions that are not actually present, so I will utilize several

approaches to validate the accuracy of the data, which will be explained in greater detail in sections to follow.

Research Approach

An urban school district in the state of Iowa was used as the case in this particular study. I used a single instrumental case study. The instrumental case study was employed to provide a general understanding of a phenomenon using a particular case (Creswell, 2013). A case study is an intensive description and analysis of a bounded social phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009) that involves a detailed description of a setting and its participants, accompanied by an analysis of the data for themes, patterns, and issues (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). The data collection was extensive and drew on multiple methods of data collection, including document review and interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Research Design: Key Informant Interviewing

Interviewing is a common method to obtain data in a qualitative study. There are a number of ways different types of interviews can be categorized: structure, theory, and alternative methods (Merriam, 2009). When looking at the structure of interviews, there are three ways an interview can be conducted: highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Merriam, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

For this study, a semi-structured interview method was used to determine the perceptions of the key informants. The researcher created and used a tailored interview guide for each of the key informants in the study. The responsive interview method was used, and each key informant was interviewed two times individually. As the researcher,

using this model, I was able to collect information at multiple levels simultaneously. The key informants that were interviewed for this study included two building administrators, two teachers who were part of the teacher association, and two teachers who were not part of the teacher association.

Data Collection Procedures

Individual interview guides were developed for each of the key informants that were used to ask questions specific to their role in the district. All interviews were digitally recorded on two individual recorders and a third party was hired to prepare transcripts of the interviews. As the researcher, I also took field notes during the interviews. The second type of data I used for this study were in the form a document review. The key artifact I reviewed was the collective bargaining agreement, which was negotiated and agreed upon between the school board, the school administration, and the teachers association.

The last type of data were gathered using a focus group of all the key-informants together. A focus group is a method of qualitative research data collection in which a group is interviewed on a topic together, with all participants having knowledge of the topic (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). “Data obtained from a focus group is socially constructed within the interaction of the group, a constructivist perspective underlies this data collection procedure” (Merriam, 2009, p. 94). Patton (2002) explained:

Unlike a series of one-on-one interviews, in a focus group participants get to hear each other’s responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say. However, participants need not agree with each other or reach any kind of consensus. Nor is

it necessary for people to disagree. The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (p. 386).

Sampling Plan Participants and Criteria for Selection

The sampling plan was thoughtful and calculated. As the researcher, I was interested in urban school districts and focused on school districts that have at least a district enrollment of 5000 students. The Urban Education Network of Iowa (UEN) serves public education districts in Iowa's eight urban centers. These centers include Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Iowa City, Sioux City, and Waterloo. The size of school district is the primary criteria for selection, and I contacted one of the selected schools based on proximity to my home to see if they would like to participate in the study. If that school district did not wish to participate, I moved on to the next school district in proximity. This process was repeated until finding a school district interested in participating in the study. If I had not managed to obtain agreement of one of the eight UEN districts to participate, I would have moved to the associate members again based on proximity to my home. The associate members are districts with at least an enrollment of 3000 students and have a free and reduced lunch population of 30%.

Once I had a school district that agreed to participate in the study, I asked for a willing district level administrator who would be familiar with teacher associations and collective bargaining. Once I had this first participant, I used the *Snowball Sampling Method* to identify other key informants who were thought to have rich information on the research topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The district administrator identified the

second key informant, who was the building administrator. The building administrator then identified the teacher who was a member of the teachers' association, and the member of the teachers' association identified a key informant who was a teacher, but not part of the teachers' association.

Sampling Concerns Addressed

Because of the small number of districts that meet the selection criteria, there was concern about protecting the confidentiality of the participating school district and the individual key informants. In order to have the best chance of protecting the identity of both the district and key informants, all participants and the school district were all given pseudonyms.

Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study was to discover the perceptions of public school administrators and public school teachers toward the teachers' association and collective bargaining and their impact on student achievement. Specifically, I used a semi-structured protocol and the following procedures for this study:

1. Ensured all participants had been given an informed consent for dissertation research participation that explained the purpose of the study, the rights of each participant, risks associated with participation and the participants' right to withdraw (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).
2. The interviews took place at locations chosen by the key informants to ensure they were comfortable and inconvenienced as little as possible (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

3. As the researcher, I brought all necessary materials: interview protocol, two digital recorders, and a notebook for field notes.
4. Prior to the interview beginning, I again obtained permission from the participant to continue with the interview. I then spent time having a casual conversation with each of the key informants (participants). I explained again the purpose of the study, the rationale for recording the interviews and how I would follow up for trustworthiness (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).
5. After asking for permission to record the interview, I turned on the two recording devices, and began the interview. I also took field notes during the interviews.
6. At the conclusion of each of the interviews, the recorders were turned off and the key informants were thanked for their time. I informed them that if there were follow up questions, they would be called. Lastly, I shared that if they had any questions or concerns that they were encouraged to call.
7. The audio recordings were transcribed by a third party into a word document and sent to the key informants to check for accuracy prior to coding.

Key Informants

The first and second interviews were with building administrators, the third and fourth interviews were with teachers who are members of the teachers' association, and the fifth and sixth interviews were with teachers who were not members of the teachers' association. Each of the interviews were divided up into multiple parts. The first part of the interview focused on the key informant's employment background, particularly their

work in the field of education. This first section also covered the key informant's past involvement in teachers' associations. The next section of the interview focused on the informant's current involvement with teacher's associations and collective bargaining in their current district. I also explored and sought to understand their perceptions of how the actions of teacher's associations and collective bargaining are impacting and influencing the districts' student achievement results. The interviews concluded with questions about how the district and the teacher's association were working together and if they thought there were any suggestions they could provide that would lead to gains in district student achievement.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The data collected were used to explore the perceptions of school administrators and teachers on the impact of teacher associations and collective bargaining on student achievement. Through the face-to-face semi-structured interview process, a large amount of data were gathered with respect to the key informants' perceptions. It was my intent, as the researcher, to consolidate, reduce, and interpret what the participants said and what the researcher saw and read (Merriam, 2009). Because of the amount of data collected, it was important to understand that data collection and analysis go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher (myself) needed to analyze as he goes along, "both to adjust his observation strategies, shifting some emphasis toward those experiences which bear upon the development of his understanding, and generally, to exercise control over his emerging ideas by virtually simultaneous checking or testing of these ideas" (Marshall & Rossman, 2001, p. 208).

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), it was very important to have the interviews transcribed, reviewed by the researcher along with the audio in order to fill in any inaudible portions and to make context of the transcript. Once the transcripts were available, it was necessary to code the data. Serving as the researcher, I had theory-generated codes from the proposal and *in vivo* codes from the interviews themselves (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Eventually using the data from the literature and the interviews, I was able to see how the data function and what clusters appeared (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In addition, I was in contact with the dissertation committee for assistance regarding the processing and results of data.

Throughout this process, I created an audit trail to insure the data were kept credible. I also conducted member checks throughout the interview process. A member check, also known as respondent validation, is a technique used by researchers to help improve the accuracy, credibility and validity of a study.

Trustworthiness

Participants were assured complete confidentiality in the final reporting of all research findings. Pseudonyms for the participants were used in an effort to ensure confidentiality and that participants' specific place of employment would not be mentioned. After total completion of the dissertation process, the interview recordings, field notes, and transcripts will be destroyed.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to one urban Iowa school district and four employees who work in the district. The interviewees consisted of a district administrator, building

administrator, a teacher member of the teacher association and a teacher who was not a member of the teachers' association. This study did not generalize the perceptions of all administrators and teachers with regard to their perceptions of teacher associations, collective bargaining, and the associated impact on student achievement, but instead, served to study and explore these four participants in a very deep and rich analysis to understand their perceptions.

Conclusion

It was the intent of this chapter to describe the qualitative research methodology that was utilized in this study. The qualitative research methodology focused on an exploratory single case study based on the goal of this research project, which was to explore the perceptions of public school administrators and teachers toward teacher associations and collective bargaining and the impact the two have on student achievement. With knowledge of these perceptions, administrators and teachers can better work together through the bargaining process to achieve the highest possible student achievement outcomes.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The intent of this chapter was to present the research data gathered during interviews with six educators who have been in their respective fields for a minimum of five years in the case study school district. The six individuals consisted of two building administrators, two teachers who are members of the local teachers' association, and two teachers who are not members of the local teachers' association. The data were collected through qualitative interview techniques for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the perceptions of both teachers and administrators toward the teacher association and the collective bargaining process.

Participant School District

The participant school district, which was given the pseudonym of "Winding River Consolidated School District" in this study, has an overall enrollment of approximately 16,000 students with a free and reduced lunch rate of 47%. The district is considered urban and incorporates a geographic boundary of 121 square miles. Located within the boundaries of the Winding River Consolidated School District (CSD) is one metropolitan city and two smaller towns. The district operates and maintains 21 elementary schools, six middle schools, three comprehensive high schools, and one alternative high school. The governance board has seven elected members and the human resource department of Winding River CSD reported there are 71 full-time administrators, 1,269 certified teachers, 1,429 support staff, and 7,290 registered volunteers. The district has an annual general fund budget of 264.3 million dollars.

This chapter describes the perceptions of both administrators and teachers of Winding River CSD on the district's teacher association and collective bargaining process. The data collection came from six key informants, who were interviewed a total of two times each over a one-month period. I begin with a description of the participants selected for interviews. Again, all participants were given pseudonyms in an effort to maintain confidentiality.

Key Informants

Teacher Grace Peterson

Teacher Grace Peterson has been with the Winding River CSD for the past eight years and has not been a member of the district's teacher association for the past five years. Prior to her accepting her current position, she spent eight years in another public district in the state of Iowa teaching Kindergarten, first and second grades. Ms. Peterson spent seven years at home between teaching positions to raise her now high school children. In the Winding River CSD, Ms. Peterson teaches first grade in one of the 21 elementary school buildings.

In order to put Ms. Peterson's teaching role in context, it is important to know that the building in which she teaches has an enrollment of 275 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, a free and reduced lunch percentage of 40% and a minority population that consists of 14% of the building total population.

Teacher Brian Mathews

Teacher Brian Mathews has been with Winding River CSD for the past 20 years and was a member of the teachers' association for the first five years of his career, but

has not been a member for the last 15 years. Mr. Mathews, up until the last seven years, taught physical education at a middle school building, but has since been teaching a program called “Project Lead the Way” in the same building.

The middle school that Mr. Mathews teaches at is one of six middle school buildings in operation in the Winding River CSD. His middle school building has a total enrollment of 580 students in grades five through eight, with a minority percentage at 11% of the total population, and free and reduced lunch numbers coming in at approximately 23% of the total building population.

Teacher Ms. Elizabeth London

Teacher Elizabeth London has been with the Winding River CSD for her entire 11 year career in education. She spent the first two years of her career with the district, working as a para-educator in a middle school level 2 special education program that served students with mild to moderate learning disabilities. Ms. London spent her first year in the district working at a middle school, but was cut as a result of a reduction in workforce, and subsequently transferred to her current school in the district. Ms. London currently works in one of the three comprehensive high schools in the district, teaching level one special education, and she has been a member of the teacher association her entire career. She was also a member of the para-educator association for the two years she worked as a one-to-one para-educator and has been a member of the teacher association for the past nine years.

The high school in which Ms. Elizabeth London teaches is one of four high schools in the district, and one of three comprehensive high schools. Winding River CSD

has one alternative high school. Ms. London's building has a total enrollment over 1500 students enrolled in grades 9 through 12, with a minority percentage of approximately 25% of that total population. The free and reduced lunch numbers come in at 46% of the total population. That number puts the free and reduced lunch numbers in that building higher than any of the other two comprehensive high schools in the district.

Teacher Caroline James

Teacher Ms. Caroline James has found her career in education via careers as a kinesiologist, pharmaceutical representative, and a cardiac rehabilitationist. Ms. James is in year 11 of her current career as a health teacher in the Winding River CSD at one of the six middle schools in the district. Ms. James has been a member of the district teacher association for all but the first year of her career in the district.

The middle school in which Ms. Caroline James teaches has an enrollment of over 500 students in grades 5 through 8. Of the total students enrolled, 37% are labeled as minority, and 67% are classified as receiving free and reduced lunches.

Principal Steven Potter

Principal Potter just finished his 11th year as high school principal in the Winding River CSD. He is currently a principal at one of the three comprehensive high schools in the district. Prior to arriving at Winding River CSD, Principal Potter was a K-8 principal in a neighboring state for five years, and a middle school teacher for the seven years before becoming a principal.

Principal Potter was a member of the teachers' association for two years while he was a middle school teacher and has been a member of School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) the entire time he has been an administrator in the state of Iowa.

Principal Potter oversees the same building Ms. London teaches in and that building has a total enrollment of over 1500 students serving grades 9 through 12, with a minority percentage of approximately 25% of that total population. The free and reduced lunch numbers come in at 46% of the total population. That number puts the free and reduced lunch numbers in that building higher than any of the other two comprehensive high schools in the district.

Principal Michael Ottoson

Principal Ottoson has just finished his seventh year as an administrator in the Winding River CSD. He is currently the head principal at one of the six middle schools in the district. Prior to becoming principal, he taught for a total of 14 years at two different middle schools in the district, teaching math and science. His first job in public education was teaching a group of teenage sexual offenders who had perpetrated against other minors; Principal Ottoson did this job for two years.

Principal Ottoson was a member of the teachers' association for five years before he ended his membership, but like Principal Potter, he has been a member of the School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) every year he has been an administrator in the state of Iowa.

Principal Ottoson oversees the building Ms. James teaches in and it has a student population of more than 500 students in grades five through eight. Of the total students

enrolled, 37% are labeled as minority, and 67% are classified as receiving free and reduced lunches.

Common Themes Found in the Data

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and better understand the administrators' and teachers' current perceptions of teacher associations and the collective bargaining process within an urban Iowa public school. I believe that better understanding these perceptions will allow educators to proceed with negotiations with a more informed perspective. This chapter presents the key findings obtained from 12 in-depth interviews conducted with six key informants. The key informants included two building level administrators, two teachers who are current members of the teacher association, and two teachers who are currently not members of the teacher association. Three major findings, and five sub findings emerged from this study. The three major findings are as follows:

1. Every key informant indicated that they have found it to be important to be and have been a member of the teachers' association at some point throughout their career.
2. All six key informants expressed the need for an active teacher association in the field of public education.
3. All six key informants cited the teachers' association and the negotiation process as being a major barrier to education and, as a result of being a barrier, the association and the collective bargaining process stands in the way of the vision

of the Winding River CSD. They believe this barrier ultimately stands in the way of a positive educative experience for the students of Winding River CSD.

The following is a discussion of the findings with details that support and explain each finding. By way of *thick description* (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Denzin, 2001), the researcher set out to document a variety and range of experiences, and thereby provide an opportunity for the reader to enter into this study and better understand the reality of the research provided by the key informants. The emphasis throughout was on letting participants speak for themselves. Quotations taken from interview transcripts attempt to portray multiple participant perspectives and capture some of the richness and complexity of the subject matter.

Finding 1: Perceived Necessity in Being a Member of the Teachers' Association at a Given Point Throughout Their Teaching Career

I asked each of the key informants if they have ever been a member of the teachers' association throughout their careers and every key respondent answered in the affirmative and their rationale was quite interesting. Mr. Mathews said that he was a member because a veteran teacher told him he needed to be a member of the association. Mr. Mathews recalled his first days of his in-service teaching:

I walked into the district office for our first meetings. This was the first time I had a real job. I didn't know what to expect, or what even to wear. I was real nervous but found a table to sit down next to a couple of other new teachers and a mentor teacher who had been in the district for a number of years. She taught science and I taught physical education. The district administrators talked to us for what seemed like hours about how to communicate with parents, how to recognize child abuse and who to contact if we had concerns. It was all important information, but I really just wanted to know what I was teaching and if I had time to get my room ready for the kids that would be showing up in less than a week. However, after being inundated with information from the administrators

one of the main things that stands out from the full day meeting is the mentor teacher telling me multiple times that I need to join the teacher association. I asked her why and she responded, it was just something that I need to do if I get sued. She got me scared and I couldn't spend my first year's salary paying legal fees, so I joined the union.

Ms. Grace Peterson had a similar story as to why she joined the teachers' association. Ms. Peterson has taught for 15 years and eight of the years have been in the Winding River CSD. She said when asked about why she joined the teacher association:

When I first started teaching, it seemed that everyone was a member of the union. There was certainly an emphasis on it, and that was just what you did when you entered the district. I was brand new; it was my first job out of college. I think you wanted to be protected in case there would be liability issues or things like. So I think liability wise that's what a lot of people do when they get out of college and get their first job.

Principal Michael Ottoson also had a very similar experience. He recalled his experience with me by saying:

I became a member of the union right out of school. I was not from a unionized family, never experienced unions before. My dad was military and he went to work for a company here in the city. I joined basically because I showed up and they said everybody joins. So I joined. The liability insurance towards being sued was something that was talked to me quite a bit about.

Ms. James and Mrs. London who are currently members of the Winding River Teachers Union reported that they are members because of a long history of union membership in their families. Both teachers come from a family of educators and their family members have always been active members in the teacher association. Mrs. London, who has been a member of the teacher association all of her nine years in the Winding River CSD, said when asked why she joined the teachers association:

I joined the union for two main reasons, the first, but probably not the most influential reason is due to liability reasons. If ever something would happen in my classroom that went to a lawsuit or went to due process of any kind, there was

concern that I would be able to have representation. The second reason and certainly the reason that had the most influence on my decision is that my parents who both taught for the Winding River Consolidated School district for a combined total of 58 years said that I had to. They absolutely were the reason I joined and am still a member today. They told me that as a result of our district being so large, the administration doesn't always have the best interest of the individual teacher in mind when making policy or rulings. When you have two parents who have as many years in the district tell you to do something, you just do it.

Ms. James also had family members who are teachers in the Winding River CSD.

Ms. James is in the middle of her "third" career and when she talked to some friends who were teachers during her first year of employment with the district, they provided what she termed "misinformation." They told her that she should not join the association because if something happens, the union will back her anyway, but once she started visiting with family members who are educators in the district, they convinced her it was a necessity to join the union. Ms. James recalled the event:

I remember talking to my sibling who is also a teacher in the district and he made it seem like I didn't have a choice to join the association. This was eleven years ago and I think maybe it was a different time, but he told me I was joining and I did. I listened to him. He told me I should because of the whole representation thing, and because it was just an organization that my family belonged to and I've been a member ever since that day.

The response from each of the key informants for the reason they became members of the teachers' association often came down to the fact that it was because it was something that everyone did. All six key informants at one point in their careers, either currently or in the past, have felt it necessary to have been a member of the teachers' association. As mentioned, the reasons for joining the teacher association were incredibly similar for all key informants, but the reasons two of them decided to leave

were different. These reasons will be discussed later in the findings; the next section focuses on Finding 2.

Finding 2: The Teacher Association is Necessary for the Winding River CSD

The teachers' association plays an important role for all three groups of the key informants. Even though the teachers' association was viewed as important for all three groups, it was important for each of the groups for very different reasons. For example, the key informant group representing the teacher non-members, which included Mr. Brian Mathews and Ms. Grace Peterson, viewed it as the current responsibility of the teachers' association to provide representation if there is an issue with a teacher legally. Mr. Mathew's responded with the following when asked what the association's current primary role is:

This might sound ridiculous, but I think they are important for teachers, but I really don't know what they do. I haven't heard anything negative about the union. I just don't hear anything positive. I think if I had to say something, that most people join the union because the union will back a teacher in case they get into legal trouble. I don't join, because I'm pretty sure they would have to come to my defense if I'm a member or not.

The second group of teachers was the group of informants who were currently members of the teacher's association and this group included the key informants Mrs. Elizabeth London and Ms. Caroline James. This group also felt the teacher association is important and this group predominately reported the primary purpose of the teachers' association is to negotiate salary, workload, and preparation periods. Mrs. London said the following about the importance and role of the teacher association:

I think the Winding River Consolidated School District teachers' association does an amazing job negotiating our contract and getting us as many benefits, including as much pay as they possibly can each year. I also think it is nice that

we have building representatives that we can go to and ask questions of if we have them. They are very approachable people and are very competent in looking into things when we do have questions.

When Ms. Caroline James was asked about the importance and purpose of the Winding River CSD teacher association she responded:

I think the association is very important and plays many important roles. I'm going to be honest with you. I feel more comfortable as a teacher just knowing that I'm a member of the union, knowing that I have professionals that are well-versed in law. They are well-versed in the contract and what that means is that they are kind of on my side. I know nothing about that stuff. You talk to me about curriculum and designing lessons and all that, I can do just fine. But with the professional venues it's great to have some backing. I know that the association will provide some backing if I need it in terms of translating if I have a question on what the contract means.

The third group was the public school administrative group. This group included Principals Michael Ottoson and Steven Potter. Like the other two previous groups of key informants, they too felt the teacher association plays an important role in education, but they also had the caveat that their power needs to be checked or it can and often does become exaggerated. When asked what the primary role of the teacher association at Winding River CSD is, Principal Ottoson responded:

I see the association filling two primary roles. I do think when the association runs the most effectively they look to improve their own teaching ranks. I'm a believer that improvement is always possible. I spout to my teachers constantly that every year they have to be a better teacher than they were the year before or they are not fulfilling their role in the district. The teachers' union can push that. The second thing I think is important is everybody needs to have a check. Without the association I have the feeling that a district, including ours, could start to make demands of teachers that are too much. The association should be that check. When we implement a decision we should say to ourselves 'What will the association think of this? Will they have a problem with this?' If we can't get it by the association, then we probably shouldn't be doing it.

Principal Steven Potter said in response to the same question:

The primary purpose right now of the union is to just try to get as much salary and benefits as possible. Secondly, the union makes sure their membership is treated fairly in all areas. I do feel without the association the state would get farther and farther behind on salaries so there is some benefit to having this association lobbying the government for wages, appreciation, and stuff like that.

Principal Ottoson also noted that he thought the teacher association was important for his salary and the salary of the other administrators in the Winding River CSD. He noted that he is a member of the meet and confer group that negotiates administrative salaries, and that, historically, the salaries of the administrators are tied directly to the increase that is negotiated by the teachers' association for their bargaining unit. If the teachers' association bargains for a 2.5% increase in base salary, the administrative group would in most circumstances be the beneficiaries of the same increase.

Finding 3: The Teachers' Association and the Negotiation Process as a Major Barrier to Education and the Vision of Winding River CSD.

All three groups of key informants had some significant concerns about the teachers' association and negotiation process. The concerns about the teacher association ranged from it being too politicized, not representative, and that the organization making it difficult to get rid of a bad teacher. The two teacher groups had very similar concerns about the association. The member and non-member key informant groups alike felt that the organization is too large. Ms. James said, "With the organization so large, there is no way that they can focus on the needs and desires of each of us." Mrs. London echoed this statement by saying, "I feel we have so many members that the focus in negotiation is always salary and benefits for those teachers who are getting ready to retire. I have many years left in the profession and feel the association doesn't represent me and teachers like me adequately."

Another common theme between the two teacher groups was that the association does not have any meetings during the school year to get feedback from the group they represent. Mr. Mathews said, “Even when I was a member, we never met in our buildings to discuss issues that we would like resolved. I was never asked my opinion.” Ms. James responded by saying that she did not even know who her building representatives were if she had an issue that she needed to have the teacher association address. She said, “I don’t know who represents me or even if we meet as a union.” Ms. Peterson, said that even though she is not a member, she would expect to be kept in the loop of the happenings of the association. Ms. Peterson said, “I think it would be good for their membership if they were able to show those of us who are not members, what they are doing for the profession, but as far as I know, the union doesn’t even have any building level meetings.”

It was evident from the two different teacher key informant groups that they felt the lack communication and meetings prohibited the association from being as student centered and, focused as the two groups either ought to be or could be. Mrs. London, said that she felt like the association could do so much more than it is, as far as communicating professional development opportunities to its members. She felt this type of action is being superseded exclusively by a fight for salary.

The non-member group took it a step farther and expressed discontent in the amount of politicization the teacher union participated in. Ms. Peterson said: “For me, I differ with political viewpoints of the teacher’s union. I’m not a one issue voter. It bothered me a little bit that there is a lot of politics that is discussed as a member and I’m

uncomfortable with that.” I asked Ms. Peterson to describe the “direction” she felt the association was taking politically and she responded:

I feel like they’re very left. They very much support democratic candidates and platforms. I just don’t always believe that that’s what needs to happen to make our schools successful. I don’t think throwing a lot of money at a school district makes it a better school district. In my opinion a lot of left candidates or democratic candidates support a lot of government. I don’t believe in a lot of government. Also, I’m a religious person so it differs a little bit with my Catholic faith. The association throws money at every democratic candidate, regardless of who they are and that bothers me. I don’t want my dues going to fund a candidate with whom I have such a huge disconnect with politically. I also have problems with association leaders handing out campaign yard signs at school. I don’t think the school should be a political atmosphere.

Mr. Mathews, echoed Ms. Peterson’s sentiments in saying that he did not want the association telling him who to vote for and constantly calling him during presidential election cycles to volunteer or donate money. Mr. Mathews continued by saying, “It appeared that their number one priority was politics and I found that to be a huge disconnect with what I thought should have been the priority for the association, which is what can we do as a profession to improve student achievement.”

Another issue the non-member group was concerned about was that they thought the membership dues are too expensive. When both key informants of the non-member group were members, they did not feel they got out of the association what they paid in to the organization. They both said that union dues were nearly \$500 a year and that they did not feel represented. Ms. Peterson chose to spend the money she would typically spend on association dues and buy an umbrella liability insurance policy to cover her assets in case she were ever sued while performing her job of a classroom teacher.

An issue that the non-members and administration had in common was that both sets of key informants thought the teacher association at Winding River CSD make it too difficult to get rid of poor performing teachers. Ms. Peterson discussed a situation in her building where a teacher who was allegedly “skewing” test scores, cheating, and fabricating report cards, and according to Ms. Grace Peterson nothing happened for years. It was not until enough people went to the building principal and complained about the teacher’s alleged misconduct that anything happened to the teacher. Ms. Peterson reported that the aforementioned teacher was transferred to another building, but the unethical grade reporting is still happening six years later, even though Ms. Peterson was under the belief that the teacher is being monitored. Ms. Peterson continued:

I guess I also feel like one thing that bothers me is I feel like there are teachers in our district that aren’t very good that are protected in their job. I feel like if you were in any other business and you were evaluated—not for student achievement, not for test scores—but what you were like as a professional, that there are some people who would lose their job in our system. There are a lot of people that keep their job and they affect a lot of people and a lot of little bodies. I think it is very difficult to let a teacher go because of the union and that is not good for our students.

The administration at Winding River CSD had very similar feelings to those of Ms. Peterson on the barriers and roadblocks the union erects when they as supervisors and instructional leaders of their respective schools attempt to either put a teacher on an improvement plan or ultimately attempt to remove the teacher from the classroom. Principal Potter felt the Uniserve director, who oversees the Winding River CSD and who does not have a background in education “doesn’t get it,” and “blindly battles” with the administration over teachers who need to be on an improvement plan or simply removed from their position. Principal Potter continued:

As a Uniserve director his job should be to battle for the process and the rules and that everything is followed and it shouldn't be about anything else for him. However, he tends to involve himself in issues that is about more than the process and makes it very difficult for me to only keep the teachers who are doing the best for our students. We have had in my time here, some teachers who are not doing what they should and are not doing what they can for students and my hands are sometimes tied because of him.

Principal Ottoson felt that the Winding River CSD does not always have the best interest of students in mind, because there are times that Principal Ottoson has seen where the teacher's association will protect teachers from dismissal or from being written up when they should instead be dismissed. Principal Ottoson reported:

If they're not a quality teacher and the district could do better with another teacher, frankly, they should be dismissed. That is a tough one. The union was started to protect the workers, but as time goes on sometimes the greatest amount of effort has been protecting the workers who need to be released. This is an unfortunate side effect of unions. I've worked with our union with the dismissal of two different teachers. Both times, when I laid it out—I said, 'These are the facts related to these people. This is the situation'—they said that yes the teachers should go. That was after a lot of assistance for the teachers, provided by both the district and the union. But at some point you gotta say, 'This employee is just not getting it done and it's to the detriment of these kids.' Sometimes they protect people that I've thought they shouldn't have.

In conclusion, it was clear from the interviews of the six key informants that there is a consensus that the teacher association at Winding River CSD is large and important to all parties, but at the same time, serves as a barrier to the ultimate goal of providing a world class education to the students of the district. Even though there were groups who thought the association was too politicized and had a misguided focus on salary, they also felt that without the association, there would be a strong likelihood that the Winding River CSD central administration would be tempted to and may run over the teachers and push policy that would be unjust and potentially illegal. Ultimately, it is the opinion of

the researcher that all parties, regardless of the potential negative aspects of the teacher's association at Winding River CSD, benefit from strong membership and an active leadership presence in the association. The benefit might come down to simply being higher wages, but all stakeholders in the district would agree that as a result of a strong bargaining unit in the teachers' association, everyone's salary is greater.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore urban Iowa public school administrators' and teachers' current perceptions of teacher associations and collective bargaining. It was the intent of this research project to better understand what the administrators and teachers in this study perceived about teacher associations and collective bargaining and why they maintained these perceptions. This explanatory study ascertained if there were similarities and differences among the administrators and teachers that might be influenced by systems or people within the school district.

In addition, this study was aimed at exploring why individual administrators and teachers perceive teacher's associations and collective bargaining the way they do. I also attempted to determine if certain conditions or situations, either formal or informal, at the building level or district level have influenced these perceptions.

It was my hope as the researcher that data collected from this study could be used by school districts, teacher associations, and bargaining teams to identify administrator and teacher perceptions of both teacher associations and collective bargaining that influence efforts to increase student achievement. By identifying these administrator and teacher perceptions and how the administrators and teachers developed these insights, a district or teacher bargaining unit may be able to develop a plan of action to address these views. An understanding of these perceptions could assist in making the relationship

between the administration and teachers less troublesome and collegial in terms of bargaining.

The research issues of this study were to take an in-depth look at the perceptions of public school administrators and teachers. The issues and focus of the study were presented in two questions:

R1: What are urban school administrators' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding collective bargaining?

R2: What types of interactions between teacher associations and urban school administrators appear to expand or restrict the collective bargaining process?

The results of this research came to fruition from the analysis of semi-structured interviews, which were used to determine the perceptions of the key informants. As the researcher, I created and used a tailored interview guide for each of the key informants in the study. The responsive interview method was used, and each key informant was interviewed two times individually. Using this model, I was able to collect information at multiple levels simultaneously. The key informants interviewed for this study included two building administrators, two teachers who were part of the teacher association, and two teachers who were not part of the teacher association. As a result of this work, there are several key conclusions that can be drawn.

Improved Communication Among the Three Groups of Key Informants Would Facilitate a More Collegial Atmosphere and Laser Focus on Shared Goals

Perhaps one of the most surprising findings was that all three groups of key informants felt each of the other respective groups feel a lack of professional respect and shared goals and outcomes, which become major barriers to a strong sense of

communication. This emphasis on communication is needed to attain a collegial atmosphere and a focus on the shared goal of maintaining and improving a “robust academic program” for all students. This perceived lack of respect shared by all key informant groups comes down to the idea that Kercher et al. (1998) documented, which said that in order to move to a new unionism, educators need to be viewed as *knowledge workers* rather than *industrial workers*. The concept of teachers as knowledge workers implies that most solutions to educational problems stem from the classroom upward, and should not be managed from the top-down. The teachers of Winding River CSD need to have the perception that their opinion matters, and they can be trusted as professionals to make professional decisions based on the district values and shared outcomes. This trust, which must be shown from the district administration was perceived to be lacking among both teacher groups.

Kerchner et al. (1998) argued that teachers should be required to be involved in decisions related to resource allocation connected to student achievement. This lack of involvement is evident when teacher Mr. Mathews said, “We get to do an online survey once every three years, where the district administration ask us how we think our building is working in regards to student achievement, administrative leadership and safety.” He continued by expressing frustration that a 15-minute survey was the only time that district administration asked him his opinion on the perceived functionality of the district and in particular his building.

This lack of communication does not only exist from the administration to the teachers but also between the two teacher key informant groups. There was constant

frustration documented from the teachers who were not members of the teacher association that they never heard about what role the teacher association was performing in the current school reform efforts. Teacher Ms. Peterson said that the only time she heard about what the association was up to, was when they were in the middle of a membership drive. She also felt that the district and teacher association communicated and worked together a good deal, but that this work was never communicated back to the teachers who are not members of the association. Teacher Ms. James who is a member of the teacher association also felt that she never heard from the association on what role they are playing in the district reform initiatives. Ms. James said, “I know we are going through some major changes and all I hear is that the teacher association is working in conjunction with the administration, but I don’t know what that means.”

Another association member Ms. London, said that she is very satisfied with her salary, but very dissatisfied with the level of professionalism exhibited by the administration and the teachers’ association. She felt like she is treated like an industrial worker, versus someone who is very educated, focused on professional development, and who maintains high professional goals. This might reflect the new unionism or professional unionism that many teachers prefer over the traditional industrial model (Duffett et al., 2008; Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). This model is based on shared leadership, communication, and common goals.

This frustration from the teachers who are members of the teacher association is contrary to the research that Currall et al. (2005), who discussed their findings that teachers who are more satisfied with their pay are more satisfied with their district unions

and also are more satisfied with their work. It is evident from the responses from both groups of teachers that they want to be treated like the professionals they are, and that starts with a strong sense of communication between all groups involved.

This communication could manifest itself in joint communication statements from the district administration and the teachers' association to all stakeholders in the district on all present and future meetings, formal conversations and shared goals. This would shed light on the how the two groups are working together in a succinct and transparent manner. Opening the lines of communication would also allow all three groups of key informants to know where the teachers' association stands on all issues and may deconstruct the idea held by all groups of key informants that the teachers' association represents a barrier to progress.

The Perceived Focus of the Teachers' Association and their Role in Collective Bargaining is Mainly Focused on Teacher Salary

It seems to be the opinion and perception of all three groups of key informants that the sole reason the teachers' association and the collective bargaining process exists, is to negotiate higher salaries for teachers. The administration felt that the teacher's association negotiates for salaries and raises that cannot be supported by the bottom line of the budget for the district. The administrators felt that, regardless of the expense of a raise, which might consequently lead to a reduction in force for some teachers, larger class sizes, or a cut in programming, the teachers' association still demands a raise every year. It was the perception of Principal Potter, who has served on the negotiations committee for the Winding River CSD, that whatever new money the district is given in allowable growth by the State of Iowa, the teachers' association request matches or

exceeds that number every year. He believes that their requests are a result of a “misinterpretation of the budget.” Principal Potter said, “We get to the point in negotiations where the association comes to us [the district] and says, ‘this is our stand and this is your stand and we’ll get an arbitrator.’ It has gotten very adversarial.”

Teacher Ms. James felt that the teacher association’s sole purpose is to increase salary as well, even if that may not be the overall wish of the district teacher association members. It was the perception of Ms. James that the association is most interested in supporting the teachers who are closest to retirement age and not the teachers who are starting their careers and may be at a different point in their lives. Ms. James said, “I would push for more than a percent or two percent raise. I have children and need insurance. I need family sick days and the association doesn’t care. They want to prime the people who are retiring for better IPER (Iowa Public Employee Retirement) benefits.”

It would appear that if the teacher’s association is negotiating for items in the collective bargaining process other than salary that this process needs to be communicated to members and non-members alike. This communication would allow the members who would like to negotiate for other things, such as insurance or sick days have a voice, and perhaps have a non-intended consequence of recruiting more members to be a part of the teachers’ association.

There is the Perception of an Absence of Shared Formal and Agreed Upon Goals

The two key informant groups of the teachers were concerned that the teachers and the administration do not have a set of shared and agreed upon formal goals for the district. The Winding River CSD has a set of goals which includes: developing a diverse

work force that utilizes exemplary professional practices, enhancing student social, emotional, and behavioral development, improving performance in all curricular areas, and increasing family and community support for student learning and citizenship development. These goals are listed on the website of the district, but it is the perception of the teacher groups that they are too broad and not agreed upon.

Both teacher groups felt that they were not asked for input, nor are the goals bought in to by the entirety of the district staff. It was the belief of the key informants that these goals are something that should be reviewed by the entire faculty to ensure they are timely, meaningful and appropriate. Teacher Mr. Mathews said, “I don’t know what the goals of the district are. It is pretty difficult for me to buy in to something if I don’t know what they are.” Teacher Ms. James said that she was aware of most of the goals of the district, but she does not think they are reviewed or discussed on a regular basis. Teacher Ms. London, who has been a member of the teachers’ association, felt that these district goals should be discussed as a bargaining unit to be certain that the goals listed on the website target the needs of the district and building in which she teaches. She continued by saying that as a result of the district being so large and serving so many diverse students that the goals can be interpreted in so many different ways.

Experiences with Collective Bargaining Could Be Improved for All Involved

The evidence would suggest that the perceptions and experiences with regard to the collective bargaining system employed by the Winding River CSD is not working as efficiently or effectively as they could be working. The perception of key informants among all three groups supported serious perceived issues with how the collective

bargaining system works. The key informants, who are comprised of the administrators have the perception that the teachers' primary interest is to make as much salary as possible without regard to anything else. The key informant groups, which are made up of both teachers who are members of the association and teachers who are not members of the association, felt that the administration does not have their or the students' best interest in mind when developing policy or negotiating contracts. The teacher members felt that the teacher non-members are taking advantage of being in a right to work state, by not paying dues and yet taking advantage of the benefits for which the teacher association negotiates. The non-members felt that the association remains solely focused on salary issues and politics and that what they negotiate has little impact on their pay or the success of their students. The evidence from this exploratory qualitative case study would prove that perceptions are reality to each of the key informants, and perceptions are difficult to alter.

A Lack of Interaction Between the Administrators and the Teachers Constructs Barriers to Success

It would give the impression from the evidence gathered from the 12 interviews that it is not the interactions between the teacher association and urban school administrators that currently expands or restricts the collective bargaining process, but rather, the lack of interaction between the two groups. It was the perception of all three key informant groups that the only times they met with the teacher's association was when it is time to negotiate contracts for the upcoming school year. As a result of this lack of interaction, it would appear from the evidence that these meetings can become adversarial very quickly. According to the two teachers who are members of the teacher

association, they are frustrated because the leadership of the Winding River CSD does not meet with them to discuss what the priorities ought to be for the upcoming collective bargaining agreement. The two teacher members did not even know who their building representatives were if an issue were to come up or who they would contact if they wanted to provide input in the negotiation process.

Limitations

This study explored the perceptions of administrators, teachers who are members of the teacher's' association, and teachers who are not members of the teacher's' association in regard to the teacher's' association and the collective bargaining process in an urban school district in the state of Iowa. As a result of this exploratory qualitative case study including the interviews of six key informants, caution should be exercised when drawing generalizations for the entire school district or even the various groups the key informants were representing. Although the participants selected represented the various factions in the school district, it is difficult to state that the results would have been the same had different participants been selected, even though the participants were interviewed two times for accuracy and consistency in the findings.

Lastly, it is important to know that the Winding River CSD is one of 336 school districts in the state of Iowa. The teacher association and collective bargaining process that is implemented in the Winding River CSD is unique to that particular school district. Other districts in the state of Iowa should take this into consideration when reading this study. One should not assume the various groups of key informants in another school district would respond in a similar way and therefore, an exploratory qualitative study

done in one of the other 335 school districts in Iowa would likely not produce the same results.

Recommendations for Future Study

The collective bargaining process and the teachers association are not new ideas to the Winding River CSD, but the process is not going as well as the three groups of key informants would like, and therefore, a few questions remain. First, it would be interesting to conduct follow up interviews with the key informants over a period of multiple years to see if they feel the process is changing and to see if their perceptions are changing.

Secondly, interviewing many participants from one of the key informant groups might produce deeper and more representative results of the process. It is dangerous to generalize results when only two participants from each of the key informant groups was interviewed. I also think it would be interesting to interview the leadership of the Winding River CSD Teacher's Association to see what their perception of the association and collective bargaining process looks like.

It would also be recommended to examine and explore the other 335 school districts in Iowa to see how they are managing the teacher's association and the collective bargaining process in their respective districts. The lessons learned could be more generalizable and prove to be valuable, as other school districts manage their staff, teacher's associations, and collective bargaining processes.

Teacher unions in the state of Iowa are needed to ensure that teacher rights are protected as the educational system becomes more and more complex and new money is

being restricted. It is important that the school districts and teacher associations work together in order to do what is best for the students, without losing sight that the school district employs professionals who expect to get paid as an educated professional would expect. Communication and transparency are key to be sure everyone is on the same page, and that everyone is doing what is in the best interest of their students.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEWER'S GUIDE FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Administrator:

Part One: Background

1. Introduction of myself and the topic.
2. Tell me about yourself, background, education, career path and how you got to be in this position?
3. Talk to me about your responsibilities as an administrator in your district.
 - a. Have they evolved over time?
 - b. Help me understand how your current responsibilities differ from how you perceived they might be when you were employed as a classroom teacher.
4. Have you ever been a member of the teacher association during your career?
 - a. For how long were you a member?
 - b. Why did you decide to become a member?
 - c. What did you feel the primary purpose of the teacher association fulfilled?
 - d. Were there any secondary purposes the teacher association fulfilled?
 - e. Would you have considered yourself an active member of the teachers' association?

5. Talk to me about the relationship that exists between the administrator and the classroom teacher?
 - a. Has this relationship evolved over your career as an administrator?
 - b. Tell me about the relationship that existed between the administrator and teacher when you were a classroom teacher?

Part Two: Collective Bargaining

1. Let's talk about your experience with collective bargaining as an administrator.
 - a. Have you participated in collective bargaining as a classroom teacher?
2. Tell me about how you perceive the purpose of collective bargaining?
3. Do you think your perception has evolved with your career? Why or Why not?
4. Do you feel the collective bargaining processes in your district expands or restricts progress in the area of student achievement?

Part Three: Teacher Associations

1. Talk to me about how you work with your district's teachers' association in your current role as administrator.
 - a. Has that relationship evolved over time?
 - b. How would you rate the strength of your district's teacher association?
 - c. Why?
 - d. Has the relationship that your district has with the teacher association evolved over time?

- e. Why? Why not?
2. Do you feel the goals of the district in which you are employed match with the goals of the teachers' association in your district?
3. Do you feel the teacher association in your district expands or restricts progress in the area of student achievement?
4. What types of interactions have you personally had between the teacher association while you have been employed in school administration?
 - a. Do you feel during these interactions that you had student achievement in the forefront?
 - b. Why?
 - c. Do you feel the teachers association had student achievement in the forefront of your interactions? Why?
5. Talk to me about the interactions between the district teacher association and district administration that restricts efforts of improving student achievement.
6. Lastly, talk about the interactions between the district teacher association and district administration that expands student achievement efforts.
7. Do you have anything I didn't ask that you would like add during this interview?

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEWERS GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Teacher:

Part One: Background

1. Introduction of the topic and myself.
2. Tell me about yourself, background, education, career path and how you got to be in this position?
3. Talk to me about your responsibilities as a teacher in your district.
 - a. Have they evolved over time?
 - b. Help me understand how your current responsibilities differ from how you perceived they might be when you were in your teacher education program.
4. Have you ever been a member of the teacher association during your career?
 - a. For how long were you a member?
 - b. Why did you decide to become a member? Why did you decide to not be a member?
 - c. What do you feel the primary purpose of the teacher association fulfills?
 - d. Are there any secondary purposes the teacher association fulfills?
 - e. Do you consider yourself an active member of the teachers' association?
5. Talk to me about the relationship that exists between the administrator and the classroom teacher?
 - a. Has this relationship evolved over your career as an educator?

- b. Tell me about the relationship that existed between the administrator and teacher when you were first a classroom teacher?

Part Two: Collective Bargaining

1. Let's talk about your experience with collective bargaining as an educator.
 - a. Have you participated in collective bargaining as a classroom teacher?
2. Tell me about how you perceive the purpose of collective bargaining?
 - a. Do you think your perception has evolved with your career? Why or Why not?
3. Do you feel the collective bargaining processes in your district expands or restricts progress in the area of student achievement?
 - a. Why or Why not?

Part Three: Teacher Associations

1. Talk to me about how you work with your district's teachers' association in your current role as classroom teacher (and visa versa).
 - a. Has that relationship evolved over time?
 - b. How would you rate the strength of your district's teacher association?
 - c. Why?
 - d. Has the relationship that your district has with the teacher association evolved over time? Why? Why not?
2. Do you feel the goals of the district in which you are employed match with the goals of the teachers' association in your district?

3. Do you feel the teacher association in your district expands or restricts progress in the area of student achievement?
4. What types of interactions have you personally had with the teacher association while you have been employed in education?
 - a. Do you feel during these interactions that you had student achievement in the forefront?
 - b. Why?
 - c. Do you feel the teachers association had student achievement in the forefront of your interactions?
 - d. Why?
 - e. Do you feel the administrators had the student achievement in the forefront of the interactions?
 - f. Why?
5. Talk to me about the interactions between the district teacher association and district administration that restricts efforts of improving student achievement.
6. Lastly, talk about the interactions between the district teacher association and district administration that expands student achievement efforts.
7. Do you have anything I didn't ask that you would like add during this interview?

APPENDIX C

WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Educator,

I would like to invite you to join me in an inquiry conducted as a doctoral candidate at the University of Northern Iowa, on perceptions of teachers and administrators on the impact of collective bargaining in one urban Iowa school district. This study will specifically examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers who are members of the bargaining unit and teachers who are not members of the bargaining unit. The study will uncover data relevant to the school district and the teachers association when negotiating and working together to develop a plan for collective bargaining. We will also explore what types of interactions between the bargaining unit and urban school administrators appear to expand or restrict the collective bargaining process. This study may prove useful to other urban Iowa School Districts as they look at their collective bargaining plan. The primary two questions guiding this research are:

What are urban school administrators' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the impact of collective bargaining on the district?

What types of interactions between teacher associations and urban school administrators appear to expand or restrict the collective bargaining process?

Your participation is voluntary and at any time during the study you may choose to no longer participate; nor face penalties if you decline to participate. Your superintendent, supervisor or colleagues will not know if you participated as this will be kept confidential. The data collection employed will consist of two semi-structured interviews that will be audio recorded at a place of your choosing. Each interview is expected to take no longer than an hour. Although the risk is minimal, no names will be used in the final report and the school district selected for study will not be identified. All participant data will be aggregated in a secure digital location with no school or individual participant identifiers (e.g. race or age)

to protect privacy and confidentiality to the greatest extent possible. Recordings of the interviews will be kept no longer than two years and then destroyed. As a participant, you will have the opportunity to review any quotes that are used and ensure the record accurately and fairly articulates your viewpoints. The results of this inquiry will be for scholarly purposes in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree. The final report will be shared with the key informants and a copy will be available at the University of Northern Iowa Rodd Library.

If you have any questions about this inquiry please contact Eric J. Gjerde, Principal Investigator and teacher at Jefferson High School, Cedar Rapids Community School District or Dr. Victoria Robinson, Professor of Educational Leadership and Department Head of Educational Leadership and Postsecondary Education at the University of Northern Iowa. If you have any questions about your rights as research participant, you can contact Anita Gordon, UNI IRB Administrator.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Gjerde, Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Victoria Robinson, Dissertation Chair

Please sign below if you agree to participate in this inquiry. Please note that you may decline participation at any time during the study. Participants will be offered a copy of this consent form.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX D

RELEASE FOR AUDIO RECORDING

Permission Form to Audio Tape for Eric Gjerde's Dissertation Study

I, _____ agree to be audio taped for the purpose of collecting data for Eric Gjerde's dissertation entitled, "A Qualitative Study of the Perceptions of Public School Teachers and Administrators on the Teachers' Association and the Collective Bargaining Process in an Iowa Urban School Setting." I understand the data collected will be used only for the study and participant's names and buildings will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be recorded in field notes rather than actual names that would identify participants. I also understand that once the field notes are collected and data is analyzed, the audiotapes will be destroyed once the dissertation is approved by the dissertation committee.

Signed:

Name of Participant

Date