Social Justice Teacher Unionism in a Canadian Context: Linking Local and Global Efforts

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Abstract

Neoliberal restructuring of education is a global phenomenon that has been actively resisted by a number of K-12 teachers' unions acting at the state and global level. These efforts have been well documented by union activists within each organization, but the accounts have been descriptive rather than analytic in nature and have masked internal, micro-political struggles for democracy, social justice, and equity faced by teacher unionists struggling to democratize their own federations. This paper uses a micro-political perspective to analyze the career histories of 25 activists affiliated with a Canadian provincial teachers' federation that self identifies as a social justice union. By analyzing moments of conflict and collaboration between groups of activists who compete for resources but are not necessarily at cross purposes, this paper contributes to the efforts of those hoping to increase the durability of social justice teacher union activism at a local, organizational, and global level.

Introduction

Neoliberal restructuring of education is a global phenomenon (Apple, 2003; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Connel, 2006) that has been actively challenged by K-12 teachers' unions in a number of national, state and provincial contexts. These challenges have tended to occur through organized resistance to accountability-based reform in single jurisdictions (Bascia & Chassels, 2004; Dobbin, 2007; Flower & Booi, 1999; Harrison & Kachur, 1999; Poole, 2007; Stevenson, 2007) and more recently, as union leaders have taken note of the increasingly similar nature of restructuring efforts across jurisdictions, they have begun to challenge neoliberalism through transnational solidarity efforts (Compton & Weiner, 2008; Kuehn, 1996, 2006; Multi.union.team, 2006; Robertson & Smaller, 1996; Vally & Spreen, 2006). These national and transnational activist strategies have been documented by organizational insiders, but their accounts have tended to be descriptive rather than analytical in nature.

Detailed accounts of counter-hegemonic union strategy at a macro-political level serve at least three important purposes. First, they offer an alternative to the "nation at risk,

declining teacher quality" (NCEE, 1983) narrative fuelling two decades of educational reform in North America and elsewhere. Second, they provide loose activist frameworks for teachers' organizations hoping to resist similar assaults on their work in other contexts. And third, they challenge fatalistic beliefs that unions have outlived their usefulness by demonstrating that many of these organizations have adapted to the increasingly globalized, transnational nature of educational governance without losing their critical capacity to hold governments accountable for educational policy decisions.

But descriptions of macro-political teacher union activism can only go so far. By focusing on organizational advocacy efforts at the national or international level, the authors of these accounts treat organized teachers as an artificial, monolithic group (For a similar argument see Bascia, 1998a; Bascia, 2009; Johnson, 1983, 1990). This treatment masks internal, micro-political struggles for democracy, social justice, and equity faced by teacher activists struggling to democratize their own federations.

Teachers' unions, like all organizations, are composed of members with a diversity of world views, commitments, priorities, and experiences. By adapting to changes in the education system, these organizations may intentionally or unintentionally generate internal structures mirroring those used by national and transnational education authorities. If the masking of these struggles extends beyond public relations and motivational purposes to impact union governance, teachers' federations run the risk of reifying at an organizational, local, and community level, the very structures they set out to challenge at a state, provincial, national, or global level (Bascia, 1994, 1998b; Bouvier, 2004; Foley, 2000; Goldberg, 1995; Mawhinney, 1997; Murphy, 1990; Perlstein, 2005; Rottmann, 2008a, 2008b; Smaller, 1991; Stewart, 2008; Urban, 2000).

Federation activists hoping to resist global, neoliberal education policy do not necessarily need to involve all teacher members in their transnational solidarity efforts, but the ongoing support of their work depends on their ability to make it relevant to members whose primary work takes place in classrooms, schools, communities, and local associations. They may share their developing awareness of transnational injustice by developing global education curriculum on the basis of their work and encouraging educators to discuss international injustice with their students. However, their capacity to demonstrate the problematic nature of centralized, neoliberal reform and the importance of a democratic public education system depends in the long run on their ability to increase teacher involvement in the union by democratizing internal governance structures and resisting the reproduction of centralizing tendencies common to national and global educational authorities.

This paper uses a micro-political perspective (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991) to analyze the career histories, activist commitments, and initiatives of union involved teachers, staff, and elected officials affiliated with one Canadian provincial teachers' federation. By revealing the power dynamics, patterns of participation, conflict and co-operation in a particular organizational context, it provides an analytic alternative to the more common macro-political accounts of international and national teacher union activism. The primary goal of the paper is to contribute a micro-political analysis to a multilayered

social justice teacher union framework for those hoping to increase the durability of organized challenges to educational inequity at the local, provincial, national, and transnational level.

Data Sources
This paper uses a micro-political perspective (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991) to analyze the career histories, activist commitments, and initiatives of social justice-minded educators affiliated with one Canadian provincial teachers' federation. The primary source of data is 25 career history interviews—each one to three hours long—with teacher activists, staff, and elected officials at a Canadian teachers' union who either self identify or were identified by colleagues as social justice advocates. I used purposive sampling to identify participants in a variety of organizational divisions (communications, bargaining, member services, professional development, research, executive), organizational locations (school, local, provincial), position types (union involved teacher activist, elected official, permanent and contract staff), and career stages (early, mid, late, retired), making a deliberate attempt to over sample for those who had been union involved for two or more decades. Secondary sources of data included five career history interviews with educators affiliated with 5 provincial teachers' federations across the country (one east, two central, two west; one small, two medium, two large), and documents tracing the history of social justice activism at the primary union.

Conceptual Framework
As I analyzed participants' career history interviews, I became increasingly aware of conflicting though not always oppositional relationships between groups of activists. Their contests for organizational priority setting and resource allocation led me to conceptualize the organization not only as a site of collective activism against external political threats, but also as a site of political struggle on its own terms. It was at this point that I turned to the literature on educational micro-politics. The analysis for this paper is based on Ball's micro-political (1987) theory of school organization and Blase's (1991) edited text on the politics of life in schools.

Blase (1991) introduces his book with a definition of educational micro-politics:

> Micro-politics is about power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves. It is about conflict and how people compete with each other to get what they want. It is about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends. It is about what people in all social settings think about and have strong feelings about, but what is so often unspoken and not easily observed. (Blase, 1991, p.1)

Blase's (1991) theory of educational micro-politics is a critical response to rational organizational theorists who attribute authority to actors on the basis of their organizational locations in hierarchical bureaucracies. More useful to me than his theoretical contribution, however, is his clearly articulated conception of the relationship between power, conflict and cooperation in coalition politics. Blase's work helps me

conceptualize internal and external union activism as a dynamic network of organized though not always coherent political endeavours. Like Blase (1991), Ball (1987) begins his text with a critique of rational organizational theory, but unlike Blase who is primarily concerned with the work of educational administrators, Ball, is primarily concerned with the work of teachers. Ball's cross-case analysis of teachers' work, relationships and resource struggles in English comprehensive schools undergoing educational reform in the 70s and 80s is useful to me because it focuses on teachers, is carefully contextualized, and like my work is inductively analyzed. From Ball (1991) I borrow the micro-political trends he identified across educational contexts—conflict, goal diversity, ideology, participation and control. Together, these concepts help me identify patterns of privilege and participation as they relate to union activism.

Building on Ball's (1987) and Blase's (1991) micro-political theories of organization, I analyzed participants' descriptions and explanations of day to day union realities focusing particular attention on three factors: 1) Patterns of participation and privilege among activists with different levels of decision making authority and commitments; 2) Instances of conflict over the articulation of what it means to be a "social justice union;" and 3) Instances of cooperation within and between informal political groups.

Teacher Union Context
If provincial and territorial teachers' federations in Canada are broken down by membership numbers into large (50,000-200,000 members), medium large (20,000-50,000), medium (10,000-20,000) and small (800-10,000), the provincial organization I studied is medium large. It is one of three self described "social justice teacher unions" in the country but like most teachers' unions in Canada and the United States, its website and promotional material use the tagline "Union of Professionals." With respect to social justice, the organization has a strong reputation for resisting neoliberal restructuring efforts at the provincial level, a history of international programs dating back to the mid 1920s, feminist and multicultural programs dating back to the early 1970s, an Aboriginal education program initiated in the early 2000s, and a more recent social justice program containing sub-units dedicated to feminist, multicultural, anti-poverty, and anti-homophobia education. In spite of three decades of social justice programming, however, employment equity in relation to staff hiring has made little progress. The demographic homogeneity found in most North American teachers' unions can also be found this organization. White, heterosexual, middle class, long time teacher activists late in their careers continue to be over-represented among staff, elected officials and union-involved teachers. Over the last two decades, women teachers have increased their representation in provincial union leadership and administrative staff positions, however, decision-making authority at the local and provincial levels continue to be guided, behind the scenes, by white, ideologically left leaning men in their 50s and 60s.

Findings
Patterns of privilege: Decision makers, Change agents, and Autonomous advocates
Each of the 25 staff, elected officials and teacher activists I interviewed had a unique career history but in relation to the existing structures, norms and policies of the federation, it is possible to outline three major patterns of participation based primarily on

decision making authority. The first group to emerge from my analysis was a small cluster of centrally involved staff and elected officials whose understanding of social justice shaped the norms of the organization. I have called this group the *decision makers* not because they were the only ones to make decisions or even because their decisions were the only ones to impact the federation but rather because their decisions held more organizational weight than did those of other participants. Many expressed a high degree of personal alignment with union priorities, policies, and norms, like one participant who said: "I agree with virtually all the policies of the organization, so that doesn't create a problem for me but for some people it might." The *decision makers* concentrated their efforts on macro-political activism. They advocated for a strong and accessible public education system and formed alliances with unions in other countries. Both sets of activist commitments challenged neoliberal educational restructuring, one at the provincial level and the other at the global level. With respect to demographics, all *decision makers* were white, middle class, heterosexual men who were either late in their careers or had recently retired.

The second group of participants to emerge from my analysis had slightly less decision-making authority in the federation than did the *decision makers*, but their work had a lasting impact on federation governance. They grew through their union involvement and in the process altered the norms of the organization with respect to social justice:

> My involvement in the federation has made me better able to deal with difficult situations. My strategizing has improved. It's given me the vehicle to become more active. I may not have been as active if I had not had the federation, so maybe that's how I've changed, from an observer and thinker to an activist with a vehicle to support my activism.

I have conceptualized this group as internal *change agents*, not because they were the only ones who worked toward socially just educational change—in fact, many of the *decision makers* have dedicated their lives and careers socially just change on a global level—but rather because their decisions were often framed by themselves and others as pushing on the existing norms and practices of the federation. The demographics of the internal *change agents* mirrored those of the *decision makers* in all but one social dimension. They tended to be white, middle class, heterosexual *women* who were late in their careers or had recently retired. In addition to the stark difference in gender—all *decision makers* were men and all *change agents* were women—the latter group, on average, grew up in less wealthy families and tended to have more formal education than the former group. The *change agents* supported the provincial and global efforts of their male colleagues, however, their primary efforts revolved around improving the conditions for women teachers in schools and their federation. In addition to their gender equity work, many of them provided professional development for teachers around the province about issues related to multicultural education.

A third group of participants with relatively peripheral decision making authority in the federation approached their locals and the provincial body as individual or organized activists concerned with a particular educational issue. I have referred to them as the

autonomous advocates not because they stood beyond the influence of socio-political or organizational structures but rather because in relation to the other two groups, their primary work tended to occur in a location external to the federation, and was often driven by their experientially based analyses of social oppression. Of the three groups, they experienced the least dependence on federation structures:

> Well, to be perfectly honest, even though I have been involved in these organizations and there has been progress, one thing that we have found out is that we get far more achieved as individuals than trying to work through these big structures, far more.

Like the *change agents*, they were committed to improving working and learning conditions for a particular group of minoritized teachers and students, but unlike the *change agents*, they lacked a critical mass of similarly positioned teachers. Their advocacy focused on one of a range of issues—poverty, Aboriginal education, anti-racism, homophobia and linguistic minority issues. The *autonomous advocates* were more demographically diverse with respect to race, sexuality, parental socio-economic status, gender, and career stage than were either of the other two groups.

The *decision makers*, internal *change agents*, and *autonomous advocates* were distinct not only with respect to demographics and decision-making authority in their union, but also in terms of career pattern, conceptions of social justice, conceptions of educational change, and theories of organization. The *decision makers* used the power and resources of the organization as a whole to advocate for teachers' working conditions and to challenge provincial accountability policies and global neoliberal restructuring efforts. The internal *change agents* built on the feminist movement and networks of women teachers to include women in federation governance; integrate women's issues into all federation structures; and challenge hierarchical decision making patterns within the union. And the *autonomous advocates* built on personal experiences of societal and educational discrimination, links to community groups and connections with individually selected colleagues, to name and challenge racism, homophobia, colonialism, and classism within the federation and the education system more broadly.

The activist commitments of these three groups are not in conflict conceptually but their desire to articulate federation priorities and designate the allocation of resources in combination with their great diversity of activist commitments, definitions of social justice, and theories of organization led to a number of intra-organizational conflicts between groups. It is to these conflicts that I now turn.

Defining social justice teacher unionism: a contested process
Not all staff, elected officials, or union-involved teachers supported social justice unionism but the 25 participants I interviewed either self-identified or were identified by others as social justice advocates. As a result, even those I characterized as *decision makers* did not have free reign over organizational priority setting. Rather, all twenty-five participants were united in their need to challenge colleagues who believed the federation

should focus solely on teachers' working conditions, bargaining, professional development, and member services.

The agreement among social justice advocates became more tenuous, however when questions about resource allocation and organizational priority setting were raised. The *decision makers*, who defined social justice in a relatively broad way, believed the full weight of the federation should be used to challenge accountability based reform and privatization threats at the provincial and global level. For them, the defence of public education was a priority because it was foundational to a democratic society:

> One of the things we do most consistently and most vociferously and most continually is defence of public education. To me that's a social justice issue. Public education is not something we should take for granted. It's a cornerstone of a democratic society.

The primary educational conflict for the *decision makers* occurred at a macro-political level between neoliberal forces and the needs of teachers and students as a united group. They tended to speak less about internal organizational conflict because they believed consensus would increase the power of their global struggle and benefit all teacher members in the long run.

For the *change agents*, the most worrisome conflict occurred intra-organizationally between them and their male colleagues who shaped organizational norms and policies. Like all union activists, the *change agents* were concerned with advocacy for strong working conditions, public education, and resistance to neoliberalism, but their most immediate goal was collective self advocacy within the federation. At the time of the interview, they were attempting to revive feminist and multicultural programs that had been eliminated ten years earlier by a centrist caucus within the federation. Before the two discrete social justice programs were replaced by a general social justice umbrella structure, these programs had broadened *change agents'* horizons (Bascia & Young, 2001), increased their access to union activism, and provided them with an organizational vehicle to influence federation governance. The *change agents* were constrained not only by executive decisions of the centrist caucus, but also by pressures from their male colleagues in the left leaning caucus. Attempts to minimize internal political conflict and redirect activist energies to macro-political struggles deeply angered and alienated the *change agents* who reported increasing tensions between men and women in the federation. These experiences taught feminist activists to "beware men of the left"—men who supported women's programming in its early stages with the implicit expectation that women's advocacy within the federation would always align with the priorities set by the left caucus.

Like the *change agents*, the *autonomous advocates* were most concerned with the barriers placed on their work by their own federation and most satisfied with those social justice efforts that allowed them to rely on their instincts. Unlike the former group who were supported by a critical mass of teacher union activists and thus comprised a significant movement within the federation, however, the latter group worked with a small

constellation of teacher and community activists within the federation and beyond to reduce the discrimination and violence experienced by Aboriginal, LGBT, and financially disadvantaged students within the education system. A number of participants raised concerns about their unions' inflexible and somewhat authoritarian approach to community activism:

> The ministry of education has imposed these enhancement agreements which look a lot like accountability contracts and we need to interrupt that, but we also need to inform our members so they don't look like a bunch of racists when they go there and say 'no, you can't do that' because that's how [a racialized community within the province] see people from our organization, as the "no" people, or barriers to success.

The *autonomous advocates* had less interest than their colleagues in competing for resources, affiliating with one of the two federation caucuses, or fighting about what it meant to be a social justice teacher union. Rather, their priority was to use some federation resources to alter the day to day experiences of marginalized teachers, students and communities:

> I think it's important that social justice work get done. But in our organization, it's always at the expense of somebody else or something else. It's always "rob Peter to pay Paul." It's never, "we're going to make this work." Rarely is it ever that. What bothers me is this mentality of lack of resources…I think our thinking needs to be re-jigged so that it's recognized that there's plenty for everyone, right? There's plenty for everyone and it's not competitive.

Taking the comment of this participant seriously, I now turn to the ways in which teacher unionists used federation resources to work through conflicts across a range of activist priorities for social and organizational justice.

Bridging global, organizational, and school based activism

Social justice minded teachers, staff, and elected officials were often set up by an increasingly centralized executive to compete for resources, but they also found ways to mediate the competitive climate and isolation they experienced. They integrated feminist and anti-racist work into their global solidarity initiatives; worked across caucuses; resisted hierarchical organizational structures; mainstreamed social justice work into professional development and bargaining structures; demystified union structures and processes for other groups of activists within the federation; increased union access for new teachers; provided tangible social justice support for members who chose to remain in the classroom; supported a culture of critique; and mediated school, community, union relations.

Over time the *change agents*—activists involved in women's and multicultural programming—noticed their programmatic isolation and as a result began to integrate their work into other organizational divisions. They continued to build their activist

networks and advocate for the election of leaders who supported their discrete programs, but they also began to involve themselves in other federation divisions. By taking their feminist analyses and commitments with them, they were able to integrate women's issues into local bargaining, professional development, federation leadership and governance. Once they realized the power of their efforts, they made sure to share what they had learned with newer social justice activists within the federation. An anti-homophobia activist described his gratitude for their support:

> I think networking with the women's program people was really key because when we went to the first Annual General Meeting, we were really green delegates. We knew nothing and the women's program delegates took us under their wing, explained to us the history and protocols of the federation. They helped us with our microphone strategy for that first big motion to pass and without their support we wouldn't have been able to do it because AGMs are very political. There's a lot of manoeuvring on the floor. There is a lot of microphone strategy. You need to be very knowledgeable to know what you're doing when you're up there at the microphone.

This demystification process allowed activists advocating for a range of social justice issues to build and diversify networks while simultaneously challenging the culture of competition for social justice resources.

Staff with primary responsibility for the social justice programs not only challenged the culture of competition within the federation, but also worked to alter governance norms when possible. One way they did this was by privileging representational decision making in the face of top down demands from the executive:

> I think one of the things I did was that if I was asked by the executive, for example to draft an affirmative action policy immediately without the help of the anti-racist program committee… I would say "no, that's the committee's job" because I honestly believed that I represented the committee, that I represented the teachers and I was not there to tell the teachers what to do….so often what happened with the federation was that it was very convenient to get people from the urban centre and it really bothered the people from way up north, or in the small rural communities that we didn't have equitable representation. There were people way up in the smaller communities who would be excellent resources for the federation who were never considered so I always wanted the committee to have some input and I would not do anything without their input and support. This angered the executive because it reduced their control.

The few staff assigned to social justice programming faced a number of challenges as they attempted to shift organizational norms. Their work was isolating and their workload intense. They encountered more resistance to their

efforts than staff in bargaining, communications, and professional development, and were more likely to hold temporary positions with reduced job security—an unintended consequence of the left leaning caucus' advocacy for administrative positions that were accessible to activists with current classroom experience.

A few of the more established staff—mostly *decision makers* who supported social justice work—used their organizational knowledge and positional authority to support the work of later generations of staff in these challenging positions:

> It is so difficult for social justice activists to be advocates within the organization, to always be raising issues that aren't necessarily comfortable with people, so, I've made a conscious effort to be a critical friend with the Aboriginal program to make sure that there's somebody to talk to and someone else to voice the issues so that the isolation is not so great

Decision makers supported the work of contract staff responsible for social justice programming not only by reducing their isolation within the organization, but also by promoting discrete social justice work in and through their international solidarity initiatives:

> The focus of our first projects were on gender issues and the participation of women in the union…There has been a significant change in the gender make up of people in the leadership of most of the unions that we've worked with in Latin American and Southern Africa and the Southern African work also links to our anti-racist programs.

This process was mutually beneficial to the *decision makers* and *change agents*. By engaging a number of teacher activists and elected officials in international union solidarity work, the *decision makers* gained organizational support across caucuses for their global social justice initiatives and by involving themselves in feminist and anti-racist work abroad, the *change agents* expanded the scope of their activism.

Experienced activists in all three groups supported the work of classroom teachers by increasing their access to union structures, decreasing their isolation at the school or classroom level, helping them navigate union structures, and distributing tangible resources:

> Our anti-racist and feminist work raised the profile and respect for the federation within the general membership so people could then say, "you know that money we're paying to the federation, here's something tangible that we're getting back, all I have to do is make a phone call and there's going to be someone there to give me a hand." And so that's very tangible and real so people can say, ok, you know I understand why I'm paying the money to the federation. It's something they can take home with them.

The resulting increase in local teacher engagement in and support of their federation benefited not only social justice advocates but also the federation as a whole. Teachers who were interested in becoming increasingly union-involved following this initial piquing of their interest volunteered to participate in local and provincial committees:

> I think there is a real sense of ownership by a lot of teachers, teachers who want to become involved. I mean there's always people who don't want to become involved but those who do want to become involved, have every opportunity. It's a real grass roots organization I feel in that way and people who have concerns, who have issues, who want their union or their organization to address those issues have the opportunity to make that happen.

The participants who felt most optimistic about social justice unionism in their organization were *change agents* involved in the women's and multicultural programs in the 1970s and 80s. Their enthusiasm and feelings of collective agency were magnified by broader social movements paralleling their personal commitments. The *autonomous advocates* on the other hand, were less enthusiastic about committee involvement. Most believed that if the federation expected them to work for free, it should support their activist priorities in return. Those who were able to gain support did so, not directly through committee involvement, but rather by forging individual relationships with trusted colleagues of all ideological, divisional, and caucus affiliations:

> I need all groups to listen to issues that are connected to Aboriginal education so I work across the groups. I have to. I can't afford not to. I would not be very effective and so therefore I'm not a member of either of those organizations or groups.

By doing this, they not only gained a wider audience for their work but also muted sharp political divisions between caucuses within the federation. The *autonomous advocates* were not always ideologically aligned with the federation, but they continued to work within union structures to accomplish their goals. Once they gained credibility within federation structures, they found it easier to interrupt the problematic nature of those structures. For example, one teacher managed to massage seniority policies to reduce turnover at a community school serving racialized students living in poverty:

> Equality is not enough. Just having access to schools is not good enough. You have to make sure there is equity at the end of the day and that the kids are coming out literate and in order to accomplish that there has to be a different distribution of resources. There has to be compensatory education for these kids…I ran interference with the union…we would train people to work in the program but because they were new teachers they would be at the bottom of the seniority lists and be laid off at the end of the year and be re-hired in another school. We had no way of getting them back so I said, "couldn't we just do a swap? Mary for John?" we

finally were able to work that out through the district bureaucracy and through the union, which was really extraordinary.

This participant's efforts were facilitated by a number of factors—his extensive personal networks within the education system and community, his perseverance, his credibility with union leadership, and union officials' tentative willingness to consider the value of his proposal.

Conclusions

In the spring of 2007, when I was conducting interviews, I was told by a number of administrative staff that the federation executive was promoting increasingly centralized decision making authority in the name of social justice. The executive, in turn, shared their belief that it was members of the administrative staff who were inappropriately using social justice rhetoric to frame their disputes with federation leaders. This dispute demonstrates both the centrality of the term social justice in organizational relations and the vitality and immediacy of micro-political tensions. Rather than masking these conflicts to prevent organizational fragmentation, union leaders would do well to acknowledge the divisions and build on connections already being forged between activists with a range of experiences and commitments.

Teacher union activists who challenge inequities at the global, provincial, and local level are set up to compete for organizational "social justice" resources, however, the substance of their work is not in conflict. Internal competition for decision-making authority and resource allocation, as well as the perception that consensus building is the best way to minimize internal fragmentation in response to external pressure, have positioned groups of social justice advocates within the union against one another. While conflict between groups of activists with different priorities and commitments can cause tension in teacher federations, it is possible for activists to work across diverse commitments without homogenizing organizational efforts or giving in to hierarchical, bureaucratic structures.

Implications for teacher activists

The micro-political organizational analysis presented in this paper has implications for those interested in connecting global resistance to neoliberal educational restructuring with organizational democratization efforts and community-based activism. By paying attention to the career patterns, activist commitments, and demographics of social justice teacher union activists in a particular organizational context and by documenting moments of conflict and collaboration between groups of activists who share resources but are not necessarily at cross purposes, this paper contributes to a larger discussion about how to increase the durability of teacher union challenges to educational inequity at the local, organizational, and global level.

This increase in durability depends on an acknowledgement rather than masking of micro-political tensions within the organization and support for a diversity of perspectives and social justice commitments. Drawing on the evidence presented in this article, the support might involve: internal structures that pique the interest of a

demographically and experientially diverse group of social justice activist teachers; accessible entry points for union involvement and capacity for a variety of activists to shape union structures; multiple organizational locations for social justice work; and opportunities to connect with social justice activists who have commitments at the global, organizational, and local level. Social justice teacher union struggles do not need to be monolithic to be mutually beneficial.

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