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Why Here and Why Now? Teacher Motivations for Unionizing in a New Orleans Charter School

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The rigidity of teachers unions has been given as a primary reason for their lack of representation among America's rapidly growing, although still relatively small, charter school sector. In the case of post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, the city rapidly converted from a union-backed teacher workforce to a largely nonunionized charter school workforce in the years following state takeover and charter conversion. This makes the recent emergence of two single-school unions in charter schools there worthy of study. As the teachers attempt to organize single-school unions in a nearly all charter school system, what are their motivations? This case study of one of New Orleans' emerging charter school unions found that pay inequities, job insecurity, a lack of teacher voice in school-level decisions, and a culture of compliance, all motivated teachers to seek unionization. Teachers hoped to promote equity and teacher involvement with their union, but the organizing effort did strain some relationships, particularly those involving middle management.

KEYWORDS *charter schools, New Orleans, teachers unions*

INTRODUCTION

Charter school growth in the United States has been rapid in the last decade (National Association of Public Charter Schools, 2014). The 6,440 charter schools operating in the 2013–2014 school year (National Association of Public Charter Schools, 2015) exhibit a wide variety of missions (Beabout &

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Jakiel, 2011), student demographics (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011; Grannis, 2013), instructional practices (Berends, Goldring, Stein & Cravens, 2010; Lubienski, 2003; Sondel, 2013), and student academic achievement levels (Miron & Nelson, 2004; National Charter School Study, 2013). What charter schools have in common, however, is that their teaching forces are usually nonunionized. Price (2011) reported that 88% of charters were nonunionized at that time, and of the 12% that had teachers unions, half of those operated in state or local contexts where participation in existing union contracts was obligatory as a condition of operation. Thus, only 6% of charters made an active *choice* to support teacher unionization.

Despite the fact that self-unionized charters account for less than 0.5% of public schools in the United States, the political debates surrounding charter school unionization have been fierce. In a response to the Price report referenced previously, Heartland Institute interviewed Stanford University political scientist Terry Moe who stated:

The unionization of charter schools is a bad idea. It can only lead to greater formalization and greater rigidity in the organizations and more adversarial relations between administrators and teachers. There's nothing that positive they can accomplish that they can't accomplish informally (Bateman, 2011, np).

For those who have fought against the negative impacts that increased bureaucracy and standardization can have on schools (Chubb & Moe, 1988), unionized charter schools can be seen as a threat to undo all of the gains in autonomy and school-level control that have accompanied rapid charter school growth. If charter schools are believed to be the most expedient method to extricate schools from stifling bureaucracies, then unionizing them could be considered a step backward.

On the other hand, others have perceived charter school expansion to be a direct attack on teachers unions and teacher influence in school decision making, which have been shown to contribute to student academic success (Carini, 2002; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Richard Kahlenberg and Halley Potter (2014) of the Century Foundation have argued that the original vision of charter schools as nimble, teacher-led, educational research and development labs, originally championed by union leader Al Shanker (1988), has been hijacked by educational privatizers. In this view, we see charter school unionization described as a key effort to get the promises of the original charter school movement back on track. That is, charter schools are a good idea, and unionization might be the way to save them. Indeed, despite teachers unions' historically tepid views on charter schools (Cibulka, 2000), they, themselves, have pursued organizing charters recently (Prothero, 2014).

While it is beyond the scope of this study to resolve this nearly intractable debate, we seek to go to the ground level and understand the

micropolitics of the single charter school unionization effort (McLaughlin, 1990). Since 2012, two charter schools in New Orleans have formed school-specific teachers unions. One of the schools was studied to examine the process of charter school unionization. If previous research on educational reform is correct, then it is likely the case that day-to-day issues impacting teachers drive their responses to reforms, rather than any desire to advance a pre-existing political or educational ideology (Evans, 1996; Muncey & McQuillan, 1996; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). This study is guided by our desire to answer the following question: *What are the motivations reported by teachers for unionizing their charter school?*

UNIONS AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

Since the influential “Nation at Risk” report (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), unions, while remaining an important player in the arena of educational politics, have often been sidelined or conceived as part of the problem facing K–12 school improvement (Brimelow, 2003; Lieberman, 1997). Following 1983, calls for Postindustrial/New Unionism/Reform Bargaining have become common (Kerchner, Koppich, & Weeres, 1997; Loveless, 2000; Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2000). These calls have been characterized by an emphasis on teacher quality and student learning, an active union role in teacher professional development, and a decentering of seniority as the primary metric of teaching success. One salient aspect of postindustrial unions has been calls for school-specific, rather than district-wide unions (Kerchner et al., 1997). In this sense, it is not inappropriate to view charter school teachers unions as an evolution of new unionism. In a nation where student achievement (as indicated by standardized test scores) has become the primary metric of school effectiveness, it has become increasingly untenable for unions to avoid performance-based compensation and promotion. And in cases where the resistance of teachers unions has met political pressures favoring accountability, unions have faced powerful opposition from policymakers (Greenhouse, 2014). Charter schools, where student performance is a nonnegotiable metric already, may be an optimal place for such new unionism to be created. In their history of teacher unionism, Kerchner and colleagues (1997) note that “collective bargaining legitimated teachers’ economic interests, but it never recognized them as experts about learning” (p. 7). The legally-mandated emphasis on student performance in charter schools suggests that unions that take root there might also have a similar focus. Kauffman (2013) suggests in the *New York University Law Review* that charter school unions may offer a hopeful middle ground for providing teachers with reasonable job security and protection from administrative abuse, but at the same time ensure that principals have a straightforward path to terminate poor teachers.

Historically, one of the primary goals of teachers unions has been a standardization of policies governing teachers work (Urban, 1982). This has included standardized salary schedules, standardized teacher evaluation processes, standardized rules for hiring and promotion (especially emphasizing seniority), and standardization of the work lives of teachers (length of school day, length of school year, planning periods, professional development, etc.). This standardization simplified the process of policing abuse of employees and recruiting teachers. In a teaching profession historically viewed as a short-term job for single women, such standardization supported the goals of making teaching a permanent job and extending the tenures of new teachers (Cuban, 1993).

Charter schools on the other hand, from their origins nearly 25 years ago, have been billed as hubs of educational innovation, free from the constraints of bureaucracies and union contracts (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2010). It comes as no surprise that it has taken a while for teachers unions to find common ground with charter school operators. Successfully negotiating a union contract necessarily sets some limits on administrative flexibility which is enjoyed by most nonunionized charters. And from the perspective of charter school teachers, many of whom sought out charter schools as preferred places to teach, the loss of flexibility could potentially be undesirable as well. The literature is somewhat unclear on both *why* and *how* charter school unions have begun to emerge.

Probably, the most well-known example of a unionized charter school is the Green Dot charter management organization (CMO), based in Los Angeles, which has its own teachers union and contract (Center for Educational Governance, n.d.). With the intent to attract and retain quality teachers, Green Dot founder Steve Barr envisioned a CMO-specific union, and Green Dot teachers founded Asociacion de Maestros Unidos (AMU) shortly after Green Dot was founded in 1999. The union is an independent affiliate of the California Teachers Association and the National Education Association (NEA). The work of the union focuses on the 21 Green Dot schools in Los Angeles. Green Dot also has a unionized charter school in New York City which is not party to the AMU contract (Kauffman, 2013).

Another well-known unionized charter school is the Amber School in New York City (Kauffman, 2013; Lake, 2004). Formed by a community-based organization and launched in 2000, the school partnered with New York's United Federation of Teachers in an effort to form a replicable model of union-charter relationships. Their resulting "thin contract" (originally only 6 pages) was signed in 2007 and combines both seniority and teacher improvement on the pay scale as well as outlining a grievance procedure that involves both teachers and administrators in decision-making roles.

The existing studies of unionized charters have tended to focus on the contracts themselves, rather than the conditions and process that led to successful unionization. While the contract that emerges from a negotiation is an

important artifact, it only tells part of the story about how and why a charter school became unionized. We are likely to see more unionized charters in the very near future. The American Federation of Teachers reports that it organized 40 charter schools between 2012 and 2014 (American Federation of Teachers, 2014). However, a recently published study of 30 years of school district collective bargaining agreements in Louisville, Kentucky concluded that these agreements are surprisingly stable and unlikely to be useful reform tools because of this stability (Cowen & Fowles, 2013). If contracts don't change all that much once instituted, then getting the first contract well built is of vital importance. Borrowing and tweaking contracts from other unionized charters would lead to standardization and the loss of an important opportunity to rethink the teacher-administrative relationship in accountability-focused schools. Understanding the conditions that gave rise to unionization and the processes that led to a successful contract negotiation is an important piece to realizing the promise of new unionism.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study seeks to answer the question: *What are the motivations reported by teachers for unionizing their charter school?* This single-case study (Stake, 1995) utilizes several modes of data collection. Semistructured interviews (Seidman, 1998) were conducted with a school administrator and six teachers associated with the unionization effort that was studied. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed manually. These transcripts were analyzed for emergent themes via the process of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Additionally, documents pertaining to unionization efforts were collected as well to establish further the extent to which processes and structures supported or inhibited the unionization efforts. These include board and committee-meeting minutes, press releases, the negotiated contract itself, and media coverage of the negotiation process.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

At the time of this writing, there are two charter schools with single-school unions in the city of New Orleans. One has completed the contract negotiation process and one is in the midst of negotiation. The case study presented here examines only the school with a signed contract. For the sake of participant confidentiality, the school will be described with a pseudonym and no media references to the research setting will be provided. It is our hope that the protections we offer the participants outweighs the lack of popular press citations that would make for a more typical research manuscript.

The School

George Washington High School (a pseudonym) is the focus of this case study of charter school union organizing. It is a charter school serving Grades 9–12 and is regularly ranked as a top-performing school in New Orleans and Louisiana, and often among the top public schools in the country. The school has operated for over 50 years, but was governed by the Orleans Parish School board up until 2005, and reopened as a charter school after the storm and resulting state takeover of most of New Orleans' public schools. It currently serves around 600 students and has a faculty of around 60 teachers. There have been two principals at the school in the last 10 years.

Research Participants

The six teachers interviewed represented the English, History, Arts, Science, and Math departments. Four had taught at the school only after it became a charter, and two had taught there both pre- and post-Katrina. The current principal was also interviewed.

TEACHER MOTIVATIONS FOR ORGANIZING

Our data showed a range of motivations for unionization perceived by participants. As one teacher labelled them, “some micro things and some macro things.” These included pay inequity, a lack of teacher input into administrative decisions, a fear of speaking out, a lack of clarity on staff retention policies, and teachers' changing views of teachers unions.

Pay Inequity

The most commonly referenced motivator for unionization on the part of teachers at Washington High was pay inequity. While the school had its own published salary scale, teachers and the principal reported that it was not followed in many cases. From the perspective of the principal, this was done in an attempt to bring in educators with specialized advanced degrees or significant professional experience rather than career educators. This was viewed by the principal as part of a strategy to “change the homogeneity in ideology” that held the school back. He wanted people with more diverse professional backgrounds than he currently saw. If a new English teacher had accomplished professional experience as a writer or a new science teacher had a doctorate, the principal wanted to give that person a more market-competitive salary rather than simply slotting them into the bottom rung of the pay scale. The principal had a long background working in private schools where individually negotiated salaries are more common.

Washington had been part of the United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO) bargaining agreements prior to the 2005 state takeover, and had its own published salary scale once it became a charter. Thus, the inconsistency of the salary scale could have been said to be a violation of a cultural norm.

And while teachers understood the logic of paying higher rates to get top talent, there was a negative intent attributed to instances where new teachers were brought in below the published pay scale. As one teacher noted:

The people he thought he could get away with, he lowballed their salary. He paid them below our salary scale. But if he thought he could get away with it, he lowballed people, and his friends at school, he increased their salaries.

One teacher involved in the organizing effort had experienced this personally: "I was someone who was hired as an 11th-year teacher, and my first year I was paid as a third-year teacher. And I had to fight like crazy to get my pay."

The principal noted that there had not been across-the-board pay raises for at least 5 years due to overall financial woes at the school. Thus, individuals bargaining for increases for themselves became the only path to a pay raise. As a high-performing school, there was also high demand for teaching openings and some perceived the administration as taking advantage of this in salary negotiations:

He said we have 3 equally qualified candidates for this job, what are you willing to work here for? They were basically saying we are going to take the low bid . . . he said we are in a financial crunch right now and we need this.

While some teachers felt that they could demand a raise up to what they believed was their appropriate salary step, it was recognized that not all teachers had the comfort to do that. Teachers interviewed suggested that male teachers, teachers who weren't supporting families, and teachers who were hired shortly before school opened, were in stronger negotiating positions than others.

Because salary information was not often publically shared among teachers, faculty members were unaware of variations from the salary scale for some time. This lack of equity, once discovered, was perceived as unethical behavior on the part of the principal. It violated a shared sense of fairness among many faculty members and indicated that the rules *as written* were not necessarily the rules *in practice*. Despite state and national trends towards performance-based compensation for K–12 teachers, a Washington High teacher typified the thoughts of her faculty when saying, "I think it's

important to have a pay scale where everybody knows what you're getting based on your experience." This belief in a pay scale wasn't necessarily recognition that seniority was the most important teacher characteristic, but was a bulwark against "unfair treatment" and a personnel approach characterized by an "utter lack of equity." One of the biggest single events of the preorganizing period was the faculty learning about a teacher "who was not being paid what he was deserved and was being bullied around and word got out about that." Clearly we see concerns here more for equity of pay than we do for general pay increases, but the fervor that accompanied these concerns was still strong.

Lack of Teacher Input

A second major motivation for unionization at Washington High School was teacher dissatisfaction with their small role in school-level decision making. The faculty, one of the most experienced of any public school in the area, wanted input into decisions at the school and perceived an administration that was making too many decisions without teacher perspectives being considered. As one participant stated:

People wanted a voice—a faculty voice—in planning sessions and planning meetings, even something as simple as when you're going to plan the calendar for the new school year, how about having a faculty member sit in on the planning for that kind of thing?

Veteran teachers had noticed a decline in teacher decision-making authority at the school: "teachers that I knew that either retired or retired early . . . felt like their input in major decision making had decreased, and we sort of collectively wanted to change that."

And while there was a clear understanding on the part of teachers that some decisions would clearly be administrative ones, they were seeking clearer communication on decisions regardless of who the ultimate authority was on an issue:

We didn't feel . . . like we were kept in the loop on things, like decisions seemed to be made from on high and put down without a lot of discussion or input. Now maybe more of that happened in the leadership team that I was not privy to.

Interesting is the previous reference to the school leadership team that existed prior to the unionization effort. This group did contain department chairs, and was the logical structure for teacher input to make its way to administration. It became clear during data collection that this team may not

have been functioning optimally. One reason may have been that the principal was appointing department heads, which may have led to a homogeneity of perspectives within the leadership team.

On the occasions when faculty did feel free to voice their concerns, one participant noted that there seemed to be little receptivity to teacher concerns:

We'd had meetings where everybody would speak but nothing would really happen out of those, so I kind of thought here's some good people that can help us to do that and I didn't see any other way, to be honest, to do it.

Compare this to the statement of Terry Moe quoted previously saying that anything a union wanted in a charter school could be accomplished informally via teacher-administration problem solving. And while that may be true in the abstract, at least some people on the teaching force at Washington High felt that there wasn't "any other way" to influence the administration without the power afforded by an organized teachers union.

And while the teachers took pains to report that this unionization effort was for the betterment of the school and not a statement about charter schools or other reform efforts in the city, some participants saw their organizing very much in connection to the charter school takeover. The lack of teacher voice at Washington was linked for some to the charter school movement which swept through the city rapidly over the previous 10 years.

I think charters are a good movement and a good idea, however, I'd always believed like at my core that it'd taken, in many ways, the teacher voice out of the reform movement. And instead put that in the hands of whoever runs the charter.

Important here is the identification with the charter school movement which has grown unquestionably dominant in New Orleans. This was not organizing as outright resistance, but organizing to *reform the reform* in a way that would insert teacher decision making into the charter schools now ubiquitous in the city.

Lack of Transparency on Retention Policy

Other than inconsistent use of the published salary schedule, perhaps the most commonly cited motivation for the unionization effort at Washington High were concerns about job security and retention. While it was commonly believed that the pre-Katrina UTNO contract allowed some substandard teachers to remain as employees, Washington High teachers didn't report this occurring at their school. What was a concern for participants were some instances of questionable teacher firings and a lack of job security. One teacher reported feeling blindsided by the termination of several colleagues:

“When the current administration came on board, there were a couple of people that were terminated rather abruptly, and I had no clue why they had been terminated to tell you the truth.”

Participants did not describe these terminations as being shocking or illegal, so there is no implication that the administration did anything improper by terminating these employees. But there was a negative impact on the school climate afterwards:

He fired two to three good teachers every year, and he fired them in June via a certified letter . . . and all the other teachers got their contracts in mid to late June, so we didn't even know. No one knew if they really had a job for the next year until mid to late June. So that made people feel very insecure.

A teacher reported that they were “required in February to [complete] an intent to return form” but then “about a week or two after school would get out, you would get a letter asking you to return.” This reality of leaving for the summer holiday without confidence that a job would be waiting for them in the fall was an uneasy change. One participant reported feeling like they were on “tenterhooks every summer, every year” without a contract for the upcoming year in hand. It is important to remember that the school faced some significant financial problems several years after Katrina, and there was significant budgetary pressure as enrollment was down and the school was adjusting to the somewhat harsher fiscal realities of being a charter school rather than a district school. While the principal reported a dire need to cut costs, there was an extremely uncomfortable lack of security reported by participants. As one teacher stated: “. . . one of the things we wanted to eliminate, this fear, this job insecurity, because of how this principal fired good teachers . . . And it just really affected morale and security for teachers.”

In some cases teachers worried about the potential for arbitrary terminations, with one female teacher noting: “he might decide one day that he doesn't like what I'm wearing or my reproductive choices and maybe I'll be part time at a lower salary next year.” Others felt that there might be political motivations behind the terminations: “People were . . . not being renewed if, in any way, they criticized the administration. And so outspoken critics of the CEO, one after the other, found themselves with no contract for the upcoming year.”

The principal was sensitive to the teachers' need for job security, noting that “teachers went into education for job security rather than money, and in New Orleans charter schools, they had neither.” What was desired on the part of teachers was a clear set of policies governing teacher dismissal and job security. Under the state of Louisiana's recent COMPASS teacher evaluation system, teacher evaluation was a heavily state-governed process, even in

charter schools. But the state process did not mandate teacher support to the same extent it required certain measurements of teacher performance. This feeling is summarized well by one teacher in particular:

If your teaching is evaluated and you are found to be not a hundred percent . . . there needs to be follow up by the administration to remediate, and a person needs to be told if they're making forward progress, rather than just saying generic things like well, you need to get your act together.

There is some evidence to support the conclusion that many schools in the state were failing to provide effective teacher support during early implementation of the COMPASS teacher evaluation program (Chiasson, 2015). So while issues of effective teacher coaching certainly were not specific only to Washington High, there is the possibility that a union contract may be a potential complement to the challenges of COMPASS implementation, as it is more likely to provide the coaching and support components generally missing from the state program.

For teachers to feel comfortable in their role, they wanted an early confirmation of continued employment from year to year, as well as a clear process for coaching and improvement planning for struggling teachers. In the nonunion charters across the city, teachers generally had little assurances of continued employment from year-to-year, giving tremendous flexibility to administration, and little job security to staff. This was not seen as an acceptable condition by Washington teachers and became an important piece of the negotiation process to be discussed as follows.

Teachers Fear of Speaking Out

A related issue was that teachers felt afraid to speak out due to fear of reprisal from the administration. As one participant noted: "there was concern that no one could express dissenting opinions for fear of not getting a contract at the end of the year." With what appeared to be a less-than-optimal role for teachers in school-level decision making (previously discussed), a fear of speaking negatively about leadership or school conditions was described by participants. One teacher stated: "I would like to see a mechanism whereby teachers feel free that they can talk about issues . . . and not feel threatened." In some cases there was clear evidence for being intimidated to speak out, as indicated in this scenario:

. . . we had another senior faculty member [who] spoke up in a faculty meeting and expressed her being upset over not bringing back [an extra-curricular program], and she was actually sent a formal letter by the principal saying, do not ever speak up in a meeting like that again, do

not ever disagree with me like that again in public. And that became known to many faculty members, and so this sense of feeling like we couldn't speak up . . .

In other cases, certainly, a perception of intimidation may have muted staff opposition even if it might have been positively received. The typical leadership team process of airing grievances to administrators appears to have been ineffective, building up tension within the faculty. Concerns had nowhere to go for productive resolution. Administrators may have assumed that faculty complaints were being heard, and that a healthy chain of command was in place. Teachers felt quite differently:

Saying that we didn't follow the chain of command, if we had a problem with the principal, we should've gone to the principal and tried to address it. And I think [they] really didn't grasp the fear of retribution that was just felt wholeheartedly by the faculty. By a *majority* of the faculty.

The school's charter documents include a grievance policy by which faculty, parents, and students who don't receive satisfactory resolution to a complaint can appeal to the school's charter board. This charter does not include, whether intentionally or through oversight, a provision for complaints against the principal to be taken directly to the board, who served as the principal's employer. This is a typical clause in charter school founding documents that was missing in Washington High's case. In any case, it is unclear if such a provision would have resolved matters, because there was a general consensus that the nonprofit board that managed the school was rather removed from day-to-day staff issues.

I guess one of the problems with charter schools, in my opinion, is that they are individual governing units. Most of these people that are on these governing boards are very busy people themselves. They are movers and shakers, right? They are lawyers or they run foundations, or they run businesses. And you know what, by and large, they really don't have time to oversee a school properly. So if a principal says, "hey everything's all right," they just say, "good, I have to go get ready for my trial" or something like that.

While this problem of distant board governance is certainly not unique to charter schools, it certainly minimizes their usefulness in resolving conflicts between teachers and building administrators, if they are not knowledgeable and trusted figures. Even if the board was approached formally, there was a sense that the public nature of board meetings would "out" the person and lead to retribution from the administration anyway: "no one felt comfortable to go complain to the board about these things as an individual because I don't know these people, I don't want to go and then I'm the guy who's in trouble."

One participant described the anxiety associated with even discussing management concerns with board members informally: “I personally did [meet on a one] on one level with a couple board members, but many of us felt like we would lose our jobs, or at the very least be disciplined for speaking up.” The fear of reprisal for speaking out as an individual led quite naturally to a desire for a collective mechanism for airing grievances felt by faculty. Individuals felt emboldened when speaking for the group, as discipline was less likely to be handed out to many faculty members: “now I feel like I can go and say [anything to administration] because what are you gonna do?” Another faculty member clearly saw a union as the protection that was needed: “It’s a shame that a lot of us felt like we couldn’t speak up without retribution too, so we wanted the protection of the union.”

Changing Views of the Union

One final motivator for unionization at Washington High was an incident of union support for a Washington teacher who had employment issues with the administration. While UTNO lost its contract to represent the teachers of the New Orleans Public Schools after state takeover (Beabout, 2010; Buras, 2010; Perry, 2007), UTNO still had an office in New Orleans and a small membership, albeit no contracts with any schools. A Washington teacher, who was an individual UTNO member, received help in a contract issue from the union, and this positive outcome caught the attention of other faculty members at the school. Another teacher at the school described the story this way:

A veteran long-term language teacher enlisted the help of UTNO to help him, he had already been a member, so he had been a member before this current drive, and when the union helped him successfully defend his position and forced the principal to back down, and treat him with some respect, and make it an arrangement that was beneficial to everyone; I think a lot of people looked at that and said, look at what the union can do in this situation.

With teachers holding some negative residual memories of the pre-Katrina UTNO organization, this targeted action in their own school got the attention of many potential union members. Another faculty member described the same scenario like this:

There was lots of talk in the teachers’ lounge that what’s happening to so-and-so is just not right, it’s just not fair, and look at him . . . the union’s fighting for him . . . and look how the union is taking up his case, and making sure that he is treated fairly. And the rest of us standing back and saying oh gee, maybe I want to join the union too.

Again, positive momentum was generated from this much-discussed issue, and the stage was set for the faculty to desire a union contract despite the lack of any unionized charter school in the city.

The removal of teachers, a loss of teacher planning time, and downward pressure on salaries all are straightforward ways to improve an operating budget that is at a deficit. But either through poor communication or the inevitable resistance to organizational change, faculty did not feel a part of the changes with their new administration and didn't feel a part of the project of improving the school's finances. With nowhere to go with their concerns, a union became a viable option.

CONCLUSION

This examination of teacher motivations for creating a charter school union shows a wide variety of factors that piqued teachers' interest in unionizing. This list included: pay inequity, a lack of teacher input, a fear of speaking out, a lack of job security, and teachers' changing views of teachers unions. While job security and teacher decision-making power are quite typical union bargaining goals for teachers unions, some of the others are more unique. In terms of pay, the union contract was signed with a nearly identical pay scale as was in place preunion. While teachers requested stronger healthcare benefits and pay raises, these were dropped in early stages of negotiating with the board. This is an indication that bread and butter issues were not the priorities for this effort. Rather, pay equity and teacher decision making were prioritized. Improved job security was perhaps a more important motivator given the desirability of Washington High as a place for teachers to work. Those expecting long tenures would naturally prioritize job security provisions.

A final important note here is that teacher motivations for unionizing seem to be traced to the coexistence of two factors: (1) a lack of trust in the administration (engendered by perceptions of wage manipulation and administrative retaliation) and (2) challenging workplace conditions brought on by financial problems the school inherited from a previous administration. The current research design is insufficient to determine which of these forces was stronger, although they certainly produced a large effect when seen together by Washington teachers. Future research on charter school unionization should include a larger sample of schools so that more variations in school type, financial conditions, and staff-faculty relationships can be analyzed.

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