

SCHOOL DISTRICTS, LABOR CONFLICTS, AND FRAMING PROCESSES:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

By

STACI S. VESNESKE

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To the faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of STACI S. VESNESKE find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Chair

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Abstract

by Staci S. Vesneske, Ed.D.
Washington State University
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Chair: Gordon Gates

Despite their visibility both in the media and in school district communities, school labor conflicts have been largely neglected in educational, labor, and social movement research. Scholars call for research that focuses on labor conflicts utilizing social movement theory. Critiques of social movement theory direct researchers toward the study of collective action within organizational contexts, fusing the noun and verb of framing analysis, developing a more sensitive, less static interpretation of behavior, and exploring both institutional and movement-related power concurrently. Therefore, this study attends to the aforementioned concerns by generating understanding around the following three research questions: What frames are demonstrated in a school district labor conflict? How are they produced? And, what is the manner by which one frame is replaced with another? Collection of data focused on semi-structured interviews of school board members, district/school administrators, union members or union staff members who were involved in labor negotiations, and gathered public and internal documents. By exploring the perceptions, actions, and decisions of school district leaders in a labor conflict, the analysis centers on interpreting the interconnections between labor conflicts, social movements, and leadership.

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Dedication

To Kendall, my daughter, for when she said:

“Welcome back from your summer classes, mommy, congratulations!”

“It’s OK, it’s just the second day of the volleyball tournament.”

“Sounds like a long paper. Sounds boring, too.”

“Is anyone ever actually going to read this thing?”

“My mom is writing a book; that’s why she has all this stuff on the dining room table.”

“Love you bunches.”

To Kim, my love, for when he said:

“You’re stressed, let’s go to dinner.”

“I think you need some fun, let’s go play poker.”

“Yes, I’ll drop the taxes off, empty the dishwasher and take your car in.”

“I’m so proud of how smart you are and how hard you’re working.”

“I love you.”

To Irene, my best friend, for when she said:

“Enough time off, we need to start taking classes again.”

“We need to do this before our kids get older.”

“You have to take these extra classes now so you can graduate in May.”

“Here are your forms, your reminders, and your cap and gown steamed.”

“Time for a drink.”

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teacher strikes and labor conflicts create a difficult, time-consuming, and emotionally strained environment for school leaders (Carter, 1979; Cherim, 1982; James, 1987; Long, 1987). Given the emotional upheaval for all involved and difficulties in gaining access, research on teacher strikes and school labor conflicts for the most part consist of studies that describe the effects of strikes on students (Brandon, 1989; Caldwell & Jeffreys, 1983; Crisci & Lulow, 1985; Wilkinson, 1989). Only a limited number of studies describe teacher strikes with the goal of understanding the context of the labor conflict that led up to the strike (Cole, 1969; Harris, Rausch & Ryan, 1982, Nicaud, Villere, & O'Connor, 1983). Perry and Berkes (1977) and Schnell and Gramm (1987) argue the value of labor conflict research for building theory on leadership actions that could help decrease the likelihood of labor conflict resulting in a strike. There is a need for such studies in education organizations (DeMitchell, 2005; Loveless, 2000).

When scholars have focused on understanding conditions surrounding strikes and other labor activities, they have described them as a distinct type of social movement (Anderson & Dynes, 1983; Clemens, 1996; Cornfield & Fletcher, 1998; Dixon & Roscigno, 2003; Dixon, Roscigno & Hudson, 2004; Fantasia & Stepan-Norris, 2004; Karsh, 1970; Voss, 1996). And, scholars have recently noted that social movement theory can lend insight to examinations of inter-organizational dynamics (Campbell, 2005; Clemens, 2005; Creed, Langstraat & Scully, 2002; Davis et al., 2005; McAdam & Scott, 2005). More specifically, the framing perspective within social movement theory illuminates the ways that participants make meaning from labor conflicts and how those meanings are produced. Finally, Riehl (2001) suggests that scholars link social movement theory with studies related to educational organizations and schooling. Thus,

this dissertation reports on an ethnographic study that sought to develop understandings of school district labor conflicts utilizing a social movement framing perspective.

The following chapter, which provides the introduction to the dissertation, is organized into four sections. The first section provides the background for the study and sets the stage for the ensuing section that articulates the research problem and purpose. The next section offers a brief overview of the study's methodology. Finally, this chapter provides a report of the study to explain the organization of the ensuing dissertation chapters.

Background

Newspaper accounts of school district labor conflicts throughout the nation make it clear that relationships between management and labor are increasingly characterized by economic, political, and cultural strife. In some school districts, the severity of these labor conflicts between teachers and administrators will culminate in a strike. Declining resources are identified as playing a role in these disputes, and several newspaper accounts cite differences over pay increases and benefit costs as driving factors (e.g., Bach, 2003; Bragg, 2005; Brant, 2005; Maeshiro, 2005; SA: teachers strike..., 2005; Teachers strike for..., 2005). In other districts, labor conflicts have centered on contract provisions that either address or prevent the implementation of reform efforts. These have created tensions between district administrators who feel obligated to support federal or state mandated requirements and teachers who see the requirements as unfair, unjust, and impossible to implement (Greenberger, 2000; Halkin, 2005; Knapp, 2001; Melton, 2005; Schmidt, 2001; Schools face..., 2000;). Federal and state laws place additional pressures on school districts and unions. This happens when teachers are identified as not "highly qualified" and test scores are placed on the front page of the local paper, with

additional information listing schools that are characterized as not making “adequate yearly progress” according to federal regulations.

Regardless of the nature of school district labor conflicts, it has been reported that teacher strikes do indeed create a difficult, emotionally strained, and time-compressed environment in school districts. In descriptions offered by education magazines, school administrators and school board members cite events such as the constant phone calling of board members, the negative portrayal of school administrators, and the violence of some teachers as events that arise during labor conflict which not only impacted them personally, but also irreparably damaged the relationship they had with the teacher union (Carter, 1979; James, 1987; Long, 1987). Authors also note the vast amounts of energy and time that strikes require, which take time away from the focus on student learning (Carter, 1979; James 1987).

Additionally, some research has suggested that teacher strikes can have a negative impact on student achievement. Several studies from a series of Pennsylvania teacher strikes in the early 1980s found that school strikes had a negative affect on both student attitudes toward school and their achievement in school-intensive subjects such as math and science (Brandon, 1989; Caldwell & Jeffreys, 1983; Crisci & Ludlow, 1985). Although later studies (Thornicroft, 1994; Zirkel, 1992) question the conclusions of the earlier authors, they note only that the impact of school strikes on student academic progress is inconclusive, not necessarily inconsequential. For example, although no direct cause and effect was claimed per se, Thornicroft acknowledged that the overall trend observed was that students had higher achievement levels in school districts where there had never been a strike as compared to those that had. Still, it remains unclear whether the economic viability of the non-striking school districts may have been a factor related to the higher student achievement.

While the aforementioned studies focused on the impact of school strikes, very few studies have focused on how participants in school district labor conflicts interpret the events during the negotiations. However, there are some notable, though less recent, exceptions. Nicaud, Villere and O'Connor (1983) discuss teachers' strikes as a series of related, sequential events. They describe different phases of a teacher strike based on their interviews with participating teachers, although their descriptions focus more on events than on the way individuals interpreted events. Also, Harris, Rausch and Ryan (1982) explore the context of a first strike situation. They focus specifically on the behaviors of the union and the attitudes of other teachers when studying a teacher strike in a suburban area. Their conclusions indicate that in this strike situation, both parties believed that the other was hiding their agenda. The teachers believed that the school board was disrespectful to them during the strike, and hired a negotiator specifically to prolong the negotiations. The school board members believed that the state-level education association had picked their district to push new negotiations limits in order to raise the contract norms at the state level, and that the union demonstrated a lack of training and poor timing in the execution of bargaining tactics. The researchers concluded that all of the conditions led to an ongoing negative climate in the district. Further, Many and Sloan (1990) used a survey instrument to gather data in regard to management and labor perceptions about the degree of competitive or cooperative bargaining behaviors. They found that the bargaining process was perceived to contain a variety of competitive, cooperative, and mixed bargaining behaviors, which is consistent with assumptions in some bargaining models. Finally, Maitland and Kerchner (1988) found that teachers whose bargaining team leaders and administrators demonstrated a highly collaborative model of bargaining also perceived that their administrators and unions together were seeking resolution to educational issues.

In addition, some books have examined the contexts of teacher strikes. Vagts and Stone (1969) explored a teacher strike in Huntington, New York with the goal of assisting administrators, teachers, and school board members in developing harmonious labor relations. Probably because Vagts had been the superintendent in the district at the time, most of the information provided on teacher perspectives is via media reports and personal communication. However, the book does review the different actions teachers and administrators took, as well as the importance of specific ideas, viewpoints, and representations in the media. In addition, as a result of a workshop on conflict which looked at the New York City schools strike of 1968, Urofsky (1970) compiled the thoughts of twelve different negotiations leaders who were involved in the strike, including well-known union activist Albert Shanker. The study is characterized as an exploration of what was involved in the exercise of, and struggle for, power during the decentralization process that resulted in the strike.

Labor conflicts in schools have also been included in the works of scholars who advocate that school systems use a more collaborative model of bargaining that they believe is likely to lead to a more peaceful experience. For example, Cline and Necochea (1997) discussed the importance of trust in changing the negotiations in their school district to a more collaborative model. Abbot, Chisholm and Rose (1994), Peace (1994), Peterson (1993) and Suarez (1994) offer similar reflections when advocating the use of bargaining methods consistent with what is now commonly known as interest-based bargaining.

The significance of labor conflicts, both for positive and negative outcomes, has drawn attention of scholars interested in interpreting and understanding this social phenomenon. To that end, strikes and other labor conflicts have been viewed as social movements (Anderson & Dynes, 1983; Clemens, 1996; Cornfield & Fletcher, 1998; Dixon & Roscigno, 2003; Dixon et

al., 2004; Fantasia & Stepan-Norris, 2004; Karsh, 1970; Voss, 1996). A social movement is defined as a group of people who come together around a common interest in order to engage in collective action. The goal of the collective action may vary among social movements, but usually includes advocacy of a specific program, idea, or agenda. Within this area, some studies focus on the nature of conflict within the labor movement itself (Babb, 1996; Cornfield & Fletcher, 1998; Voss & Sherman, 2000; Voss, 1996). For example, Voss and Sherman explore how labor unions eventually come to be seen as part of the organization's formal power structure, and must then reinvent themselves as more radical in nature in order to maintain their status with members. In addition, Fantasia and Stepan-Norris state that because of an increase in labor movement activism, they advocate the renewed use of social movement theory to explore the contemporary context of labor relations. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) also see the benefit in viewing strikes in relation to other forms of "contentious politics," including social movements, and Isaac and Christiansen (2002) note that "a social movement hypothesis should be added to the standard stock of explanations for strikes" (p. 741).

When viewing a strike as a social movement, it is also possible to look at the context of this type of organized behavior within a school system. Campbell (2005) and Clemens (2005) concur that organizations and social movements are both forms of collective action and therefore can be analyzed similarly. Creed et al. (2002) provide both an argument and a methodology for examining organizations using the framing perspective of social movement theory. Strang and Jung (2005) note that organizational change is sometimes best understood as a social movement, and Riehl (2001) sees the value in linking social movement theory to studies of schools. Thus, social movement theory provides a lens to understand school district labor conflicts.

Research Problem and Purpose of the Study

With some exceptions, research on school strikes has tended to focus on the effects of strikes in terms of student achievement and attitudes (Brandon, 1989; Caldwell & Jeffreys, 1983; Crisci & Lulow, 1985) and the phases of strikes (Nicaud et al., 1983) rather than on the myriad conditions, actions, and belief systems inherent in labor conflicts and labor relationships leading up to the strike. DeMitchell (2005) argues that as the work of teachers is covered by a collective bargaining agreement in many states, school leaders need to possess knowledge about how to work effectively with unions. Indeed, several scholars bemoan the lack of educational research in regard to collective bargaining and unions (DeMitchell & Fossey, 1997; Kerchner, Koppich, & Weeres, 1997; Loveless, 2000).

Other than “strike manuals” published by state school board organizations and education associations, little attention has been focused on how individuals involved in school district negotiations construct meaning during bargaining in ways that impact a labor conflict. In the conclusion to their study examining strike durations across private and public sectors, Rubin and Smith (1991) stressed the need for future research to “explore the nature of different types of strikes *as they progress*” (author’s emphasis) and they state the importance of a “genuinely dynamic approach that understands strikes as a dynamic element in the labor/capital relationship rather than simply a static occurrence of employee/employer conflict” (p. 96).

Other researchers note the need for further investigation into social movements within organizations (Clemens & Minkoff, 2004; Creed et al., 2002; Scully & Creed, 2005). For example, Campbell (2005) states that “if students of organizations and social movements paid closer attention to each other’s work, then opportunities for creative conceptual and theoretical cross-fertilization might occur, and our understanding of both organizations and movements

might improve. To date, researchers in these fields have made limited progress in this direction” (p. 41).

Finally, social movement researchers note that the framing perspective has heretofore demonstrated limitations in several key areas. First, scholars note a neglect of social movement theorists in general, and more specifically framing theorists, who utilize the organization as the unit of analysis, instead maintaining a movement-centric focus (Martin, 2002; McAdam & Scott, 2005). This movement-centric focus has had an impact on the way in which scholars frame the construct of power in organizations. Social movement scholars tend to examine power as it relates to transgressive contention, which is the process by which the disenfranchised engage in collective action to gain organizational power. On the other hand, McAdam and Scott state that an examination of prescribed politics, which is the process by which the structural elements of organizations regenerate and replicate power relationships, could be explored concurrently with transgressive contention to enhance the understanding of both organizations and social movements. Next, within framing studies scholars observe a tension exhibited between those who develop their analysis using the frame as a noun and those who employ framing as a verb (Benford, 1997; Broad, Crawley & Foley, 2004). This lack of clarity around a frame as a thing, or framing as an activity, adds to ambiguity within the construct which impedes the development of a cohesive theory, and Broad et al. (2004) note that Benford and Snow (2000) make it clear that their original concept included the use of framing as a noun and as a verb. Finally, scholars reflect that framing studies have a static tendency and frequently treat frames and framing as immutable and unchanging, neglecting to view them as dynamic processes which change, shift, or are replaced as reality gets reinterpreted (Benford, 1993; Benford, 1997; Steinberg, 1998).

In summary, despite their visibility both in the media and in school district communities, school labor conflicts have been largely neglected in educational, labor, and social movement research. When school strikes have been studied, findings have been more focused on student achievement outcomes rather than on how participants experience and make meaning in ways that may have enhanced or hindered the progression of the conflict. Scholars call for research that focuses on labor conflicts utilizing social movement theory. Critiques of social movement theory direct researchers toward the study of collective action within organizational contexts, fusing the noun and verb of framing analysis, developing a more sensitive, less static interpretation of behavior, and exploring both institutional and movement-related power concurrently. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to attend to the aforementioned concerns by exploring how frames are demonstrated and produced during a labor conflict in a school district organization. This study seeks to generate understanding around the following three research questions: What frames are demonstrated in a school district labor conflict? How are they produced? And, what is the manner by which one frame is replaced with another?

Examining how frames and framing processes operate within school district labor negotiations is expected to add insight into the ways bargaining participants interpret and make meaning from the events around them. Through applying and developing social movement theory to such ends, the questions addressed in the study should in turn assist school district leaders in understanding the context of negotiations in their own districts, an area largely neglected by educational leadership scholars. In addition, these research questions will add to theoretical areas explored by social movement and framing theorists, but which are noted as needing further development. These areas include the incorporation of an organizational rather than movement-centric focus which looks at both institutional and movement-related power,

using the concept of frame as a noun and as a verb, treating frames as dynamic rather than static, and exploring why and how frames change and are replaced.

Methodology

In order to address this study's guiding research questions, an ethnographic methodology was used. Three school districts in the northern United States were selected as research sites and given the pseudonyms of Mountain, Jefferson, and Riverview. Individuals within the school districts were selected to be participants utilizing a snowball technique. Effort was made to maintain a balance between the number of district and union personnel interviewed, in order to assist in data triangulation in the description of specific events. This balance was maintained in the Mountain and in the Jefferson School Districts, but was more difficult to maintain in the Riverview School District, because union members there were less willing to participate. However, in each district, access was gained to the union president and to the district person who was the lead in bargaining, whether that person was a district administrator or a district board member.

The primary method of data collection was through semi-structured interviews with a focus on eliciting individual narratives. A total of twenty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted, varying in length from approximately 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. Follow-up interviews were conducted in districts where some bargaining issues were not fully resolved at the end of the labor conflict. Additional data were also collected from newspapers and websites that included details not otherwise obtained from the interviews.

Throughout the data collection, during the time tapes were being transcribed, and throughout the coding process, the analysis process included writing multiple theoretical memos, diagramming ideas, and outlining ways to organize and make sense of discoveries, relying

heavily on techniques described by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) as well as Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland (2006). A researcher notebook was utilized extensively, and was helpful in logging emerging ideas and themes which were referred back to when initial coding schemes were abandoned. The analysis process led to five overarching themes which emerged as frames. Further analysis led to sub-categories within each frame, and the process of writing the analysis led to the broader connections to social movement framing theory.

Report of Study

This study has six chapters. This first chapter provided the background for the study, the problem and purpose of the study, the research questions and a brief overview of the methodology. Chapter two provides the conceptual framework for understanding several key concepts related to framing theory and its connection to some concepts from organizational theory. Chapter three offers a detailed explanation for the study's methodology, including site selection, key participants, data collection, analysis, role of researcher, and ethics. In chapter four, the bargaining events in Mountain, Jefferson, and Riverview are described. In chapter five, five different frames seen in school district labor conflicts are examined, focusing on key framing tasks and processes. The chapter also explores how bargaining frames in the Mountain and Jefferson school district were replaced by other frames later in bargaining, and why the frame replacements occurred. Further, chapter five looks at why the original frame was not replaced in the Riverview school district. Chapter six concludes by reviewing findings, noting limitations, and examining the theoretical, practical, and substantive significance of the study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

School labor conflicts have been largely neglected in educational, labor, and social movement research. Very few studies have focused on how both district and union leaders experience and make meaning in ways that may have enhanced or hindered the progression of the conflict. Further, scholars who study social movements identify the utility of framing for facilitating understanding of the ways in which individuals experience labor conflicts in organizations. Following such guidance, this study seeks to generate description, analysis, and interpretation for the following researchable questions: What frames are demonstrated in a school district labor conflict? How are they produced? And finally, what is the manner by which one frame is replaced with another?

The conceptual framework that was employed to address the study's research questions is offered in this chapter. The purpose of the chapter, therefore, is not to provide an exhaustive review of all literature which pertains to school district organizations, labor conflicts, social movements, and framing theory. Rather, consistent with comments by Maxwell (2006) as well as suggestions by Glesne (1999) and Rudestam and Newton (2001), this chapter seeks to provide a review of the relevant literature that provides a foundation for the study as well as the interpretation of its findings. The chapter is designed to provide an overview of key theoretical concepts in relation to scholarship on frames and framing processes within organizations.

As such, chapter two explores five broad concepts addressed in the research literature, as well as more specific areas within each concept, which are presented in the following five sections. First, the three theories that inform the discussion of social movements will be briefly described. Following that, the theoretical influences of framing theory will be explained, with

reference to its roots within the symbolic interactionist perspective as well as its origination from Goffman's (1974) work in the book *Frame Analysis*. Third, the research of key framing theorists within the social movement area will be reviewed, including a more specific discussion regarding the characteristics frames and framing processes. Next, some of the concepts which overlap between social movement and organizational theory will be explored, with a focus on the ways that both research areas treat the concepts of power and the legitimization of unspoken norms of behavior. Finally, some critiques of framing theory which this study seeks to overcome will be shared.

Social Movement Theories and the Framing Perspective

A social movement can be defined as collective action which results from group advocacy of specific political, social and/or religious goals and outcomes (Roche & Sachs, 1955). There are three distinct areas of social movement theory that have emerged from sociological inquiry in the last century. The first is called political opportunity, so named because it identifies the impetus behind social movements as a specific political or cultural context in which changes in structure or power relationships of a given political system create a context in which a group of people is motivated to collective action (Davis, McAdam, Scott & Zald, 2005; Kriesi, 2004; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996). Focusing usually on large-scale protests and revolutions, political opportunity researchers explore which aspects of the larger external environment impact the progress of social movements (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004).

A second strand of social movement theory focuses on resource mobilization. In this strand, the power of social movements is explained through the use the resources and structures that are commonly used to identify leadership and to organize collective action (Davis et al.,

2005; Edwards & McCarthy, 2004; Klandermans, 2004; Marullo, 1998; McAdam et al., 1996). Resource mobilization theorists view social movements as rational, patterned, and conducive to analyses similar to those of other organizations (Buechler, 1993).

A third social movement theory, framing, postulates that social movements engage in the constant interpreting, communicating, and framing of beliefs, actions and events in order to garner internal and external support (Benford & Snow, 2000; McAdam et al., 1996; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Snow, 2004; Snow & Benford, 1992; Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford, 1986; Zald, 1996). Framing theory was originally conceived as an outgrowth of resource mobilization theory. It was presented by researchers discontent with the lack of attention social movement scholars had paid to how meanings and ideas can impact a movement's ability to mobilize action. In their seminal assertions, Snow et al. (1986) shared that their conceptual model was developed as a bridge linking social psychological and resource mobilization views on social movement participation. Since that time, the social movement framing perspective has emerged as one of the fastest growing conceptual model for scholars studying the collective action of groups, and is now firmly entrenched as one of three central concepts for understanding social movements.

Theoretical Influences on Framing Theory

Framing theory falls under the umbrella of symbolic interactionism, a perspective originating from Herbert Blumer's (1969) work. There are three concepts that are considered to be central to Blumer's conception. These include the belief that people: (a) act toward things on the basis of the meanings they assign them; (b) generate these meanings based on their interactions with others, and (c) engage in an interpretive process which has the ability to transform the meanings in a way that assists in making sense of the world around them.

Rather than a theory, symbolic interaction is considered to be an “intellectual position” or an “organizing system of thought” which guides the thinking of those looking to explain the world around them (Gusfield, 2003, p. 119). Charon (2004) describes symbolic interactionism as a perspective that focuses not on individual characteristics, personality, or behavior, but on the “nature of social interaction”:

The symbolic interactionist creates a more active image of the human being...Individuals interact; societies are made up of interacting individuals. People are constantly undergoing change in this interaction, and society arises and changes through this social interaction. Interaction is an ongoing activity: Humans act in relation to the acts of one another; they take one another’s acts into account as they act. Interaction means that the acts of each individual are built up over time, depending in part on what others do in the situation in relation to them. Interaction means that individuals are not simply influenced by others; it means that actors constantly influence one another as they act back and forth. (p. 28)

Snow (2001) articulates that Blumer’s three-pronged characterization of symbolic interactionism fails to expand upon other important concepts of relevance to symbolic interactionists by attending almost exclusively to the concepts of meaning and interpretation. Thus, Snow offers four broader, more detailed, and thus more inclusive orienting principles that he considers to be implied but not expressly articulated in Blumer’s work. The first principle, interactive determination, contains the notion that the only way to understand others is to consider the context in which they are embedded and their relationships with the elements of that setting. The second principle, symbolization, identifies the importance not only of those symbols that are in a constant state of generation and interpretation, but also those which are embedded

and entrenched in our daily lives and institutional forms. The third principle, emergence, contends that symbols and meanings have the potential to change, and new meanings can arise, based on challenges, clarifications, and departures from accepted beliefs or practices. The final principle, human agency, highlights the fact that while human beings are actors who engage in active decision-making about the world around them, sometimes their decisions and beliefs are constrained within specific organizational or structural contexts of which they are unaware, until some sort of event occurs to cause them to take ameliorative action. Mihata (2002) stridently agrees with Snow's broader conceptualization of symbolic interactionism. He provides, however, an even wider-ranging representation which he says is implicit in Snow's four expansions of Blumer, that symbolic interactionists ask complex questions. He states:

Symbolic interactionism thus incorporates both self and other, both individual and society, both agency and structure, and does so in a framework that is multi-dimensional, multilevel, and dynamic. A cynic might say that interactionists want to include everything. While explaining *everything* (author's emphasis) may be impossible, this pursuit of explanations that incorporate the complexity traditional approaches leave out represents the distinguishing characteristic and the great potential of symbolic interactionism. (p. 572)

Within the area of symbolic interactionism, Goffman (1974), a leading scholar, first proposed the concept of frames as "schemata of interpretation" that enable individuals to render "what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful" (p. 21). For Goffman, frames allow humans to "locate, perceive, identify, and label" an infinite number of occurrences and "provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim and controlling effort of...a human being" (pp. 21). Goffman also believed that, taken

as a whole, the frames through which a social group perceives the world thereby constitutes its culture, such that within any given organization, the frames become institutionalized in various ways.

Snow et al. (1986) used the broad concepts from symbolic interactionism, and more specifically from Goffman (1974), in their initial description of the frame alignment processes in which social movement actors engage. Later, Snow and Benford (1992) began to expand upon that initial concept to include those frames which assist social movements to identify, garner support, and mobilize action for the purpose of resolving a problem identified by that specific movement. Just as two individuals would influence each other as they act back and forth, social movement organizations and individuals also have an impact on each other by a constant changing, shaping, and defining of the reality of the movement and of the individuals who are members in it, for both internal and external constituents. Frames take the overarching concept of symbolic interactionism and extend it to examine how individuals interpret their experience of not only their interactions with other individuals, but through their interactions within organizations as well, whether in formal or informal groupings. Benford and Snow (2000) share that frames are definitions of reality that guide social movement action, but the verb “framing” can also be conceptualized as the grouping of activities which serve to generate support or construct meaning.

Key Concepts in Framing Theory

There are several key concepts within the study of frames and framing processes that are applicable to this study. The literature discussed in this section overviews studies that explore what researchers have identified as the core framing tasks, including diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. The next construct to be discussed is a variable feature of the framing

tasks known as frame resonance. Frame resonance is defined as the degree to which a frame secures or possesses the potential to mobilize action given its salience and credibility. For the core framing tasks to successfully engage participants, resonance must be achieved. The third organizing construct to be discussed centers on the framing processes utilized through the framing tasks. Generation and frame alignment will be described, because these processes assist in promoting frame resonance. Finally, the section will explore what researchers have described as frame disputes, and how they impede the core framing tasks for organizations.

Core framing tasks. In examining how social movement organizations (SMOs) garner support, a body of research has articulated upon the core framing tasks SMOs engage in. Although SMOs may use different processes to complete these tasks, as described later in this section, the core framing tasks for SMOs are (a) “diagnostic framing”, which is how SMOs define the problem, in part by focusing blame and responsibility; (b) “prognostic framing”, which is how SMOs articulate the solution to the problem as well as the strategies for carrying out the action needed to solve the problem; and, (c) “motivational framing” which is how SMOs provide the rationale for engaging in group action, using the appropriate motivational vocabularies (Benford & Snow, 2000; Benford, 1993).

Several studies define how specific movements utilize these core framing tasks. For example, Benford (2007) utilized the context of the college sports reform movement to show how sports reform activist groups engaged in diagnostic framing and prognostic framing. Diagnostic framing resulted in various characterizations of the college sports problem such as overly commercial “edutainment” that was hurtful to the integrity of higher education institutions, exploitive to athletes, and harming to non-athletes. Prognostic framing occurred within two different sports reform groups who advocated differing paths to effect change. The

paths were different in the prognostic framing task depending on the focus of the organization during the diagnostic framing task. Benford (2007) does not include in his descriptive overview the motivational framing task, noting that despite related definitions of the problem and several potential pathways to resolve it, activists have yet to discover a way to motivate the general public to action.

In another study, Futrell (2003) examines the prognostic, diagnostic, and motivational framing tasks of the Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) movement associated with the chemical weapons disposal conflict. Futrell observes that the NIMBY protestors diagnosed chemical disposal projects as unwanted and unjust, but that the task was less clear initially due to ambiguity in what constituted the full diagnosis of the problem. Futrell attributed the problem to the “information haze” NIMBY groups encountered when attempting to gather empirical information about chemical weapons disposal. He shares that without a clear diagnosis, NIMBY groups had difficulty completing the prognostic framing task of providing solutions. Consequently, the ability of NIMBY groups to move others to action via the motivational framing task was also impaired.

Frame resonance. Frame resonance is a variable feature of collective action frames. Initially introduced by Snow et al. (1986), frame resonance refers the power of a given frame to attract and mobilize constituents. Levin (2005) describes frame resonance as a fit between culture, events, and message. Three conditions of frame resonance have been explored:

- (1) *ideational centrality/narrative fidelity*—the frame must draw on traditions, values, folktales, and so on that are already present in the culture of the constituency;
- (2) *empirical credibility*—the frame must have an apparent evidentiary basis; and
- (3)

experiential commensurability—the social problems that the frame attempts to address must have penetrated constituents’ lives (Babb, 1996, p. 1034).

Fujiwara’s (2005) study of efforts to reinstate immigrant’s welfare rights, in the aftermath of a law which severely reduced them, provides examples of how frame resonance differed depending upon how well activists were able to utilize symbolism and meanings that resonated with the cultural beliefs of the broader American public. Specifically, one successful campaign focused on images that portrayed elderly, disabled, or cognitively impaired women, images which resounded with Americans’ views of aging, human rights, and morality. Another successful campaign focused on the betrayal of Vietnamese citizens who suffered trauma, loss, and displacement as a result of the Vietnam War. Both of these campaigns resonated soundly with American ideals and values, seemed credible to potential supporters, and could be related to the experiences of many individuals.

Frame resonance is important to the core framing tasks. In particular, diagnostic and prognostic framing are more likely to be successful when frame resonance is strong. In their study of three different welfare rights groups, Reese and Newcombe (2003) argued that SMOs would be more effective by defining their issues in ways that resonate with cultural beliefs and experiences. They found that the ideological rigidity in the diagnosis and prognosis of the problem undermined the ability of two welfare rights organizations to achieve their similar goals. For example, one group identified the problem as being associated strongly with a radical feminist ideology, which resulted in an uncompromising demand to eliminate the Welfare-to-Work program. This group was less successful in recruitment efforts than another, which adopted a more pragmatic ideology which resonated soundly with many more potential

adherents. Thus, when the meanings within a frame echo the life experiences of potential adherents, the core framing tasks are more likely to be successful.

Conversely, a lack of frame resonance can be debilitating to a specific movement's frame, degrading its strength and eventually causing it to be replaced. Babb (1996) focused on the concept of "frame resonance" to discuss why frame changes occurred in the United States labor movement from 1866-1886. Babb asked, "What happens when a frame that resonates with extant traditions and beliefs also contradicts experience?" (p. 1034). Her answer was that when individuals perceive a discrepancy between ideology and experience, "frame vulnerabilities" appear and the original frame weakens, becoming susceptible to replacement. Other authors have also focused on the concept of frame resonance. For example, Appelrouth (1999) observed that the Christian Coalition shifted their primarily biblical discourse frame to a rational-legal discourse frame. In so doing, their frame achieved greater resonance with outside groups, but it also lost resonance with a core group of its supporters who perceived that the frame's original ideologies had been replaced in a way that no longer resounded with their experiences.

Discursive processes. While frame resonance can be degraded because of a disconnect between values and experience, frame resonance can also be enhanced, making the core framing tasks more likely to be successful, when generative discursive processes and frame alignment processes are utilized. Benford and Snow (2000) first share that discursive processes such as frame articulation and frame amplification are two ways that new frames can be generated to replace old ones. Using the frame articulation process, members of organizations connect and align experiences so that they are viewed together in a unified and compelling fashion. Benford and Snow state:

Slices of observed, experienced, and/or recorded “reality” are assembled, collated, and packaged. What gives the resulting collective action frame its novelty is not so much the originality or newness of its ideational elements, but the manner in which they are spliced together and articulated, such that a new angle of vision, vantage point and/or interpretation is provided. (p. 623)

In the frame amplification process, members of a group focus on specific events, issues, or beliefs as being more important than others, so that the larger frame or movement of which it is a part comes into focus for adherents. Benford and Snow believe that the key to understanding how frames are generated by participants resides not in the specific topics or issues comprising the frame, but in the articulation and amplification processes. They also share that very few studies have examined how groups have used these discursive processes to generate new frames. This observation is echoed by Steinberg (1998) who shares that discursive viewpoints of the framing perspective are not usually examined by traditional framing scholars.

Strategic processes. Snow et al. (1986) also identify four frame alignment processes that enhance frame resonance and thus help the core framing tasks by linking the frame with the interests, values or experiences of potential adherents. Benford and Snow (2000) characterize these tasks as strategic processes social movements utilize in a deliberative fashion to garner support. The four tasks are frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation. In frame bridging, participants link together ideologically similar frames which come from different organizations, structures, or people. Strategic frame amplification is similar to discursive frame amplification in that specific items are amplified for potential adherents. While discursive frame amplification highlights specific events, issues and beliefs showing that some are more important to others in order to create clarity around a larger social movement or

frame, strategic frame amplification continues that process by amplifying those beliefs in a way that will resonate with potential adherents. Frame extension refers to the process by which key values of the frame are extended in a way that incorporates the values of potential adherents. Finally, frame transformation occurs when the understandings and meanings of a specific frame are transformed in a way which emphasizes new ones.

Several studies have explored these different frame alignment processes. For example, Mika (2006) explored the ways that the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) organization utilized frame bridging, extension, and transformation in their advertisement campaign in ways that were not necessarily effective for recruitment, but which were effective in getting the campaign noticed by non-adherents. PETA organizers utilized the bridging technique of displaying the “peace sign” in their advertisements, utilized frame extension by incorporating their own ideas into frames of patriotism, religion, and sex, and utilized frame transformation by reframing the consumption of meat as the equivalent to the treatment of individuals in a Nazi camp. In addition, Cornfield and Fletcher (1998) utilize the concept of frame extension to explain the changes in the American Federation of Labor legislative agenda from 1881-1955, Kolker (2004) examines how the breast cancer movement used frame transformation to change a frame that focused on individual women’s problems into a frame which focused on breast cancer as a major public health concern. Frickel (2004) demonstrated how frame amplification and frame extension assisted scientists to promote an interdisciplinary area of study called genetic toxicology, and McCammon, Hewitt and Smith (2004) examined the women’s suffrage movement in the United States, which achieved frame resonance for their potential adherents by using frame amplification processes that focused on differentiated frames used with different audiences.

Frame disputes. When people in an organization have differing ideas on what diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational tasks will best accomplish organizational goals, “frame disputes” may erupt between different factions. According to Benford (1993) intramovement frame disputes can occur when members of an organization have differing versions of reality, and thus disagree on the diagnostic framing of the issue. Frame disputes also occur when different members provide differing ways to solve the problem, which is called prognostic framing. Benford examined frame disputes that erupted between differing factions of the nuclear disarmament movement, finding that frame disputes affected the disarmament movement in contradictory ways. For example, he shared that frame disputes impacted the mobilization efforts of some SMOs, but enhanced the mobilization efforts of others, and that while frame disputes sometimes depleted resources, they also could result in the enhancement of a movement’s efficiency. He concludes his study by noting that frame disputes are an integral part of shaping a movement’s actions, beliefs, and structure.

Comparable Aspects of Social Movement and Organizational Theories

Campbell (2005) states that using social movement and organizational theory concepts in research studies has the potential to provide greater conceptual understanding of both areas, but that very little progress has been made in that endeavor. Organizations and social movements are both forms of collective action and therefore can be analyzed similarly (Campbell, 2005; Clemens, 2005). Given these assertions, some authors have begun to utilize social movement theories within the context of specific organizational structures. This section will explore the connections between social movement framing theory and organizational theory in regard to three areas: general framing concepts seen in organizations, the framing of intra-organizational power, and the concept of institutional logics and frame analysis.

Framing concepts within organizational theory. Several scholars have focused framing processes in concert with organizational theory. For example, Davis and Thompson (1994) assert that framing processes in social movement theory could be helpful in exploring how institutional investors come to collective agreement on what they want. They share that such an approach could take into account the fact that common interests are not objectively determined but instead are socially constructed, in this case constructed specifically by events in the industry which may impact investor decisions. In addition, Rohlinger (2002) shares an occurrence in which organizational structure and identity impacted or constrained the ability of two opposing abortion movement groups to utilize framing strategies to get mainstream media coverage. For example, the National Organization for Women (NOW) had a centralized, bureaucratic structure in Washington, DC, which gave them access to political allies. Further, they had an organizational goal of getting media coverage, and tested different messages for effectiveness. On the other hand, the Concerned Women for America (CWA) was originally located in San Diego, and had a decentralized and less bureaucratic structure which emphasized the bias of mainstream media outlets.

In addition, Clemens (1996) utilized the concept of “frame resonance,” to explain why organizational frames changed over time:

Translated into the language of organization, to the extent that the proposed model of organization is believed to work, involves practices and organizational relations that are already familiar, and is consonant with the organization and the rest of those individuals’ social worlds, mobilization around the model is more likely...the probability that any given reframing will take hold and shape the relations of practices of a group will be

determined largely by the local distribution of organizational repertoires and their compatibility with the newly introduced frame. (p. 211-212)

Clemens explains that frame changes occur within organizations. She argues that when individuals begin to view that the ideational foundations of their chosen frame conflict with their experience in an organization, they must choose a different organizational frame that resonates with their experience. For example, in her analysis of American labor, Clemens found that the differing structures of U.S. labor movements presented differing opportunities and limitations in the mobilization of power and resources. As the U.S. labor movement developed, labor leaders adapted their organizational models from model structures such as those that were fraternal and those that were more militaristic in nature, because those were the structures that resonated with their experience.

The framing of intra-organizational power. Social movement and organizational scholars focus on different aspects of power and power processes (McAdam & Scott, 2005). However, these two power processes are not mutually exclusive. The first way to frame intra-organizational power is by viewing it as “transgressive contention” (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001). Transgressive contention refers to the conscious mobilization of internal and external constituents to increase their power and thus their ability to impact the organization. The second framing of intra-organizational power is called “prescribed politics” (McAdam, 1999 as cited in McAdam & Scott, 2005). The concept of prescribed politics frames power within organizations as institutional authority to describe how it gets reproduced and activated. Thus, organizational theorists have tended to focus on the formal structures of the organization to determine who has power, and how it is utilized to advance organizational goals.

Due to the study of labor conflicts resting largely in the arena of social movement theory rather than in organizational theory, most framing theory studies in labor conflicts have focused on the perspectives and activities of labor leaders engaged in transgressive contention (Babb, 1996; Cornfield & Fletcher, 1998). For example, Cornfield and Fletcher examined the changing legislative agenda of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) by focusing on the group's activities to influence legislation. These studies have a tendency to neglect the perspectives and activities of administrators or actors on the other side of the conflict, who are more likely to have a prescribed politics focus. For example, Harris, Rausch and Ryan (1982) explore attitudes of union members in regard to a teacher strike, but were unable to garner direct information from district leaders. Thus, their descriptions of perceptions in regard to the activities of a first strike are based upon the viewpoint of union members, and one is unable to determine how administrator attitudes or beliefs may have impacted their decisions.

Framing and institutional logics. McAdam and Scott (2005) share the belief that organizational theory focused on institutional logics connects well to the concept of framing. Institutional logics are sets of shared practices, beliefs, and norms of behavior which guide organizational activities. Scholars focusing on institutional logics explore the belief systems and shared practices which are prominent in a specific organizational field. Lounsbury (2005) shares that institutional logics “have been shown to shape decision-making by determining what issues are attended to by decision-makers and providing the rules of appropriateness that make certain actions or solutions legitimate” (p. 74). Similarly, framing theorists explore the “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). Clemens’ (1996) study on the early American labor movement retains both conceptual foci by making the argument that

organizational forms can themselves be frames, sharing that, “Understood as a movement frame, organizational form defines groups as ‘people who act together in a particular way’ and portrays problems as amenable to a particular type of action” (p. 206).

Similarly, Creed, Langtraat and Scully (2002) provide one of the most comprehensive discussions about using frames to understand organizations. In their lengthy treatise on the value of frame analysis, they provide both an argument and a methodology for sorting out underlying logics, situating frames in context, and surfacing implicit ideologies within organizations. They share that while social movement theorists tend to view frames in the context of contentious politics, frames can also be utilized to surface underlying principles giving coherence to a variety of idea elements or symbols. They clarify that frame analysis utilized in the examination of organizations is:

...explicitly about social actors’ lenses and metaphors as they are deployed, particularly in the service of collective advocacy, mobilization, or public policy. The metaphors used by frame advocates might be considered as part of the analysis of how social actors are anchoring their case or appealing to resonant cultural images...the researcher comes in as a player in making sense of these socially enacted frames, but the focus is on the deployment of frames in the social world. (p. 38)

In demonstrating how to utilize frame analysis to explore two different conceptual frames, they analyze them based on a variety of elements which include metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, visual images, roots, consequences, and appeals to principle. When matched with the two different frames, they call these elements a “signature matrix,” first presented by Gamson and Lasch (1983), which is utilized to understand the institutional logics of a specific organization. The signature matrix provides a basic method by which researchers can

look at diverse meanings and ideas as they are integrated into one organization or organizational field. One strength of the signature matrix is its utility in looking at unifying themes or structures which tie the ideas together. Further, they say that frame analysis using the signature matrix can be enhanced by a more comprehensive approach incorporating other framing tasks, features and processes. Examining framing processes is also useful, because, consistent with Snow and Benford's (2005) assertions, examining the process by which meanings are produced is an equally important way to understand collective action. Thus, in their case studies examining Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) texts, they provide both a signature matrix and an explanation of several key framing processes utilized. Creed et al. (2002) utilize framing processes they have categorized into punctuation, elaboration, and motivation; their definitions of these concepts match the definition of Benford and Snow's (2000) framing tasks of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing.

Critiques of Framing Theory

Despite or perhaps as a result of the proliferation of social movement studies utilizing a framing perspective, several critiques have been noted. The critiques which will be discussed here are ones that are concerned with the movement-centric focus of previous studies while neglecting relevant organizational theory concepts, the separation of framing theory as a noun or a verb, rather than both, and the focus on framing as a static, rather than dynamic process.

Movement-centric focus. First, some researchers have observed that social movement theorists in general have focused more on movements themselves to the neglect of studies which might explore social movement dynamics within specific organizations (McAdam & Scott, 2005). Benford (1997) shares that this movement-centric focus creates a tendency to anthropomorphize social movements into things who "frame," clarifying that "social movements

themselves do not frame issues; their activists or other participants do the framing” (p. 418).

Martin (2002) expresses a related viewpoint, sharing that the underutilization of frame analysis in complex organizations neglects an understanding of the individuals in the organization.

Use of “framing” as a noun or a verb. In his “friendly” critique of the framing perspective, Benford (1997) notes that ambiguity in the framing concept has led to different implications in its use. Broad, Crawley and Foley (2004) clearly explain the difference by sharing that the problem is essentially in the distinction between “frame” used as a noun and “framing” used as a verb. Steinberg (1998) expresses a similar concern, sharing that frames tend to be represented as discrete, much like texts or maps. One of Benford’s (1997) main critiques in this area is that use of the frame concept only as a noun has the potential to lead to a large quantity of different frames all relating to their own unique context. This results in the dilution and confusion of interrelated framing concepts. Further, it is clear from their comprehensive review of framing research to date that Benford and Snow (2000) believe that frame analysis includes both the examination of frames themselves as well as the processes by which those frames are constructed and maintained.

Treatment of frames as static. Steinberg (1998) addresses a related concern about previous framing research. He notes that framing theorists, in particular those focused on the frame as a stable entity, ignore one of Goffman’s (1974) original arguments, which is that frames are dynamic and can change. Benford (1997) offers the same critique, sharing that frames should be interpreted as dynamic processes. Both Steinberg and Benford make the point that frames can be complex and instable. In addition, Benford shares that frames are interactive between and among the individuals experiencing them and the context in which the experience occurs. Thus,

in exploring them as dynamic processes, one might observe multiple realities which may be influenced by a specific encounter, context, or biographical background.

Summary

In summarizing the relevant literature that provided the foundation for this study, this conceptual framework outlined several considerations. First, the relationship between symbolic interactionism, Goffman's (1974) framing concepts, and social movement framing theory was explicated. Next, several key concepts of framing were outlined, with examples from applicable studies. Diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing tasks were explained, as was a variable feature of collective action frames, frame resonance. Generative framing process and frame alignment processes were also described. This conceptual framework then provided insights from scholars who have begun to look at the concept of framing within the context of organizational theory. These scholars have focused on framing within organizations, the framing of intra-organizational power, and the connections between institutional logics and frame analysis in organizations. Finally, this conceptual framework explored some of the several observed limitations of social movement framing theory, including its movement-centric focus, the treatment of frames as nouns or verbs, and the viewpoint of frames as static rather than dynamic processes.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Despite their large visibility both in the media and in school district communities, scholars call for research concerning school labor conflicts to further understanding of how participants experience and make meaning in ways that perpetuate or hinder the escalation of tension and hostility. Therefore, the purpose of this ethnographic study is provide insight into school district labor conflicts while attending to theoretical concerns in regard to framing processes within organizations by exploring how frames are demonstrated and produced during a labor conflict in a school district organization.

This chapter will first include the process by which sites were selected to participate as well as descriptions of each of the sites. Then, the processes of gaining access and building rapport with selected participants will be recounted. Next, the data collection activities will be reviewed, and will include information on participant interviews, observations, the collection of internal documents, news media and website information. The process of analyzing data will then be depicted. Finally, the role of the researcher and ethical considerations will be presented.

Site Selection

The descriptions, analyses, and interpretations offered in the study pertain to three school districts in three different northern states. These districts, Mountain, Jefferson, and Riverview (all pseudonyms) were chosen based upon the following selection criteria given the purposes of the study (Patton, 1990). Specifically, each of these school districts had failed to arrive at a contract settlement as of mid-August prior to the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, and

were identified by union, media, or district personnel as engaged in a contentious negotiation. This identification was important, because some districts take longer to settle a contract, but the personnel involved do not consider the situation to be a “labor conflict.”

The identification process of the selected school districts utilized three main strategies, although two ultimately provided the selected districts. The first strategy was to use the internet to search for teacher strikes. This led me to districts that were either in labor negotiations the media believed might lead to a strike, or districts that were actually engaged in a strike. Mountain and Riverview districts were recognized using this strategy. The next strategy I used was to ask union leaders I was acquainted with to notify me if they heard of districts whose contract negotiations were becoming difficult. This strategy led me to the Jefferson district, as well as to two other districts which were not utilized due to the inability to gain access. The last strategy, asking state-level personnel association members to self-identify if they were in or were anticipating difficult labor negotiations, yielded two potential districts. However, in one district the human resources director declined to participate, and in another, after an initial interview with the assistant superintendent for human resources, the contract was settled in what was considered by the district to be an amicable fashion.

The size and location of the school district were not initially used as criteria for selection and identification, as those factors were not anticipated to be significant relative to the study’s purpose. Nevertheless, I did eventually include at least one school district with over 30,000 student FTE, the Riverview school district, after there was some initial indication that the size of the district may impact participants’ perceptions. This was despite some difficulties in gaining access to key union personnel, as noted below in the description of the three selected school districts.

Description of Selected School Districts

Mountain School District. The Mountain School District (MSD) is a suburban school district in the northern United States. Mountain is one-high-school district which serves four small towns contained within 425 square miles and enrolls about 4200 students. In the past the four small towns had supported their own district, but the districts had consolidated into one district over twenty years ago. With about 35% of students receiving free or reduced-priced lunch, MSD is considered to be a middle to upper class school district. With a 12% population of students of color, Mountain is primarily Caucasian, but 6.1% of the students are served by the English as Second Language (ESL) program and 14% qualify for special education services. Over the course of the last five years, Mountain's ethnic and socio-economic diversity has increased; participants attributed the change to greater availability of low-cost housing for those wanting to commute to a larger city.

Data from the 2005-2006 school year shows that MSD's 10th grade achievement levels were lower by comparison to two other school districts of nearly the same size and poverty level in their state. The number of tenth grade math students meeting standard was more than 20% points lower than one of the other similar high schools, and the writing achievement percentage in Mountain was more than 10% points lower than the same high school. Similar achievement discrepancies were found at the 7th and 8th grade levels by examining Mountain's data compared with the two other companion districts.

The number of third and fifth-grade Mountain students meeting standard is a more positive picture, with their third graders performing comparably to one of the similar districts, and outperforming the third graders of the other similar district. Nevertheless, perhaps because of

the lagging test scores at the secondary level, in 2005 the district listed “No Child Left Behind (NCLB) compliance” as the first objective of the first goal in its strategic plan. Superintendent Caroline Solomon (all names used are pseudonyms) stated in her introduction to the plan that she wants to work with the community to “create extraordinary learning experiences for the children of the Mountain School District community.” In her 2006 Performance and Budget report, she noted that the district’s vision is focused on student achievement and expanding pathways to success.

Jefferson School District. The Jefferson School District (JSD) is located less than a one-hour’s drive outside of a large city in a northern state. While Jefferson used to serve only a rural community, its location has begun to make it an increasingly desirable school district for those who work in the city, but who want to live in a more rural environment. Its schools are surrounded by large pine trees which create a forest-like setting, and most houses sit on more than one acre of land. With about 2000 students and a free and reduced lunch percentage of 37%, Jefferson’s population is considered to be middle class. Children attend one of four schools in the area: two elementary, one middle school serving sixth through eighth graders, and one high school serving ninth through twelfth graders. Jefferson also maintains an alternative program for homeschool students which generates over 100 student full time equivalent (FTE), as well as two different credit retrieval and remedial programs within regular schools.

In the last state assessment, Jefferson students performed well on achievement tests when comparing their students to a district of nearly the exact same size and demographics. They also performed slightly better than students in two other districts of the same size having close to the same free and reduced lunch percentage. Nevertheless, students in the Skyview School District, a same-sized district whose attendance boundary lines cross Jefferson’s, outperformed Jefferson

students by 2-10% in nearly all grade levels and subject areas, despite having a free and reduced lunch percentage reported at over 80%. The one area where Jefferson students did outperform Skyview students was on the tenth grade math test. Jefferson tenth graders passed the test at a rate of 63%. Given that Jefferson teachers see Skyview as a comparison district when looking at teacher salaries, administrative costs, and class sizes, this marked disparity in student achievement despite Skyview's higher free and reduced lunch rate is noteworthy. For example, Skyview's teacher to pupil ratio is seventeen, compared to Jefferson's, which is over 18. Further, the percentage of Skyview's operating budget expenditures associated with the teaching function is 66%; Jefferson's teaching-related budget expenditures are reported as 61%.

Some would say that the disparity in achievement scores is more related to some unique circumstance going on at Skyview. Others would say that it might be attributed to Jefferson's recent history, which has been marked by a leadership crisis and associated budget problems widely reported in the media. All participants interviewed recalled the fact that in the fall of 2000, Jefferson's finances had been taken over by their state's oversight structure, due to financial insolvency. The previous superintendent's tenure was characterized as leaving the district in "dire financial straits," polarizing both the community and the teachers and resulting in months of conflict that led to more than 200 teachers and community members holding a walkout against him.

Riverview School District. The Riverview School District (RSD) is located in the northern United States in a metropolitan area containing over 250,000 residents. With almost 50,000 students, Riverview is the largest school district in the state by a wide margin, and is in the top 100 school districts in the United States in terms of size. Riverview has approximately sixty elementary schools, ten middle schools, seven comprehensive high schools, a vocational

school, and more than fifteen alternative learning settings, including charter schools, specialized programs, and varied grade level groupings. The schools as a whole contain a great deal of diversity representative of the Riverview community. While the majority of students are Caucasian, 44% represent other ethnic backgrounds, with almost 25% either Asian/Pacific Islander or American Indian/Alaskan Native.

Riverview has grown enormously over the past fifteen years, with the largest growth occurring throughout the 1990s. In 1988, Riverview's student FTE was almost 39,000, but by 1998 it reported over 47,000 student FTE, representing a growth of over 20%. Riverview also grew in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but less dramatically. In 1999 it had just over 48,000 student FTE and by 2006 it had grown another 1000 students, to over 49,000.

The district reports that their test scores are better than national and state averages, but Riverview has a number of schools that have not met the federal requirement for adequate yearly progress (AYP). In fact, 35 of their schools did not make AYP in 2006, with several moving to the third and fourth levels, requiring significant interventions from outside of the purview of the regular school leadership, including student choice to attend another school with transportation costs being borne by the school district. However, despite not meeting AYP, the district as a whole continues to post gains in both mathematics and language arts, with around 80% of all students grades three through ten meeting standard in language arts and about 70% meeting standard in mathematics. With such a high percentage of students already meeting state standards, it becomes more difficult to continue to post the gains required of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

With less than 30% of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, Riverview is considered to be a middle class school district, although there are eight schools within it that

have a free and reduced lunch rate of 100%. Beyond that, several have a free and reduced lunch rate between 40% and 60%. Still, the majority of Riverview schools have a free and reduced lunch rate of less than 30%, with several below 5%.

Being a large school district, the Riverview School District has several administrators who work in central services, each with a more specialized role than one would find in districts of less than 500 students. The central office is divided into six broad areas, including instruction, finance, school support/facilities, technology, human resources, and communications/public relations. Although there are only two assistant superintendents, the heads of each of the six broad areas all report directly to the superintendent. In the human resources area, one executive director oversees the department, which includes five other directors in charge of contract administration, broad human resources functions, recruitment, equal employment opportunity, and benefits. The executive director for human resources is responsible for all contract negotiations, but is assisted in bargaining by the director for contract administration. Neither the superintendent nor the board participate directly in negotiations, although the executive director for human resources keeps them updated via frequent reports both with the superintendent and with the board during executive session. Also on the district's bargaining team are several other administrators, including building administrators.

Participants

Once districts were identified, selected, and access secured, individual participants were identified in each of the districts utilizing a snowball technique (Glesne, 1999). I first attempted to contact administrative personnel to ask for their participation. In the Mountain and Riverview districts, initial contacts were made via email; in the Jefferson school district, the initial contact was made by phone, because a person with whom I was acquainted worked in that district.

A key issue in gaining willing participants was trying to ensure that at least one union bargaining team member and one district bargaining team member would participate in interviews in order to provide a two-sided view of the negotiations, which was an important concept when exploring my research questions. Although I knew that in the case of Mountain and Riverview, I could get much of the union viewpoint from information posted on that union's website, I believed that individual interviews with union members as well as district administrators would provide additional information-rich data.

In that endeavor, I discovered that in two districts, Mountain and Jefferson, administrators were somewhat more willing participants than union members. Those administrators who agreed to participate in interviews did so after I emailed them and in their interviews they readily named key union personnel who they felt would provide me with rich data. However, it was more difficult in regard to union members, as negotiations strategies are considered to be confidential. Because administrators and union personnel were both told that I planned to interview individuals from both sides of the negotiations, this may have impacted union personnel's initial willingness to participate. Further, as a school district human resources administrator, it is possible that union leaders did not have the level of trust with me necessary to share information during the negotiations. Ultimately, in JSD, I was able to interview four union members of the bargaining team as well as district management and board members. However, in RSD, I was only able to interview one union member on the bargaining team, the union president, despite numerous requests of other bargaining team and union executive board members. However, this was also the union with the largest amount of information on their website, which mitigated somewhat the inability to get more bargaining team members' perspectives.

In MSD, union members and administrators both initially agreed to be interviewed. However, upon my arrival, two of the administrators and two of the board members, despite my reminders, seemed to be surprised I was there. The superintendent, who had agreed to be interviewed, had scheduled medical procedure and had not let me know prior to my arrival that she would be unable to participate. The assistant superintendent seemed to have forgotten I was coming, and so had to reschedule the time of our meeting. One school board member arrived to our scheduled interview one hour late, another did not show up, but a third agreed to be interviewed instead. On the other hand, all three union members I interviewed remembered that I was coming and were ready for my interview at the time scheduled. Nevertheless, despite some of these initial frustrations, ultimately all three districts had both union and district negotiating personnel who agreed to participate in interviews.

Participants were initially given information regarding the topic of the study, the purpose of the study, and references for them to contact should they have questions. It should be noted that union staff members in the district where I had the most difficulty gaining access to union personnel, Riverview, did contact both my chair and the union references I had provided in order to verify the information I had given them in regard to the study. Ultimately, while the union president decided to participate, the paid union staff members declined my request on the advice of their state-level organization supervisors.

Once individuals agreed to participate, they were given the consent form which formalized and expanded upon the initial information they were given (see Appendix A). My goal was to interview at least four individuals from each of the identified districts. I was able to interview more individuals than that and some were interviewed more than once. In MSD, I interviewed eight different participants; in JSD, I interviewed ten different participants, and in

RSD, I interviewed six different participants. In order to get the most information rich data (Cresswell, 1999) the individuals selected in districts were either a school board member, a district/school administrator involved in bargaining, or a union member involved in bargaining activities. I made every attempt to maintain a balance between the number of district and union personnel interviewed in order to assist in data triangulation in the description of specific events. This balance was maintained in Mountain and in Jefferson, but was more difficult to maintain in the Riverview, as noted above, because union members there were less willing to participate. However, in each district, I was able to gain access to the union president and to the district person who was the lead in bargaining, whether that person was a district administrator or a district board member.

The superintendent was not interviewed in all districts because in some cases the superintendent's level of involvement in the actual bargaining was minimal. This is not uncommon, as many districts feel the superintendent needs to be protected from the criticisms that frequently occur during a labor conflict. For example, in Riverview the lead bargainer was a person hired solely to bargain, and administrators other than the superintendent as well as board members were much more highly involved in negotiations. That being said, in Jefferson the superintendent was the lead bargainer and thus was interviewed.

Building rapport. I utilized several techniques to develop rapport with participants. First, I ensured that I thanked them for their time, that I was very interested in their perspective, and that I would keep their comments confidential, as was noted in the participant consent form. I also was able to compliment each individual on something about his/her school district, having reviewed some documents and website information in advance of the interview. Throughout the interview, I maintained a neutral stance; however, I did laugh or make an empathizing comment

as appropriate when participants shared some anecdotes (Weiss, 1994). It is clear from reading the transcripts that in the beginning of the interview, some participants were very reluctant to share any difficult information, and I usually noted a very surface-level description of events initially. However, by the end of each interview, participants clearly felt more comfortable sharing what they perceived as some of the less positive aspects of their situation; that is reflected in the more information-rich dialogue reflected later in the interview transcripts. In particular, the last question I always asked, “Is there anything you haven’t yet shared or that I haven’t asked you about that you think is important for me to know in my understanding of your labor conflict,” yielded more detailed responses than I had anticipated. This resulted in some very rich data that had not been shared previously.

In the three districts, I would have guessed that rapport would be more firmly established with one of the district administrators interviewed, given my own professional position and background. However, this was only the case in one school district, Riverview, perhaps because the lead bargainer was a human resources administrator, as I am. In that case, due to the rapport developed, I was able to talk with him the most frequently throughout the labor conflict, and he consistently responded to my emails and requests for information. In Jefferson, I was able to develop the best rapport with a board member. He was a willing participant and was particularly interested in my research topic, but he had forgotten the time and date of our initial interview appointment. Feeling bad that he had done so due the distance I had traveled, when I arrived for our second interview he brought me ice cream and we spent nearly two hours in discussion. He also was willing to keep me updated and posted on the follow-up in that district. Finally, in Mountain, I established the best rapport with a union leader, which I attribute to her openness in the interviews as well as to some commonalities in our career and educational aspirations.

Data Collection

Methods utilized to collect data were interviews, observations of districts, reviews of internal documents, and collection of information from news media as well as from district and union websites.

Interviews. The primary method to collect data was through semi-structured interviews with a focus on eliciting individual narratives. A total of twenty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted, each lasting from approximately 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. When possible in the individual districts, some participants were interviewed at least once during the bargaining process, with the majority being interviewed after the bargaining process was completed. Follow-up interviews were conducted in districts where some bargaining issues were not fully resolved at the end of the labor conflict. I originally intended to conduct interviews with other observers from outside the school districts, including newspaper reporters and possibly parents, in order to get their perspective, but during the data collection I made a conscious decision to focus the interviews instead on those individuals who were closest to the contract negotiations, feeling that their information was the more valuable relative to my research questions. Reading print media from newspapers and websites was a particularly valuable activity in the larger school districts, and provided me with more detailed data and information I would not have otherwise received from the interviews.

As Blee and Taylor (2002) note, semi-structured interviews have been utilized extensively in social movement research, particularly when the researcher wishes to interpret complex events and processes and wishes to obtain rich, detailed data when not able to participate in prolonged engagement in the field. They are also appropriate when the nature of the social movement is such that interviews and observations before the movement occurs are

problematic. Because personnel in labor conflicts are usually reluctant to have outside observers participate in meetings and conduct observations of situations which may be considered confidential as part of bargaining, utilizing interviews in this field study proved to be the most beneficial method by which to collect information-rich, detailed data pertinent to the research questions. In addition, with participating districts being in three different states and myself being a full-time administrator as well as doctoral student, prolonged engagement in the field would have been quite difficult.

Blee and Taylor (2002) further note that semi-structured interviews can be utilized to get broad, diverse perspectives, to scrutinize the context and meaning of statements, to analyze the construction of collective and individual identities, to bring human agency into the study of social movements, and to examine how messages are received by constituents. In this particular study, interviews assisted me in integrating multiple perspectives, in developing a holistic description of interrelated behaviors, and in learning how specific negotiations events were interpreted (Weiss, 1994). Thus, participants were asked questions designed to allow them to tell stories about their negotiation experience. The interview protocol focused on asking questions asking about individuals' recollection of events, but also asked participants to name times in their experience when they felt specific emotions (see Appendix B).

This focus on participants' narratives when conducting interviews can be supported by the assertions of some authors who advocate the use of narrative interviews as a way to empower respondents to set their own agenda, provide more specific details about the topics discussed, use their own vocabulary, and make meaning of events by using their own conceptual framework to describe their experiences (Smith, 1996; Cox, 2003 both cited in Elliott, 2005). In addition,

Davis (2002) and Fine (2002) advocate the use of narratives in the study of social movements.

Davis (2002) states:

Social movements are dominated by stories and storytelling, and narrative goes to the heart of the very cultural and ideational processes these scholars have been addressing, including frames, rhetoric, interpretation, public discourse, movement culture, and collective identity. The investigation of narrative in social movements is both warranted and overdue...narrative is both a vital form of movement discourse and a crucial analytical concept. (p. 4)

Given the methodological considerations noted by researchers in regard to semi-structured interviews and participant narratives, I began every interview by explaining to participants that this was an opportunity for them to tell their story about bargaining, that there were topics I might prompt them to cover if they did not naturally share them in the story-telling process, and that they should feel free to give their own opinions and perceptions in their telling of the story. Then, once the audio tape was recording, I began by asking participants to describe their thoughts and feelings as they initially approached the bargaining. This prompted the participants to begin telling their negotiations stories. As participants talked, I used my semi-structured interview question guide to note the topics they covered, and throughout the interview, in most circumstances I did not need to ask the questions I had listed, because participants covered the vast majority of topics without prompting. In those cases, I only needed to ask for more details and descriptions.

On the other hand, there were three questions that I did verbally ask all participants, even if they had partially covered them in their own narratives. These were the questions which asked participants to tell me what mistakes they think their side (union or district) or the other side had

made, what they should have done differently, and the final question which invited participants to share with me anything I hadn't asked about but that they felt was important for me to know in my understanding of the labor conflict in their district. I believe that using this strategy of blending semi-structured interview questions with a focus on participant narratives contributed to rich data because participants linked together ideas, thoughts and feelings on their own, rather than following a pre-set road map. Although the resulting differentiation in the temporal sequencing sometimes lent itself to difficulty in setting events into a timeline, I believe it helped participants to relax during the interview, which in turn assisted me in building rapport, which in turn led to a greater depth and quality in the information they provided.

Observations and internal documents. While the focus of the study was on semi-structured interviews and individual narratives, data triangulation occurred in several ways. First, because more than one person was interviewed in each district, events noted by one respondent were present in the narratives told by another respondent, which assisted in confirming specific actions by individuals. In addition, when applicable, I requested that the participants share internal documents relevant to the negotiations experience or specific events, and I reviewed other written materials such as contract proposals, salary schedules, cost of living information, and achievement data when needed to verify data shared by either the district or the union. In order to further triangulate the information gained from the interviews and to provide the context of the labor conflict, other data was also collected, including the demographics of the district's students and staff, organizational structure, and community context. In addition, in two of the districts, some observations of applicable meetings and events were conducted. Approximately ten hours of these additional observations were conducted beyond the interviews. In the third district, direct observations were unachievable due to the distance from my research location;

however, television news media did provide some visual documentation of events. Observations were conducted of demonstrations, board meetings and community forums, utilizing observation documentation techniques described by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995). These observations were focused on factors described by Merriam (1998) including the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversations, and more subtle factors such as symbolic actions, word connotations, and nonverbal communications.

News media and district and union websites. Finally, two rich sources of data not only assisted in triangulation, they assisted to illuminate district and union perspectives as well. The print news media, as well as district and union websites, provided detailed information on a variety of topics from the sequencing of bargaining events and activities, to the specific issues, to strategies and tactics used by district and union leaders to garner support for their positions. Although Jefferson, the smallest of the three districts, had only limited news media coverage and no union website to provide information about the labor conflict, the other two school districts, being larger, had websites and news coverage containing a plethora of information. Specifically, MSD's district website had only informational and demographic data, but the Mountain Education Association website posted numerous opinion pieces about their labor conflict (which resulted in a strike), and provided links to all media coverage related to the strike. Because news print media covering the Mountain strike was extensive, numerous details, quotes, and events were described, allowing me not only the opportunity to verify events shared in the interviews, but also to utilize the interviews as more of an opportunity for participants to share their perspectives, rather than clarify specific factual details.

Of the three districts, Riverview and the Riverview Education Association websites provided the most print data. Not only did the full-time released president post weekly

bargaining updates, the website provided word for word text of union members' testimonies from school board meetings. This information was particularly useful due to my inability to attend and observe board meetings in Riverview. The Riverview Education Association website also outlined specific union labor activities including demonstrations, letters to the school board, collection of economic, workload, and time data, and "working-to-the-contract" actions. Further, both the district and the union websites offered perspectives on the bargaining, sometimes in a "tit for tat" format. The district had a special section on their website listing all union statements and information that the district felt was wrong. For example, if a union member testified at a board meeting, the district would post some of the speech on their website, giving the district's perspective regarding whatever inaccuracies there were in the speech. Then, the union would counter on their website, explaining why the district's information about the speech's inaccuracies was incorrect.

The Riverview Chronicle, the local newspaper, was also useful for obtaining data. After each bargaining session and when a tentative agreement was reached, an article would be posted outlining what had occurred. When, in August, it looked as if the teachers may strike, the paper had a forum allowing readers to post comments on a discussion board. This discussion board assisted me in evaluating some others' reactions to events, and although community perceptions were not critical to my research questions, several Riverview teachers posted comments on the discussion board, and these perceptions were useful to my research.

Analysis

Throughout the data collection, during the time tapes were being transcribed, and throughout the coding process, I engaged in a process of writing multiple theoretical memos, diagramming ideas, and outlining ways to organize and make sense of discoveries, relying

heavily on techniques described by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) as well as Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2006). I maintained a researcher notebook in order to provide a log of emerging ideas and themes which was helpful as I began and abandoned different coding schemes. In addition, although grounded theory development was not anticipated, grounded theory mapping techniques described by Clarke (2003) were helpful when beginning the initial collection and examination of data.

Ideas for coding developed throughout the data collection process and as each interview was completed, but the final coding of all interview transcripts occurred when the majority of interviews had been transcribed and read at least twice, and when the initial descriptions of the events in each school district had been written. Because I was writing, revising, and deleting different possible coding schema throughout the data collection process and during the process of reading each transcription twice, I initially thought I had a good idea about which codes would help me make the most sense of my data. However, the first coding schemas I tried did not seem to adequately cover the information in the transcripts, and so I abandoned them. Instead, I began reviewing some of my initial jottings and ideas in my researcher notebook, and then began to reread the transcripts. In the end, it was more productive for me to thinking about broader, emergent themes rather than more specific codes. After about a week of only thinking and jotting, five different themes emerged. I used sporting metaphors to name them while completing the first level of coding, calling them sprinting, baseball, football, boxing and poker. This use of the metaphors assisted me in determining how specific lines of text could be coded, and it also impacted the analysis process significantly by bringing greater depth and creativity to my thinking.

When beginning coding, my initial belief was that the five codes would evolve into five different typologies for bargaining behavior. However, as the coding progressed, it became apparent to me that my data suggested a more complex relationship between the themes. Thus, from that point, using suggestions outlined both in Elliott (2005) and in Weiss (1994), I moved from a local integration analysis of the typologies to an inclusive integration analysis related to what I was perceiving to be the most applicable theory of social movements, framing. Thus, I determined that the categories functioned more as frames than as typologies. However, I wanted to ensure that I was focusing in on how this framing was functioning within my own data, rather than making my data fit another researcher's findings. Therefore, I kept in mind that one of the main functions of conducting qualitative interviews is to explore participants' views of reality in order to extend and revise existing theory (Blee & Taylor, 2002) and I continued referring to the data to develop and test the assumptions behind the five different frames, to interrelate explanations, and to delineate connections to theory (Harry, Sturges, & Klinger, 2005).

Once all transcripts were coded using the five frames I had identified, I used notebook paper to identify which lines of text related to each frame, and within that frame, separated out the union and district actions. Next, I cut and pasted each piece of interview data into a document related to just one frame. At that point, I re-read all of the lines of text that were related to each frame and organized them based on sub-categories. From that point, the writing of the analysis began, which ultimately resulted in four different analysis drafts in which aspects of each frame were organized or categorized differently. Not happy about any of the categorical methods thus far, but knowing that the five areas were indeed conceptual frames, my dissertation chair and I went back to the framing literature. There, we discovered scholars using a "signature matrix" to assist in the categorization of frames within organizations, called a frame analysis (Creed et al.,

2002). This is the method that I ultimately used to show the ideas in each frame. Also following the suggestions of Creed et al., I then provided a more comprehensive analysis of each frame by incorporating other framing tasks, features, and processes emphasized by framing theorists, drawing heavily from the work of Benford and Snow (2000).

As Weiss (1994) suggests, I continued to refine my thinking as I wrote the analysis, creating arguments that became more coherent as the writing and revising process continued. Because I was conducting a frame analysis consistent with Creed et al.'s (2002) work, I kept in mind their views on the relative strengths or weaknesses of frame analyses, including the following:

...how richly they capture a frame; how deeply they peel away the layers; whether they initially move to present frames in ways that ring true to sponsors of the frame; whether the researchers' interrogation of their own perspective informs the analysis and gives readers further understanding and assurance that the analysis is not packing an ideology covertly; whether the ultimate exposure of contradictions or underlying logics elicits an "aha" from readers; and sometimes whether the frame analysis is a gateway to dialogue, action, policy, or change. (p. 48)

During the revision process which included several drafts, I shared ideas with the chair of my doctoral program, and with union and school district leaders who did not participate in the study, soliciting their feedback and insights, as well to assist in tightening my arguments. The feedback in particular from union leaders provided additional insights into my data which were incorporated into the descriptions of each frame.

Role of Researcher

My role was as interviewer and sometimes as observer. However, it must be acknowledged that as a Human Resources administrator, it is possible that participant responses to interviews, as well as participant actions during observations, may have been impacted by their assumptions regarding what I was thinking about their negotiation events. In addition, my own background knowledge, orientation, and definition of the situation could have impacted my interpretation of events (Peshkin, 2000; Luttrell, 2000).

Specifically, I am the Executive Director for Human Resources in a school district which has a labor-management relationship characterized by peaceful negotiation sessions. I have never experienced a teacher strike in the role of teacher nor in the role as building or human resources administrator. As a young teacher I remember more veteran teachers frequently referring to the “rights we fought hard for in the strike of 1987”, as I listened to them with a cynical ear. I also need to acknowledge a pre-conceived opinion in regard to the processes that I believed could be used successfully in bargaining with teachers. Thus, throughout data collection and analysis, I conscientiously remembered my role as researcher and my need to acknowledge my original bias, which included my feeling that the negative aspects of a teacher strike far outweighed the benefits, and my feeling that there were always possible alternatives to a strike.

In order to mitigate these biases, I first engaged in conversations and reflection with my doctoral chair as I approached the data collection and analysis phase of this project. Then, about three-quarters of the way through data collection, I began reading several texts that assisted me in further mitigating this bias. Specifically, I read texts that outlined the potentially positive role of unions, collective bargaining, and other union activity (Clawson, 2003; Kerchner & Koppich, 1993; Kerchner, Koppich, & Weeres, 1997), and the perspectives of teachers who had engaged

in a strike (Bascia, 1994; Streshly & Mitchell, 1994; Urofsky, 1970). Further, I read one text in particular (Streshly, 2001) which, while advocating for the use of a collaborative bargaining strategy, also asserted the inevitability of strikes in some district-union relationships. Streshly states that contentious unions are simply a fact of life in some school districts, and he bemoans the fact that few administrators wish to share their experiences in that area. These additional readings and perspectives provided necessary, additional background knowledge, which helped mitigate my original bias of believing in the possibility of a collaborative bargaining relationship in any labor-management situation. Ultimately, this deliberate examination of my biases assisted me greatly in the analysis process.

Nevertheless, my experience in bargaining, albeit in a more collaborative arena, is likely to have assisted me in understanding events that would have otherwise been perplexing. Specifically, Creed et al. (2002) state that frame analysis is enhanced by an in-depth knowledge of the actors and social arenas involved. While I did not have an in-depth knowledge of specific individuals in this study, I did have extensive knowledge related to the roles, processes, and strategies that were likely to be utilized in bargaining.

Ethics

Ethical considerations were followed. Participant names and identities and school district names and locations were kept confidential. Names were changed and pseudonyms were utilized after receiving completed transcriptions. Because the transcriber worked within the educational environment, she also signed a confidentiality agreement. Each person interviewed was given a consent form indicating the purpose of the interview, that there was no anticipation of harm, that they could withdraw at any time, and that names and identifying information would be kept confidential. The Washington State Institutional Review Board approved the study protocol in

February 2006, and I submitted a modification to the proposal when it was determined that topic of the study and the data collection timeline changed slightly from the original submission. An extension for data collection was approved in January 2007 and in accordance with the most recent IRB approval, all data was collected prior to February 2008.

In terms of bias, I was careful in regard to potential biases first as a human resources administrator and second as a member of a labor-management team which uses the interest-based bargaining process extensively, and which recently completed a peaceful negotiation on eleven collective bargaining agreements. It is hoped that the threat of bias diminishing my analysis was lessened by my conscientious setting aside of knowledge of that process while engaging in data collection and analysis in order to focus on the stories that were being told. Further, I had to set aside any preconceived notions about how negotiations “should” work, in order to hear and understand the perceptions of those who shared their opinions and recollection of events.

Finally, although there was no anticipation of harm to the participants, it was possible that individuals not chosen to participate in the study would have concerns in regard to others choosing to participate. Some non-participants may have felt that individual members of the labor and management bargaining teams would be sharing confidential information; other non-participants could have feared that I would share inflammatory information inappropriately. This seemed to be the case with two paid staff members of the Riverview Education Association, who were told by their state supervisor that they should not participate in the study. In order to help prevent any repercussions, I encouraged participants to discuss their participation with the appropriate members of their work group, as well as to share the consent form, emphasizing the confidentiality of the study, with their peers. Because I am a school district administrator, I also

gave Washington Education Association staff references to union member participants, in order to provide them with the opportunity to discuss the researcher's background in advance of the study. Some union members did seek references from that source.

Summary

The preceding information has provided information in regard to the methodology of this ethnographic study of labor conflicts in school district organizations. Having explored various considerations in regard to site selection, participants, data collection, analysis, the role of the researcher, and ethics, the next chapter will provide a description of the events surrounding the labor conflicts in Mountain, Jefferson and Riverview. After that, an analysis of the frames and framing processes present during the labor conflicts will be presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

BARGAINING EXPERIENCES IN THREE DISTRICTS

This chapter will review the bargaining events that occurred in the three school districts selected for this study: Mountain, Jefferson, and Riverview. As Creed et al. (2002) state, some researchers of organizational theory are “wrestling with how to create richer depictions of ‘the environment,’ including multiple and often competing forces and logics of action that impinge on organizations” (p. 35). Thus, the intent of this chapter is to provide a description of bargaining events in each of the school district organizations in a way that will assist in a deeper understanding of the analytical conclusions drawn about frames and framing processes in the next chapter.

The chapter is broken into four sections. In the first section, the events that occurred immediately prior to the strike in MSD, as well as some events that occurred after the strike ended, will be described. In the second section, bargaining events in JSD will be shared. In Jefferson, negotiations resulted in mediation just days before school was to have started, but did not end in a strike. Third, the Riverview bargaining experience will be explained, with a description of how two different tentative agreements were rejected by union members, resulting in an arbitration hearing, a strike vote, a new round of bargaining after the arbitrator’s report came back, and eventually a contract settlement in late March of 2007. Finally, a summary of the chapter is offered.

The Mountain Experience

The events surrounding the Mountain bargaining experience reflect the teacher and the management bargaining teams’ very different viewpoints in regard to each other and in regard to negotiations. Union leaders believed in the importance of preparing for negotiations. Thus, one

of the union's activities was to conduct an extensive survey that identified a large number of contract provisions and changes desired by the teachers. However, the district wanted to limit each side's issues to a set number. This created a conflict in the negotiations even before meetings began. A union leader stated:

It was clear that the board didn't understand how we put our proposal together. They brought up the idea of each side only bringing seven issues to the table. Well that was April, and the problem was, we had already surveyed our members; we had already surveyed them twice, to find out what the issues were. We had done a complete contract analysis.

Further, the use of the survey and the resulting multiple contract language changes that were proposed as a result, were described with exasperation by several district and board administrators. One stated:

I went through a process several times of counting the lines of new text in the contract that they wanted, and when we started they had 800 lines of changed, altered, or new text in that contract that they had proposed. We still had come back with somewhere around 450 lines because we knew what we were up against. As we nibbled down some, it was tough to get them to nibble down at twice the rate, so, that's the way it went for months.

Having begun in 2004, bargaining continued through spring of 2005 with very little agreement on any issues. Throughout the bargaining meetings, union leaders had the idea that Mountain Superintendent Solomon, having come from a "right to work" state, had little regard for union activities and demonstrated a lack of leadership for the board. Several of Mrs. Solomon's actions, including specific examples given wherein she allegedly did not follow the contract, were interpreted by union leadership to be not only indicative of a lack of respect and a

lack of leadership, but to be indicative of a desire to “break” the union by ignoring the contract and taking actions she perceived to be management rights, regardless of contract language.

Further, union members questioned Ms. Solomon’s ability to effectively lead the school board, indicating that she did not do enough to communicate all of the information the board needed to make decisions about bargaining. Another perceived that the superintendent’s role in the negotiations appeared to be ambiguous at best. A union member shared, “I think that we all believed that Superintendent Solomon was involved, but was either not having influence or choosing not to. Either of those is not acceptable, I don’t think.”

There were other issues that the union felt impacted the negotiations negatively. One was a lack of skill and knowledge on the part of the board members. One union member shared her perception that board members had very little of the requisite knowledge needed for bargaining.

Another shared:

I think part of the problem we have is that our board members really don’t know much about schools. If you look at (a nearby city), there are lawyers on the school board. Well we’ve got two cops, a tree farmer, a business owner, and one person who did work in a classroom and took a paycheck, but took it under false pretenses, because he was blatantly incompetent; the superintendent was just too lazy to fire him... Teachers used to call and say, “You know, I don’t understand why this is happening.” And I would say, “Don’t try, you’ll just give yourself a headache, you can not understand irrational acts.” And so much of what our board does is almost irrational. You would really have to watch them in action for some time to really get a feel for it, for that. They have an amazing ability to agree with themselves. They have an amazing ability to tune out anything that

they don't want to hear. Anything that they don't agree with, it just gets tuned out and they keep going right the way they were going to go.

The union also questioned the district's choices about who was representing them in the first bargaining meetings. The first issue was about the person whom MSD's school board had hired to negotiate for them. They had originally hired Jim Meadows, a professional negotiator who worked for the state's School Board Association, to be their lead negotiator. When Mr. Meadows had to move to another position, the School Board Association sent John Pearson, who had not negotiated before. Mr. Pearson was seen by the union as having little skill and as being a major reason why negotiations stalled early in the process. A member of the negotiation team stated, "To describe Mr. Pearson as incompetent would be an insult to incompetent people everywhere." The district actually agreed with that assessment and relieved Mr. Pearson of his duties. One district administrator stated, "I think it went really slow, and I think a big responsibility there was our negotiator not being a 'closer'. Not having that ability to go in and say, 'Ok, here is what we're going to do on this article,' and kind of encouraging closure on that. He was very poor at accomplishing that." Another described Mr. Pearson's lack of bargaining skill in more detail:

There has to be some attempt to portray the reasons behind your positions. Well, he was not real savvy about that. He'd go out there and he was like a machine gun da-da-da-da-da-da this is our position, this is why and that's just the way it is. Again, the bedside manner. For the first couple of meetings he got away with that because he was the, to use a term, he was the cute new attorney dealing with the old lady on the other side. And there were some charming little witticisms between the two of them. But that soon disappeared...

The person chosen to replace Mr. Pearson amplified the union's belief that the district had little intention to bargain in good faith. Walt Cummings, an attorney who represented school districts, was characterized by union members as having a history of conflict with unions, one who frequently chose to take grievances to arbitration rather than working to resolve problems, perhaps in an effort to make more money. In one incident, Mr. Cummings was described as having stopped a grievance settlement that had been agreed to by the superintendent and by the union:

(Superintendent Caroline Solomon) sent it to (MEA paid staff member Darla Hughes).

Caroline sent it to Walt. Walt rewrote it. It was totally different...so Darla called Caroline and said, "Caroline, this isn't it." They sat down again and worked another one. Walt got a hold of it, changed it...that happened three times. So we went to arbitration, and we won the arbitration very easily. Walt Cummings got dusted on that one. But he made \$8000 so he was happy with that. And it really became the case (with a lot of grievances).

On the other side, district leaders believed that the union's lack of agreement in bargaining meetings was because union president Mark Cunningham was tightly aligned with the state's Education Association, which guided his intentions and actions. They believed that he was seeking to advance his union leadership career by implementing a larger state education association master plan to make the bargaining process as drawn out and as contentious as possible, with the goal of "wearing out" districts in order to get overly permissive contract language which favored teacher rights. A board member stated, "It really came back to what they wanted out of pieces that were typically more management-rights types of issues." Another board member believed that the Mountain Education Association had received an edict from the

state association to force the bargaining to a strike situation in order to put pressure on other surrounding districts to settle their contracts with more union gains.

Mr. Cunningham's choice to utilize paid education association negotiator Darla Hughes further amplified their concern that Mr. Cunningham was trying to be a star soldier in a broader state-level attack. In fact, district administrators believed strongly that if they could have just sat down with teacher representatives without the paid negotiator, they could work through the contract. A board member stated:

Even though we needed some professional advice and assistance, we were saying, "Look, why don't we just talk to each other? The board members will talk to the teachers' association and we'll do the negotiating, we'll do the discussing and we'll limit it to that—just talk to us. And the professionals can be here for advice and for reference and for caucus time, but when we're actually face to face and talking, we'll talk to each other."

Ms. Hughes was characterized by district personnel as not being helpful to the bargaining process, based on her perceived leadership in a bargaining strategy that district leaders believed was focused on coming back to issues over and over again in an effort to wear the district down enough to eventually agree with them. An example given of what district personnel perceived as Darla's bad bargaining strategy at its best, and bad behavior at its worst, was the following:

One of their positions was that they wanted to expand the non-discrimination clause to include the term "creed." Well, so, "creed," that's interesting. (We asked), "What do you mean by creed?" (They said), "Well, you know, like a core set of beliefs." (We said), "Well can you be more explicit for us?" They said, "Well, if I" – and this is Darla talking – "Well, like for instance if I was a member of the Neo-Nazi group I would expect you

wouldn't discriminate against me because of my belief." I swear everybody's jaws in the room just went (opens mouth). And so, ok, this is what we're going to be dealing with for the next months. That was probably the second session that happened. If it wasn't so disgusting, it would have been hilarious.

District personnel also believed that teachers' own personal issues or complaints about the district made them particularly difficult to bargain with. District administrators shared the belief that the focus of the bargaining team members was on issues that had personal meaning for them based on a previous "bad" experience. They saw the president and the paid negotiator as having an adversarial posture against the district, with the passive acceptance of the less-experienced teacher bargainers. As a result, both union and district leaders began thinking that a major labor dispute was likely, and they engaged in mediation, described by a union leader as not being helpful:

Things got worse when we got into mediation...They wouldn't offer counter proposals. We would give them a counter proposal and they would either say, "No" or they would say, "Gee we'd like to study this, let's go home." And then they would come back the next time and say, "No." Instead of the usual give and take, you know, proposal, counter proposal, counter, until you decide you're stuck or you TA (tentatively agree), they followed the same pattern of saying, "No," and rejecting it. And often times, then would not even give us the reason why. We would ask through the mediator, "What's really wrong with this?" and their answer was, "We're not going to change the language. So, just don't even bother to ask, forget it." They seemed to have the idea that any time they told us "no" on something, we should simply stop asking and leave.

Finally, by the fall of 2005, MSD had been in labor negotiations for sixteen months. Mediation had been unsuccessful, and the district believed that something needed to be done to push a contract resolution before the school year. So, the Mountain bargaining team decided to do a “contract implementation,” in which the district declared that their final proposal was the contract to be implemented, regardless of teacher union agreement. Within the administrative bargaining team, the board members in particular believed that one way to force movement in the negotiations process was to do the contract implementation. With the school year starting, the discussion was that the district simply could not go another year without a contract. In addition, if the union had a serious problem with the contract implementation, they reasoned, then a strike would occur at the beginning of the school year—much better than at a later time if bargaining were to continue unsuccessfully. Further, it was difficult to budget for a new union contract that had not been agreed to, and fiscally it made sense to plan for specific pay provisions in the district budget.

Still, there was one board member, a teacher from the neighboring school district, who tended to disagree with the rest of the board. In a letter to the local newspaper published almost nine months later, he gave his version of a conflict over whether or not to go forward with the contract implementation, which, he said, resulted in his resignation. Once he had resigned, there was no dissent among the management team to contend with, and thus, the board was able to vote unanimously to proceed with the contract implementation. District administrators and board members expressed the same reasoning throughout their interviews. One stated, “I think it was kind of a necessary evil because things had broken down and it was a trigger to either bring closure or what ended up happening...there’s not agreement, we need to move one, we’ve got a new school year starting, we just need to do it.”

There was thought among the board members that there might not be a strike, and that the teachers would, perhaps, accept the contract implementation and the labor dispute would be over. One board member stated, “There was some sense that our contract was reasonable enough that they may not strike, and the thought was it would...get things moving and communicate a sense of urgency that we’re really ready to be done with this.” However, that same board member admitted that in retrospect, a contract implementation was likely to have led to a strike:

I think some of us realized, more so than others, that in implementing a contract, you were drawing a line in the sand. With a labor group like this that has a history of not backing down...I was very concerned that that line in the sand...they were going to cross it. And we pretty much set the stage for that to happen...The decision to implement a contract, I think that in retrospect, you can always look back, but I might have opted for a different approach. I think there may have been some other options at that point in time that we just didn’t really thoroughly consider.

The union did indeed view the contract implementation a “line in the sand.” However, they viewed it as positive in one way: the contract implementation was the catalyst they needed to motivate their own constituents into action. A union member stated:

(The contract implementation) was the big hatchet I think. I think that is where a lot of our members kind of came around the corner. If they were not too sure where they felt things were going, having a district implement on you was pretty big. For them to do that was huge. So that was a big mistake, as far as it brought our association quickly together. So if the school board and the district were looking to go into the school year and have us feel good about something, implementing totally wiped that clean. That was a big step. So that really showed their hand on what they wanted. They wanted their way and that

was it. That's not negotiations, I don't think. I think they believed we wouldn't go out on strike...I think they thought well they aren't going to be strong enough and they'll just take what we give them.

However, the union's team was not ready to strike, having not yet done what union professionals recommend to prepare for a strike, and having not followed the process that their state's education association required to be able to request their membership to authorize a strike. In addition to preparing documents for the state, the Mountain Education Association had to organize their strike crisis committee, plan for media and community communication, and conduct informational picketing and marches before the strike. Most importantly, they had to take a vote of the membership to ensure their members would support a strike decision. The strike vote is, for a union, the ultimate test to determine if previous communication tasks have been accomplished successfully. It is a vote of union members to authorize the union bargaining team to begin a strike on a specific day in the future, if the contract is not resolved by that time. The Mountain Education Association met at a local bank, described this way by a union leader:

When we took the strike vote, we had already polled everybody because that is part of the preparation. You never go in without knowing what your vote is going to be. That meeting at the bank, for me it was very powerful. I had never done anything like that before. I don't have a family to support. There's less worry there. I know my decision was really easy for me, saying we need to go, because I was close to it, but I felt for those people where it was a big issue for them to move forward. But when everybody stood up—an overwhelming amount of people stood up and said, “ Yeah, we're willing to do this, this is important enough to us”—when that happened kind of the floor went out for me, I was like wow, this is a moment frozen in time for me. We clapped and applauded

each other. And then we had to ask for those who didn't believe that, and a handful of people stood up. We still applauded them because we respected their choice and we understood. So there was a lot of respect there and that was good to see. But it was definitely a moment in my life that I will never forget.

Thus, in November of 2005, after over eighteen months of bargaining a contract that expired in 2003, the Mountain teachers went on strike for nineteen days, which became the longest teacher strike in the state's history. Widely covered by local and national media, the strike was characterized as one in which the conflicts centered around management rights versus teacher rights. This was especially true in light of federal legislation requiring school districts to meet yearly accountability standards or face a reduction in resources.

As the strike progressed, specific events, even those that participants perceived as leading to the end of the strike, were described in ways which varied greatly between the management and the union side. This was certainly the case in regard to two major events: the district's use of security officers during the strike, and the reasons why the strike ended.

One event that was described frequently by all participants was the use of paid security officers to be present at the district central administration office during the strike. For the district, the officers were a necessary presence because of a plethora of union membership behaviors that they perceived as threatening. For the association, the paid security, as well as what they perceived as the administration's use of the media to highlight their "fear" of association members, was merely a tactic designed to garner support from the community. Thus, events were described very differently by the two sides. For example, a board member described this event:

One night as I left the parking lot I was surrounded by picketers and several teachers, and my car was banged on and shaken back and forth and picket signs hit the car and were

stuck in front of it. I mean, I'm sitting here saying that's so and so, my daughter had him for classes, and I'm like, what are these people doing? This is the type of behavior that they feel is justified because they don't get their way...It was kind of like a bunch of 3rd graders having a tantrum because they couldn't have another piece of cake, I mean they were just going nuts.

Another event, one that led to a criminal trespass charge being filed against a union member, was described by the communications director Jill Marion:

I came into the district office very early in the morning, and it was still dark out. There was one teacher who was waiting in between our two buildings, and when I came up to the door to unlock it, he came from behind the buildings and stood right behind me as I was unlocking the door and he made personal, very personal remarks. He stated I should be ashamed of myself for lying. He made some personal remarks about my relationship with the prior superintendent. I was verbally threatened, but I also felt physically threatened because there was this man standing, probably ten inches behind me with a picket sign making personal remarks and accusations and threats.

In another instance on payday, a district payroll clerk had decided to make it easier on the picketing employees to receive their paychecks, since they would not cross the picket line to get them. So, rather than mailing the checks to the employees' homes, she decided to do them a favor by going out to the picket line with the box of checks to hand them out. A district administrator described that event by summarizing, "They made remarks to her that she was treating them like cattle, and it was all so innocent on her part and so she was just devastated. She spent the rest of the day crying."

The association described the district administration's use of security as an unnecessary tactic only designed to cast a negative light on union members and damage their morale. A union member described her reaction to the district's use of paid security:

I was disappointed. I felt that way the first day when there were armed guards circling the district office. It's public property. We're employees. We're teachers. We're not going to be violent. They just presented very quickly that they were worried about us. It came out that we were thugs. They had armed guards ringing the district and also there were armed guards up at Roosevelt Grade School. Never once were we violent. I mean yelling at somebody—if you can't be yelled at—I can yell at you all I want; that's not violence. So it was just unnecessary, and that just puts a divide up, and very quickly it was them against us. You could see that change, kind of like guards in a jail and the inmates.

The reasons given explaining why the strike ended varied so widely on each side of the dispute that it was difficult, as an outsider, to identify which specific events triggered the final resolution. The governor of the state and different community groups had weighed in on the issue by presenting their own versions of contract resolution. However, there was very little in the way of a resolution, evidenced by the fact that disagreements over key issues continued beyond the bargaining and were scheduled to be decided through a binding arbitration process scheduled several months later.

Still, the descriptions of the end of the strike illustrate the way each side's belief system served to guide their interpretation of why the strike ended. District administration generally characterized the end of the strike having been caused by the union realizing that their community support was eroded to the point that they would not prevail on several issues. Stated an administrator:

The community supported the district on our issues and were upset that the union was out there carrying signs saying we're out here for kids, when they knew full well, that's not why you go out on strike, is for the kids. So I think the union finally realized that. They were losing their credibility and their support...and I do think that when it came down to it, to a settlement, that it was finally the union being willing to say, OK, we'll take this.

Ironically, the description above is remarkably similar to the way union leaders characterized the end of the strike, with one glaring difference: union leaders believed that the board was willing to settle because *the board* had lost community support:

I think the pressure from the community (ended the strike). I really think that the community finally got it and stepped up to help us a lot. Whatever pressure—calling, emailing, just being present. The district doesn't want the community to be in an uproar and neither does the school board. So I think that really put some pressure for their side to finally say, "We'll take this."

Thus, in November of 2005, the nineteen-day strike in Mountain ended, and the teachers went back to work. Still, in the strike's aftermath, several events unfolded that are worth noting.

By late spring of 2006, the teacher who had been the coordinator of activities during the strike became union president. A group of community members started a campaign to collect enough signatures to recall three different board members, and although the campaign ultimately failed, in June of 2006 two of the board members who had been the main focus of the strike resigned. They both cited the time required of being a board member and a need to focus more on their individual families as the reasons for their departure. A third board member unexpectedly died over the summer, and the remaining two board members found themselves in the position of having to appoint three more members, who would then need to run for their seat

in the next election. Finally, the superintendent and assistant superintendent announced to the board their respective decisions to retire at the end of the 2006-2007 school year. One union member shared the perspective that the flurry of retirements and resignations may have been attributable to the aftermath of the strike,

I knew that the superintendent was probably going to retire, because she's been superintendent for while, and she's coming on to that retirement age. I could speculate and say she could work for another two or three years, and maybe she's choosing not to because her husband's retiring, but it does seem to be quite convenient. Then to have the assistant superintendent go as well? Again, he's kind of close to retirement, but he's definitely not an old man, so him not stepping in for the next two years, I don't know, I haven't really talked to them personally about why they're leaving. But it is going to be nice to have things kind of changed. The association has changed, the board has changed and now the district office will be changed.

The board member who had resigned during the strike also noted:

So, how far has the district come in these last seven years? Once again, the board is seeking applicants for a majority of the board positions. Once again, it soon will be searching for a new superintendent. Once again, it will try to understand why we have large numbers of home-schooled kids in the district and try to attract them back into the fold. Once again, the administration will begin "collecting ideas" for the next labor contract negotiations. And once again, the district and community are trying to heal the wounds from a bitter strike. People often say, "Some things never change." For our community's sake, let's hope they're wrong this time.

There is some indication that things have changed. One district administrator commented that the joint labor-management teams seemed to be working, and people were talking again in a way that seemed to indicate that they wanted to solve the problems. The arbitration to decide the language of the remaining two issues originally scheduled for June of 2006, had been postponed until October, but ultimately the two issues were resolved through a joint labor-management effort.

Union members also seemed optimistic. The fall of 2006, one year after the strike, was marked by distinct changes in the labor-management relationship. The new board members were more involved, and it seemed that the resignation of the two board members most involved in the strike was promoting change as well.

The union also felt that the superintendent was listening to their concerns, even though it appeared she was doing so as a result of some pressure from the school board. In general, though, the level of communication between the association and the superintendent was, in the view of the new union president, improving:

The superintendent has been across the table a lot of the times with many informal talks and I think that she was getting a lot of pressure from the board, because I actually speak to the board chair quite a bit, and there were some times where I knew some information, and that's not what was being said at the table, and so our team was able to call the district administration on that. We could tell them we know that's not necessarily what the board was saying, so we have a better feel for things. You do that a couple of times and they realize, "Oh they do have the ability to really understand what's going on, so I guess we have to be up front with them." The superintendent is definitely at the table, but now she and I have a pretty good working relationship and I think that she trusts what I

say, not necessarily that she going to do what I would like her to do, but will take it into consideration. So when she gets pressure both from the association and from the board, I think that's also kind of what pushed things forward in resolving the outstanding contract issues.

The Jefferson Experience

As bargaining began for the 2006-2009 contract, district and union leaders in the JSD had some trepidation over what the outcome might be, due to what they perceived as a difficult relationship between school board members and teachers. A district administrator described why the Jefferson Educational Association (JEA) may have had a negative perception of some board members, an account confirmed by union leaders who were interviewed:

The conflict originated because the JEA usually has a representative from each of the buildings come to the board meetings. Well, in the last couple of years, a couple of board members have said flippant reckless comments in a board meeting, and rolled their eyes like "Ugh, teachers already have enough time off" types of comments. Just flippant, reckless comments and so now those comments have been quoted by every teacher. So even though they have come back and put on breakfasts and have provided technology grants and things for the teachers, it still, those comments, it comes back to that the JEA believes they do not respect teachers, at least, a couple of them do not respect teachers. One board member admitted that his relationship with the teachers' union was not good, because the union frequently characterized him as being against education:

I've got teachers who that think that I am the devil, and I've never spoken with them. There is one teacher down in the valley area, her name is Mrs. Massey, and she had my son and did a wonderful job when we first moved here. We moved here six weeks before

my wife could get here. My son was a basket case, he was crying all the time, and she took him under her wing and got him on the straight and narrow, and to this day, he just thinks the world of her, and I do to. But, if you were to go and talk to Mrs. Massey and ask her what she thinks of Mark Smith as a board member and you'd get a decidedly different opinion.

On the other hand, district personnel perceived that the make-up of the association's bargaining team had a large influence on the negative relationship that impacted bargaining. One stated:

None of them are good communicators. Seriously, none of them. The only exception is one representative from one building. In that building there are two representatives and one is absolutely not a good communicator and the other one is a good guy, but he's not on their executive board. But they're, for the most part, abrasive, would rather argue than come up with an idea, and then, what has been typical is that they take bits and pieces of information and have not distributed it to their constituents.

District administrators also believed that the union's paid staff person, called a "field representative" or a "uniserve director" in the National Education Association affiliate structure, was not going to be helpful to the relationship either, citing his removal from another school district as evidence of his poor abilities and abrasive approach.

Despite the initial skepticism, however, both sides began preparing in earnest for the upcoming negotiations. District management felt that the best way to approach the negotiations with the teachers was to be sure that they had accurate information in regard to the district's finances. To that end, they offered to share financial information by having a union member go through the district's budget with the business manager to show that "there's not a stock pile

hidden here or there,” and that the union members could see whatever discretionary money there was to spend in bargaining. The district administration wanted to show that increasing costs of the retirement contribution and energy bills would eat up much of any perceived reserve fund excess. Nevertheless, the district had planned for the bargaining financially, and in their mind, “the year before we had really given them a very nice package, and did some things that for a district of our size, it was a pretty hefty package...and we knew that we could probably take a look at doing some more this year.” The union did not respond to the district’s offer to review the finances in the way the district would have hoped. Union leaders were not interested in hearing about the district’s financial issues, which they believed were mitigated by the fact that school board policy had set the district’s savings balance level at 8% of the total budget.

Further, the district believed that the union had already planned to strike as early as in the fall of 2005, before bargaining began in February of 2006, which they saw as another reason that the union did not want to find out more about the budget. A board member stated that the union had been “...posturing from day one. If you look back on it now, you can see that it was always there that they were going to strike. I think no matter what we would have offered them, they were going to fold their arms and be offended and picket...that was their goal.” One of the reasons the district believed that the JEA was preparing for a difficult bargaining round was because of the involvement of their state’s education association.

It was obvious with the involvement along the way of their state education association and their uniserve representative that they had had the discussion about striking before we ever started negotiating, that this was the year that they were going to take it all the way if they had to. Nothing else was going on in our state at the time, so we were it. We

were selected. I believe we were. The state education association wanted us as an example and they were willing to sacrifice kids to get there.

From the association's viewpoint, they were simply preparing for every eventuality as they began to decide upon strategy for bargaining:

We came into the last year of the contract, and we had been worried the previous year because in dealing with our association and uniserve folks, they were adamant in telling us that you don't want to go to work without a contract. It puts you in a world of hurt, and we knew that. But try as I could, as I talked to my membership, they of course were very reticent to considering such thing as a strike.

The union also conducted other activities to prepare for the upcoming bargaining session. The main activity was the distribution of surveys to find out what member interests were, along with financial comparisons to other districts' teacher compensation and expenditures. The union discovered that the majority of their members' concerns were around how their salaries compared to those in nearby districts as well as the perceived increasing costs of administration in the district. Thus, when the bargaining process started, the teachers were feeling that the main issue to be negotiated was compensation.

On the other hand, the administration wanted to focus on collaboration time and language issues, both of which they believed to be common interests of the union. With those in mind, bargaining started, with the team utilizing what they called a "hybrid" bargaining approach, due to administration's perceived lack of efficiency related to the interest-based bargaining model. Stated a district administrator, "I've gone through interest-based bargaining training a couple of different times and with the teams. We've devised our own way to cut to the chase and kind of get things done a bit faster."

Union members shared that district administrators were the ones who had decided not to use interest-based bargaining (IBB) strategies. They did, however, seek to clarify early on what the bargaining process would look like:

Our concern was that, just as in the past, we weren't sure how the negotiations were going to be run. The first few days we sat down, and this is back in February, the district let us know that they were not real interested in doing the interest based bargaining, which is a much more collaborative. They said it just takes too much time, too much talk, and they just wanted to get to the issues.

Thus, norms came to be established for the traditional bargaining sessions, and even contained details about how each side would present, how they were going to cross lines out from the current contract when proposing a change, and even what colors would be used.

Still a union member expressed a concern about the way the district approached traditional bargaining:

We thought we were doing great at the good old-fashioned package exchange. We had all received interest based bargaining training and our previous bargain had been done through IBB. But when we had our re-openers two years previous, we had all agreed that IBB was, candidly, rather cumbersome. It's a very long, slow moving process, and the district was not interested in that. They wanted to move faster, and the school board members didn't want it, and that was fine with us. But the fascinating thing was, ok, so we'll prepare our packages and exchange them and then negotiate those. Well, we prepared our packages, we exchanged them, but all we talked about was their package, all three years.

Another union member shared the perception that district administrators did not have enough of the requisite knowledge needed to conduct a traditional bargaining session. One union leader stated:

They hadn't really done that kind of back-and-forth proposal really effectively before, because we'd never done counter-proposal-like things before, with this group at least. I think it was just confusing for them, you know? We'd get a proposal and it would be total mush. It was chaos! So red flags went up all over the place as we went through this. It's like we had to say, "No, we can't do that, you've got to redo this whole thing, start with this," and so the whole process was just delay after delay and misstep after misstep.

In addition, all participants mentioned in some way that the much of the time in the initial negotiating sessions was spent discussing the district's proposal. However, union and management personnel differed greatly in their perception of why that occurred. District leaders believed that the discussion over their proposal was lengthy because of the variety of issues that were addressed in one package, as well as the fact that union leaders did not express serious disagreement with it throughout the spring.

On the other hand, a union member reported that the long amount of time spent discussing the district's proposal had more to do with the way the district thought they should bargain than any sort of purposeful delay on the union's part:

The district got themselves all in a bind over the fact that they wanted us to shift from our contracted seven-hour, forty-minute day to working an eight hour day, and that way we would then have time to collaborate. We tried to point out to them many times: one, this wasn't one of the hot issues for our association, and two, it doesn't make much sense. You're going to pay us the same to work more and then tell us it's some magical

collaboration time? So they tried to put a spin on it, and we took it back to our membership and the membership said absolutely not, period. We proceeded from February 'til the end of June, discussing the district's eight-hour day, collaboration time package, and they were showing us all these fancy ways that they could put all this money back into our teacher's pockets, when in reality we were back earning it again; there was no raise. It's fascinating because they always think they have to sell something, so they would have power points and presentations and we're saying, "Hey, this is negotiating, this is not 'teach us time.'"

Another union member indicated, "they always had an idea, and maybe it's the fatherly attitude, that they knew better where we wanted our money placed than we did, so it was hard to get them convinced to put it in places more where we wanted it."

At one point in the discussion of the eight-hour day proposal, the district had requested to present it to the rest of the JEA membership, because, in their view, it was complicated enough that it would simply be easier to present the entire proposal to the teachers, rather than have the JEA bargaining team try to explain it to their membership. However, there was great disagreement over the intent and process to be used during the meeting. District administrators shared that the JEA bargaining team had agreed that the district could present the proposal to the whole group. JEA members stated that the original intention was only to allow the teachers to ask questions of the written proposal if they had any. The JEA described district leaders as attempting to put things in the presentation that had not been written in the original proposal, and shared that they were simply pointing out that the district could not present what was not in the written proposal. The district described the union's behavior at that meeting very differently:

In the meeting, one union member became very loud, and he actually came towards me, took some steps, almost threatening steps, towards me. I'm sitting in a chair presenting this power point, and he's taking steps towards me. So, I stood up to meet his physical approaching. I don't think anybody thought we were going to go chest to chest or anything immature like that, but it was clear he was trying to be intimidating physically as well as vocally. I don't remember the exact words, but he said something like, "The rest of us didn't agree to this," even though the union president had agreed to us doing this presentation for their membership. And he would say things like, "You know, we didn't agree to do this, and you're giving information that we haven't agreed to," and of course we responded, "We know you haven't agreed to it yet. This is a proposal, and you knew we would have to discuss this."

As the bargaining reached into June, one of the district's proposals contained a significant amount of language changes that they were hoping would serve to condense a contract they viewed as long, cumbersome to read, and difficult to understand. They believed that, although there were obviously some proposed language modifications that were likely to be rejected by the union, the union as a whole would appreciate eliminating some of the redundancies in the contract in order to make it easier to understand. They expressed shock that the union perceived it as a maneuver to eliminate some union rights.

Certainly there were a few things in there that we wanted to get, things that they wanted to get, but that's all it was. But we were just trying to be helpful in shortening the contract. In place of some language, we put in there to refer to administrative codes and laws of our state. But when they got it, they just went nuts over it. They wanted it all written out, and we thought they wanted it to be short, because it's in the law anyway.

The union clearly did not see the language proposals as what they wanted. In fact, they perceived the language alterations to be in sharp contrast to what they would ever want in terms of association rights and management rights, saying:

They had language proposals that would have gutted the contract as far as being able to protect your rights with the association. I mean, anybody who had been here for more than four or five years would have just said, “We’re walking—we’d walk on that.”

Yet another issue that was being discussed in the spring was who would pay for the “carve out” costs, a mandatory fee charged to each individual that subsidizes retiree health care in the state. Many districts had paid for the carve-out for their teachers, and some unions had negotiated for their districts to pay a partial cost of the carve-out. In the Jefferson administrators’ first proposal, they offered that all of the teachers move to the state’s own health plan, which would eliminate the carve-out requirement as well as reduce insurance premium costs, albeit at the expense of any one individual’s preferred insurance choice. That discussion also took quite a bit of time, as an expert had to be brought into a bargaining session to explain how the state’s health plan worked. When it was discovered that an employee who lived in the county north of Jefferson, where the assistant superintendent lived, could not be covered by the plan, the idea was dropped. The union asked the district what the purpose of that proposal was. They said the district responded by saying, “We just wanted our current insurance broker to step up to the bar, we really weren’t serious about this as a financial package.” The union perceived then that the district was bargaining in bad faith, which district administrators denied.

By the end of June, little progress was being made on the language issues, but both sides of the bargaining table realized that they needed to begin discussing money proposals. Thus, there were a few meetings in July with the assistant superintendent as the lead, because the

superintendent was unavailable in those time periods. Those sessions did not result in a bargained agreement, and the union declared an impasse, which in the state means that the next step in bargaining is mediation.

The district felt that the union's declaration of impasse was simply the next step in a pre-conceived plan to strike, and they felt that the declaration was not only surprising, but also that it was unjustified, because the district administrators were still working on discussing the union's requested changes in compensation with the school board. Nevertheless, once the union had declared an impasse, the Public Employer Relations Commission (PERC) was required to appoint a mediator to assist in the negotiations. Once the mediator began working with them in late August, JSD administration became even more concerned, because they felt that she was not effective in moving the union toward what they saw as a good resolution given the district's financial situation:

We had a very poor mediator, she just came in and said, "I have never worked with a group that is so adamant, and they don't want to do any compromise at all," and so every time we'd see her that's what she'd say. She'd come in visibly shaken, but what do you do? Fire the mediator? Because then, the other thing is you're coming up with the deadline of school starting, and they were not going to start school without a contract by golly. So, they didn't care about the mediator. She wasn't running their show. They already knew what they wanted, and so, even though the mediator would come in here and talk for a while, she'd just come in and shake her head to us and we're like, "Oh, how did we get this lady?" She was not effective at all for any kind of compromise. And she was intimidated by them.

The union did not see the mediator as ineffective. In fact, they stated that bringing in the mediator was a smart move, because they felt they accomplished in three days what they had not accomplished in eight months. They saw her as understanding that they were very unified and unwavering in their demands.

However, after two days of mediation, both sides agreed that very little progress on the money items had been made. As a result, the union decided that they needed to conduct some informational picketing, a common union practice when negotiations are stalled. According to both union and district personnel, the picketing was effective in promoting a resolution due both to the number of teachers who participated as well as the extensive media coverage, that included both television segments, a front-page newspaper article, and a photograph of the picketers, whose numbers totaled anywhere from forty to fifty.

Understandably, however, while the union viewed the picketing as a positive show of strength, the district viewed it as a discouraging indication that the association was more unified than they thought, even though they felt that rank and file union members had no idea the tactics that were being used by the individuals on the union negotiating team:

It was tough when they went out on the little informational picket line because there were teachers that were so loyal to the district, our friends, that are out there and we're thinking, "They're being misled, they don't understand," but on the other hand, it's their paycheck, and friendship goes beyond that when you're talking about a paycheck, and so that hurt a little bit, because we're thinking, "Oh look, she's out there," and because we really didn't think their negotiating team had the support of all the other teachers. When it came down to it, before that time, we thought there's no way the teachers would go on strike. We thought we could count probably twelve that would be out there, but then

when we had like forty five or fifty out there, all of a sudden it's like, "You know what, they're believing everything the negotiating team is saying. They could go on strike." So that was a turning point because before that time we thought they'll never go on strike, they're being obnoxious, they've threatened strike, but they don't have the backing.

Concurrent to the picketing and mediation, union leaders also described an event that allegedly occurred with the superintendent, but that was verified in part by other sources.

We were still working out some details in mediation, then the next day all of a sudden the district started reducing programs, because those darn teachers were taking all the money, quote-unquote. Well I had heard rumors, and a teacher came to me and said, "Hey, I'm being told that my program may be cut because of the teachers' demands." I said, "Well, be that as it may, how does that make you feel, whether it's true or not, how does that make you feel?" "Well," he said, "I don't like being threatened," and he said, "I don't believe them, but I was just in the superintendent's office and he basically said that you were a worse thing next to a terrorist." I said, "Let me get this straight again. The superintendent of schools told you, a JEA member, that your leadership was worse than a terrorist?" "Yeah," he said, and I said, "Hmmmmm...and what just exactly did he tell you after that?" "Well that you were the cause for my program to be cut." I said, "Really." So, I contacted our state education association and said hey, I think you need to talk to this teacher, which they did, and we filed an unfair labor practice, right then, bang... And then, we informed the superintendent he would write a formal letter of apology, apologizing to the membership for statements made and then, and only then, would we drop the unfair labor practice. And so he did.

Thus, after the picketing, and after three days of mediation, and after agreeing that the superintendent would write a letter of apology to union members, the district decided to settle the contract before the school year started. It happened literally hours before the teacher contract was scheduled to begin, and only three days before school was to start, thereby averting a strike. However, the school board had the final say in whether or not to accept the agreement with the union. They did not want to accept the agreement, and yet they also believed at that point that the teachers would most likely strike if they did not. One stated, “sometimes as a board member you just have to hold your nose and vote, and that’s what I did.” This board member also sent an email to fellow board members at 11:15 pm on the evening before the contract settled, giving his reasoning for voting to accept the contract. The email read in part as follows:

It comes down to simply this:

Do I vote to accept this offer of JEA that I philosophically oppose, which I believe will make future negotiations more difficult and suffer some pretty significant personal pain and humiliation. In doing so, I can prevent dividing the community and inflicting pain and inconvenience on my constituents...or do I “bow my neck” and force a strike, “knowing in my heart” that if we can get the word out, cooler heads with the teachers will prevail, and support our kids. We blindside the public and parents who do not see this coming, we destroy the district climate for probably 4-5 years, we foster mistrust and anger, instead of collaboration and team work, and I hamstring our administrators and diminish their chances to accomplish our educational goals.

The board did vote to accept the proposal, but as a whole the district’s negotiating team members were quite obviously not happy about the settlement for a variety of reasons, including the financially risky situation they believed it put the district in.

Conversely, union members believed strongly that their show of strength in the picketing as well as holding firm in their financial requests were effective tactics that resulted in a some “decent” gains in the new contract, gains that would not negatively impact the district’s fiscal future. They did not see the outcome as damaging to their reputation, or to the reputation of the district, in any way. Indeed, much of what occurred during bargaining, including their own actions and the district’s actions, they viewed as being simply part of the process, part of doing business, and they expressed their frustration that the district did not seem to understand the “rules of the game” the way that they should.

In sharp contrast to the union’s retrospective view of the negotiations and the contract settlement, the district negotiating team members expressed their sadness, anger, and even disgust at the outcome, and in particular their perception of how the union behaved in order to get the contract settlement:

The teachers here, well, not the teachers here, I shouldn’t say that, I should say the union mucky mucks, the cronies, they’re really caught up in this union stuff. Some of them are good teachers, don’t get me wrong, but they’re lousy union leaders. Well, maybe they’re good union leaders, but that makes them not good for kids. I really strongly believe that it’s more about the kill for them, because they’re walking around puffing their chests that they won. They didn’t win anything. In reality, we did give more than we should have, but it’s going to hurt the kids, and it already is. They use the reason, “This is good for kids.” And some of the teachers who I thought I had a lot of respect for, I don’t anymore.

Subsequent to the initial interviews, which occurred about a month after the contract negotiations had ended, the superintendent announced his retirement, and in March of 2007, a new superintendent was hired. In a follow-up interview, one district administrator shared the

perception that there were good teachers in his district, and that he hoped the new superintendent would be able to create a balance between paying the teachers a reasonable salary and maintained fiscal responsibility for the district.

The Riverview Experience

In the spring of 2006, RSD began bargaining for a successor contract to a 2005-2006 one-year agreement. It was the district's perception that because the price of the state's main export was high, teachers would be expecting more money, even though larger state coffers did not necessarily translate to more money for school districts. This was especially true given the increasing costs of energy, as well as their state's large increase in the district's mandatory retirement contributions for teachers. The Riverview bargaining team entered bargaining with a great deal of experience. Although the executive director for human resources had only worked for RSD for four years, he had lived in the district for over thirty years. He also had extensive experience in negotiating and in bargaining with unions, having worked as a contract negotiator for a large retail establishment. The director of contract administration, also on the bargaining team, had worked in the district since the 1970s, first as a teacher, then as a principal, then as a supervisor in the teaching and learning division. In those roles, he had negotiated contracts both for the union and for management, and thus he also had a wealth of experience leading negotiations. Indeed, he was one of the lead organizers for a three-day strike in Riverview in 1994. Further, both human resources administrators had negotiated the recent one-year agreement, even after the lengthy 2005-2006 bargaining nearly led to a strike. Although the superintendent was not directly involved in negotiations, she had worked for RSD for over 25 years and also had experience both as a union member and as an administrator during previous negotiations.

These experiences seemed to provide this group with a certain amount of perspective when discussing the recent contract negotiations. None of the administrators interviewed appeared to be angry or shocked about the previous year's bargaining nor the current negotiations, referring to the process more often as just "the way things go around here." This was partially due to the frequency with which the Riverview teachers rejected district offers, resulting in mediation. For example, a district administrator's description of the spring 2006 contract negotiations was factual in nature with very little indication of any strong emotion, despite his being aware of the unusual nature of a union voting down a tentative agreement:

Initially there was a lot of posturing, probably on both sides, people being careful of what they said and talking about issues that really didn't mean much to either side. We made very little progress until we went to mediation...then, in three days we went from not even having discussed the financial things, which are always at the end of the contract negotiations, to getting everything resolved and we actually reached a tentative agreement with them. But their bargaining team wasn't united on it. Their bargaining team went back to their executive board, and the board said that's not good enough. So, they were having a meeting that night, and we kind of put some additional things together real quick, made a couple of changes and got something that their board would approve. So we had a tentative agreement, approved by the bargaining team and approved by their executive board, not just by a simple majority. And then they had a meeting to ratify it. We got the thing done on Friday, and they were having a meeting in a couple of days. They had to get the information out to people, and then there was a vote. There were lot of emails going back and forth, a lot of people asking questions about it, and it was defeated. So that's the situation we're in right now. It's been rejected by the membership.

My belief is it's been rejected by the membership because they're almost conditioned to do that, that you keep rejecting things and you get more, you get more, you get more. In the teachers' contract, we offered more than we offered to any other group, and we offered more than any other district, or at least—we have like five major districts in the state—any other district in the state. We offered them more, and they rejected it.

In addition, when summarizing the district's reaction to the rejection of the tentative agreement, one school board member stated that the district was “disappointed, but not really surprised.”

District administrators also identified several specific union actions they knew they could anticipate once the first tentative agreement had been voted down. In fact, as they approached the beginning of the school year with the possibility of ongoing bargaining, or even the possibility of a strike, their joint experience prepared them for activities they knew would happen, even going so far as to indicate their perception that the union seemed “again” to be comprised of two different factions, with a moderate faction that sometimes prevailed and a more aggressive action that sometimes prevailed. District administrators felt that they could anticipate a scenario similar to one they had seen previously, with the union engaged in rallies, mass meetings, coordinated efforts to send messages to the school board, print media, and a push for a strike authorization and mediation and arbitration

The district team also believed that the strategies were consistent with those advocated by the National Education Association (NEA), as described below by a district administrator:

(The NEA) trains on how you go to the different stages on your bargaining and escalate in each of these stages in an attempt to encourage the other side to reach an agreement with you. So, I believe it's fairly scripted for them to go through each of these stages where they'll start negotiations and they'll have some press releases out there about

continuing negotiations and then pretty soon they're going to have press releases about how the other side doesn't seem to be moving, and they're looking for a fair settlement, and then there'll be more press releases out there saying that the district is being unreasonable, and that they need to offer more. Some of it is designed to put pressure on politicians, some of it's designed to emotionally whip up the membership, and then they will call for a strike authorization vote to make a big production out of it. They'll make sure the media's aware of it and the purpose of that is they are selling it to their members like there's no real sacrifice on the district's part, there's no real pain, and you just have to make a strong stand. Show unity, we need to force the employer to be more reasonable. And so, any district association worth its salt can get a strike vote, and with the intent that it will produce a greater degree of pressure on the management folks. And our state's NEA affiliate is very good at that process I believe. The part that they're not good at, is they're not good at de-escalating the emotional factor in their rallying of the membership.

It was later verified via news and other media reports, including the Riverview Educational Association (REA) website, that district administrators were quite accurate about what would occur once the initial tentative agreement had been voted down and if bargaining were to continue into the beginning of the school year. For example, in regard to the May rejection of the contract, which occurred by a margin of more than two to one, the president of the association at the time, John Johnson, commented on the REA website, "The strong member turn-out and the level of passion in the discussion sent a strong message—to our bargaining team and to the district. You told us loud and clear that what we brought you wasn't good enough." In addition, the bargaining spokesperson and president-elect Clint Crabtree stated, "We are a

membership organization, and the members have spoken. In the coming days the board and the bargaining team will be meeting to work out where we go from here.” It was also reported that at the meeting “veteran members spoke of the lean years during the 1990s when teachers accepted salary freezes and flat contracts” and Mr. Johnson stated that, “The understanding was that when the economic outlook improved, we would make up some ground and at least be able to catch up with inflation.” And, in a confirmation of the district’s view that the price of the state’s largest export impacts teacher views of the money available, Johnson further stated, “This year the state has seen historically high (export) revenues, and the Riverview School District has gotten some of those riches. In light of this, our members told us they would not accept what was a lackluster agreement.”

On July 1, the newly elected president of the REA, and former bargaining spokesperson, Clint Crabtree, began his leadership role. A veteran of union activities, Crabtree had served on several bargaining teams over the last twenty-six years as a teacher before being elected president, in an election in which he ran unopposed. He continued to comment that the association membership believed that the tentative agreement was simply too low in terms of compensation. “We met with the district on June 20th and agreed that we would each have to assess what to do next. The district effectively said there is no new money to put on the table. We emphasized that our members were clear that the tentative agreement was not enough.” Crabtree also began to refer to the possibility of a strike vote, stating, “Normally, our next step would be to take a strike vote, but we are hoping we don’t have to. Our goal is a fair settlement—not a job action.” In a news report that came out at about that same time, union officials reiterated their perception that the district had plenty of money to spend on teacher salaries, if only they wanted to, noting that the district had received an additional \$31 million in

revenue when the state legislature gave schools additional money from the state's higher-than anticipated export revenues.

In the district's view, this rallying of the troops, which started with the rejection of the initial tentative agreement in May and continued into August, actually worked to the detriment of the union when it came time to send a new contract to the general membership for a vote. The district and the union had some concerns about how well the membership would respond to Crabtree's new leadership as president. These concerns were based on the previous contract rejection, when he was the bargaining chair, and the different factions within the union. However, they did feel that the union president was trying to work with the district in order to ensure his success as a union leader.

The district's concerns about the factions within the union proved to be accurate, as the union membership again voted down a contract that the new bargaining team had agreed to only hours before the teachers were to return to work. When describing the rejection after it had occurred, the union president noted that it was possible his role as spokesperson when the contract was rejected in June could have impacted his ability to sell the new contract.

In retrospect, hindsight, I think it was a bad decision on my part to become part of the bargaining team when I was the only candidate for president, because when we ended up with the tentative agreement in May that was rejected, I was the spokesperson, and I was president elect, and so that focal point in terms of negativity was clearly directed at me. However, he also noted that there were other issues out of his control that also probably had a large impact on the August tentative agreement being rejected, including members' sensitivity to the fact that there had been salary freezes in previous years.

On the other hand, the district viewed the proposal as a good one that the union leadership simply could not sell to the membership, because the union president was perceived to have “given in” to the district, despite his past history of union advocacy. The union acknowledged that there was dissention about the decisions of their leadership, as evidenced by the meeting of the membership that resulted in the tentative agreement being voted down. A union member shared:

There were some of the accusations against the president in the second tentative agreement general membership meeting and then the vote, some personal attacks and accusations that the president was “in bed” with the school district. Someone said, “Why can’t you tell us how the executive board voted on whether to put this tentative agreement thru to the membership?” The president indicated that it was not a vote, that the executive board was in the room when the decision was made to sign the tentative agreement, and each person around the room had a chance and an opportunity to express their position, so there was no official vote. So, the president said having the board members say whether they voted yes or no was inappropriate and he ruled in out of order. And then another member went to the floor and said again, “Why won’t you tell us what the vote was?” and the president said, “From everything I’ve seen and heard, you wouldn’t believe us if we told you anyhow.” Then, one of the executive board members, also a bargaining team member and in fact the spokesperson, went to the floor to a microphone, said that he resigns, he’s resigning because of the comment that the president had just made. But then later he came back and requested to be reinstated, and he told the board he didn’t really resign, blah blah blah.

After the contract was voted down in August, the district noticed a distinct change in the union's leadership strategies, and, with mediation sessions scheduled for mid-October, the union increased its efforts to push the district to a better financial agreement for teachers. A district person stated:

We had some conversations with Clint, but we didn't have any meetings with him. He kind of changed a little bit. It seems like when he saw that the membership wouldn't support the deal, he didn't have much choice but to say, "OK, well I don't support this either, we gotta get more, we gotta go back, we gotta show the district solidarity and support, we gotta wear purple shirts or you gotta go to the school board meetings, we've got to go out and have meetings in the buildings," and so that's how it went.

Indeed, prior to the October bargaining session, the union did engage in a variety of strategies designed to show the district how unified their membership was in regard to the requested financial provisions of the contract. These strategies included holding a rally of teachers and supporters, wearing purple every Thursday in demonstration of solidarity, and having members testify at board meetings. In their testimony at board meetings, union members expressed their concern about not having competitive salaries in relationship to other districts, about the district misplacing priorities, and about a shortage of special education teachers, ostensibly due to the inability of the district to pay competitive wages, thereby exacerbating a lack of quality teachers. However, the RSD website began posting a section entitled "Bargaining Update" in order to provide the district's viewpoint on the bargaining as well as to refute some of the testimony given by union members at board meetings

The war of words continued throughout October on the association website, the district website, and in the local media, with the union claiming the district was being stingy with its

money and erroneous in its priorities, and the district claiming that the union's statements ranged from unfair to untrue. A review of each side's claims and refutations seems to indicate that the financial issues, at least in September, were truly a matter of where one believed the money should go. However, district administrators believed that what the union saw as "rethinking priorities", the district saw as making very difficult choices between bargaining units, between programs, and between salary and class sizes.

As the rhetoric continued, both sides came to the table for two bargaining sessions in mid-October, hoping to be able to come to an agreement that would be palatable to both the district and to the association membership. However, the two bargaining sessions were described by both the district and the union as largely unproductive, although each felt it was because the other side would not "move" from their own proposed financial package. Thus, at the end of the session, bargaining was declared to be at an impasse, and the district and the union began to prepare for the next step in their state's process, which was arbitration.

As the district looked ahead toward arbitration, they were preparing for all possibilities. However, the district's inability to provide a larger financial package was further solidified as other financial issues became apparent. District administrators indicated that their original financial offer was even more of a risk in terms of the district's budget than it had been in August, with the district's retirement contribution rate increasing substantially, and with the price of the state's largest export dropping. They did not rescind their original offer; however, they had to prepare for the possibility that the union might strike after the arbitration, because the arbitrator's decision is only advisory and is not binding. However, it is a required legal step in that state before a union can undertake a strike. In thinking about a strike, a district leader explained:

We've had strikes here at the district before, and we've got a number of people who have been through them, and the one thing with the state education association or the NEA is it's pretty predictable, they have the same game plan, and we have strike preparation manuals here and I've read through the information about the couple of strikes the teachers have had before. The one thing about it is our superintendent has said, "If there's a strike, I'm closing the schools."

It was clear also that the school board had been prepared for the possibility of a strike, and while they acknowledged that a strike is always difficult, they also stated that they believed the district was prepared, saying:

There have been some discussions now, and also in the past, about when they could strike. Right now they can't strike because we haven't gone through arbitration, but prior to that there was a time when they could strike, and we were talking about it and were as prepared as you can be. But a strike is a difficult thing to go through. So, we will be prepared when we need to be, but I don't think you're ever really ready for a strike. Especially here, it's not like we can line up a whole bunch of substitute teachers and just replace everybody.

Meanwhile, the association continued to assert that the district had money to spend on teacher salaries, if only they would choose to do so. They continued to engage in a number of activities designed to put pressure on the district and on the school board in the time leading up to the arbitration scheduled for late December. They also began preparing in earnest for the arbitration by collecting data to show the arbitrator how far RSD had fallen behind in its ability to attract and keep professional staff. In addition, the bargaining team stepped up its efforts to visit buildings in order to energize members, collect information, and share information. One

activity involved having teachers track how many hours per week they worked. Another activity involved sending postcards to legislative candidates and incumbents about the “urgent need for the state to resolve the retirement crisis” by funding the district’s required increases in the employee retirement contribution rate. A large number of teachers met at a middle school to prepare and send the postcards out. In addition, the union gave their teachers several “talking points” to use in their communications with each other, or with the media. The information included the following, taken from the REA website:

(Why we’re not willing to settle for what the district has offered us.)

- The single most important ingredient in student achievement = a quality teacher in every classroom.
- With the nationwide teacher shortage, every school district has to compete for quality teachers.
- Riverview School District has fallen behind in its ability to attract and keep the quality educators our children deserve.
- The district has the money—they just need to focus their priorities on what matters most—quality teachers in the classrooms
- Education does not exist inside a bubble, exempt from the laws of supply and demand.
- With our state’s small population, we’ll never be able to grow enough teachers. We’ll always have to recruit from other states.
- RSD must offer competitive salaries and benefits or it won’t be able to attract and keep the quality teachers our children deserve.

The union also continued to assert to their members that if they demonstrated solidarity now, a “job action” would be less likely to be needed later, saying that wearing the same color shirts

each Thursday would assist in demonstrating this solidarity. Also, while the district began to focus less on external media and more on the internal work of preparing for arbitration, the union stepped up their paid media coverage, paying for several radio advertisements to begin airing after the general election. The series of ads focused on the important role teachers play in students' lives from the viewpoints of teachers, students, and parents. The transcripts of the ads were posted on the REA website, and included the following one, from students' perspectives:

REA Radio Image Advertising Campaign

Students Talk

Quotes:

#1 She helps me out, and she challenges me to do my best.

#2 He takes the time to give me extra help.

#3 In Spanish, I love the way she makes the grammar FUN.

#4 Talks to us like we're intelligent. So we respect her too.

Voiceover: These kids are talking about the most important role model in their lives after their parents. They're talking about teachers.

Quotes:

#1 She makes me laugh and makes me think.

#2 He's an awesome teacher.

#3 It's not just what you learn in books. She teaches us about life too.

Voiceover: Our teachers bring knowledge, passion, and commitment to their classrooms.

Quotes:

#4 He won't let me slack off—he keeps me motivated.

#1 I brought my grades up from Cs to As.

Voiceover: Be proud of our teachers. They believe in our children and prepare them to do great things.

Tagline: A message from the 3,500 [35-hundred] teachers and other dedicated professionals of the Riverview Education Association.

Quote: Because good teaching MATTERS.

As the arbitration approached in December, the union began to make the argument that the district was “dragging its feet” in settling the contract because of the interest they were making off of the money that would have been paid to teachers in a contract settlement, an amount that they say totaled just over \$12,000 for the six months of an unsettled contract. Although this amount was a pittance compared to Riverview’s overall budget of over \$350 million, the union still took it as a Thanksgiving opportunity to push members to communicate with the school board, stating:

Let’s talk turkey! You’re struggling every month to come up with the extra money it’s costing you to pay your health insurance premium. But because we’re working without a contract, the district contribution has remained at \$700 instead of \$790 per month.

Meanwhile, RSD is lining its coffers with the money it should be contributing to your premium. Tell the school board to get back to the table prior to arbitration to settle the contract now!

In December, as arbitration approached and as the school semester was ending, the union president looked back at all the activities they had been involved in over the course of the fall contract negotiations, and shared a list of those activities to his members. At the end, he stated:

Finally, I so much appreciate the hard work and support from all of you over these past several months. Your solidarity is impressive, and believe me, the district is feeling the heat. Please travel safely over this holiday break and come back recharged and ready to work together to achieve a competitive contract. All my best wishes.

However, the district did not seem to be “feeling the heat,” believing that the arbitration would simply be the next step in the bargaining process, one that would likely result in an advisory award that the district would consider and the union would reject on their way to a strike vote. But, there was some confusion regarding when the union could legally take the strike vote. One week before arbitration was to begin, the union announced that they would hold a strike authorization vote the day before arbitration, readily admitting that the move was to put pressure on the district to settle the contract. The union president shared with the newspaper that the vote was more of a strategic move meant to send a message to the school district—and the arbitrator—that the pending offer was unacceptable. “Teachers are not interested in striking,” he said. “They’re interested in having a competitive contract.”

The district responded by expressing their bewilderment, sharing that the move looked like it was meant to alarm the district and to attract attention from the media. The Executive Director for Human Resources stated, “I’m confused by this, frankly,” and explained to the newspaper that, “I think the intent of the law is to get an arbitrator’s help before authorizing a strike.” The disagreement appeared to center around the intent of the law, with the union believing the law only prevented an actual strike before arbitration, and the district believing even a strike vote before arbitration would be an unfair labor practice.

Despite the confusion over the law, the strike vote occurred, with union members voting to authorize a strike should the arbitrator’s award not be acceptable. Although union members

would not share what percentage of the membership voted to strike, they did say that voter turnout was “strong”, with members casting ballots at various sites throughout the district. Then, the day after the vote, arbitration began, with both sides presenting their case to an arbitrator. While the district focused on their fiscal responsibility and reasonableness of their financial offer to the teachers, the union focused on how Riverview’s salaries were becoming less and less competitive relative to other districts and how the district really did have the money to pay the teachers more, if only they would realign their priorities.

With the arbitrator’s decision not due until the beginning of March, the months of January and February were more of a waiting game for the district and union, and the union continued to assert that their members would indeed strike if the award was not acceptable. When the arbitrator’s decision did come back, it was not considered to be favorable to the union. In fact, the union president stated that the union was confused by the decision, which agreed that the teachers deserved more money, but which supported the district’s viewpoint that without detrimental cuts in other programs and services, their original financial offer could not be substantially increased. After a week of reviewing the arbitrator’s report, and with media speculating that a strike was inevitable, the district and the union went back to the bargaining table for five more days in a last-ditch effort to prevent a walkout.

After over a year of bargaining, two tentative agreement rejections, an arbitration hearing, and a strike vote, representatives of RSD and REA came to yet another tentative agreement. Copies of the tentative agreements were in buildings by March 15, and a ratification vote was scheduled to take place two weeks later. In the meantime, union members held informational meetings and posted the tentative agreement as well as a summary of the financial package on their website. Then, on March 30, the union president announced that the contract

had been accepted by the union membership, ending the labor dispute in Riverview and preventing a strike.

Summary

This chapter provided descriptions of the bargaining activities in Mountain, Jefferson and Riverview. In Mountain, the labor conflict resulted in the district deciding to employ a contract implementation; in response, the teachers voted to strike, which ultimately became the longest strike in their state's history. In Jefferson, district administrators agreed to acquiesce to a number of teacher demands in bargaining after seeing that a large percentage of their teachers were willing to picket, and speculating that they could also strike if a contract settlement was not reached quickly. Finally, in Riverview, bargaining continued for over a year, and after two tentative agreements were rejected, both parties went to non-binding arbitration. When the arbitrator's report came back seemingly in favor of the school district, they went back to the bargaining table and negotiated a settlement that was approved by the teachers in late March of 2007.

Understanding the events of the labor conflicts in these three districts provides valuable information in regard to the context in which framing activities occurred. As Benford and Snow (2005) state, "...neither frames nor framing processes are purely mentalistic or cognitive entities. Instead, they are rooted in and constituted by group-based interaction which is readily available for first-hand observation, examination, and analysis" (p. 210). Thus, now that a picture has been presented of the observed activities around which meaning-making occurred, the study now turns to an analysis of the frames and framing processes in the three districts.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIVE FRAMES IN SCHOOL DISTRICT LABOR CONFLICTS

The following chapter offers the analysis and interpretation of the experience of labor conflict for school district administrators and teacher union representatives in the three districts selected for study. Specifically, the analysis articulates important indicators, influences, and inflection of collective action frames, which assisted in sense making pertaining to the logics and ideologies guiding advocacy, mobilization, and policy evident in each of the labor disputes. The purpose of the first part of this chapter is to describe each of the identified frames including their associated core framing tasks, as well as the discursive and strategic processes. The second part of the chapter explores how and why participants changed frames given problems and conditions connected with frame resonance and frame disputes.

Framing in School Labor Conflict

The previous chapter provided a description of the labor conflict in each of the three districts. The depiction of contentious labor bargaining introduced key players and sequenced critical interactions and events in a linear fashion as told by participants and as evidenced in documents. The proceedings in each of the three districts are treated separately, as if there was little or no relationship between them. In many ways, such treatment is appropriate because the participants in each of the districts were unknown to those in the others, due to their separation by geography and membership in different state professional associations among many other things. However, shared cultural norms and values, as well as assumptions about American public schooling, are evident in each of the stories. Collectively, the analysis of data gathered through interviews, observations, and artifacts exposed similarities and differences between districts. These were compared to reveal patterns and themes that explained and facilitated

interpretation of the experience of school labor conflict in these districts. Five frames, labeled stewardship, craftsmanship, solidarity, competition, and diplomacy, emerged from the analysis and are presented below.

Framing theorists Gamson and Lasch (1983) and Creed et al. (2002), among others, speak about a signature matrix as the product of presenting an accessible approach for conceptualizing the “central organizing idea, or *frame* (italics in original) for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). Table 1 below provides such summary for the meanings inherent within each of the frames apparent in this study. There are some differences in the categories utilized by this signature matrix and those utilized by Gamson and Lasch (1983) or Creed et al. (2002). These differences reflect a sensitivity to the data in this study and could be attributed to the fact that Creed et al. studied written texts, while this study used multiple sources of data, including internal communications, interviews in media, transcripts of public speeches, transcripts of participant interviews, etc. Like this study, Gamson and Madigliani (1989) also amend their signature matrix given the findings of their study.

The top of this signature matrix identifies the five frames seen in this study. Down the left side of the matrix are the different categories of features observed within that frame. The meanings of most categories are clear (i.e., focus, relationships, communication, data, activities, and judging basis). However, some explanation is needed in regard to others. The matrix begins with a metaphor that suggests the context and type of interaction in which meaning is produced. Exemplars refer to the types of people who are valued within this frame. Catch phrases noted here are comments of an individual in that frame that are most representative of those comments made by other participants. Finally, the roots of the frame refer to organizational structures that are likely to be more familiar to the reader. After the presentation of the signature matrix, a more

detailed description of the meanings within each frame as well as the framing tasks and processes by which they were produced and communicated will be presented.

Table 1.

Signature Matrix

	Stewardship	Craftsmanship	Solidarity	Competition	Diplomacy
Metaphor	Lecture	Game	Production	Fight	Dance
Focus	Prudence	Predictability	Demonstration	Winning/losing	Solving the problem
Exemplars	Those who hold organization's needs above their own	Those who have skill and training in bargaining and negotiations	Those who are able to mobilize others to collective action	Those who can stand up to groups or individuals who are only focused on their own needs	Those who can reach agreement despite conflicts
Catch Phrases	"More bang for the buck"	"It's a game that has rules to follow"	"Show them we're strong and united"	"It was about the kill for them"	"We'll see what happens and go from there"
Relationships	Authority-based	Professional-based	Power-based	Conflict-based	Egalitarian-based
Communication	Top-down	Bottom-up	Diffused	Adversarial	Bilateral
Data	Reduced	Gathered	Communicated	Disputed	Analyzed
Activities	Time-oriented	Process-oriented	Resource-oriented	Defense-oriented	Results-oriented
Judging Basis	Efficiency	Skillfulness	Reason	Morality	Adaptability
Roots	Authoritative structures, patriarchies	Trade organizations focused on respect and professionalism	Social movement organizations mobilizing others to action	Biblical viewpoints of good and evil, morality	Diplomatic endeavors, mediation, statesmanship

The Stewardship Frame

Administrators in both Mountain and Jefferson conveyed the importance and purpose of being stewards of educational excellence and public funds. They viewed their role in the organization as that of public servants who were entrusted to ensure that negotiations would not result in a contract that would place an undue financial burden on district resources. The process of defining the bargaining problem to be addressed (i.e., diagnostic framing) attended to meanings associated with the appropriate use of money, time, and other resources. The process of identifying a solution to the problem (i.e., prognostic framing) conveyed how they tried, either successfully or unsuccessfully, to keep bargaining moving along in a way that protected important time, fiscal, and other resources.

In Jefferson participants frequently defined fiscal issues as lying at the heart of their concerns. The school board had adopted a board policy requiring the district's reserve fund balance to be at least 8% of the total budget. In describing the negotiations, district and board leaders continually referred to their obligations to maintain financial solvency. From this position, they justified their reluctance or difficulty in giving teachers more money. Further, when they did describe the allocation of resources to teacher bargaining, they expressed the viewpoint that money should only be spent on items that would improve instruction, and that simply giving teachers pay raises was not the wisest course of action. One district person stated:

Where do you spend the resources? My feeling is if I can spend a thousand dollars to make a teacher's job more easy and make them a more effective teacher, then that thousand dollars per teacher that I spend gives me great rewards for their job satisfaction, for the kids that they serve for the community and all that as a whole. If I give them a

thousand dollars, just because I give them a pay raise are they going to be a better teacher?

The predominant values embedded in this frame were related to efficiency. In particular, it was common for district administrators to define a short bargaining timeline as indicative of a positive, productive negotiations experience. In an example of the discursive process of frame articulation, one administrator commented that any time spent on negotiations was “such a waste of time and resources.” Another shared a previous experience in bargaining: “I sat down and negotiated with them in two and one-half months. It was meaningful, purposeful, and focused on legitimate issues.” One administrator even criticized his own bargaining team for not recognizing sooner that bargaining was going on too long without results:

Look at that window of three months and look what was brought to the table from both sides and look at the outcome. Now if there are not TA’s, to me that’s a huge red flag as to the productivity of both groups...Before we set another meeting, what are we going to do to insure that we are going to get some results? Instead of maybe waiting seven months and then saying, “You know what you guys? We’re not getting anywhere.” Well seven months had gone by and to me that window’s too long. So, I guess what I’m saying is the response time to me should have been shorter as to the effectiveness of the negotiations...There were sessions where we spent a lot of time, but it was really non-productive.

In addition, when district leaders wanted to move on to other issues in bargaining, they perceived that union leaders would not, and they blamed the union’s bargaining strategy for the negotiations going on for so long with little agreement. Indeed, in Jefferson, district leaders abandoned the interest-based process in favor of a traditional bargaining process due to the

perceived increase in time required for the interest-based process. A union leader shared, “The district was not interested in (interested-based bargaining); they wanted to move faster, and the school board members didn’t want it, and that was fine with us.”

Relationships too were found to exhibit particular qualities given the manner in which participants approached bargaining. Formal authority structures were observed to influence individuals and how they defined and based their interactions with one another. District leaders had the distinct viewpoint that they, given their access to information and responsibility for the district’s educational and financial well-being, brought to the table the more informed viewpoint in regard to what was the best bargaining outcome consistent with the protection and wise utilization of the district’s resources. In district leaders’ view, they had the money, and they, not the union, should be deciding how to spend it in the most effective way possible, with one leader indicating, “We were interested in making sure that if we were going to spend this pot of money, that we got the biggest bang for the buck.”

Union leaders indicated their recognition of this viewpoint, and shared numerous examples. One said, “It’s interesting negotiating with someone whose world view includes that kind of patriarchal way of dealing with things. You’ve got a very paternalistic, ‘I’m the guy who doles out the goodies...I know what’s good for you.’” Another union leader shared, “They’ve always had the idea that—maybe it’s fatherly—they know better where you want your money placed than you do, so it was hard to get them convinced to put it in places more where we wanted it.”

Given that individuals had a structural view of relationships based on formal authority, the communication process that expressed participants’ meanings tended to be top-down. That is, participants perceived that control over the negotiations process was a feature of negotiating.

District administrators endeavored to demonstrate their knowledge and skills during bargaining. The following exemplifies how a district leader for Mountain attempted such management, which presumed the union would have similar interests in efficient bargaining, demonstrating what theorists call frame extension. A bargaining leader approached the union with the idea that each side should limit their bargaining interests to seven, total. He believed that, if he could just talk to the teachers directly, without the district's or the union's use of paid professional negotiators, he would be able to negotiate the contract himself. This bargaining leader's position was also shared by other Mountain administrators in that they did not see MEA president Mark Cunningham's choice to utilize paid education association negotiator Darla Hughes as helpful. Other district administrators also believed strongly that if they could have just sat down with teacher representatives without the paid negotiator, they could work through the contract. A board member stated:

Even though we needed some professional advice and assistance, we were saying, "Look, why don't we just talk to each other? The board members will talk to the teachers' association and we'll do the negotiating, we'll do the discussing and we'll limit it to that—just talk to us. And the professionals can be here for advice and for reference and for caucus time, but when we're actually face to face and talking, we'll talk to each other." The response to that was, "No, Darla Hughes (paid association staff member) will speak for us." So even though I think we had hoped they would agree to those things and we would be in a better position, we were basically told, "No, the professional will do the talking..."

In JSD, the superintendent believed he had developed a proposal that met the interests of the union, and utilized several bargaining meetings in an effort to convince the union of its

merits, even requesting a meeting with the entire membership to present the details of his proposal. Further, when district leaders described the information they communicated to the union, they viewed themselves as trying to assist the bargaining process by giving union members information administrators believed teachers would find helpful, and they characterized union leadership as not wanting to listen to what the district had to share.

In another example of this control, district leaders in Jefferson offered to share financial information by having a union member go through the district's budget with the business manager to show that "there's not a stockpile hidden here or there" and that the union members could see whatever discretionary money there was to spend in bargaining. The union did not respond to the district's offer to review the finances in the way the district would have hoped. A district leader shared:

The teachers did not want to find out. One of the negotiations team members said, "It's not our job to find where the money is, you just need to make the teachers a priority, so you need to find the money for it. You're telling us that the money is all going to be absorbed in various things, and that you, by resolution, need to keep an 8% operating reserve fund balance. Well, we don't care, we don't want to know how the budget works." We thought we could explain it to them and they could see, "Yeah, you're right, this is all the money you have that's discretionary," but they were not interested.

When union leaders did not demonstrate actions consistent with a stewardship frame, administrators became critical of the union, characterizing them as being inscrutable and difficult to bargain with. When one explained that the district expected the union to narrow the issues, he said, "What's important to you? We want to know. Get the 900 lines of crap off the table and tell us what's important to your local people." Another district leader expressed that the union was

not productive in bargaining, saying that union members were “just goofing off...I mean we were in here basically bargaining against ourselves.” Another district leader criticized the union for their characterization of him, while expressing his focus on prudence: “It’s frustrating—you get demonized when you’re just trying to be frugal and wise with the taxpayers’ money and make the schools the best you can.”

District leaders also judged themselves utilizing the filter of efficiency. District leaders expressed a positive view of themselves because of their desire to spend both time and resources in the wisest manner possible. School board members in particular were very adamant that their role as elected representatives of their community conferred upon them the weight of making decisions around bargaining that were financially and logistically sound. In an example of frame amplification, one stated, “(We wanted) to protect dollars, and one of the things that we always talked about as a district and that I talked about specifically was that I don’t mind spending money, but I want productive money—let’s have productive dollars.”

School administrators also engaged in framing processes that focused on actions to reduce the data required in bargaining. As previously discussed, district leaders in Jefferson wanted to reduce the number of changes to be discussed in bargaining. Several district and board administrators expressed exasperation over union discussions about their membership surveys and resulting contract proposals. Indeed, Jefferson district leaders believed the union collective bargaining agreement was too long. They sought to reduce its length by hiring an attorney to revise it by referring to state laws, rather than describing legal processes in detail.

The implications for those who bargain using the stewardship frame can now be discussed. First, this frame reveals the ideological importance of stewardship and accountability in managing the district’s resources. Thus, an advantage for leaders using this frame is that they

are able to employ discourse that emphasizes the values pertaining to frugality to their advantage and they can criticize and delegitimize challenges by union leaders as evidence of teachers getting “something for nothing.” Further, because bargaining has the potential to take up a large amount of time, a focus on efficiency can lead to less time spent in negotiations. However, as in the case with both Mountain and Jefferson, sometimes going faster results in going slower.

A challenge for leaders is that their frame extension attempts that are based on these assumptions may be interpreted by union members as miserly, intended to give teachers as little compensation as possible. In addition, the privileged focus on data and knowledge that administrators deem crucial has the propensity to create an impression of naiveté in regard to the bargaining process, especially if union leaders have collected a large quantity of data from their constituents and want to address all of the data in bargaining. Finally, union leaders may perceive that district leaders are not listening to union-generated ideas, and focusing instead only on their chosen district interests perceived to be most relevant. Shared one union leader, “We get the impression that we’re sometimes treated as tall children that need to be scolded and we need to be told how things are, and we got tired of listening to that after a while, so we’d say, ‘No, we don’t want to hear that anymore.’”

Craftsmanship Frame

For many of the union leaders, meaning making during the labor disputes revolved around issues of bargaining training, knowledge, and skills. Thus, participants were found to discuss how they defined and diagnosed the developing conflict against predetermined, predictable rules that they perceived as being accepted by those with competency in negotiations. For example, as union leaders in Jefferson approached bargaining, they had a mindset that if the district did not want to engage in interest-based bargaining, then they would be following the

processes associated with traditional bargaining. Diagnostic framing within this frame was also evident in Mountain, where members of the union's team shared what they felt was being done incorrectly in their bargaining sessions with the district's representatives. For example, when describing a previous district bargainer in the Mountain district, a union leader was not flattering when talking about the bargainer's "style," that he described as slow and methodical, but did not question his skill or knowledge of negotiations.

Given such definition, union leaders reported advocating and expecting the use of activities that followed accepted bargaining processes in which they had experience and training (i.e., prognostic framing). Indeed, norms for the traditional bargaining sessions were described in detail by participants beginning with how each side would present, how they were going to cross lines out from the current contract when proposing a change, and even what colors would be used. One union leader, however, shared his perception that bargaining did not begin as predicted:

We thought we were doing great at the good old-fashioned package exchange. We had all received interest based bargaining training and our previous bargain had been done through IBB. But...(the district) wanted to move faster, and the school board members didn't want it, and that was fine with us. But the fascinating thing was, ok, so we'll prepare our packages and exchange them and then negotiate those. Well, we prepared our packages, we exchanged them, but all we talked about was their package, all three years.

Further, participants spoke of their relationships as based on set "rules," that could be relevant to the production of meaning from this frame. Sometimes, professional rules governing the relationship were legal in nature, and other times, the rules were more related to processes. Union leaders believed that to diverge from what they viewed as the rules of bargaining was

hurtful to the entire process. Also, examples of the district not knowing what to do were shared in a manner that amplified the values posited in the frame. A union leader shared: “The district lost a huge amount of respect from our members, because they didn’t see the district was playing straight, negotiating honestly and fairly. They felt like they were playing games and not playing by the rules, so to speak.” Another union leader expressed disappointment that the superintendent had not demonstrated a greater leadership role during bargaining, saying:

I think we all believe she was involved, but either was not having influence or choosing not to. Either of those is not acceptable, I don’t think. If she was involved, then some of the things that came out, I am disappointed she allowed to come out. And if she wasn’t involved, she needed to be at the eleventh hour with things...she was in and out throughout the whole process.

In the Jefferson school district, union leaders were upset by the superintendent speaking with a non-bargaining union member in regard to bargaining issues. They believed that he overstepped the boundaries of his role and threatened to charge him with an “unfair labor practice.” However, they characterized this breach, too, as him not knowing his role in the relationship during bargaining:

The paternalistic thing actually probably got in the way as much as anything, because that’s what he was doing with (the union member not on the bargaining team). He was going to him as kind of the father figure, like, “You’re not being well represented, you’re going to lose your job because of these people, I can help.” You know, “I’m your answer – I’m your salvation.” And so again, it goes back to the whole thing of not really knowing the rules.

In addition, union leaders in Jefferson believed that district leaders' lack of knowledge caused them to take negotiations disagreements "personally," which union leaders believed was an erroneous viewpoint.

It's a chess game, and you've got to play your pieces right, and the only thing I think that was a conflict was when the other side felt like things were going our way, so to speak, and when they were losing control in some sense. That's when they started doing silly things like talking to members and saying stupid stuff. So the conflict actually became more personal for them. For us, we were trying to get the process to work with people that didn't know how to do it, or didn't have the confidence to do it...so it wasn't a conflict to us. Different interests, yes, but I'd see it more as a game of chess, the way we played it.

Connected to these perceptions about relationships, the communication process focused on the teachers in the organization, who the union believed should be the organization's primary focus. Communication originated from the membership at large, bubbling up through the bargaining team, ostensibly to be taken into consideration, and respected, by the other side's leadership. Thus, as an example of frame bridging, union leaders shared with district leaders all of the concerns expressed by the membership, believing that their own focus on teacher concerns would bridge to district leaders' desire for happy employees. Leaders used the negotiations process as a way to communicate their constituencies' interests. They did this by presenting information in their bargaining proposals from surveys as well as information gathered from an analysis of their own collective bargaining agreements. When union leaders perceived that their district leaders were frustrated by the number of items they were attempting to communicate, they again considered this indicative of a lack of understanding of the process.

Meanings were also constructed through judgments of others who were perceived to lack skill and knowledge about the negotiations process. Union leaders tended to view their administrators' time and efficiency-oriented approach as indicative of their inexpert status as negotiators. And, in an example of amplification, one union leader in Mountain shared the perception that board members had very little requisite knowledge needed for bargaining:

They just wanted to do what ever would serve their interest. So we realized, ok, we've just got to do the regular old hard nose proposal / counter-proposal bargaining. That may be the only thing that will work. The thing that got to be the most frustrating about it was that it was never clear what a proposal was and what wasn't a proposal, and they weren't really clear about how to do it. They hadn't really done that kind of back and forth proposal really effectively before, because we'd never done counter-proposal-like things before, with this group at least. I think it was just confusing for them, you know? We'd get a proposal and it would be total mush. It was not, "Here is our original working agreement and there are the modifications we want to make." Instead, it was, "Maybe this is an original agreement, but it also includes stuff that we were planning on putting in there, and we cut those out, even though they're not in the original," and it was chaos! So red flags went up all over the place as we went through this. It's like we had to say, "No, we can't do that, you've got to redo this whole thing. Start with this," and so the whole process was just delay after delay and misstep after misstep.

Individuals in Jefferson gave different examples of times during bargaining when they felt they had to remind the district team that a specific action or statement could be considered an unfair labor practice, although in those situations also mentioned by district personnel, it could be a matter of interpretation as to whether or not an unfair labor practice was committed.

Highlighting specific events in a frame amplification process, one union member was quite specific in listing several mistakes he believed the district had made:

I think the first mistake the district made was they didn't realistically look at what they had as far finances to support some teacher demands. I think the second mistake they made was they had their own interests first, period. Yes, you can say that's natural, but, you know, they negotiated with the administrators and negotiated with the classified, they have to deal with the bus contracts, why start out with that approach?...And I think the biggest mistake they made in the negotiation process is they really don't have very polished or qualified negotiators. Negotiating is a give and take process. I have this I want, you have that which you want, let's see what we can do that can make each other happy. And all they wanted was their eight hour day, their package, their plan, their boiler plate, their language, their everything, and by the way, yeah, we'll give you \$75,000, and even then, we'll tell you where to spend it.

Data were gathered and treated in particular ways when participants discussed their work as connected to the craftsmanship frame. Data were viewed as a tool to be utilized in the craft of bargaining. Union leaders gathered data around two main topics: how their teacher salaries compared with others in comparable districts, and member interests garnered via surveys of teachers in that district. How teacher salaries compared to those in other districts was the topic most frequently seen in the Jefferson school district. Union leaders in Jefferson consistently stated that their salaries compared poorly to those in a neighboring school district with similar demographics, and made the same point in media coverage.

The second focus of union data-gathering was in regard to member needs. Unions consistently conducted surveys and polled members in an effort to determine what the general

membership felt they needed as a result of bargaining. In Mountain, union leaders surveyed their members twice to find out what their issues were, and then did a complete contract analysis, leading them to the development of a proposal the district said had over 800 lines of changed text. In Jefferson, leaders had conducted a similar survey, assisted by their state education association:

We did a really good job going into it, collecting information from our members. We did an extensive survey and, boy, it had 80, 90 questions in the survey to try and get an idea of what their concerns were. We did a lot of background talking to individuals within the building just to clarify, you know, one-to-one, what are your issues, what do you think we should be working on? So when we went in, we were pretty clear about what our goals were and what we needed to achieve for the members.

In summary, the craftsmanship frame was associated with meaning-making focused on skill and knowledge of bargaining. Therefore, an advantage of this frame is that the negotiations process tends to revolve around defined, predictable, actions. All parties can anticipate activities that are likely to occur. There are few surprises that arise from this frame, because norms govern behavior, modes of operation, and processes consistent among teacher bargaining units, at least those affiliated with the National Education Association. Another advantage of the frame is its focused use of data that can help the bargaining process address individual and collective concerns coming from either district or union leaders and constituents. Further, consistency in the level and skill of bargainers reduces the need for disputes over rules that govern negotiations, whether those rules are legal or procedural or cultural.

A challenge for leaders using this frame centers on the lack of agreement pertaining to norms, or more accurately, the deficit in training or understanding of bargaining processes being

used. When that happens, the way in which individuals articulate and amplify the bargaining frame through words and in actions can be seen as evidence of that side's propensity for conflict. For example, a district leader shared, "The amount of language that was presented to me—the impact of that to me was pretty much telling me and telling the district that they were unwilling to come to the table with a real realistic expectation as to what we would agree to." Thus, the challenge here is to ensure, or at least accurately judge, the other side's understanding of the process and approach to be utilized in bargaining. Once that challenge has been met, an advantage is that both sides will be able to anticipate the activities likely to occur, leading to fewer misunderstandings.

Solidarity Frame

Participants in the solidarity frame defined bargaining much like a social movement, and meaning-making was focused on the demonstration of solidarity and the veracity of position(s) (i.e. diagnostic framing). The importance of using actions and resources that would help individuals get their messages across was emphasized, with the goal of ensuring support from their own group members and from the community. They believed that this demonstration of their strength as a group would show the opposing side how strong they were—both in conviction and in beliefs—which would consequently motivate both internal and their opposing, external constituents to action (i.e., motivational framing).

Union members in the solidarity frame indicated that they valued strength and the demonstration of solidarity. Activities that demonstrated the largest amount of support from their constituents, in the most public way possible, were used. Visual activities such as union members picketing, with the participation of large numbers of teachers, were evident in the Mountain and Jefferson districts. Participants believed that picketing was effective as a

motivating activity, and thus it was utilized as the contract negotiations became more contentious, during mediation sessions, during preparations for a formal strike, and throughout the strike that occurred. A union leader shared his perspective on the value of picketing:

(The district leaders) thought to themselves, “Ah, you teachers won’t walk.” Candidly, do I think my teachers would’ve walked? You know, I don’t know, but the fact that we’d stand out there with an informational picket sign and draw attention to what the administrators were doing, why do you think at some point and time we wouldn’t say, “Enough’s enough,” and walk out the door?

While picketing was certainly an activity union members considered to be most motivating, any activity that provided the means to call greater attention to their argument was valued as well. Several activities were utilized for this frame amplification process. Teachers distributed fliers door to door, and attended community meetings and board meetings to share their perspective. They had to organize their strike crisis committee, plan for media and community communication, and conduct informational picketing and marches before the strike. Union leaders verbalized their belief that these demonstration activities helped end the strike. One said:

I think the pressure from the community (ended the strike). The last couple of weeks we had community members active, we had them on the phone lines, and we had community meetings. So I really think that the community finally got it and stepped up to help us a lot. Whatever pressure—calling, emailing, just being present. The district doesn’t want the community to be in an uproar and neither does the school board. So I think that really put some pressure for their side to finally say, “We’ll take this.”

Meaning was evident in relationships that focused on power. Individuals demonstrated that the more strength they could show, the more power they had, and the more they would be able to control the parameters of the bargaining relationship. In Mountain, the union began to show their power in earnest after the district had done the contract implementation. Ironically, the contract implementation actually provided the union with an opportunity for frame articulation by furnishing the catalyst they needed to motivate their own constituents to demonstrate their solidarity and unity. A union member stated:

(The contract implementation) was the big hatchet I think. I think that is where a lot of our members kind of came around the corner. If they were not too sure where they felt things were going, having a district implement on you was pretty big. For them to do that was huge. So that was a big mistake as far as it brought our association quickly together. So if the school board and the district were looking to go into the school year and have us feel good about something, implementing totally wiped that clean. That was a big step. So that really showed their hand on what they wanted. They wanted their way and that was it. That's not negotiations, I don't think. I think they believed we wouldn't go out on strike...I think they thought well they aren't going to be strong enough and they'll just take what we give them.

Union leaders in both Mountain and Jefferson districts used large numbers of teachers engaged in demonstration efforts. A union leader expressed how strong the union was in spite of district leaders' skepticism, saying, "I think when we went to strike, we knew we were strong, but they were going to call our bluff. I think clear to the eleventh hour, even after the strike vote, they thought, 'They're not going to go. This isn't important enough to them.'" In the Jefferson

district, one union leader described an incident where he tried to explain to the district that the union had the strength and power to strike over some outstanding issues:

We just said, “Time out. We’re not discussing it any more. We’re done discussing your issues. We now discuss our issues, and our issues are, we want a Masters stipend, we want a career stipend, we want an additional per diem day, we want an additional TRI day and we want the carve-out paid...If you do this it will bring us somewhat on par with Skyview and we’re happy with that for now.” And they said, “Oh no, oh no, we don’t have that money.” And we said, “You guys don’t understand. We’re not asking you anymore. What I’m pointing out to you as the JEA president and as one of the negotiations team members is that if you don’t meet some of our demands, most of our demands, there’s the danger that school won’t start on time. Call it what you will.”

It was also clear that having a large number of teachers picket the central office in Jefferson extended the solidarity frame by convincing the district leaders that the union could strike if needed. A district leader shared:

When it came down to it, before the information picket with so many people, we thought there’s no way the teachers would go on strike. We would have predicted probably twelve that would be out there, but then when we had like forty-five or fifty out there, all of a sudden it’s like, “You know what, they’re believing everything their bargaining team is saying. They could go on strike.” So that was a turning point because before that time we really thought, “They’ll never go on strike, they’re being obnoxious, they’ve threatened strike, but they don’t have the backing.” Then, when we saw that, we thought, “Uh-oh, they have the backing, they’re being sold a bill of sales and they’re going to come through to show their strength.” And those teachers who are really loyal to the

district don't feel they're really doing anything wrong, but to us it was like, "Oh, there's a mass out there; uh, what do we do?"

A diffused communication process was evident. Neither top-down nor bottom up, information emanated outward from different members of the group, like ripples around a rock dropped in a pond. This communication strategy was directly tied to the demonstration of strength and solidarity—the more individuals communicating the same message to internal and external constituents, the greater the likelihood that the group would be perceived as being strong. Thus, communication was varied, coming from different sources, but focused on several specific talking points identified by the group. In each district, an examination of local media reports indicates that there was a remarkable consistency in regard to the content of the communication, regardless of who among the group was speaking. For example, media reports in Mountain included a union member not on the bargaining team sharing that she wanted salaries in Mountain to be competitive so that the best teachers would want to come to teach there, resulting in a better education for students. In Jefferson, the union leader shared the same sentiment to his local newspaper.

In addition, once the contract implementation occurred, it was important that the Mountain union convince a large number of their internal constituents to demonstrate their support for the union bargaining stance. Thus frame bridging, amplification, and extension processes were apparent when union leaders spoke individually with teachers in the union who may not have been involved as much in the bargaining process. Danielle Soter, a teacher not on the bargaining team who had previously worked as a support staff member for central office administrators, described how one such meeting changed her thinking regarding the district proposals:

At first...I didn't really pay attention. I've never been real active with the union probably because at the last contract, I was there the night they settled at four o'clock in the morning doing the recording for the administrative team...I would get e-mail from the district saying we offered this and we offered that...At the time when they put out that stuff, I'm like well, what's the big deal with that? Why won't the union accept the prep time during the day? It sounds good to me...And then a person who works here who knows what's going on said, well, it's a problem because that means before and after school. And then all of a sudden I understand that is a problem. But before that I had talked to various people who said nobody is going to strike over these issues...But then when that person came in and sat down issue by issue, and then knowing what the District had led us to believe, that was huge for me.

The union meeting when the strike vote occurred was also described by union leaders as an important event to communicate to as many members as possible the importance of demonstrating their solidarity to district leaders who still had not agreed on a contract resolution.

The strike vote and its impact were described by a union leader:

When we took the strike vote, we had already polled everybody because that is part of the preparation. You never go in without knowing what your vote is going to be. That meeting at the bank, for me it was very powerful. I had never done anything like that before. I don't have a family to support. There's less worry there. I know my decision was really easy for me, saying we need to go, because I was close to it, but I felt for those people where it was a big issue for them to move forward. But when everybody stood up—an overwhelming amount of people stood up and said, yeah, we're willing to do this, this is important enough to us—when that happened, kind of the floor went out for me, I

was like wow, this is a moment frozen in time for me. We clapped and applauded each other. And then we had to ask for those who didn't believe that, and a handful of people stood up. We still applauded them because we respected their choice and we understood. So there was a lot of respect there and that was good to see. But it was definitely a moment in my life that I will never forget...I think people were happy that we had enough of a showing to demonstrate that they couldn't just get by with it. Because up until that strike, I believe and I think a lot of the administration felt like it wouldn't really happen...that we didn't believe in the cause enough to stand up for it. That there were a few people making a whole bunch of noise, but it wasn't the collective whole. But when we got there we saw that it was the collective whole. So it kind of empowered us. See, it's not just one or two people.

Union leaders in Jefferson also used diffused communication to reach the broader membership. In regard to bargaining sessions that were occurring, they updated their membership via email throughout the summer. The union president indicated that in addition to these regular updates, union members held a meeting to discuss the progress of bargaining:

Many of them came fearful we were going to ask for a strike vote, but we did not. We assured them that we were going to turn over other stone yet before we had to ask them for that, but by the same token, we asked them, "Hey, what do you want us to do as a negotiating team if by August 31st we don't have a new contract?" So, we had to go and have that meeting.

Individuals judged themselves and others based on the concept of reason. Consistent with meanings seen in the solidarity frame, they expected that the effective demonstration of their strength and solidarity would result in a reasoned and logical conclusion on the part of the other

side. For example, union leaders believed that when district leaders saw the union had enough support to accomplish a strike, district leaders would logically acquiesce to their demands, or at least come closer. When the demonstration of strength seemed not able to accomplish the desired result, individuals characterized the other side as being unyielding and stubborn in the face of what they perceived as valid arguments to move from their original position. For example, a union leader in the Mountain district shared:

They decided that the teachers weren't going to go on strike. When it became apparent that the teachers were going to go on strike, they didn't change their strategy, they didn't change their attitude. They just kept doing what they had been doing. When the strike started and it became apparent that the teachers were not going to collapse, cave in, if that truly was, and I thoroughly believe that was their strategy, at some point you need to change your strategy, and they never did.

Data were also utilized in ways that assisted in framing processes to internal and external constituents. Using data gathered while in the craftsmanship frame, in the solidarity frame, the focus was on sharing data that would support the group's argument to the greatest numbers of people possible. For example, teacher salary information was shared in numerous forums by union members, including at board meetings, their website, and in advertisements and fliers. It should be noted that, with the communication process going to a wider audience, data shared by unions was geared toward outside interests, an example of frame extension. For example, union leaders believed that their teachers were underpaid, but the communication to outside constituents focused more on data emphasizing the need to attract high-quality teachers, and the inability of the district to do so. In the Jefferson district, union leaders provided information to the local media that referred to a perceived disparity between pay in the Jefferson district and the

nearby Skyview district. They also referred to data that they stated demonstrated that administration costs in Jefferson had gone up at a higher rate than teacher costs.

In the solidarity frame, the demonstration of power has several advantages. If disagreements over data occur during the approach to bargaining while utilizing a stewardship or a craftsmanship frame, then activities associated with the solidarity frame, if carried out successfully, have the potential to convince the other side of the bargaining table to move from their original position, in order to reach agreement. In the this frame, communicating data and arguments to internal and external constituents assists in frame amplification and frame extension, thereby gathering greater human resources necessary to show strength in numbers. William Streshly (2001) shares that school district leaders as whole tend to be less skilled than union leaders at conducting activities designed to gather support for their position, and they are less adept at gathering an internal support system to carry out those activities. This opinion is supported by participant comments, with one district leader saying, “In each district, we don’t have someone who will give us information on all the other contracts in the state. We don’t have a superintendents’ association that’s strong like that, and we definitely don’t have a school board association that’s strong enough like that.” Thus, an advantage of using this frame is that it forces district leaders to think like labor movement leaders in terms of the resources, planning, and activities they will need to convince a larger constituency of the value of their bargaining position.

A challenge for those in this frame is that the activities they carry out can be seen as further evidence of their side’s refusal to bargain in good faith. District leaders who have never seen their own union take action in ways consistent with this frame are particularly susceptible to viewing such processes as damaging to the relationship, or even morally reprehensible. For

example, a district leader stated that the general union membership didn't realize their leadership had gone through "obnoxious tactics" to get to where they were in bargaining, and that district leaders were mad at union leaders. Another mentioned, "It was frustrating, it was angering. They literally brought in the attorneys from the state education association, their big guns, and they definitely used strategies to move us into the position they wanted and really they held children at ransom." Thus, a challenge for leaders is to look for ways to carry out activities designed to pressure the opposing bargaining team while keeping in mind the fact that the labor-management relationship will continue beyond the labor conflict at hand. This challenge may be made easier by maintaining an understanding of what is likely to occur throughout a bargaining process if agreement is not reached.

Competition Frame

When individuals were in the competition frame, bargaining was defined as oppositional, with two distinct sides fighting each other. They frequently characterized their decision-making as a win or lose situation. As an example of diagnostic framing, district leaders in this frame frequently characterized the organization as being one side versus the other in a contest that severely impaired any previous relationship between district and union members. The actions taken by district leaders in this frame stemmed from their refusal to accept a less than desirable contract, which they believed would be equivalent to sabotaging the district's financial and educational interests.

Saving face and being right were values expressed by individuals. When district leaders provided a rationale for their decisions (i.e. motivational framing), they gave examples of events or issues which defended their decisions and supported the notion that the union was behaving unethically and not in the interests of students. In interviews for this study and in their recounting

of conversations that occurred, they provided examples of union activities or decisions that supported their view that the union was wrong in their demands.

In particular, individuals expressed their satisfaction with circumstances that they believed swayed the community “against” the union. One area this occurred was in regard to community support. District leaders in Mountain believed that the main reason the strike ended was that the community became frustrated with the behavior of the teachers:

They made the mistake of making it personal. I think the community saw through that, and was insulted by it, and I think it backfired on the union. I think that it was insulting to the community... Union members had to go out with flyers and distribute them through the community, and they were confronted by people who were insulted by the flyers. One flyer in particular said, “It’s up to you to get this strike settled.” And you know the community took issue with that. They said, “It’s not our issue. You guys need to settle it and just get our kids back in school.” So I think those were some bad strategies.

Another area where this competitive nature was seen was when district leaders provided examples to support their view that union leaders had an agenda to “get back” at the district for past injustices, an example of frame amplification. One district leader stated that a union leader in his district has “so many chips on his shoulder that you could open a potato chip factory.” Another district leader characterized all but two people on the union bargaining team as being poor teachers.

Relationships were based on conflict in this frame. Conflict was manifested in how district leaders described themselves as feeling personally attacked by union members. Several commented on the fact that while they tried to keep the personal attacks from bothering them, it was difficult. One said, “To try not to let my emotions out and retaliate in any kind of way was

really, really hard, but that's kind of what happened once we got past about a week without a settlement. I think everybody reached their breaking point." Another commented, "Even though their comments were more directed at the school board and not against me and the other district administrators, we were still upset. We couldn't sleep thinking about how negotiations were going."

District leaders also shared opinions that showed the bargaining relationship as a confrontation, as evidenced by these comments that came from different district leaders in the Mountain and Jefferson districts: "I strongly believe, now, that it's more about the kill for them, because they're walking around puffing their chest that they won;" "this one person on the bargaining team is just scary, and I once warned the former superintendent and told him that I didn't know if this guy would come in and shoot him;" "I was personally accosted by a teacher, one who has a reputation of being angry and confronting people. I saw that a very strong union tactic was to personalize everything, to make personal attacks. The union made personal attacks." In Jefferson, a board member said:

I think some of us realized, more so than others, that in implementing a contract, you were drawing a line in the sand. With a labor group like this that has a history of not backing down...I was very concerned that that line in the sand...they were going to cross it. And we pretty much set the stage for that to happen.

An adversarial communication process also assisted in the production of meaning. In this process, comments were made against each other, rather than simply to each other or about each other. Some examples given by different district leaders included, "So this teacher makes a smart-assed comment, and you know, it's like you just wanted to reach across there and slap the guy," and, "You kind of realize, OK, that's where we are, we're one side against the other now,

we're not two sides having a discussion to come to terms with what's good overall for us, but we're in confrontation mode...I viewed it as a power struggle."

The communication process was also characterized as one in which the different sides were not listening to each other. One district leader shared, "They really wanted to run the show without having much communication and just say, 'Here, take it or leave it, that's where we are.' As far as their side goes, it was a lot of force and doing their own rules." An administrator from a different district provided a similar perspective: "When you get to that point and people get hot-headed, they lose sight of the issues, they dig in their heels, and personalities clash. It really became a situation where personalities clashed and people dug in their heels."

In Jefferson, district leaders articulated adversarial communication that was characterized by union leaders not wanting to listen to the district and openly disagreeing with how the bargaining process was being conducted. For example, a Jefferson district leader described the union's behavior when the district was presenting their proposal in front of the general union membership:

In the meeting, one union member became very loud, and he actually came towards me, took some steps, almost threatening steps, towards me. I'm sitting in a chair presenting this power point, and he's taking steps towards me. So, I stood up to meet his physical approaching. I don't think anybody thought we were going to go chest to chest or anything immature like that, but it was clear he was trying to be intimidating physically as well as vocally. I don't remember the exact words, but he said something like, "The rest of us didn't agree to this," even though the union president had agreed to us doing this presentation for their membership.

In the competition frame, participants judged themselves and others using criteria of morality. They frequently focused on events that showed union leaders taking actions that may have impacted bargaining, but that were anathema to the larger financial and educational goals of the district, an example of frame amplification. District leaders expressed anger and frustration at union leader tactics, and shared their belief that union leaders simply did not care about the children of the district. They specifically characterized several union actions as being unethical and not in the best interests of the students of the district. Concurrently, they characterized their own actions as having the best interests of the district in mind.

Mountain district leaders also described what they believed were unethical actions on the part of the union. One stated, “It all goes back to the heart of the people at the table and the process, and both were failed from the start. If they really had a care and concern not only about how much money was in their pocket, but about the district and the kids, the hearts would be different and the process would be different.” District leaders also described union member activities during the strike as unethical. One event that was described frequently by all participants was the use of paid security officers at the district central administration office during the Mountain strike. For the district, the officers were a necessary presence because of a plethora of union membership behaviors that they perceived as threatening. For example, a board member described this event:

One night when we had a negotiations session I had to leave early...and as I left the parking lot I was surrounded by picketers and several teachers who I recognized and my car was banged on and shaken back and forth and picket signs hit the car and were stuck in front of it. I haven't really seen it other than a snippet on TV, but it looks really bad. I wasn't necessarily frightened, but I was startled and appalled by the behavior. I mean,

I'm sitting here saying that's so and so, he teaches at the high school...that's the teacher, I know him, my daughter had him for classes, and I'm like, what are these people doing? But I think at the time they felt their actions were justified because after all, it was just that disrespectful ignorant board member who they'd heard so much about who refused to do the right thing and was forcing them to be out on the street striking when they really wanted to be in the classroom...This is the type of behavior that they feel is justified because they don't get their way...It was kind of like a bunch of 3rd graders having a tantrum because they couldn't have another piece of cake. I mean they were just going nuts.

Another event, one that led to a criminal trespass being issued to a union member, was described by the communications director Jill Marion:

I came into the district office very early in the morning. It was probably about seven o'clock, and it was still dark out. There were only a few demonstrators here at the time, but there was one who was waiting in between our two buildings, and when I came up to the door to unlock it, he came from behind the buildings and stood right behind me as I was unlocking the door and he made personal, very personal remarks. He stated I should be ashamed of myself for lying. He made some personal remarks about my relationship with the prior superintendent. I was verbally threatened, but I also felt physically threatened because there was this man standing probably ten inches behind me, with a picket sign, making personal remarks and accusations and threats.

In another instance on payday, a district payroll clerk had decided to make it easier on the picketing employees to receive their paychecks, since they would not cross the picket line to get them. So, rather than mailing the checks to the employees' homes, she decided to do them a

favor by going out to the picket line with the box of checks to give them the checks out there. A district administrator described that event by summarizing, “They made remarks to her that she was treating them like cattle, and it was all so innocent on her part. She was just devastated, and she spent the rest of the day crying.”

District leaders in the Jefferson district also characterized union leaders as acting unethically. Although district leaders did not want to accept the agreement because they believed it would hurt the district, they believed at that point that the teachers would most likely strike if they did not, and they all agreed that a strike would be bad for the community. In sharing that he did vote to approve the final proposal in order to avoid a strike, a board member stated, “Sometimes as a board member you just have to hold your nose and vote, and that’s what I did.” This board member also sent an email to fellow board members at 11:15pm on the evening before the contract settled, giving his reasoning for voting to accept the contract. At the end of the email, he shared, “I am voting to take the burden and spare our district the inevitable pain, to accept the JEA proposal and move forward. Now please excuse me while I go vomit!”

District leaders in Jefferson also believed that that the union behaved unethically by lying to their constituents and the media in regard to bargaining information. One district leader shared, “I saw them in their communication with staff literally mislead them, lie to them and prepare them for where they were headed from the beginning: the strike, the picketing and so forth.” Another stated how the union’s unethical behavior had impacted him personally:

I think that my trust in mankind, in human nature, in people, has changed, and my trust is a good word, and my faith in them has changed. I couldn’t believe that these people that I respected and knew, would go there. On the other hand, many of the people who stood on the picket lines definitely I know were misled...The whole process was gut wrenching.

There are board members now who will never be the same. In fact, the entire board will never be the same, nor do they have the empathy and respect for teachers that they had when they came on board to help kids. They are, to this day, still suffering over this, what took place and how it happened, and they saw that what went out were lies. They knew how hard we'd worked, and they knew that we were trying here every minute...I'm not sure how to describe it. I hadn't ever experienced it like I did this time. I've experienced the people that represent them, just those kind of people, and you kind of work with that and move on, but not this kind of a process. Again, from my viewpoint, people who I thought had integrity I no longer respect. It should be outlawed, because it tears down the ability to work together. We've made a lot of effort in the last seven years to heal a community in our district, and we've come a long ways. Now, their actions, what they've done here, it has taken all of our work and basically negated it.

Consistent with meanings in the competition frame, data were disputed. However, it was not disputed in the sense that individuals simply disagreed. It was disputed in the sense that those in this frame believed that leaders from the other side were deliberately misrepresenting information; meaning, they were telling lies to their internal constituents as well as to external sources such as the media. A leader shared that, "There were rumors of the communication being one sided, skewed, misrepresentative of what actually was going on, and biased. I think that led their membership to believe in some untruths." Another district leader described the union's alleged lying in this manner:

They put out a publication right after one session that said the district is stalling and we're like, "What? You know, just tell us yes or no on the proposal so we can move on," so that was very irritating to us and the board that they published untruths. And, we do

have documented information to show there definitely were statements that were false. When it was on the news, there were statements made by the teachers that were false, and our board is still having a problem with that, and they still want us to come out and to explain what happened. So the superintendent is going to be meeting with the news reporter and the reporter is going to try and get the correct information in there without saying she published wrong information in the first place, but still give us a chance to say our side of the story, because we told her, “Hey, those were adamantly not true, and we can prove it.”

In the competition frame, wanting to “win” a labor conflict in which one believes that losing would result in dire consequences for the district’s children is a laudable goal. Certainly, believing in the ideals of integrity and truth are equally noteworthy. Nevertheless, other than those two lofty concerns, moving into this frame unfortunately has few advantages for district or union leaders. The reason is that meanings associated with a definition of bargaining that views the opposing side as an enemy create the mindset that the opposing bargaining team needs to be vanquished. In this process, one must be in a defensive and an offensive mode, and thus actions and words are used to defend oneself while at the same time trying to “beat” the other side. These actions typically result in high emotions participants characterize as anger, sadness, betrayal, or disappointment. In retrospect, district leaders who were in this frame reflected that these feeling may have impaired the district’s ability to look at other alternatives. One shared:

Now that things are starting to calm down, I can kind of look back on what was going on during the strike. I think both sides became very isolated, and I think that each side fell into that whole group-think, you know, where you’re so isolated. I would imagine that the union was hearing from their supporters, and we were hearing from our supporters,

and so you kind of take strength, it kind of gives you strength. And it kind of makes you feel like, “I need to keep doing what I’m doing because of them. They support me. This is how they want the district to come out of this, so darn it, that’s what we need to go after and we need to be strong.” And so, it becomes difficult to hear anything else that’s going on, on the outside. And to, sometimes, be rational. I really think both sides kind of digressed into that.

Thus, a challenge in this frame is that leaders need to change meanings so that their analysis of the situation focuses less on saving face and more on strategies that will help them with the goal of achieving an acceptable contract.

Diplomacy Frame

In the diplomacy frame, seen primarily in the Riverview district but seen also in at least one individual in the other districts, bargaining was described as amorphous, requiring the employment of different strategies in order to resolve problems. In Riverview, while many individual roles and activities could be expected, it was the unpredictable nature of bargaining that leaders in the diplomacy frame prepared for when conducting negotiations, evidence of diagnostic framing. Having defined bargaining this way, the decision-making process included choosing activities consistent with any of the aforementioned frames that might assist them in solving the problem. It should be clarified that, although elements of interest-based bargaining would naturally fit this frame, the diplomacy frame is not another name for interest-based bargaining, because it is not a defined bargaining process. It is a conceptual frame through which any bargaining situation or conflict might be viewed, even one that leads to a strike.

The achievement of results was the primary value in this frame. Although different sides felt differently about the best way to achieve those results, participants were clear that they were

willing to do anything to get a negotiated agreement. This frame has ideations similar to leadership concepts expressed by Heifetz (1994). Specifically, its focus on problem solving for results, expecting the unexpected, and changing one's own strategies in order to match the needs of others are all concepts similar to Heifetz's (1994) view of "adaptive work." He expresses the opinion that one must constantly examine one's own definition of a problem with the evidence being presented. He also focuses on the concept that when two groups with competing interests work with one another, leaders must realize that:

Each faction has its own grammar for analyzing a situation—a system of internal logic that defines the terms of problems and solutions in ways that make sense to its own group members. Shaped by tradition, power relationships, and interests, this internal language of problem-solving is used largely unconsciously, but members of a faction know intuitively when it is misused. To lead a group of factions, one has to sense the separate languages (p. 119).

Individuals in this frame clearly understood and recognized that two different languages were being spoken. They also recognized when others did not see those languages. Leaders did not characterize the actions of the other side as a conflict; rather, they characterized them as part of a bargaining process where disagreements were not resolved during other bargaining activities. For example, a union leader shared:

As much as it being a conflict, I think it was more—just negotiations. It was just being played out in a way that we were making sure that we were showing our strength and it kind of brought up differences that way. The actions we took were just part of the bargaining. I think the district just took it personally. We've done this enough that we

know you've got to plan a strategy, you've got to figure out what's going to work, you've got to know what the moves are.

District leaders also viewed union activities as part of the process to get desired results, taking what can only be described as a matter-of-fact attitude toward events that they could have taken personally. As described by one union leader in Riverview:

The message that NEA teaches their folks is to focus on one person in the district to blame. So, each local union group focuses on somebody different, and I've seen the teacher's association focus on a superintendent, I've seen the focus on the human resources person who's leading the negotiations, and so, it depends on any particular moment in time. But they normally focus on somebody to be the fall guy... Then, they just revert back to their playbook, that says hold a general membership meeting, talk up a strike vote and then kind of go forward from there.

Even as Riverview moved toward an arbitration hearing, they were still focused on getting results, and thus, still talking to the union about what each side might take to arbitration, knowing that those decisions would impact both the arbitrator's report and any further perpetuation of the labor conflict. In an example of frame extension, a district leader shared:

It's all going to be financial, in the end. That's really what it's going to come down to: financial. Because we can work through the rest of it, but at this point, one of the meetings we need to have with the union is, "What do you want to say we're in agreement on, and what don't you? Do we each get to pick five causes? Do we pick? What do we pick? And how will we do it, do we just agree on some?" Well, obviously, they're going want wages, benefits, and all those types of things, but there's a couple of things we would want in there also. So we just need to talk about it.

Meanings were made within relationships that were characterized as egalitarian. Both sides viewed that the other side had power, and both bargaining groups saw that each had to work to achieve an acceptable agreement. Thus, there was a recognition of the concept that power in the relationship was negotiated and held in different ways, a recognition of the processes of prescribed politics and transgressive contention. Recognizing both the formalized structural authority of district administrators and the ability of unions to consciously mobilize themselves in order to garner power, there was a mutual dependency in resolving the labor conflict. Thus, frame extension and bridging occurred within a deliberate maintenance of the labor-management relationship, despite activities associated with any of the other frames, and despite the perceived personalities of those involved. In Riverview, when a district leader believed that the union had made an incorrect statement to the media, he called the union up to clarify the intent and purpose of the statement. Further, when one contract proposal was voted down by the union membership in Riverview, that same leader called a meeting with the union president in order to strategize about what the next steps might be in the process to meet their joint needs. In the Riverview school district, this close communication with the district even created the perception among some union members that the union president was too close to district administration, despite his past history of conflict with the district:

When the president came in, he had always been kind of known as somebody who always wanted to fight with the district, instead of work with the district. Then when he was the spokesperson for bargaining and became president, and he did work together with the district, some people saw that as a weakness in him. He kind of was “damned if you do, damned if you don’t.” He was in a tough spot. He went out and tried to sell it and people

just went, “Aww—he gave in to the district,” and so, he didn’t have the full support of the membership.

The communications process used by district leaders in this frame was bilateral. District and union leaders saw communication going from one side to the other, but in a way that assisted in getting both sides of the bargaining table going in the same direction. Participants described communication that was designed to reach agreement, to find out what the other side wanted, to make a bridge to one’s own interests, and to find solutions that met the needs of both parties. District leaders believed in the importance of continuing to work toward a resolution, even when the bargaining process resulted in disagreements between the parties. In an example of frame bridging, one district leader shared, “Negotiating is a give and take process. I have this I want, you have that which you want. Let’s see what we can do that can make each other happy.” Another shared, “If consensus isn’t reached, you just keep talking about it because either side can’t adopt it until the committee comes up with something that they’re proud of.” One leader explained what needs to happen when bargaining from positions; his description provides an example of a frame transformation process:

In order to get a party to move off of their position, you have to give them enough of a license to do that, or an excuse to do that...you know, it’s not just, “This is our position, suck it up and take it.” You really need to work to gain an understanding, have solid examples, and illustrate how the mechanics of this proposal would work, or why their proposal doesn’t work. If you spend the time illustrating the flaws and benefits of issues, you give license to people to relieve themselves of their position. Otherwise they are going to say, “I didn’t hear anything good enough to move me off of it.”

Finally, a union leader shared the differences between the current strategy and that of a previous leader who utilized different bargaining strategies, saying, “You have to kind of lead them to the water, and the previous president just wanted to have them think the right way from the beginning. But sometimes you have to come through the back door.”

In this frame, leaders judged themselves and others based upon their ability to adapt and make decisions that would bring them closer to an agreement. They were able to share the specific strategies they were using in order to get the other party, or to get their own constituents, to agree to a bargaining resolution. They saw themselves trying as many different strategies as possible to gain agreement, and maintained an optimism that one would eventually work.

On the other hand, when district or union leaders in this frame did offer criticisms of the other side, those criticisms were based on how the “politics” of the other side were hindering the ability to adapt and get a contract resolution, rather than on any individual’s specific skill or character deficiency. For example, a union leader in Riverview shared:

The district has continuously refused to even consider putting a school board member on the bargaining team. And when we tried several years ago, the school district paid for a legal opinion and it said having board members in bargaining would violate the open meetings act. Well, we believe that the school board wants to be able to be insulated from the bargaining process, because many of the people on the school board eventually run for local government positions and/or state legislative seats.

District leaders in Riverview expressed concern that their union president might not have enough political clout to sell a deal to the teachers, evidenced by two contract proposals being rejected by the general membership. However, they simultaneously seemed to understand his position as an elected union official himself:

We had some phone conversations where we were talking about how to get a deal, but when he saw that the membership wouldn't support the deal, he didn't have much choice but to say, "Ok, well, I don't support this either, we've got to get more, we've got to go back, and we've got to show the district solidarity and support. We have to wear our union shirts, and you've got to go to the school board meetings, we've got to go out and have meetings in the buildings," and so on.

Data in this frame were analyzed in ways consistent with the motivation to get an agreement. Leaders utilized data to inform their decisions about everything from their approach to bargaining to their activities during a labor conflict. However, while in the other four frames leaders focused on what might be considered factual data (albeit interpreted differently), leaders in this frame focused also on a variety of less tangible data, including the personalities of the bargaining leaders, their interactions with their internal constituents, their ability to sell an agreement to the other side, and how best to communicate with them in a way that would lead to positive results. Thus, the data shared by leaders in this frame tended to be about personalities and interactions, rather than facts. For example, district leaders in Riverview frequently expressed their interpretation of the internal dynamics occurring within the union structure, with one saying:

I think this president is trying to get a deal, and was somewhat surprised when the tentative agreement wasn't ratified by the membership. Even though this person is a new president, in the past he has been kind of a thorn in the side of the district, just because he filed a lot of grievances, and wanted to be argumentative. But I think at this point he sees that in order for him to be successful as a president, he's going to have to work with the district. So, that's what we're hoping at this point in time.

Other leaders also demonstrated their attention to data more likely to be associated with people and processes. In an example of frame articulation, one leader in Mountain described a time when he shared his thoughts on the new union president with other district leaders:

We're very conscious of the change in leadership at the union. I brought it up to our cabinet and we've talked about it. I think there's a lot of, "Well, how do you make that happen? I can't make somebody be my best friend." Well, that's not what I'm aiming at. But any time there's changes, there's opportunity, and the new union president is one of their new people. She's not that long in the district and I think she's got a little bit more balance of mind than the previous leader. I know that personally, I will do anything that I can to build that relationship.

And in Riverview, district leaders considered past experiences with striking teachers when anticipating the possibility of a strike, and used that data to determine how to deal with a strike situation. One said:

Our current superintendent last year had publicly announced way up front that they would not open schools during a strike. That prevents a lot of consternation in the community with parents concerned about their kids going to these lower-staffed schools, and it also prevents a lot of animosity between co-workers.

There are advantages to viewing bargaining through a diplomacy frame. First, approaching bargaining with the idea that one is flexible, using a variety of strategies, methods, processes and data makes it more likely that the opposing bargaining group will view the other group as being willing to address their issues. Secondly, being able to adapt one's own frame to that being demonstrated by the other side provides the opportunity to more deeply understand and recognize what activities are likely to occur. Finally, a large advantage is that those in this

frame recognize the egalitarian nature of the labor-management relationship and demonstrate respect for the power that the other side has. Inherently, districts have power over financial resources, but they also enjoy the power of making decisions for the district that impact the nature of teacher work. But unions have power, too, and their power is in their numbers. When teachers choose to strike over their district's bargaining positions, schools can't usually stay open, and the community is impacted greatly. As one district leader described it:

The superintendent kept thinking, "Oh they wouldn't go on strike, the community wouldn't support it," and I'm saying, "What's the community going to do about it?" There is nothing they can do. Even though we know the community backs us as administrators, and we've had strong support in the community for being the leaders here, even though they like us, they have no clout to punish the teachers, if the teachers go on strike. They'll call us and say, "Get your teachers in order," so we lose out both ways.

A challenge to those utilizing this frame is to be able to maintain focus on bargaining as an activity of mutual dependency, using a variety of framing processes to assist in alignment of values and beliefs. These include articulation, bridging, amplification, extension and transformation processes, any of which might be effective in achieving resolution at any given moment. In addition, as this study has shown, frames tend to shift throughout bargaining. Being able to identify a shift and respond to it strategically requires leaders to consistently pay attention to changing data. This task is not always easy—when groups move into a solidarity frame or a competition frame, it is easy for leaders to feel personally attacked or to feel as if they are the target of the activity. Thus, staying in a diplomacy frame requires constant focus on the part of leaders.

Summary of Five Frames

There are five frames with which participants in this study interpreted negotiations. Two of the frames, stewardship and competition, were seen primarily in the words and actions of district leaders and carried meanings of power consistent with a prescribed politics viewpoint. Inherent in two other frames, craftsmanship and solidarity, were meanings of power consistent with transgressive contention and tended to be expressed in the words and actions of union leaders. Diplomacy, the fifth frame, exhibited qualities of meaning making that acknowledged both bases of power within the organization.

In the next section, this study discusses what happened when the ideations differed within each frame, including the differing organizational viewpoints of power, led to a disconnect in the meanings provided by a frame in Mountain and Jefferson. It also examines what occurs when both district and union leaders in an organization such as the Riverview share a common frame.

Frame Resonance

In Mountain and Jefferson, district leaders began bargaining with stewardship-focused roles as keepers of the public interest. The way in which they viewed relationships was primarily authoritative, with district representatives in bargaining claiming that due to their formal role in the district, they knew best how bargaining should be conducted and how bargaining money should be allocated. Likewise, craftsmanship appeared to be the organizing frame for union leaders' meaning making. Both stewardship and craftsmanship, at the beginning of bargaining, were observed to demonstrate qualities of strong frame resonance. In Riverview, frame resonance was also strong within the diplomacy frame, and its strength continued throughout bargaining with both union and district leaders demonstrating actions consistent with its meanings. As proposed by Snow et al. (1986) and as described by Babb (1996), frame resonance

occurs under the three conditions of ideational centrality, empirical credibility, and experiential commensurability. Thus, for a frame to resonate with adherents, it must be connected to the traditions and values already present in the culture of the individual, it must match adherents' actual experiences, and it must solve a problem present in adherents' lives. Focusing on the first two conditions, Babb (1996) contends that when a frame's ideational elements do not match adherents' experiences, the frame weakens and eventually gets replaced. That is what happened to both stewardship and craftsmanship in Mountain and Jefferson, and which is not evident in Riverview. Such findings lead to the following interpretation about frame disputes, replacement, and stability.

Initially, the ideational elements embedded in stewardship matched district administrator's bargaining experience. In terms of the organizational structure, district administrators and school board members had formal authority over the teachers. They made decisions about curriculum choices, but even more relevant to bargaining, they made all decisions in regard to the district's finances. Relationships in the authoritative structure traditionally seen in most school districts were based on formal authority, with the school board and superintendent at the top of the organizational chart, and positions with lesser power lower on the chart. Money was a declining resource, and decisions had to be made about how best to spend money to provide the best education for students. Time was also perceived as a limited resource, especially with the work of instructional leadership becoming more scrutinized in an era of accountability. In addition, the ideational elements within craftsmanship matched the negotiations experiences of the union leaders. Union leaders in bargaining were selected by their group to follow the bargaining process in which they were trained. They were seen as "experts" in bargaining by their membership, having attended workshops by state and national level union

experts. Union leaders believed in the value of the bargaining process to represent the interests of teachers. They saw the union as a partner in education, one that had the ability to negotiate an agreement that would lead to happier, more productive teachers.

However, as bargaining progressed in Mountain and Jefferson, the experiences of both parties came to be increasingly discordant with the values inherent in these frames. For example, district leaders who saw themselves as authority figures having the right answer came to see that the union did not value their ideas in bargaining. Further, district administrators assumed that union leaders would want to have their bargaining interests resolved in as efficient a way as possible, but they encountered a plethora of union bargaining issues that they viewed as excessive. Thus, although district leaders believed that their own bargaining approach would be welcomed by union leaders, they experienced something very different—union resistance, even anger, at what they viewed as efforts to “help the process along.”

Concurrently, union leaders also began to see a disparity between their values and their experiences with district leaders. Union leaders were more than willing to discuss what defined process would be used to bargain, but they began to believe that district leaders did not know how to bargain in any way, whether traditional or interest-based. They also viewed the district as not debasing union membership needs because district leaders wanted to either limit the number of items to be addressed, take out sections of the contract, or discuss only the proposals that fit district administrator interests. Most salient was union leaders’ surprise at how little district administrators knew about bargaining in a technical sense, including the specific knowledge of how to write proposals, change proposals, avoid Unfair Labor Practices in the legal sense, and demonstrate a general knowledge of union rights and provisions that, once bargained, would be considered issues most unions would strike over if taken away. Thus, while union leaders valued

the process and the skill of bargaining, their bargaining process problems with district leaders presented them with a very different experience..

The differences between stewardship and craftsmanship generated frame disputes between district and union leaders. A frame dispute that occurs internally within an organization focuses on two things, how the problem is defined (i.e., diagnostic framing) and how it should be resolved (i.e., prognostic framing) (Benford & Snow, 2000). In terms of the definition of the problem in Mountain and Jefferson, district leaders believed that the union leadership did not understand district leaders' responsibility for fiscal and educational standards. They believed the way to solve the dispute would be to convince the union to understand their own ideas and perspective, so that bargaining would be resolved. Essentially, district leaders had a prescribed politics view of power in the labor-management relationship (McAdam & Scott, 2005), one that emphasized their formal authority and leadership over the bargaining process.

On the other hand, the union representatives defined the bargaining problem as one of skill, and were perplexed by the district continuing to misunderstand the rules of bargaining despite the union's interventions to tell them of their errors. The way for them to solve the problem was to be consistent in their own pre-set bargaining strategy, to follow their specialized training, and to call attention to errors in the district's actions. This viewpoint demonstrates a transgressive contention view of power (McAdam et al., 2001), one that emphasizes the use of informal, mobilized power to force the organization into action, in this case resolving bargaining issues. For example, consider the two similar, but different, recollections of bargaining in the Jefferson school district. The first is from a district leader.

We took a lot of time with our board and our negotiations committee and our administrators and put together an out-of-the-box proposal that was really quite unique

and we were excited about it... (And) we were honestly making a serious sincere effort to try to fix the language for them and for us and get the contract down to a workable size and we spent the money with the attorney to make sure that it was proper and so forth.

This second comment was from a union leader in the same district:

I think our district leadership doesn't really know how to negotiate. They want to convince you to think their way, it's just good old black and white, and they don't get that, so they spent hours and hours and hours in these meetings trying to persuade us to see the wisdom of an eight-hour day, and we kept saying, "Our membership doesn't want an eight-hour day, let's let it go and let's move on." And they could not let it go. They would not accept the fact that our membership didn't want to work extra hours for the same pay and do more stuff. It was illogical, but they couldn't get it, and literally, we went session after session with them not understanding. It was just mind boggling... I mean all of their changes were like that. It was like you could go down the list and say, "Well, that's ridiculous and you'd be insane to accept this." Our team was thinking, "OK, we'd strike on these, no question," and we knew if we brought those items to the whole membership, every single person would say, "Ok, I'm outta here."

Having defined the problem of bargaining differently, and then utilizing different ways to address the problem, the frame disputes between district and union leaders came to weaken the frame resonance of stewardship and craftsmanship. Frame replacement began, with the union taking the first actions to replace their frame. When their values of skill and knowledge began to conflict with what they were experiencing with administrators, their words and behavior came to increasingly exhibit those of solidarity. This study proposes that in bargaining, individuals

engage in meaning-making in ways that align their values or ideations with their lived experiences.

During bargaining, craftsmanship increasingly failed to address the experience and feelings of union leaders, as if the district representatives did not respect the bargaining process and were unwilling to listen to union concerns. Solidarity, however, focused attention and incorporated values in ways that responded to such an experience.

In this study, the strength of solidarity for union leaders was generated via the discursive processes of frame articulation and frame amplification. Frame articulation, where events and experiences are spliced together in a way that provides a new vantage point, occurred within the union as the frame moved from one of specialized skill to one of demonstrated power. In Jefferson and Mountain, union representatives used their experiences in bargaining to interpret the district leadership as unwilling to negotiate fairly, unwilling to come to a reasonable agreement, and unwilling to respond to teacher needs. Frame amplification, where specific issues or events are highlighted as being particularly important, occurred in Jefferson as the union began to focus on the specific issue of teacher quality, equating a fair contract and good pay with the ability to have good teachers. The comparison to teachers in other districts was also a central focus of Jefferson union leaders. Frame amplification occurred in Mountain as the union focused on the issue of teachers needing to be respected. As was shared by numerous individuals in Mountain, the contract implementation provided the largest specific event that directed members toward accepting solidarity.

Once union leaders entered a solidarity frame, district leaders' hope for resolving bargaining in a timely, efficient manner demonstrating their wise management of the public's resources appeared impossible. In fact, in combination with weakening frame resonance and

frame disputes, union leader activities aligned with the developing solidarity frame were the last straw leading to district leaders' abandonment of stewardship and move to competition. In the competition frame, district leaders found new ideations that matched their experiences. In their view, their relationship with the union was defined by its adversarial nature. They perceived the union as possessing little regard for the education of students, creating conflict by picketing and other demonstrations of camaraderie, and being stubborn only for the sake of winning. In short, they believed that the union was fracturing the relationship with the district. With these experiences in the forefront of their minds, competitive oriented ideations were quite resonant with their experiences.

Within the district administrative team, competition was also articulated through the frame articulation and amplification processes. During frame articulation, district leaders spoke to each other about union actions. It was clear from interviews that within each bargaining team, there had been conversations expressing frustration and anger toward union activities. In both Mountain and Jefferson, the characterization of union actions was remarkably similar. District leaders believed that their union leaders were predisposed to conflict, and had interests that were wholly anathema to what was best for students or for the larger union membership.

Administrators in both Mountain and Jefferson, which are in different states, believed that their state union organization had chosen them as a "target" for possible strike action so that the local union would be an example of strength to other unions in that region. As a result, district leaders were reluctant to "give in" to demands they felt were going to seriously damage the district's ability to provide a quality education to their community. Having articulated that the bargaining experience was one of conflict, their bargaining had only two possible endings: win or lose.

In frame amplification, these administrators focused on specific events that they believed demonstrated the union's desire to win at any cost. In Mountain and Jefferson, district leaders' comments about the union centered on examples of the union's desire for disagreement, including bargaining history in that union, region and state, and the personal work histories of the teacher bargaining team, including the lead negotiator. Specific incidents they chose to share when discussing events in the middle and end of bargaining tended to characterize union members as being unreasonable or aggressive. These discussions also clearly occurred internally between district bargaining team members. During interviews, district leaders recollected conversations they had had with their attorney(s), their colleagues, and even some union members wherein their anger at union activities was the focus of the discussion.

In contrast to the other two districts, in Riverview, bargaining leaders in the district and in the union utilized diplomacy throughout bargaining. This frame retained its resonance throughout their negotiations sessions, and did not change, despite a bargaining trajectory that was remarkably similar to that in Mountain and Jefferson. In Riverview, bargaining involved contract rejections, picketing, demonstrations at board meetings, a strike vote, and arbitration. Yet, the view of the organization as unpredictable, and a belief in the importance of using whatever different strategies might be needed to resolve the contract, remained consistent with individuals' experiences in bargaining, whether a district or a union leader. While district and union leaders may have disagreed with the other side's approach or decisions, they did not see those decisions as indicative of a desire for conflict; rather they viewed them as evidence of the nature of bargaining.

In short, although they predicted many events that would occur as a result of their knowledge of standard bargaining tactics, they expected the unexpected. And when the

unexpected came, they were prepared with a host of differing strategies to ensure an ongoing openness to resolving the contract. In Riverview, when two different contract proposals that the REA negotiating team had agreed upon were voted down by the general membership, district and union leaders expressed the belief that a different approach was now needed, despite the widely held opinion that such an event is quite rare in bargaining.

In Riverview, there was also an acknowledgement of the dual power roles of district administrators and union leaders. Unlike Mountain and Jefferson, district leaders in Riverview demonstrated a respect for the power the union had to take their membership out on strike, and they never questioned that a strike was a possibility. It was also clear that both union and district leaders knew that in order for a contract to be settled, the relationship between them had to be maintained as egalitarian and respectful. This was very evident in their communications to the media and even to the school board. For example, the union's phrasing that the "district has misplaced priorities," was certainly less adversarial language than the host of other characterizations they could have chosen. Further, in media communications, and even in individual interviews for this study, district leaders shared a positive view of the teachers and an understanding of their position, even while noting that the district's resources simply could not accommodate some of the union's financial interests. Again, these views, consistent with a diplomacy frame never came into conflict with their experiences, and thus frame resonance was maintained throughout the negotiations in Riverview.

Summary

This chapter has provided descriptions of five different frames seen in the labor conflicts of three different school districts. A signature matrix provided a parsimonious description of several different characteristics associated with each frame. Then, each frame was described in

greater detail relative to diagnostic, prognostic, and if applicable, motivational tasks. Further, framing processes seen in each district provided a more comprehensive analysis of the frames present in each district. Finally, the process by which frames shifted and were replaced with other frames in bargaining was explored.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Despite their visibility both in the media and in school district communities, school labor conflicts have been largely neglected in educational research. It is clear that labor disputes and strikes generate enormous stress for all involved. Practitioners and researchers alike desire better understanding of the stages, processes, strategies, and tactics that are manifest prior to and during labor negotiations that lead to strikes in the hopes that such exploration will shed insight on ways to avoid this most severe expression of disagreement between management and union. Indeed, social movement theories point to frame analysis as a promising method for determining how labor conflict in a school district is produced, organized, maintained, and concluded. This study seeks to generate understanding around the following research questions: What frames are demonstrated in a school district labor conflict? How are they produced? And finally, what is the manner by which individuals replace one frame with another? The particulars of the background, problem, and questions that form the purpose of the study are found in chapter one.

In order to address these research questions, an ethnographic methodology was used. Three school districts in the northern United States were selected as research sites (i.e., Jefferson, Mountain, and Riverview) and individuals within the districts were interviewed and observed. A total of twenty-seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with both union and district representatives, each lasting from approximately 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. Follow-up interviews were conducted in districts where some bargaining issues were not fully resolved at the end of the labor conflict. Reading print media from newspapers and websites also provided more detailed data and information that were not otherwise received from the interviews.

Throughout the data collection, during the time tapes were being transcribed, and throughout the coding process, the analysis process included writing multiple theoretical memos, diagramming ideas, and outlining ways to organize and make sense of discoveries. The analysis process led to five overarching themes that emerged as frames (e.g., stewardship, craftsmanship, solidarity, competition, and diplomacy), further coding led to sub-categories within each frame, and the process of writing the analysis incorporated key tasks, features, and processes. Chapter two provides a thorough articulation of the conceptual framework that guided the study and chapter three the full discussion of the methods.

This study focused on five different frames by which individuals were analyzed to have experienced during bargaining and labor conflict in these districts. Chapter four describes the bargaining events surrounding the labor conflicts in Mountain, Jefferson, and Riverview. Chapter five provided a signature matrix that identifies the key attributes and characteristics within each of the five frames, as well as a full explanation of each frame as described in relation to its framing tasks, features, and processes. The final section of chapter five address the processes by which frames changed and were replaced by other frames or remained stable.

District leaders in Mountain and Jefferson began bargaining with what can be labeled as the stewardship frame. In contrast, union leaders in Mountain and Jefferson began bargaining with the craftsmanship frame. However, as the meanings behind the initial frames began to conflict with the experiences of individuals, and as frame disputes occurred, union leaders in Mountain and Jefferson replaced the craftsmanship with solidarity. Within the craftsmanship and solidarity frames, different expressions of transgressive contention (i.e., the viewpoint that the attainment of power requires the conscious mobilization of those having little formal authority within the organizational structure) are evident. District leaders in Mountain and Jefferson

replaced stewardship with competition. Stewardship and competition embrace prescribed politics (i.e., power is conceived as institutionalized within formal authoritative structures, coded into structural designs). In Riverview, both district and union leaders demonstrated diplomacy and did not change throughout bargaining, even as bargaining arbitration loomed. Within the meanings associated with diplomacy, it was demonstrated that individuals had an awareness of, and a respect for, both transgressive contention and prescribed politics occurring in the district.

Limitations

Theoretical limitations. This study had theoretical limitations. First, the study was limited to three districts that experienced a labor conflict in the time span of 2005-2007. Data analyzed for the study were gathered largely through interviews. Events that occurred prior to bargaining beginning, and after the labor conflict was resolved, were not directly observed by the researcher, even though past events were usually described by participants. In one of the districts, where the labor conflict occurred in late 2005, follow-up information was available via interviews, but on the other hand, in another school district the labor conflict was just fully resolved at the time of the dissertation's completion. Consistent with Benford's (1997) comments on the limitations of current framing research, this study therefore was unable to examine how district and union leaders' frames may have changed, evolved, or expanded over time in the years subsequent to the original conflict.

Some other criticisms from framing theorists denote further theoretical limitations that can be seen in this study. One concern of Benford (1997) is that because the majority of research associated with framing has been case study descriptions, a plethora of specific types of frames have emerged. He believes that with so many studies identifying different frames, the framing perspective as a whole could become trivialized. He further notes that more specific frames have

less utility than those that are applicable across a variety of cases. In this study, the naming of five different frames that apply to a specialized school labor conflict arena would seemingly fall into this criticism.

In addition, similar to an argument by Carragee and Roefs (2004), in which they note past researchers' neglect of how political and social power impact media framing, this study did not integrate the framing perspective with a hegemonic perspective. In doing so, the analysis failed to explore the broader ideological notions behind the frames expressed by district and union leaders, which may have been apparent in a more thorough review of the written communication produced by national and state-level school board, administrative, and union organizations. That being said, Voss and Sherman's (2000) article *Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Union Revitalization in the American Labor Movement*, which discusses changing hegemonic notions inherent in union organizations, provided helpful insight in reviewing the practical significance of this study.

Additionally, this study explored leader perspectives, for the most part neglecting the voices of others, either in management, the union, the school system, or the community, who were not responsible for bargaining, but who were rank and file participants or bystanders. As several social movement researchers note (Benford, 1997; Blee & Taylor, 2002; Davis, 2002) social movement studies usually employ methodologies based on key participant interviews and media accounts due to the difficulty in studying movements as they occur. As a result, Benford (1997) states that some framing research suffers from an "elite bias" that creates a top-down perspective that is unlikely to illuminate the relationship between the framing processes of group leaders and the impact on those they are leading.

Finally, it should be noted that this study's use of social movement framing theory diverged from other studies of labor movements because it included the framing processes demonstrated by management personnel as well. Most social movement scholars who utilize a framing perspective explore how movement leaders utilize frames and framing processes in order to mobilize constituents to action. District management personnel do have constituents, but their framing tasks are geared toward gathering agreement among other district leaders and bystanders in the community—as well as preventing union personnel from garnering support. District leaders did not utilize framing tasks to mobilize others to action per se, unless that action would be to resist or oppose union wishes, which in some studies has been referred to as “counter-framing” (Benford & Snow, 2000). Although this is a fine distinction, some social movement scholars may consider the equal focus on management personnel framing processes to be outside the bounds of the framing perspective seen in most social movement studies, although it is clearly within the bounds of frame analysis studies advocated by Creed et al (2002). Nevertheless, as Benford (1997) notes, there has been a considerable lack of clarity in regard to specific framing concepts, and thus use of the framing perspective with both management and union personnel may be regarded as a strength rather than as a limitation, as will be noted later in this chapter.

Practical limitations. This study had practical limitations as well. First, how district leaders in Mountain and Jefferson, the two smaller districts, framed negotiations was quite different from how district leaders in Riverview, the larger district, framed negotiations. Although expert reviewers of this dissertation analysis indicated that this result was consistent with their own experiences, they also indicated that they believed the differences to be attributed to the human resources or negotiations training of individuals in district leadership positions,

rather than of district size in and of itself. Therefore, conclusions about how district leaders frame negotiations in smaller or larger districts should be avoided, despite the observations in this study.

In addition, all unions in this study were affiliated with the National Education Association, which may have led to a certain amount of consistency in terms of the frames with which they viewed negotiations. For example, several district leaders in the study referred to some sort of “NEA strike manual,” whether the meaning was literal or metaphorical. This was an indication that union leaders could indeed have been framing negotiations based on a pre-determined set of behaviors in which they had been trained, rather than on their own construction of meaning based on their specific district situation. In addition, one would have to review actions taken by striking teacher unions who are affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, widely considered to be a more militant teacher union, to determine if there is consistency across differently organized teacher organizations.

Finally, although each of the districts was in a different northern state, there was a certain consistency to their educational programs, structure, budgetary issues, and bargaining interests that could have been related to their geographic location or to the specific time period in which the study occurred. For example, all of the districts had posted average or better than average student performance on state tests, none of the districts were in areas dominated by poverty, all of the districts had board member leaders supportive of the superintendent and district administration, and all were concerned about the rising costs of district retirement contributions to the state. These consistencies, which were not deliberate in the selection process, may also have led to consistencies in the framing processes that may not be seen in other district labor conflicts.

Recommendations

Given the aforementioned limitations, several recommendations for future research can be made. First, within the area of the social movement framing perspective, further research should focus on the context of labor conflicts in organizations other than school districts, and might begin to include more data in regard to how management, rather than only union, leaders are framing their own experiences. Similarly, including the viewpoints of those constituents who are not union or district leaders may provide additional data not found in traditional studies of labor conflict leadership. Consistent with Benford's (1997) recommendations, such studies should include the progression of events over time to avoid the problem of circular arguments caused by working backwards from a successful "movement" and then proposing some causal linkage between events.

On a practical level, further investigation with differing-sized school districts may illuminate any inherent differences between the framing perspectives of personnel in larger or smaller districts and may show how different levels of training or experience may impact framing processes utilized by different individuals. In addition, studies of school district conflicts involving AFT, rather than NEA, affiliates may show a different viewpoint or framing.

Significance

Theoretical significance. Despite its limitations, this study contributed significant theoretical concepts. Broadly, this study links two bodies of research regarding school district labor conflicts and social movement framing theory by exploring the perceptions, actions, and decisions of both management and union leaders in a labor conflict. There are areas largely neglected in school district labor conflict research, which has in the past focused primarily on strike effects. By using social movement framing theory as a theoretical framework to explore a

case study in which leaders are faced with bargaining difficulties, this study serves to fill a research gap that fails to adequately address how leaders impact the progression and resolution of labor conflicts.

More specifically, this study sought to overcome the limitations of social movement theories' movement-centric focus by utilizing frame analysis in the examination of three school district organizations involved in a labor conflict. The study also focused concurrently on transgressive contention and prescribed politics during the labor conflict, looking at both the purposeful and structural ways frames influence participants' view of reality. Further, utilizing the strategies of frame analysis (Creed et al., 2002) helped link the organizational study of institutional logics with the framing beliefs and activities that legitimate school district or labor leaders' use in their efforts toward contract resolution. In addition, this study gave attention to both frames as nouns and framing as a verb, examining what participants said about their labor conflict experience as well as the process by which their meanings were produced. Finally, this study explored the dynamic nature of frames and framing processes, looking at why participants in the labor conflict replaced their original frames, as well as the manner by which the frame replacement occurred. Therefore, social movement framing theory informed the research in the area of leadership in labor relations.

This study also made a contribution to research in the area of labor conflicts. As Dixon and Roscigno (2003) note, despite the "Growing body of work which has applied insights from social movement theory to the American labor movement...little of this work has addressed individual participation in industrial actions, strike activity in particular" (p. 1293). Isaac and Christiansen (2002) also share that "a social movement hypothesis should be added to the stock of standard explanations for strikes" (p. 741). By focusing on how individuals on both sides

framed the negotiations process and constructed meaning through their relationships and actions, this study adds to the heretofore limited literature (see Dixon & Roscigno, 2003 and Voss & Sherman, 2000 for notable exceptions) incorporating the individuality of labor conflict participants with social movement theory.

Practical significance. This study has practical significance for school district leaders. Past research on teacher strikes for the most part consists of studies that describe the effects on students after the strike has ended (Brandon, 1989; Caldwell & Jeffreys, 1983; Crisci & Lulow, 1985; Wilkinson, 1989). Only a limited number of studies focus on describing teacher strikes with the goal of understanding the context of the labor conflict leading up to the strike (Cole, 1969; Harris et al., 1982; Nicaud et al., 1983). This study gives district leaders practical knowledge of the context of three different labor conflicts, utilizing a framing perspective. This practical knowledge could resonate with those district leaders who identify with the framing processes that impacted the thoughts, actions, and decisions of this study's district leaders.

Understanding how a tendency to frame negotiations in a specific way could inadvertently create conflict between district and union leaders might assist those beginning the bargaining process to consciously shift to a different frame that is more compatible with their unique situation. As seen in this study, the diplomacy frame allowed Riverview leaders to respond to their labor conflict in a way that limited negative emotions and kept them focused on consistently looking for ways to achieve a resolution. On the other hand, the disparity between a stewardship and craftsmanship appeared to escalate the labor conflict in the Mountain and Jefferson. Thus, determining what frame is being utilized, and then taking action to match that frame could assist leaders in limiting the length and severity of a labor conflict.

As district leaders examine the frames by which they approach and react to events in bargaining, they may see implications in regard to how they prepare for bargaining as well as how they garner and allocate resources for bargaining. For example, noting that union leaders in this study gathered as much data as possible in regard to their bargaining interests, district leaders might choose to gather and present their own data during bargaining, whether that data is related to district finances, building administrator interests, school board interests, or union member opinions. Further, when seeing that union leaders have moved into the solidarity frame in order to demonstrate a level of support, district leaders may examine what resources they have to use for the same purpose, including website information, newsletters to the community, media contacts, and building administrators. Finally, simply knowing what framing processes, and therefore what decisions and activities, are likely to be seen in a less-than-peaceful bargaining situation could help prepare leaders emotionally and strategically for a difficult negotiation.

Given the practical significance of this study, there are several recommendations for practice that may be helpful to school district leaders involved in bargaining:

1. School district and union leaders should examine their own assumptions about bargaining prior to beginning negotiations. Identifying which approach frames they are using, and if those frames may be in conflict with the other side of the bargaining table, could be helpful in this process.
2. School district and union leaders should talk to each other in regard to their assumptions about bargaining, including the collection and use of data, the timeline for bargaining, the number of people involved, financial constraints or wishes, and the likely number of issues to be addressed. As district and union leaders discuss these aspects of their

bargaining approach frames, it may lead to choices about specific bargaining styles or processes to be used.

3. School district leaders should recognize that because of collective bargaining laws and statutes, unions have the freedom to bring as many items as they wish to be bargained; thus district leaders may want to ensure that their own data-gathering process is as extensive as the union's. This means that district leaders may have to force themselves into a data frame, even if they are making decisions using an efficiency frame.
4. Because it is clear that disagreements over the perceptions of data and processes moved union personnel into a solidarity frame, taking time at the beginning of bargaining to find agreement on data and process may prevent union actions in the solidarity frame that tend to upset administrators, moving them into a competition frame. Thus, joint training, joint surveys, joint "listening" meetings of union and management personnel, and joint financial presentations could be helpful in beginning bargaining with some concurrence on district data.
5. When disagreements over bargaining issues begin to escalate, union leaders move into a solidarity frame so that they can demonstrate their strength and level of support. District leaders at that point should resist the natural urge to move into a competition frame when union fliers, communications, and picketing begin.
6. Rather than a competition frame, district leaders should move into a diplomacy frame, being creative and patient, trying to find the most likely actions that will result in an agreement in their district. Depending on their circumstances, they might choose stewardship by reexamining existing data to determine priorities, or by gathering new data. Continued communication with union leaders will assist in the ongoing data-

gathering process. Or, district leaders might choose solidarity by marshaling resources via professional assistance, community meetings, publications, and media involvement. At this point, all actions should be considered in light of the potential impact, negative or positive, on the bargaining process.

7. Both district and union leaders should try to avoid personalizing bargaining activities.

This seemed to be more easily accomplished by union personnel who tended to see bargaining as a process, even a game, with specific rules, parameters, and recommended activities consistent with gathering data and marshaling resources. Administrators can reduce the urge to take bargaining activities personally by working to understand the frames in which the union operates and responding strategically to what they are interpreting.

Substantive significance. This study has substantive significance as well. Teacher strikes create a difficult, time-consuming and emotionally strained environment for school leaders (Carter, 1979; Cherim, 1982; James, 1987; Long, 1987). Thus, understanding the context of a labor conflict leading up to a possible strike is important for administrators hoping to reach a bargaining settlement before a labor conflict occurs. Unfortunately, the research on collective bargaining is surprisingly small (Loveless, 2000), despite the fact that “If the core of the school is the work of the teacher, and the work of the teacher is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, it stands to reason that administrators must understand and work effectively with unions as well as teachers” (DeMitchell, 2005, p. 539). In short, despite the large role teacher unions, and collective bargaining, play in the lives of many school district leaders, school labor conflicts have been greatly ignored in recent educational literature. When seen, they usually expound on the success of collaborative strategies (Cline & Necochea, 1997; Peace, 1994) while

giving short shrift—if any—to descriptions of labor conflicts (Nicaud et al., 1983; Harris et al., 1982 are less recent exceptions). In his noteworthy practical guide *Preventing and Managing Teacher Strikes*, Streshly (2001) calls it “the battered-wife syndrome...the superintendents think it’s their fault, and they don’t want to talk about it” (p. 2).

Viewing negotiations as the process of framing, and re-framing, events, their definitions, and their interpretations, is one way to understand this important part of a school district leader’s work. While labor movement scholars have recently begun to utilize the framing perspective when looking at how large-scale labor movements garner support, only recently has this perspective begun to be explored in terms of individuals’ participation in and interpretations of events. With teachers at the center of improving educational quality, and with collective bargaining agreements as a major component governing their work, this study makes a substantive contribution by using the framing perspective to provide insight to school district leaders in charge of bargaining.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Vesneske Participant Observation/Interview Consent Form

2006

My name is Staci Vesneske of the Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling Psychology at Washington State University. As has been discussed, I am a doctoral student studying aspects of conflict in labor management relationships between school districts and teacher unions, and I am enrolled in courses to complete my doctoral research. As part of my doctoral research, I am to conduct interviews and field observations about school districts who are involved in a labor conflict. The information gathered will be used for my doctoral dissertation.

The study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Washington State University. I am requesting your permission to interview you with the possibility for follow-up interview as needed. Audio tapes of the interview will be taken, then transcribed and then erased. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality form, and all identifying details regarding your specific comments will be altered to conceal your identity. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from it at any time. There is not any anticipated risk of embarrassment or harm as a result of your participation in the interview or observation, your identity will remain confidential, and you will not be identified, nor will your comments be connected to you, in this study. You are encouraged to discuss your participation with your supervisor(s) to ensure they are aware of your participation. You may freely withdraw from with study at anytime.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have about the project at any time. You may also contact the chair of my doctoral program, Dr. Gordon Gates at 509-358-7749 or gates@wsu.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant you may contact the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509) 335-9661.

Participant's Name

Date

Researcher Name
Staci Vesneske
6106 W. Chippewa Court
Spokane, WA 99208
509-999-9283
staciv@spokaneschools.org

Date

Appendix B

Vesneske Interview Guide

Topics of Inquiry

1. The person's thoughts or feelings regarding what the labor relations were like in that district before the current negotiations experience.
2. The person's descriptions of labor relations actions or events during the negotiations and after the negotiations.
3. The person's feelings about others during the contract negotiations.
4. The person's thoughts about how and why the contract was eventually settled.

Question Guide:

1. Tell a little about yourself, your professional background, how you came to work in the district, etc.
2. Please talk to me about your school district. What has it been like to work here for the past ____ years? What is it that is important to know about the district? What have you liked about working here, what have you not liked?
3. Describe what is happening with the union/district now that you are in formal contract negotiations.
4. Talk to me about the teachers in your district? What is it that they are wanting? How do you know?
5. Talk with me about the administration? What is their motivation? How do you know?
The school board?
6. Describe the contract negotiations meetings.
7. How are the meetings organized? Who decides the agenda? Who is in charge?

8. How would you describe your bargaining style; how would you describe the other team's (district/union) bargaining style?
9. What events or conversations do you remember most about negotiations?
10. Could you describe any times when you felt misgivings about the process or when you questioned the integrity of the process?
11. Can you describe how you felt throughout the contract negotiations and the eventual resolution?
12. Can you tell me about any times during the negotiations when you felt uncomfortable about what someone else was saying or doing?
13. Do you remember anything or anyone that made you angry? Sad? Frustrated?
14. Now that the contract negotiations are over, how would you describe the process you used?
15. Is there anything you would have changed or done differently either before, during or after the contract negotiations?
16. Is there anything someone did or said that contributed toward the contract settlement?
17. Is there anything I haven't asked you that you think is important for me to know?

