

The organizational impact of university labor unions

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Abstract The current review presents both postulated and empirically tested consequences of university unionization and labor strikes on the North American institution's administration, faculty, and students. The review explores the impact of collective bargaining on employee working conditions including job security, academic freedom, university governance, and due process. More importantly, this review examines the much neglected issue of organizational work relationships in a unionized academic environment. The relationships discussed include those between faculty members, between the faculty and administration, between the faculty and the university as an institution, and between the faculty and their union. The threat of unionization and labor strikes to the professor–student or mentor–mentee relationship has been a central concern of those opposed to graduate student unions, and this issue is also addressed here. The text concludes with the identification of potential areas for future research.

Keywords Coping · Industrial relations · Labor strikes · Labor unions · Organizational behavior · Public administration · Stress

Introduction

Unionization on American university campuses is reaching an all-time high. In the 1970s and 1980s, the fastest-growing section of the labor movement consisted of professionals and other white-collar employees. For much of this period, the leading organizer was the professoriate (Aronowitz 1998). In fact, by 1995, approximately 40% of full-time faculty in the United States were represented by labor unions (Julius and Gumpert 2002). Moreover, faculty unions now have a major influence on approximately one third of American campuses. These unions are found primarily in public institutions, but within the past decade a growing number of faculties have attempted to organize in private institutions as well (DeCew 2003). Unions in the professoriate have also expanded to

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include part-time and adjunct faculty, who now make up more than half of the teaching professionals in American higher education (Bodah 2000). The most controversial group of academic union organizers consists of graduate students serving as research and teaching assistants. The movement to form graduate student unions has accelerated rapidly in the past 15 years. In 1990, there were five American graduate student unions. By the fall of 2000, graduate employees in 23 universities had voted to unionize, and in at least 19 other universities, graduate employees were in the process of organizing (Rhoades and Rhoads 2002). Throughout the 1990s, membership in graduate student unions tripled to include almost 40,000 teaching and research assistants (DeCew 2003). By 2006, there were more than 40 universities with recognized graduate student unions (Singh et al. 2006).

The proliferation of academic literature addressing the impact of academic unionization has expanded greatly in the last 5 years, particularly in response to “flip-flopping” decisions from the U.S. National Labor Relations Board (Euben 2004) concerning the legality of graduate student unions. Interestingly, however, this literature has neglected to address the most severe possible consequence of unionization: a labor strike. American university labor disputes have previously resulted in strikes, although no central body seems to have kept an up-to-date record of the frequency and duration of these disputes. A somewhat dated statistic published in 1994 by the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, indicated a recorded 163 faculty strikes from 1966 to 1994 (Annunziato 1994).

Although the United States has approximately 65 times more 4-year degree-granting colleges and universities than Canada, it had only about 3 times the number of faculty strikes (Grayson 1997). But, unlike the United States, almost all of Canada’s postsecondary institutions are publicly funded (Montgomery 2003). In Canada, the collectively bargained protections and rights of graduate students and faculty are more strongly entrenched (Rhoades and Rhoads 2002). The national rate of graduate student unionization is 41%, with the highest rates of unionization in British Columbia and Ontario (where unionization originated), followed by Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan (Zinni et al. 2005). Over half of the country’s faculty members are unionized (Montgomery 2003). In fact, 44 of the 50 independent, non-vocational universities belonging to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada must negotiate terms of employment with faculty representatives (Rees et al. 1995). Between 1976 and 2000, 28 faculty strikes occurred on Canadian campuses (Tudiver 1999; Tudiver, personal communication, July 30, 2001). The duration of these strike actions ranged from several days to as long as four months. Despite the incidence of major labor strikes in both American and Canadian academic institutions, few studies have directly assessed their impact.

The differing rates of university unionization and number of labor strikes that are found between American and Canadian universities result primarily from the nature of the universities’ funding. In Canada, virtually all colleges and universities are publicly funded, and most are subject to collective negotiations. In the United States, there is a strong representation of private academic institutions, which differ from public institutions in a variety of ways, including the laws that govern them. As a result of these differences, collective bargaining in American higher education is primarily found in public institutions. Although the statistics differ from source to source, the overall conclusion remains the same. For example, according to Ehrenberg et al. (2004), approximately 38% of full-time faculty in public universities and colleges were covered by collective bargaining agreements in the mid-1990s, whereas only 6% of full-time faculty in private institutions were covered. According to Rhoades (1998), 44% of full-time faculty nationwide are represented by collective bargaining agents, but that number rises to 63% of full-time

faculty when looking exclusively at public institutions. In fact, faculty in public institutions account for 95% of all unionized faculty.

The laws governing collective bargaining in higher education help to explain the differing levels of unionization in public and private institutions (DeCew 2003). In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed an executive order permitting federal government employees limited bargaining rights. Many state governments followed suit, establishing their own laws governing collective bargaining for public employees. As a result, many public universities and colleges have given collective bargaining rights to faculty and other employees. Collective bargaining in private higher education is regulated by the National Labor Relations Board, although this body's rulings have been scrutinized by all levels of the American legal system. Until recently, the most influential decision was that of the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Yeshiva University* case of 1980. The court ruled that faculty were managers, and were therefore ineligible to bargain collectively with their universities and colleges. Therefore, faculty unionization in private higher education has been fairly limited (see DeCew (2003) for a more complete discussion of the relevant legislation and its impact).

The current review will present both postulated and empirically tested consequences of university unionization and labor strikes on the North American institution's administration, faculty, and students. The text will review the impact of collective bargaining on employee working conditions in a university setting and will examine the much neglected issue of organizational work relationships in a unionized academic environment. The threat of unionization and labor strikes to the professor–student or mentor–mentee relationship has been a central concern of those opposed to graduate student unions, and this issue will be addressed here. The effect of unionization on relationships between other individuals and/or groups on campus will also be assessed. The text will conclude with the identification of potential areas for future research.

Working conditions

Many of the reasons cited for collective bargaining in the academic environment involve the improvement of working conditions including faculty power and university governance, workload and support services, job security, equity issues, due process and grievance issues, promotion procedures, and academic freedom. Researchers have attempted to determine whether or not unionization has brought about improvements in some of these areas. Few, if any, have examined the impact of labor strikes on these working conditions; however, it is likely that this type of labor disruption would simply maintain or further any advancements made in these areas by unionization alone.

Job satisfaction

Research examining working conditions has usually not been specific to a particular issue in the work environment, but has examined overall job satisfaction in unionized versus non-unionized workplaces. Many of these studies have failed to find any effect of unionization, or have found a negative effect of unionization on job satisfaction. Ormsby and Ormsby (1988) found that faculty at a university in the American southeast did not report higher levels of work satisfaction approximately 3 years after unionization. Faculty were more satisfied with pay, but were more dissatisfied with nonmonetary aspects of their jobs. Using data from the 1988 U.S. National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF),

Lillydahl and Singell (1993) found similar results. Unionized faculty were more satisfied with wages, benefits, and some aspects of job security, but were less satisfied with virtually all other aspects of their jobs. As a result, overall satisfaction between unionized and non-unionized faculty was approximately equal. Schell and Loeb (1986) surveyed both unionized and non-unionized Canadian faculty and found that they were quite satisfied regardless of their unionization status. Conversely, Cameron (1982) found a nonsignificant difference that both faculty and administrator satisfaction was lower at unionized American institutions. It is possible that Cameron's findings were confusing cause and effect; however, Wilson et al. (1983) reported that following unionization, more administrators disagreed that unionization stimulated positive change in the academic environment. The purported decline in job satisfaction among faculty can further aggravate labor relations on university campuses. For instance, lower levels of job satisfaction have been associated with greater union sympathies (Baldrige et al. 1978; Feuille and Blandin 1974; Ponak and Thompson 1984) and an increased likelihood of voting in favor of a labor strike (McClendon and Klaas 1993; Ng 1991).

University governance

When examining the possible benefits and disadvantages of faculty unionization, university governance is often a central issue. On the one hand, critics argue that the traditional university senate, which is the primary means of faculty influence over university policy, is actually a very weak governing body at many academic institutions and has been usurped by the administration. Unionization is seen as a means to increase faculty influence in universities where administrators have limited the power of the senate (DeCew 2003; Williams and Zirkel 1988). Changes in the size of universities and their administrations have also impacted the style of university governance. In what can be termed the “corporatization” of higher education, the current trend is for the highest governing body of a university to consist of managers and directors of top industrial and commercial corporations (Bronfenbrenner and Juravich 2001; Conlon 2000; Rhoads and Rhoades 2005; Robin and Stephens 1996). Given the members' backgrounds, it is no surprise that they govern the university in a similar fashion, ignoring the traditional academic focus on education and the advancement of knowledge in favor of the more corporate goal of amassing and storing great wealth (e.g., Wolff 1996). The loss of faculty power associated with weakened senates and university corporatization is essentially a loss of perceived control, which has been a central concept in the vast literature of stress and coping research. According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) cognitive stress model, belief in one's control over a situation is a primary psychological coping resource, combating the tendency to experience a negative situation as stressful. If faculty perceive a loss or lack of control over their employment or career situation, then it is not surprising that faculty would seek unionization in order to alleviate stress and to restore a sense of control. In support of this asserted importance of perceived control in the work environment, Van Sell et al. (2006) surveyed unionized faculty at a midsized American public university. They found that those union members who had higher perceptions of personal instrumentality, meaning that they felt that they could more effectively address work-related problems themselves without union assistance, were more likely to have lower union service satisfaction and to participate in fewer union activities.

Beyond provoking unionization, limited faculty influence can also stir up more intention to strike in the event of a labor dispute. Faculty members involved in decision making are

more satisfied with their jobs and experience higher morale than faculty not involved in university governance (Baldrige et al. 1978; Watkins 1986, as cited in Dayal 1989), and as was previously mentioned, lower levels of job satisfaction are related to the increased likelihood of voting in favor of a labor strike (McClendon and Klaas 1993; Ng 1991). Thus, by disallowing faculty participation in institutional decision-making, the administration may be negatively impacting job satisfaction and increasing the likelihood of a call to strike. A more direct examination of this relationship was described by Bacharach et al. (1990) who reported that teachers who felt that they had little influence over their jobs were more likely to have strike-related militant attitudes. Bigoness (1978) conducted a similar study of faculty attitudes toward collective bargaining. His correlational analysis revealed that faculty members who were highly involved in their jobs, were less likely to favor collective bargaining; although regression analyses indicated that job involvement did not explain much additional variance in these attitudes. Neumann (1980) agreed that perceived power is a major determinant of attitudes toward collective bargaining; however, he noted that different dimensions of perceived power predict collective bargaining attitudes among faculty in the physical versus the social sciences. Specifically:

In the physical sciences, perceived individual power is negatively related to all aspects of collective bargaining attitudes, while perceived central administration power is positively related to those attitudes. In the social sciences, on the other hand, perceived faculty power has a negative effect on faculty attitudes toward unionization, whereas personal chairperson power has a positive impact on all aspects of collective bargaining attitudes (Neumann 1980, p. 363).

Overall, therefore, it has been argued that limiting faculty power in university governance can contribute to the adoption of collective bargaining, and according to empirical study, it can increase the likelihood of a labor dispute on campus.

There has been some support for the contention that unionization improves faculty governance. According to Cameron (1982), following unionization, faculty and administrators noted a marked increase in faculty power. In her review of the literature, Cameron concluded that participation increases in unionized institutions; however, the influence that this participation has on university decision-making varies depending on the kind of faculty senate, the history of faculty involvement, and the nature and strength of other interest groups on campus.

Opponents of this assessment of unionization argue that faculty governance works well, and that faculty can negotiate with the administration without having to seek the support of a union. In fact, according to this point of view, unions actually diminish faculty influence in university governance through several means (DeCew 2003). First, some analysts point out that unions are not representative of the faculty. Senates may be composed of politically active faculty, but these members of the senate must answer to any fellow faculty member who questions their actions. Union executives, on the other hand, only answer to fellow union members and not to faculty who have chosen not to join the campus union. As a result, a subset of faculty is silenced on issues that become the purview of the union alone. It should be noted that this criticism cannot apply to the Canadian context, as Canada has adopted the Rand formula. According to this Supreme Court ruling, all employees must pay union dues regardless of whether or not they are members of the union because it is assumed that the union is essential for all workers and must be responsible for them (Dion 2006). The union is legally required to bargain and represent *all* employees regardless of whether or not they are members of the union. Depending on the nature of their employment, similar legislation applies to a subset of American workers as well

(National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, Inc. 2006). Second, it has been argued that union executives are inherently more liberal and more antagonistic towards the administration than the more conservative senate members. As a result, the faculty as a whole is represented by a more hostile group, creating a more adversarial and less cooperative relationship with the administration. This can only serve to make the administration less open to faculty recommendations and requests. Finally, critics also point out that the mere existence of a union on campus can diminish the level of faculty volunteering for university service. Professors are less likely to serve on university committees or to volunteer as members of a weakened senate. This avoidance of service activities was cited as one of the consequences of the labor unrest and the hierarchical decision-making structure at Toronto's York University, which suffered a faculty strike in 1997 and a strike of teaching assistants in 2000 (York University Sub-Committee 2002).

There is some empirical support for the argument that unions actually reduce faculty influence over university governance. For instance, in Hedgepeth's (1974) interviews with members of the recently unionized State University of New York (SUNY) community, it was confirmed that the union and its members had taken over some of the roles previously played by the faculty as a whole. Specifically, the Faculty Rights Committee, which had previously presided over grievance procedures and concerns for professional rights, ceased to exist in the new unionized environment. In addition, there is evidence that unionization resulted in centralized university decision-making and more bureaucratic and formalized procedures (Baldrige et al. 1981; Moore 1981, as cited in Cameron 1984; Richardson and Mortimer 1978, as cited in Cameron 1984). According to Baldrige et al. (1978), presidents on unionized campuses felt that they had lost power to unionized faculty; however, evidence indicated that there was actually a shift toward greater administrative power. Decision-making power was being taken out of the hands of departments and placed in the hands of a central administration. Presumably, this trend has continued to the present day. One of the concerns noted in York University's State of the University Report following their 1997 and 2000 labor strikes was the centralization of power in the University Executive Committee which both preceded and followed the strike. Complainants cited the minimal consultation with the community and the low impact of input when it was actually sought as a primary issue of concern (York University Sub-Committee 2002).

There does not appear to be much consensus on the role unionization has actually played in university governance. Some reviews of the literature have concluded that unionization results in decreased participation and communication, whereas other reviews have concluded the exact opposite (Cameron 1984). In fact, some researchers have concluded that unionization has had no effect on governance issues (Birbaum and Inman 1983, as cited in Cameron 1984). Overall, it is likely that these differences in findings emerge from different definitions and measurements of unionism and governance, different types of institutions being studied, and the lack of longitudinal analyses (Cameron 1984).

Regardless of whether or not unions increase faculty influence, an additional issue of contention is precisely which matters of governance and policy fall under the purview of the union and which fall under the senate. According to a 1974 survey, presidents and union chairpersons tend to agree that unions focus their attention on economic issues such as faculty salaries, promotions, and some working conditions, whereas senates retain control over academic issues such as degree requirements and curriculum (Baldrige and Kemerer 1976). Results of this survey and a similar survey of SUNY representatives (Hedgepeth 1974) indicated that both university administration and union personnel believe that senates and unions have taken control of mutually exclusive university issues. According to Singh et al. (2006), a similar division of duties is emerging with graduate

student unionization: the administration retains control over academic issues, and only economic issues are open to union negotiation. However, in the case of both faculty and graduate student unionization, it is likely that this clear distinction between academic and economic issues will become muddled. Arguably, every academic issue, including teaching methods and curriculum, has an economic component to it (Beatty 1975). For faculty unions, there is a gray area of issues that falls somewhere between the realm of union control and the realm of senate control. According to Baldrige and Kemerer (1976), senates and unions shared a joint influence over personnel issues such as faculty hiring, promotion, and tenure policy, and neither senates nor unions had any input over departmental budgets or long-range planning. However, in order for unions to sustain and expand the support of their membership, they must expand the scope of their bargaining. As a result, Baldrige and Kemerer anticipated that unions would gain increasing control over the gray areas of university issues and possibly academic issues as well. More than a decade later, Williams and Zirkel (1988), focusing on academic issues, confirmed that this prediction had materialized in their examination of American faculty collective bargaining agreements from 1975 and 1985. Compared to agreements from 1975, the 1985 contracts permitted greater faculty control over 16 of 18 academic issues such as curriculum, class size, course load, faculty appointments, promotion and tenure, retrenchment, and academic freedom. Interestingly, Kemerer and Baldrige (1981) conducted a follow-up questionnaire study of their 1976 research, and identified a continuing distinction between union and senate areas of influence. However, as Williams and Zirkel pointed out, perceptions of senate and faculty control may be very different from the actual regulations that are written into the collective agreement. Williams and Zirkel also noted that union control over academic issues likely increased because, with time, unionized faculty have become increasingly knowledgeable about collective bargaining and what it takes to have their demands met. Also, as faculty unionization spreads, there are more contracts available for modeling by unions. When one union wins a concession from the administration, unions at other universities may request similar concessions. Once a concession has been incorporated into a contract, the administration at other universities is in a weaker position from which to deny these demands.

Job security, tenure, promotion, and due process

Another set of working conditions at the heart of the faculty unionization controversy includes job security and tenure, promotion procedures, and general due process. Many faculty believe that unionization will provide improvements to each of these areas. According to both Seidman et al. (1974) and Ponak and Thompson (1984), faculty expect unionization to provide protection against unfair treatment and arbitrary administrative action. Although faculty have not always been convinced of potential improvements to the fairness of tenure evaluations, they have generally felt that unions would enhance job security and their chances for promotion. In many cases, these were the exact reasons cited for unionization (DeCew 2003). Moreover, Dworkin and Lee (1985) found that faculty who felt that they would have a difficult time finding employment positions elsewhere were more likely to support unionization. Improvements to job security and due process have also been identified as the primary goals in collective bargaining. Dayal (1989) asked faculty at Central Michigan University to identify their professional bargaining goals. Criteria and procedures for reappointment, tenure, promotion, and grievances were listed among their top choices. Beyond increased support for unionization, dissatisfaction with

opportunities for promotion has also led to increased support for strike action (Ponak and Thompson 1984; Schutt 1982).

Critics have cited several potential disadvantages that relate to job security and due process. For instance, it has been suggested that unionization would make termination or lay-offs of unionized faculty procedurally and politically difficult (Rhoades 1998). Even dismissal or retrenchment due to financial exigency (i.e., when the university experiences extreme financial difficulty) is made virtually impossible by some collective agreements (Brown 1982). Administrators have reported similar concerns about graduate student unionization, fearing that it will be difficult to terminate students whose performance may be below average (Julius and Gumpert 2002). Other concerns have been expressed about the impact of unionization on the tenure and promotion of weaker faculty. For instance, will members of promotion committees approve weak candidates for fear of reprisal from union grievances (Ladd and Lipset 1973)? Or will tenure be granted on the basis of longevity or default, rather than on performance (Cameron 1982)? It has also been suggested that faculty may be content with procedures for promotion and tenure, but that the union's insistence on formalized procedures may force unwanted changes on university personnel (DeCew 2003).

Although not entirely unanimous, most empirical researchers agree that unionization has provided benefits to job security and tenure, promotion procedures, and due process. In terms of job security, Wilson et al. (1983) found that following unionization fewer university presidents believed that faculty unionism increased job security. However, Gilmore (1981) surveyed chief administrators at unionized public sector universities and found that various job security provisions had increased in number and in degree of uniformity and specificity. Studies of faculty opinion have found similar results. In Elmuti and Kathawala's (1991) survey of faculty at an Illinois university, more than one third of respondents believed that the union had had a positive influence on termination-for-cause criteria. Likewise, in their analysis of data from the NSOPF, Lillydahl and Singell (1993) found that unionized faculty members were slightly more satisfied with job security than were non-unionized faculty. Literature reviews of the impact of unionization on job security have come to similar conclusions (Cameron 1982; DeCew 2003).

In terms of tenure, it appears that collective bargaining has brought about more formalized and specified written tenure policies (Benedict and Wilder 1999; Gilmore 1981; Williams and Zirkel 1988). Although Ponak and Thompson (1984) reported mixed feelings among faculty about the benefits of unionization for tenure procedures, other studies have indicated that faculty believe that unionization has improved tenure evaluation. Elmuti and Kathawala (1991) found that more than one third of faculty at an Illinois university felt that unionization had had a positive influence on tenure. In a survey of Canadian faculty, Schell and Loeb (1986) found that unionized faculty were more likely than non-unionized faculty to believe that bargaining protects the vulnerable members at the time of tenure evaluation. Guthrie-Morse et al. (1981) compared union and non-union American universities and, after having noted some restrictive assumptions in their analysis, they reported that the tenure rate was 3% higher at union institutions. Likewise, in a study of faculty at public universities in Ohio, Benedict and Wilder (1999) concluded that collective bargaining increases the probability that a faculty member is tenured. Moreover, reviews of existing research on the influence of unionization on tenure have generally identified positive effects (Cameron 1982; DeCew 2003).

As with tenure issues, collective bargaining appears to have formalized promotion procedures and to have integrated these changes into collective agreements (Benedict and Wilder 1999; Gilmore 1981; Williams and Zirkel 1988). Some studies have failed to find

benefits of unionization in terms of promotion. For example, Guthrie-Morse et al. (1981) found that unionized institutions made early gains in terms of faculty promotions, but this success declined in later years. In addition, more new faculty were being hired by non-unionized than by unionized institutions. It appeared that unionized universities were using their resources to pay for larger compensation increases to the existing faculty. Despite these findings, there has been much empirical support for the promotion-related benefits of unionization. Both Gomez-Mejia and Balkin (1984) and Ormsby and Ormsby (1988) found that unionization did not have a negative effect on faculty satisfaction with promotion. In fact, Elmuti and Kathawala's (1991) survey of faculty at an Illinois university found that more than one third of respondents believed that unionization had positively influenced promotion. In a study of faculty at public universities in Ohio, unionization was found to have a weakly significant positive effect on the probability that a professor would be in a higher rank. This positive advantage in promotional rank appeared to be centered on senior faculty with more years of service (Benedict and Wilder 1999). Generally, researchers have agreed that unionization has eliminated the arbitrariness of promotion decisions (Cameron 1982).

Less research has examined the role of unionization in general due process. As mentioned previously, both Seidman et al. (1974) and Ponak and Thompson (1984) found that faculty expected unionization to provide protection against unfair treatment and arbitrary administrative action. Not many studies have examined whether or not this has come to fruition. Elmuti and Kathawala (1991) surveyed both union and non-union faculty at an Illinois university that had signed its first collective agreement in 1976 and found that the appeals and grievance procedures were positively influenced by unionization. Surveys of American university administrators, faculty, and union officials have concurred (Baldrige et al. 1981; Gilmore 1981). In addition, given the increase in formalization and bureaucratization associated with the adoption of a faculty union (Baldrige et al. 1978; Richardson and Mortimer 1978, as cited in Cameron 1984), it is logical to assume that arbitrary administrative action has, in fact, been minimized at unionized institutions. Overall, despite a few empirical findings to the contrary, faculty unionization has led to improvements in job security and tenure, promotion procedures, and due process. For most of these, the consistency of the related empirical research spans an impressive 10 or 20 years. However, current-day replication and longitudinal analysis would add credence to these conclusions. Future research, particularly in the area of due process, is warranted.

Academic freedom

There is no general consensus on the definition of academic freedom (Dayal 1989); however, it is clear that the term is broad-based. It may include control over the focus of faculty research, as well as the content and methods of faculty teaching (DeCew 2003). Regardless of how academic freedom is interpreted, it is often cited as a primary impetus for unionization (DeCew 2003). Academic freedom is at the heart of scholarly innovation, and is cherished by members of the academic community. When academic freedom is threatened, faculty may perceive unionization as a valid and effective means of protecting it. Likewise, academic freedom is an important goal in collective bargaining. In a survey of faculty at Central Michigan University, Dayal (1989) asked faculty to identify important bargaining goals and to rate each of their selected goals in terms of importance. Although economic gain was chosen by more respondents, the faculty ranked academic freedom as the most important bargaining issue. In explaining this paradox, Dayal suggested that

perhaps academic freedom represents an ideal bargaining goal that has not yet been achieved. A few researchers have suggested that unionization does not impact academic freedom (e.g., Birnbaum and Inman 1983, as cited in Cameron 1984), and Wilson et al. (1983) found that following unionization, fewer university presidents believed that faculty unionization had improved academic freedom. However, other reviews of the literature have come to the opposite conclusion. According to DeCew (2003), the effect of unionization on faculty governance and academic freedom is “varied and complex, but generally positive” (p. 64). Rhoades (1998) suggested that perhaps the greatest advantage of collective bargaining is its ability to negotiate freedom and autonomy in the university environment. For instance, Article 10 of the Collective Agreement between the York University Faculty Association and the York University Board of Governors states:

The parties agree to continue their practice of upholding, protecting, and promoting academic freedom as essential to the pursuit of truth and the fulfillment of the University’s objectives. Academic freedom includes the freedom of an employee to examine, question, teach, and learn; to disseminate his/her opinion(s) on any questions related to his/her teaching, professional activities, and research both inside and outside the classroom; to pursue without interference or reprisal, and consistent with the time constraints imposed by his/her other University duties, his/her research, creative or professional activities, and to freely publish and make public the results thereof; to criticize the University or society at large; and to be free from institutional censorship. Academic freedom does not require neutrality on the part of the individual, nor does it preclude commitment on the part of the individual. Rather, academic freedom makes such commitment possible (p. 22).

Research does suggest that over time, faculty contracts have provided increasingly more faculty control over academic issues, including academic freedom (Williams and Zirkel 1988). Overall, it is clear that academic freedom is a major concern for university faculty, and can be a primary factor in both drives for unionization and collective bargaining. Given the limited amount of research focused exclusively on this issue, it is difficult to say whether academic freedom has been enhanced by faculty unionization. Nonetheless, if the reports about increased formalization and bureaucratization (Baldrige et al. 1978; Richardson and Mortimer 1978, as cited in Cameron 1984) are accurate, then it is likely that unionization has attempted, if not succeeded, in having formal rules written for the protection of academic freedom.

Campus relationships

Beyond its possible role in the improvement or degradation of various working conditions, theorists have also considered how collective bargaining might influence the many relationships between individuals and groups in the organizational context. The nature of these relationships can be highly important for job or life satisfaction, productivity, and even general health. When examining unionization in the academic environment, a unique set of organizational relationships must be considered. These include the interrelationships between the university administration, the faculty, and the students, as well as among individual members of these groups. These interrelationships will often determine the general morale on campus and are vital to the functioning of the university. These relationships can also be very sensitive to negative events and influences; therefore, it is not surprising that many researchers have speculated about, and empirically tested, the role of

these relationships in the formation of unions and the development of strikes, as well as the potential impact of labor unions and strikes on these campus relationships.

Faculty–administration relationship

When considering the introduction of faculty unionization, there is often debate concerning the resulting potential for improvement or degradation of the relationship between university faculty and the administration. On the one hand, it has been suggested that unions enhance collegiality by improving communication between faculty and administrators and by setting guidelines for mutual decision-making (DeCew 2003). On the other hand, critics of unionization anticipate the development of conflict in the faculty–administration relationship (DeCew 2003; Seidman et al. 1974). They argue that unionization is inherently adversarial, and creates tension and division between faculty and administrators.

Ironically, it is often the conflict between the faculty and administration that brings about campus unions (DeCew 2003). Arnold's (2000) study of unionization at the Universities of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island found that the faculty and administrative authorities held deeply contested views concerning central ideas about academic life. Likewise, Hutcheson (2000) noted that it is when the relationship between the faculty and administration is strained that promoters of unionization, such as the American Association of University Professors, seek to represent faculty in collective bargaining. Other research has found that dissatisfaction with the administration contributes to faculty militancy, including support for unionization and strike action (Baldrige et al. 1978; Feuille and Blandin 1976; Ng 1991; Ponak and Thompson 1984).

Given the controversy surrounding the expected impact of unionization on the faculty–administration relationship, empirical research has examined this issue. Although some research has failed to find any impact of faculty unionization on satisfaction with the administration and those in supervisory roles (Birnbaum and Inman 1983, as cited in Cameron 1984; Ormsby and Ormsby 1988), many studies have identified negative consequences. The faculty–administration relationship in unionized institutions has been characterized by both defensive behavior and impaired communication (DeCew 2003). In interviews with prominent community members at the SUNY during the second year of a negotiated contract, Hedgepeth (1974) found that communication with subordinates had been inhibited, in part because administrators were now more tentative about how their statements would be received. According to Brown (1982), collective bargaining contracts for university faculty reflect and highlight this nature of distrust and suspicion. Moore (1981, as cited in Cameron 1984) reported major alterations in trust in the unionized environment. Many studies have empirically identified the adversarial relationship between the faculty and administration that anti-union advocates had speculated about. Following unionization, both administrators and faculty, unionized or not, agreed that collective bargaining diminished collegiality and created division in academic life (Gilmore 1981; Hedgepeth 1974; Ponak and Thompson 1984; Schell and Loeb 1986; Wilson et al. 1983). In private institutions, the administration represents the opposing faction in collective bargaining. In American public institutions, the faculty will often bargain directly with the state government; thus curbing the role of administrators as lobbyists for better funding and faculty salaries, and positioning administrators as adversaries (Ladd and Lipset 1973). In some cases, the administration or state government hires non-university negotiators on contract. These negotiators are often drawn from law firms that are characterized as anti-union, or at best 'management oriented', and can further augment the adversarial

relationship between the faculty and administration. Lillydahl and Singell (1993) confirmed the impact of this adversarial relationship when they found that compared to faculty in a unionized institution, faculty in a non-unionized environment expressed greater satisfaction with the leadership in their departments and with chief administrative offices.

Inter-faculty relationships

Relationships with colleagues in the workforce can be very important in the organizational context. In terms of a collective bargaining scenario, for instance, McClendon and Klaas (1993) found that having social support from pro-strike co-workers increased faculty members' likelihood of picketing and engaging in strike-related activities. In a more general sense, positive co-worker relationships can reduce stress and strain in the workplace (Fenlason and Beehr 1994). Likewise, trusting relationships with co-workers can increase perceived organizational support and overall commitment to the organization (Ferres et al. 2004). Given these findings, it would be in the best interests of all organizations to facilitate the development of positive co-worker relationships. One of the primary concerns expressed during a drive for faculty unionization is that inter-faculty relationships may be harmed. Significant animosity can develop between pro- and anti-union factions during the unionization drive, and bitterness may continue following a successful certification vote (DeCew 2003). According to Hedgepeth (1974), this is precisely what happened following unionization at the SUNY. Other sources for division can also develop in a unionized academic environment. For example, Saltzman (2000) pointed out that Toronto's York University full-time and part-time faculty are represented by separate bargaining units. As a result, the administration must mediate between the interests of two separate and competing faculty sectors. Similarly, at Ryerson Polytechnic University, also in Toronto, Canada, the union chose to accept a two-tier salary structure in an agreement that also intensified workloads and minimized tenure prospects for newer members of the faculty (Burke and Naiman 2003). The solidarity of union members, and likely the relationships between faculty, suffered as a result. Ormsby and Ormsby (1988) failed to find an effect of unionization on satisfaction with co-workers at a university in the southeastern United States. However, in a study of faculty and administrators across 41 American institutions, Cameron (1982) concluded that perceived collegiality had declined as a result of unionization. Likewise, Lillydahl and Singell (1993) found that, compared to faculty at non-unionized institutions, unionized faculty expressed less satisfaction with the quality of their colleagues, interdepartmental cooperation, and the spirit of cooperation among faculty. Given the findings from all of these studies, which together span several decades, it is fair to conclude that inter-faculty relationships in a unionized environment may be more strained than those in a non-unionized environment. Therefore, this potential consequence should be considered by university faculty who are contemplating union certification.

Faculty–student relationships

Two types of faculty–student relationships have been identified as potential victims of unionization. First, it has been suggested that the relationship between faculty and students may be compromised by faculty unionization. Second, it has been argued that the relationship between faculty and graduate students may be negatively affected by the

unionization of graduate students. There is very little empirical research concerning the impact of faculty unionization on the relationship between faculty and students. According to DeCew (2003), students may view the unionization of faculty as a threat to their influence and decision-making power on campus. Student organizations often seek representation on governing boards and committees so that they will have some say in the determination of academic matters. Likewise, students often value their role as evaluators of faculty teaching performance. Unionization of the faculty may be perceived as a potential interference with these roles. When faculty at the City University of New York (CUNY) first engaged in collective bargaining, students requested that representative observers be allowed to attend negotiation sessions and that students be invited to offer testimony concerning issues of contention. When the CUNY faculty union opposed these student requests, the student body likely felt that their original perception of a campus power struggle had been confirmed (Ladd and Lipset 1973). Collective bargaining may also be threatening for students who believe that raises in faculty pay and benefits may translate into higher tuition rates (DeCew 2003). Beyond the concerns that students may have about the financial and power implications of unionization, faculty and administrators at SUNY noted the increased formality and impersonality that characterized their interactions with students following unionization. Back in 1974, these faculty and administrators expressed concern that if this trend continued, the drive for student unionization could increase (Hedgepeth 1974).

Given the enormous rise in graduate employee unions over the past few decades (DeCew 2003; Rhoades and Rhoads 2002; Singh et al. 2006), it seems that these faculty and administrators were correct in their predictions. Unionization of graduate employees has generated the greatest concern about faculty-student relationships. Opponents of graduate student unions claimed that the integral mentoring relationship between a graduate student and his/her faculty advisor would be irreparably damaged (DeCew 2003; Ehrenberg et al. 2004). Some anti-union advocates suggest that faculty mentors will evolve into faculty supervisors who can no longer speak candidly to their graduate students. Instead, these faculty must speak cautiously for fear that their comments might be cited in a grievance hearing (Julius and Gumport 2002). Likewise, some faculty have expressed concern that tensions might rise in the event of a graduate student strike, particularly given that faculty are often appointed to university bargaining teams (Julius and Gumport 2002). Moreover, in a letter to the university community, the president of Columbia University wrote:

‘A union would reduce the flexibility that faculty advisors and students currently have to structure teaching and research assignments to meet individual needs’ as well as other aspects of graduate training (see DeCew 2003, p. 105).

The drive for graduate employee unions has been so confrontational that the mere prospect of unionization has led to a deterioration in the faculty–student relationship. Perhaps the most serious conflict emerged at Yale University. In an attempt to force the university to recognize the graduate employee union, teaching assistants conducted a grade strike, refusing to submit final grades to their departments. Members of the faculty and administration threatened striking graduate students with the loss of their positions as teaching assistants, negative recommendations in their future careers, and possible expulsion from the university (Hayden 2001; Lafer 1997).

In response to these contentions by anti-union advocates, several empirical studies have been conducted. In the most cited of these studies, Hewitt (2000) surveyed faculty members in the liberal arts and sciences at five American universities with legally recognized graduate student collective bargaining agreements. It was found that faculty at

these institutions did not have a negative attitude toward graduate student unionization. According to these faculty members, student bargaining did not interfere with their ability to advise or instruct graduate students and did not inhibit the mentoring relationship between students and their advisors. Although some faculty were concerned that union activities might take time away from academic study, they believed that graduate student employees were underpaid and generally exploited by the university. Two other studies, both of which adopted an interview method, have shed light on the impact of graduate student unionization on the relationship between students and advisors. Lee et al. (2004) conducted interviews with members of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) community who were involved with some aspect of the collective bargaining process or who had familiarity with the role of teaching assistants. When asked about the impact of graduate employee unionization on relationships with their advisors, some students not only denied conflicts, but also cited more positive relationships. Specifically, these students claimed that collective bargaining had reduced their workloads and improved their working conditions, which resulted in improvements in their performance and, therefore, improvement in their relations with faculty. With contractual limits on the amount of work assigned through teaching assistantships, graduate students could likely devote more time to research and other scholarly endeavors (Lee et al. 2004). Moreover, unionization provides a more formalized and structured method of handling disputes, which can help to improve communication and to avoid hurtful interpersonal interactions. Lee et al. also suggested that the power differential between faculty and students is so embedded in the graduate school experience that unionization cannot influence this relationship. Julius and Gumpert (2002) conducted interviews at all of the American universities where graduate students were seeking employer recognition of a certified bargaining agent or were formally organized for the purposes of collective bargaining. Interviewees included representatives of graduate employee unions, their respective universities, faculty unions, and university negotiators. As with the findings of Lee et al., Julius and Gumpert reported that collective bargaining had not compromised the student–faculty relationship. In fact, the clarification of roles, responsibilities, expectations, and employment policies had enhanced the mentoring relationships. In speculating about the possible reasons for this improvement in the student–faculty relationship, Julius and Gumpert suggested that graduate students do not perceive their professors as the employer. In fact, graduate students are often unclear about who their opponent in negotiations really is: the university, the department, a funding agency, or a state government? The mentor–student relationship may also be unaffected by unionization due to students’ dependence on faculty for positive evaluations. In the university job market, but particularly in the currently tight job market, students must rely on recommendations by faculty in order to find employment in the academic world. To jeopardize this positive evaluation by engaging in spiteful anti-faculty behavior or commentary would put an end to a career before it even got started.

Having described the role that both faculty and graduate student unionization might play in faculty–student relations, one must also contemplate the potential influence of university strikes on these relationships. As previously stated, in the event of a graduate employee strike, tension may rise between faculty and graduate students, particularly if faculty are assigned to the university’s negotiating team. In the event of a faculty strike, students will likely see themselves as victims, and their anger may be directed toward striking faculty members (DeCew 2003). In the 1995 University of Manitoba faculty strike, student logs revealed animosity toward professors: “F__k you to all professors on strike and especially to those on the picket line” (Albas and Albas 2000, p. 444). In the 1988 Dalhousie University strike, students developed more negative opinions about the faculty

in general and much more negative opinions about the administration (Amos et al. 1993). Therefore, striking factions on a university campus should be aware of the impact that their collective action may have on their relationships with students.

Faculty–organization relationships

One final set of relationships that must be considered in an academic institution with a unionized faculty is the commitment of faculty members to their respective universities and unions. Many facets of organizational commitment have been examined in previous research, including identification and involvement with an organization, degree of dependence on an organization for pay and benefits, and the extent to which an employee feels that he/she *ought* to stay with the organization (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran 2005). These various definitions of organizational commitment have been associated with several organizational outcomes including low levels of employee turnover, absenteeism, and lateness, and with high levels of job satisfaction and performance (Angle and Perry 1981; Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran 2005; Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Mowday et al. 1979; Porter et al. 1974; Steers 1977). Given these findings, it is no surprise that organizations seek to maximize the organizational commitment of their employees. Yet, how does the presence of a union impact commitment to the organization? Ormsby and Watts (1989) surveyed faculty members at a university in the southeastern United States both before and after faculty unionization. The introduction of a collective bargaining agent did not significantly impact the level of faculty commitment to the university. Likewise, Schell and Loeb (1986) distributed questionnaires to Canadian faculty at certified or special plan (an intermediate stage between certification and consultation) universities and non-certified universities. Results in this study indicated that there was no significant difference between unionized and non-unionized faculty in terms of commitment to the university. Empirical research is less clear when examining the impact of commitment on labor militancy. In their study of the faculty strike at Temple University, McClendon and Klaas (1993) found that faculty who expressed lower levels of organizational commitment were more likely to vote against accepting the administration's contract offer. However, levels of organizational commitment failed to predict faculty members' involvement in picketing activities or their behavior when voting to defy a court order to return to work. Although Ng (1991) did not study organizational commitment per se in his study of the University of Saskatchewan faculty strike, he failed to find a relationship between faculty attitudes toward the university and the faculty's degree of militancy; although, faculty less satisfied with the university administration and working conditions were more likely to vote in favor of striking.

Interestingly, research examining commitment to the union in the academic environment has been equally confusing. Like commitment to the organization, union commitment is a multi-faceted construct. It has included concepts such as degree of allegiance felt towards the union, the desire and willingness to complete daily tasks in order to maintain the union, and the extent to which one believes in general unionism (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran 2005). Although it may seem counterintuitive, commitment to the organization and to the union are independent constructs that can co-occur (e.g., Dean 1954; Purcell 1954). In fact, Fullagar and Barling (1991) demonstrated that union and company commitment do not often share common predictors. Empirical research concerning the impact of union commitment on labor militancy has produced mixed results, due likely in part to the varying facets and definitions of the construct. Some studies have clearly

demonstrated that union commitment is associated with union militancy and strike propensity (Barling et al. 1992; Black 1983). Other studies are less clear in their findings. For example, McClendon and Klass (1993) found that striking faculty who expressed greater union commitment were more likely to engage in picketing activities and to vote to defy the court injunction that ordered them back to work. Union commitment was not associated with voting patterns that led to the rejection of the administration's contract offer preceding the court injunction that ended the strike. The authors suggested that these differences could be explained by the fact that voting to reject a contract offer involves fewer risks than picketing or defying court orders. Ng (1991) also found seemingly contradictory findings. Striking faculty members who expressed greater loyalty to the Faculty Association were more likely to vote in favor of the strike; however, this voting behavior was unrelated to members' general beliefs about unions and their willingness to work for the Association or to act as responsible union members. Finally, in their study of faculty members from six Canadian universities, Ponak and Thompson (1984) concluded that service on a faculty association executive (which might be considered a sign of union commitment) does not affect views on collective bargaining. This was a particularly surprising finding, considering that more militant union members might be expected to gravitate towards the union's executive committee. Given the long history of unionization in Canada, the authors suggested that faculty's extensive experience with unionization likely moderated faculty attitudes. Overall, it is difficult to conclude how organizational and union commitment influence labor militancy. It is likely that a more in-depth analysis of the varying facets of each type of commitment is needed before more concrete conclusions can be drawn. Given the rise in graduate student unionization (DeCew 2003; Rhoades and Rhoads 2002; Singh et al. 2006), future research addressing the faculty–organization relationship should also consider whether new faculty who experienced unionization as graduate students are more likely to expect, promote, and join faculty unions when seeking academic employment.

Conclusion

Unionization on university campuses is a growing trend. Attacks on academia in the form of funding cutbacks, increases to faculty workload, the rising number of part-time faculty, and attempts to abolish tenure will encourage faculty unionization to spread (Bodah 2000; DeCew 2003; Ehrenberg et al. 2004; Ponak and Thompson 1984). The rising teaching load of graduate students and the escalating financial and time-related costs of a post-graduate education will ensure that unionization of graduate employees is also a growing trend (DeCew 2003). As discussed throughout this text, there will be advantages and disadvantages of this increasing trend in unionization, and it may mean many possible changes to the relationships, forms of governance, and various academic freedoms on campus. Although many states currently prohibit striking by university personnel, the increase in academic unionization will likely also translate into an increase in labor militancy, including strike action. Whether it is a potential strike by faculty or by graduate employees, it is important that all academic professionals consider ways to prevent labor relations from deteriorating to the point of a work stoppage. Empirical findings suggest that administrators should consider ways of improving job satisfaction. Any initiative that improves communication between the union and the administration, and allows faculty to feel that they have some element of influence or control over their working environment will alleviate labor tensions and reduce the likelihood of a strike.

Although this text has provided an extensive outline of the types of issues surrounding unionization and strikes in the university environment, including academic working conditions and relationships within the university community, it has also outlined many issues and questions that are in need of additional research. For instance, even at the height of research into faculty unionization, there was not enough study of the effects of unionization on university governance and academic freedom. Furthermore, controversies over the definitions of these terms prevented the limited amount of research in this area from providing even a remotely coherent picture of how unionization might affect these working conditions. It is also important to note that much of the existing literature was published in the early days of unionization, just a few years following the introduction of faculty unions. Many of the findings of these early studies may be outdated and not generalizable to some of today's university campuses, where faculty unions are more entrenched and are accepted as simply an inherent part of university life. Likewise, it is uncertain whether the existing literature will generalize to times of political conservatism that generate hostility toward unions in general, or to the changing rates or patterns of unionization in North America. In addition, as graduate student unionization becomes increasingly more common and presumably more accepted, additional research will be needed to assess the impact of this change in the academic environment.

Throughout the decades, researchers have called for longitudinal study of academic unionization (e.g., Amos et al. 1993; Cameron 1984). They have noted the importance of assessing attitudes and experiences before and after unionization, and before, during, and after a university strike. Although some studies have attempted to provide this kind of data, most continue to do cross-sectional analysis. Admittedly, longitudinal study that spans several years runs the risk of data bias due to conditions that cannot be experimentally controlled (Cameron 1984); however, even these more extreme types of longitudinal study can provide valuable information that is currently lacking in the literature.

Perhaps the greatest paucity of research involves the impact of university labor strikes. Although a fairly rare occurrence now, it is almost certain that this kind of labor conflict will become increasingly common. What impact will these labor disputes have on job satisfaction, on the relationship between the faculty and the administration, on organizational or union commitment, or on the mentor-student relationship? Although one might suspect that labor strikes will produce effects similar to those of unionization, future research may identify unique outcomes.

Finally, it must be noted that unionization and labor strikes will be different at every university. There is no way to tell whether the findings of the few available existing studies are generalizable to other institutions or labor strikes. The only way to build up the generalizability of research is to conduct additional studies at a variety of different institutions. In this way, researchers can determine how existing findings differ depending on the type or size of academic institution, the passive versus contentious nature of the certification vote, which section of university personnel is unionizing or striking, the length of the labor dispute, etc. (Barling and Milligan 1987). Likewise, it can be determined whether the findings of previous strike studies apply to "near strikes" (Amos et al. 1993) or to cases where strikers have been legislated back to work (Barling and Milligan 1987). In the laboratory of the real world, there are innumerable variables to consider. The only way to build a cohesive understanding of these vast possibilities is to continue the tradition of empirical study in every available instance. Undoubtedly, we should strive to build strong interrelationships among campus groups and to prevent university strikes; however, it is also our duty to expand knowledge of the antecedents and consequences of university strikes so as to minimize their impact on present and future university communities.

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