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The Experience of Faculty Strikers: Factors that Could Impact Higher Education Strikes

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Abstract

Higher education is being challenged as is the unionization of faculty. This combination could create a climate where faculty may need to strike. The purpose of this research is to describe the lived experiences of striking faculty to bring a greater understanding of what faculty may incur. This research utilized a phenomenological approach with a combination of composite narratives and in vivo coding to describe the lived experiences of striking. With the number of layoffs, strikes and threats of striking, this research is timely in understanding what striking entails and how it can best be navigated for the benefit of the faculty. There were 333 striking faculty of which twenty-seven were interviewed. Three themes developed and will be discussed. First, how the faculty's perception of the Union can influence their experience and willingness to remain on the picket line. Second, realizing a striker's experience is not monolithic, as realized in the differing experiences of the two campuses of Wright State. Lastly, surprising themes emerged, such as mental health issues surrounding financial, work and family struggles throughout the duration of the strike.

Keywords

mental health, strike, Union, phenomenology, Regional Campus

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The Experience of Faculty Strikers: Factors that Could Impact Higher Education Strikes

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Higher education is being challenged as is the unionization of faculty. This combination could create a climate where faculty may need to strike. The purpose of this research is to describe the lived experiences of striking faculty to bring a greater understanding of what faculty may incur. This research utilized a phenomenological approach with a combination of composite narratives and in vivo coding to describe the lived experiences of striking. With the number of layoffs, strikes and threats of striking, this research is timely in understanding what striking entails and how it can best be navigated for the benefit of the faculty. There were 333 striking faculty of which twenty-seven were interviewed. Three themes developed and will be discussed. First, how the faculty's perception of the Union can influence their experience and willingness to remain on the picket line. Second, realizing a striker's experience is not monolithic, as realized in the differing experiences of the two campuses of Wright State. Lastly, surprising themes emerged, such as mental health issues surrounding financial, work and family struggles throughout the duration of the strike.

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Introduction

Higher education is under evolving pressure. It is an institution that has historically striven and continues to strive toward the ideals of developing leaders through the advancement of thought processes and knowledge and educating students for public service or civic duty, the ideal focusing on the social impact of an educated society (American Council on Education, 1949). More recently, a potentially divergent purpose has also developed, an increased emphasis on job attainment and preparation for the workforce. Traditionally this task has been filled by trade schools. The focus becomes measuring the economic cost versus return on investment. This focus supports a more "corporate" view of the educational system's purpose (Bowen & Tobin, 2015). Professors are often found straddling these potentially opposing objectives, which can lead to labor disputes and strikes as they try to meet these demands.

One way to counter the attack on higher education is not only to unionize but to be willing to support a strike if needed. But what does a faculty strike look like? This research allows for a window into various experiences of faculty striking in higher education. Through the composite narratives, unions may come to a better understanding of the unspoken experiences of striking faculty and become better prepared for the future. These narratives also enable faculty to prepare themselves effectively should a strike occur in the future.

The purpose of this research was two-fold. First, this research brings to the reader, through phenomenology, the lived experience of the faculty striker. Second, combining in vivo coding and composite narratives brings the participant's voice to the reader in understanding how the strike impacted the strikers both individually and as groups, differing by the branch

(location) of the campuses. This study received Institutional Review Board approval (IRB # 06666).

Literature Review

Higher education faculty strikes have taken place but generally are short. Strikes were more frequent in the mid-20th century, decreasing in the 1990s. Annunziato (1994) reviewed academic strikes in the U.S. from 1966-1994. Importantly, this report suggests that higher education strikes are not uncommon, with the highest number occurring in 1977. The average duration of these strikes was 13.8 days, a median of nine days, with the shortest duration at half-day. The two longest strikes during the examined period occurred in 1966 when faculty at St. John's University struck for 150 days (Annunziato, 1994) and in 1990 when the faculty of the University of Bridgeport went on strike for two years. After 1994, faculty strikes in higher education decreased (Jacquemin et al., 2020), but they still occurred.

Magney's (2002) analysis of academic strikes indicated that the strike concerns focused on better health benefits and wages, job security, layoff criteria and shared governance. These concerns were like those highlighted in this research. However, this research presents narratives from the faculty that describe the experiences of the strike. In addition, Magney points to the strikes not having a strike pay fund, instead offering low-interest loans. These aspects are a layer of financial instability that needs to be explored. Finally, Magney indicates union pre-strike preparations to be broadly like the Wright State strike, such as establishing off-campus headquarters, identifying and staffing picket line sites, and conducting public relations. These preparations, which included faculty participation, are important to this study as they were conducted in differing ways between the regional and main campuses. These preparations were conducted by the faculty union leadership where the faculty themselves were the union leaders. Balanoff (1985) highlights the concept of solidarity committees as a method of creating solidarity as unions prepare. This research points to the importance of these solidarity committees by comparing the regional campus's lack of solidarity committees or a union headquarters to access with the same at the Main Campus.

Herbert and Apkarian (2019) recently investigated higher education strikes from 2012 to 2018. Their review collected information from the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, government sources, news, and other electronic sources. The researchers painted the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) as reluctant to strike. However, though not in favor of striking, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) embraced faculty unionization and has been involved in many strikes. The average number of strike days was 2.9, with a median of three days. Wright State University's strike was 20 days. The literature indicates that many of the faculty strikes tend to be short so in the Wright State strike, organizers may have assumed it would be of short duration. Herbert and Apkarian's review focuses on the numbers without any discussion of the strikers themselves and their experiences striking. This research begins to examine the experience of the faculty striker through interviews and expand beyond the current research.

The Personal Impact of Striking

The literature reviewed on faculty strikes focuses on a more quantitative aspect of the number of days, reasons for striking, and appears to be generally older. The focus of this research is to examine the lived experience of the faculty striker in a more qualitative psychosocial manner. To explore striker experience, literature outside of higher education was reviewed, which also seems limited and older. Fowler et al. (2009) indicated that only two

studies have empirically explored the psychosocial impacts of strikes on strikers. These two studies referenced the 1976 strike of Canadian air traffic controllers and the 1984 College strike in Canada. Both studies used questionnaires to explore the mental/emotional impact of the strike experience on Union members. Fowler et al.'s (2009) quantitative investigation of the psychological impact of a United Steelworkers of America strike suggested that the amount of strike activity impacted mental health with more strike activity decreasing the negative impact on mental health. It was also found that strikers would also benefit from routine and social interaction with Union members. Additionally, strikers' stress levels were impacted far more than non-strikers. Mental health included measures of depression, anxiety, irritation, and stress. Stress levels were expressed in areas of financial security, unknown duration of the strike, and overall ambiguity of the outcome.

It was not until Brown et al.'s (2006) ethnographic account of the 1999 Irish Nurses' strike that a qualitative approach was used to discover the underlying shared experience of the impact of strikes. Using semi-structured interviewing and journaling, Brown et al.'s (2006) findings suggested that the strikers had a variety of versions of the strike. These findings also suggested that conflicts occurred in terms of self-identity and roles. Here, the conflict appeared between the caregiver and the striker's role. This research extends the literature in presenting composite unified narratives which reflect not only similar experiences shared by those interviewed, but also by showing the experiential differences that emerged between the members of the two campuses.

Recent Faculty Union Activity

The long Wright State University strike in Ohio was not the first or last in the continuing saga of faculty labor disputes within academia. Also in Ohio, this strike occurred after the time when in 2010 Bowling Green State University formed a bargaining unit and in 2022 Miami University faculty petitioned to form a union with the AAUP (AAUP, personal communication, June 8, 2022). All three Universities have a similar institutional climate and have branch campuses.

Job elimination, attrition, and resignation of faculty at every level seems common in academia today. It continues to serve as a reminder of the importance of faculty unions and understanding the experiences of faculty strikers. For example, Ithaca College approved a plan to eliminate 116 faculty, the University of Akron (Ohio) let go of 100 full-time faculty, and the University of Texas-San Antonio did not fill 12 vacant faculty positions and let go of 69 adjuncts (Poliakoff, 2021). Emporia State University used the Kansas Board of Regents decree of suspending tenure to "layoff" tenured faculty (Flaherty, 2021; McCoy, 2022). The reasons given for suspension of tenure included Covid 19, low enrollment, and financial instability. Duke University has plans to release 75 positions which were expected to begin in January 2021 (Nietzel, 2020). The loss of these positions resulted in a permanent program shutdown (Gifted Atlanta, 2020). Fifteen hundred part-time faculty struck at the New School in New York (Cascone, 2022). Adjuncts at Mercy College threatened to strike (News 12 Staff, 2022) as did City Colleges in Chicago (Fangmann, 2022; Masterson, 2022) on November 2, 2022. Finally, though not faculty, 48,000 University of California staff, including researchers and graders who support faculty, are striking (Alvarez, 2022).

Strike Context

The 2019 Wright State strike resulted from a 2014-2017 contract that had expired, but the faculty, under contractual guidelines, continued to teach until a new contract was in place. For strike analysis and context, 266 emails were reviewed between September 2, 2013, and

March 2, 2019. Only emails shared on the official university website were reviewed. Emails revealed that strike concerns did not seem to begin until March 2016 which centered on transparency regarding budgetary spending, promotion standards, and the university's academic mission.

Concerns loomed larger when the university administration retained an outside counsel in April 2017. With negotiations stalled, a factfinder was appointed in July 2017. During this time, a new university president was selected. In October 2017, informal union liaisons formed at the regional campus. After approximately a year, in October 2018, the factfinder's report was delivered to the union members. The members rejected the report in November because it seemed to support administration demands with little consideration for the faculty. The rejection hastened the eventual filing of the formal strike notice with the Ohio State Employment Relations Board (SERB). The strike began at 8 a.m. on January 22 and ended on February 10, 2019. The issues in dispute included: workload, job security for non-tenure eligible faculty, summer teaching, pay, health benefit premiums, and furloughs. The current 2023 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) will expire soon and negotiations loom. Additionally, the AAUP has since joined the AFT. The lessons and experiences learned during the 2019 strike need to be considered not only for this institution but for all higher education institutions navigating these turbulent academic times.

Through a phenomenological approach, this research aims to expand the research on faculty strikes by presenting descriptions of faculty strikers' lived experiences. The following research questions were at the center of this research. What were the experiences before, during and after the strike? How supportive were the faculty of the strike and the union before, during and after the strike? What was the faculty experience at the regional campus compared to faculty at the main campus? Finally, generally, what were the faculty experiencing, reflecting on, and going through before, during and after the strike?

Method

Positionality Statement of the Researchers

Author (GF)

I am an associate professor at the regional campus, Wright State University – Lake Campus. I have been at the campus since 2013 and have never been part of a strike. As a Canadian citizen, I have been socialized in a pro-union environment. I am a cis, White woman that is living in the sandwich generation. I long-distance care-give for my parent (at the time of the strike both parents were alive), a spouse, and mother of young children. As a tenured professor, I have some job stability, perhaps more than adjunct faculty but still feel vulnerable. In addition, I am the primary income earner. I have multiple roles to navigate at any given time and prioritize as needed.

The more I reflected on my experience during the strike, the more I wanted to understand how others felt before, during and after the strike. As I continually spoke with colleagues, I understood the profound impact that the strike had on my colleagues. These conversations were not monolithic but expressed the individual effect of the strike. I was a striker who felt compelled to cross the picket-line and wanted to understand what compelled others at the regional campus to do the same. Finally, as an associate professor, I assumed my job was safe but soon realized that I did not have the power that “tenured” once had. My vulnerability was brought to light by this strike.

Author (DH)

Giovanna and I are in different places in our lives and, therefore have experienced the strike with different personal viewpoints. This enabled the research to maintain a degree of balanced perspective and decreased bias.

I am an associate professor at Wright State, Lake Campus, employed full-time since 2010. Previous work experience includes high school (HS)/middle school (MS) science teacher, and in the corporate world. My spouse is the primary wage earner, kids were in high school or college during the strike. I have been on both sides of the union debate, depending on my prior occupations/jobs. I still could, I think, go either way depending on what is on the table and the reasoning. Going into the strike, I had no doubts about it. I believed it was about academic freedom, and I was willing to strike if it took. I wanted the future of education to maintain this ideal. It was not about the money or insurance for me. I realized afterward that I had the financial freedom to act on this. Many of my colleagues did not and feared for their future. I sensed that some might have felt that I may be angry or disappointed in their returning before the strike was over. I was not. We all do what we can.

Population Sample

Snowball, purposive sampling was used to recruit the participants in the strike. The faculty at the Regional Campus were directly contacted through an email invitation. The invitation was sent individually, explaining the purpose of the research and asking if they would like to take part. These were colleagues at the regional campus. Regional faculty had provided several faculty contacts at the Main Campus. Once interviewed, the Main Campus faculty had suggested that generally, the College of Medicine, College of Business and the College of Nursing had not struck (at least not in large numbers, if any). The College of Medicine faculty was not part of the union. Utilizing purposive, systematic sampling, approximately 100 email invitations like the regional campus were sent to faculty in the College of Liberal Arts at the Main Campus.

Ten participants from the Regional Campus and 17 participants from the Main Campus were interviewed. Author (GF) knew the participants at the Regional Campus and did not know any of the Main Campus participants. Author (DH) viewed de-identified coding only. The interviewing took place through video calling, in-person video recording and telephone audio recording. Interviews took place between July 2019 and March 2020.

The sample information is presented according to Campuses in Table 1. One participant did not indicate their gender. Four participants did not indicate their rank. Five participants did not state the number of years at the institution.

Table 1
Regional and Main Campus Sample

Variable	Campus	
	Main	Regional
Gender		
Male	8	7
Female	8	3
Rank		
Instructor	0	2
Lecture	1	1
Assistant Professor	8	0

Associate Professor	5	5
Full Professor	0	1
Years at Institution		
10 or less	5	4
Between 11-20	5	3
21 years or more	4	1

There is an even distribution of male and female faculty at the Main Campus versus the Regional, with more males than females in the sample. Main Campus participants represented 13 faculty with at least tenure-eligible positions whereas the Regional Campus is represented by six tenured faculty. Years at the institution indicated that nine faculty were teaching at the Main Campus for eleven years or more whereas the Regional had four. The Main Campus faculty came from a variety of disciplines such as history, biology, English, math, philosophy, and sociology. The Regional Campus participants also represented a variety of disciplines such as teacher education, math, economics, science, and psychology.

Instrument

Author (GF) conducted all interviews. The questions reflected experiences, media commentary and conversations with fellow strikers. The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview schedule. Probing questions were used to examine specific lines of questioning further. The semi-structured interview was divided into three areas: before, during and after the strike. Before the strike, several of the questions consisted of the following: Can you describe the days leading up to the strike? What were you thinking? How were you preparing? Were you making assumptions about how long it would be? What were your feelings the night before? When was the time that you realized, this was really going to happen? When did you decide, you were going to go on strike? Why did you go on strike? Questions inquiring about experiences during the strike include, what were you thinking when you got that email that basically stated, “we will see on the picket line?” Can you describe your time during the strike? What did you do? How did others react to you? Were you worried as to how this was going to end? How did this affect you – morale, challenges, concerns, making ends meet? After the strike questions consisted of, how did it feel when there was finally an agreement? How was it the day you went back to the classroom? What was the reaction by the students, faculty and staff? Was it worth it? Did the Union do the job you wanted it to do for you?

Research Design

This research aimed to explore the shared lived experiences of faculty who struck during the 2019 faculty strike at Wright State University. The faculty strike took place at both the Main and Regional Campuses. This shared event appeared to be suited to a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology considers the shared experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus was to describe the lived experiences of the strikers. Understanding that the strike event is a shared experience within a specific environment, a striker group was sampled from the Main Campus and the Regional Campus. In addition, phenomenology understands the necessity of reflection during the qualitative process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is a reflexive process where the authors' experiences as strikers themselves can contribute to the context of the experience with the understanding that their experience is not the same as their participants. It is a balance that is continually visited. Composite narratives were used to describe the experiences. Todres (cited in Johnston et al., 2021) describes composite narratives as descriptive phenomenology. The ability to use phenomenology as an

approach and composite narratives as a method of presenting the experiences is important in this research. The composite narratives proved to be a tool that would facilitate confidentiality.

An initial round of coding was conducted. A second round of reorganizing the data into emergent themes placed them within the larger context of strikes within higher education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth indicate interviewing as a common data collection method. They suggest that five to twenty-five participants would provide saturation for a phenomenological approach. This research project consists of 27 participants with a subset of 10 Regional faculty participants.

Upon Institutional Review Board approval, snowball sampling was used to contact participants who took part in the strike. Once the participant voluntarily agreed to participate in the research, the researcher and the participant determined the form of meeting. At the time of the interview, the participant consented to voluntarily participate in the research, either in person and/or by video. As a result of Covid 19 pandemic and distance, some interviews were conducted through social media programs such as Skype or Facebook Messenger. Participants' confidentiality and privacy was protected by conducting the interviews at the author's (GF) home or in a conference room at the campus where there was little to no human "traffic." GF presumed that the participants understood the limits of confidentiality associated with the social media platforms. It was not specifically mentioned in the consent form. The interviews were recorded, and recordings were stored on a password protected laptop and flash drives. Only the interviewer has viewed the original data. If it was an in-person interview, the participant reviewed the consent; however, if the interview was videoed, the researcher verbally read the consent and then on video, the participant consented. The data will be secured in a locked location for 10 years.

Author (GF) conducted the interviews and developed the composite narratives. The other author served as the outside auditor. The outside auditor's role was intended to confirm that the composite narratives were capturing the participants' experience. The outside auditor does not know the identities of the participants. The auditor reviewed the audit trail after the first round of coding was completed. At this point, only the codes were visible and all identifying information removed other than campus identification.

Both authors were striking Regional Campus faculty. This experience and interaction aided in coding and composite narrative creation by understanding the context of the responses but also required conscious and continual reflection of coding and interpretation of those codes. The interviewer and auditor were able to use their experience to recall the environment and context that the coding was pointing to and use each other to be aware if their own biases were being placed in the data. In addition, the personal experiences provided a reasonable basis for the auditor to assess the narrative capturing the lived experience of the strike (Hancock, 2021) as part of composite narrative creation.

Composite Narratives

Wertz et al. (2011) identified key aspects of the composite narrative. First, the narrative is informed by the researcher's knowledge of the literature. Second, the narrative is informed through listening to the participants, as was done through the interview process. Third, the narrative is informed through the researchers' reflexivity. McElhinney and Kennedy (2021) also indicate the importance of researcher reflexivity in composing composite narratives. Reflexivity, for this research, utilized the researchers' knowledge and experience as faculty strikers to frame social context as the participants shared their experiences. In addition, reflexivity was used to continually monitor that personal experience was not imposed on the participants' responses through the initial coding. The next stage, during which codes were placed into themes, reflexivity informed how these codes could come together. Finally, Wertz

et al. (2011) suggest using the first person. This was utilized within this research suggesting the individualizing of the "pseudo" person but within their narrative, other phrases were used to present the variation of thoughts by the participants. Here, reflexivity, the use of the researcher's knowledge and experience, is used to contextually inform the creation of the composite narrative.

Creese et al. (2021) indicated that a composite narrative is the culmination of several interviews framed into a single individual. These researchers used all 48 individual interviews to create thematic composite narratives. We have applied similar parameters. We have created thematic composite narratives using all the interviews from the Regional Campus participants compared to those from the Main Campus participants. All 27 participant interviews were used within the composite narrative as similar themes developed.

Johnston et al. (2021) addressed the limitations of the use of composite narratives that relies on the skill of the researcher to "reflect the participants' perspectives" (p. 13) by using an external auditor and focusing on questions that could be applied to other striking environments. Johnston et al. suggested they "constructed a composite narrative using the words of the participants" (p. 9). We approach this using in vivo coding. In vivo coding uses the participants' words and phrases (Saldaña, 2015). This combination allows individual experiences to be collectively combined into one narrative. The composite narratives consist of Regional participants, Main Campus participants, or all participants according to the theme or themes.

In vivo coding was used for the initial oral coding after reviewing the interviews. Oral coding refers to coding directly from the video or audio without a transcript. In vivo codes continued to be used throughout the development of the composite narratives. The second author's role as an external auditor was to improve credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness, as "the first step [is] to construct the narrative was to return to the data" (Johnston et al., 2021, p. 9). Here, NVivo coding brings us back to the data.

We followed Johnston et al.'s (2021) next step for this research. "The data was first compiled into a long list of quotations from interviews that indicated the properties and dimensions of the main finding" (p. 9). This research was not limited to one main finding. This research focused on properties and dimensions of several themes. Words and phrases were used at this point. Then "the process involved separating the participants' quotes and rearranging them" (p. 10).

An audit trail was kept ensuring credibility and trustworthiness, as suggested by Johnston et al. (2021). "I kept a detailed audit trail of the origins of the data that was selected" (p. 10). The audit trail for this research started by conducting initial oral coding of the audio and visual interviews. Then the initial codes were organized into general categories such as before, during and after the strike. Once completed, the thematic categories were developed. As the composite narratives were developed, it was ensured "to use the participant's language as much as possible" (Johnston et al., p. 10). However, to create a narrative that can relay a cohesive, readable, engaging perspective, "some slight additions and changes . . . to develop the narrative flow and readability" (p. 10) were made. Additionally, Johnston et al. (2021) suggests reflexivity could prove to be advantageous to narrative building. Reflexivity allowed for the addition of context to the narratives for better understanding of the experience. In addition, reflexivity was used to identify both similar patterns of experiences and experiences that existed outside of the pattern. The researchers' conversations with colleagues aided in identifying when certain experiences were nuanced. For example, the Regional strikers felt left out when not receiving picketing signs that added to their sense of abandonment.

The narratives have been de-identified. As GF was conducting the interviews, two of the participants were concerned about confidentiality. Therefore, we addressed this concern as much as we could by creating these composite narratives and using pseudonyms. In a small

campus, even listing what unit a faculty was in would divulge their identity. In addition, though we have used in vivo coding, there are no quotations within the narratives to support our effort in addressing participant concerns. The codes that appeared or were similar two or more times were added to the narrative. Though the focus was on patterns, experiences that seemed to be different than the researchers' experience or those heard through discussions with colleagues were also included. These discussions provided a broader perspective to the themes and allowed for the flow of the narrative to be developed. Here, reflexivity proved important in identifying the main patterns but also experiences that existed outside the pattern.

Findings

Three themes are presented through the composite narratives. First what is the Union members' perception at various phases of the strike. Second, the experiences of the Regional faculty will be presented as compared to the Main Campus striker. These experiences appear to be focused on the Union. This analysis is crucial to understanding the relationship of a Union within a Regional Campus. Those Regional union members need to be considered and not overlooked. Lastly, in addition to the stressors that the strikers experienced, there were several surprising sub-themes after the strike that emerged. Though we had guiding research questions, we were also open to any other themes that the participants voiced.

Collective Perceptions of the Union: Reasons to Join, and to Remain on, the Picket Line

As the contract negotiations were at an impasse, the members felt the Union leadership was strong and supportive of the members' decision to strike. The following are pseudonymised narratives from both Campuses and reflect the perceptions of the Union from both campuses:

- Tim:** But starting from the beginning, some of us joined the Union because of the idea that "I was not going to be the one faculty that did not contribute." Other reasons included the need for transparency, a clearly defined promotion and tenure process, and that Union can negotiate on our behalf.
- Lisa:** Let me start with the Union here at the Regional. The Regional was Union-strong. The vote to organize the union was about 18-20 years ago. The vote was close, with the Regional being the deciding factor.
- Desiree:** Why strike? I guess everyone has their own reasons but generally, these are the reasons why we struck: (a) Retrenchment [the ability for administration to restructure the faculty such as firing and layoffs], (b) Summer teaching, (c) Workload, (d) Unlimited furlough days, (e) Academic freedom, (f) Economic reasons, (g) Working conditions, (h) Healthcare, and (i) Partners in governance.

For most of the interviewees, it was not about salary. It was more idealistic. Moreover, it seemed to affect the instructors more than the tenure-track Faculty. Other Faculty mentioned the imposed contract as their reason to strike:

- Claudia:** I and some of the other Faculty were here when the Union first came to the University. Initially, the NTE [non-tenure eligible] faculty were not included in the contract. One of my colleagues, who was

involved with the vote, suggested there was so much pent-up frustration [at their lack of being part of the union and feeling they were not being treated fairly as a result. Eventually NTE joined the union]. Another colleague did not think unionizing was necessary; he had not experienced the issues that seemed to warrant the Union's presence, but he did appreciate it when the Union helped with an office issue. My other colleague pointed to standardized rules which can be applied to everyone regarding tenure, summer pay, salary, and issues of casual decision-making. [The Union] had become acutely aware of the academic working conditions. [Colleagues] knew the University had a Union and would advocate for better working conditions, clear standards for promotion and tenure, and a competitive salary. So, it was natural to join.

The University had experienced several financial "scandals." Faculty appeared to be frustrated with these situations and how the administration proposed to handle them. The University had financial problems, questionable dealings with H1B visas, and property issues that concerned a member(s) on the Board of Trustees (B.T.). These concerns were not being addressed. We realized it was one of the reasons for the strike and a reason why Faculty would decide to strike. For many the Administration and B.T. were seen as the antagonists, as shown in the following:

Barbara: Oh, so many scandalous stories about the Board of Trustees (B.T.). The questionable financial decisions and H1B VISA were just a few. I do not think the Administration understands how to deal with the Union and does not understand higher education. I heard one B.T. member state they did not care about the Liberal Arts. A colleague suggested it was old White men whose power position was being threatened. The trustees thought that the Union was not negotiating for their own Faculty but for the national cause. I thought many Faculty had a negative perception of the B.T. Some faculty believed the B.T. was completely corrupt or abandoned oversight, and that the Administration was incompetent and shady. Some even thought the President and Administration were puppets of the B.T., and the B.T. ran the show. I heard some even thought this was about Union-busting.

Barbara spoke of the national cause. This appeared to refer to the larger conflict that was being experienced between faculty and institutions across the country regarding intellectual property and academic freedom. Johnny also mentions the B.T. but has a list of specific reasons. He also suggested solidarity and standing up for the vulnerable was a reason to strike. It appears that some view the Union in idealistic terms:

Johnny: We did not trust the B.T., the president, and the administration's outside lawyer. If one was going to stay, we wanted our jobs to be worthwhile. Some thought accepting the imposed contract was giving up. I would say the general list of *specific* reasons were healthcare, teaching and workload, retrenchment, contract, the whole package, non-tenured faculty, furlough, compromising tenure, job security, evaluation process, and maintaining shared

governance. However, I would also say the broader conceptual reasons were complicated. It was not personal but for solidarity. We had vulnerable colleagues and needed to stand up for them.

Across the sample, the reasons the participants struck were similar. The greater reasons given most frequently were generally not about salary or health insurance, although they were mentioned. Many participants seemed to take a larger, more idealistic view. The whole group, the whole purpose of the University, is important for the Faculty. How does the Union create one sense of solidarity representing both Campuses:

Stewart: It seemed that the decision to strike was varied and happened in a few different ways. We had several Faculty that were for it from the beginning, no doubt, no question, always would strike, and no way they were not going to strike. They believe not going on strike would send the wrong message. For others, certain events pushed their decision. One mentioned the imposed contract. Another said they would strike either way but the real impact for them was the messaging and misinformation the Administration was sending.

Stewart seems to imply that reasonings for going on strike varied. Alex also suggested that a vote or authorization to strike may not come to fruition: it will probably not happen or be relatively short in duration. This perception was one that the Union did encourage. This encouragement seemed to be done informally. Through the reviewed emails, the Union does suggest this would be a short strike. The messaging of the administration seemed to be another motivation to strike which included blaming the faculty for the university's downturn and troubles:

Alex: The Union reassured us that the strike would not be long. Most figured that it would stop once the Administration realized we were on strike. Academic strikes were rare. No one thought it would go on very long but looking back, it was a naïve approach. We believed we would have a contract without needing to strike. We did not really plan that far out for striking and did not realize the Administration and B.T. would come up with this crazy Term B [which is lumping the entire semester's content into the second half of the semester to accommodate the weeks of striking]. One colleague believed the B.T. had no clear view of the battlefield. The B.T. thought the strike would be one to two days; people would panic and come back to work. The B.T. did not know the degree of Faculty outrage [at everything]. The Faculty thought the Union had a better sense of what was going on. Several Faculty assumed the strike would be longer. One thought it might last six weeks because they realized the B.T.'s goal was to "crush us."

The antagonist for both Campuses was the Administration and B.T. The decision to go on strike and the reason for staying on strike were similar. Both focused on idealism and elements that produce academic freedom and working conditions. The Union perpetuated the hope of a short strike; if there was a strike, it would be one to two days. This narrative proved to be detrimental. As the prior narratives suggest, the University Administration had no experience with a strike and the Union/strike culture. Though some Faculty had assumed the

strike might drag on, strikes were rare, and the Union seemed to rely on this rarity to drive support.

Regional versus Main Campus Perspectives

As the strike evolved, differences between the Regional and the Main Campus became evident. The following composite narratives reflect this as it pertains to perceptions of the Union. The participants at the Regional Campus seemed to have a lot of concerns, doubt, and sense of abandonment from the Union. The Main Campus narrative is short due to the Main Campus' perceptions being more similar and positive. The Author (GF) at the Regional campus had an established rapport with their strikers allowing for more in-depth conversation.

Regional Campus

The following narratives present a changing perception of the Union.

Ben: I assumed the Union was telling us the truth. Some of us saw the Union doing a fantastic job; they were more than patient with the Administration. If the Union votes to go, you go. Many viewed the Union as organized, ready to negotiate and not unreasonable. We had faith in the Union's ability to represent us. As the strike continued into the second and third week, the faculty were not seeing any progress and becoming doubtful. We felt the Union was not giving us the full story. We did not think the strike would go this long and thought the Union was unprepared for the duration. There was no strike pay, and money became an issue for many of us. The strike was getting nasty at the end, like a game of chicken [This is a colloquial term that suggests both sides continue to push each other until one side decides to give up or that both could be hurt.]. Some thought the Administration was ready to take it to the end of the semester to break the Union. The strike started better than it ended. At the Regional, some felt the AAUP had abandoned us like we were an inconvenience and invisible.

With the physical distance between the campuses, we felt forgotten, disconnected, and uninformed as Ben's narrative has shown above and Jean's below. The sense of inconvenience, invisibility, and distance seemed rooted in lack of resources, Union leadership not visiting, physical distance and a generalized lack of support for our efforts.

Jean: When we met Wednesday about returning to work, it had been about two and a half weeks into the strike. We were tired and ready to be done. We were here because of the Term B threat that the Administration made. Are they bluffing? It seemed reasonable that they would do it and could. The Administration was willing to hurt the students. We had to decide right now if we were going to go back to work or stay on strike. We would have probably stayed on strike if the ultimatum, that is, the threat of Term B, was not there.

About five stayed on strike, but most of us had concerns and returned to work. We, the ones that went back, had issues with childcare and finances. Those who kept on striking did

not waiver and perhaps did not have financial issues. Why should we feel shame admitting we were not willing to sacrifice for the greater good? Why is it more socially acceptable to say we are going back for the students and not for the financial reasons to take care of our family? It would have been totally different if the Union had a strike fund to assist with the duration of this strike.

The Union lacked presence at the Regional. If the Union had been there, they could have quelled doubt. Some were flipping off the Union at the meeting. It was intense. The Regional Campus does not have the options of the Main Campus.

When it came down to it, most of us did what the others did. Again, we were ready to be done and it was easy [to cross the picket line]. There was solidarity with the larger group. Some of us had spent much time with each other. We were proud of how long we stayed on strike. But when the strike ended two days later, it was a kick in the pants and sucked.

The options mentioned may have referred to the academic flexibility of a larger campus where there are more course offerings and faculty. In addition, the faculty that crossed the picket line mentioned they felt it was a "kick in the pants and sucked" because they had been striking that whole time, felt like they needed to go back and then it was settled. Perhaps, if the perceived threat of Term B, loss of income, and job loss were not there, they would have stayed.

Main Campus

Mary: I knew it would be long, but I did not think three weeks. The University was not negotiating. I thought maybe two weeks. One thought it was evident that we were not striking past the fourth week, and another agreed. During negotiations, we thought we were close to a contract at the end of the second week. The Union knew there would not be a fourth week because Faculty would go back. There seemed to be a general worry about the length of the strike because the strikers' crossing the picket line impacted other strikers.

The Regional doubted the Union during the strike, perhaps more than the Main Campus. It could be that the Main Campus had a better impression of the Union because it had more Union presence. On the other hand, the perceived lack of presence at the Regional might be reflected in the fragmented perception of the Union, which seemed to worsen as more participants expressed feelings of abandonment toward the end. This sense of abandonment may have contributed to understanding how the threat, aka Term B, would be viewed differently at each Campus. Feeling left behind, abandoned and tired, the Regional would be more susceptible to perceiving Term B as a plausible threat rather than a bluff as the Main Campus participants perceived it, possibly linked to the Regional Campus participants' feelings of abandonment, lack of support, and feeling that they were less well-informed than the Main Campus.

Mental Health, Collective Perspective

A third theme that evolved is the stress that faculty experienced during the striking period and afterward. Mental health is to be considered with strikers, which we interpreted here as a multidimensional concept. The adjectives that the participants used reflect several emotions that can reflect the mental health of an individual, including feeling tired, spent, distracted, disrespected, and worried, as well as experiencing fear, lack of sleep, nerves, jitters, stress, low morale, and mental exhaustion. The issues that created such emotions included

concern about finances, family, and potential job loss. The following composite narratives reflect the strikers' mental health:

Claudia: The night before there was a concern if the Union would really do it. How many would really participate. And later on, the longer it would go on, the more apocalyptic this would be. I heard some were careful about what they said, were an emotional wreck and they would cry in the shower. People were afraid and worried. They needed to be consoled harder in the third week.

Paulette: I think it was a scary time especially if one was the main wage earner, the one with the health care and two kids. Can you imagine no insurance with two kids? What happens if something went wrong? I know one colleague whose partner said once the money runs out, they would have to go back to work. Another striker wasn't worried because they were single, no kids, had savings, and had family that could help them.

Pat: Our expertise was disregarded, and it was demoralizing. I think this said it all. I heard that our parking pass now says employee where before it was faculty/staff. We are just another number.

The mental health of the participants was less impacted when finances were not central as indicated when Paulette mentioned the colleague that seemed to no have kids, had savings and was able to strike.

Broader Impact and other Effects after the Strike

Though there were three main guiding research questions, there were several sub-themes that developed. These sub-themes suggest that the striking experience was not monolithic and was complex. The following composite narratives highlight several complexities which deal with the stress, the uncertainties and overall experience of the strike both positive and negative. Following is a narrative from each campus on the overall effects, along with narratives on "trauma," faculty cohesion, "scabs," and department chairs which are presented collectively as subthemes that have emerged.

Regional Campus

Afterward, the feelings were mixed. Many had feelings of accomplishment but also acknowledged the stressful situation of striking. Interestingly, on the positive side, four subthemes emerged toward the Union after the strike ended for the Regional Campus: (a) it was worth it, (b) I would do it again, (c) general idealism, and (d) striking did have an impact. This is despite feeling abandoned during the strike.

Broader issues also became evident in terms of Union performance, such as: (a) The Union was not being realistic about what could be gained, (b) The length of the strike was too long, (c) The contract was not that much different than a week ago, and (d) Did not get anything:

Tim: By the end of the strike, I think we thought the job the Union did was a mixed bag. Some thought the Union did a good job. They ran

the strike well and represented us well. We had tenure protected. The Union seemed good with the information and kept us informed. So, considering the Administration was a brick wall, the Union performed well on balance. Others thought the Union was a bit more hostile and aggressive than they would have handled it. However, did most think it was worth it? Yes, especially for the contract language but not really for the health insurance. Though there were issues with the Union, many of us would do it again, conditionally. For some of us, the conditions include ensuring some type of strike fund, ensuring academic freedom, tenure and teaching conditions. However, some did point out that health insurance and salary were not considered striking issues for themselves.

Main Campus

For the Main Campus, there appeared to be more positive perspectives toward the Union as being supportive of Faculty as evidenced in the following narratives, which collectively were very similar in their experiential perspective:

Lacey: I thought the Union did the job I wanted. I was impressed. The Union was willing to negotiate but the Administration was not. And the Union was not afraid. I thought the push back needed to be strong and unified. But they needed to make the call. I didn't. Others had the same perceptions as me. They thought that in this climate, the Union fought, had strength and fortitude for the Faculty. A colleague mentioned they were impressed with the Union officer[s]. The Union officers had put in many hours. Another colleague viewed the Union as proactive. They never felt the Union had misled them as to what we were getting. It was just sad it took three weeks to get the losses we were going to have anyway. The Union did a good job for advocating for appropriate working conditions for academics. It was indispensable. Every Campus should be unionized and should have the Union as a way to push back.

Pat: From what I heard, yes, most people would strike again. However, there has to be certain conditions. It depends on what is at stake; protect the role of the Union at the University, keep healthcare as part of the bargaining process, teaching load, and retrenchment. But there was one colleague that said they would never go on strike again. For them, this is just a job. They are much more lukewarm about it. They seem to be less passionate because they are less dedicated to the school. Another colleague said if it was the same issues, yes, they would do it again but would probably leave the University.

It is worth mentioning that some strikers still believed in the Union as being ideal. They mentioned that going on strike was being a role model for students. The Union was a way of showing students how to stand up. For some, they quickly realized the benefit of having a voice:

Sally: We had to do things for the good of the whole. It is about respect. Some struck for larger issues that were at stake such as a power struggle, fighting against corporatization, social justice and labor rights.

Lisa: I think at times we think idealistically. We wish more people were unionized to fight against the greed of the upper level. And we hope that we taught students to stand up for themselves. However, we think there are bigger impacts that the strike had. The fact that we were willing to strike, that it was not an idle strike, it will make them [Administration and Board of Trustees] think twice if it comes close again. We are stronger as a Faculty, better off and it gives us a right to negotiate in the future. But there is a fear of a plan to get rid of the Union. The Administration and Board of Trustees are learning how to break the Union.

Stewart: I think this continues us having a strong Union and solidarity. When workers are not treated fairly, workers band together and get things done. I think we stood our ground and made the Faculty labor conditions better. This is an important precedent, and I am grateful of the Union. I shudder to think if there was no Union. The strike made a difference and I saw a huge difference. At times we are often positioned in the ivory tower, but we fought, acted, paid the price physically, emotionally, financially for that integrity. I think this accounting is a way to have a history to record the deep feeling and commitment of Faculty to knowledge, truth, and democracy.

Rhonda: I think the strike is a big scar and the University has been badly wounded. On a larger level, higher education is under threat. The Faculty needed to take collective action to allow a national ability to negotiate. Higher Education has become corporatized and monetized as there seems to be a larger dismantling of higher education. Hope has a good effect on education throughout the nation. We made allowances, became more attached to other unions such as the local support from the Iron Workers during our strike.

Both Campus participants see the “fight,” or as one participant suggested “warfare,” as needed. Even though at times they would not want to experience a strike again and it would take much to get them back on the picket line, this was conditional. The comments by those at the Regional Campus point to the greater good and toward helping “others.” This was seen at the Main Campus too. The conditions do not necessarily refer to salary but to working conditions, workload, tenure, and other aspects that refer to academic freedom.

The “Trauma” of the Strike

Emergent Subtheme: The Picket Line and Headquarters (H.Q.)

We interpreted the experience of the picket line being different at the Main Campus. In addition, strike H.Q. played a role for morale. H.Q. was important and was located at the Main

Campus. The weather also played a role on the picket line, as inclement conditions would deter the strikers:

Lacey: The picket line created a powerful sense of Faculty solidarity. The picketing helped calm me down, made it reasonable and calmed the voices of doubt. All we did was march back and forth and wave at traffic. The strong camaraderie was a big development from the strike. We got to meet Faculty across Main Campus, Faculty we never met before. We got to talk to people in way[s] one usually doesn't with the same values. Some stated it was the most relaxing and happiest they have been for a while. I was there every day. I would go in for 6 a.m. for set up, almost every day I had a shift and many times I would break down [the strike tents and equipment]. Some days I stayed for the whole day and then went to H.Q. It was a full-time job for me but that varied for everyone. This was one of the greatest professional experiences I have had.

Several of the strikers interviewed pointed to the importance of H.Q. and the atmosphere and refuge it created for them. During the Regional interviews, the lack of a supportive "H.Q." had a lasting impact on the Regional's connection to the Union as discussed in *Regional versus Main Campus Perspectives* section:

Chris: How can I describe H.Q.? There was electricity in the air and a huge sense of camaraderie. Even today when I drive by the hotel, I remember it. It was a party at H.Q. early on those two to three days. I spent a lot of time there. There was so much at H.Q. with signs, hand warmers and food. There was always a gang of people. Though people seemed scared, I think that H.Q. brought feelings of comfort and calm. I felt out of touch if I wasn't there. But it was hard to do after three weeks, and I got motivated by others [to keep going].

Emergent Subtheme: Faculty Cohesion

Several of the faculty went back three days before the end of the strike and six faculty remained striking. What seemed to be created was a "fault line" between those who struck and those that did not, especially with senior Faculty and Faculty that were part of the Union. This section will be presented as before, during, and after the strike:

Larry: There are a lot of ways to look at Faculty culture during the strike. I think if you were in the Union and did not strike, it hurt us tremendously. It was the reason it went so long. It seemed like Faculty was not all together. It was puzzling that pro-union Faculty did not go on strike. Why were they in the Union all this time? We were disappointed with those that didn't go. But others had more powerful thoughts. Some Faculty thought that the non-strikers were free-riders, moochers by allowing others to sacrifice for them. Generally, a bond developed with those that struck. There was more interaction outside of school and we got to know each other. What seemed to really put some off were senior Faculty who did not strike. Some could understand if you were not on the contract, however,

some were harsher with senior Faculty. They can't forget it, it was unforgivable. The senior Faculty that did not strike appeared as a leadership failure. The elders should have stepped up more. They are in a position where they both professionally and financially can. We were disappointed they didn't.

Harrold: Some also resented Faculty who complained about the CBA [collective bargaining agreement] and then didn't strike. It was a shock who didn't strike, and it was suggested that authoritative figures threatened their careers. The resentment is for the ones that aided and abetted. The scabs covered classes and talked disrespectfully about their striking colleagues. There was appreciation [by the strikers] for Faculty who struck and then went back still making the sacrifice.

The participants seemed to indicate an understanding of the lived reality of their colleagues. One participant suggested that their small group of strikers were closer after the strike than before:

Jane: So how do I see those that went back? It is mixed. I understand Faculty are fearful and I am not going to shame them because at least they struck. I am also aware people have different personal situations. I am not going to shame them. But it is also disheartening that the Faculty went back. They were manipulated and they were torn up about it. Some Faculty were just pissed off and disappointed. My gut reaction is that it was devastating. Has the strike failed? It has had an impact on morale.

Terra: There is an assumption with the Faculty that did not go on strike, that they could not sacrifice their kid for the strike. But there was disappointment, and we are more cautious of what we say [around Faculty]. Some thought unstriking Faculty sold out. But we had mixed feelings about this group. It was their personal decision, and everyone has to do what is best for them. Some of the reasons for not striking were medical issues, non-union beliefs, untenured [positions] or being the main breadwinner. It is hard to hold it against them.

Brendon: So how is Faculty now? Mixed. I think in the departments where there was good chair leadership, they were able to come back. Ours were able to come back as a family. Generally, Faculty who struck stayed together. A Faculty member stated that her liaison group became closer. There was a sense of solidarity. I never realized how important culture is and how people feel about each other. The dedication is to the department not WSU. After the strike, some just didn't try to talk about it and for some the camaraderie was gone as soon as we went back. For some of us, we have more of a connectedness because of the picket line.

Emergent Subtheme: Scabs, Collective Perspective

We were surprised that negative feelings seemed to be directed more toward outside of the University scabs than those strikers that went back and those Faculty which did not strike. Collectively from both campuses:

Jack: I remember who the scabs are, and I am not going to associate with them. I am mostly ok with Faculty that went back but if you scabbed, that felt like a betrayal. Some strikers were trying to find out if they were being scabbed. They were surprised who their replacement was. The scab was represented just as qualified as the striking Faculty. It was personal. I had no real contact with Faculty that didn't strike. A past student had scabbed and now we are no longer friends.

Emergent Subtheme: The Department Chairs, Collective Perspective

The chairs were mentioned by a few participants. Though not interviewed in this research study, it appears that the chairs impacted department cohesion and may also influence the cohesion after the strike. The chair's leadership appears to be significant:

Lynn: There were some issues with the department chairs but not all. In one department, the chair was punitive and authoritative. They were even hard on striking Faculty's developmental funds. They made the Faculty out to be selfish. Some Faculty felt betrayed by their chair because the Faculty thought the chair was with them but sided with the Administration. Another story had the department chair's position threatened if they struck. It seemed after the strike, the departmental relations depended on how well the chair dealt with the aftermath. One chair found out the Faculty was angry and, within a few days, stepped down. Another chair's only communication with their Faculty was to deliver the human resource letter indicating a pay deduction. In my department, we were able to come back as a family because of the little gestures of help from our department chair such as getting the department together and having a conversation.

Discussion

In this study, participants at two Campuses under one Union described their experiences during a three-week academic strike. The interview addressed perceptions of the Union during three distinct phases: before, during, and after the strike. Collectively, the participants seemed to describe their lived experience in terms of Union perception in similar ways before the strike. However, during the strike, some at the Regional Campus did not appreciate the Union's lack of presence there. After the strike, the Regional Campus still questioned the Union's performance where the Main Campus seemed satisfied with the Union's performance. The purpose of the Union, the decision and the reason to strike focused on idealistic ideas of what a union is along with the pragmatic issues such as workload, compensation, and health benefits. This ideal vision of the Union continued until after the strike, as faculty described its impact. Idealism was a driving force, with many strikers declaring that if the conditions were "right,"

they would strike again. This was true for the Regional campus even after their feeling of abandonment. The concerns expressed by the strikers as the reason to strike was like those pointed out by Magney (2002) where such issues as benefits, wages, and layoff criteria (retrenchment) are still issues within academia. Mentioned within the research was a lack of a strike fund which is generally used to supplement lost wages and low-interest loans. Strike funds were not available to these strikers though no-interest loans were available.

Fowler et al. (2009) point to the importance of union activity to mental health. As the researchers suggested, the amount of union activity impacted the mental health of strikers. The more strike participation by the individual the better the mental health (Fowler et al., 2009). Within this study, there were moments where it seemed the more strikers were involved mental health improved particularly in the first week. As the strike entered the second and third week, it seemed to deteriorate for both Regional and Main, and headquarters was one strategy for some to maintain a positive perspective. However, that is not to suggest that the participants are not tired, stressed or spent. Fowler et al. (2009) could be suggesting that participant involvement in strike activities could be a coping mechanism for the fatigue and stress. Being with others could provide the social support to navigate through the strike. This appeared to be evident within this research as strikers from each campus seemed to have strong comments about the union. This may point to the reason why a large group at the Regional crossed the line and went back to work when the Administration and B.T. advanced the Term B Threat. The fragmentation is an issue that we suggest the Union address in the future. Those at the Main Campus appeared to understand the threat was a bluff, not so for the Regional. The difference seems plausible as the Union could have continually addressed the Faculty's fear.

The preparation of a headquarters that are included in Magney's (2002) discussion of union preparation is important. The Main Campus strikers pointed to how headquarters was a place to develop and embrace solidarity, interact with other strikers, and a source to "recharge" in the later part of the strike. This is comparable to Balanoff's (1985) concept of solidarity committees. This enthusiasm and camaraderie were not as prevalent and not provided largely by the union to the Regional Campus. These types of solidarity committees should be further explored as they connect to increase union activity and perhaps even positively impact mental health.

The duration of the strike and the narrative created about the possible duration of the strike may be connected to mental health as the strikers mention how the last week of the strike was stressful. Strike duration was reviewed by Annunziato (1994) and Herbert and Apkarian (2019). Both reviews point to academic strikes being short. The Union seemed to be making the same assumptions but perhaps a bit more realism would have prepared the strikers for a possible longer strike. What seems clear is that participants need financial help during such a long strike. The Union, before the strike, had created a mental image of this lasting only two to three days. The participants did not seem to be mentally prepared for a longer strike. These are two issues that the Union needs to address. Now that "strike culture" has been established, the participants understand the potential length of the strike and can better prepare which would be easier with a strike fund and strike pay being provided.

Though we had guiding research questions, we were surprised by some the emergent themes and support the of Fowler et al. (2009) and Brown et al.'s (2006) work where we need to go beyond the apparent reasons to strike. The idealistic view of the union was powerful and reflected by the strikers as worth maintaining. The powerful impact of having a headquarters where strikers can interact, share stories, and get motivated was evident and worthy of future reflection. Also, even though strikers may have not been happy with the union, if the conditions were present and solidarity was at issue, the strikers would strike again. Lastly, understanding that the striker's experience is not monolithic. As Brown et al. (2006) suggests, there are multiple versions of a singular event. There is no consensus. Here, composite narratives were

useful as a form of presenting the experiences of an event but also to be used in an environment where retaliation is feared.

However, the Union has much in its favor. The participants describe the importance of a Union in terms of protection and maintaining the integrity of higher education. The perception of the Administration and B.T. stayed resolute. The participants viewed these two entities as the antagonists in each phase of the dispute. As the strike continued, the antagonists' desire to break the Union appeared more evident. This appeared to be a unifying factor between the two Campuses, but not enough to hold all the Regional on the picket line. As several of the participants implied, higher education appears to be under siege. The strike, for some, proved to be a part of a national effort to understand that Faculty need to stand up for higher education. It was clear, with the weighing doubt expressed by several participants, under the right conditions, the Faculty, at least these Faculty, would strike again not only for academic freedom and integrity but for the greater good, their colleagues and for solidarity.

Key Considerations

The composite reflections have provided key considerations not only for the Faculty but union organizers.

Professional Strike Preparation

The Union has suggested Faculty remove as much course material from the university's online learning management software as possible. This served to protect intellectual property and made it difficult for "scabs" to teach effectively. This was impactful. The "scabs" whom we later learned varied in teaching experience and abilities, had a difficult time teaching. This also caused concern to the Administration; they brought a labor complaint against the Union, alleging the removal of course materials (not including the Master Syllabus, which is available) to be an unfair labor practice. The State Employee Relations Board rejected this complaint in January 2019. Any qualified professor has at their disposal the Master syllabus from which to teach, and striking faculty are not required to provide for their replacements their own detailed style of lesson plans while they are out. This did prove difficult for "scabs" to fill in. Many were not qualified in the field they were teaching, some had not taught before, as faculty learned upon returning.

Mental Health

The Faculty's mental health due to the stress and uncertainty before, during and after a strike is a concern and needs to be addressed by union organizers. Words such as "warfare," "wound," and "trauma" were used. This could suggest lasting mental health impacts for the Faculty. Union organizers should provide mental health counseling for Faculty that have experienced such issues.

Faculty Culture

Faculty culture has been impacted; perhaps longer than both the Union and the faculty themselves may realize. The "fault line" between striker and non-strikers seemed to have been created from the onset. The community created after the strike was within the strikers, who felt their combined efforts strengthened the friendship and bonds between them. We are not sure if this same sense of community was created within the non-strikers as this was not the focus of this research.

Limitations and Future Research

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience of striking Faculty members at a Regional and Main Campus that share the same Union. A sample of 27 interviews were conducted, a number that appears to achieve research saturation. We focused on the participants that took part in the strike. A comparative view would have proved informative if interviews had been conducted with staff, students and even members of the Administration and B.T. Though composite narratives were chosen to present findings to address concerns of confidentiality and retaliation, the use of direct quotes would perhaps have presented an additional layer of rich description and understanding.

Within qualitative research, generalization is always a concern. The findings in the research are generalizable to the culture and environment at this institution, at this time. The position of these researchers on generalizability in qualitative research is one where we did not conduct the research to be generalizable but to understand the experience. The researchers' ability to be open to emergent themes that enhanced the depth of the strikers' experience can be used to continue this examination. Generalizability may be limited but what was gained by this research is another layer within the literature that will continue in future research. However, the questions used in the instrument can be used in other research at other institutions which addresses the issue of transferability.

The researchers had not endeavored in composite narrative writing prior to this experience but the process began like other qualitative research that involved thematic coding where initial codes and phrases were written in a list. These codes were then placed in thematic groups based on similar experiences. In addition, reflexivity provided a context of what seemed significant to include. The experience and knowledge of the researchers as strikers seemed to aid in understanding what was impactful during the strike. The difficulty is the balance of keeping the participants' language as stated and providing a cohesive narrative. The important focus for us was to maintain the participants' language while trying to maintain cohesion. Researchers should continue to find the balance between individual language and cohesion.

Future research should not aim to replicate this research but add to the findings based on the environment they are researching. Johnston et al. (2021) spoke to the importance of reflexive work in terms of understanding social context. This was used within this research to create the context of some of the narrative so that readers were able to understand the "background" of the experience.

Future research should continue to explore strikers' experience. This experience should expand past the generic reasons to strike such as salary and health benefits. This research has added to the literature but further research is needed to understand concerns of mental health, role conflict, coping strategies, and why strikers cross the picket line to name a few.

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