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ABSTRACT

Scores on the Institutional Functioning Inventory (IFI) administered to faculty at 18 unionized and 18 matched non-unionized campuses in 1980 were compared to scores at these campuses prior to the implementation of academic bargaining a decade earlier. The sample was selected from among 93 institutions that had administered the IFI in 1970 and in 1980. The IFI is a standardized instrument with scales designed to measure 112 dimensions of institutional climate and with scale scores ranging from 0 to 12 for such items as Intellectual-Aesthetic Extracurriculum, Freedom, Human Diversity, Concern for Undergraduate Learning, and Concern for Innovation. Results of the study show no significant relationship between unionization and changes in campus climate as measured by the IFI. Although the results dispute commonly held assumptions about the effect of bargaining on campus life, it is noted that the finding is consistent with other research that has also failed to find a relationship between collective bargaining and changes in important institutional and organizational processes. (Author/LB)

The Relationship of Academic Bargaining to Changes in Campus Climate

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ABSTRACT

Scores on the Institutional Functioning Inventory (IFI) administered to faculty at 18 unioned and 18 matched non-unionized campuses in 1980 were compared to scores at these campuses prior to the implementation of academic bargaining a decade earlier. There was no significant relationship between unionization and changes in campus climate as measured by the IFI.

The introduction of faculty collective bargaining on more than 800 campuses of 433 colleges and universities [12] represents one of the most significant changes in the organization and administration of American higher education during the past fifteen years. It might be expected that this change would have an impact upon institutional goals, academic values, faculty-administration relationships, innovation, and other aspects of institutional functioning related to campus climate. To date, however, treatments of the relationship of bargaining to campus climate have been primarily anecdotal in nature, and often prepared by principals in the bargaining process whose objectivity is of necessity compromised by their roles. This study uses faculty responses on a standardized instrument to compare perceived changes in institutional functioning on unionized and non-unionized campuses over a ten year period.

The structures and processes of faculty collective bargaining are generally believed to alter interpersonal relationships, authority structures, and communications patterns and make them less consistent with norms of collegiality which represent the desired, if not always the achieved, ends of more traditional governance patterns. One major element in this change is the development of adversarial relationships between union and administration [2, 16, 21, 23, 25]. These may be caused not only by differences in the perceived self-interests of each group, but of equal significance may be a natural consequence of intergroup competition and inexperienced negotiators [6]. Finkin [13] has commented that

> The bargaining process imports a psychology of its own.... A different dimension is added when the law coerces a relationship between the administration and faculty union. It is entirely unsurprising that presidents and trustees

should react to the faculty's representative as an adversary in a contest of strength.

Bargaining has also been accompanied by increased centralization of decision-making [3, 14, 25] a massive shift from informal to formal and highly structured personnel relationships between faculty and their institution [3], changes in the quality of campus relationships [4], and the potential for impoverishment of communication between faculty and administration both in quantity and in content [6]. Each of these changes contributes to the bureaucratization of higher education, and can reduce the feelings of collegiality between faculty and administration [21].

Changes of this nature would be expected to have profound organizational and institutional consequences because of the interaction between bargaining and other campus structures and processes. As open systems, institutions of higher education can be viewed as composed of several interdependent subsystems [18], which are influenced by the environment as well as their interaction with each other. Changes such as collective bargaining, introduced into the managerial and structural subsystems of the organization, should be expected to influence other subsystems related to institutional goals and values, the processes through which the work of the organization is accomplished, and psychosocial aspects of communications, influence, and authority relationships [17]. Lee [23, p.25] has commented that "The presence of collective bargaining has the potential to affect nearly every area of institutional operations," and in fact a number of authorities have expressed their conclusions or concerns about a wide range of issues in which bargaining might lead to important outcomes. For example, it has been suggested that bargaining may erode academic values [13, 22, 26]

and that it may alter institutional missions and goals [23]. Concern has been expressed that bargaining makes campus change and innovation more difficult [4, 28], may decrease organizational effectiveness [10], formalizes faculty-administration relationships and encourages administrators to work "by the book", [1, 3] and can increase conflict on campus not only between different constituency groups, but among faculty themselves [4, 22, 23]. Polarization between faculty and administration on personnel and program issues has already occurred on some unionized campuses, and this is predicted to intensify in the future during an era of increasingly scarce resources [3].

Methodology

Changes in institutional structure and organizational functioning of such magnitude should be expected to have a measurable impact upon organizational climate. However, attempts at such measurement must also consider that in addition to collective bargaining, institutions over the past decade have been subject to a number of external forces, some of which (for example increased centralization, enrollment and budget declines, and federal and state intrusion) might have effects similar to those ascribed to unionization. This study attempted to control for these environmental impacts by comparing changes in campus climate at two groups of institutions, one composed of those engaged in collective bargaining (BARG), and one of institutions which were not (NOBARG).

The sample was selected from among 93 institutions which administered the Institutional Functioning Inventory (IFI) to their faculties in approximately 1970 and again in 1980 as part of a program of research on the relationship between campus climate and finance (note 1). The IFI is a standardized instrument with scales designed to

measure eleven dimensions of institutional climate. Scale scores can range from zero to twelve, with higher scores indicating greater or more positive institutional emphasis on the dimension. The following scale descriptions are taken from Peterson, et. al. [27, pp. 1-2], which contains more complete descriptions of the instrument, scale items, and scale construction, as well as analyses of scale reliabilities and the validity of the IFI as a measure of campus climate.

(IAE) Intellectual-Aesthetic Extracurriculum refers to the availability of activities and opportunities for intellectual and aesthetic stimulation outside the classroom.

(F) Freedom has to do with academic freedom for faculty and students as well as freedom in their personal lives for all individuals in the campus community.

(HD) Human Diversity has to do with the degree to which faculty and student body are heterogeneous in their backgrounds and present attitudes.

(IS) Concern for Improvement of Society refers to a desire among people at the institution to apply their knowledge and skills in solving social problems and prompting social change in America.

(UL) Concern for Undergraduate Learning describes the degree to which the college - in its structure, function, and professional commitment of faculty - emphasizes undergraduate teaching and learning.

(DG) Democratic Governance reflects the extent to which individuals in the campus community who are directly affected by a decision have an opportunity to participate in making the decision.

(MLN) Meeting Local Needs refers to an institutional emphasis on providing educational and cultural opportunities for all adults in the surrounding area, as well as meeting needs for trained manpower on the part of local businesses and governmental agencies.

(SP) Self-Study and Planning has to do with the importance college leaders attach to continuous long-range planning for the total institution, and to institutional research needed in formulating and revising plans.

(AK) Concern for Advancing Knowledge reflects the degree to which the institution - in its structure, function, and professional commitment of faculty - emphasizes research and scholarship aimed at extending the scope of human knowledge.

(CI) Concern for Innovation refers, in its highest form, to an

institutionalized commitment to experimentation with new ideas for educational practice.

(IE) Institutional Esprit refers to a sense of shared purpose and high morale among faculty and administrators.

From among the population of 93 institutions with IFI scores in both time periods, 18 were identified which were engaged in collective bargaining in 1980 (BARG), but which were not unionized in 1970. Each was matched by Carnegie Classification, control (public or private), and size with an institution in the population which was not bargaining either in 1970 or 1980 (NOBARG). An attempt was made to match institutions on geographic location as well, but was successful for only 11 of the 18 pairs. The final sample included four research or doctoral universities, twenty-two comprehensive colleges or universities, six liberal arts colleges, and four two-year colleges. Sixteen of the institutions were private, and twenty were public. This sample significantly overrepresents private institutions and underrepresents two-year institutions compared to the national population of all unionized colleges and universities. For this reason, as well as because of the non-random method by which institutions were selected, the results should be considered as suggestive and tentative.

Mean scores on the eleven IFI scales were calculated and compared between the BARG and NOBARG groups for both study years.

Results

The data in Table 1 compare IFI scores in the BARG and NOBARG groups for 1970 and for 1980, as well as the changes of these scores between the two study years. They indicate that in 1970 differences between the BARG and NOBARG groups were small and not statistically significant on ten of the eleven scales. The score difference on

Freedom (F), the single scale showing a statistically significant difference between the BARG and NOBARG groups, was only moderate. To the extent that the difference was meaningful, faculty at institutions

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TABLE 1 HERE

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not entering into bargaining perceived that they had somewhat less academic freedom in 1970 than did faculty at institutions which later unionized. On other scales which might reasonably be thought to identify the potential for unionization, such as Democratic Governance (DG), or Institutional Esprit (IE), no significant differences were found.

To some extent these summary data may mask differences related to institutional type or control. Unfortunately, the number of institutions in the data base is too small to examine this possibility with any degree of confidence. We did, however, examine separately for private institutions (eight pairs) and public institutions (ten pairs) the changes in IFI scores for the three scales (Freedom, Democratic Governance, and Institutional Esprit) which might be considered most directly related to academic bargaining. Freedom scores were higher in 1970 in BARG than in NOBARG institutions in both the public and private sector. Democratic Governance scores were higher in private than in

public institutions in 1970; by 1980 they had declined in private institutions but appeared stable in public institutions, regardless of bargaining status so that they were more similar in 1980 than had been the case a decade earlier. Institutional Esprit scores were much higher in private NOBARG institutions in 1970 (9.11) than in private BARG, public BARG, and public NOBARG institutions which were remarkably similar (7.73, 7.47, and 7.57 respectively). By 1980, IE scores had declined for all four groups with the biggest decreases seen in private BARG and public NOBARG institutions. Our tentative conclusion based on these data is that public or private control accounted for little of the differences seen between the BARG and NOBARG groups in 1970, and that these groups became even more similar by 1980.

It has been suggested that faculty bargaining is in part a response to deteriorating conditions of employment or other causes of faculty dissatisfaction [4], and may in fact occur on certain campuses in response to faculty perceptions that an institution is not functioning effectively [10]. These data do not appear consistent with these concepts. At least on those dimensions of institutional climate measured by the IFI, faculty perceptions in 1970 did not appear to effectively discriminate between institutions which later entered bargaining relationships, and those which did not.

Scores in 1980 followed the same pattern as in the decade earlier. Again, there were no significant differences between the two groups on ten of the eleven scales. The sole significant difference in 1980 was in the emphasis given to the intellectual and aesthetic extracurriculum, which appeared to have increased slightly in the NOBARG group while at the same time decreasing moderately in the BARG group. We can think of

no plausible explanation for this difference. The 1970-1980 change scores displayed in the last three columns of Table 1 indicate that mean scores were exceptionally stable for both groups on all scales over the ten year period. In no case were any changes on any scale for either group significantly different between 1970 and 1980.

One possible explanation for the apparent failure of bargaining to affect IFI scale scores might be that although all BARG institutions were negotiating in 1980, some might have unionized so recently that the consequences of bargaining would not yet be apparent. To test this possibility a regression analysis was made of changes in IFI scores controlling for the number of years of bargaining experience. The analysis indicated that the mean bargaining time for institutions in the sample was about seven years, and that the length of time an institution had been bargaining was unrelated to IFI score changes.

Discussion

In view of commonly held assumptions concerning the effect of bargaining on campus life, it is surprising to find no statistically significant relationship between unionization and IFI scores. At the same time, however, it is important to note that this finding is consistent with other research which has been unsuccessful in establishing a relationship between collective bargaining and changes in important institutional and organizational processes. For example, recent studies [3, 4, 19, 24] have reviewed earlier predictions that bargaining would encompass academic matters and eventually erode, or perhaps even replace faculty senates, and have shown them to be incorrect. Other investigators have found that despite claims that bargaining would increase faculty power actual changes in the level of

faculty participation in governance during a seven year period were similar both on unionized and non-unionized campuses [1]. And finally, despite early findings that bargaining increased salaries, more recent studies suggest the impact of bargaining on faculty compensation levels is so small that any differences may be related more to the methodology of the researcher than to real changes in purchasing power of faculty [5, 9, 15].

Overall, therefore, recent research is building up a cumulative,consistent and impressive picture of faculty collective bargaining as a process having surprisingly little impact upon many important aspects of institutional life. Neither those who have feared bargaining as a threat to traditional processes and values, nor those who have welcomed it as a universal corrective for continuing problems can find support for their positions in these studies. The findings, however, do suggest two interesting questions. First, in the absence of substantiating research, how can the belief that bargaining has negative organizational consequences be explained? Second, why is it that such an important institutional process appears in fact to have no measurable impact on organizational climate?

Perceptions of bargaining consequences. We can suggest two interrelated answers to the first question. One is that much of the data about the effects of bargaining on relationships comes from interviews and writings of persons directly involved in the process [4]. They have seen at first hand the behavioral consequences of interaction in the stylized adversarial setting of collective bargaining, and have experienced the stereotyping, attribution, cognitive distortions, and creation of the "enemy image" which often

accompanies the bargaining process [6, 8]. Their worst fears having been confirmed (in many cases their own behavior has made it a self-fulfilling prophecy), it is not difficult for them to believe that behavior at the bargaining table will be carried into other institutional arenas. With that expectation, they may attribute future disruptions in campus relationships and processes to bargaining, regardless of their actual causes.

The other, and related, answer may be that much of the commentary about bargaining has come from administrators. There is no question that bargaining is potentially disruptive to ongoing administrative routine, challenges previous administrative practice, and adds new dimensions of uncertainty and conflict to administrative life [11]. There may be a tendency among administrators to incorrectly assume that disruptions in ones own professional activities are not isolated but in fact reflect similar disruptions in other important organizational activities. Much of the meaning of organizational life is equivocal, and most administrators have an extremely limited view of most of the production activities of the enterprise. It is plausible for them to assume that their own confusion and anxiety is shared by others on campus and to expect, for example, that its effect upon administrative process must be mirrored in faculty teaching or research activities as well. These data, which reflect faculty perceptions only, suggest that this is not the case. Regardless of the very real discontinuities which bargaining may create for administrators, the faculty world of teaching, advising, research, and service with its traditional interactions and routines is likely to go on substantially unchanged. Aside from their involvement in the grievance process, which is a visible and direct

consequence of bargaining, faculty may be not only unconcerned with, but for the most part usually also unaware of, the bargaining process.

We believe that these two psychological factors - generalizing the interaction of the bargaining table to predict organizational consequences, and believing administrative disruption to be symptomatic of disruption in other organizational functions - account for much of the belief that academic bargaining seriously distorts college and university programs and functions. Although these data indicate that such distortions do not in general occur, this analysis suggests that administrators faced with the apparent reality of their direct experiences will not find these conclusions persuasive.

Organizational responses to bargaining. The more important question still remains. Why should a process as powerful as academic bargaining appear to have so little impact on campus climate? One possible explanation might be that the campus climate changes attributable to bargaining had already taken place on campuses when the IFI was first administered in 1970 in anticipation of unionization. The impact of bargaining upon climate could not therefore have been captured in this study. Although the lack of impact even when number of years of bargaining are controlled does not disprove this possibility, it certainly makes it unlikely. The results may also reflect bias in the study sample, either in the inclusion only of institutions willing to administer the IFI, the overrepresentation of four-year institutions, or the inadequate geographical matching of institutions. Our data base is not comprehensive enough to test these possibilities with any degree of rigor.

The more likely explanation in our view can be found in the nature of educational organizations. While the open systems model suggests that changes in one organizational subsystem will result in changes in others, there are several related aspects of the model which might affect any measurable impact of bargaining upon climate. First, organizational subunits interact not only with each other, but with the environment as well. During the period in which academic bargaining has become a factor on many campuses, institutions have been exposed to an increasingly turbulent environment. In addition to the factors mentioned earlier, colleges and universities have been subject to the consequences of massive shifts in student curriculum interests, decline in public confidence in higher education, reduction in faculty earning power, lowering of faculty morale, externally imposed procedures such as affirmative action, and attacks on tenure due to financial exigency, among others. In this environment, collective bargaining is a "weak treatment" upon which institutions can be differentiated. Any effects it may have upon organizational functioning are confounded, dampened, and ultimately lost in the roiling interactions with more powerful environmental forces.

In addition, the subsystems in many organizations tend to be loosely coupled, and this is particularly evident in educational institutions [29]. This means that while other organizational elements may be responsive to bargaining, they also retain their own identity and processes, and changes in one organizational subsystem may therefore not immediately or directly influence another. This may be particularly true of bargaining which in many ways operates as a self-contained process often isolated from other organizational

functions. Although the interaction may be intensely felt by the direct participants, as a process conducted in closed session and without publicity it is generally invisible to the larger campus community. Direct faculty involvement for the most part is limited to voting on a contract at the conclusion of the process. In many cases, newly negotiated contracts are not much different from previous ones. Unless bargaining leads to open warfare as participants at the table attempt in various ways to gain political advantage by enlarging the conflict, the contentious dynamics of negotiations appear unlikely to spread outside the conference room.

The relatively loose linkages between faculty on most campuses, even in the presence of bargaining, contrasts with the more structured connections of the administrative bureaucracy. There is some evidence that faculty and administrative differences in perceptions of the impact of bargaining [3] may to at least some extent be due to the nature of these differences in communications systems [7]. As a consequence, administrators may be more likely than faculty to see bargaining as having important organizational effects. The concept of loose coupling suggests however that bargaining in most situations may be thought of as just another "building block" which can be added to the components of an existing organization without altering the other stable subunits of which it is composed.

Institutions as open systems typically exhibit significant organizational stability due to homeostatic processes. The tendency of systems is to respond to internal and external change in such a manner as to restore an organization as closely as possible to its previous state [18]. Kerr [20], for example, has suggested how these

processes maintained the status quo at research universities during 20 years of intense social and institutional conflict. Commenting on the reasons for changing his previous belief that issues of institutional governance, such as collective bargaining, had substantive significance for higher education, he stated that

> Within the confines of the changes in the governance of universities considered in the United States, and given the heavy emphasis on individually made decisions by faculty members and students and the active competition among institutions, one specific arrangement in governance versus another has minor implications for what actually happens in a university, although processes may be made more time consuming and more personally disagreeable (pp.30-31)

Higher education would seem to have accommodated to bargaining as it has to the myriad of other forces which act upon it. Disruptive aspects are usually isolated from other institutional functions, and ongoing organizational processes react to, and temporize bargaining outcomes that might otherwise disturb them. The final outcome appears to be that "administrators say unions have hurt a little, while union officials say unions have helped a little - but, overall, the impression is that not much has changed.... Outside of personnel issues, collective bargaining has had only modest impact" [3, pp. 6, 46].

The findings of this and related studies appear to support the general concept that academic bargaining is likely to continue, rather than change, previous campus relationships [25]. As Begin [4, p. 294] has commented "At this time, the consequences of faculty bargaining strongly reflects prebargaining institutional conditions, an outcome that underlines the reactive nature of unions". Where indicators of campus climate have been positive bargaining is unlikely to change them; where adversarial relationships and low morale have

been the norm, they will be continued. Individual campuses may reflect exceptions to this finding, but it appears to be true in general.

Notes

Note 1. These data were collected by Richard E. Anderson, for his study Education and Finance: An Evaluation of the Relationship at Colleges and Universities, which was supported by the Lilly Endowment. Of the 220 institutions that administered the IFI to faculty between 1968 and 1974, 125 agreed to participate in Anderson's study, and 93 were included in the final sample. Coordinators on each campus were asked to select a 20 percent sample of the full-time faculty in 1980 (with N no less than 60 nor more than 150) that replicated the original campus sample by academic rank and disciplinary area. For each campus, the IFI was administered at the same time of the year as was the original administration. The mean time between the first and second IFI administration was 9.5 years. Anderson's study included 6,905 respondents for the 1970 period, and 5,113 respondents in 1980.

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TABLE 1

IFI scale scores in 1970 and 1980 at 18 bargaining (BARG) and 18 nonbargaining (NOBARG) institutions, matched by Carnegie Classification, control, and size.

	1970			1980			Changes in scores between 1970 and 1980		
Scale	BARG N=1501	NOBARG N=1710	Diff	BARG N=776	NOBARG N=1161	Diff	BARG	NOBARG	Diff
IAE	6.36	7.01	0.65	5.89	7.25	1.36*	-0.47	0.24	-0.70
F	8.99	8.17	0.83*	9.03	8.40	0.63	0.03	0.23	-0.20
HD	6.82	6.44	0.38	7.22	7.02	0.20	0.40	0.58	-0.18
IS	5.31	5.70	0.39	4.62	5.18	0.56	-0.69	-0.53	-0.12
UL	7.89	7.77	0.12	8.08	8.15	0.07	0.20	0.38	-0.18
DG	6.43	6.21	0.22	6.04	5.53	0.51	-0.40	-0.68	-0.29
MLN	7.06	7.54	0.48	8.91	8.94	0.02	1.86	1.40	0.46
SP	6.33	6.56	0.23	6.31	6.68	0.37	-0.03	0.11	-0.14
AK	2.84	3.74	0.90	3.00	3.82	0.82	0.16	0.08	0.07
CI	7.91	7.59	0.33	6.85	6.89	0.04	-1.06	-0.70	0.36
IE	7.43	8.20	0.77	6.99	7.58	0.58	-0.44	-0.62	-0.18

* Significant at .05 level, two-tailed t-test