



Unions in Teachers' Professional Lives: Social, Intellectual, and Practical Concerns. Nina Bascia. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1994. 115 pp.

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Unions in Teachers' Professional Lives is part of the series of publications on professional development and practice edited by Ann Lieberman. The studies in this edition were conducted out of Stanford University's Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching. The purpose of the series is to shed light on efforts to "transform schools that aspire to achieve democratic ideals" (p. vii). Bascia conducted an ethnographic study of three California high schools from 1987 to 1989, when the schools were involved in attempts to implement fundamental educational reforms, especially reforms that included teachers and their bargaining units in collaborative and participative decision making related to curriculum, instruction, and school policies.

The three high schools in suburban school districts varied by the resources available and the student clientele. "Rancho" was a "resource poor" district with a history of strong adversarial union/administration relationships. "Onyx Ridge" was a "relatively resource strong" district located in an upper-middle-class community. "Oak Valley" was located in a "wealthy" suburban community. Case studies for each school in the study are provided in separate chapters that examine aspects of union-school district collective bargaining history and the factors that affected attempts to introduce collaborative-participative structures regarding the professional work of teachers. Finally, there is an analysis of the results of these efforts and a discussion of how and why, generally, the previous relationships between teachers' professional unions and school administrators seemed to prevail in efforts to fundamentally change the structure and operation of each school.

The study provides a solid description of the histories of the three districts and a profile of those teachers and administrators who were interviewed and/or provided data for the study. As could be expected, three key factors are prominent from this data: (1) the teacher and administrative professionals were experienced educators, most of whom had 15 or more years of experience, with the exception of superintendents who had much shorter tenures in the district; (2) there were changes in the social class and racial/ethnic student populations, especially in two of the schools that became involved with desegregation, which impacted on the culture in schools; and (3) the existing school adversarial relationships, which did not primarily focus on learning by students, usually determined the effect of the reform attempts.

Wells and Serna, in their spring 1996 *Harvard Educational Review* article "Politics of Culture: Understanding Local Resistance to Detracking in Racially Mixed Schools," have done some very meaningful and interesting work regarding teacher cultural beliefs about their students' learning, the status associated with the schools where they work, and the teacher work that they do. This article on schools described a growing understanding, among those who study school cultures, that there is a strong belief among many teachers that schools are about doing teacher work and



that their unions play a prominent role in protecting their views of their work and the schooling practice. Bascia's book, unfortunately, only hinted at this belief and the relationship of unions to schools; the frequent conflict between teacher work and real learning was not a major consideration in the book's analysis. Such a discussion would have contributed mightily to the analysis chapter by Bascia. Another researcher, Chris Argyris, in his 1982 book *Reasoning, Learning and Action: Individual and Organizational*, discusses the inherent conflict that arises in organizations when espoused theories become increasingly discrepant from the theories in use. Bascia did not adequately account for this phenomenon in her book. This study by Bascia seemed to this reviewer to provide prime examples of this discrepancy between organizational cultural and conditions in the three schools. Argyris suggests that theories in use (existing cultural ways) have a way of enduring almost beyond believability. As the stories of schooling and schooling practices unfolded in these three high schools, such a discrepancy seemed particularly true as school populations began to change in two of the schools, as social class, race, and ethnicity became even further complicated with the development of desegregation efforts in the schools.

As previously stated, the book is a good, solid piece of qualitative research on schooling, teachers, teacher unions, and the schooling process. Indeed, it exemplifies the greatest value of qualitative research and studies of this nature as this book and other qualitative research allow those who read the book to create their own meaning out of Bascia's work and their own research and experience; thus we can accept Bascia's findings and add our own. This book is well worth reading for its rich qualitative contribution to the understanding of the major issues in fundamentally changing schools so the focus of schooling will be on student learning and not, as it continues to be, on teacher work.

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