Rethinking Unions:

Contradiction, Leadership, Narratives and the Case of UFCW Local 401

By

Jason Foster

A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration (Management)

May 2015, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Copyright Jason Foster

Abstract

Rethinking Unions: Contradiction, Leadership, Narratives and
the Case of UFCW Local 401

by Jason Foster

Abstract: Over the past 20 years, the Alberta-based United Food and Commercial
Workers Local 401 have revitalized their union through organizing diverse groups of
workers in hard-to-organize occupations, increasing involvement in political and
community matters and adopting innovative organizing and representation strategies.
They have done so with a stable leadership that exhibits autocratic and populist
tendencies. The apparent contradictions of autocratic structures and innovative reforms
are difficult to explain using existing explanations of union renewal and concepts of
union forms. This in-depth study examines Local 401 in an effort to explain the
unexpected patterns. Using a variety of methods, including Critical Narrative Analysis,
the study reveals that unions may be more fluid and dynamic than the existing literature
acknowledges. The study concludes the business union-social union duality common in
industrial relations theory needs to be replaced by a more flexible, more multi-layered
conceptualization of union behaviour. Unions exhibit elements of both social and
business unionism at the same time because they are organizations created at the
intersection between structure and action and are always in flux. The study also
highlights a possible third path for union renewal, coined "accidental revitalization",
where local-initiated renewal can occur without planned intention and within a context of
stable local leadership. Third, the study explores the role narratives play in resolving
apparent contradictions in union behaviour by constructing internal logics and how
narratives contribute to the production and re-production of power dynamics within
unions.

Date: April 29, 2015

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Introduction

The embryonic beginnings of this dissertation were sparked during a day walking the Lakeside Packers picket line in October 2005. The beef processing plant was in the midst of an ugly 24-day first contract strike. During my tenure as a staff member for the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL)[1], I had been on my fair share of picket lines. My experience was they are mostly the same: workers milling about, chatting idly among themselves, stopping vehicles and pedestrians who happen to wander by to explain the dispute. They mostly involve stretches of mundane ritual punctuated by bursts of heated excitement catalyzed by an antagonistic vehicle or an attempt to force replacement workers through the line. In the world of 1990s and 2000s labour relations, legal strikes are the stuff of timidity. Picket line restrictions, intrusive video surveillance by both sides and active Labour Board injunctions keep most things in check. The modern picket line seems to resemble its early 20th century ancestor only by the presence of placards and picket signs.

However, the Lakeside strike was no ordinary strike. First, the plant is located in Brooks, Alberta, a sleepy southern Alberta town previously known for cattle and oil well servicing and deeply entrenched in Alberta's conservative rural culture. Second, the employer, at the time Tyson Foods, was virulently anti-union and had fought hard for two decades to keep the plant union free. After a previously failed organizing bid, the company taunted the union by hoisting a banner on its main sign beside the Trans-Canada

---

[1] The author was the Director of Policy Analysis for the Alberta Federation of Labour from 1998 to 2009.

Highway declaring the plant to be "Proudly Union Free". Then there was the union involved, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 401, who seemed to all an odd choice to take on this Herculean fight. They were a grocery store local, representing mostly food-related service sector workers. Further, there was another UFCW local in the province, Local 1118 who predominantly organized and represented meat packing workers, which seemed the better fit. What did grocery workers know about the tough work and brutal conditions of a meat packing plant?

But what made Lakeside truly different, at least for me, was the workers. In keeping with industry trends (Broadway 2013), the make-up of the workers at the Brooks Lakeside plant had shifted significantly; a massive influx of African and Asian immigrants (and later migrant workers) had transformed the face of the plant. Half of the workers hailed southern Alberta (or other rural areas of Canada) as their birthplace, while half now claimed origins in Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, South Africa, Philippines and other far-flung locations.

It was a plant divided and a town in flux. I knew before I arrived in Brooks that the certification, gained by the narrowest of margins, was heavily split along racial lines, with the Caucasian Canadians largely opposed and the newcomers in favour. I knew the latest drive was sparked by a wildcat protest by a cluster of Somali workers, and was successful because, this time, the union had found a way to win over the newcomers. I had been told the strike was not pretty.

But that information hardly prepared me for what I experienced on the picket line. It was a crisp fall day, but the sun was shining. Just off the highway, at the main entrance to the plant, clustered hundreds of workers wearing UFCW Local 401 bibs, some standing around fire barrels, others meandering back and forth across the road, still others hanging around talking in small groups. And the faces of almost every single one were black or brown. I had never been on a picket line that looked like this. The labour movement in Alberta is pretty white (Alberta Federation of Labour 2001).

Amidst the sea of African and Asian newcomers, I spotted a handful of UFCW staffers familiar to me. But even those I didn't know I immediately identified as union staff. Not because of the colour of their skin (there were also smatterings of white Newfoundlanders on the line that day), but because they seemed so different in every way from the people for whom they were working. The staffers were a mélange of young, attractive, energetic grocery store workers and grizzled union vets with years of experience in the labour relations trenches. Neither group seemed like they had anything in common with the men and women milling about around them.

Then the local President, Doug O'Halloran, drove up to the line. The energy in the crowd rose. O'Halloran is a larger-than-life former meat packer, easily weighing over 400 pounds, who carries himself with an air of authority tinged with modesty. After some informal greetings, he addresses the crowd. They listen, rapt, and cheer and applaud after everything he says. I am surprised at the enthusiasm, energy and, frankly, love they express for him.

Later in the day, the employer tries to push some busses of scabs through the line. Things get crazy fast. No polite discussions here. Shouting, jeering, people rocking the busses as they try to inch their way across. A window ends up getting smashed (I am not sure how). The members and staffers acting as one, unified in conviction and action. The energy is electric and vaguely dangerous. A few busses get through, others give up and turn away. Soon the swell ebbs and the line calms down. A partial victory, but another battle awaited tomorrow.

In the days following my brief visit, the strike would escalate with more violent clashes. The employer builds a dozen roads across fields around the plant to sneak in workers. In a dramatic and bizarre scene, four managers, including the plant CEO, chase local president O'Halloran across back roads in a high speed car chase in an attempt to serve him court papers. A three-car accident results, leaving O'Halloran with significant injuries.

After 24 days the strike was settled, the tentative agreement narrowly approved and Lakeside workers had their union. Over 2000 workers were now Local 401 members. It was the largest successful certification in Alberta in more than a decade. The AFL moved on to other challenges, leaving Local 401 with the challenge of unifying a deeply divided workforce.

But the strike lingered with me. I couldn't shake a series of questions. Just how did they do it? How did they successfully organize Lakeside packers? UFCW 401 represents grocery workers. O'Halloran had a reputation in the labour movement for

running an authoritarian, top-down union, and Local 401 was seen as a classic "business union", playing the game the old way. How could such an entity achieve such an unexpected victory? And do it by mobilizing the types of workers the labour movement was generally LEAST able to organize?

Contradictions

When I would ask about Lakeside, people would tell me it was just O'Halloran's stubbornness that led to the victory, but I didn't buy it. The more I thought about it, the more I was convinced there was something going on with Local 401. A pattern was beginning to emerge. In 2002, they held a first contract strike at Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton, which employed a diverse workforce including large numbers of Philippina women. Then Lakeside. Then in 2006 they struck Palace Casino in Edmonton, another first contract dispute and another highly diverse and unlikely workforce for a grocery store local.

The more I looked at the local, how it operated and at how it was delivering for under-represented workers, the more confused I got. There were too many contradictions, too many ways in which it was doing what leaders and other activists in the labour movement said they couldn't do given their reputation. Plus it didn't help they were doing more reaching out and innovating than any other AFL affiliate at the time. Something didn't add up.

Then one day I decided to stop trying to explain away the contradictions and instead embrace them. Maybe there was something to be learned by Local 401's stubborn

refusal to be pigeon-holed. Maybe there was something to be learned by being open to the thought that maybe unions were not as simple as we have been taught.

And thus, this dissertation was born.

Rethinking Unions

Mainstream thinking about unions, both among practitioners and within academia, adopts some widely accepted notions of what unions do, how they operate and the range of differences between them. These notions form the basis of how we study unions and how we try to understand what we observe. In recent decades, much of those notions have been informed by the institutionalized nature of unionism under Wagnerism. Widely held frames about union behaviour are useful in that they order and help "make sense". However, in this era of globalization and neo-liberalism, there may be opportunity to ask whether those notions still reflect reality. This study proposes to ask that question.

In any academic discipline and certainly among any sizeable group of activists there will be differences in perspective. While the notions referenced above and discussed below are widely held, they are not universal. Nor do they reflect historical patterns that may be less common today. When referring to "we", one risks over-generalizing and ignoring diversity of perspective. However, there is a need to recognize that some views are more dominant than others. This study attempts to engage dominant notions in two areas specifically – the social-business union duality and union renewal. It is not attempting to take on the totality of union thought in North America. It also

approaches the question with the awareness that other views and possibilities are present. However, for the sake of coherence it speaks mostly to those more widely held views, as those are the views that most shape our understanding of unions. In the pages that follow, the conversation is intended to be with the widely held views in those two areas.

The first topic for re-thinking prevalent notions is re-examining the business union-social union duality. Unions come in many sizes, shapes, forms and purposes, a fact known for a long time. However, the range of possibilities in union behaviour and structure can be daunting. Thus, when it comes to unions, there is a tendency to categorize. We want to apply a label so that we can easily understand what kind of union with which we are dealing. That union is a "militant union". This union is "collaborationist". One might be seen as "activist" while another is "bread and butter". There is a long history of this labelling; consider "yellow dog" unions and "syndicalist" unions from the early 20th century. We have got an adjective for every kind of union.

As detailed in the next chapter, two of the most powerful descriptors in the contemporary Canadian labour movement are "business union" and "social union". They immediately evoke images of who and what we are dealing and lock in a familiar frame of reference. There is no question the two terms have proven helpful in interpreting the complexity of union form and action; they help us organize our observations into manageable and replicable précises.

But how well do they reflect the current state of unions in Canada?

It is not just UFCW Local 401 that poses challenging contradictions to widely held notions of unionism. When the former Canadian Autoworkers union, long considered a bastion of social unionism, signed its "Framework of Fairness" with Magna International, a deal widely criticized for undermining key organizing principles (Rosenfeld 2007), it was difficult to understand using a social unionism frame. In contrast, UFCW Canada, widely seen as a business union, has spent years attempting to defend the rights of farm workers in Canada with little prospect of ever collecting any union dues from them (UFCW Canada and Agricultural Workers Alliance 2011), a move impossible to explain from the business union rubric.

Part of the problem is that we have seen business and social unionism as opposite poles of union action, as conceptual opposites. A union is either in one camp or the other. Thus, as in the two examples above, when a union acts outside the logic of their label, we struggle to find an explanation and the contradictions plague us. It may be time to acknowledge that this approach to making sense of union action, for all its usefulness, may have some drawbacks.

It is pointless to argue whether the business-social dichotomy at one time accurately reflected the nature of union behaviour and structure. Such a debate gets us no further in working out how we must understand unions today. The reality is that the past 30 years have not been kind to organized labour. The onslaught of neo-liberalism, globalization, a rapidly shifting economy and workforce has presented significant and longstanding challenges to unions. Traditional approaches to both workplace

representation and political engagement have weakened or ceased to be effective. The forms of union action we witness today are creatures of the specific challenges unions face in the 21st century. They may or may not fit neatly into the categories we wish to assign them. It is time to rethink how we understand unions.

As will be discussed, some observers have begun to question the rigidity of the business-social dichotomy (e.g., Ross 2012). However, even these theorists have not fully explicated an alternative model nor fully acknowledged the ramifications of their work. In short, we do not know how to best understand the mixture of union behaviour observable today. What is becoming increasingly unavoidable, however, is that we must recognize that the traditional dichotomy may no longer apply.

One case study will not resolve this concern. It will merely be one data point upon which we can slowly advance our new understandings. However, it is argued here that the starkness of the contradictions observed in Local 401, the noticeable inability to squeeze it into one of the business-social polar markers, makes it a well suited case to explore unapologetically the nature of union behaviour in the first couple decades of the 21st century.

The first of the questions driving this study is what the complex and contradictory nature of Local 401 can teach us about how we come to understand and classify unions. Is the traditional binary of business-social applicable today? Do we need a more nuanced conceptualization of unions that more accurately reflects unions in the 21st century?

Unions in Motion

There is a second way in which we need to re-think unions. We need to re-evaluate how we study unions. Too often we examine unions as institutions, as static organizations that are more about stability than change. The other premise posited here is that unions are not static organizations that can be studied like a still life painting. They are constantly in motion, meaning we need to study how they move and how those movements affect union behaviour.

More specifically, unions are the interaction of structure, actors and external forces. The traditional study of unions has a solid grasp on the structure of unions and how those structures feed into the actions we see. There is a long history of studying union structure, with walls full of books on the topic (a short list of examples include: Hoxie 1923; Webb and Webb 1920; Turner 1962; Crouch 1982). Traditional approaches also do an excellent job, in particular in histories, of highlighting the role of actors, of how the men and women who are members of unions and lead unions have shaped the labour movement (e.g., Heron 1996; Morton 2007; Finkel 2011). There is also an extensive body of work, in particular in the context of surging neo-liberalism, that examines the external forces, from law to politics to social environment, that alter labour's destiny (e.g., Panitch and Swartz 2003; Robinson 2000; MacDonald 2014). What is missing is an attempt to bring all three elements into a single field of analysis. Unions exist at the intersection of these three dimensions. Actors are key to understanding what unions do, but their actions are bounded, defined and propelled by

the stable structures that define unions, and constrained and contextualized by the external world acting upon unions. We must begin to study unions using the lens of what one could call dynamic stability – something that moves and stands still at the same time.

In recent years a body of literature has evolved which attempts to look more carefully at the interactions of the three elements, to understand how and why unions change or stay the same. Broadly clustered under the theme of "union renewal" (or revitalization) these authors are exploring how unions respond to their external world, how individuals within unions react to challenges and how structures and other stable aspects of the organization either encourage or inhibit change (or both). The union renewal research has begun to integrate our understanding of unions as organizations of both structure and dynamics, of both change and stability. Researching the interaction of elements is more complex than simply drawing conclusions from structure. Union renewal work has drawn out a more complex picture of the lives of unions.

The situation of UFCW 401, as we will see, is not your usual case of union renewal. However, this study rests firmly within the realm of union renewal literature, in that it seeks to understand the dynamics that led to the noticeable change in the local's actions and approaches. Those dynamics include a complex interweaving of external pressure, personality, structure, and informal process. UFCW has changed a great deal in twenty years. To understand how and why it did so we need to heed the complexity of the dynamics. It is through embracing complexity that the apparent contradictions anchored in widely held views of renewal begin to make sense.

The second set of questions motivating this dissertation revolve around how unions change. How do union actors come to understand their situation and how do they come to a place of willingly navigating change? Reaching new understandings about how the actors themselves make sense of their action will develop new filters through which to observe union renewal, which may, in turn, reveal new pathways to renewal not previously imagined in the literature.

Structure of Study

The chapters to follow will attempt to lay out the specific case of UFCW Local 401 but in a manner that illuminates insights into unions in general. Local 401 might be the case subject, but the lessons we learn from their trajectory over the past 20 years and from their unique blend of structure and outcome may apply to a range of union experiences. Consequently the study is structured to weave between the specifics of Local 401 and the universality of union action. Each chapter will look at a different component of the case, and of our knowledge of how unions work. The structure of the study is outlined below.

Chapter 2 will examine the existing literature around unions and create the theoretical links between the case study and our broader perspectives on union action. Specifically, it will engage the extant literature on union forms (i.e., business and social unionisms) to examine the history of the debate about union purpose, to outline what we currently know about union forms and to challenge how that knowledge reflects the realities of unions today. The chapter will focus in on the theme of contradiction,

exploring how the nature of unions is rooted in their fundamental relationship to capitalism, and muse whether observed contradictions – being both an opponent of capital and institutionalized within capitalism - are a manifestation of that relationship. The chapter will also work through the union renewal literature, with a particular emphasis on recent work revealing the importance of narrative, union self-identity and the complex interplay of factors behind renewal.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods and methodology of the study and introduces the reader more fully to the case subject. Case study research design necessitates multiple methods for data collection and analysis. The study combines documentary review, qualitative interview and direct observation to form a rich picture of life in the local. The primary analytical approach will be Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) (Souto-Manning 2013). CNA is a relatively novel method in the study of unions (although more common in health and education). It emphasizes the role of narrative in understanding human behaviour and draws out, in a manner that retains context and temporal continuity, how narrative construction shapes understanding of behaviour. CNA also recognizes that narratives are created by and for particular interests, and therefore power dynamics are deeply embedded within narratives constructions. Narratives are both a way in which power is exerted, but also a mechanism for cloaking that power from public sight. This study emphasizes narratives as a mechanism linking the three elements shaping union form and action. The chapter will conclude with a brief description of UFCW 401 and a timeline of key events over the past 20 years to orient the reader to the case subject.

The three subsequent chapters will outline different dimensions in the case,
drawing upon relevant findings as they relate to the research questions. Chapter 4 looks at
Local 401's structure and internal processes. It reveals a high degree of contradiction in
structure and a complex dynamic between formal structures, as laid out in the by-laws,
and the informal practices that have evolved over time under the current leadership. It
also looks at members' expectations for the local and how those link to the narratives
being weaved by leadership about the local. A picture of contradiction and complexity
emerges.

Chapter 5 examines more closely the role of leadership in creating change within
Local 401. It explores in detail the nature of O'Halloran's leadership and the local's view
of "good leadership", linking those findings to the changes that occurred within the local
over the last two decades. The findings reveal a seeming paradox in that authoritarian
leadership is mixed with cozy populism to create legitimacy for change. The chapter
draws together an analysis of leadership's role in change, identifying a new possible
pathway for union renewal not previously contemplated by the literature. Coined
"accidental revitalization", it focuses on the role of local-level leadership, stability and
narrative consistency as drivers for change rather than crisis, upheaval and planned,
concerted action.

Chapter 6 turns its attention directly at the social-business union divide. Using a
traditional dichotomous lens, UFCW 401 is shown to display markedly contradictory
tendencies. However, through an examination of how Local 401 views itself and its

actions, including member views on what constitutes social/business unions, the chapter demonstrates a degree of internal consistency within the logic of Local 401's narratives. It goes on to explain that the nature of 401's actions are made coherent if the rigid duality of unionisms is relaxed and replaced by a more dynamic, permanently in-flux, model of unionisms.

Chapter 7 changes focus and draws in insights explicated in the previous chapters. It closely examines the various narratives constructed by UFCW 401 leadership and the mechanisms used to construct and reproduce these narratives. More importantly, it goes on to analyze the role these narratives play in maintaining the power dynamics within the local. The narratives create both legitimacy for the existing leadership and space for that leadership to enact change it deems appropriate. Whether this function is positive or negative is also discussed.

The concluding chapter returns to the broader picture, examining how the lessons learned studying UFCW 401 can be applied to the body of knowledge about unions. It highlights the new possibilities that emerge from the insights gained and it discusses the consequences of existing theory around union renewal and for our conceptualization of unionisms in the 21st century. It also, of course, looks at the study's shortcomings and the unanswered questions arising from it.

Conclusion

Before we embark on the journey of this study, one note is necessary. As is the nature of case studies, the following pages will tell the story of UFCW Local 401. It is,

after all, their story that sparked my intellectual curiosity in the first place. While Local 401 will be the protagonist in this account, like all good stories the real message is about something bigger. This study is about unions and their struggles to make sense of the changing world around them and their efforts on behalf of working people. When we take a step back to analyze the meaning of Local 401's actions, we also glean insights into the meaning of union action more generally. And while the details may be specific to UFCW 401, the challenges and dilemmas and contradictions are shared by all unions today.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Considerations

The topics explored in this study draw upon and impact two theoretical aspects in the study of unions. The two central theses of this project raise important questions about how we come to perceive and understand the forms unions take as well as how they morph and change over time. This chapter will explore the two areas by outlining the existing literature, explicating how it links to the present study, and engaging in a dialogue with the present state of theory regarding unions.

Unions are complex, complicated institutions to study. One must examine both their external face and their internal life – the latter is often overlooked in union research. One must also see them as stable institutions linked to unchanging realities of the economy and as ever-changing collectivities. One must also remember that unions shape their environment as they are shaped by it. They must respond to external forces, but do so in a manner that engages the organization's agency. They have history, which anchors them, but they are also in a state of constant re-creation moving forward. All of these dimensions need to be a part of our conceptualizing of unionism and its forms.

As mentioned earlier, the study moves within two related bodies of literature. The core questions are exploring how we come to understand unionisms in the 21st century and how unions revitalize and change. The first question directly challenges the common understanding of how to identify and classify unions. Since unions came into existence, thinkers have contemplated the different forms unions take. These conceptualizations about forms of union action have formed the bedrock of union research and have long

served as core assumptions about the nature of unions. In short, the first question examines the nature of unions' stable identity. The second question, in turn, looks at unions in motion. Over the past 20 years growing interest in union renewal has led to an explosion of theorization about how unions can revitalize and re-energize themselves and the methods they use to do so.

It is because unions are such complex entities that these two distinct literatures actually interact and co-relate. There is no simple boundary between the two areas of research, for new insights in one will affect the other. In this regard this study can be seen as located at the intersection of the two bodies of work. Each theoretical area will be discussed below.

The Union Dualism

Through industrial history, unions have taken different approaches to representing workers, from trade-specific craft unions to the generalist but non-radical Knights of Labour to the revolutionary Industrial Workers of the World to today's modern general unions (Heron 1996). In particular, the history of unions is one of an ongoing debate about the function and purpose of unions. Are they, as in the old "bread and butter unions" (Robinson 1993; Moody 2007), defenders of workers' narrow economic interests, or do they possess a larger responsibility to the working class by organizing for broader social change (Hyman 1975)? The scope and nature of the question has shifted according to external contexts – for example, the definition of "social change" has become less radical in the past 60 years (Camfield 2011) – but it continues to be central

to organizing our understanding of union purpose. Other aspects of union structure and behaviour, such as internal democracy and relations with employers, often flow from this fundamental question.

One of the most powerful conceptualizations of unionisms over time has been a dualism between business unionism and social unionism. This approach has become one of the fundamental constructions in labour relations theory since World War Two. Business unions offer a structure and approach that focus more exclusively on workplace representative functions, while social unions are purported to broaden their agenda to include seeking broader political and social change (Godard 2011). Kumar and Murray (2006, 82) offer an elegant articulation of the difference as including "the defence of the worker as wage earner as opposed to the worker as citizen". This dichotomy has shaped much of the contemporary theorizing around unions and their functions, and has served as a fundamental framing for the study of Industrial Relations (Hyman 1975). A flip through any contemporary Canadian Industrial Relations textbook will reveal the extent to which industrial relations scholars continue to rely on the business-social duality to characterize forms of union behaviour (for example, see Godard 2011; McQuarrie 2011).

Considerations of business vs. social unionism go back to early debates regarding the functions of unions in society and their role in creating and fostering social change. Much of the debate initially circled around the potential for unions to foster class consciousness and to organize workers against capitalism; whether they, by bringing workers together, engage in the act of "forming, within the state, a spontaneous

democracy of their own" (Webb and Webb 1920, 808), or they are simply purveyors of "the thin gruel of 'economic' politics alone" (Lenin 1902/1989, 138). Hoxie (1923) may have been the first to coin the term "business union", contrasting it to more politically minded 'socialistic' and 'quasi-anarchistic' unions. For Hoxie business unionism "is essentially trade-conscious, rather than class-conscious. … It aims chiefly at more, here and now, for the organized workers of the craft or industry, in terms of mainly higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions" (45). It is a definition that remains largely un-altered today.

In the contemporary context, while the debates of Lenin and the Webbs have been replaced by questions of social democracy vs. Gomperism the notion of a duality between types of union continues in the literature. Business unions are seen as the descendants of the "bread and butter unions" (Robinson 1993; Moody 2007), and as such restrict activities to representing members in the workplace, most often through formalized processes (e.g. arbitration). In contrast for social unions the boundary between workplace and community is blurred, and social and political engagement becomes a key union priority (Ross 2007). Social unions, to some degree "not only address their bargaining demands but actively lead the fight for everything that affects working people in their communities and the country" (Gindin 1995, 268).

The categorizations also have powerful capital within the labour movement itself. Activists often "classify" unions into one of the two camps; unions themselves attempt to define themselves using those terms. In a Canadian context, the Canadian Union of Postal

Workers (CUPW) and the former Canadian Autoworkers union (CAW) are often cited as "social unions", while the building trade unions and some of the American international unions, including UFCW and United Steelworkers, are often claimed to be "business unions".

The conceptualization of union behaviour into two distinct forms is pervasive in North American industrial relations. Yet, there remains a high degree of uncertainty and vagueness around the terms. For that reason, the discussion will begin with a careful consideration of the two forms of unionism, followed by the reasons for questioning the applicability of the dualism in the contemporary context.

Business Unionism

As considered above, business unionism interprets the union role narrowly. The task of the union is to address the immediate workplace needs of its members. Business unions eschew a broader political agenda and are more likely to perceive workers having "a common community of interest with capital" (Moody 2007, 164). Internally, business unions are more likely to have a top-down, leader-driven structure with limited avenues for member participation (Schenk 2003).

In much of the unionism literature, business unionism, sometimes called economistic unionism or the service model, is under-defined. It often receives only a couple of short sentences (or even bullet points) before the author moves on to juxtapose it to social unionism (e.g. Schenk 2004; Kumar 1993). Schenk (2003) offers eight brief points to describe business unionism: union leaders solve problems for members; reliance

on formal grievance procedures; passive membership; reliance on experts and technical specialists; closed channels of communication; centralized and top heavy structures; reactive and dependent upon employer; and external and internal organizing as distinct activities. These brief descriptors do illuminate important characteristics of business unionism, such as the tendency for centralized, powerful leadership, minimal member activism and a narrowly defined role for the union. However, they fail to fully articulate the intricacies of the union's structure and internal life. This omission means characterizations of business unions lack richness of detail, leaving them as not much more than a sketch.

Another under-examined area is differentiation within the business union model. In short, it is possible to have militant business unions who engage in strike activity and member mobilization over their economic issues and more compliant business unions who emphasize "good" relations with the employer. Recognizing that business unions can display outwardly divergent appearances hints that some of what ties business unionism together conceptually is their internal workings – a rarely studied phenomenon, at least in the contemporary era. One of the challenges to understanding business unionism is integrating both formal and informal aspects of its structure and behaviour. Most unions contain explicit democratic structures in by-laws and formally permit multiple access points for member participation and decision-making (Jenson and Mahon 1993; Lynk 2003). However, informal dynamics have much to say about how those formal processes shape the union's character.

One of the sources of differentiation between business unions is the style of leadership embodied by those in charge. Because they lack a vibrant internal democracy, business unions will be heavily shaped by their leaders, a dynamic dubbed "popular bossdom" by Turner (1962). In such unions, "the relations which actually exist between the membership and the key officials will depend very much on the latter's style of leadership … so that two unions of essentially the same real governmental type may present very different characters to the outside worlds" (291) as well as internally. One of the challenges of this leadership dependent dynamic is the inherent difficulty in identifying consistent features from which to form durable categories about business unionism.

Finally, the boundary between narrow workplace interests and broader "community" or "political" action is sometimes difficult to identify. When the CAW lobbies for a national auto strategy, or for a bailout of the auto companies, is this an act of protecting members' interests or attempting to foster political change? They are acting in a bread and butter fashion, but engaging that narrow self-interest via a broader field of play. Similarly, when a building trades union opposes the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), are they protecting so-called Canadian jobs or speaking out against an unjust program? When the TFWP became a hot political issue in the mid-2000s, Alberta building trades unions organized rallies arguing "Canadians First" access to jobs, decrying exploitation of TFWs and demanding changes to the TFWP (Foster, Taylor, and Kahn 2015). Is this an example of engaging in political change, or a nationalistic defence

of members' interests? These examples, one from a so-called social union and one from a business union, speak to the need to not simply classify according to outward behaviour, but to probe the intentions and narratives behind those actions. This is undoubtedly a much more challenging and nuanced task.

Implicit in much of the discussion of business unionism is the assumption that it is the mainstream, expected form of unionism today, reflecting the formalization that has occurred since World War Two. This proposition contains an element of truth. However, we should not neglect its linkages to earlier eras of union history. So-called business unions have existed since the early days of unionism, suggesting business unionism is linked more tightly to the nature of unionism's relationship with capitalism rather than just being a creature of the post-war Wagner model. Business unions are more aware of their need to work with the system as it exists. They may still be in conflict with the employer, but they are choosing to "play the hand they are dealt" so to speak. We will return to this point below.

Social Unionism

The literature defining social unionism is more fully developed. There is widespread agreement that social unionism takes a broader outlook on the role of the union, one that is more explicitly political and sees workers as citizens with a diversity of identities and interests extending beyond the workplace (Schenk 2003; Kumar and Murray 2006; Robinson 1993; Baines 2010). There is also recognition that social unions engage, to a greater or lesser extent, in more democratic, activist internal processes and

structures (Ross 2007). Different forms of social unionism have been identified based upon on how unions manifest the broad goals of social unionism and their motivations for adopting those goals.

In what some call the "organizing model" unions adopt an inclusive, activist orientation with the goal of increasing union vitality and facilitating the organizing of new members (Schenk 2003). While more membership-focused, this model continues to place the interests of the institution as primary to the goals of social justice. In contrast, "social movement unionism" has a more democratizing goal (Ross 2007). The purpose of mobilizing members is to build the union as part of a broader political movement. Another sub-set of social unionism is "community unionism", which seeks to disconnect unionization from the rigid legal framework constructed since WWII (Black 2005). It espouses organizing across worksites and among the unemployed, impoverished and marginalized, and around broader economic and social issues. This form of unionism "bridge[s] the home-workplace divide … these organizations take a holistic approach to the lives of working people" (Black 2005, 26). This form is rarely, if ever, found in the contemporary Canadian labour movement (Baines 2010). There is little agreement among researchers over how common social unionism is in North America. Some argue social unionism is frequently found in Canada and that most Canadian unions display some social union characteristics (Ross 2007; Kumar and Murray 2006). These authors point to specific unions, such as CUPW, CAW and others as examples of unions practicing a broader political agenda (e.g. Gindin 1995; Schenk and Bernard 1992). Others, such as

Camfield (2011), adopt a more pessimistic outlook, positing a thesis of "the decay of unions as working-class movement organizations" (67) and arguing all unions in Canada today are business unions. Shantz (2009) argues social unionism is limited by structural barriers embedded within Canada's decentralized legal regime for collective bargaining.

The matter of social unionism's viability will not be resolved here. Instead the debate is raised to draw attention to the difficulty in identifying social unionism. Once again, there is a need to reconcile observable "social union" behaviours and patterns with internal, less measurable, motivations and dynamics. As Ross (2007) articulates: "'social unionist' tactics can be articulated with a business union frame. Key to recognizing, and understanding, social unionism is therefore not the use of a particular tactic but rather the *relationship* between that tactic and the underlying goal it is meant to serve" (26). This observation highlights, once again, the perils in too quickly labeling certain actions as "political" or "self-interested".

Further complicating the picture much of the social union literature assumes a progression from business unionism to social unionism (e.g. Voss and Sherman 2003; Schenk 2003), that unions move "beyond" business union to a higher level of social unionism. While this claim is inaccurate – many unions have no desire to move away from business unionism and are quite functional performing business union practices – much of the framing in the literature is rooted in its prescriptive nature. As a result, some commentators have examined how unions might move from one form to another, finding

that there are significant challenges and roadblocks (Ross 2008; Sainsaulieu 2006; Voss and Sherman 2003).

More beneficial to our task of understanding the nature of social unionism is Voss and Sherman's (2003, 74) findings that three factors shape the ability of a union to become more social/political in its orientation: "the occurrence of a localized political crisis leading to new leadership, the presence of leaders with activist experience outside the labour movement who interpret the decline of labour's power as a mandate for change, and the influence of the international union in favour of innovation". They argue a mixture of local factors (new leadership, activist experience) and influence from the National/International Office, in the form of centralized direction from above, lead to a politicization of a local. These three factors shed light on two characteristics about union dynamics. There are forces from both above and below that shape union culture and behaviour, and some form of crisis event or process needs to be present to shock a union out of its complacency. This may go some distance in explaining why some unions make seismic shifts in their tactics (e.g. SEIU, discussed below) while others stick to long-standing methods.

Classification of social unionism, much like business unionism, proves to be more elusive and multi-faceted than it first appears. The complexities to union structure and processes lead to myriad pathways both toward and away from an idealized notion of social unionism. That this complexity is found on both sides of the union duality suggest

the two forms may have more in common than we first anticipated; a thought to which we now turn.

Questioning the Unionism Duality

The discussion above highlighted that defining forms of unionism and classifying unions into categories of "social" or "business" is wrought with pitfalls. Our understanding of forms of unions is not as complete as first appears. The picture is more complicated than generally acknowledged and a rethinking of how we categorize unions is required. There are two aspects to questioning traditional notions of unionism. The first can be found in the corners of the extant literature, where acknowledgements of the messiness of union categorization emerge but require further elaboration. The second requires a detour to the theoretical underpinnings of unions' relationship with capitalism.

Acknowledging Complexity

Within the literature there are moments of recognition that actual union practice is not as clean as the theory. Claims in the comparative IR literature arguing that due to historical divergence Canada's labour movement adopts a social union model (Robinson 1993) in contrast to U.S. business unionism (Chaison and Rose 1991; Freeman and Medoff 1984) prompted a response by some scholars questioning the uniformity of such claims. Closer examination of Canadian unions reveals uneven patterns of social unionism (Ross 2007; Panitch and Swartz 2003). For example, Canadian branches of international unions are more likely to display business union characteristics as a result of their American parent (Swartz 1993).

Voss and Sherman's findings, above, that centralized authority plays a role in politicizing unions draws out the ironic observation that "business unionism has been the handmaiden of social movement unionism, not its antithesis" (Milkman 2006, 21). Elements of business unionism may be more compatible to social unionism than originally anticipated.

In a particularly useful study Kumar and Murray (2002; 2006) surveyed unions across Canada about their structure and practices. They find unions in Canada, even branches of international unions, display characteristics of both forms of unionism. While acknowledging that patterns of social union practice are prevalent in Canada – they argue "there has simply been less ideological space for this kind of union practice [business unionism]" (2006, 81) – their survey finds sufficient diversity both between and within unions to often defy simply categorization.

Recent work by Stephanie Ross and colleagues has gone the furthest in fleshing out the complexities of categorizing unions. Ross, too, has found evidence of contradictory practices, such as union interactions around climate change (Hrynyshyn and Ross 2011), and in dealing with economic crisis (Ross 2011). More importantly, Ross has used these observed contradictions to begin to draw out the nuances in our understanding of unionisms, arguing business and social union actions are more related than first expected: "The counter-position of business unionism and social unionism as ideal types also ignores the fact that, for most unions, these are two related faces of union activity, often in tension with each other but sometimes mutually reinforcing" (Ross

2012, 43). She argues that the dualist framing overstates linkages and constructs false barriers. For example, she suggests the link between external social union action and internal participatory democracy is over-stated, and that so-called narrow union functions such as collective bargaining can be a site for achieving broader working class gains.

In a useful advancement of unionism theorizing, Ross (2012) argues union practices should be analyzed on three dimensions: collective action frames, which define the union's and workers' identities and purpose for action; strategic repertoire which are the actions the union chooses to engage; and internal organizational practices. The purpose of looking at three elements is to get beyond surface action to examine intentions and "cultures". The elements combine to create a form of logic that structure union action. Ross states that social and business unionism "represent two such patterns in union thinking and action … [but] the three elements are not rigidly attached" (34) and a great deal of contingency exists in union action. Finally, Ross acknowledges "there is no reason to believe that collective action frames are themselves always internally consistent" (35). The dynamic created between the dimensions allows for contradiction and uneven patterns of behaviour that may not fit within the dualism. However, Ross does not elaborate on how to address examples of contradictory elements, so it is unclear how to apply it practically. Nevertheless she offers an interesting conceptual tool.

What is intriguing in both the case of Ross and Kumar and Murray is neither fully develops the consequences of their findings for union theory. Both have observed cases that do not fit the dualist model, and they develop reasons for why this might be so, yet

the foundation of the dualism remains. In both sets of work, there is an implied conclusion that the concepts retain their usefulness, even if the boundaries between them are blurrier than anticipated or that they, as Ross suggests, be viewed as ideal types. With her three-part analysis, Ross contributes significantly to our potential to unpack the complexities of unionisms but, to date, she has not fully applied it to a real world case to test how it might challenge the duality.

It is argued here more can be done with the revelation that unions can display contradictory qualities of social and business unionism, and that there is a dynamic tension between those qualities. It can be used as a launching point for re-examining established notions of two forking paths for union practice. At the minimum it is reason to probe more deeply into what might cause those contradictions and what their effects might be. The intention of this study is to begin that messier exploration of contradictory forms of unionism.

Unions under Capitalism

The second set of potential insights for questioning the unionism duality rests in re-surfacing theoretical understanding of unions' relationship to capitalism. It is a relationship of contradiction and constant motion. The groundbreaking work of Hyman (1975; 1989), Offe (1985) and others re-conceptualized for a twentieth century audience how the specificity of union practice can be understood in the general context of the capitalist socio-economic system. By doing so they both re-asserted that the logic of trade unionism is unique among collective organization and reminded that the nature of the

relationship locks unions into a particular tension between economism and transformative change.

There is insufficient space here to fully recount the argument. But we can begin by asserting that unions are creations of capitalism and as a result hold a contradictory position within it. In the specific, unions draw together workers in a collective to enhance bargaining power with the employer – to raise the price of labour power and to resist employer control over the labour process. Yet the specific role takes place within a context of the system as a whole, as union action also strikes, at least potentially, at the heart of capitalist employment relations by challenging the absolute authority of capital to control production and retain surplus value (Hyman 1975).

Unions are creatures of a specific form of employment relationship and as such are embedded in that relationship. They must work within existing structures to perform well-defined tasks, such as bargaining. To fail to do so causes them to no longer be unions. Yet, to do only those basic functions leads to increased ineffectiveness and impotence in the face of the power of capital, as capital and the state collude to undermine even the most basic of union strength. Therefore, unions must also seek out ways to redefine the employment relationship and the context in which it occurs. Unfortunately to take on a more political role of this nature is to potentially face an even more savage response from employers and the state. This is the crux of the union dilemma. It needs to be both narrow and broad, but must struggle to achieve either.

Offe (1985) extends this dilemma in his discussion of the logics of collective action, pointing to the complexity of union's position in capitalism. Workers and their unions "can neither fully submit to the logic of the market, nor can they escape from the market. Caught in this trap, workers and workers' organizations are involved constantly in the immensely complicated process of finding out what their interests are and how they can be pursued in a way that does not turn out to be self-contradictory and self-defeating" (213-214). The tension leads to the possibility of pursuing both economistic outcomes and more transformational change and, of course, to the likelihood of erroneously adopting the employer's logic for action at the expense of clear articulation of working class interests.

The complexity to which Offe speaks can be seen in unions today, well-institutionalized into the present industrial relations legal regime. They rarely (if ever) show their radical anti-capitalist side. While the manifestations of unions' relationship have been toned down, the underlying logic has not. The nature of unions' conflicted and contradictory relationship with capitalism has not changed (Hyman 1989). To be more specific, keeping our eye on the fundamental relationship in a way frees us from the restrictive dualism of union forms. If the nature of unionism under capitalism is one of contradiction, then we should not be concerned to find contradictory expressions of unionism within a union. Asking whether unions can/should adopt social unionism is the wrong question. Instead, we should ask: how do unions navigate the contradictions of their position? Unions are economistic, but they are not merely economistic. Unions are

political, but they are not only political. Unions practice both exclusion and usurpation (Parkin 1979); they divide and unite the working class. They are coopted within capitalism and simultaneously challenge it. For example, the mere act of agreeing to a collective agreement both challenges the employer by binding them to certain behaviours but also entrenches the legitimacy of employer control over the workplace in the first place. The contradiction can also be seen in unions' lingering resistance to the worker cooperative movement (Whyte 1983); worker coops enact a different employment relationship, one whose logic unions struggle to integrate into their role in the workplace.

The latter observation highlights the point that in addition to the uniqueness of the logic of collective action, the employment relationship itself also develops a particular logic, and that logic is in motion. "Workplace relations need to be seen as involving continuing struggles which develop logics of their own and in which the unintended consequences of actions are important" (Edwards 1986, 318). The logic allows for a more complex dynamic between employer and worker to emerge, one in which both conflict and cooperation play a role. Further, this dynamic can manifest in different ways (Edwards and Scullion 1982) leading to a lack of a direct link between structure and behaviour within unions and between unions and employers (Batstone 1977).

Further, how unions respond to their dilemma is contingent. It varies in time, space, and context, and based upon the will of its members. As Gramsci (1969, 14) observed: "the trade union is not a pre-determined phenomenon: it becomes a determinate institution, that is, it assumes a definite historical form to the extent that the strength and

will of the workers who are its members impress a policy and propose an aim that define it". Because the process is dynamic, any stop-action photograph of union life is likely to find elements of both forms of unionism.

Seen within the broader contexts of unions' relations under capitalism, the prospect of contradictory tendencies becomes less problematic. Unions act with a focus on the immediate – how to make gains for workers today – but their actions are embedded within a history and a relationship that makes it difficult at any given moment to ascertain what action best achieves long term transformation. There is much grey in the picture of union forms.

<div align="center">

Unions in the 21st Century

</div>

There is a second reason this is an opportune time to re-examine notions of union forms. The past couple of decades have brought significant social and economic change. Much of that change has presented serious challenges to unions and their functions. In the first years of the 21st century, unions have been presented with two challenges that raise questions about their role and their ability to achieve social and political change.

First, the rise of neo-liberalism and pressures in many sectors from globalization[2] (Crow and Albo 2005) has brought heightened anti-union animus, weakened state protections and emboldened employers, all of which significantly threaten and challenge the position of unions (Godard 2011). Globalization shifts power to employers, as

---

[2] The effects of globalization are uneven and contested. Some industries are more vulnerable to the pressures of international capital flows than others. For the purposes here, globalization is seen as part of a larger political project freeing up capital both within and across borders and restricting the role of the state in governing the economy.

corporations have more alternatives at their disposal in terms of shifting production, constructing global supply chains and placing pressure on workers to moderate demands (Mittelman 2000). Neo-liberalism serves to support and enact the power shift by altering labour market policy and legislation to weaken worker protections and to alter the role of the state from constraining and regulating capital to facilitating accumulation (Godard 2002). Added to this is the accompanying process of de-industrialization which is hollowing out the core of industrial unionism's base in the manufacturing sector (Jackson 2010) leaving unions scrambling to protect the last vestiges of the industrial sector and simultaneously seeking out new sectors to organize. Overall these pressures result in a weaker bargaining position and destabilized labour relations (Rose and Chaison 2001). They also severely undermine union's political strength (Swartz 1993). Unions, lulled by decades of institutionalization and relative labour peace due to the Fordist compromise, were not well positioned to respond to the new attacks and have struggled to mount a counter-offensive.

Second, the contemporary workforce has become more complex and diverse. Both the sectorial location of jobs (as a consequence of de-industrialization) and the characteristics of workers are changing. Employment growth is most rigorous in non-industrial sectors, and increasing numbers of immigrants, women and workers of colour are found in workplaces in North America (Yates 2002). Work is becoming increasingly precarious and unstable, in particular for racialized and gendered workers (Vosko 2000). This reality is significant for unions in two respects. First, economic growth sectors have

lower unionization levels (Jackson 2010) and are less fertile ground for organizing efforts (Jackson 2006). Second, women, workers of colour, newcomers and youth fare less well in the labour market than traditional unionized workers – i.e., blue collar, white men (Jackson 2010). They have more difficulty gaining access to unionization, in part because they are more likely to be found in low-union non-industrial sectors (Yates 2002), may be more distrustful of union representation (Hunt and Rayside 2000) and are more susceptible to the aggressive anti-union actions of employers and governments (Stanford and Vosko 2004). Unions have not been well placed to address the challenges posed by economic changes (Rose and Chaison 2001) and they have been slow to address equity issues (Hunt and Rayside 2000; Fairbrother and Yates 2003).

The other end of the employment spectrum is no less troublesome for unions. The rise of technical and professional sectors, pose challenges for traditional representation methods. The challenge is particularly true in high tech industries, where individualism and entrepreneurialism inform the self-identity of workers (Lane 2011), and where unionization is not considered a useful option (Legault and Weststar 2010). Traditional union functions, such as wage bargaining and collective voice, are seen as less relevant to this group of workers (Milton 2003).

For unions these shifts are a question of relevance and effectiveness. Both the business and social union functions have been affected. Traditional organizing and representation strategies are less effective than in the past; both unions' ability to politically mobilize and the effect of that mobilization is undermined. The challenges of

neo-liberalism, de-industrialization and a changing workforce demand a re-thinking of

union models (Albo, Gindin, and Panitch 2010). Hyman (2004, 30) argues unions need to

"recapture the advantage in the battle of ideas" by developing new framing of their

purpose and function. Accomplishing this requires re-examining both the business and

social sides of their function. That examination will likely require/permit new forms of

union practice to emerge.

Union Renewal

A body of literature has arisen in response to the late 20th and early 21st century

challenges discussed above examining whether and how unions can revitalize. The focus

of the so-called union renewal literature is to diagnose how traditional union practices

and structures are contributing to the crisis and to reveal specific strategies to revitalize

and strengthen unions. It is framed as both a general response to the crisis and a specific

set of actions:

> *Union renewal is the term used to describe the process of change, underway or
> desired, to "put new life and vigour" in the labour movement to rebuild its
> organizational and institutional strength. It refers to a variety of
> actions/initiatives taken or needed by labour organizations to strengthen
> themselves in the face of their declining role and influence in the workplace and
> society.* (Kumar and Schenk 2006, 30)

Ostensibly renewal is a basket of diverse approaches successful in increasing

union effectiveness. Indeed, much of the literature takes the shape of "best practices" for

unions (Schenk 2003; Fairbrother and Yates 2003). The variety of reforms is extensive.

Researchers have examined organizing strategies (Martinello and Yates 2004; Yates

2003), structural changes (Haiven, Levesque, and Roby 2006), internal processes

(Hickey, Kuruvilla, and Lakhani 2010), political involvement (Schenk and Bernard 1992), prospects of organizing new workers (Coates 1992; Yates 2002), interactions with external community partners (Cranford and Ladd 2003; Baines 2010) and seeking out new ways of representing workers outside of traditional models (Haiven 2006; Adams 1999).

Importantly, union renewal is seen as a conscious and planned process. It is intended as change with a particular end in mind, and designed steps to achieve the defined goal (Cornfield and McCammon 2003). This is not to say that reform is rigid, formulaic or un-amendable. The key is that the effort be one of purposeful change.

As they seek out effective strategies, many authors lead to a place of advocating for reforms that seek to democratize unions, empower rank-and-file activists, expand coalition with the broader community, and emphasize social change as a union goal. An example of this can be seen in Kumar and Murray's (2006, 100–101) overview of renewal efforts in Canada:

> *It is, in fact, the unions that are pursuing larger social visions and enlarged solidarities that are most likely to be associated with innovations in the degree of change in membership involvement, politics and agenda, as well as in implementation of new technologies, activist servicing, and new methods and targets for organizing. In other words, innovation in structures, policies and practices cannot be understood in isolation from larger debates over the purposes and governance of unions.*

The overlapping of renewal and social unionism becomes evident here. Sustainable renewal becomes linked to a social union-oriented agenda, suggesting renewal necessitates a move away from business union practices. Some renewal research has found internal democratic processes are important variables in union revitalization

(Levesque, Murray, and Le Queux 2005) and that rank-and-file activists are essential

actors (Murray et al. 2013), conclusions that further wed renewal and social unionism.

However, it would be a mistake to decide renewal and social unionism are

synonymous. While they share some common territory, the terrain of union renewal is

more sprawling and should not be fenced in by the boundaries of social unionism. Often

the role of strong leadership and trained staff is more important to revitalization than

member engagement (Voss and Sherman 2000; Hickey, Kuruvilla, and Lakhani 2010).

Here renewal diverges from social unionism. As Voss (2010, 377) states:

> *The research on union renewal in the US, in short, questions the rosy picture of bottom-up, worker-driven democratic change so prevalent in the academic work on union democracy. Member engagement and rank-and-file involvement are clearly important in their own right, but, to date, paid union staff, strong leadership and central coordination have played a more consistent key role in union renewal.*

Voss' finds that renewal most frequently occurs from above, initiated by senior staff and

leadership at the national or international level. While some renewal occurs from below,

usually via a crisis or upheaval at the local level (Voss and Sherman 2003), much of the

revitalization observed results from innovation sparked by infusion of new ideas at a

level higher than the local (Voss 2010).

Many documented "best practices" of renewal, have deviated in significant ways

from social union ideals. One high profile example is that of 'Justice for Janitors' (J4J).

The Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) J4J model has for almost two

decades been lauded as a leading example of successful union renewal for its ability to

reach out to racialized and gendered workers in vulnerable economic positions, and for

redefining union social justice campaigns (for good overviews of J4J see Milkman 2006;

Savage 2006; Cranford 2004). Indeed, its track record of fundamentally shifting how

organizing campaigns are run, incorporating the broader community in their campaigns

and creating activist avenues for workers is unquestioned and well-reported. Less

discussed are the consequences of the fact most reforms were achieved through highly

centralized leadership, reliance on paid staff, and heavy-handed internal maneouvres such

as local mergers and trusteeships (Moody 2007). In addition, J4J's strategies to empower

certain groups like recent immigrants often unintentionally harm other groups, such as

migrant workers (Foster and Barnetson 2012). The J4J example shows the complex

dynamics involved in union renewal. SEIU was partly influenced by the efforts of

renewal activists, but it was also affected by other aspects of its political and economic

context (e.g. weak legal environment, need for quick, focused responses). The interplay

of those conflicting influences led to a structure that contains elements reflecting both the

renewal literature and more traditional forms of business unionism. Thus J4J also offers

an example of the complexity of defining union forms. SEIU looks neither like a social

union nor is it easily cast as a traditional business union. What J4J's contradictory

characteristics mean for our conceptualization of unionisms is under-developed in the

literature. As result, the extant renewal literature presents as somewhat one-dimensional

picture when it comes to its understanding of union processes of change

Context Contingencies

A path out of the quandary may arise from the latest phase of union renewal research which grapples with the complexities of what leads some unions to renew and others not. These efforts bring to the surface the contingencies found in union responses to the period of crisis; the point of interaction between internal and external conditions. "[U]nions reflect and refract these [external] forces but they are also strategic agents, acting upon themselves and their broader operating environment … neither voluntarism nor determinism will help us understand the new terrain in which unions operate" (Dufour et al. 2010, 293). This work is beginning to coalesce around the recognition of the importance of a complex interplay of power resources and strategic capabilities (Levesque and Murray 2010), internalized collective identities ("referential unionisms") (Murray et al. 2010), narrative resources (Lévesque and Murray 2013) and the framing of the crisis/problem (Yates 2010) to determining whether a union will successfully renew and revitalize its practices.

The work on narratives and framing are of particular relevance for this study. There is a growing recognition that structures and policies are insufficient for understanding the dynamics at play if and when a union engages in renewal. A number of researchers have begun looking at the role of internally constructed meaning in determining union action. They identify the constructions in different ways, sometimes referring to frames (Yates 1998; 2010), narrative resources (Lévesque and Murray 2013), or even fortifying myths (Voss 1996), yet they refer to similar phenomena – the

construction of meaning. These constructions, as Levesque and Murray (2013, 3) put it, "consist of the range of values, shared understanding, stories and ideologies that aggregate identities and concerns. They frame understanding and union actions, and inform a sense of efficacy". A key element of the narrative constructions is that they are stable but not static. Unions draw upon these frames to "make sense" of ongoing events and to structure their responses. Ross' collective action frames, discussed earlier, can be seen as another application of this concept.

A related concept is what Murray et al. (2010) call referential unionisms, which can be seen as the interplay between internal constructions and external forces. They view referential unionisms as "the production and internalization of sets of practices and norms that inform union behaviour. … Referential unionisms are constructs that link both internal and external factors in multiple and dynamic ways" (313). They view the concept as multi-dimensional and multi-fold (thus their use of plural), drawing in a variety of other resources, capacities and repertoires, including narratives and frames.

This work around narratives and identities is still formative and not yet well integrated into a working model of union renewal. Thus its insights remain only partially realized. However, the constructs are a first attempt to conceptualize aspects of a union's situation as a dynamic interaction between internal specificity and external context. The value of this approach is its ability to move away from prescriptive best practices and toward a more conceptually rich understanding of the contingencies involved in union renewal. It can also be argued this new approach permits an understanding of union

practices that can transcend rigid notions of union forms. Doing so would be a new application of the concepts developed to date.

Thus we are brought full circle back to the issue of understanding union forms. The union renewal literature is relevant for study for two reasons. First it speaks to how unions morph. The union in this study underwent significant strategic and political changes as it responded to challenges in its dominant industry. The case is both a test of the unionism duality, but also another data point in the union renewal domain. Second, recent renewal research has been developing conceptual constructs that may prove fruitful in interpreting and understanding the dynamics involved in union being examined. The case has something to say about both the nature of union renewal and how we come to understand union forms.

Conclusion

The work of union researchers and theorists has provided us with an extensive knowledge base of how unions operate. It is becoming evident that there is a complex interplay between structure, process, internal relations and external forces that shape unions and the actions they take. Accompanying those elements is a series of narrative constructions that serve the purpose of making sense of the actions in context. The nature of how these elements interact is only beginning to be explored.

Developing a more intricate understanding of union dynamics is more important than ever, given the challenges facing unionists in the early 21st century. Globalization, de-industrialization, neo-liberal assaults on workers and a changing face of the labour

force are demanding of unions a new way of engaging with their functions under capitalism. With those changes, there is a need to re-think our conceptions of how unions react and respond to both external forces and internal dynamics. The traditional duality of union forms seems increasingly unreflective of how unions work today. The reality is much more complex. Some of that complexity is beginning to be acknowledged, but needs to be fleshed out to understand what 21st century unionism means.

As well, there is still more we can learn about how unions revitalize themselves. What are the factors that create the environment for change, and how is that change propelled? We understand pieces, but the picture is not yet fully formed. In particular the impact of internal dynamics continues to be poorly understood.

The case study to follow intends to probe these important questions more fully, to help extend our burgeoning understandings of how unions evolve. In the process it also intends to embark on a process of questioning our traditional notions of union forms, to ask whether they continue to reflect the realities of 21st century unionism.

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

Unions are complex entities. Their internal life is multi-faceted. Structurally they are democratic organizations rooted in a long tradition of rank-and-file control over key decisions. Yet they also vest a great deal of power in their executive positions; the president and other key staff have much say over day-to-day operations. Formal processes such as the General Membership meeting co-exist alongside informal avenues of decision making occurring behind the scenes. Union leadership must pay attention to member needs while simultaneously managing external relationships with the employer, the broader labour movement and the state.

In one sense, the union role is focused and straight-forward – act as bargaining agent for workers in their workplaces. Yet that scarcely begins to describe what unions do. Much of what goes on within unions is not part of the official playbook because the practice of labour relations in North America has become a highly developed, complex process. A tight boundary cannot be easily drawn around the study of unions for the variables shaping their form and function are innumerable. In other words, unions cannot be profitably disentangled from their contexts to be studied in splendid laboratory isolation. Further, questions of union renewal and forms of union action cannot be answered through taxonomic assertions or broad theorizing alone. There is simply too much going on to allow such clean approaches to the study of unions.

Thus, unions must be studied in their so-called natural environment. Unions are best understood when analyzed explicitly as part of their broader context. The people

who comprise unions and operate within unions are ever in motion and are constantly re-constructing their relationships with one another and external actors. Researchers wishing to develop insights into the role and function of unions must be able to keep track of the undulations and rhythms. To do so, they are required to embrace complexity and detail.

In other words, to learn about unions we must draw the general from the specific. It is from a series of specific observations that the general patterns begin to emerge. In particular, to understand forms of unions and to make sense of how unions revitalize themselves, we need to observe real unions in action without overlooking the complexities of those actions.

Drawing from these insights, the author conducted an in-depth case study of a union local in Alberta, UFCW Local 401, to reveal insights into the broader challenges facing unions in the 21st century. Case studies have a long tradition in Industrial Relations (e.g., Gindin 1995; Rachleff 1993; Smith 2004) and can be used to answer complex research topics (e.g., Ross 2005). Through extensive contact with the local, the study was able to observe internal dynamics and relations not normally visible to outside observers. In addition, reflection upon the specific contexts affecting the union brings broader perspectives. The end result is a richer, multi-layered understanding of both the specific union being examined and the nature of union action in general.

This chapter will lay out in specific terms the study's research questions. It will then describe the case subject and briefly outline key events involving the local over the past 20 years. Following that the advantages and challenges of case study design will be

discussed, along with the specific methods employed in the study. It will outline the procedures used for data collection, as well as the demographic make-up of the interview participants. Finally the method used for analyzing the data will be discussed.

Research Questions

As discussed in the previous chapter unions hold a contradictory position in modern capitalism, requiring them to hold in tension conflicting roles and purposes. In addition, they are organizations in motion, constantly in the process of being made and re-made. This reality poses challenges to union researchers. But it also opens the possibility of more nuanced, sophisticated understanding of the nature of unions and their actions. This study embraces the complexities arising from contradiction and directly tackles the consequences.

The overarching research focus of this study is to explore how recognition of contradiction and context contingencies alters our conceptions of unions and their role and function. In the context of 21st century challenges to unionism, what are the internal dynamics that lead to union revitalization? How does the contradictory position of unions manifest itself in union action and behaviour, and how can we best understand that in terms of our theories of unionisms? The broad focus can further be parsed into four inter-locking research questions:

1. How does the appearance of apparently contradictory tendencies within the same union alter our perceptions of the business/social unionism duality? Does the

appearance of significant characteristics purported to divide the two forms of unionism within a single case, suggest a re-consideration of how we define those forms of unionism? Can it be labeled a new form of unionism, or is it a deconstruction of old taxonomies?

2. Are the contradictions a reflection of how unions may be responding to the challenges they face in the 21st century, including globalization, neo-liberalism, shifting identities and associations among workers, and shrinking unionization?

3. How do workers and union leaders come to understand the nature of those responses?

4. How do the responses found in the case study advance our knowledge of the internal processes and dynamics within unions as they attempt to revitalize?

The four questions can be seen as different facets of the larger research focus, taking what is a conceptually large effort and examining it from multiple but related angles.

The first question addresses the broader theoretical consequences of acknowledging contradiction as part of the union experience. If unions display contradictory characteristics, how are our widely held conceptualizations of union types affected? However, we cannot examine unionisms out of context, thus the second question becomes necessary. The observed patterns, actions and structures need to be understood within the broad challenges facing the labour movement today. This is not to say there is something "different" about unions today, but simply that we must recognize

that steps taken by unions today are in response to external forces unique to our contemporary time period.

The perspective of how the actors themselves understand and explain their actions is also important, which is the focus of the third question. When researching unions we are, essentially, studying the outcomes of human actions and interactions. As collective entities, unions are created and defined by the decisions and deeds of the human actors within it. Therefore, asking how those actors come to make sense of those decisions and deeds becomes an essential component in revealing the inner logic of union action.

The final question links the theoretical consequences to practical outcomes for unions. Just as the union renewal literature often attempts to serve as a practical guide to achieving social unionism, any study examining the internal life of unions must consider how the findings might shape the future of unions. More specifically, how might the gleaned insights be utilized to aid in the revitalization and renewal of unions in North America? Union renewal may not occur in the manner in which we think, and thus we must ask explicitly how the first questions link to union renewal.

The four research questions feed into a broader focus that intends to draw from the specifics of a case study more general lessons about the nature of unionism. Like any single study, in particular one focused on only one subject, the answers to the questions cannot be conclusive. The results of this examination will be a step along the path of developing a richer, more multi-faceted analysis of union purpose, role and action.

Case Study Design

There are many ways to research unions. Many tools are available to draw out insights about how these organizations work. Given the specific nature of the research questions being explored here, a case study approach has been adopted. Case studies are often disparaged due to their focus on a single subject, but they are amply suited to tackle complex, multi-faceted topics. In the study of unions, case studies are a common research approach (e.g., Gindin 1995; Rachleff 1993; Smith 2004), in large part because unions lend themselves well to the contextualized insights drawn out by detailed examination of one case.

A case study is not a method; it is a research design or strategy (Creswell 2009). It is an over-arching approach to the research topic that ties together a matrix of methods and analytical tools. While case studies take many forms, they all share a couple of key characteristics. Mills et al. (2010, xxxii) identify that case studies focus on the "interrelationships that constitute the context of a specific entity" and develop an "analysis of the relationship between the contextual factors and the entity being studied". Third, case studies have "the explicit purpose of using those insights … to generate theory and/or contribute to extant theory". This latter characteristic is integral to the value of case studies. The subject is not studied for the sake of the subject or for mere descriptive power. Instead the specific case is utilized to draw out insights relevant for broader theorizing and practice.

For the research questions being tackled here, maintaining context and linking to broader theoretical implications are crucial, thus making a case study approach appropriate, possibly ideal. A case study design offers a number of advantages for tackling the identified research questions. Hartley (2004, 323) states "the case study is particularly suited to research questions which require detailed understanding of social or organizational processes because of the rich data collected in context". Case studies excel "when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context" (Yin 1993, 3). Both of these conditions apply to these research questions. This study aims to embrace the case's complexity and its interactions with its contexts (Stake 1995); losing context would cause the study to neglect important dimensions of the phenomenon. We have taken the position that, as creatures of capitalist relations, unions cannot be appropriately understood outside their contexts, both theoretical and practical. Case studies preserve the context and, in fact, highlight the interactions between context and the subject. To accomplish this, case studies necessitate a more multi-faceted approach to method, incorporating multiple data collection strategies (Yin 1994), which will be discussed below.

The advantage of case studies is their ability to draw analytical conclusions from a complex data source. Triangulation is one of the key ways in which they accomplish it (Stake 1995). Triangulation takes numerous forms, but the most relevant for this study are data triangulation, where data is collected from different sources, and methodological triangulation, wherein multiple research methods are adopted to gather the data (Wolfram

Cox and Hassard 2010). By drawing data from multiple sources and methods, including interviews of diverse parties, direct observation and documentary review, the study becomes less susceptible to distortions from single sources and can develop a more nuanced understanding of the data by examining it from multiple perspectives. Multiple data sources and methods can be seen as a process of constructing multiple windows through which to observe the study subject.

In addition to triangulation, the use of a transparent research trail and thick description of the data are essential to demonstrating the theoretical voracity of the study (Stake 1995). Transparency demonstrates to the reader the rigour of the data collection and analysis and permits external evaluation of the methods. Thick description suggests more than a detailed accounting of events, although that is also a requirement. Thick description "takes into account not only the immediate behaviors in which people are engaged but also the contextual and experiential understandings of those behaviors that render the event or action meaningful" (Dawson 2010, 942). In other words thick description integrates the observation, its context and the constructed meaning permitting a more wholistic analysis of the event/action being observed. Together these three techniques bolster case studies' claims of validity and reliability by demonstrating that analytical conclusions are well-supported.

A particular strength of case study design is its capacity to draw out new insights, even from conflicted evidence: "One strength of theory building from cases is the likelihood of generating novel theory. Creative insight often arises from the juxtaposition

of contradictory or paradoxical evidence" (Eisenhardt 1989, 546). Contradiction lies at the heart of the research questions posed here, requiring a research approach deft at making sense of conflicting or complicated data. Techniques adopted in case study research will draw out and utilize the contradictions to a great extent than other approaches.

A common pitfall for case study research is their examination of a single case, potentially raising doubts about how applicable the findings are to other contexts (Stake 1995). Given that context is essential to strong case research, the problem of generalizability may be unavoidable. Context will always be different. However, conclusions arising from case study analysis can be effectively generalized if the study is sufficiently grounded in good social theory and through "force of example" (Flyvbjerg 2006). In other words a well-conducted case study is capable of identifying and isolating insights of a more generalized nature without losing the particularities of the case's context.

The particular form of study employed here is a single-case explanatory embedded case study (Yin 1993; Yin 1994). While a taxonomic detail, it is a useful identification process for it clarifies the study's intentions. The goal of the study is not simply to explore or describe, but to find explanations for the observed phenomena, to draw out insights into union purpose and behaviour. While explanatory case studies are more challenging to conduct, they possess greater analytical power and are more likely to lead to theoretical advances. The study is single-case and embedded because while there

is single unit of analysis – one union local – there are sub-units within the local (i.e.,

leadership, membership) requiring isolation (Yin 1994). By recognizing the differing

positions held by different actors within the local, the possibility of a more multi-layered

analysis arises.

The use of case study design overcomes the prickly difficulty of unions' inherent

embeddedness within specific contexts by embracing that complexity, rather than

artificially simplifying to isolate relevant factors. The specific methods and analytical

tools used will be outlined below, but first it is necessary to introduce the union being

examined in the study and summarize some of the contexts in which it operates.

Case Subject: UFCW 401

The selection of UFCW 401 as the site for this study was not accidental. The

author's prior knowledge of the union, its internal workings and events in which it was

embroiled led to an awareness of the local's potential to reveal insights into the research

questions. UFCW 401 is an Alberta-based local of one of the largest private sector unions

in North America. UFCW 401 is an appropriate subject for examination for a number of

reasons. First, its industrial and geographic location makes it well suited for an

examination of the effects of globalization and neo-liberalism on union strategies.

Second, its parent union has long been regarded as an example of business unionism

(Robinson 2000), and the local's structures reflect the international's approach. Third, the

local's actions in the past decade – organizing diverse workplaces using creative

strategies – belie expectations of business unions and suggest there may be something

more complex at play. UFCW 401 has undergone something of a transformation in the past 20 years which makes it an intriguing site for inquiry. Further, its activity level and growth cause it to stand out among unions in the province of Alberta.

UFCW 401 is a multi-unit, province-wide local with a current membership of approximately 30,000[3], a number that has doubled in the past 20 years. It is the largest private sector local in the province (UFCW Local 401 2011). Originally it predominantly represented grocery store and food industry workers, of particular note being the province-wide certifications with Canada Safeway and the Real Canadian Superstore (owned by Loblaws). UFCW 401 was originally a local of the Retail Clerks International Union and the current local is the product of a series of mergers with other locals, giving it some smaller presence in meat-packing and other food industries in addition to its dominant grocery membership. A timeline of the local's history can be found in Appendix A.

The local's structure conforms to the Constitution of the International union, which bestows an elected local president with sweeping authority to direct and operate the local union, constrained only by international and Canadian national office dictates (UFCW Canada 2008). Structural emphasis is on creating a stable stewardship for the local through strong leaders and a top-down decision-making process. The president of UFCW 401 has been in the position since 1989, initially appointed by the Canadian National Director, and is widely regarded as the singularly most important voice in the

---

[3] Much of the data cited in this section come either from personal communication with union officials verified from multiple sources or from internal union documents.

union. He serves four year terms and has only been challenged twice during his tenure.

The President directs an extensive staff of almost 50, including 35 full-time

Representatives and senior staff (e.g. legal counsel) who handle most servicing and

organizing functions. Most representatives are hired from among the local's membership,

the grocery bargaining units in particular. The size of the staff has increased dramatically

in the past ten years as both membership and organizing demands have increased. While

recent hires have increased gender parity among the senior staff – 21 men and 14 women

– only one representative is non-Caucasian. Of the administrative staff, all but one are

women.

In terms of organizing and strike action, Local 401 is one of the most active locals

in the province. Over the past few years they have consistently ranked among the busiest

unions in filing certification applications. Over the past five years Local 401 filed 38

applications for certification (not all were successful). The only legitimate trade union to

file more applications was the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE), the

province's largest union which is about three times larger than Local 401, who filed 69[4].

AUPE also organizes within the public and quasi-public sector, traditionally sectors more

amenable to unionization (Thomason and Pozzebon 1998). Local 401's activity represent

about 10% of all legitimate organizing activity in the province in that time period. No

---

[4] By far the highest number of applications was registered by the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), with 231 applications. However, CLAC is widely known to be an employer-friendly union and therefore their applications are often unopposed by the employer, especially in construction trades. For this reason, their statistics do not reflect true organizing activity and thus are excluded.

other private sector union was able to maintain a level of organizing similar to Local 401 across the period.

The workplaces targeted by Local 401 have been diverse. Applications have included car rental companies, nursing homes, restaurants, casinos, couriers, hotels, catering companies, oil sands accommodation companies, non-profit agencies, a school for children with disabilities, and even other union locals. The occupations of target workers are similarly diverse, with most being in retail and food service or human services in some capacity.

In addition, since 2000, UFCW 401 workplaces have lost 215,000 person-days[5] to labour disputes (strikes and lockouts), which make up 22% of all person-days lost in the province during the period. This figure, and the organizing statistic above, is noteworthy given that Local 401 makes up only approximately 7% of unionized workers in the province.

Crisis and Change

In the 1990s, restructuring in the grocery industry, fueled by increased competition and global market pressures (Hurd 2008), led to significant destabilizing of UFCW 401's membership. Demands for concessions from employers, intensified union avoidance efforts by non-union chains, and the introduction of labour-saving technologies provided difficult challenges to the local. In 1993, the union accepted an agreement with Safeway, its largest employer at the time and dominant player in

---

[5] Person-days are the number of work days lost due to a labour dispute multiplied by the number of workers affected by the dispute.

Alberta's grocery industry, which contained significant rollbacks. Much of the pressure

for cost reductions by the employer was sparked by a voluntary recognition deal signed in

the 1980s by the previous local president with Superstore (a low cost grocery chain

owned by Loblaws), who were just entering Alberta at the time, affording lower wages

and less protection than Safeway workers. A subsequent round of negotiations with

Safeway in 1997 led to a failed 75-day province-wide strike. The result of the two rounds

of bargaining was a significantly lowered staff cost structure, two-tier wages and

increased use of part-time workers in the stores. The agreements created widespread

membership dissatisfaction, in particular among part-time members partly attributable to

401's flat rate dues structure requiring all members to pay the same dues regardless of

hours or income. Flat rate dues are rare in Canada and are a controversial provision due

to their perceived inequity, where part-time workers and workers earning lower wages

pay the same amount of dues as higher wage earners. Loss of members in grocery was

off-set in this period by amalgamations with other locals mandated by the International.

Following the failed 1997 strike, the leadership began to embark on a series of

reforms and changes to the unions' priorities. Starting in the early 2000s, the union began

a concerted campaign to organize new workplaces. At this time its organizing targets

branched outside traditional industries. New certifications included workers at non-profit

agencies, a recycling board, a rental car dealership and security firms in Alberta. They

currently represent workers at 52 different employers in the province. A list of employers

where Local 401 currently represents workers is found in Appendix B.

Over the next 15 years, they also became more willing to engage in strikes and other direct action to defend members' interests. Between 2000 and 2013, Local 401 navigated eleven strikes/lockouts at various workplaces, including four disputes over first contracts. Table 3.1 provides a timeline of UFCW 401's labour disputes.

Table 3.1: UFCW 401 Labour Disputes, 1995-2013

Dates	Employer	Number of Affected Workers
March 26 – June 10, 1997 (74 days)	Canada Safeway	8,300
March 27 – April 17, 2000 (22 days)	Canbra Foods (now Richardson Oilseed)	170
May 2 – November 25, 2002 (175 days)	Shaw Conference Centre (Economic Development Edmonton)	300
October 12 – November 4, 2005 (24 days)	Lakeside Packers (Tyson Foods, now JBS Food Canada)	2,400
September 9, 2006 – July 10, 2007 (303 days)	Palace Casino	300
March 29 – December 11, 2009 (256 days)	Old Dutch Foods	170
September 7-14, 2009 (8 days)	McDonald's Consolidated & Lucerne Foods (Safeway)	360
June 28 – September 1, 2010 (66 days)	McKesson Canada	210
April 16 – June 30, 2011 (76 days)	Gate Gourmet Canada	55
September 30 – November 27, 2011 (59 days)	Sobey's Forest Lawn, Calgary	130
October 6 – 8, 2013 (3 days)	Superstore	8,700

Prior to the 1997 strike, no one can remember a single UFCW 401 strike. As will be shown, the local's communications and messaging strategies also became more

aggressive and militant over the period. It is noteworthy the local's leadership remained the same throughout the changes, a central topic of investigation in this study.

Some of the strikes are notable for their size, including Safeway, Lakeside and Superstore which were some of the largest private sector strikes in Alberta history. Many of the strikes were much longer than the Canadian average (Campolieti, Hebdon, and Hyatt 2005), suggesting conflict with the employer was protracted. It also shows a degree of determination in the local's strike efforts. Often the union faced stiff resistance from the employer, leading to such lengthy strikes. Other strikes are important for the demographic make-up of the members involved. Disputes at Shaw, Lakeside, Palace, and Old Dutch were for a first contract. The four first contract strikes are also noteworthy because all involved workers who are traditionally under-represented by unions. Shaw Conference Centre had a workforce divided between young workers attending school and more mature women workers of colour, many of whom were newcomers. Palace Casino was dominated by women, many of whom were racialized. Old Dutch had an ethnically diverse workplace.

The strike at Lakeside Packing in the small town of Brooks made national headlines for its bitterness and violence (Foster 2006). It was also a dispute where race and ethnicity were at the centre of the dispute. The Lakeside Packing plant was a racially divided workplace with a virulently anti-union employer who had successfully beaten back organizing drives for 20 years (Broadway 2007). The 2005 dispute was sparked and led by Sudanese and Somali newcomers demanding better working conditions (Inkster

2007). The certification of the union divided the prairie town, as well as the workplace, largely along racial lines. The strike itself was ugly, including many violent altercations between the two sides, dozens of charges and the accidental (and unrelated) deaths of two strikers as they drove home from the picket line. Indicative of the bizarre and ugly tone of the dispute was a dramatic car chase between the UFCW 401's president and two plant managers attempting to serve him with court papers. The resulting crash inflicted a permanent disability upon the union president (he has since been required to use a scooter at all times). The publicity of the incident led the government to place pressure on the employer to settle (Foster 2006). The union narrowly won the ratification vote, with 56% approval divided heavily on racial lines (Hjalte 2005).The successful ratification made it the largest successful certification in Alberta in almost 20 years.

The 2013 Superstore strike is notable for its size, but also for the union's ability to mobilize a difficult to organize workforce in difficult circumstances. Superstore has long had high employee turnover, in part due to its high proportions of part-time work, lower wages and employer reticence to give increased hours. By 2013, the workforce was a mostly mixture of young workers and older workers of colour, mostly women, and many new immigrants. The strike, sparked by a series of concession demands from the employer, occurred in a bargaining unit with little history of militancy and after UFCW locals in Saskatchewan and Manitoba agreed to last minute deals accepting many concessions. UFCW 401 was also under pressure from UFCW Canada to settle. The

strike lasted only three days and, by many reports, successful in not only preventing

rollbacks but achieving a number of gains for the workers.

A feature of recent UFCW 401 organizing and strike action is the innovation that

took place in strategies and tactics. The local's willingness to experiment and learn from

mistakes is another way in which it is unique in the Alberta labour movement. The local

adopted inclusive, creative organizing tactics to draw together vulnerable workers not

normally associated with unionization. The organizing campaigns were resource-

intensive and were structured to partner experienced staff representatives with culturally

diverse insiders. Emphasis was placed on empowering and mobilizing groups normally

under-served by union efforts. For example, at Lakeside union organizers focused on the

50% of the workforce from Asia and Africa, rather than the longtime, mostly Caucasian,

Albertans in the plant. Union literature was translated into multiple languages.

Advertising in support of the strikes was aggressive and attempted to frame the disputes

in larger social justice terms. While many of the new recruits came from cultures that are

open to collective action in broad terms, Canadian-style unionism was new to them and

thus organizers had a significant role in educating the workers about the basics of unions

in Canada. UFCW 401 embraced the diversity of its membership and found ways to use it

to build solidarity. They altered their organizing approaches to reflect the perspectives

and needs of the new recruits. The strategies they employed, the motivations behind them

and their effect will be discussed in subsequent chapters

Throughout this evolution, Local 401 has not been an isolated island. UFCW National has also undergone significant change over the past 20 years, as have other locals of the union. Particularly noteworthy has been UFCW National's struggle to organize (and legalize the organizing of) farmworkers (UFCW Canada and Agricultural Workers Alliance 2011). The other Alberta UFCW local, Local 1118, has offered some of the best practices for addressing the issue of temporary foreign workers in unionized workplaces (Foster, Taylor, and Kahn 2015). All unions evolve, and certainly Local 401 existed in a context of unions grappling with change. However, as will be shown, the impetus and motivation for change in Local 401 was highly internally driven and focused.

Today, Local 401 boasts of its increased diversity and new membership. "We are one of Alberta's youngest and most diverse unions. Nearly half of the union's members are under 30. As well, the male female ratio of UFCW Local 401 members is 50/50" (UFCW Local 401 2011, n.p.). This diversity is only partly due to the newly organized workers. Changes in the grocery industry have also made that workforce more racially and ethnically diverse (Paradowski 2009). Throughout all the changes, the leadership of Local 401 has remained stable (the same President continues at the helm), nor have its structures been altered, giving rise to possible contradictions and pertinent questions about how change was achieved.

Political Involvement

UFCW 401's approach to broader political and social issues has also morphed over the period of study. While the local has long been a long-time affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress, the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) and local District Labour Councils, its political and broader community involvement has increased.

In the 1980s, Local 401 was seen as a highly conservative union with the Alberta labour movement, regularly taking sides against more activist-oriented leaders at the AFL, district councils and other labour organizations. In the early 1990s, the local ceased paying dues to the AFL for a number of months in protest of its left-leaning actions at the time. Over time Local 401's commitment to the house of labour has increased. By the early 2000s it was taking a lead role on many AFL and related committees and projects.

While nominally a supporter of the NDP for many years, occasionally releasing staffers to work election campaigns and providing token financial support, the local did not formally affiliate with the party until 2008. Since that time it has taken a more active role with the party, sitting on Provincial Executive, creating a larger presence at party events and substantially increasing financial donations. The President has used his stature to wield influence on key party matters such as nominations and election of provincial leader. Support for the NDP is not generally considered radical political action, but it does indicate an increased willingness by the leadership to extend the union role to advocating for political change.

Early in the period under review, much of the local's external energy was spent on charitable causes such as the Leukemia Foundation (which continues). Recently it has begun engaging with other political groups and causes. It has supported a variety of campaigns launched by the anti-privatization Friends of Medicare to defend public health care. Since 2011 the local has offered sustaining support to the Parkland Institute, a left-wing research institute affiliated to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. In 2012 they joined Public Interest Alberta, a provincial advocacy group around a variety of public policy issues including seniors, privatization, homecare and education.

Over the past decade, UFCW 401 has become a large supporter of Gay Pride events in Edmonton and Calgary, including sponsoring events and participating in the respective Pride marches. More recently, in 2014, they have started a partnership with Migrante Alberta, a grassroots organization mobilizing and advocating for temporary foreign workers in the province.

The local remains reluctant to actively engage with more direct action or radical political efforts, preferring financial donations and association with more established left-wing organizations. It places a heavy emphasis on electoral politics over extra-parliamentary organizing, although that is shifting with their recent relationship with Migrante. However, the trend is toward the local becoming more vocal politically and more supportive of left-wing political organizations.

UFCW Local 401 offers a contradiction between structure and strategy. Its structures remain rooted in a business union tradition, but the last 15 years have

witnessed a change in its organizing and representative behaviour that reflect a more social union orientation. It is for this reason the local is ideal as a subject for study. We can learn two significant things from more fully understanding its evolution. First we may gain insights into how unions learn and adapt in the face of industry changes. Second, we may be able to see how surface contradictions are reconciled internally to permit new approaches to unionism. From there we may catch glimpses into where unionism in Canada may be going over the coming decades.

Data collection

In keeping with good case study design, data was gathered in multiple forms, clustered into three broad methods. First a wide range of documentary material, including union constitution and by-laws, media reports of events, union internal communications such as newsletters and other relevant documents were gathered and reviewed. Second, the researcher performed direct observation at union meetings, conferences and other events. Third, a series of interviews were conducted among leadership, union members and selected knowledgeable third parties. Each of the methods will be discussed in detail below.

Documentary review

The documents reviewed for the study fall into three types. First are the legal documents that define the local's formal structure and process. Second, there are media stories and third party reports, such as Labour Board decisions, that discuss key events and interactions involving the union. Third, union-created communications, both those

designed for members (e.g., newsletters, reports to members, etc.) and those created for

external audiences (e.g., pamphlets, press releases, advertisements) were reviewed. Each

is discussed in turn.

The purpose of reviewing legal and structural documents was to ascertain the

formal attributes and processes of the local. UFCW 401 agreed to provide key legal

documents, including the UFCW International Constitution, the Local 401 By-Laws, a

list of local bargaining units and employers and a staff organization chart. In addition,

they also provided a 2007 report on dues structure, titled "Building a Stronger Union".

Other documents collected included four months' worth of union financial statements and

a small sample of collective agreements. The author was also able to take notes while

minutes for two General Membership (GM) meetings were read out loud verbatim (the

author was unable to procure a copy of the minutes, which were in short supply at the

meetings).

Third party reports, such as labour board decisions and media articles, are a useful

source of data. They construct context to inform observations, interviews and analysis of

the activities of the local and provide triangulation for union accounts of the same events.

However, while such third party reports indeed contain objective accounts of factual

events and are helpful in that regard, we cannot ignore they are also narrative and

ideological constructions. The media is known to display a negative "bias" toward unions

and their activities (Harrison 1985; Schmidt 1993) and tends to play up certain elements

of a story and downplay others (Gamson et al. 1992). The state is not a neutral party in

matters of labour relations (Panitch and Swartz 2003). To this end, analysis of these documents must take into consideration such bias, as discussed below.

Using FPInfomart, an online media database, a search of archived news articles was conducted. The purpose of the search was to identify all articles related to events involving UFCW 401 and any articles referring to UFCW 401. The date range of the search was January 1, 1996 to June 30, 2014. These dates span a period commencing a year before the 1997 Safeway strike, widely considered to be a key turning point in the local's history, to ensure all significant events of the study period were included. A total of 11 media outlets were selected for the search. Sources included the major daily newspapers in Edmonton and Calgary (four in total), two national newspapers, CP Newswire, transcripts from CBC TV in Edmonton and Calgary, CBC News Transcripts and articles posted on cbc.ca/news. Using a Boolean search term of "United Food and Commercial Workers" + "401" a total of 659 articles were found.

To test whether the search results were exhaustive, a series of alternative search terms were employed using the same date range and media sources. These terms included naming key events (e.g. "Lakeside" + "strike") while excluding the original "United Food and Commercial Workers" + "401" search term. The intent of these searches was to determine if there were stories relevant to key events that did not mention the union by name. A manual search of the results found no articles addressing the key events in any substantive way. They were either mishits or articles making only passing reference to

the event with little useful content. In other words, the author is confident all relevant articles were captured in the original search.

A manual search of the 659 articles revealed a number of stories with mostly similar content (e.g. a wire story run in different papers). After removing duplicates, a collection of 487 unique articles remained and were forwarded to the analysis stage.

The third category of documents is union-created communications. The value in these documents is they reveal how the union perceives itself and how it wants others to see it. Like all forms of communication, these documents are partly about information but are also acts of persuasion and construction (Boje 2010). A wide range of communication material was collected. The union provided electronic files for all material produced related to strikes, labour disputes, boycotts or other labour relations event. These files consisted of 86 documents ranging from ads, leaflets and handbills to websites and designs for t-shirts and other paraphernalia. Supplementing these documents were 4 pieces collected by the author from union offices. These leaflets covered more general topics, such as union education and ongoing political issues like temporary foreign workers. Table 3.2 categorizes each of the 90 items by format and whether it was designed to communicate to Local 401 members (internal) or to the general public (external).

Handbills and flyers are defined as small, single-page messages designed to be handed out on picket lines or at information rallies. Leaflets have more detailed content and a multi-page design (even if using one piece of paper). Advertisements are designed

for placement in newspapers, magazines or on billboards. Websites include the content

for pages built exclusively for the event (e.g. boycott campaign sites). They also include

Facebook-related content. Paraphernalia include buttons, balloons, bumper stickers and

wrist bracelets. Posters are larger and designed for putting on walls. The open letters were

handouts specifically formatted in a letter format, offering significantly more content than

handbills.

Table 3.2: Format and Audience of Union-Created Communication

Communication Format	External Audience	Internal Audience
Handbills/Flyers	15	18
Leaflets	11	6
Advertisements	12	1
Websites/Facebook	6	5
Paraphernalia	3	4
Posters	4	1
Open Letter	1	1
T-Shirts	0	2

Other material included three copies of the Local's membership magazine, Your

Voice, which was just launched in the fall of 2013. Produced three times a year, it is a

glossy full-size magazine that runs between 24 and 44 pages. It publishes a range of

articles, mostly written by Local 401 staff and leadership, discussing union news,

bargaining updates and upcoming union events. Articles also cover a range of political

topics, especially provincial politics, and some space is devoted to the NDP. Finally there

are pieces aimed at educating members about the labour movement and UFCW

affiliations.

Finally, a new member orientation package and a Shop Stewards' Conference package are included. Both of these packages contained multiple items, including leaflets, calendars, guidebooks and pens and pins, but are designed to be presented as a whole and to provide a single, coherent message. Consequently, each package will be analyzed as a single unit of communication.

Direct Observation

The second source of data for the case is direct observation by the researcher. Direct observation allows for the development of insight into the organization unmediated by others' perceptions, memories or agendas (Bryman et al. 2011). In the context of this study, direct observation is best suited to integrate formal aspects of the union process and structure with informal practices. In particular, power dynamics between members and between members and leadership can be revealed where otherwise obscured from view.

As the goal was to observe interactions between leadership and members, the author received access to a variety of union meetings and gatherings. A total of seven GM meetings were attended in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and in a work camp north of Fort McMurray[6]. The author also attended a weekend-long conference for Shop Stewards of the local's largest unit (Superstore grocery stores) which included both formal programming (i.e., classroom workshops and plenary speakers) and informal

---

[6] Work camps are residential complexes built to house construction workers building remote tar sands projects. UFCW 401 represents camp workers who provide housekeeping, maintenance and food services for the workers. The camp workers also reside at the camp, usually in rotations of 20 days on and 10 days off.

components (i.e., coffee breaks and meals, wine and cheese social and an evening banquet). In addition, the author spent approximately 12 hours observing informal interactions and daily activities in union offices in Edmonton, Calgary, Brooks and Fort McMurray. During the data collection phase the union was not involved in any labour disputes or other activist mobilizations, so there was no opportunity to observe picket line or rally activity. The researcher was unable to attend any ratification or strike vote meetings.

Meeting attendees were informed of the researcher's presence and its purpose by the meeting chairperson or other person of authority and given an opportunity to ask questions. At the Edmonton, Calgary and Red Deer GM meetings, the researcher was asked to give a short summary of the purpose and goals of the research project as part of the meeting agenda. Observations of informal interactions were a combination of passive observation and short conversations with individuals. All individuals were aware of the researcher's presence and purpose during informal interactions.

During meetings and the conference, notes were taken on a lap-top computer as proceedings took place, supplemented by additional reflections in private as soon as possible after adjournment. Notes from observations of informal interactions were taken, if possible, while the interactions were taking place (e.g. while sitting in union office) or at the earliest opportunity afterward if on-site note-taking was inappropriate. Twenty-one pages of typed notes were recorded during observation of formal meetings, with an additional 10 pages of hand-written notes arising from observed informal interactions.

Observation was unstructured, but focused around key patterns and dynamics

relevant to the research questions (Bryman et al. 2011). Of particular interest was the

power dynamics in the structures and process of union events. Attention was paid to how

authority was exercised, the tone and style of leadership exhibited by meeting chairs and

speaks, and how members reacted to leadership. As well, observations about how

decisions were made, what the priorities of discussion were and how actively members

participated in the meetings were noted. Finally the researcher watched for how much

space was present for dissent and debate, as well as who wielded informal influence and

how that influence was manifested. Given that union participation has gender and racial

dimensions (Das Gupta 2006; Kirton 2006), attention was paid to dynamics between men

and women and workers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Overall, the goal of

the direct observation was to bring to light the moments when formal structure and

informal practice overlap and identify how that shapes internal union interactions.

Interviews

The final data source is a series of semi-structured interviews with relevant

participants. Given the multi-level nature of the study, interviews were conducted with

the local leadership and staff, rank-and-file members and activists, and outside observers

who have insight into the union and its actions. The purpose of interview data is multi-

fold. First, the interviews traced the personal experiences of the participants in the union

and their perceptions of the local. Second, the interviews drew out union actors'

perspectives and memories on key events involving the union. Third, they explored

participants' perceptions about the union role in the workplace and society, how 401 compares to other unions and how it fits into a social union/business union framework. Fourth, the interviews attempted to draw out the narrative utilized by participants' to make sense of the union's actions and evolution.

Interview participant recruitment strategies were heterogeneous. Participants who were not members of the union were identified and recruited directly by the researcher and selected due to their knowledge of and perspective on the union and its activities. Emphasis was placed on strong familiarity with the union and its leadership and an ability to place its activities in context of other unions and the broader labour movement. Staff participants were likewise recruited directly by the researcher and selected to ensure diversity in length of service with the union, functions performed for the union and geographic location were achieved. All key leaders of the union local were interviewed.

Member participants were recruited through a variety of techniques. For the first wave of recruitment, the union produced a random list of members who had engaged in some form of union activity – attend a course, serve on a committee or act as a shop steward. The list included members' employer and contact information. The researcher selected potential recruits from the list with an eye to ensuring a balance of representation across employers and made contact directly. Eight participants were recruited through this strategy.

The second wave narrowed the selection based upon demographic, geographic and employer (who they worked for) criteria. The researcher submitted requests for lists

of members who met certain criteria, including young workers, workers from specific workplaces and new members. The union submitted lists ranging from four to 12 names and the researcher made selections from the list, again contacting the members directly. Seven participants were recruited in this fashion. To the author's knowledge, potential recruits in the first two waves were not contacted by the union in advance of the recruitment call.

The third wave involved workers in Brooks and in a work camp north of Fort McMurray. Three factors made direct selection and contact by the author unfeasible. First, these workers were more difficult to contact due to language barriers and their remote fly-in status, respectively. Second, due to travel requirements the researcher had a narrow window in each location within to schedule interviews. Third, union officials liaising with the researcher advised that direct contact by the researcher would not be effective in those locations due to the specific characteristics of the members. Instead, working with the researcher, union officials made contact with prospective participants in advance of the researcher's arrival. They selected candidates based upon instructions given by the researcher, including representativeness of the workforce (e.g. occupation, ethnicity, gender). The researcher provided only a general sense of the interview questions in order to minimize the risk of the officials "stacking" the selections. Based upon the interviews conducted, the researcher is confident the officials did not attempt to salt the list with members holding particular views about the union. Seven interviews were arranged in this manner.

In addition to the three waves of recruitment, three participants, including one ex-member, were recruited through referral from other participants. The researcher also attempted to recruit participants while attending union meetings and events. Some leads were developed but no participants were recruited in this fashion.

While a few member participants had no official role with the union, most of the interviewees had had some involvement, most likely as a bargaining committee member or a shop steward. It can be argued this skews the results of the interviews by excluding those with minimal contact with the union. It is true non-involved members might hold a different view of the local. However, they are also in a weak position to offer insights into the internal life of the union or perspectives on its activities and functions. Plus, they are more difficult to recruit. A decision was made to focus on members who could speak to their personal experiences in the union and their interactions with the union leadership and staff. Instead, efforts were made to ensure different types of members were represented in the interviews, including new members, young workers, newcomers, as well as different workplaces and occupations. It was felt achieving diversity in this regard was more valuable than finding members who were dis-engaged from the union entirely.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate as the research question is focused and the phenomenon being examined is well-defined (Richards and Morse 2007). A preliminary list of questions was prepared to anchor the interviews and provide consistency across participants, but the order of the questions was not pre-determined and interviews were conducted in an

informal manner to permit the emergence of unanticipated contributions (Kvale and

Brinkmann 2009). Appendix C contains the preliminary questions. Interviews were in-

person, except for one completed over the telephone, and were conducted in a location of

the participant's choosing. Interviews were conducted in Edmonton, St. Albert, Red Deer,

Calgary, Brooks and in a work camp north of Fort McMurray. All interviews were audio

recorded and later transcribed by the author. Interviews took between 40 and 150

minutes.

A total of 38 interviews were conducted between January and June 2014. The

status of participants breaks down thusly: 23 current members; 1 ex-member; 3 union

local leadership; 7 staff; 4 knowledgeable outsiders. The three union leaders were the

President, the Secretary-Treasurer and the Executive Director of Labour Relations[7]. The

outside participants included an arbitrator in Alberta who has worked with 401, a long-

time labour movement activist and staff member for other unions in the province, and

two former staff members of UFCW Canada. Table 3.3 shows the demographic

characteristics of the member, ex-member and staff participants. Leadership and

knowledgeable outsiders are excluded from the table. Staff are included in the table for

two reasons. First, six of the seven staff members interviewed were Local 401 members

before being hired as staff, making their past activist history relevant. Second, accounting

the demographics of the staff separately would risk revealing one or more of their

---

[7] The three leaders were informed that their anonymity could not be guaranteed given the nature of their
position. All others were assured that no identifying information would be revealed. Thus, the three leaders
will be the only interviewees named in the study.

identities. Table 3.3 presents the participants in aggregate form to protect the identity of

the participants.

Table 3.3: Interview Participants Demographic Make-Up

Characteristic	Number
Gender	
Male	15
Female	16
Age	
Under 30	6
30-39	5
40-49	11
50+	9
Country of Birth	
Canada	21
Southeast Asia	5
Africa	3
South America	1
Europe	1
Employer	
Superstore	7
Safeway/Lucerne	3
PTI/Wood Buffalo Catering	5
Lakeside	3
Old Dutch	2
Shaw Conference Centre	1
Co-op Grocery	3
Other	7
Length of Union Membership	
Less than 5 years	9
5 to 10 years	11
11 to 20 years	5
Over 20 years	6

Table 3.3 suggests the participants broadly reflect the local's membership. Among member participants, a majority were women and 10 out of 24 members/ex-members were born outside Canada – all seven staff were born in Canada. In addition, one member participant is a temporary foreign worker (TFW) and two volunteered they are members of the LGBTQ community. The different industries and employer groups are also represented.

Member participants were asked what roles they in the past and/or currently hold with the union (multiple answers were allowed). Five indicated they have no official function with the union, eight reported sitting on a bargaining committee, six sit/sat on a local standing committee, one had sat on the local's Executive Board, and 16 said they were or are shop stewards in their workplace. Time active in the local ranged from a couple of months to over 20 years.

Data Analysis

As discussed above, one of the challenges in studying union practices and theorizing about forms of unionism is there are multiple factors influencing the outcome. One must study the external, observable practices, but place those actions within both a formal and informal context. Further, internal, less observable motivations also matter. The intentions and goals of the actors also shape the outcomes. Thus, for this case study, the goal for data analysis must be to analyze the interaction between formal structures, narrative construction and observable patterns of social dynamic within the union and in

its context to draw out a more nuanced and multi-dimensional understanding of union dynamics. This will require a multi-level analytical approach, reflecting the multiple sources of data collected and need to draw out dimensions of insight from them. Approaching the analysis in a multi-step process is also necessary for ensuring appropriate triangulation of the data (Wolfram Cox and Hassard 2010).

The data was approached using a three-step analysis. First, it was examined to extract its manifest content related to events, formal structures and other factual elements. The case study requires an accurate depiction of key events, relationships and structures connected to the union local. Various data points contribute to achieving this, including formal documents, media and government reports, direct observation and triangulation of interview participants' perspectives. For this purpose, the first level of analysis incorporates qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000). Content analysis is more intentional and methodical than a simple "careful reading". The analyst must look beyond and below the physicality of the text "to examine how individuals use various texts in their respective worlds" (Krippendorff 2013, 28). In other words, to draw out relevant meaning, the researcher needs to bring to the text a particular focus and keep in mind the author's context. This analytical step draws out the context which sets the field for actors' behaviours and interpretations of that context. Part of that context is the power dynamics in which they are embedded.

The second step draws out how the actors construct the storyline about the union, its role and its practices. This step provides insight into the internal world of the union's

members, leaders and others. At this point, we are less concerned with understanding what happened and more interested in the perspective of the participants *as they see it*. For this step, the data was analyzed using narrative analysis (NA). NA is a sub-set of content analysis that focuses on the ways in which people order and relay information in the form of a story (Prasad 2005). Narratives form an integral part of how humans understand the world around them; we construct stories to create meaning for ourselves and others. By viewing narratives as an act of construction, narrative analysis probes both the meaning of the story and what interests the story serves. It also retains the teller's context. "Narrative analysis permits a holistic approach to discourse that preserves context and particularity" (Smith 2000, 327). Narratives, by temporally sequencing an account of events, attempt to construct meaning for both the audience and the narrator which serve the interests of the narrator (Riessman, n.d.). To this end the teller, the audience and the context all become an important component of the analysis (Czarniawska-Joerges 2004). In case studies, NA contributes to theory building by "problematiz[ing] the relations of the narrative case to its authors" (Boje 2010, 591).

NA is particularly important for interview transcripts, but it can be utilized for other data sources as well. Media and government reports "tell a story" about an event, for example the development of a strike and its causes. Even constitutions develop a narrative about who the organization is and how they see themselves. The role of the analysis is to draw out how the narrator constructs a coherent narrative for the reader.

That narrative must then be considered against the contextual backdrop and related to the research questions.

The third analytical step was taken to ensure power and its effects are rendered visible. In a broad sense this step requires adopting a 'critical' lens to the data. One of the criticisms of both content analysis and narrative analysis is they are insufficiently critical because they do not adequately isolate how certain interests are served (and others disadvantaged) through particular content and narratives (Fairclough 2010). In other words, they do not actively address the question of power and its influence (Prasad 2005). The issue of power pervades the dynamics in this case study. Unions are inherently situated in a power relationship with employers under capitalism. Within unions, power plays a central role in union practices – the power of leadership to direct, the formal power of membership through its collective voice, the informal power of particular activists and others. We must also not forget, as mentioned above, that media and government are not devoid of power-laden interests which shape their framing of events. The data collected in this case study must be analyzed in a manner that draws out power dynamics.

The challenge, then, is to conduct the analyses using a reflective, iterative process that maintains a 'critical' perspective (Johnson and Duberley 2000) so power and its exercise are surfaced and connected with other aspects of the data. In recent years in the disciplines of psychology and education have developed an analytical approach called Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) as an attempt to methodically identify the theory and

method of approaching NA critically (Emerson 2004; Souto-Manning 2012). While not yet widely adopted in other social sciences, CNA has the potential to contribute significantly to the critical examination of social behaviour. Souto-Manning (2013) argues critical approaches to the study of language, such as critical discourse analysis (CDA), operate solely at a macro-analytical level and can lose sight of study participants and their micro-level experience, raising the question of "critical for whom?" (201). Meanwhile NA often addresses only micro-level experience without reference to institutional and societal differences in power (Emerson 2004). CNA is viewed as blending aspects of NA and CDA to provide a richer form of discourse analysis. "CNA allows us to learn how people create their selves in constant social interactions at both personal and institutional levels, and how institutional discourses influence and are influenced by personal everyday narratives" (Souto-Manning 2012, 4–5). Methodologically, CNA requires the researcher to move sequentially from micro to global levels of analysis to draw out different aspects of critical significance (Emerson 2004), in what is essentially a reflective, iterative process.

CNA is well-suited for this case study due to its strength at navigating both micro-level experience and macro-level influence. CNA recognizes study subjects are not passive recipients of discourse, but are an active part of responding to and shifting discourse. The participants in the proposed study are active agents in defining their union and constructing narratives around its meaning. However, their narratives are not isolated islands and can only be understood in the broader context of power within organization

specifically and society generally. In short, CNA allows the researcher to embrace the significance of the participants' experience while maintaining the ability to critically contextualize that experience.

In practice, the three analytical steps do not occur sequentially. The process is more of an iterative spiral, where the researcher analyzes the text from multiple perspectives, moving back and forth between the three approaches, each time reflecting new insights and deepening the analysis. This back and forth both necessitates and is necessitated by the need to surface power relations in the text at all stages of analysis. By engaging in the back and forth, a richer understanding of the narratives emerges, but also of the interests the narrative serves and how it serves them.

The analysis process itself went through multiple stages. The data was parsed according to which research question it addressed, including the social-business union duality, union local structures and process, leadership, and narratives. The data was then analyzed in a grounded fashion for the occurrence of common themes, phrases, framing or narratives. The two sets of coding were then analyzed co-currently to reveal moments of convergence and divergence, allowing for the establishment of broad themes. At this point the analysis sought to flesh out the narratives found in the data and then link them to their respective contexts. The final step was to consider how these narratives and their contexts serve particular interests and in what manner they do so. The results of the analysis will be presented in the subsequent chapters.

Ethics

Before any interviews or observation occurred, appropriate ethics approval was sought and received by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board (SMUREB) (Approval #14-037). The SMUREB determined the research to be of minimal risk of harm to the subjects.

Interview participants signed written consent forms informing them of their right to withdraw and indicating no personally identifying information would be revealed. Union leaders were provided a separate consent form indicating their anonymity could not be assured, and thus identifying information would be revealed. In addition, the researcher verbally confirmed consent to participate and to the use of audio recording. For meeting observation, the researcher took steps to ensure meeting attendees were informed of their presence and the purpose of the research.

No incidents of emotional strain or psychological harm were reported to the researcher during or after contact with the participants. No participant withdrew their consent post-interview. All paper records will be kept in a secure cabinet and electronic documents stored in an encrypted, password-protected computer for a period of five years, after which they will be destroyed. Any lists with personal contact information provided by the union for the purpose of participant recruitment have been destroyed.

The author attests that, to the best of their knowledge, the research was conducted in a manner that complied with all ethic rules and standards of Saint Mary's University

and that all possible steps were taken to assure the safety and integrity of the study

participants.

Chapter 4: The Union Life: Contradictions of Structure and Process

Much of the extant literature on union behaviour examines outward actions – how the union interacts with external actors and force. Researchers study bargaining, strikes, political activity and other visible elements of the union role. This emphasis is logical and understandable, as these are important and measurable aspects of unions. However, the internal structure and processes have received much less attention. Despite a handful of studies (e.g., Early 2011; Fletcher and Gapasin 2009), which are designed more as exposés than anything else, the internal life of unions has been rarely studied.

Ross (2008) has acknowledged the importance of union democracy in shaping our understanding of unionisms, but she does not closely examine the real life internal workings of unions. She, too, focusses on the outcomes of democratic processes, rather than the steps to achieving them in the first place. Studies examining the J4J model (e.g., Milkman 2006; Rudy 2004) similarly focus more on the outcomes of SEIU's transformation than on its hierarchical, centralized structures and processes within the union.

It is not that researchers do not understand the significance of structure and process, and many have pointed to the impact of union structure (Briskin and McDermott 1993; Hunt and Haiven 2006; Hyman 1975). However, analysis of the interplay between formal structure and informal dynamics has been underdeveloped. Partly this lack of attention may be due to the difficulty in observing informal internal dynamics. Further it

could also be that the connection between formal structure and informal processes is tenuous.

It is precisely the uncertainty of how formal structure informs real life patterns within unions that makes it a necessary focus of inquiry. More specifically, how does structure impede, aid or alter the ability of unions' to revitalize and transform? The first step in this case study is to take aim at UFCW 401's formal structures and informal dynamics to find out how they interact to shape the local's outward expressions. This chapter will outline the local's formal structures and processes as found in the by-laws and constitution and link that to informal dynamics observed during the period of study. More specifically, the chapter will describe how the structures "come to life" in General Membership meetings (GMs), how the leadership and membership interact at union events and the kind of internal space created within the local. Further, it will examine members' views of the local's democratic processes and link those to both the degree of loyalty and dissent expressed within the local.

Local 401 Structures

Like all unions, UFCW 401 operates under a set of local by-laws that conform to the terms and conditions found in the constitution of the national/international union body. The constitution and by-laws set forth all the legal parameters of the organization's objectives and jurisdiction, outline membership eligibility, rights and obligations, and processes for amending the by-laws. Further, they indicate the officers and executive

committee of the local along with their responsibilities and authorities. Finally they lay out the process in which elections, GMs and other events shall occur.

As UFCW is an international union, its headquarters are based in Washington, D.C. However, as is common for unions spanning both Canada and the U.S., UFCW International has created a semi-autonomous Canadian arm, UFCW Canada, based in Toronto. The international constitution does not provide UFCW Canada with direct authority over Canadian members, but instead requires the International to "consult with the [UFCW Canada] National Director ... and consider any recommendations of the International Officers in Canada prior to carrying out their respective authority on matters directly affecting the membership in Canada" (UFCW Canada 2008, 5). In practice, the U.S. union leaves matters within Canada to the authority of UFCW Canada unless those interests come into conflict with the International. This arrangement has allowed for some degree of independent action on the part of UFCW Canada.

While UFCW Canada is a separate legal entity for legal purposes, its self-determination is informal. UFCW Canada's constitution is identical to that of UFCW International, and UFCW Canada holds no authority to amend its constitution independently of the International constitution. Similarly, UFCW 401's bylaws adopt, for almost every section, the exact wording found in UFCW Canada's constitution. While 401 has the right to amend its bylaws, the amendments must be approved by the International President before they take effect.

The International constitution centralizes decision-making, establishing a clear hierarchy between locals and the International officers, with the latter provided final authority. It also provides sweeping powers to take over locals which the International Executive Committee deems to be "working against the best interests of the International Union" (UFCW Canada 2008, 8), commonly described as "placing under trusteeship".

The highly centralized tendencies of the International combined with a rigid requirement that Canadian and local bylaws conform with International wishes immediately highlight an issue in studying a local of an international union. The room for a remote local, large by Canadian standards but dwarfed by U.S. locals, to chart its own course, internally as well as externally, is strictly bounded. There may be opportunities within the formal structures of the International, but finding those windows will require careful examination.

Approval of bylaws by the central union and a high degree of centralized power is common among unions, even within Canadian-based unions. However, unions of Canadian origin or re-patriated from U.S. parents tend to provide greater local autonomy and possess leadership structures less distant than U.S.-based international unions (Gindin 1995; Ross 2005), thus allowing for wider windows for local reform. As part of a large International, in particular one with a reputation for top-down approaches (Moody 2007), the opportunities for deviation available to UFCW 401 are fewer than for a comparable Canadian union.

Local 401's international links bring to the surface a potential dynamic where any deviation on the part of the local may need to arise more out of informal aspects of internal union operations than amendment of its formal structures. The high degree of similarity between the local bylaws and the International constitution (as will be shown below) indicate that UFCW 401's formal structures and processes have been largely determined by the International and reflect the dominant outlook of the International. If UFCW 401 deviates from the norm of UFCW International or UFCW Canada it is not the result of structural reforms. This raises the prospect that it is the interaction of rigid formal structures and more fluid informal processes that may explain the events at Local 401 over the past 20 years.

Officers and Elections

In large part UFCW 401's bylaws reflect the centralized and authoritative tendencies of the International constitution. UFCW 401's bylaws establish 21 local officers, including President, Secretary-Treasurer, Recorder and 18 Vice-Presidents. The Vice-Presidents are identified geographically, representing different regions of the province. The 21 officers make up the Local Union Executive Board (LUEB). While the bylaws make no reference, the President and Secretary-Treasurer are full-time officers, while all other positions have no ongoing remuneration and are booked off to attend meetings and events (UFCW Local 401 2009).

The bylaws provide an extensive array of power and authority to the President, referring to the position as "the chief executive officer of the Local Union" and granting

"general supervision over the affairs of the Local Union" (UFCW Local 401 2009, 10). In addition to traditional authorities, including chairing meetings and interpretation of bylaws, the President is awarded the power to appoint all committees, to hire and supervise all staff and to determine the compensation levels of all staff. As well, the president "shall have the authority to appoint stewards, or to determine that stewards in designated locations be elected by the affected membership, and shall have the authority to remove stewards in either instance" (10). Further the President is provided the authority to "disburse the Local Union's funds and … disbursements shall be authorized *or ratified by* the Local Union Executive Board" (10, emphasis added). It is noteworthy (as per the added emphasis) that the bylaws allow for post-hoc approval of spending by the President.

In contrast to the two pages of powers and duties of the President, the Secretary-Treasurer's and Vice-Presidents' role are defined in single sentence: "shall assist the President in the discharge of the President's duties" (12). The Recorder simply takes and retains minutes of GMs and Executive Board meetings.

The role of the LUEB is paradoxical. The bylaws explicitly indicate that the LUEB "shall have full and complete charge of all business of the Local Union not otherwise delegated to a specific officer or officers, or reserved to the membership" (13), suggesting a rather sweeping scope of authority. However, read in tandem with the list of Presidential authority, there appears to be little of consequence that falls to the LUEB's mandate.

Officers serve four year terms and elections conducted of the entire membership by secret ballot. A number of provisions are noteworthy. First, nomination to run for President or Secretary-Treasurer requires a petition signed by two percent of the membership (approximately 600 signatures at current membership level). It can be argued this relatively high bar gives an advantage to the incumbents, who have access to a much larger number of members than any potential challenger.

Second, the bylaws indicate a person is eligible to run if they have been a member of the local for a period of 12 months, or if they have been a member of the International Union for at least 24 months. Union staff, if they meet one of the other criteria, are eligible to run for office. The significance of permitting candidates who are not members of the Local will be discussed below.

Third, if any of the elected offices becomes vacant the LUEB is authorized to appoint a replacement to complete the term. This clause interacts in interesting ways with the past practice of the Local and with members' expectations of the vacancy process, which is an expectation that UFCW Canada will appoint a mid-term successor. This, too, will be discussed further below.

General Membership Meetings

The bylaws are sparse when addressing the issue of general membership meetings. The bylaws require that GMs occur quarterly at times and places determined by the LUEB, that adequate notice of meetings be provided, and that quorum is set at seven (7) members in attendance. Further a special meeting can be called upon petition by 10

percent of the membership and "informational meetings" can be held at the discretion of

the officers. Aside from a requirement that a financial report be provided to the

membership "not less than once a year" (12), there are no mandatory items or topics to be

discussed at GMs, and no pre-determined procedures.

Dues and Strike Pay

Constitutions and Bylaws do not stipulate union membership dues or other

financial arrangements such as strike pay, however they are important components to

understanding union structure. Before 2009, UFCW 401 had a flat rate dues structure of

$9.25 per week, along with a $25 initiation fee. As noted earlier, this is an unusual

(although not unique) approach to local union dues, but one that is problematic for its

perceived inequities between lower and higher income earners. In 2009 they adopted a

hybrid dues structure. The flat rate remained unchanged, but in addition members pay a

"field dues payment" of 30 cents per hour worked. The initiation fee was increased to $50

(UFCW Local 401 2007).

Two factors influenced the change. First, the union was facing significant

financial pressure, having run deficits for five consecutive years in the early 2000s

attributable to "the uncertainties and the associated high costs of conducting union

business in the Province of Alberta" (UFCW Local 401 2007, 8). Second, the flat rate

dues structure was a point of contention, particularly among part time employees, over

perceived unfairness. Someone working five hours a week at the lowest pay scale paid

the same amount of dues as a long-time full time member. The significance of the dues structure and the dynamics around its change will be discussed further below.

A second key financial aspect is strike pay. Unions traditionally provide some degree of remuneration for workers who choose to attend picket lines or perform other activities during labour disputes. Most of the time strike pay is a fairly nominal amount, ranging between $50 and $300 per week (Alarie and Sudak 2006). In the 1997 Safeway Strike, Local 401 paid picketers $100 plus $15 per dependent per week (Kent 1997). Following that strike the union leadership made a decision to alter its approach to strike pay. President Doug O'Halloran summarized the change: "Back in the old days you got $100 or maybe $200. You cannot ask anyone to go on strike now for that kind of money. You have to give them near what they're making in order to go out. Our strike pay now is $8 an hour for the first 2 weeks, and then it increases to $10 an hour after that" (D. O'Halloran 2007, 27). The union tops up the hourly rate by $25 per week for each dependent and strikers can claim up to 12 hours a day, six days a week (Poole 2005). An active picketer can earn as much as $600-$700 a week, an amount for part-timers that can be more than their regular wage. The change has significant financial consequences for the local, but also affects their ability to build and hold strong picket lines. The significance of this practice will be discussed further below.

In general, the formal structures of UFCW 401 suggest a highly centralized organization that vests a high degree of control and authority in the position of the President. Like most unions, nominal control over the local rests with the membership

through electing officers and GMs, however the bulk of key decisions and actions rest

with the President and others as delegated. At times the President has utilized their

centralized authority to make decisions that deviate from UFCW norms, such as with

strike pay.

Local 401 Practices

As in any organization, formal institutionalized structures only provide a look at a

union's skeleton. How those structures feed into day-to-day practice and how the spaces

in-between bylaw clauses are filled are also key elements. Formal structure defines the

core rules of engagement within the union as well who are the central actors. There

remains a large scope for how those actors interact with the defined boundaries. Based

upon direct observations and interviews with leadership, members and external parties,

the following section attempts to offer a glimpse into the practical and informal dynamics

of UFCW 401 within the formal structure outlined above.

Elections and Centralization

The current leadership team consists of President Doug O'Halloran, Secretary-

Treasurer Theresa McLaren and Executive Director of Labour Relations, Tom Hesse.

O'Halloran first became president in 1989 when the previous president resigned mid-

term. As O'Halloran admits, he was ostensibly hand-picked by the National Director:

> *So the Canadian Director asks me to go to Toronto. I go and he says to me, I'll*
> *recommend to the Executive Board that you become President. I was like, well I*
> *don't want to become president, I am too young. He says it is like this, the ship*
> *only comes in past the breakwater once, and if you don't take it now you will*
> *probably never be president. So, I basically said no and he said no problem but I*
> *think you can do it. As long as you don't steal or lie to membership I will get you*

out of everything else. So I finally agreed, became president in '89 and have been president ever since. (O'Halloran)

At the time, O'Halloran was an International Representative working for UFCW Canada. It was common practice in UFCW Canada to elevate staff to positions of elected leadership. One of the external participants interviewed was very familiar with internal operations of UFCW Canada in the in 1980s and said that locals usually had little say over who became their Presidents. They indicate the attitude was "we were in charge. The national and international office" (knowledgeable outsider (KO), 33). While the local's executive "officially" made the appointment, as per the bylaws, the process was determined by the national office. O'Halloran has been re-elected six times subsequently, but only faced an opponent for the position twice.

McLaren became Secretary-Treasurer in 2002, again through appointment due to the retirement of her long-time predecessor from a recommendation by O'Halloran. McLaren had been a staff representative for the local since 1994 and a member of the local since 1978. She has run unopposed for re-election three times. There have only been two Secretary-Treasurers during O'Halloran's tenure.

The formal provisions for elections in the bylaws do not manifest in the actual practices of the local. Its history is one of appointment, where subsequently the advantages of incumbency smooth re-election waters. The local does not have a history of actively contested elections and few members vote in officer elections. Most assume O'Halloran's successor will be appointed. "At some point I assume either somebody else steps into that position or National comes in and they appoint a replacement. I think

under the National Constitution the National can appoint if the executive board can't

pick" (staff, 27). Some see the succession process even more cynically: "I'm pretty sure

[O'Halloran's son] will take over. There will be an election obviously, but Doug usually

gets what he wants." (member, 4). Despite formal provisions entrenching democratic

determination of leadership, the practice is highly reflective of the centralized structure of

the organization.

The third member of the leadership team is Tom Hesse. While he is a hired staff

member, rather than elected official, the role he plays in the union identifies him clearly

as part of leadership. Multiple participants identified Hesse as a key leadership figure

along with the two elected officers. As one staff member put it:

> *It is the leadership, and a lot of it goes to Doug, a lot of it goes to Tom and a lot of it goes to Theresa that we are able to make it work in taking on these fights and these disputes while still being able to manage the membership of the union. I have seen the three of them who are truly our leadership, take on those roles, take on those challenges and make it possible.* (Staff, 24)

Unlike other staff, Hesse is not assigned bargaining units or particular functions. He

describes himself as a troubleshooter:

> *I have been director of organizing, director of advocacy, I did arbitrations. I am now a project manager. I lead major negotiations and organizing drives. I manage big projects. I am a troubleshooter and, well, my job is what I would call vertically integrated collective bargaining. I will write the communications, meet with the members, I'll do the proposal meetings, I'll sit at the bargaining table, I'll design the ad campaign, I will speak with the media. It will be this ball of representation.* (Hesse)

Hesse was a Representative for Local 401 in the 1980s before becoming an International

Representative, similar to O'Halloran. He returned to the local in his current position,

Executive Director of Labour Relations, in 2001.

The three leaders are widely seen by the members as the key decision-makers for the local. In particular, Doug is perceived as having firm control of the local. "Doug runs it. I think that is pretty much end of story. Doug runs it. I believe he has great foresight and understanding with how to be almost as ruthless as companies" (member, 16). A number of participants defined the dynamic bluntly: "It is Doug's local" (staff, 9). The nature of leadership in Local 401 and its role in shaping the union will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. For the moment it will suffice to observe that the informal processes of union decision-making are widely regarded as highly centralized. They reflect the large scope of authority afforded the president in the bylaws, although much of that authority, in practice, is transferred in daily matters to an un-elected staff member. The current leadership rose to their positions through non-democratic means, universally through staff positions either in the local or nationally. Two had no significant links to the local at the time of their original appointment. O'Halloran and McLaren gaining democratic legitimacy only after they had served in the position for a period of time, and through the use of significant incumbent advantages. The third member of the leadership team remains an appointed staff member.

Staff Relations

The centralized tendencies of the local work their way to the administrative structures and staff relations. One of the former UFCW Canada staff members interviewed for this study highlighted the lack of financial and administrative policies and controls within Local 401:

They are probably less on top of it than any other local, on the back end. ... You have to report this, where your money is being spent and that, well on the back end here, in the accounting, their system as it was couldn't tell you anything. ... There is no other local union that had that little control over the day to day operations of the individuals and that was not good. (KO, 38)

To explain the lack of accountability systems they point to the centralized leadership practices of the union. "First of all Doug runs the union, he ran the union that was his way. Second, out here, there was always a crisis going on. There was never any time to stop and say we should do this, we should do that. The crises have gone on in this union since 1997, the start of the Safeway strike, to today" (KO, 38). In the past year or two, the local has begun implementing expense and staff performance policies and a stronger financial management system. It is too early to evaluate the effects of these new systems on the operations of the local.

The centralized practices of the local also play out in leadership's relationship with staff and the division of responsibilities between staff representatives and shop stewards. Staff report a direct, personal, intense relationship with O'Halloran. "He can be a tough boss, he can. As bosses go he can be the nicest guy in the world and he can be your worst enemy" (staff, 27). He places high expectations on the staff. "We are expected, like anyone who is full time staff in the union, we are basically on call 24 hours a day. … [The staff] are overworked, they are beyond capacity and the more we grow the worse it's going to get" (staff, 9). Members can see the high demands placed on staff: "So all these reps are running around stressed the fuck out with not enough money, for one, there is just not enough people and manpower to get the work done and that worries me" (member, 16).

One cause of the high workloads is for most bargaining units represented by Local 401, staff takes a very active role in the workplace. In addition to identifying and recruiting potential committee members and shop stewards, they handle all grievances, including initial write-up (the exceptions to this are Lakeside and other, more industrial, plants). "So if you look at the way CAW operates in auto plants, they have people who are their shop stewards who write their grievances and do all the basic first and second step. Whereas we do all of it, we get legal counsel, we call all these places, and it is really draining [us] of [our] resources and our time in that sense" (staff, 8). In these workplaces, stewards serve only as eyes and ears and unofficial sounding boards for members. Local leadership has acknowledged the shortcomings in this approach and during the period of field research were in the process of training shop stewards in the handling of grievances. However, the local remains highly reliant upon staff for the daily operations of the local; a decision that both suppresses member activism and places undue stress on staff members.

Recruitment of staff has also followed a centralized, informal process, creating an internal dynamic affecting both the hiring of staff and ambitions among activists. "Remember who we hire as reps. We don't hire outside, we hire from within" (staff, 2). Following the 1997 Safeway strike, the local developed a formalized system of "relief reps", rank-and-file members who would be selected (upon recommendation of staff) to fill-in for permanent staff on leave. The relief rep would perform most or all of the duties of the staff member, depending on length of absence. The system is perceived as "a

training ground" (member, 4) for future staff. As a relief rep demonstrated their ability

they would be given longer and more complicated assignments, from many months up to

more than two years. McLaren indicates that the process is intentional and they make its

evaluation function explicit:

> *Some relief reps will be great relief reps but you know they won't make the full*
> *time thing. You try them out just to see. We had another young guy … we tried. He*
> *is a very smart guy but he has some serious attitude issues, right? I mean if you*
> *are arguing … with me, and not getting along with the members, you are not*
> *lasting very long. We are not going to use them. But you didn't know that until*
> *you tried him.* (McLaren)

It is significant to note the evaluation is both for ability to perform the duties and for how

well the relief rep fits into the local's culture. A point of contention among members is

that relief reps do not earn the normal staff salary, but continue to get paid their regular

wage as a union "book-off". "I talk to people that get pulled out of the store that are

doing the reps' work, and they are expected to do the same and … they are just getting

their wage plus mileage and whatever" (member, 4).

The relief rep system also serves as a justification for sometimes side-stepping

formal hiring procedures. McLaren provides an example of a recent hiring of a relief rep

booked off for over two years: "So I said to Doug, she doesn't have to go through a Tom

[Hesse] interview. She has proved herself for two and a half years, you can see the work"

(McLaren).

The relief rep system can be seen as serving multiple purposes. In addition to

training and recognition of ability, some argue it serves to develop a desired outlook and

screen for those that do not fit into "Local 401 culture". The knowledgeable outsider with

extensive experience in the Alberta labour movement identified it as such: "[They] make sure they have the best people and … it is a homogenized thing. You have to be schooled to believe what the union believes. You have to become a UFCW kind of guy" (KO, 13). The system may also serve as a means to provide incentives to activists by offering the potential of full-time employment. "It is good for your active members, too. It says if you are a good member you might be able to get this. What is the difference between a rep's salary and a full time worker at Safeway?" (KO, 13). The promise of a "real" staff salary down the road, conditional upon the existing leadership "approving" of you, creates motivation to work hard but also to "toe the line". In this respect, the relief rep system has both practical and ideological purposes. It may produce quality staff members by pre-training them, but it also pre-selects for staff members that reflect the perspectives of the leadership team. The selection process likely occurs as both filtering by the leadership for traits and viewpoints they desire, but also as self-filtering where ambitious activists morph their viewpoints to ensure they pass the test. In this way the relief rep system plays a key role in re-producing the narratives that construct and support Local 401's identity, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7.

General Membership Meetings

The core of any union internal democracy is the General Membership Meeting. It is the place where members have direct access to the local leadership, can weigh in on any relevant issue and vote on key decisions. However, for most unions in Canada, GMs are sparsely attended and fail to act as a significant forums for accountability (Camfield

2011). This is equally true for UFCW Local 401. However, even if GMs are not well-attended, they still serve as moments of direct engagement between members and leadership and provide a glimpse into the internal workings of the union. This study utilized GMs and other events as an opportunity to observe the informal dynamics within Local 401. It is useful to outline those observations in some detail.

The bylaws indicate the President acts the Chair of GMs, which must occur quarterly. The GM agenda, while not constitutionally determined, is well defined and standard-fare: reading of previous minutes, financial report, minute of silence for deceased members, business report, correspondence, members' business. Notices for GM dates are posted in all workplaces and published in the new magazine.

The actual experience at GMs diverges significantly from its formal requirements. First, the local holds multiple GMs in 12 different cities around the province, and in each of the six remote work camps north of Fort McMurray where UFCW represents kitchen, front desk and housekeeping staff (who live onsite at the camp).. Most locations hold GMs every second month, while some are more sporadic. A calendar published in its magazine indicated 34 separate meetings over a four month period.

The sheer number of GMs, averaging over eight per month, is impressive. It reflects a recognition that as a province-wide, multi-unit local a single, quarterly GM is inadequate. It is unreasonable to ask members from every corner of the province to come to a single location to participate. In fact it would be impossible. The adoption of multiple GMs for specific regions/units of the local is an informal response to practical realities of

the local. They are not alone in adopting a model of multiple GMs, either in UFCW or

the labour movement in general. As unions amalgamate locals, the ability to create spaces

for the entire membership of a local become increasingly difficult. However, the

divergence between the sparse constitutional requirement and resource-intense practice is

an example of how unions are creatures of both formal structure and informal responses

to realities.

An exception to this pattern worth noting is Lakeside in Brooks. When asked how

often GMs are held in Brooks the answer was:

> *Never. We can't. How do you hold one? We tried. We used to book the community
> centre out at the rodeo grounds. The first couple times we had a 100, 125 people
> then it got less and it got less and it got less and then it got no one. ... They show
> up if there is an issue and if we need to hold it we can, but for actual membership
> meetings, nah. [Other staff member] and I are out at that plant maybe three, four
> times a week. ... Just walking around making our presence known, being visible.
> Somebody comes up, hey I got a problem. Okay, listen, come to the office. This is
> your community centre, come to the office.* (Staff, 22)

When queried further, it was clarified that GMs do happen sporadically, usually

organized when there is a specific issue relevant to the membership or a serious matter

needing attention. These ad hoc membership meetings are more successful in drawing

attendance.

The lack of GMs for Lakeside, their largest single-site unit, is not necessarily a

reflection of lack of member engagement with the union. For a variety of reasons,

including language barriers, cultural differences and the physically challenging nature of

the work, traditional GMs may not be the most appropriate tool for member-leadership

interaction. The practice of formal GMs appears to have been replaced by a more

informal openness at the union office. The replacement of formal GMs with an informal openness to address issues also speaks to how Local 401 approaches its relationship with its members. Formal paths of accountability are de-emphasized in favour of individualized attention to members' concerns. This approach has built-in assumptions about the needs and desires of members, raises questions about the comprehensiveness of accountability, and produces a complex dynamic within the union. This theme will arise multiple times in this study and will be discussed in more detail later.

GMs in Practice

With so many GMs, the local has developed a practice of delegating the task of chairing meetings. The president did not chair any of the meetings attended for this study. Two were chaired by the Secretary-Treasurer, while the remaining GMs were handled by the staff member assigned to that geographic region. The researcher was informed that the President attempts to chair one of Edmonton and Calgary but often his schedule makes that impossible. The majority of meetings, in particular those in the camps and smaller centres, are handled by staff.

Attendance at the seven observed meetings ranged from seven to 31 people, with an average of 22. Among the attendees, a high degree of diversity was observed. Women made up half or more of attendees, including 100% in Red Deer. Workers of colour, from varied backgrounds, represented a sizeable portion, ranging from 10% to 75% of those present. Each meeting had a handful of young workers present, although their numbers were smaller. Informal conversations revealed that, except for the camps, the majority of

attendees were shop stewards and many were currently acting as relief reps. In the camps most attendees were rank-and-file members with no role in the union, attributable to their isolated location and ongoing residency at the workplace. Only a handful of new or inexperienced members appeared to attend at any GM.

The formal portions of the meetings were short, ranging from 29 to 55 minutes in length. In fact, short meetings appear to be a point of pride; in one meeting the chair lamented that they "failed to break the record of 22 minutes" (Calgary notes). However, members tended to linger for a long while afterward, often longer than the meeting itself, to chat in small groups or ask questions of the staff/leadership.

There was some variance in chairing approaches, but key patterns emerged. The formal meeting items were handled in a serious but formulaic fashion. Minutes were read verbatim, reporting of finances and correspondence was detailed (in one meeting letters were read in their entirety) although much of it appeared to address trivial matters (such as thank you letters for donations), and the business report carefully summarized bargaining activities across the local. The chairs adopted a dry, routinized manner when engaging in formal reporting. However, the subdued tone would be punctuated by inside jokes, gentle ribbing of longtime members and an occasional aside, such as a critique of a charity to whom the local no longer donates.

At the same time, there appeared to be a laziness to the process, a lack of rigour in covering the material. For example, similar emphasis would be given to a thank you letter as to the monthly financial report. Also, the unevenness in presentation between chairs

suggested no effort was taken to ensure all members received the same information. The

impression left was that the formal business items were of minor concern, that the

members were not overly concerned about the boring details, and that these were

formalities to be covered as quickly as possible. At one meeting the chair almost

apologized for the formal reports interfering with informal interaction: "those are the

things we are constitutionally mandated to do at GMs. Now that I have that checked off I

am at your disposal" (Fort McMurray notes). Another time the chair dismissed it as "stuff

I have to do" (Fort McMurray notes).

Questions or comments from the floor about the reports were sparse, and usually

related to clarification of a specific item or point. No real debate arose from the reports.

Often questions/comments would come from staff members aimed at highlighting a

matter given less attention or to offer additional information. The formal aspects of Local

401's meetings are highly reminiscent of any standard "business" union where

accountability and internal democracy are downplayed: lack of debate, scant information

about important decisions and an absence of "big" decisions left for the GM to decide.

The informal portions before and after the meeting were a different story, in a

couple of respects. The atmosphere became friendly, casual, relaxed and familiar. Most

members knew each other well and had been coming for a long time. Few efforts were

made to welcome or include attendees who were new or apparently did not know anyone.

There was a noticeable comfort with directly asking questions of the staff/leadership

during the informal portions. At times these questions, almost always about a specific

workplace or union matter, could be quite pointed and almost challenging. The

staff/leadership did not rush out, but stayed until all questions were asked.

The contrast between formal and informal aspects of the GMs was striking. One

set of meeting notes sums up the overall pattern well:

> *Struck by the bifurcated feel of the meeting. Manifests in two ways: One is the formal/relaxed dichotomy – rigid agenda, detailed reporting, but done in a haphazard, lackadaisical way. Also a relaxed rapport with members. Second, most attendees were experienced activists, but some were clearly newer or somehow not in the loop. No one worked to make them welcome, and they left quickly. Meeting felt like a "formality" – not really the way the union does business or is accountable to its members. It feels like accountability is more informal than that.* (Edmonton notes)

The divergence of formal and informal elements is similar to other aspects of the local's

internal practices. The formal mechanisms for accountability are hollowed out yet

replaced by a more fluid, informal process. There is reason to raise concerns about the

vitality of this informal accountability, but it appears to fulfil a clear function within the

local that needs to be understood further. GMs provide us a first exposure to the complex

nature of the contradictions between formal and informal, structure and practice. The

dynamics are multi-faceted. This is not the last time that contradiction will play a central

role in understanding the internal workings of UFCW 401.

When asked about the nature of GMs, the leadership acknowledges the limited

role they play in the local:

> *I am not one of those that gets all upset that there aren't zillions of people out at union meetings. I mean I have done this for 40 years. With the exception of the 70s when there was nothing else to do, attendance at union membership meetings is relatively the same. What bothers me is when leaders don't come, shop stewards and our leaders don't come. I bargain agreements so people can spend time with their family. … Where they don't have to sit around a union office*

listening to a union meeting. That is the kind of agreements I am trying to negotiate, so I am never discouraged by that. (Hesse)

Even some members recognize the unfulfilled potential of GMs. "When you go to a meeting it is always the same 5 or 6 people that show up. … I think one of the issues is maybe a lot of the times people think that these meetings are only for the shop stewards. … With a lot of people in retail you have a lot of younger people and they are like well someone else will handle that" (member, 37). In general, both leadership and membership suggest that GMs only become sites of activity when there is a pressing matter – a large unit is heading toward a dispute or there is a significant internal issue, such as a dues increase.

The lack of active engagement and vitality of GMs is hardly exclusive to UFCW 401. The significance of the observations lies not in the lacklustre participation by members, but in how the GMs have evolved within the local to serve a different function. The informal dynamics are more important to the ongoing functioning of the local than the quickly dispensed formal business. Observing a handful of GMs, a clear impression is left that they are not the location of either decision-making or accountability in the local, although the informal aspects hint that they may be found in more informal relations, which need to be explored further. The consequence of the lack of significance in GMs raises questions about the nature of internal democratic engagement in the union, a question that will be explored more deeply in subsequent chapters.

Other Member Events

An additional sign that the local leadership does not view GMs as a particularly effective vehicle for membership involvement and accountability is its recent decision to organize alternative forms of member engagement. Specifically they have begun organizing regular shop steward and members conferences to address specific matters on a larger scale. They have also begun utilizing "telephone town halls" to provide bargaining units a new kind of access to the leadership. Both will be discussed briefly below.

In March 2014, the union organized a weekend-long conference for Superstore Shop Stewards. The conference followed the resolution of the Superstore strike in the fall and was intended to begin the process of enhancing the role of shop stewards in that bargaining unit. Leadership of the local indicate it was part of an effort to expand the steward role across the local to include performing orientations, filing and completing the first steps of grievances. "We're going to give them a crash course on how to do the orientations and … [t]each them about investigation, filling out the forms, getting it to the union rep, time limits, [etc.]" (staff, 2).

The Shop Steward conference consisted of plenaries and breakout work in small classes. It also incorporated informal activities (i.e, dinner events, icebreakers) and was attended by about 150 Superstore workers from across the province. The classroom work consisted of walking through the key changes to the collective agreement and teaching the basics of grievances, etc. The plenaries were a venue for the leadership and guest

speakers to talk on more general topics, such as provincial politics, the broader labour movement and steps forward for the union.

The attendance was diverse. The majority were women, which is reflective of the Superstore unit demographics, and while Caucasians were the largest group, they made up less than half of the attendees overall, again broadly reflective of the membership. There were a couple of dozen young workers. From observations and informal conversation, it became clear that long term, full-time employees were more likely to be white males (working in the back rooms or in the meat department) while women, workers of colour and young workers were more likely to be newer and part-time. This polarization is likely reflective of the division within the workplace itself.

The conference dynamic was multi-sided. There was a sincere effort to teach the stewards and help them build skills to do their job properly, especially in the classroom portions. The conference was also part celebration of the strike victory, as evidenced by the conference's slogan: "We did it together! Now it is time to continue to walk the walk". But the conference was also used by the leadership as an opportunity to promote the union and its outlook on both workplace and political matters. For example, there was a tendency by the instructors to "talk-up" the gains made in the contract and side-step questions about its shortcomings, giving the impression that part of the event's purpose was to "sell" the new contract. In other words, the proceedings were a mixture of education, persuasion and framing: education in that they were attempting to build practical skills for their stewards; persuasion in that they were convincing members of the

"success" of the strike and resulting agreement; and framing in that they were using the event to reproduce narratives about who the union is and the value of the leadership within it (to be discussed more fully in Chapter 7).

An example of persuasion efforts was the emphasis given to provincial politics and the local's support for the NDP. The approach was blunt and direct and a clear attempt to persuade members why the NDP is the best party for working people. The leader of the provincial NDP was the guest speaker at lunch, which also included a showing of the film *Mouseland.* The leadership used the opportunity of the large gathering to pursue its ongoing efforts to engage its members in electoral politics and advance the interests of the NDP. Informal discussions with participants suggest the effort was met with fairly tepid response. All staff and the Secretary-Treasurer acted as facilitators during class room sessions. Notably, the President had no formal role, except for a short speech to the opening plenary. Instead, he was "present at all breaks and meals, just hanging around, talking with whomever wants to talk to him" (Superstore notes). He appeared to disappear during the class sessions, apparently to do other work. O'Halloran's role was one of accessibility and authority (to be discussed further in Chapter 5).

The conference bore many similarities to the feel of GMs. The formal components were more about persuasion and framing than dialogue and discussion, but opportunities for informal discussion were emphasized by organizers and appeared to be utilized by attendees. According to many participants, much of the value of the

conference was in the access to staff and leadership during breaks and meals. Again, a

dichotomy emerges between the formal and informal aspects of the event that makes easy

categorization difficult.

During the period of study the union also organized a week-long conference in the

mountain resort of Kananaskis for activists from all bargaining units, and began

conducting "telephone town halls" to tackle bargaining unit-specific matters, such as

bargaining updates. Due to scheduling the researcher was unable to attend either the

conference or town halls. The Member Conference, entitled "Building Our Future

Together" was structured more as a school, offering up a series of classes which

participants attended for the duration of the event. The classes (from the listing in the

event brochure) included an introduction to Local 401, core workplace issues like health

and safety, WCB, and grievance and arbitration, and a course on managing personal

finances (reflecting UFCW Canada's education efforts to build both workplace and life

skills among their members). It also had more broadly-focused topics such as "the attack

on workers" which examined political issues, "crossing generation lines" to promote

better communication between age groups, and "community engagement/making

change" looking at community groups and social change. The union estimated about 300

members attended.

The telephone town halls were intended as a way to reach more members on

matters important for their bargaining unit, such as bargaining updates and dues increase

proposals. They are viewed as an alternative to GMs. "We've been actively using

telephone town hall meetings. So instead of, um, yes we still want our members to come out to union meetings, sure we do … But also recognizing a lot of them can't. But if we can phone them at home, we can pull two, three thousand members for a half an hour, hour we have their undivided attention" (staff, 9).

It cannot be ascertained how interactive the town halls are, but given the nature of these types of events – over the phone, large numbers of participants – it is reasonably argued the leadership is likely to dominate the discussion and there would be little opportunity for the bulk of members to ask questions or interact. However, member reaction to the innovation appears positive. "I think these town halls they started doing is excellent because you can do it from home, you can do it from anywhere. They're making it so easy for you to enlighten yourself instead of relying on other people to pass on the information" (member, 5). However, the town halls are perceived more as a method for leadership to share information with members rather than debate. "[T]hat's another tool that they're using to keep everyone informed" (member, 5). The town halls may improve access to information about key issues or events, but they seem unlikely to develop a more fully developed form of accountability. Much like the member conferences, the town halls are as likely to be vehicles for narrative reconstruction as they are earnest efforts at engagement and accountability.

The alternatives to GMs being attempted are effective at drawing in larger numbers of members into union activity, and the staff and leadership appear sincere in their desire to create greater engagement. However, these events are not idyllic examples

democracy in action. The events have a degree of member passivity plus active agenda

pursuing from leadership that complicate their function and role in the local's internal

affairs. While greater involvement is a positive for any union, the advancement of

internal union democracy is more questionable.

Union Office Atmosphere

The author spent 12 hours informally observing activities in four of Local 401's

offices. In doing so, it becomes clear that members, or at least the small sub-set of

members who come to the office, find it a safe space. The offices themselves are standard

fare – utilitarian furnishings, officious front receptions, rows of offices and cubicles,

staffers talking on the phone or standing at photocopiers. What was noticeable was the

demeanour of members coming into the office and the interactions between

staff/leadership and the members.

Members were almost always at ease and behaved as if this was a familiar,

welcome environment. Members would sit in the front reception area, sip on a coffee and

chat with the administrative staff or a rep. Discussion would flow from inquiries about

personal matters to workplace issues and concerns to idle union gossip with a high degree

of fluidity. Members also seemed to feel fairly comfortable with discussing workplace

concerns in public spaces, not concerned with who might be overhearing their issue. The

boundary between "private office discussion" and "public small talk" seemed blurred

(Brooks notes), as conversations would move back and forth between the two locations

and between topics. This degree of informality is unusual in union offices (in the author's

experience) where talk of serious matters is kept away from public socializing areas. It is noteworthy both for its rareness and for its suggestion that dynamics between staff/leadership and members are informal and quite relaxed.

The Brooks office was particularly busy, with a steady stream of members coming to raise concerns, ask questions and visit – in multiple languages. The administrative staff person, a former Lakeside employee who speaks five languages, became a key figure in the office, in large part due to her ability to communicate across cultural groups[8]. A staff member confirmed the Brooks office is viewed as something of a community drop-in centre. "Our office works a little different than the other offices. … Now we do our visits as well, but we have what I like to call a walk-in clinic, like a doctor. That is what I think we have. We see more here in a week that walk-in than some of our other [offices] in Lethbridge, in Calgary, then they would have in a full month" (staff, 26).

In all office locations, relations with the leadership were relaxed, informal and personal. Members had no hesitation to interrupt or include themselves in conversations between leadership and staff. Notably, the President's office in Calgary (his primary location) was not tucked into a back corner, but was instead the front office, window open to the reception area and door usually open.

---

[8] The need for multi-lingual support staff was recognized by Local 401 leadership early after certification as a necessity to represent such a linguistically diverse workforce. Their hiring decisions have been guided by this recognition.

These are merely small snapshots of the daily life of the union, but they have the ability to reflect larger tendencies. The union offices have a relaxed, informal atmosphere that is welcoming and accessible to members. Members appear to feel comfortable talking about their concerns openly and directly. The degree of informality and comfortable accessibility re-iterates the developing sense that informal modes of interaction and accountability take precedence over formal processes.

However, it is important to keep in mind, this informal accessibility is passive. Members must take the active step of coming to the office; a step taken mostly likely by members with a positive history and/or high degree of activism with the local. One must ask whether a new member who knows nobody in the office and is less familiar with its atmosphere would have a similar experience? Or what of the member who has had a negative experience or disagreement with the leadership? Would they feel equally comfortable discussing their concerns in the reception area? It is important not to lose sight of what is lost in the transfer from formal to informal processes.

Member Expectations

How do members react to the emphasis on informal processes over formal structures of union democracy? Are they comfortable with the privileging of personal service and access over a robust accountability framework? Members' views of how the union operates do not speak to whether the processes are desirable, but they do deepen our understanding of the dynamics at play within the union. To be stable, any institutional

processes and structures must have, to some degree, legitimacy among the members. Is

that the case in Local 401?

Member interviewees were asked if they thought their local was democratic and

why. The question solicited two types of responses. The largest group, in particular those

with less activist experience or involvement in the union, argued that Local 401 was

democratic. This group adopted a view of union democracy that is passive, limited and

anchored in formal structures. Here are a few examples of this type of response:

> *Yes. Because we do votes. We do votes on our board, you know, president, secretary, treasurer, all that. So they do send out letters to come and vote for who. And we believe in democratic [principles], not just appoint somebody.* (member, 7)

> *But as far as I can tell we are run on very democratic principles. Even the way we are doing our collective contract, it follows those old rules where the bargaining committee is doing their best to get the best collective agreement or negotiation with the company. If they don't like it in the end they can vote on it, and then it is down to that vote. You know. The committee or the union can bargain with the employer, whatever, but in the end it still comes down to a democratic vote as to whether they accept the agreement.* (member, 10)

> *Yes. Doug, who is our president, is elected democratically which is why I think it is democratic. … When we have issues that we present to the company we do it democratically. We have to sit down, we have to vote. If there is strike coming up, we have to vote. Those are the kinds of things are democratic. We vote and the power of the members shows in the voting.* (member, 14)

> *I mean everything always gets voted on at our membership meetings and anything. And so if there is a change that needs to be made, a dues increase or anything, it always gets voted or it gets put to the executive committee.* (member, 16)

These responses reflect a sense of democracy that is based in notions of voting and

majority rule. It embeds a high degree of trust and legitimacy in the leadership and their

authority and it diminishes the purpose of debate and discussion. However, it does reflect

a core sentiment that in issues that matter, members are the final arbiter of what happens.

The second type of response was more sophisticated. While recognizing the core

structural elements that construct a democratic organization, the participants struggled to

reconcile their notion of democracy with the reality that the president retains a high

degree of authority over union activities. In one instance this was expressed as cynicism:

"we all have an opportunity to vote for the upper levels of the union structure, and

{*lowers voice*} honestly I have never voted, and I don't really see the point" (member,

25). More commonly, respondents acknowledged that the degree of centralized decision

making in the local challenged their conceptions of democracy:

> *If it's democratic in the way that we run our political systems, then I would say*
> *probably yes. I don't think it is truly democratic. We have elected a president and*
> *he makes the decisions. So it's very much like, it kind of has the feel, almost like*
> *the United States .You have two options, pick A or pick B, yes it's democratic but*
> *you can only pick from A and B and don't really stray from A and B. ... But as far*
> *as the union goes ... we elect him as president and he makes the decisions.*
> (member, 3)

> *Formally, yes. I mean I would say yes [we are democratic]. That is the core of*
> *unionism is democracy and we definitely support that. ... There are instances*
> *where you follow Doug's direction. In that light it's not.* (member, 4)

> *And of course, our executive committee is made up of membership. So, I think*
> *there is a lot of direction that is given to Doug from them. I mean, obviously, if*
> *those folks were to say we need to go in this direction and, obviously, if Doug*
> *knows that is a bad idea then, yes, he'll disagree and say, no we are not going to*
> *go there because that will really harm us.* (member, 6)

A tension arises in these responses. Their instinct is that democratic organizations

are about process as much as structure, and they perceive that the union's practice is to

cede to the authority of the President. Some try to explain the contradiction through

necessity: "the argument could be made that you have to have one leader" (member, 4).

Others fall back on their trust of the leadership: "I don't know how it works sometimes

and sometimes I don't like it but I know at the end of the day they've planned it well

enough that I don't believe that they are leading us in the wrong direction at all. I don't

believe that they would ever" (member, 16).

This tension will be pursued more fully in the Chapter 5, but for the moment it is

useful to reflect that the vestigial role of GMs and other formal accountability

frameworks does not, for the most part, trouble the local's membership. Nor does it

appear to undermine the legitimacy of the union's leadership and their actions. Other

narratives surface to calm the troubles arising from the contradiction of strong-handed

leadership in a supposedly democratic organization. This theme will be developed

throughout the study.

Access to Leadership

One of the factors that may mitigate concern with the local's centralized processes

is the sense, almost universally found among participants, that members can readily and

easily achieve access to the local leadership and staff should they need to. Most

participants also demonstrate a trust that their assigned representative is responsive and

quick to address issues, but even when they express confidence in their representative,

they indicate that directly taking a concern to the President or the Secretary-Treasurer is a

viable option.

With few exceptions, participants spoke positively about the responsiveness of

their staff representative. The common practice was to call the representative if a

workplace issue arose they could not address themselves. "Normally I would go through

my union rep. If I have a concern normally I talk on the phone [with them]" (member,

14). The staff were perceived to be encouraging of this practice. "I only met

[representative] and he was always 'if there is a problem give us a call'," (ex-member,

31). Many participants attributed this to the character and work ethic of the staff

themselves:

> *[I]t is very approachable coming in here. You can just come and see*
> *[representatives] and say this is what is happening … it is not hardship coming to*
> *the union office and saying hey this is what is going on. Or even calling, hey come*
> *meet me at the plant, because they are very approachable people that really care*
> *and that go way beyond what is expected of them.* (member, 29)

A similar confidence arises when considering contacting the elected leadership.

The following are exemplars of a common refrain:

> *I think if you ever had an issue with the union I think you could pick up that phone*
> *and reach the president.* (member, 23)

> *If you need anything, if it is serious enough you should just go straight to Doug or*
> *Theresa immediately from what I have experienced.* (member, 16)

> *Through my experience you always go up the ladder. So I start with my rep and*
> *after that it would be Theresa and after that it would be Doug.* (member, 37)

The widespread confidence that they could access the leadership arises out of a sense that

the leadership is grounded and in touch with the membership. "I'd phone Doug. He has

always prided himself on being available 24/7" (member, 4). Members sense that the

President is an approachable and available leader, which creates a trust he will listen:

Because we know he actually [is] representing the workers. We all know him. We put his face in the local 401 and we want him to be there. 'Cause everybody, I think all the members, know who he is. He gets out and talks to them. He gets out and introduces himself as much as he can to every unit. (member, 7)

The expectation of access is something actively fostered by the leadership. The staff are explicitly informed by the President they are expected to be on call day and night, and the leadership places a high priority on engaging with members in a personal way. "Doug, yeah, he is always approachable, I think that is what it is. He's doesn't just go shop at Superstore or shop at Safeway, he is not going to just pick up stuff and walk out the door. He is going to go around that entire store and talk to everybody that's there and introduce himself as their president, you know, and I think that impresses people" (McLaren). O'Halloran frames direct access as a tool for maintaining member satisfaction with the local: "The thing that I found is that if a member is pissed off, if you sit down for 5 minutes and talk with them, they leave maybe not happier, but they leave knowing the union is doing the right things. So it's really dealing with the rank and file membership" (D. O'Halloran 2007, 12).

Once again, the process for addressing concerns, either workplace or union related, is direct and informal, consisting of "picking up the phone" at any time and having a reasonable expectation of a quick response. The lack of effective formal mechanisms for addressing issues is perceived as less problematic because the local has developed a culture of direct personal access. It is important to remember that the formal mechanisms exist, but are simply not utilized in an effective fashion by membership or leadership. Informal arrangements privilege those who are more active, have more ability

and/or willingness to pro-actively advocate for themselves. With a membership of

30,000, how many of those members have the knowledge, confidence, awareness, trust or

inclination to "pick up the phone" and phone the president? However, how many of those

members are engaged enough to attend a meeting if they had a concern? The more

important aspect is noticing the dynamics that emerge when a local diminishes formal

structures in favour of informal access.

Dissent and Unity

One of the hallmarks of a healthy democratic organization is space and

opportunity for real debate and, at times, constructive dissent. GMs serve as a natural

venue for debate and dissent. In the case of UFCW 401, the formal opportunity to raise

questions or concerns appears to not be taken up by members. From both direct

observation and reports from participants, it appears GMs are rarely the site of any

significant internal debate or dissent. In fact, union events seem to display an unusually

high degree of unity among members. The use of informal access to the leadership may

channel some of what might occur at GMs into a more personal process. But the noted

absence of an identifiable group of members unhappy about the direction of the union or

with a decision requires exploration. What does it say about Local 401?

One of the knowledgeable outsiders argues the lack of open dissent suggests a

non-democratic atmosphere in the union:

> *I have never seen a union, a democratically run union, that didn't have a good
> sizeable core of malcontents, people unhappy with the union. Even the best run,
> most democratic union is going to have 20, 25 percent of its members unhappy.
> And they are going to contest that, they are going to speak out. And if they don't*

contest it and speak out then you have to ask yourself, why? Do you have a culture of power, do you have a culture of intimidation going on? (KO, 13)

Most member participants dismiss this notion, saying they would be comfortable speaking out if needed and believe there is space in the union for it. "[We have] a democratic way. You go up the ladder. Nothing will happen to you … you voice your opinion and the members will decide. That is how it is" (member, 7). There is a sentiment that the informal access can be effective. "They are always listening to the members. … I can walk there anytime and present an issue, or I can call anytime I want to get my representative and they put me through. No matter what time always they will call back and listen to the issues" (member, 14).

However, this sentiment is not universally held. Some participants believed there is some hesitance to speak out against decisions made by the leadership.

I like Doug but he makes all the decisions and its' sometimes it's frustrating when you feel that you've invested a certain amount into something to have it – I don't want to say belittled - but devalued in some way … [Y]ou put in a certain amount of effort and they say well, no, we don't want you to do that, we want you to do this. And I've heard it from talking with people who have been active longer with the union and some of the reps that you just kind of have to take it and grin and bear it to a certain extent. (Member, 3)

There is some sense that open disagreement with the leadership is futile. "There's this idea that, well you don't even bother to stand up to him because he's kinda got everybody in his back pocket. I personally don't subscribe to that but I've heard lots of people in my workplace say there's no point in standing up, don't even bother to put your name against him because you just won't win" (member, 3). As well, some hint that reprisal is possible against those who speak out negatively: "He won't want them involved. You won't get to

sit on this committee, you won't get to go to this convention, you know. He likes to
[marginalize] people that are outside his view of things" (member, 4)

Also present is an opposite sentiment, one that diminishes the importance of
dissent. It is seen as inevitable: "You are always going to run into people with different
opinions or your personalities clash or anything like that. But at the end of the day as long
as you are all there for the same reason, that's fine" (member, 16). Or the "problem" is
attributed to the dissenter themselves: "There is always bad apples, grumbling" (member,
17). This framing has the effect of making dissent less about legitimate democratic debate
and more about complaining and unreasonable people.

For their part, the leadership claim they are open to dissent and try to deal with it
directly.

> *What I would do, is I would call a meeting of the group and listen to their
> concerns, then in turn give them the reasons why this is happening. ... If it was an
> individual I would just talk to the individual, obviously. ... But once they are
> explained properly and calmly, well I haven't had a situation, in my personal
> experience, where I hadn't been able to get somebody turned around.* (McLaren)

Again, they articulate a very informal process for addressing dissent, one in which things
get hashed out individually, rather than in an open forum. Plus, it appears the willingness
to hear concerns has its limits:

> *First of all if they will talk, you sit down with them and you try to use common
> sense and logic and ask them, put them on the spot, and I find whether it be
> politics or whether it be how much money you make or all these issues, the real
> pains in the ass ... I put them in a position where it is, look, you want to be on the
> bargaining committee? No. well then shut the fuck up! And I have said that to
> some people, I said look you don't get to whine and fucking whine. Step up to the
> plate.* (O'Halloran)

This response reinforces the framing that some people are simply unreasonable. It also suggests that the concerns of active members are taken more seriously than members who are not participating in the work of the union.

Overall, two narratives emerge regarding dissent. First, formal structures, such as GMs, are available to members. That they are not utilized is not a concern because the local has a vibrant informal process through direct access and personal attention to issues. Within this framing some dissonance can be heard from those who struggle to square openness to debate with the high degree of control wielded by the president. There is also the question of where are the members who are unhappy with the state of the union? It is possible that the reliance on informal practices forces them to choose exit (in terms of union involvement) rather than voice. What is clear, however, is that this is a local which places greater emphasis on unity over debate, participation over formal rights. The consequences for internal democracy are complex, in particular the noticeable lack of open dissent and debate regarding the direction of the local.

Conclusion

An examination of the structure and process of Local 401 reveal a number of interesting observations. Local 401 is a highly centralized union with strong presidential authority. Yet it also prides itself on responsiveness to members and its relaxed, informal, comfortable accessibility. Despite the high degree of presidential control, there is not a noticeable degree of discontent or dissent within the local. In fact members seem to trust that the leadership is accessible and responsive, although there is some unease with the

amount of control held by the president. Members seem to prefer (or have been trained by the leadership to want) the informal processes that have arisen within the local and are, for the most part, unconcerned by the stagnant formal structures, such as GMs. It is uncertain whether there is a legitimate climate of debate and discussion within the local.

The formal structures as laid out in the by-laws are, oddly, both facilitative and secondary to the internal life of the union. The by-laws facilitate the top-down approach through affording so much power in the office of the president. Yet, simultaneously, the democratic infrastructure built into the bylaws is, in practice, widely under-utilized, supplanted by a more informal process of direct access and individualized problem-solving. This raises significant questions about whether accountability and democratic control are fulfilled. There is no easy answer to this. Greater use of GMs and increased occurrence of contested elections does not necessarily lead to a strong democratic tradition within a union. But neither can we be assured that the informal processes preferred in Local 401 also further these goals.

The local has developed an inviting, relaxed, informal atmosphere for its members. Members feel welcome. They have a comfortable relationship with the staff and leadership. This familiarity likely breeds confidence to challenge the leadership. However, it occurs within an environment of centralized power. The leadership has the authority to make most decisions without member approval. They appoint committee members and shop stewards (in most bargaining units). They have developed a sophisticated relief rep system to train and vet future staff members – a desirable and

lucrative job for retail workers. All of these processes feed the opposite tendency of submission to authority. Relations between leadership and staff follow in a similar fashion. UFCW 401 revolves around strong authority, unity and conformity, however it does so in a fashion that encourages relaxed, direct, informal interactions between leadership, staff and members.

While there is some unease with the degree of presidential control, the participants do not seem overly troubled by the state of the union's internal affairs. In part this is due to a narrow conception of democracy, but it is also attributable to the effects of the informal, relaxed atmosphere and direct access to leadership. It is not just that dissent is strangely absent, but it is replaced by a familial unity and togetherness. The cause and effect of this dynamic will be explored more fully in subsequent chapters.

The key finding of this examination of the union's structures and processes is that of complexity and contradiction. Formal structures and informal processes combine to create a complex internal dynamic: top-down control infused with a casual, almost anarchic, process of member accountability and responsiveness. At first blush it defies easy categorization. There is no question this is a top-down organization widely associated with business unionism. Yet the vibrant, personalized relations between leadership and members and high degree of positive unity belie such easy categorization.

We are only seeing part of the puzzle at this point, as we have only taken the first steps in our inquiry. This chapter has revealed the patterns and dynamics that play out within the union. Subsequent chapters will attempt to uncover the causes and

consequences of such dynamics. The next step? Examining the nature of 401's leadership

and its effects more closely.

Chapter 5: "Accidental Revitalization" and the Role of Leadership

The last chapter touched upon the issue of leadership and the complexities that arise between the formal structures of the local and the informal dynamics that are formed due to leadership approaches. In particular the co-existence of dominant, top-down leadership and highly personal and familiar interaction raises questions about how the individuals who lead the local influence its direction, atmosphere and accessibility. This chapter explores the role of leadership more extensively, examining not only how the leadership constructs dynamics, but how that leadership engages the union in change. More specifically, what role has the leadership played in shifting Local 401 and revitalizing it?

The role of leadership in unions is often a paradoxical one. Unions, at their core, are anchored in collectivity, democracy and worker rights. In the abstract, unions are the epitome of the democratic organization, borne of worker mobilization and powered by solidarity. In practice, it is much more complicated, as labour relations in the modern era lend themselves to expertise and specialization. The result is that unions often come to rely heavily on strong leaders and small cadres of professionals for their operations. At the intersection of the two tendencies is where we find the nature of a union local.

The structures of UFCW 401 have not changed over the years, and to that end neither has its tendency toward centralized authority. However, over the past twenty years, Local 401 has evolved, both in its internal affairs and external matters such as organizing. The membership has become more diverse, in part due to economic and

industry changes and in part new organizing targets. The local has adopted new organizing strategies and developed methods for representing a wide range of workers. The union has chosen to take on fights and causes that many others shy away from. Many of their organizing successes were in workplaces where other unions declined to attempt to organize. The local has become somewhat more politically active. And while it remains highly centralized, the local has developed a unified membership around an informal, highly personalized form of leadership accessibility and accountability. The question of how much these shifts signify a serious transformation in the union's identity remains open, but there can be little doubt that the UFCW 401 of today looks different than in 1997.

This chapter will examine the state of Local 401's leadership, trace its evolution over the past 20 years and explore how the leaders perceive their members and the role of leadership in a union. Further it will look at how the specific nature of 401's approach to leadership has shaped its capacities to embrace diversity and build loyalty among members and staff. Ultimately this will lead us to examine more directly the role of leadership in initiating and navigating revitalization and union renewal. Finally, the chapter will conclude by exploring the consequences for our current theories of union renewal and the role of leadership in managing change.

Leadership Approaches in 401

The so-called strong leader is common in the labour movement, reflecting traditional male dominance over union life (Frager 1983). The authoritarian and

authoritative leader is not just a feature of business unionism, either. Accounts of, for

example, CAW's Buzz Hargrove (1998) or even CUPW's Jean-Claude Parrot (2005)

suggest the "top-dog" leader is widespread across types of unions. In this regard UFCW

401 is not unique. However, the President plays such a central and over-riding role in the

local that his leadership practice is an important point of inquiry. President Doug

O'Halloran is the dominant figure in UFCW 401. "It is Doug's local" (staff, 9) is a

refrain heard often. Every participant, inside and outside the organization, pointed to

O'Halloran being firmly in charge of the local. His dominance in the local's affairs

means to understand how the union has changed over the years, we must look closely at

how he approaches his leadership role and how he has changed his outlook over the

years. It can be argued O'Halloran is the embodiment of the structures and processes

discussed in the previous chapter – formal control and informal accessibility.

As has been alluded, O'Halloran executes his position with a combination of stern

authority, rugged populism and a focus on members' needs (as he defines them). His

dominance over the actions of the union was a recurring theme. He has a firm hand on all

aspects of the local.

> *Naturally with the [arbitration case] Doug pretty much dominated that. ... Let's be clear. I am not going to pussyfoot. ... although it was [staff member's] case, [staff member] was there, but Doug dominates any situation he is involved in.* (KO, 20)

> *I think Doug very much wants to be in charge, and he does need to be. ... I know the executive feels bullied sometimes. The only time I ever really saw them challenge him was when he wanted [his son] to take over.* (member, 4)

> *Most of the time he can be a consensus leader, some of the time he can be a dictatorial leader.* (staff, 27)

In their arrogance of rejecting the mediator's report, on October 12th president O'Halloran decided to call the strike, and we did. (Duckworth 2007, 9)

Someone comes to us and Doug says alright we're taking this on. Okay that decision has been made. (staff, 24)

There is also a strong impression that Doug is open, accessible and puts the

interests of his members first.

I think Doug has always been a members' president. (staff, 9)

Very people-oriented. Very workers oriented. He wants the best for the workers. He doesn't like seeing the company take advantage of the workers. He's that kind of leader. He is also very friendly, understanding. (member, 7)

Doug will literally put himself in front of a bus …[put himself] between the bus and his member. (staff, 2)

I think this is something Doug has been very clear – and again it is always about the membership. So, when the national office says you guys need to do this, and we know for a fact our membership doesn't want that we're not going to betray our membership. (member, 6)

Related to the member-focus is a sense of common touch populism in his approach:

He is very down to earth and he never, he treats us all on an equal level, it doesn't matter what your job description is, as a member there is no levels, I mean somebody, may be a plant manager and there may be someone who is a casual maintenance worker and he'll talk to both at the same level and the same time and give you the same consideration.(member, 36)

Doug's around, my members know who he is. … He goes to Calgary he can't go into a Safeway store. He can't go into a Coop, they know him. He goes into Superstore they surround him. They know him. (staff, 22)

Nobody has ever walked a picket line and not had him there. And that's where I think his strength in leadership and the loyalty that comes from the membership comes from. There have been a lot of picket lines in a lot of places where when push came to shove nobody else is at the front of that line. (staff, 24)

He is our president but he doesn't act like one of those big people. … [H]e is just like ordinary person. (member, 17)

These reports are supported by direct observation. At the Stewards' Conference, Doug played up his connection to the members, contrasting himself with the employer and reminding them "I am no better than you" (Field Notes). He made himself available regularly and appeared to have an easy, friendly manner when interacting with members. Staff also feed into this sense of dedication to membership. The staff member introducing his speech at the conference told the attendees "You're his life. He adores you." (Field Notes). The notion of O'Halloran as down-to-earth may reflect his personality, but it is also clear that it is an active part of 401's narrative construction for the union and its form of leadership. In this respect, O'Halloran's populism can be seen as both reflection and projection – something the leadership wants the membership to see.

The participants' descriptions of O'Halloran give rise to a paradox regarding his leadership. In one corner is the controlling, domineering authoritarian. "He comes across as a bully" (member, 4). In the other, a caring, down-to-earth fighter. "He'll give anyone the shirt off his back if he needed to give it to them. That is just the man I have always experienced him as. I have never experienced anything un-genuine with Doug" (member, 16). A number of participants openly identified the duality of this leadership.

> *I've seen Doug be so analytical in a professional way and I have seen him in situations where he has spoken to people in such a compassionate way. And then I have seen him do things where he should be charged, in terms of harassment, bullying or you know what I mean.* (KO, 20)

> *Doug is a big bully, Doug is a big pussycat.* (KO, 38)

> *So he gets the reputation as being a 'it's my way or the highway' kind of guy. And that is who he is. He believes what he is doing is right. I think he could be convinced if something he was doing was wrong, but you would have to prove it to him. But it is very difficult.* (staff, 9)

There is a certain amount of intimidation around Doug because he is such a formidable character. So there are people who are afraid to talk to him even though they shouldn't be because he's not scary. (member, 3)

The effect of the paradox is the construction of a narrative of O'Halloran as strong-willed, determined and focused on members' interests. His use of power is legitimized through his perceived commitment to defending 401 members.

For his part, O'Halloran engages in the paradox himself. At one point he downplays the degree of control he wields: "The thing about Doug [being] top-down I think is a misconception because they see me out on the front line and stuff but if they came and talked to our staff and talked to our members they would realize it is just part of the group" (O'Halloran). However, he also admits to playing a heavy hand when needed:

[My leadership style?] You know, wacko. I don't think I am a good administrator. I don't think I run the organization well as a business but … the deal I have with the staff is let's reach conclusions through compromise and if we can't reach a conclusion, then I will make the decision. Nine times out of ten we arrive at things by consensus, and the one time we don't I am like a fucking bulldozer. …, I always make it worse than it should be so that next time, 'oh fuck, why do we want that lunatic telling us what to do, let's come to a consensus'". (O'Halloran)

O'Halloran emphasizes his willingness to listen, to debate and to come to decisions collectively, but the onus is on others to move Doug, rather than the other way around, and that is not perceived as an easy thing. "He will listen, if you push hard enough. So, he is very single minded. Put it that way. He has his vision and this is how it is going to happen until he has enough opposition and then maybe he'll veer, maybe he won't. But he is willing to listen" (member, 4). It is also possible to see how O'Halloran's approach builds both loyalty and intimidation.

The highly personalized, almost reverent relationship between O'Halloran and the members creates a dynamic that can be disturbing yet appears to retain a high degree of legitimacy among active members. A question that cannot be easily answered is the consequences of this pseudo-cult of personality for those who are not as enamoured with O'Halloran's leadership. Space for formal dissent is scant in Local 401 and may create an impression of greater legitimacy than is the case.

Some may express concern that O'Halloran's longevity as President is also a source of concern, as longstanding leadership is often associated with conservatism and rigidity to change within unions (Moody 2007), and a signal that the local's internal democracy is weak. It is the stability of O'Halloran's tenure that makes the changes occurring within Local 401 so unusual and meriting further examination.

Finally, by creating legitimacy through personal admiration, O'Halloran weakens the local's capacity to build secondary leadership, in particular among rank-and-file members, which leads to an increased marginalization of members in charting the direction of the local (further enhancing his authority). With few prospects of O'Halloran's defeat electorally, the normal pathways for leadership change are closed off, replaced with no visible process for succession. Rumours abound in the local that O'Halloran's son, currently the local's Director of Organizing, will be appointed President upon O'Halloran's retirement. While those claims are denied by both O'Hallorans, the lack of any other succession plan raises questions. Real or perceived, the nepotism at which the rumours hint alters dynamics within the local. Nepotism can

increase loyalty and cohesion in organizations, but it also stifles innovation and openness (Jones 2011). This is relevant because it is yet another characteristic of O'Halloran's presidency that speaks against innovation and change within the local.

O'Halloran's presidency is marked by a profound paradox, one that parallels the duality of structure and process found in the previous chapter. O'Halloran has accepted the power that the structure affords him, using it openly, forcefully and possibly dictatorially, but has done so in a manner that emphasizes a populist connection with his members, constructing the impression for the members that he is putting them first. His populism is central in creating legitimacy for his centralized authority and building support and trust from the membership to continue acting in an authoritarian manner. However, this trust-building goes hand-in-hand with his over-the-top bully-like behaviour, which has the effect of keeping dissent at bay and reducing moments where his authority to decide might be challenged. It is a paradox of pathways to legitimacy – both the carrot and the stick.

The paradox extends itself to the nature of populist leadership itself. Populism possesses a complex and contradictory relationship with democracy (Abts and Rummens 2007). While it can foster elements of democratic behaviour it, in many ways, possesses a fundamentally anti-democratic spirit in that calls upon an autocratic "saviour" to lead the populace. In terms of unions, populism can be an effective force for mobilization, but the form of union activism it creates will be, in essence, relatively shallow and leader-dependent. While O'Halloran's populist approaches may be effective and, indeed, well

received by the membership, they should not be equated to building a strongly democratic organization.

It should be noted here that O'Halloran's approach to leadership, while possibly somewhat stark, is not uncommon in the labour movement. Unions in Canada often produce "heroic" leaders, which is a very male approach to leadership (Briskin 2011). Unions' rigid structures and cultures of confrontation lead to "strong man" approaches to leadership (Kaminski and Yakura 2008), reinforced by men's historic dominance over union life (Frager 1983). This form of leadership, emphasizing outcome over process, tends to restrict member participation and internal democracy (Foley and Baker 2009). These heroic leaders are often able to create an atmosphere of devotion among the membership through their charismatic, populist style.

Indeed, the tendency is reminiscent of Michel's warnings about the Iron Law of Oligarchy (Michels 1915/2001). Despite their democratic motivation and purpose, the appearance of autocratic leadership and structures to support them are not uncommon. In this respect there are many Doug O'Hallorans in the labour movement and thus his approach is not particularly noteworthy in and of itself. Except that the changes that occurred within Local 401 over the past 20 years are significant, and it is impossible to understand those changes without understanding O'Halloran's approach to leadership.

View of Leadership Role

O'Halloran's traits as president only partially explain the nature of leadership in Local 401. They are best understood within the context of how the local leadership

conceptualizes the role of leaders in a union. Local 401's leadership proscribes to a very

particular notion of what leaders are expected to do for union locals. It is articulated most

clearly by Tom Hesse:

> *I would say, firstly, I think you need leadership. You need someone to make*
> *strong, compelling leadership decisions. To practice labour relations now you*
> *can't bring 9000 members into a meeting every day to make decisions.*
> *Corporations turn on a dime. Their leadership is monolithic, highly centralized.*
> *In order to be effective you have to make quick decisions sometimes. Does that*
> *mean you are top down? That is the first issue I would raise. I don't think it*
> *means you are top down. I think that it means you are doing what you need to do*
> *to represent your members and that is what leadership is about. So when you*
> *have more aggressive capital, they are coming at you every single second, they*
> *are able to make decisions that turn on a dime. It is rapidly evolving*
> *circumstances, thousands of workers involved. You have to sit down and say, you*
> *have to make a decision, you have to decide what is right, how to be true to the*
> *members. I think contemporary labour relations creates a higher responsibility on*
> *leaders to think hard all the time about whether they are doing the right thing or*
> *not because I don't think you have the luxury of all these daily checks and*
> *balances.*(Hesse)

This quote is illuminating for a number of reasons. First, it articulates a very specific

concept of leadership, one that incorporates a strong figure who works "in the best

interests" of the membership, but not necessarily under the direction of the membership.

Second, this type of leadership is necessitated by external forces – capital and the nature

of modern labour relations. Third, democracy is framed as an idealized process that is not

tenable today. Things are simply moving too fast. Fourth, to not act decisively is a failure

of leadership and a failure to the members.

This notion of leadership is bolstered by how the leadership views the make-up of

their membership. They argue the bulk of their membership do not have the time or

desire to become actively engaged with the local. Once again, Hesse states it the most

directly:

> *When you have part time workers you may end up with a structure that in order to give them meaningful representation you are going to have to make some decisions that they neither have the time nor the interest in making themselves. A part time worker often will think about looking at another job rather than attend ten union meetings. If I walked up to the average part time worker and said you have to commit to ten union meetings over the next ten Tuesday nights, okay? And we are going to talk and have dialogue and you are going to tell me your issues and we are going to bargain what you need, I need that kind of interaction with you. Or you can just trust me to try and bargain as best as I can the following benefits, including part time, they will just hand it over to you. ... Many of our members would happily surrender that bottom up approach if we deliver the right product. ... People still view it themselves as stop gap employment, some of them. [They] don't aspire to retire at Superstore or at Safeway. So if they don't have a long term interest in their employment, how do they get a long term interest in the union, right?* (Hesse)

The perceived lack of interest in union involvement also arises from the demographic

make-up of the membership. "[T]hese are all groups of people who have historically in

the workforce been underrepresented and been marginalized and not been given their

due. I mean young workers make crap wages. New Canadians tend to end up in very

menial, low paid jobs. They're scared to speak up" (staff, 2). This view of their

members', regardless of its accuracy, feeds into the strong initiative-taking leader

framing, now creating an internal force necessitating this approach.

There is ample room to raise concerns about this view of union members and

union leaders, in particular how this view distorts notions of union democracy and short

circuits serious consideration how to mobilize and activate members. The view also

legitimizes an authoritarian approach to running the local and consolidates power within

the office of the President. However, there is no question that it is a powerful narrative

frame within the local and undoubtedly drives the leadership's decisions of how to approach union issues. The narrative also provides an internal coherence around the contradictions of being both authoritarian and member-driven.

The narrative also explains how the local might approach creating change. It is a narrative where change is driven by the leadership. It is the leadership that ascertain what change is needed and how to accomplish it. It is the responsibility of the leadership to ensure the members' interests are addressed. Thus, the leadership team, and not the rank-and-file, become the key actors in making change occur within the local. The narrative creates the organizational space for O'Halloran to decidedly make his mark on the local, which leads to the question of how he has used that space to shift the union,

The Influence of Leadership on Change

Local 401 has had the same leadership team for more than 20 years. Yet in that timeframe the local has undergone enormous change. It has more than doubled in size due to branching out to new industries and diverse groups of workers. It has become somewhat more engaged in politics and is trying to build a more activist steward network. Yet it has done so using a centralized decision structure and a particularly "male" approach to leadership. A natural question is how has the leadership influenced the change in the union? This section will look at two aspects of 401's leadership. First, it will outline how the leadership initially sparked a shift in the local that, to a degree, freed it from previous dynamics. Second, it will work through the changes made to the local and the leadership's role within that.

Shifting Local Culture

Doug O'Halloran's involvement in UFCW Canada is one of contradiction.

Deeply embedded in its culture in the 1980s, he ascended to the presidency of 401

through appointment. However, once there he took some significant steps to distinguish

his leadership from both that of his predecessors and other UFCW locals in Canada. A

former national staffer interviewed for the study was clear that O'Halloran has made a

distinct mark:

> *The local 401, as we know it, is Doug O'Halloran. Before him this local ran just*
> *like so many other local unions did, very conservatively, very watch the money,*
> *watch the spending. ... Most presidents don't know who half their members are,*
> *they rarely go on a picket line. Doug leads the charge. That is Doug's style,*
> *always been Doug's style.* (KO, 38)

It is likely back when first appointed, the leadership of UFCW Canada did not expect

O'Halloran to take a divergent course with this local, given how deeply entrenched he

was. Let us examine what O'Halloran did to chart a different course for Local 401.

In the 1980s UFCW, both UFCW Canada and Local 401, could be described as

the classically described 'business union'. The structures fed into strong presidents and

weak processes for accountability, which in turn led to concentrated power and tight

hierarchical control. UFCW was not known for its political involvement or social

conscience and it had a reputation for arranging back room deals and avoiding

confrontation with the employer (Moody 1988). An ex-national staff member confirmed

this in their interview:

> *Our union lived on voluntary recognitions. The grocery store grew, we grew.*
> *Voluntarily recognized, wasn't a lot of fights, not a lot of battles. [We] didn't*
> *need to have a fight, a battle. You just got 'em. There they were. So as a president*

your job was to hire, we used to call them baggage carriers, who typed your letters and you just floated on the membership rising. You didn't have to fight, no organizing, you didn't have to be smart, didn't have to think. (KO, 38)

"Voluntary recognitions" are certifications negotiated privately between the employer and the union and do not involve labour board processes, including a membership vote. They are controversial in the labour movement as they are often used by employers to prevent more militant union organizing (Taylor, McGray, and Watt-Malcolm 2007; Merit Contractors Association 2006), and they signal a desire by the union to pursue a less confrontational relationship with the employer (Tufts and Thomas 2014). In this period, UFCW struggled to respond to changes in its core industries and across the continent had embarked on "a strategy of 'controlled retreat' … [which] meant a willingness to accept concessions … as long as this did not threaten the international union's dues base" (Rachleff 1993, 81). Membership engagement was low and militancy was actively discouraged (Moody 1988).

A culture of extravagance and closed circles of insiders developed. "With UFCW I can remember eating at the big fancy star restaurants and drinking the best of the best and eating the best of the best, and [National Director] would pull out his big credit card and with thousands, I know there were dinners that were thousands of dollars." (KO, 33). More than once the atmosphere was described as an "old boys' club". "Back in those days …United food and Commercial Workers, it was a man's man arena. Drinking at lunch time? Yeah. Almost mandatory. And not just having a beer at lunch, you would have three or four. … [I]t was really critical if you want to succeed with the guys" (KO, 33).

The union was heavy-handed with its locals, and in turn presidents were heavy-handed within the local.

> *You don't have to get too far into the behaviour of UFCW, placing locals that kick off the traces under trusteeship. ... The Vancouver Safeway local rejected a concession agreement the union wanted them to take and were basically talking about breaking away. The international put them under trusteeship, broke down their office doors, terrorized the secretaries, seized all the books and assets and kicked the existing executive out of office.* (KO, 13)

The event, confirmed by multiple sources and reported in Moody's (1988) treatise on U.S. business unionism, is noteworthy because O'Halloran was a UFCW International Representative at the time and participated in the raid. He subsequently ran the trusteed union for three years immediately prior to being appointed president of Local 401. This connection offers evidence that, at the time of his appointment, O'Halloran was deeply embedded in the union's culture and a part of its closed circles and heavy-handed practices.

O'Halloran's tenure as president is full of contradictions. As noted above, he has continued UFCW practice of top-down, authoritarian leadership, but has added a populist and more militant approach, in rhetoric and action. A recurring story in O'Halloran's narrative is his rejection of the traditional title given to local leadership. He recounts the story in his interview for this study: "[T]hat was the first thing I changed when I became president. My business cards said Chief Executive Officer. And I said why is that on there? [I was told] because that is what the presidents in Canada are. They are President and Chief Executive Officer. I says fuck that, get me new cards" (O'Halloran). He tells the story again to members at the Steward's Conference (field notes). That a 25-year-old

story of largely symbolic importance remains a regular feature in O'Halloran's repertoire

speaks to the value he places on appearing down-to-earth and on the side of the members.

It also positions him as being different than other union leaders in some fashion.

Persuading members that he is "one of them" is a key component in building and

maintaining O'Halloran's legitimacy.

However, O'Halloran has deviated in concrete ways from the practices of the

International. He has ended the local's practice of negotiating voluntary recognitions. He

cancelled a voluntary recognition negotiated just before his appointment.

> *When I first became president in '89, 401 had negotiated a contract here with Superstore for a warehouse. At that time Safeway had a Cadillac warehouse plan, which they still do. I find out we have got this deal we are going to vote and it was a substandard contract. So I go to [outgoing President] and say, you know, you gotta get me out of this deal because I am not going to agree to it. He says, you know the people are already signed up and have UFCW cards and stuff. I said to him, I know you are the president but I can't agree to that deal. So he phones up the company and the company says, sure, no problem. They go and tear up our cards, invite the Teamsters in the next day, they sign the cards. And that warehouse today is a million square feet, out by the airport, still a shitty deal, so you always wonder, you know, should you have these high of principles or shouldn't you.* (O'Halloran)

In another case, O'Halloran bucked UFCW Canada in his refusal to accept a

nationally negotiated voluntary recognition. In 2007, Loblaw's (Superstore) discount

arm, No Frills, expanded to Western Canada. UFCW Canada negotiated a voluntary

recognition and initial agreement with the company which provided lower wages than

other Loblaw's and Superstore locations. Local 401 was the only local in the country to

refuse the arrangement.

> *The company went to our national union and said, look, we are prepared to give you a contract but this is what it has to be. So we are the only province that didn't*

take those workers because the contract was the shits. So I said to UFCW National, you know we are not interested ... It would have gotten us 3000 more members which would really help financially, but I made the decision in good conscience we could not ... put our Superstore members or our Safeway members under a deal where another company has six dollars an hour labour advantage. And so we, um, we walked away from it. Subsequently they are non-union today. (O'Halloran)

In both cases, O'Halloran describes his decision as based upon principles. Acting upon principle is a key element in the leadership's narrative about itself (which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7). However, a more likely interpretation is that O'Halloran's reluctance to accept voluntary recognitions may result from learning a hard lesson about their downsides. In 1991, Superstore, with whom Local 401 had a voluntary recognition (negotiated prior to O'Halloran's appointment), was expanding to rural centres and negotiated with O'Halloran for voluntary recognition for the new stores. The negotiations broke down and Superstore instead signed a tentative agreement with the Teamsters union. Local 401 fought back with a successful organizing drive in the first rural store, thwarting the company's efforts. . "Doug had just been in the local for two or three years at that time and that was his first signature battle … [F]rom that point Doug didn't trust the company any further so then on any rural store we got our own cert" (staff, 27). The incident shifted O'Halloran's view on voluntary recognition and the need to develop a real base of support in the workplace. Similarly, O'Halloran's reluctance to accept lower wages for the No Frills workers may arise from the local's experience with Safeway and Superstore. From the outset the Superstore collective agreement has been inferior to the Safeway contract, and over the years Safeway has used the disparity

against Local 401 at the bargaining table. Not wanting to establish an even lower bar may simply be an act of preserving bargaining leverage, rather than "high principles".

Assessing O'Halloran's actions around voluntary recognitions draws out some of the contradictions in his leadership. Refusing voluntary recognitions and turning away potential members because of a sub-standard contract appears to be an act of principled unionism. A business union leader might accept the backroom deals to pad the union dues regardless of the quality of the agreement. However, O'Halloran's position arises more out of a pragmatic response to realities than principle per se. He experiences the risks involved in voluntary recognitions and is mindful of his future bargaining position. It is difficult to classify O'Halloran's action in this regard.

Over the years O'Halloran has developed a reputation for sparring with the National Office. "National Office has given Doug lots of leeway, first of all because they have to, Doug has his reputation … he does what he needs to advance the interests of his local union. My guess is when Doug decides to retire, that national office will probably have more of a presence here and it will be toned down a bit" (staff, 27). O'Halloran acknowledges the dynamic: "The national office, some of the situations we get ourselves into, down there they just think we are fucking crazy. Well O'Halloran did it this time!" (O'Halloran).

It appears this pattern of spurning the national office has not abated over the years. "I have seen many, many conflicts between Doug and the national office, as late as last October, Superstore. I found that to be disturbing actually. Just that that sort of

pressure would be put on Doug" (staff, 27). In the lead-up to the October 2013 Superstore

strike, locals in Saskatchewan and Manitoba signed deals at the last minute giving the

employer most of the rollbacks it was seeking. Multiple sources have said that because

Local 401 refused to settle, the National Office placed a great deal of pressure on

O'Halloran to abort a strike and take the rollbacks, pressure he resisted. Participants cite

multiple reasons for why O'Halloran resisted, from the booming state of Alberta's

economy to the other locals having "weak membership" (McLaren). It appears much of

O'Halloran's thinking revolved around his intuitive sense that the membership "needed"

a strike and would show enough strength to call Superstore's bluff. "You know you just

need a tremor here or there, a release for the membership. For 30 years they have put up

with this company and they need a protest, right?" (staff, 27). Another factor is that they

consciously built up the members' fortitude through planning, mobilization and extensive

communication. "We started a year in advance at Superstore" (Hesse). Regardless of why

the local decided to both challenge their largest employer and buck the National union,

they were in a position to do so because of decisions made by the leadership. Again, the

local's approach to the Superstore negotiations appears to be less about principles or

having suddenly tapped a well of militancy and more about learning from past mistakes.

A few years earlier the local was also nearing a strike with Superstore, but caved at the

last minute in part due to fears that their members would not hold out on strike. They

changed their tactics, including preparing much farther in advance, to prevent finding

themselves again in a position of weakness.

It is important to not overstate the degree to which Local 401 has diverged from other UFCW locals. Many aspects of UFCW Canada's culture is replicated in O'Halloran's leadership. "The very culture that put Doug O'Halloran in there, that appointed him, that keeps him in there is UFCW culture. … We know there are differences between locals, but all in all you have to ask yourself how significant are those differences? Are we really prepared to say this is an exception?" (KO 13). It may be more accurate to describe the dynamic as paradoxical. The degree of independence and rebellion is bounded by the structures and culture from which O'Halloran emerges. However, Local 401 has found a way to navigate a more militant and more independent route over the past 20 years. And much of this must be attributed to the decisions made and leadership approach of O'Halloran. Importantly, despite being framed by O'Halloran as principles, his actions more accurately reflect a pragmatic learning process.

Navigating Change within 401

The second aspect of leadership's role in change is how they have initiated and navigated change within the local itself. Local 401 went from a medium-sized grocery store local to the largest private sector local in Alberta representing multiple industries and sporting a high degree of diversity. Given the integral role of the leadership team in the local, it is natural to ask what role they played in steering the local toward revitalization and greater activism.

The tradition of centralized authority made re-directing the priorities of the local, in one respect, a simple process. For example, the decision to revamp the strike pay

(discussed in the previous chapter) was a strategic decision made by O'Halloran and then simply ratified by the Executive Board. Despite the simplicity of the process, the ramifications of the decision were sweeping. In essence, by providing strike pay that almost equaled, and at times exceeded, the members' average weekly pay, Local 401 reduced one of the barriers of going on strike, especially for lower-income, part-time workers. "The secret to [being able to get picket line support] is being able to pay reasonable strike pay. And thank god the membership at 401 has recognized that. We try to pay the people 80% of their income in strike pay. No other union does that" (O'Halloran). The local frames it as a fairness issue: "we are able to keep the wolf away from the door" (O'Halloran quoted in Kleiss 2009), but the decision also facilitated the local's ability to take strike action. Often strikes are ended, or potential strikes avoided with a last minute settlement, due to inadequate picket support. The union experiences, or fears, their members will lose their enthusiasm for a strike once the negative consequences (i.e., lost income) become real, will not staff picket lines in sufficient numbers and will clamour to be allowed to return to work. Picket line crossing and weak strike support are real risks in the industries represented by Local 401. Even though the 1997 Safeway strike lasted 74 days, participants report that the strike ended with an unsatisfactory contract because the morale and determination of the membership waned. "There is still a feeling in the stores from people who were on strike – I hear it all the time, I am not going on strike again. We didn't get more than we could have got" (member, 4). In its strikes at Palace Casino, Lakeside, Shaw Conference Centre and Old

Dutch, so-called "scabs" were an ongoing issue, one that would have been worse had the picket pay not been so high, and the union was able to achieve its relative victories in these disputes by shoring up the ability of picketing members to stay on strike until they got what they needed. The strike pay changes led to profound consequences for the local's ability to mobilize its members and stand up to employers.

However, it does not appear to be taken with any long view calculation. Rather it appears O'Halloran made the decision in response to a failed strike. It was an attempt to correct a mistake and prevent it from happening again. Again, it is an example of a pragmatic response to a practical problem that is elevated by the local leadership's narratives to one of a principled action.

Becoming an Organizing Union

Similarly, the decision to broaden their organizing efforts does not appear to arise from a coherent, identifiable moment, but rather from a series of responses to external forces. The responses were anchored, however, in a consistent narrative defining the identity of the local as an "organizing" union. The initial impetus for additional efforts on organizing came from UFCW National. At the 2003 National Convention, a decision "put percentage mandates on locals … whatever revenue you have, you have to spend a percentage on organizing" (staff, 2). The existence of a nationally mandated requirement to organize is confirmed by Victor Carrozzino, Executive Assistant to current National Director Paul Meinema, who indicates all locals are required to devote a portion of their dues to organizing (personal communication).

The National resolution started the wheels of organizing within Local 401, but it was internal decisions that shaped the nature of that organizing. There were many unorganized grocery stores and related food service companies in Alberta available to the local as potential targets. Yet, over time, Local 401 opted to organize new types of industries rather than focus on deepening their impact on grocery. Until mid-2014[9], the union had not engaged in a major grocery-related organizing drive in almost 15 years.

However, the outcome of organizing casinos, meat packing plants, car rental companies and so forth did not emerge out of a coherent set of strategic decisions. Participants could not articulate a vision for Local 401's organizing strategy. Instead the explanation was a self-identification that Local 401 "organizes anybody".

> *We're pretty proud of the fact that we're the union that will represent anyone, even when other unions don't want to because it's economically not feasible. Shaw was the prime example. (The Canadian Union of Public Employees) suggested the workers come to us because they believed that we could take on the kind of fight that it took to win there."* (O'Halloran quoted in Howell and Mah 2005)

Repeated participants expressed, usually with a high degree of pride, that Local 401 will organize any group of workers who need and want unionization. "[W]e certainly don't turn anybody away. I've never heard of anybody approaching us looking to be unionized and we've said no" (member, 6). One member put it rather poetically: "they absorb all. It is kind of like rays of lights coming in. It is like a rainbow" (member, 7). The willingness to bring in any workers is not simply a recognition they will unionize any industry or

---

[9] In June 2014, at the end of the study's data collection period, Local 401 launched a large-scale, multi-faceted campaign aimed at Save-On Foods (Pattison Group), who currently have a province-wide voluntary recognition with the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC).

employer, but a statement of their self-identity as a union who takes on difficult fights

and that this attribute sets them apart from other unions. It also reinforces the narrative

that UFCW 401 acts on principles.

> *You know some places that have 20 members, 40 members, 50 members a lot of unions won't organize them. A lot of unions won't organize places where you know you are going to have a fight. We have always had a different philosophy. The union should always be there with morals and principles to do the job for the underdog.* (O'Halloran)

The source of this narrative is openly identified as coming from O'Halloran and

his approach. "Doug's always said – and I agree with Doug's position – anybody that

wants to be organized we organize" (member, 4). Participants also noted that organizing

targets were often decided by O'Halloran for reasons of personal determination or

stubbornness. For example, many participants indicated that the eventual victory at

Lakeside was due to O'Halloran refusing to give up. The local began attempting to

organize Lakeside in 1992, only finally winning certification in 2005. Despite substantial

defeats over multiple campaigns, O'Halloran kept ordering another effort. "So virtually

for the first three or four years we never got our allotted 40%. But through the persistence

of president O'Halloran for one, we remained here" (Duckworth 2007). On O'Halloran's

instructions the local purchased a house to create a permanent presence in Brooks. "Doug

again sent a signal that we were not going away. We were going to be there until hell

freezes over if need be. So we purchased a house. That was in the fall of 1998" (staff,

27).

Often Local 401 did not actively target employers, but simply responded to

requests. It was always O'Halloran who decided whether to take on the challenge. "[At]

Palace Casino, a lawyer who was working for the [staff] association phoned us and said,

look, this is going to be a battle, and the association can't win, will you take on the fight?

So we did. A lot of these places we end up organizing … because of other groups coming

to us" (O'Halloran). When asked how he determined when to take on a particular

organizing campaign and when to decline, O'Halloran denies any strategic calculations,

instead returning to his overall narrative of principle. "It really is a philosophy that either

you have or you don't have" (O'Halloran). None of the leadership team were able to

articulate a long term rationale or matrix for selecting organizing targets, leaving the

impression that the choices for campaigns were due to a mixture of chance, stubbornness

and personal impulses.

On the surface this is a surprising finding, as one might reasonably expect the

kind of shifts witnessed at UFCW 401 would arise from a vision for change. However,

the nature of Local 401's autocratic leadership render moot any need for vision.

O'Halloran does not have to persuade anybody of his plans, nor does he have to justify

his actions to the membership; he can do as he pleases which does not lend itself to

articulations of rationale. Seen from below, the membership had little say in who the

local organized, thus losing control over what their local would look like in the future.

Innovations in Organizing

The development of innovative organizing and representation strategies appear to

have formed through a similar ad hoc process. Local 401 adopted a number of new

approaches to campaigning, including multi-lingual literature, peer-to-peer organizing,

involving the union in the cultural communities of the workers, and changing how they persuaded potential members. In some cases they adopted strategies used by unions elsewhere, but often they were developed internally through trial and error. The emergence of new tactics was less strategic and pro-active than it was reactive; the organizers were learning from their past mistakes. To return to the Lakeside example, traditional organizing methods weren't working.

> *It is one thing for a union to go in and create a campaign and we tried that several times. It doesn't work. You can't create a campaign if you don't have people who want to organize their workplace … You know in January of 1999 we came [to Brooks], we signed up people, we got a vote, we were slaughtered. In 2000 we came, we talked to people, we got a vote, we were slaughtered worse. 2001, we did the same thing, we didn't take it to a vote. 2002, same thing. … In '03 [we] went back we talked to a few employees and … we said is there anything that is going to be different this year, is anything going to change?"* (staff, 27).

The local did not run a campaign in 2003, and in 2004 only returned after a group of Sudanese workers at the plant walked out in protest of working conditions. The subsequent campaign looked very different than previous attempts. "Because that time was driven by the members, that is the difference" (staff, 27). Organizers reacted to a specific set of external circumstances and developed their new strategies "on the fly". The common message among participants was that they tried new things because old tactics were not working and were not even sure the innovations would help.

Being innovative was simply a survival strategy. "We were going to organize on a large scale. But that meant massive litigation and not being afraid to litigate. And not being afraid to litigate meant you needed the creative argument and a creative way of doing things" (staff, 24). The narrative of necessary creativity led to a growing stridency

and forcefulness in their strategies, communications and outreach. They developed a

tendency to draw in community groups, such as churches and advocacy organizations,

into their disputes and broadening the nature of the issues they discussed. In one example,

during the 2006/7 Palace Casino strike they videotaped people crossing the picket line

and threatened to post their pictures on an anti-scab website. The action provoked a

lengthy legal battle with the province's Privacy Commissioner finally resolved at the

Supreme Court of Canada in 2013[10]. They also increased their use of paid advertising to

persuade the public and to expand the scope of the dispute.

The evolution of their communication strategies can be seen in the design and

messaging found in their paid advertising. During the 1997 Safeway Strike newspaper

ads were black and white with a simple message of "Don't Shop at Safeway". In the 2002

Shaw Conference Centre dispute, the ads were slightly more forceful, accusing Shaw of

being "Guilty of unfair treatment of workers" alongside photos of actual Shaw

employees. At Lakeside, the local began the practice of widening the debate, running ads

asking "Is this an Alberta worth celebrating?" alongside a story of an immigrant Lakeside

employee and a mock Alberta centennial logo (2005 was Alberta's centennial), designed

to link centennial celebrations to mistreatment of immigrant workers. At Palace Casino,

ads were targeted at criticizing the gaming industry as immoral and the mistreatment of

workers was merely an extension of its immorality. At Superstore and Old Dutch, public

health issues were central to the ad messaging, accusing the stores/factory of mice

---

[10] The decision, a clear victory for the union, proclaimed that the right of expression on a picket line is a fundamental aspect of labour relations and cannot be over-ridden by concerns of individual privacy.

infestations, lack of cleaning and food safety violations. In all the strikes, websites were

set up with provocative URLs, such as "greedygalen.com" (owner of

Superstore/Loblaws), and evocative messaging highlighting owners' excesses and/or the

employer's shortcomings.

By design the local shifted from traditional boycott messages to more

controversial and hyper-dramatic messaging. The leadership team began to feel a more

provocative and blunt messaging would attract more attention, raise the stakes for the

employer and increase the likelihood of settlement. Plus they were aware it was good for

mobilizing and engaging their own membership. While the increasing volume of their ads

was intentional, the shift was reactive to external forces rather than pro-active

strategizing. As Hesse explains:

> *Ultimately the union should be the voice of reason and compassion, but to the extent that we do that we get marginalized. We don't get noticed by the media and so you have got to be loud to get attention in a loud, provocative world. ... Another variable would just be the size and shape of capital, consolidation in industry, so the players on the other side are bigger and bigger and bigger. If you are going to be David and Goliath, the slingshot isn't going to work anymore. ... You need a bigger rock in the slingshot, a multi-barreled slingshot or whatever. ... Outrageous times will increasingly call for outrageous measures. There is a reactive component to what we do. We certainly try to be pro-active, but there is a reactive component. ... If people who are not involved in your cause or your purpose directly to be interested in or get your message you need to be provocative. I think there is an element of responsibility. Employers will say it is outrageously provocative to talk about food safety in Lakeside, but it would be irresponsible not to.* (Hesse)

To restate they did so because they felt it was necessary to survive. The shift was aided

by the local's internal narrative of being a militant, principled union willing to be "truth-

tellers" (Hesse). Local 401 may have developed new ways to organize, but they did not set out to innovate, they see themselves as simply doing what they must to survive.

Embracing Diversity

Finally, the local's embracing of diversity and mobilization of normally marginalized groups parallels other developments in that it is more a reaction to changing circumstances rather than a concerted, planned effort. The changing demographics of the grocery industry brought more newcomers, women, workers of colour and young workers into the local's ranks. Plus, as we have seen, the decisions to target workplaces with higher proportions of immigrants, women and youth were reactive and idiosyncratic rather than part of a coherent strategy to reach out to those groups of workers. However, once confronted with the reality of a so-called "diverse" membership and potential membership, there is evidence that the local engaged in a process of learning how to effectively represent such a membership. Once again, the process was one of learning from mistakes.

> *I think it is a one-on-one, a case-by-case, it's a feel your way around, what works, what doesn't and you have to be very light on your feet in this job. Particularly if you're on strike as much as we are, taking on different people that we are. You have to be very light on your feet, very agile … okay that didn't work I'm not going to do that again, I am going to do this or this person's not that person so I am going to deal with them differently.* (staff, 2)

Initiatives such as multi-lingual communications, outreach to cultural social networks and peer-to-peer organizing arose to solve practical barriers they experienced. For example, the union started actively working to incorporate cultural leaders actively in the workings of the local after observing dynamics among particular cultural groups. "So if you want

to organize a place or even get a strike vote, I will use the Phillippinos for example, if you got a strong Philippino who really believes in the union, that one person can turn an entire group of Phillippinos to understanding … why you gotta take these steps, do what you gotta do, right?" (McLaren).

The narrative of doing whatever needs to be done drives the leadership's explanation for their innovations.

> *For example, we organized the Baccarat Casino, largely an Asian workforce. So how's a white German Polish guy organize an Asian workforce? Well, we interacted with the workers, found people of that ethnicity who were of a similar mindset to us, immediately employed them … as organizers, instantly. They just started doing house calls with us. … [We] translated documents into simplified Chinese. … So that is recognizing your demographic and reaching out to that demographic.* (Hesse)

The leadership approaches the question of inclusion from a pragmatic, rather than principled, stand. They do things because they work.

However, there is a sense that the local's definition of diversity may be a narrow one. They see the process as one of building "cultural sensitivity" (staff, 27) rather than equity. They measure their progress in terms of numbers: "When I became president we maybe had 2 people on staff who were female, on the executive board maybe three, four. Now 50% of the executive board is women, 50% of the staff are women" (O'Halloran). There does not appear to be much self-reflection about how reflecting the diversity of the membership might require changes to the union's structures or processes. The traditional (white and male) union model is viewed as fully compatible with the changing demographic profile of the union.

Across questions of membership diversity, organizing targets, controversial and/or innovative strategies and tactics or structural changes to the local, a clear pattern emerges in how UFCW's leadership responded to shifting external conditions and contexts. The local did not develop grand schemes and new visions for how to chart the union's future. Instead, change came from a series of reactive, in-the-moment decisions that had longer term ramifications for the local. However, those decisions were anchored in strongly held narratives about who the union was and what they do. As a result those decisions contained an internal consistency that, over time, led to an evolution in the union and its practices.

Leadership, Accidental Revitalization and the Consequences for Union Renewal

The patterns found in UFCW 401's evolution over the past 20 years reveal two significant findings. First, renewal arose from a series of pragmatic, reactive decisions rather than any conscious strategy to revamp the local's practices and approach. This suggests reform can occur through unintentional mechanisms, a term which this study coins "accidental revitalization". Second, the role of the leadership is central to understanding how renewal came about, a consideration that complicates our understanding of union renewal processes. This section will examine these two findings and explore their consequences for the union renewal project.

Accidental Revitalization

The study author came into the project expecting to find a "eureka" moment for UFCW 401's leadership, the point when they recognized the need to change how they did

their job if they were to survive. It never came. While the leadership team recognized the downward trends in the grocery industry, the rising wave of neo-liberal economics and politics and its associated anti-union animus, and the challenges of increasing diversity in their workforces and their threat to the viability of the union, it never crafted a strategy to combat or address them. It may be because they were too busy fighting immediate battles.

Instead, renewal came via a series of ad hoc learnings, from trying not to repeat past mistakes and to become more effective in a pragmatic way. However, those learnings were anchored by a strong narrative understanding of who Local 401 was and how they do things. This narrative was focused around being fighters, taking on any challenge that came and of being unafraid of bold, controversial action. It is this narrative that gave the set of decisions marking their evolution coherence and effectiveness. They were simultaneously building a militant culture and using that frame to justify its construction.

The particular path taken by UFCW 401 does not neatly fit the current wisdom of how unions reform themselves. Reform efforts are seen as resulting either from directed, centralized action by national leadership in response to a crisis or an analysis of the depth of the problem (Voss 2010; Stinson and Ballantyne 2009) or from rank-and-file resurgence and a turn towards activism unionism (Cranford and Ladd 2003; Foley and Baker 2009). In the case of UFCW 401, it is a bit of both and a bit of neither. The national union played a minor role in directing resources for organizing, and a sub-set of

local members had become more active in recent years, spurring some change. However, the bulk of the transformation resulted from the actions of local staff and leadership. Further it occurred without an identifiable crisis within the local, without a change in leadership, and without a palpable call for change by the membership; all regularly identified as necessary precursors to renewal efforts.

More importantly, the change occurred without an intentional, conscious plan of action. A commonality among the different threads of the union reform literature is the notion that renewal is an active project of transformation, that the actors are aware of their goal and engage decisions to achieve that goal. Commonly held definitions of union renewal embed within them a notion of intentionality: "labour revitalization itself consists of initiatives conceived, developed and taken by labour organizations to redefine their relations with workers, employers and the state" (Cornfield and McCammon 2003, 16). Union leaders and/or rank-and-file members are perceived as making calculated decisions based upon an explicit analysis of how to address changing external conditions. Case studies of renewal (e.g., Milkman 2006; Stinson and Ballantyne 2009; Robertson and Murninghan 2009) highlight policy papers, internal debates and structural and budgetary reforms aimed at achieving the goals of renewal.

Understanding how revitalization occurred within Local 401 requires a new way of understanding how union renewal can occur. Renewal need not result from a measured, calculated set of actions but can be the indirect consequences of responding to immediate stimuli and changing contexts. To explain the patterns observed with Local

401, the term "accidental revitalization" may prove useful. Accidental revitalization does not imply stupidity, luck or chance. It refers to the notion that actions with a focus on the immediate can lead to longer term transformations of union behaviour and structure. Doug O'Halloran and the 401 leadership did not embark on a project to revamp how their local operates, in fact in many respects they are highly conservative; instead they responded to specific issues with focused decisions designed to win a particular battle. However, their decisions developed an internal consistency, fueled by a strong narrative self-identity, which built upon one another to alter the longer term trajectory of the local. If someone decided to follow a river system to its destination, they would end up at the ocean, even if they were unaware that all rivers lead, ultimately, to the sea. What gets them there is the logic of pursuing a single path, not the conscious awareness of the end goal. The leadership of UFCW 401 had a clear sense of how they wanted to respond to specific threats to their union – they chose the river system they wanted to follow. Their goal was, possibly, the next spot of calm waters, or even simply to navigate some treacherous rapids. Yet the series of consistent decisions led them, slowly, partially, toward the ocean.

There is logic and intention in accidental revitalization. It simply resides in a different location than much of the renewal literature asserts. The intention is in the moment, in acting in the best interests of the local. That there were no policy papers or grand edicts informing the actions neither diminishes their significance, nor, as we have seen, reduces their effectiveness. Accidental revitalization reflects the complex reality of

unions in the 21st century. Often there is insufficient time to ponder a long term strategy for survival. Sometimes unions have to react immediately, regardless of whether there is a longer term plan in place. The concept of accidental revitalization opens up space for a more fluid and pragmatic path to union renewal, one more reflective of practical experiences on the ground.

Introducing a notion of accidental revitalization is not intended to supplant existing paths for union renewal. Instead it adds another dimension to our understanding about these processes. Real life is never as clean as theory, and recognizing that sometimes renewal occurs through the accumulation of consistent short-term decisions bridges some of the distance between practice and theory. In fact, accidental revitalization can be integrated into more formal notions of renewal, creating a multi-faceted explanation for how unions renew themselves. While a union may construct a framework for reform and implement critical path decisions, either centrally or via rank-and-file action, to re-shape the union, they are still reliant upon individual actors reacting and responding to real-time situations. Staff members, local presidents, organizers and seconded activists are all asked to perform specific functions and roles in the renewal project. They are engaging with workers, employers and the state which have their own interests and behave in particular ways. Those actors make judgment calls frequently, albeit informed by the broader strategies, and those judgments shape the direction of the renewal project. Accidental revitalization recognizes that any learning organization will encompass both intention and consequence. To date the importance of consequence has

been under-developed in the reform literature; accidental revitalization is intended to correct that.

Finally, accidental revitalization meshes nicely with Murray et al's (2010) concept of referential unionisms. Their concept permits the theoretical possibility of stepping outside the boundary of intentionality, recognizing that past experience and narrative framing also play a role. The experience in UFCW 401 is something of an embodiment of referential unionisms. It is a strong exemplar of the power of narrative frameworks, a notion discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters. In working together with referential unionisms, accidental revitalization has the potential to contribute to the evolving union renewal literature, explored more fully below.

Role of Leadership

First we need to consider a second significance of UFCW's revitalization experience. The union renewal literature, as mentioned above, emphasizes the importance of rank-and-file mobilization and agitation as well as the influence of national leadership and centralized control. Unions renew, we are told, when national leadership make strategic decisions about the future of the union as a whole, or when members react to a crisis and demand a change in how the union operates (Voss 2010). Neither of these scenarios applies to UFCW 401.

The story of Local 401 is more about continuity than change. The same leaders were in place throughout. The structure was stable and facilitated leadership authority over the local. While the local's primary industry underwent a slow transformation and

the union saw a gradual weakening of its position in the industry, we cannot point to a

particular point of crisis or a specific moment where a strategic shift occurred. The

changes in UFCW 401 did not come from rank-and-file agitation, nor did they come from

the national union. The usual markers of renewal are absent.

On the surface this appears to contradict the existing literature around how

renewal occurs. In one way it does pose a challenge to our understanding of the dynamics

behind renewal efforts. Much of the literature dismisses the possibility of strong local

leaders acting as agents of transformation. The assumption is that these leaders are too

entrenched and too conservative in their approach, that they have a vested interest in the

status quo. "Unsettling perceptions of change – steps into the unknown – can easily be

perceived and experienced as threatening for leaders as well as staff and members"

(Kumar and Schenk 2006, 45). That is why either mandated change from above or

agitation from below is required. The results of this study suggest that assumption is

over-stated. While local leadership can become entrenched (as any position of power

can), it is important to not be too prescriptive. Leadership's response to renewal

possibilities is contingent upon a variety of factors, including the leadership's internalized

narrative frameworks. Local 401 shows that a leadership confident in its own authority

and legitimacy is capable of making decisions that can lead to renewal.

The case of Local 401 does not fit the previously constructed scenarios for

reform. This could lead us to question the voracity of existing theories around reform.

However, a more accurate interpretation, one that incorporates both the current wisdom

about reform and the potential for outliers such as Local 401, is to see the opportunities

for renewal as resting on a continuum of possibility. Top down, centralized reform led by

national unions and staff is one possible opportunity path. A more grassroots generation

of localized change is another. What this study suggests is that localized central control is

a third possible path. UFCW 401 is, in many respects, a local version of Voss' top-down

renewal scenario. Strong leadership in a position to implement change is able to bring

about a degree of renewal, simply at the local rather than national level. It is not so much

a contradiction as it is another level of possibility, one not contemplated by Voss' macro-

analysis.

Local 401 is only a single case. It may prove to be the exception. But its existence

suggests that more opportunities exist for renewal than the literature acknowledges. This

is significant. Like all other renewal scenarios, certain conditions are required. The

leadership needs to be secure but not isolated. There needs to be a set of challenges or

crises to spark innovative strategies, although these crises can be of an immediate nature.

The leadership needs to have enough legitimacy and authority to effectively implement

innovation. Finally, the local's narrative framework needs to promote an outlook of

innovation, experimentation and some form of "higher principle" as an anchor. Even if

their actions are not actually motivated by principle and instead, as in the case of Local

401, by pragmatic response, the narrative affords a coherence to their actions. It may be

these conditions are rare, which is why we have not seen examples previously in the

literature. But the case of UFCW 401 demonstrates that it is possible to arrange such a set of conditions in which local-based, centralized renewal is activated.

Consequences for Union Renewal

The union renewal literature has consistently been grounded in union realities and has contributed greatly to the project of revitalizing unions in the 21st century. Renewal scholars have endeavoured to reflect the practice of union change within their theorizing. It is a strength of the discipline. In this context, the current study contributes by drawing upon real union experiences to reveal additional dynamics that take place around renewal. Specifically it adds three important insights to the literature.

First, as discussed above it creates a third path of opportunity for renewal to occur. This finding is not so much a contradiction of what has come before, but can serve as a supplement to what we already understand as possible scenarios. The majority of renewal project likely occur as Voss, Kumar and others have articulated. This case study suggests, however, that other pathways are possible if the conditions are right. This possibility means union renewal theorizing needs to be more flexible to incorporate the kind of dynamic found in Local 401, but other possible pathways currently not recognized. Union renewal theory needs to see revitalization as a set of contingencies and contexts which can manifest themselves in multiple ways and at multiple levels of interaction. In recent years, many renewal theorists have become moving in a direction recognizing contingency (e.g., see Levesque and Murray 2010; Lévesque and Murray 2013). This case study should be seen as a data point encouraging theorists to more fully

develop our theories of contingency and possibility in the context of revitalization. There are more possible scenarios for renewal than has been recognized. More work, obviously, is required.

Second, this study has surfaced the possibility of accidental revitalization. This finding challenges the predilection of union renewal scholars toward a rational, planned, intentional approach to renewal. There is no question renewal can be plotted and designed in the manner described by the bulk of the literature. The case of Local 401 has demonstrated that renewal can also be a consequence of inter-related but non-associated decisions and actions. In many respects it can be argued the non-intentional form of renewal is a more accurate reflection of actual union experiences. Most union leaders and activists are pre-occupied by daily issues and challenges. They focus their energy on the latest round of negotiations, the most current organizing drive or a looming political campaign. At the local level, unionists are pragmatic practitioners. They are most certainly capable of long term vision and strategizing, but the emphasis is often on more immediate concerns. There is an instinctive logic to understanding renewal as a by-product of shorter-term decisions. The union renewal literature can be made stronger by more coherently incorporating the possibility of accidental revitalization as a possible manifestation of renewal.

The tool that allows for this study's findings to be integrated into the broader union renewal literature is the concept of referential unionisms. It is also this study's interactions with referential unionisms that make up the third contribution to union

renewal. Murray et al.'s (2010) concept opened up explorations of union renewal by focusing on the effect of internal dynamics on the potential for renewal. By finding that union's self-identification – their references for how they respond to crisis and change – partly determine whether they engage in a renewal project or not, Murray et al. actively insert the notion of contingency into the renewal discussion. How they come to understand their identity as a union and what they have been in the past shapes how they act going forward.

One way to understand referential unionisms is to see them as unions' narrative frameworks. They are the story union activists and leaders tell themselves about how they act and what principles they hold. The series of decisions and actions taken by the leadership of UFCW 401 are given focus and coherence by the narratives they construct about themselves. They are a union who fights, stands on principles and organizes anybody. Their narratives also provide the self-identity of a union that is willing to experiment, take bold steps and "do whatever it takes" to represent their members. These narrative frames link their situation specific decisions into a coherent package of reforms that led to revitalization.

In a narrow sense, the case of UFCW 401 is an empirical example that confirms the validity of the referential unionisms theory. But it is more than that. The interaction of referential unionisms and accidental revitalization create a new lens for understanding union renewal. Accidental revitalization helps transition the theory of how unions change, as expressed in referential unionisms, to a grounded understanding of renewal in

practice. In other words, accidental revitalization demonstrates the applicability of referential unionisms in practice, while referential unionisms provides accidental revitalization with a coherent mechanism for how the process can occur. Together the two concepts provide a more nimble explanation for the contingencies of union renewal. They bring to the table not only an explanation for when renewal might occur (and when it might not), but a grounded process for how narrative frameworks can be translated into tangible outcomes. When brought together they have greater explanatory power than in isolation. Their interaction adds significant insight into the internal dynamics of unions as they engage in union renewal.

Finally it is through the conceptual web of referential unionisms/accidental revitalization that the findings in the case study can be fully integrated into the union renewal literature. Bringing to the surface the role of narrative frameworks turns what could have been an outlier case into an exemplar of what is possible. The actions of UFCW 401 do not fit the traditional mould of renewal. On the surface their structure, internal dynamics and external actions do not necessarily add up to the outcomes they have achieved. Only by looking below the surface and unpacking the narrative they tell themselves (and others) about who they are do their structures, actions and outcomes start to mesh. The logic can only be found once the binding influence of their narratives is revealed.

Conclusion

To make sense of UFCW 401's revitalization, and the unique role its leadership plays in achieving it, it is necessary to step outside the traditional union renewal constructions. To begin, it is a case that simply "does not fit" well in the existing literature related to renewal. But if we incorporate an analysis of their narrative frameworks and use those narratives as a sort of decoder ring, we can come to see how the specific experiences of the union led to the witnessed outcomes. Leadership was central to the revitalization process, but not in the manner expected. The unique role of the local leadership to create innovation, fused through a powerful narrative, took a traditional grocery store local in unexpected directions. And the process in which they engaged is only understood by incorporating new ways of understanding unions and what they do.

Chapter 6: Blurring the Business-Social Union Divide

One of the most enduring notions of union behaviour in North America is the division between "business unions" and "social unions". Despite decades of experience suggesting the reality is more complicated, the conceptual dualism remains. Part of the reason is that much of the work in the area attempts to classify unions based upon the externally visible components of their behaviour: bargaining strategies, public statements, degree of member mobilization and activism, political engagement, and outward signs of internal democracy. The categorizations serve to organize and make manageable our insights into union behaviour and structure, which is why they remain powerful concepts. However, they risk over-simplifying the internal life of unions and overlooking other dimensions to union forms.

We must also acknowledge that much has changed for unions in the past thirty years. The onslaught of neoliberalism, globalization and de-industrialization has dramatically remade the world in which unions operate. While the concepts have existed as long as industrial unionism their meaning became entrenched during the Wagner Era within the context of the Cold War. Are such conceptualizations relevant today?

UFCW Local 401 is a useful case for examining the question of whether our longstanding notions of the two unionisms accurately depict union forms of behaviour today. UFCW International has an entrenched reputation as a classic "business" union, with their top-down structures, resistance to activist mobilization and reluctance to engage in radical politics. The same is true, to a lesser extent, for UFCW Canada. The

outward evidence of UFCW 401 is similarly linked to business unionism, as we have

seen in previous chapters. Yet, when one spends some time examining what Local 401

actually DOES, the picture begins to blur. Aggressive tactics against employers, frequent

strike action, a willingness to engage in a variety of political and broader social causes,

and an embracing of under-represented workers belie the portrait of a stodgy,

conservative business union. Compared to similar UFCW locals in Saskatchewan and

Manitoba, Local 401 appears to be more militant and embracing of diversity. Making

sense of UFCW401's apparent contradictions requires a more careful examination of

features not readily visible to the outside observer, and may demand a re-thinking of how

we categorize unions

This chapter examines the social-business union divide through an exploration of

how the concept is understood within Local 401 and how it manifests itself in actual

union action. The chapter will examine Local 401 from an integrated perspective, taking

into account structure, process, and outcomes as well as the intentions and internal

narratives that drive the local's actions. The chapter will also examine the local's

perceptions on the topic, exploring how they view the union role and where they might

place UFCW 401 in the business-union dichotomy. This latter question adds insights into

the internal logics and identities of the local, which play an important role in how they

make sense of their actions. Taking such an integrated perspective will reveal the

dynamics between the practicalities of Local 401's experience and the theory of union

forms, which in turn lead us to new reflections on the nature of the unionism duality

Comparing UFCW 401 to Theory

The structures, processes and actions of UFCW 401 are intriguing, making for an interesting storyline. However, what do they teach us about how we should classify unions? We need to compare the practical realities of Local 401 to the theory of business and social unionism to see how well they fit the conceptualizations. Thus the chapter begins by assessing what we know about UFCW 401 in the context of the theory.

In her overview of business and social unionism in theory and practice, Ross (2012) examines unions using three elements: collective action frame, strategic repertoire and internal organizational practices. These elements are useful for making sense of the complexity of union practices to develop some degree of a coherent understanding of how they fit into theoretical context. While Ross begins with collective action frame, arguing it organizes the logics of the other two, our discussion will take the reverse order given much has already been revealed about Local 401's structure and leadership. The discussion below will attempt to draw together observations about UFCW 401's practices with our theoretical understanding of forms of unionism.

Internal Organizational Practices

Chapter Four closely examined the formal structures and informal decision-making processes of UFCW 401, revealing a local operating with an openly top-down, leader-focused internal process. While they have incorporated a loose, informal dynamic which makes the leadership appear approachable and accountable, there is little doubt that the local is run by the small cadre of leaders. The changes to the local in the past 20

years, as discussed in Chapter Five, were determined and navigated by the leadership

with little input from members. Further, their long tenure and lack of any visible dissent

within the local gives the leadership team a high degree of security. Elections appear

fairly nominal and the oversight by the Executive Board more theoretical than actual.

Top-down structures with secure, longstanding leaders are considered a common

and defining feature of business unionism. In this regard, Local 401 fits neatly into that

conceptual basket. It inherited a traditional business union structure from the

International, and the local leadership has utilized that structure to secure their authority

within the local.

Other aspects of business union internal practices are not so easily applied to

Local 401. One of the dimensions in which social and business unions are supposed to

differ is their level of rank-and-file activism and the degree to which the union

encourages member empowerment and engagement. UFCW 401 cannot be considered an

activist local. They have long relied heavily upon paid staff for handling the work of

servicing and negotiating. Until recently, shop stewards in grocery stores did not even file

grievances, instead handing that responsibility off to the staff representative.

In the past decade, however, there has been a concerted effort to shift away from

that model, and the local has invested a great deal of energy in expanding its activist pool,

training activists, creating more opportunities for activism and giving more responsibility

to workplace stewards. As in any effort to engage workers in union life, the results have

been uneven and imperfect. It should also be noted that the nature of the new activism is

workplace-focused, improving ground level activism on shop floors, rather than encouragement of greater input into the direction of the local itself. Further, the nature of the training is designed, in addition to skill building, to imbue a common narrative framework regarding the local and the nature of union activism. It is an act of solidarity building through homogenization of perspective.

The nature of Local 401's activist culture complicates the picture. Clearly it is not a picture of a classic social union; the scope of activism is narrow and tightly controlled. The local places an emphasis on unity and common goals within the organization, which is also a marker of a business union. Yet, in a Canadian 21st century context, UFCW 401 could be considered among the more "active" of union locals in the country. They are building an activist base in the many hundreds. They have not been afraid to mobilize their members through strike and other direct action to further union goals. Further they appear to encourage members to take leadership roles on picket lines and in their workplaces and they draw upon members who have leadership standing in their cultural and geographic communities to engage in union affairs. Their approach to activism may be an example of internal processes in flux.

Another element of their internal practices that is harder to categorize is their approach to finances. Moody (1988) demonstrated that business unionism leads to prioritizing the health and stability of the local over other goals, leading to a degree of financial conservatism and a tendency to intertwine the interests of the union with the interest of the employer. This tendency is not readily evident in UFCW 401. The

leadership emphasizes their willingness to risk the financial stability of the local to fight for their members. "I remember even back in '97 [Safeway strike] Doug says if we have to we will sell the office buildings, we will sell everything we got in order to get it done" (McLaren). They talk about the money they spend to wage campaigns and fight legal battles: "We spent probably a couple million dollars preparing for the Superstore strike. And as a matter of fact before, three weeks before the strike, maybe a month, we spent a million dollars. We ran a full page ad in every major newspaper, which cost $450,000" (O'Halloran). While much of this talk can be interpreted as bravado and part of a narrative construction, there can also be no question that Local 401 "puts its money where its mouth is". The multi-year effort to organize Lakeside cost millions. They were willing to take on first contract labour disputes with units rejected by other unions. Some of the criticism from the former national staffer interviewed was their lack of attention to financial matters. Their behaviour is suggestive of a leadership more focused on winning battles for their members than ensuring the long-term financial health of the union, which has more in common with social unionism than business unionism.

Further, the leadership of the local is clear that its interests and the interests of their employers are in conflict. The local is highly antagonistic in its bargaining approaches and quick to criticize wide aspects of the employers' operations. Unlike Samuel Gompers, John Lewis and other famous business unionists, the Local 401 leadership do not preach the virtues of capitalism; instead they are quite clear that capitalism is the problem and they openly teach that analysis to their members.

Built upon a base of business union structure, Local 401 demonstrates some inclination toward social union approaches in their internal union life, making it hard to discern where they are most appropriately slotted. Making the task more complicated is that the nature of their leadership is pervasive throughout all aspects of the local, requiring that all actions and practices be interpreted within the context of such a strong, male form of leadership. In its internal operations, clear signs of both forms of unionism can be found.

Strategic Repertoire

The second element in union practice is the range and choices of their strategic repertoire, what tactics and actions they adopt. Business unions restrict themselves to the traditional strategies of formalized collective bargaining, while social unions adopt a wider scope of actions to further their goals. UFCW's range of tactics can be difficult to categorize.

Social unions are known to be active in broader political campaigns and issues, using a wide range of strategies for advancing their members interests. In this regard, Local 401 can be considered moderately active. Their primary political vehicle, like many unions in Canada, is support for the NDP provincially. Their support is mostly financial donations and, traditionally, booking off staff to work campaigns. In recent years they have begun expanding the pool of people booked off for campaigns to include shop stewards and other activists. The President has taken a strong informal leadership role in the party, playing something of a "king-maker" around key party decisions. They

have taken a strong partisan stand internally, making the NDP a central topic of any gathering of members. Other political engagement has consisted mostly of financial and some volunteer support for various left wing political causes, including Medicare, anti-privatization initiatives, progressive research, LGBT solidarity and migrant worker advocacy. In recent years, the local has also taken a leadership role in the AFL and local labour councils, increasing its level of cooperation with other unions in the province.

While this is not an insubstantial list of political activities, it is bounded in significant ways. Most support is demonstrated either through financial or in-kind donations or through symbolic gestures (e.g., entering a float in Gay Pride parades). These are the kind of actions that are easily approved and controlled by the local leadership and do not require significant membership mobilization. On the other hand, their overt and dogged efforts to promote the NDP among their membership speak to an attempt to engage the members more directly in politics.

Of course, support for the NDP in recent decades is not necessarily a signal of social unionism. Many of the more conservative unions in the country are NDP loyalists, while more politically militant unions have distanced themselves from the traditional party of labour. The relationship between partisan support and forms of unionism is not easy to discern[11], and will not be resolved here. However, within an Alberta context, active partisan support for the provincial NDP, a small party with only a handful of seats,

---

[11] As a case in point, the former CAW, by reputation a "social union", took up the practice of strategic voting leading to their endorsement of multiple Liberal candidates. Such a tactic is usually regarded as a sign of business unionism.

is interpreted as a more politically aggressive act as more conservative unions opt to support the larger Liberal party (or, inexplicably, the governing Conservatives) or remain steadfastly non-partisan. Therefore Local 401's open support for the party is noteworthy.

Interestingly, the leadership's pitch for the NDP is couched in class terms. "[When talking to members] we always say the NDP is for the working person" (McLaren). O'Halloran puts it more bluntly: "So do you want to join a party that is screwing the average workers on any given day or do you belong to a party that is fighting for the rights of those workers" (O'Halloran). In education classes and conferences, the leadership incorporates lessons in economics and politics. For example at the Superstore Shop Stewards Conference, a talk about the role of the shop steward focused mostly on the nature of capitalism and corporations and the need for working class-based resistance as embodied in the shop steward (field notes). Both how effective these tactics are, and how deeply into the membership they penetrate are open questions. Also, there is no attempt to discuss alternatives to capitalism and the goal appears to be raising awareness of conflicting interests under capitalism rather than begin a discussion of socialism. Yet the language is not reminiscent of traditional business unionism and appears to have more in common with social unionism.

Yet, Local 401 is known mostly for its organizing and labour dispute activities. In this realm there is no question it has been innovative, aggressive and creative, drawing in larger social issues and unabashedly targeting the nature of corporate power. It has also adapted strategies to reach out to racialized workers, young workers and other groups

normally under-represented by unions. Activities of this nature fall into a grey zone in the unionism literature. They are narrowly focused on the bargaining relationship, aiming as they are at achieving a "good" contract for members. However, the local's practice of broadening the framing of the dispute to public health, corporate greed and social justice issues in their communications and their adaptation of new strategies acknowledging differing identities of workers suggest a linkage to a type of social union tactic that many business unions may not attempt. In particular their ads and external communications (i.e., leaflets) demonstrate a strongly self-conscious strategy of linking narrow workplace issues (e.g., health and safety) to broader social issues (e.g., public health). They have also recently adopted some of the tactics of social movements, such as releasing thousands of helium-filled purple balloons (imprinted with "It's About Fairness") at an Edmonton Superstore in the weeks before the strike. In a way the local transforms the workplace frontier of conflict into a more broadly political one. In this way the line between business union actions and social union tactics become blurred.

Diversity and Unionisms

One of the most significant claims for Local 401 as a social union is how it has embraced and encouraged diversity within the local. The question of diversity normally would fit under the strategic repertoires heading, but given its significance to both the local's narrative arcs and its originality as a case study, the issues is worthy of an expanded examination.

As discussed in the previous chapter, some of Local 401's diversity is a product of shifting employment patterns with their employers and some is due to organizing choices made by the leadership. Regardless, the union has had to tackle head on the question of how to represent a diverse membership and how to encourage activism from the range of groups within the membership. Many of the initiatives they engaged in revolved around the necessities of organizing drives and were the result of learning lessons, rather than pro-active planning.

The outcomes of those organizing drives are a clear indication that many of their initiatives were successful in drawing in and appealing to groups normally under-represented by unions. The next step, however, is to ascertain how effective the local has been in involving and integrating such diversity into the life of the union. Here the picture is more mixed. At union events, such as conferences and GMs, diversity is evident. Women, racialized workers and young workers are heavily represented. However, no formal steps are taken to ensure these workers feel welcome, understand the process and/or feel respected and at ease. It is not that they are excluded, but that it is assumed everyone there comes from the same knowledge base and comfort zone. This lack of accommodation is part of a more generalized laissez-faire approach to formal meetings and events in the local, and hints that the union has not fully come to terms with the realities of equitably integrating marginalized workers into the union.

Yet, the researcher did observe notable personal acts of accommodation by union officials. At one of the GMs, a new member, an older man of apparent South Asian

descent, attending his first meeting, demonstrated some confusion and disappointment.

This was due, it was revealed through informal conversation later, to a mis-understanding

of the purpose of the meeting. He had hoped to discuss the new collective agreement at

his workplace. While the formal meeting did nothing to welcome him or answer his

questions, immediately upon adjournment two staff members sat down with him for an

extended period to answer all his questions. One staffer even offered to drive him home

(it had taken the member two hours by public transit to get to the meeting). This approach

to welcoming members parallels the overall emphasis toward personal and informal

processes within the local. It is simultaneously dismissive and attentive.

The local has attempted to implement formal avenues to increase involvement of

under-represented groups. They, of course have youth and women's committees, but

there is reason to question their effectiveness at creating meaningful participation. The

youth committee has struggled to remain viable:

> *Although it has been around there for a while it has had some troubles starting up. Lately I have been trying to get them to come out socially, just the people in [city], because I think that is a little more feasible, that we have a little more socializing and stuff and coming up with ideas so that when we do meet provincially we can have some solid ideas to just get out there. ... A couple of people have said they are willing to stay and hopefully we can work on, you know, getting a solid idea out there.* (member, 10)

While the women's committee "has grown, almost doubled from what it was" (member,

5) participants could not point to significant tasks or achievements. Both the youth

committee and women's committee appear to have little direct influence in related

policies or practices in the local.

The local recently introduced a Community Action Network (CAN) Committee to create links to various ethnic and cultural groups. However, the committee is in its infancy and it is not possible to ascertain its potential effectiveness. The local has also developed a "cultural comfort course" designed to teach members about how to navigate a culturally diverse workplace and union local. As one young activist describes it: "that is a course for old snarky white guys who don't know how to let women into their warehouse and new Canadians into their warehouse. Basically what the course does, [is] teaches you how to deal with a more diverse workforce" (member, 16).

The local claims to do a good job of ensuring representativeness on bargaining and other shop floor committees. For example, O'Halloran runs down the make up of the bargaining committee during the Lakeside Strike: "We have 22 people on the committee. I would say probably half are female, and at least half are of ethnic origin. So it's a very multi-cultured committee, and it's one of the best committees that I had ever seen" (D. O'Halloran 2005). The local has also been make efforts in recent years to make their shop stewards more reflective of the membership. "We're now, not sure targeting is the right word, but trying to become much more culturally inclusive in the way we are getting our shop stewards, so they have the ability to talk to members in their own, whether it be language or cultural group or whatever it happens to be" (member, 9).

Except for the noted initiatives, the local's approach to promoting activism among a range of groups has been informal and passive. Their approach is to appeal to members

on the value of the union and what it provides members, rather than to accommodate

cultural, age, and gender identities.

> *It is through collective bargaining that we are able to relate. Because people are able to see the concrete nature of what that is and when you are talking about outreaching to young workers and new Canadians and temporary foreign workers the nuts and bolts of what we do as a union is we negotiate and we service members. If you have got good contracts it allows you to outreach to those people a lot easier.* (staff, 24)

This perspective can be interpreted as part of a larger narrative construction, one that

either transcends or dismisses diversity by construction a unifying solidarity. This

narrative construction will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

The local leadership also acknowledges they have more work to do in terms of

ensuring their staff and leadership reflect the membership. "Ideally you want the union to

look like your members. Your employees, the make-up of your union. We are still very

white. We are a little better on the gender equality in the union. I think we have probably

50/50 in terms of men and women working in the local union. But we are still Caucasian"

(staff, 27).

Overall it can be difficult to clearly evaluate UFCW 401's efforts in creating a

diverse union local. Their organizing and representation strategies have been, at times,

quite effective. Translation, integration of community leaders and embracing of diversity

have been hallmarks of their attempts to do the work of being a union. However, in terms

of creating an internal union environment that reflects the overall make-up of the

membership, both efforts and outcomes have been more mixed. The local has been more

successful at reflecting diversity at the shop level than they have at the higher levels of

the local itself. To a degree this bounded success is attributable to the local's relatively weak internal democracy in general; there are simply fewer opportunities for a wide range of members to engage in decision making within the local.

There is a desire by UFCW 401 to be an inclusive, respectful union. There is also a desire to be seen as an inclusive, respectful union, and this latter desire plays out in how they construct their self-identity narratives. Whether the narratives line up with practice is a more difficult question.

Collective Action Frame

Ross anchors her analysis of unionism in the frame that the union takes about its role and the nature of its members' interests. Once again, Local 401 does not neatly fit into either frame. The first key observation is that most of the local's energy is spent on organizing and bargaining efforts, the crux of institutionalized unionization in the Wagner era. It can be argued that UFCW 401's efforts are inward-focused, aimed at improving the lot of their specific members either by improving their contract or earning certification. They spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on ad campaigns focused around a labour dispute. They mobilize their members for strike and other workplace-oriented action.. We do not see a similar degree of structured commitment to political causes or to engaging their members in political campaigns.

The simple answer would be to point to that inward orientation and argue they are a version of a militant business union. However, that would overlook key aspects of what they do around broader interests. Their education agenda is infused with teaching

economic and political analysis. Their communications – both external and internal – attempt to link their members' motivations, issues and concerns to broader trends and institutions. They talk in class-based language, linking their members to "workers" and "working people". These are examples of a union who adopts a wider action frame.

The leadership, in their rhetoric at least, sees their job as a union extending beyond bargaining and arbitration. They justify their involvement in politics as part of the union role.

> *Every political decision that is made affects our live. Whether it be who controls water, who controls air, who sets the laws, who, from labour's perspective, [decides] OH&S, those decisions are all made by some government body. ... So you go back to why you are involved in the union, and the job that you do as a union. It is because you are trying to protect the rights of people, basically protect their health.* (O'Halloran)

This is a narrative that more closely fits a social union frame. The union perceives its function to represent the broader interests of its members, not just their workplace issues.

When brought together, a complex image emerges. Local 401 appears to accept a broader, more class-based, more political role for the union. However, the local engages that role with more inwardly-focused strategies and actions. This can be seen as paradoxical, and in a way it is. However, as Ross points out, the link between frame and strategic repertoire is not always linear. We must analyze the nature of the action, its outcomes and the motivations which create it. In the case of UFCW 401 a complex inter-dynamic becomes evident, one that requires further contemplation. To fully make sense of what Local 401 does, and to integrate it somehow into theory, we might need to rethink the link between inward-focused action based upon an outward-focused frame.

Rather than contradiction, we need to explore whether the aims of social unionism can be achieved via business-unionesque repertoires. Can collective bargaining lead to a form of social unionism? That question, along with other theoretical consequences arising from the data, are examined at the end of the chapter.

UFCW 401 Narratives of Unionism

A component of a union's collective action frame is its narrative about what kind of union it is, what its role is and who it represents. In other words, the narratives of how the union comes to make sense of its actions can give us insight into the internal logics adopted by the union. When evaluating how UFCW 401 fits the unionism conceptualization, it is useful to examine the narratives they construct around their purpose and role.

In other words, we need to ask does UFCW 401 see itself as a business union or social union? Of course, any answer to that question is contestable and must be balanced with objective observations of the union in action. It is for that reason this chapter began with examining its actions and framing. But by now looking at how they see their actions, we can reveal how they understand the supposed contradictions. The combining of the objective and subjective creates the potential for a more rounded view on the topic. The following section will look at how the members and leadership of UFCW 401 talk about their local and how it fits into the dichotomy.

All interviewees in the study were asked how they define business and social union and then, following a brief explanation of the terms, asked to categorize Local 401. The responses were illuminating.

Membership Views

In general, the members interviewed in the study have a tenuous and partial understanding of what a social or business union is. Many refused to offer a definition and others expressed the terms in vague notions. Common terms describing business unions included being interested in "profits" and "money" and only caring about the union. In contrast social unions were concerned about "people", "social conscience" and listening to or interacting with the membership. The notion of unionism is captured in overall priority and focus, rather than in the details of how the union operates. A couple of excerpts serve as exemplars:

> *Social union, I would say that is more from the people … the union is the people themselves or its more geared toward the individuals toward the social aspect of things. Where if it was business I would say it is more of an entity that is moving toward a business style model, where you have to make profit, you have to grow, you have to do those sorts of things. So you run your union … in the fashion that will result in more business-like results, as opposed to more social results.* (member, 3)

> *a social union, if I'm understanding it correctly, would be a union that … really focused on the social issues going on around them. … And a business union, I guess that would be the folks that are more concerned with what's going on with the business than what's going on for their membership.* (member, 6)

> *[Business unions] get their membership and they for the most part are not willing to go on strike because that can be very costly and … they will just kind of say, hey employees this is the best that we can do for you, might as well take it. Social union is … is not afraid to go on the big strikes and stuff like that. And become active in that they are more openly political.* (member, 10)

It can be argued these quotes reflect some of the core essence of the concepts but only the broadest of sketches. The answers may be reflective of what the members want their union to be like. Notably absent from their definitions are issues of internal democracy, political activism and member mobilization. It is also interesting to note that universally social unionism was seen as good and business unionism as less desirable.

After being informed what the terms meant, the members were next asked to classify Local 401. Given the vague understanding of the terms expressed by the participants, we must be careful not to read too much significance in the specific answers. However, they do provide some insight into how members make sense of their union's structures and actions. Few labelled Local 401 as a business union, and those that did suggested that the local was doing what the members wanted – focusing on workplace issues. That so few chose business union is not surprising, given the term was generally seen as negative and, overall, members felt the local was doing a good job representing them.

More participants opted for the social union label. Again this is not surprising. The vague way in which the participants understand the term might make it easy for Local 401 to meet the threshold in their minds. They seemed to equate being a social union with militancy and willing to fight, something for which the local is well-known, as well as a vague sense that the local defends not just the members but all workers. For example: "Because they do step out and represent anybody that wants to be represented, whether they are a union member or not" (member, 5).

The most interesting result, however, was that the largest portion of respondents either said the local was both a business and a social union or saw that it didn't fit either picture very well. Respondents could see that the actions and structures of Local 401 did not neatly suit a simple categorization.

> *I would call us a social business union (laughs). We are very, very good at representing our members. We are very focused on representing our members, but at the same time we also see the broader implications outside what's going on that can affect our membership be it good or bad.* (member, 6)

> *I see the business side of it more, but you know what, I could see them being a very social union, I can see that.* (member, 23)

> *I think we were business but we are evolving into social. I don't think we are there yet, totally. We're getting there, but I think we could do more politically. We need to do more politically because ... [unions are] dying out.* (member, 4)

The responses suggest that members are conscious, in some fashion, that the picture is not so simple. They were unable to enunciate any specific aspects that create that complexity or contradiction, but their instinctive reaction was to reach for something more nuanced.

We must be careful not to take this analysis too far; it is far too uncertain how well the participants understood the concepts. However we can make a couple of tentative observations. First, the apparent contradictions within Local 401 are observable for members as much as for outsiders. They may not reflect extensively on that reality, but they can see its complexity. Second, it does raise a question of how well the concepts "make sense" for people experiencing unions in practice. Is the dichotomy too clean and tidy to reflect what union members see on the ground?

Leadership Views

The views of the staff and leadership are more pertinent to understanding Local

401's view of itself because it is those men and women who are most active in

constructing relevant narratives. Here, too, we find a reluctance to choose one or the

other and an emphasis on complexity. Much of their response was defensive, arguing

why they are not a business union which is clearly their reaction to the local's reputation

in the labour movement. "[We are not] a business union because we don't do anything

fucking that's logical business wise" (O'Halloran). Beyond the initial response, however,

was a tendency to hold on to both concepts, as in McLaren's response:

> *Because we go the extra mile for members. We are not just filing grievances for*
> *the sake of filing grievances. We are out there in the communities. We are in the*
> *political scene. ... It is all about the members. It is not about how much money we*
> *have in the bank. Yes, we've got to be fiscally responsible, obviously, but we're*
> *not gonna stop doing something for social reasons and purpose because of*
> *money.* (McLaren)

There was also an acknowledgement of evolution over time, an awareness the local at

one time was a business union but has changed:

> *I think we are not the same union we were 20 years ago. We are not the same*
> *union that signed the original Superstore deal in 1984. That was the business*
> *union that went in there. If we were the same union we would have signed the No*
> *Frills deal[12]. So, we are still a pragmatic, nuts and bolts, that traditional business*
> *sense union. I think key activists and key people within the local have started to*
> *shift, started to change that. (staff, 24)*

The narrative logic that may underlie these responses is one that the local cannot

afford to offer all aspects of social unionism, but that it has been making change. Hesse

---

[12] No Frills, as discussed in Chapter 5, was a voluntary recognition offer accepted by other UFCW locals
across Canada but rejected by Local 401.

makes the most explicit statement in this regard. When discussing a decision to accept a

less-than-desired contract, he offers up a metaphor:

> *I think we are a principled union that proceeds with principles first and then we have to make pragmatic decisions in different circumstances to get the most out of those principles. To get the most out of the lemon, ... you gotta make lemonade. ... So I think that we want that lemonade but we have to make practical decisions sometimes about how much lemonade we are going to get out of the lemon, while ensuring the lemon survives. For without lemons there will be no lemonade at all. So I am squeezed, all of our leadership, into these pragmatic decisions at times. ... So I want that delicious, sweet lemonade but I might have to swallow something bitter to make sure the lemon survives and I get another crack at the lemonade machine three years down the road. But does that mean I am a business union? To not consider those things, I would think is not a sign of a business union but is a sign of a dumb union. It is just dumb. Those are ill-considered decisions. To only be about ideology in the context in which I work is dumb and that in and of its self is arguably morally wrong.* (Hesse)

In his analogy we can see Hesse attempting to equate social unionism to a form of

out-of-touch Quixotism and to justify top-down practices as practically necessary. There

is reason to contest his framing of the debate. His implication is that social unions fight

for the sake of fighting without any strategic calculation. This assertion is, simply,

inaccurate, and in many respects allows him to sidestep the main issue at hand. The

question about unionisms is not about accepting a bad deal or refusing to fight. One of

the knowledgeable outsiders offers a valuable counterpoint. To be a social union, the

participant felt required a far more transformative change than Local 401 has shown.

"One of the things it would take is a far deeper form of democratic trade unionism. A

genuine deep commitment to rank and file control. And it would take the capacity to risk.

… Holding a strike, being militant and holding a strike at Safeway, it is not a risk. … The

question is not so much can you mobilize your members but what do you mobilize them

for" (KO, 13). The outsider is questioning whether the goal to survive to the next round of bargaining, or to make change in society? Hesse would counter it is both, thus turning a contradiction into a complexity.

Hesse actually goes further. In discussing the notions of business and social unionism, he challenges the duality. "There is no such a thing as, on an ipso facto basis, a more socially conscious union and a more business-like union" (Hesse). He argues that the notions of business and social unionism "are just constructs, these are just terms that people just throw around in different circumstances to serve different interests. I think they are highly artificial, highly contrived" (Hesse). He proceeds to offer a lengthy and complete definition of the two terms, as he believes they are constructed. He links business unionism with adopting a business-frame, "acquiring market share, acquiring dues, providing a narrow service" and "cost-benefit analysis". He also acknowledges business unions' more narrow, "bread and butter" approach and less likelihood to be involved in politics. He also links the term to a lack of militancy through strikes and so on. In contrast social unions are "less interested in money", less about acquiring dues and more concerned about "what the right thing to do" is and acting on principle and "morality". He implies that social unions are also more political and more militant.

The essence of Hesse's argument is two-fold. First, he argues the reality is more complex and fluid. "I think unions are about surviving and what I might do on a Tuesday might be different than on a Wednesday. My member's interests should be in play. And I need to be flexible and so I think it is circumstance driven" (Hesse). He explains that any

union can display either social or business union traits, depending upon what is needed at

that particular time to advance the interests of its members. Second, he argues the terms

are used less as markers of union forms and more as leverage in conflicts and competition

between unions. He uses the UFCW/CAW conflicts over fisheries in the 1980s as an

example.

> *We had a big raid, big back and forth war with them in Newfoundland over [fisheries]. … Of course they held themselves out as a social justice union and us as a business union. And so they tried to frame the debate in those terms. But you can't help but notice as well that they were under financial pressures in their industry, the auto industry is struggling. There is a sort of pressure, they have a shrinking membership. There is no doubt they have an interest in expanding their membership in order to survive as an organization.*

Hesse questions the authenticity of the terms in that context, arguing they are often used

more as weapons than accurate descriptors. "Maybe there is a legitimate debate about

where you sit on the spectrum, who we ought and not ought to be. But in tough times,

there have been times where it raises issues of the bona fides of the labels and how they

are being used" (Hesse).

Hesse's provocative challenge to traditional conceptions may be, to a degree, a bit

of sophistry and it is certainly convenient for him to undermine the premise upon which

criticisms of UFCW are built. He also oversimplifies the fishery conflicts and their

outcomes. The questioning of the duality also feeds into the local's narratives about being

misunderstood by others. However, he raises an under-acknowledged point. The use of

the terms business and social union take on particular political and strategic purposes and

may become rhetorical devices as much as accurate descriptors of union behaviour.

The combination of Hesse's lemon metaphor and his provocative second guessing of the terms reveal an important insight into how UFCW 401 narratives incorporate and embrace contradiction. The leadership is aware they often act in fashions that would be labelled "business unionist" by outsiders, but they build a narrative that justifies the use of those actions and undermines the assumptions upon which the criticism is based. They see the external environment bounding the strategic choices they make, thus not only making them defensible but actually admirable.

Blurred Lines

While caution is required interpreting the subjective assessments by Local 401 members and leadership, in particular the members, it is noteworthy that the difficulty clearly identifying the location of UFCW 401 and the tendency toward complexity parallels the results of the earlier more objective analysis of UFCW's actions. The addition of participants' responses is useful in that it adds a grounded experience of how their union operates to more conceptual observations and analysis. Together there is reason to contemplate that the complexities and contradictions of UFCW 401 recommend some re-consideration of the notion of a rigid dichotomy between the two forms of unionisms. UFCW 401 appears to be a case of blurred lines and that fuzziness may necessitate a new filter on how we understand unions.

Re-Thinking Unionisms

How are we to make sense of the evidence pointing in multiple directions? In both the reflections of participants and a more objective analysis of Local 401 structures and

actions, emerges complex picture emerges. The experience of UFCW 401 is complex, multi-layered and in flux. However, it only appears contradictory if we rigidly apply traditional categorizations of business/social union to the findings. To develop a coherent understanding of UFCW 401 in action, we need to re-think our conceptions of union forms. The case of UFCW 401 draws out three ways in which we need to look anew at unionisms.

First, we need to jettison our notion of unions as static organizations defined by formal structure and institutionalized rules of behaviour. But neither should we devolve them into aggregations of human action, without form or constancy. Gramsci is partly correct; unions are constantly in the process of being constructed. They morph and shape as both their members and external forces push and pull them. But there are limits to the degree in which they can shift. Unions are caught in a particular relationship with capitalism that is not of their own making. While the specific manifestations of capitalism change, and have been changing dramatically in the past few decades, the nature of unions' relationship to it remains constant, meaning elements of unions and what they do is static. Neither can we completely ignore that unions are composed of formal structures and rules, which can be quite stable and enduring. Change happens, but it occurs within a logical framework, both at a micro (union) and macro (capitalism) level. It can be argued unions are in a constant state of "bounded creation". They are not inert, but they continue to be informed by their past.

The case of UFCW 401 shows us that unions are made at the intersection point between structure and action. The leadership of Local 401 made decisions in real time based upon real events and with practical outcomes. However, those decisions were informed by past narratives (their referential unionisms) and constrained by both externally and internally imposed limits to action (e.g., labour law, membership mobilization, etc.). The range of possible action is also bounded by the local's structures. To be more specific, the local's top-down structure facilitates certain actions, but makes others more difficult. Their centralized model made it easier for the local to alter organizing strategies or launch aggressive ad campaigns, but inhibited efforts to create meaningful engagement opportunities around membership diversity or political action. The local does not dis-engage from its history, even as it moves forward into the future. The reforming initiatives of the leadership morphed Local 401, but they did not create an entirely new union. That which came before, and persists, coloured the nature of the change. The end result is a union local that exhibits multiple characteristics, in part because it still is (and always will be) in flux, and in part because the future always links back to the past.

Second, we need to question the two solitudes nature of the union forms. One could agree that unions are always in flux but still insist it is possible to retain traditional conceptions of unionisms. If we see such categorizations as snapshots in time, rather than enduring tendencies, the binary may still hold. Unfortunately, the case study shows that even the snapshot comes out blurry. Even if we look at UFCW 401 on any given day,

without its context and history, it will exhibit elements of both social unionism and business unionism. It develops innovative organizing tactics and engages in politics but lacks substantive member control over internal affairs. It mostly engages in the work of collective bargaining, but does so from an ethos of a broader mandate and purpose. Do they possess contradictory tendencies? Possibly. A more fruitful way to understand the mixed results is to remember that social unionism and business unionism "are two related faces of union activity, often in tension with each other but sometimes mutually reinforcing" (Ross 2012, 43). All unions possess elements of both because that is the nature of the work they are required to perform. It may be that the dual nature of the union role is simply laid barer in UFCW 401 than other locals. Or it may be that we need to ask different questions to reveal the inner complexity of union activity.

UFCW 401 was chosen as the site for the study because they appeared to display contradictory tendencies. At the conclusion of the study, it is apparent that the tendencies are internally coherent and reflect the local's specific context. The contradiction disappears when we relax our notions of a rigid duality. The space between business unions and social unions is more fluid than it appears, and the possibility of existing in both spaces is real. The difference between traditional notions of union forms and what is being argued here is the same as shifting from Newtonian physics to Quantum physics. We are required, like the Quantum physicist, to accept the possibility that a particle, in this case a union, can exist in multiple points in space simultaneously. Indeed, that is the only way a union can exist, by embracing multiple elements of the union role.

The third re-thinking arising as a consequence of this study is that we need to more carefully separate how we theorize about unionisms and how we actually use the terms. It was argued in the theory chapter that union theorists have acknowledged unions can exhibit characteristics of both union forms, but they rarely absorb the consequences of that acknowledgement, falling comfortably back into traditional binaries. Thus the notion of "two types" of union persists. The result is that the complexities get lost, with two consequences. First, the terms sometimes become weapons for pigeon-holing unions. In this regard, Tom Hesse may have a point when he calls them contrived. In practice the terms are used as much to obfuscate as illuminate. They become labels of virtuosity or vileness, rather than accurate descriptors of what is happening. Second, it takes away the vividness of union life. When applying the concepts roughly rather than precisely unions become two-dimensional figures. The interesting stuff lies in the interactions between the two tensions. It is how the union responds to that tension where the insights are found. Blithely applying the labels causes us to look in the wrong places for the essence of unionism. It would be a mistake, equally, to jettison the terms entirely, for they do offer a useful starting point for understanding the choices unions must make. The concluding chapter will explore how we should move forward with the concepts.

Conclusion

The concluding chapter will consider directions for conceptualizing union forms and contemplate the future of business and social unionism. But first, one more piece is required to complete the puzzle. If a union is created at the intersection of structure and

action, a mechanism is required to prevent a collision rendering the union immobile. That mechanism is narrative. Narratives are the lubricant that permits structure and action to come together. Narratives create coherence in what could be seen as dissonance, and construct paths forward. For our purposes they also allow practice and theory to move in unison. Narratives also serve particular interests and are a delivery vehicle for power relations. The role of narratives and their relationship to union action will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Narrative Constructions and their Role in Union Dynamics

Throughout the first few chapters examples of narrative construction were highlighted and some discussion of their role in serving certain interests within the union considered. This chapter intends to bring the narratives into one location, to examine more fully the nature of those narratives, how they are constructed and whose interests within the local they serve. Further this chapter aims to incorporate the final missing piece about how to understand this case study of revitalization and forms of unionism. Narratives explain the process of HOW leadership is able to both maintain central control over the local while still expanding its repertoire and shifting its focus of action.

As we have seen, Local 401 does not easily fit into commonly held notions of how unions behave. If one were to only look at their actions, one might want to declare them an outlier. However, if we examine the logic behind their actions, as they see it, a clearer, more cogent understanding can emerge. By seeing the internal logic, we can reconcile the apparently contradictory aspects and draw a more comprehensive picture of what is going on. Understanding the nature of their internal logic is not the same as accepting it. It can be argued that the logic they have constructed serves to obfuscate other realities of what is happening within the local. To this end, in addition to explicating the narratives and their function, we must also critically engage them. How does the internal logic created by the narratives serve the interests of the leadership, how does it maintain their power base, and how is the membership affected by it? The analysis

below does not intend to legitimize or rationalize the actions of UFCW Local 401, but the starting point of critique must be understanding how and why those actions occur.

Fortunately, by questioning the logic we can actually deepen our understanding of how unions operate. If we develop a more sophisticated understanding of narrative construction and reproduction within unions, we will be in a position to refine our theories about union behaviour. This chapter hopes to begin the discussion of how narratives can further our understanding of unions.

The chapter will start by re-visiting the role of narratives with a more specific focus on their general impact on union dynamics. It will then summarize the key narratives found in the study, breaking them into three broad families, followed by an examination of the members' reactions to and interpretations of the narratives. It will then look at how the narratives are generated and maintained and, finally, how they produce and reproduce power relations within the local. The chapter will end by looking at theoretical consequences of the study findings around narratives.

Role of Narratives

In a general sense, narratives weave together separate moments and occurrences into a single temporal entity. What may appear contradictory and incongruent develops coherence. In a way humans use narratives to help us "make sense" of what we see and do. We naturally relay events in story form for they are easier to understand that way, both for the teller and the audience. However, it may be more useful, especially in a study of unions, to view narratives also as vehicles for constructing an internal logic, for

building a self-identity of the union and its members. Unions are always acting for they are institutions of an ongoing and always evolving relationship, the employment relationship. The meaning of the actions, the whys and hows of strategies, decisions and events, takes shape through their translation into narrative. Different acts, in different points of time, become linked and therefore become imbued with logic. The logic, over time, grows and different narratives combine to form self-identity of who the union and its members are. We cannot understand the nature of a union local without making sense of the narratives it has constructed. Narrative is a pathway into the internal logic of the union.

Because not all actors within a union have equal access to the tools of narrative construction the narrative also becomes a vehicle for power. Narrative construction and reproduction are not neutral, they serve particular interests. Those with greater opportunity to construct narratives, the leadership, possess a disproportionate capacity to shape the self-identity of the union. Therefore the narratives that are constructed are more likely to serve the leadership's interests. When examining narratives, this truism must be remembered at all times.

Of course, narrative construction is only one form of power. Union leaders also possess power through institutional provision, moral suasion, access to resources and coercion. Forms of power cannot be easily disentangled. Nor is it the purpose of this study to interrogate the nature of power. It is sufficient to note that interpreting narratives requires seeing the multiple forms of power and how narratives feed into those other

forms of power. Leaders do not gain their positions of authority through narrative (at least not predominantly through narrative), but narrative certainly becomes an important mechanism for maintaining power.

Yet, it is not that simple. Every narrative must have both a narrator and an audience. The audience has its own set of interests and can accept or reject the narrative, or portions of the narrative. Each audience member will interpret the story in a manner reflecting their position and personal identity. In this manner narratives can become contested. So, we must also study the audience reception to the narrative, as well as the narrative itself.

Further, the audience is not passive. Upon receiving the story, the audience member becomes a narrator themselves. They translate the story and tell their version of the narrative anew to other audience members – in this case other union members and outsiders. In this way narratives are both perpetuated and morphed, taking, to a degree, a life of their own. It is through this collectivizing process that narratives embed themselves and start to take the form of union self-identity. Self-identity becomes the union's anchor for navigating actions and incidents and eventually feeds into and forms a part of its referential unionisms.

Because narrative plays such a fundamental role in the creation of a union's self-identity, it forms an integral component of a union's internal dynamics. It can explain why a union engages in the actions it does. Further what the narrative is and how it is used can reveal much about a union and how power is wielded within it.

Narratives are by no means the only way to develop insights about a union. They should, instead, be seen as one particular window into the union. Other windows can reveal a similar scene, and utilizing all the available windows permits the most complete view. This author argues the narrative window has been under-utilized by union theorists and by including narrative we can develop a more complete understanding of unions.

Local 401's Narrative Families

When the various sources of data about UFCW 401 were analyzed a number of narratives emerged. Some have been discussed briefly in previous chapters. Further reflection revealed that they naturally fell into clusters, or families. All of the identified narratives answer part of the question "who is UFCW 401?", but they come at it from different perspectives and serve to address particular components of Local 401's self-identity. The analysis identified three families of narratives. There are the "internal narratives" which aim to explain the internal life of Local 401. There are the "external narratives" which tell the story of how UFCW 401 presents itself to others. Finally, there are the "member narratives" which focus on describing who the members are and what the leadership's role is in the union.

Naturally, the various narratives and their families overlap. A narrative can serve multiple functions. However, for ease of presentation, the discussion will focus on the primary purpose of each narrative. The three families will be discussed in turn below.

Internal Narratives

Three narratives were identified that relate to the inner life of the local. These narratives tell the story of how the local operates and what its internal principles are. They serve to understand what kind of union it is for its members and how members interact within the life of the union. The three narratives tell the story of UFCW 401 as a member-driven union, a diverse and inclusive union and a union that operates like a family.

A Member-Driven Union

When asked to describe UFCW 401 one term popped up frequently: "member-driven". There is a clear sense from participants both inside and outside the local that, regardless of the formal structures and centralized authority in the union that the actions the local takes and the decisions they make are driven, in some fashion, by the membership. "[T]he bottom line's the members. If they turn against you, you're fucked. It doesn't matter if you are doing a good job or a bad job or whatever. If they lose faith, you know, you're done" (O'Halloran). This is a narrative that is even seen by those outside the local: "What makes Doug the best president is all about the members. … Member driven, everything is membership driven" (KO, 38). This is a framing that suggests the motivation of the leadership is the members' best interests. It also shifts focus away from formal processes to what happens at moments of crisis.

> *As much as some other unions might say we are top down, wasn't it fascinating that when it came time to take out 9000 new Canadians, the majority of them women who had never been on strike in their life … they all got out on the picket line. So if we were so top down and the decisions were contrived … and only*

belonged to the leadership, disconnected from the members, then how does that happen if we are so flipping top down? ... Because there was 9000 leaders on the picket line, not just Doug O'Halloran. (Hesse)

Finally, the narrative revolves around a notion that member-driven is linked to the membership having faith in the leadership and being willing to act when asked. The presence of those traits is provided as evidence for being member-driven. The narrative creates its own self-fulfilling circle; it argues faith needs to be placed in the union leadership to act in accord with members' interests and then points to the trust members place in the leadership as evidence that the leadership is member-focused. Actual member participation falls outside the circle.

A Diverse and Inclusive Union

The local also tells the story about their diversity and inclusiveness. They boast about being the most diverse local in Alberta, in terms of age, gender and race/ethnicity. Their internal communications, such as new member orientations, posters and conference brochures, play up the diversity of the membership with multi-cultural photos, in particular emphasizing young female workers of colour. Headlines and slogans emphasize the membership's diversity: "Many Faces, One Voice" (Lakeside pamphlet); "Bargaining Strong Together" (Superstore Strike Slogan). The union is portrayed as a welcoming, inclusive place where race and gender are not issues of conflict:

There was no racism on the [Lakeside] picket line. Everybody was a union member, everybody helped one another, so it wasn't an issue. And we didn't want it to become a race issue. It might've been a race issue in Brooks, but it was not a race issue in the plant. So we downplayed that, and it was good. (D. O'Halloran 2007)

In the union it has all been positive. But I mean there is definitely prejudice out there. Even at work when we have been in meetings with our management, we were told as soon as we left the room our head manager said, are all lesbians that aggressive? ... [But in the union] you could tell they are very focused on human rights ... They included it and it was fought for, but they want diversity in everything, they definitely are supporting it. (member, 36)

There is a claim of "colour-blindness" (and gender and age blindness) in the narrative, that these are simply not issues in the local. While the leadership acknowledges there is more they need to do around engaging so-called minority members, they argue the challenge is one of finding the right strategies rather than reflecting on whether the union environment is respectful, welcoming and inclusive.

A number of concerns can be raised about this narrative. It is evident that at Lakeside and other disputes, race was most definitely an issue. Deep racial divisions pock-marked disputes from the beginning. As Galabuzi (2006) has noted, claims of colour-blindness are mechanisms for submerging race and racism as a real issue and papering over its entrenched nature in society. It is a form of avoidance. While in the heat of a bitter strike, denying racial tensions may have a constructive strategic role in attempting to remove oxygen from the fire, the extension of that narrative to the local's internal life is more problematic. Race and how to best tackle racialization within the union are very real matters requiring attention. Claiming openness and colour-blindness thwarts any concerted effort in that direction.

The Union as Family

The metaphor of UFCW 401 as a family re-occurred time and again. Both membership and leadership related the nature of the relationship between people within

the union and the sphere of the union itself as being related to family. Here are a few

examples:

> *I can do anything for union because my soul is with them. I am closer with them than my family.* (member, 17)

> *I always say we are the happiest dysfunctional work family ever created.* (staff, 2)

> *Once you have gone into that you've essentially married into the union. ... Because once you become a part of it, it's your family.* (member, 16)

The narrative suggests the nature of the union transcends traditional union relations and

the activists build a much stronger bond. The metaphor of family is important for it

implies loyalty, mutuality, love, commitment and a long-term relationship.

Family can also evoke a parental relationship, and this also appears in the

narrative. In particular, O'Halloran is portrayed as a father figure for the union.

> *He is like a dad. For me he is like a dad that – you're supposed to do this but at the same time he is trying to discipline you – this kind of thing. I see him like that.* (member, 1)

> *I think it is like a relationship between family members. Parents and children.* (KO, 20)

> *We run to the union for help, this man (O'Halloran) is like a father to us, he is a father to us, now who are we going to run to?* (Lakeside striker quoted in McGinnis 2005, B1)

The metaphor of father brings out a variety of connotations. It gives O'Halloran authority

and status within the union and implies both that he is responsible for the members and is

"in charge" of them. In short, it invokes a degree of hierarchy within the mutuality of

family and places the members in a subordinate, child-like position. The narrative evokes

patriarchal notions of male leadership, as symbolized in the father, to place O'Halloran in

an unassailable position. While this may shore up O'Halloran's status as leader, it simultaneously stunts any movement toward a vibrant rank-and-file activism. If activists are children, the corollary of the father metaphor, then they cannot be trusted to engage their own decisions and are reliant, by definition, on the sturdy hand of the leader-figure.

External Narratives

Three externally-focused narratives were found. These stories answer how UFCW 401 is positioned vis a vis the outside world. In other words, what kind of union is Local 401? The stories told are that the local is a militant union that will organize anyone, that they are principled "truth-tellers", and that the union stands apart from other unions.

Militant Union

As was shown earlier, Local 401 has a well-developed narrative as a militant union willing to organize any workers who want a union, regardless of how hard the fight. Their website boasts of this attitude: "We are a high profile union, never shying away from the tough issues or cases" (UFCW 401 n.d.). Language of willing to take on a fight appears in most of the union's internal communications. An example from their members' magazine: "UFCW Local 401 has never backed down from a fight and stands by workers who seek to improve working conditions for themselves and their co-workers" (C. O'Halloran 2013, 16). The sense of strength and willingness to fight applies both to organizing new members and to their approach to dealing with existing employers.

In interviews, members expressed a degree of pride at being part of a strong union. "It really is a no guff union, they are not going to lie down, they are willing to do whatever it takes to get what the workers are expecting" (member, 36). Even critical outsiders acknowledged that Local 401's actions make it "militant" (KO, 13).

In the narrative arc there also appears a tendency to talk big about settlements. O'Halloran at one point refers to a recent contract as a "Cadillac agreement". Hesse goes further:

> *I can show you the best retail food collective agreement in North America at Loblaw's. We have it. I can show you contract language that does not exist in collective agreements where people have all sorts of bargaining power, full time, skilled workers. I can show you language that focuses on social justice issues, stuff we didn't have to bargain, stuff we chose to bargain. ... I can bring you a bunch of collective agreements and show you the kind of unique things that we pursue.* (Hesse)

The magazine boasts of a contract that "set a higher standard for all retail workers across the province" (McMeckan and Hesse 2014, 12). Getting results is the narrative flipside to fighting tough fights, and part of building a framing of Local 401 as a militant union.

Such boasting props up the local's sense of its own effectiveness, even if those boasts over-stretch reality. The claims are made because the leadership knows the membership – nor anyone else, for that matter – can easily disprove them. The nature of collective agreements is not straightforward; all contracts have strengths and weaknesses and all deals are, by definition, compromises. An agreement must be judged in context, but the narrative boasts strip the evaluation of that important measure. For example, Local 401's Superstore contract is superior in many respects, including wages, job protection and employee rights, than the comparable local's contract in Saskatchewan. Is

this due to 401's superior negotiating or to the booming economy in Alberta where employers must pay more to retain staff? That is not an easy question to answer. Further, we must remember that grocery contracts today are comparably worse than they were 25 years ago due to changes in the industry which have undermined workers' bargaining position (Hurd 2008). The narrative also strips away this historical context.

A Principled Union

UFCW 401 also couches its actions under the guise of principles and a willingness to speak the truth to power. The latter relates to their aggressive, provocative approach to labour disputes and the former a rationale for their decisions. The principles are articulated in a fairly vague fashion, suggesting some sense of commitment to working people. "The union should always be there with morals and principles to do the job for the underdog" (O'Halloran). There is a proud awareness that they rub employers the wrong way. "No employer is going to sit there and say that we had a nice conversation with a 401 union rep, and we got to an agreement on something. No. Somebody said something offensive, somebody called you names. … If you are not willing to stand and fight you are not working for us" (staff, 24). Their willingness to be outspoken and aggressive is linked to their notion of acting on higher principles. That those principles are never defined is an uncomfortable fact ignored by the leadership.

A Union Different Than Others

UFCW 401 supplements the other narratives with an attitude of being different

than other unions. They frame their position as standing apart from others in terms of

militancy and outspokenness, with a clear sense that UFCW 401 is doing more.

> *It is always 401 that steps up to the plate. Not a whole bunch of unions out there are putting their hands up first, you know what I am saying?* (McLaren)

> *To me that is what sets us apart from some of the others. I mean Doug is a smart man. He can look at a situation and realize, yeah, this isn't going to be good. But he is still willing to take them on because it is the right thing to do.* (staff, 9)

> *[We are] probably one of the most active locals in Alberta, if not THE most active local. Bar none. Probably one of the most active locals in Canada.* (member, 6)

Accompanying this sense of superiority is a belief that many unions dislike Local

401 because of their out-there approach.

> *There are certainly unions out there that don't like us. We're too aggressive, maybe we're a little too forward thinking or we're sticking our nose where it doesn't belong. And I think there're other unions out there [who] have very high praise for us.* (member, 6)

> *I would probably say whether they like us or not they would have to say that, like Star Trek, we have gone where no man has gone before. And I think we are admired for that, possibly resented in some cases.* (McLaren)

The combination creates a storyline where the opinion of others does not matter because

any criticism is based out of a resentment of Local 401's achievements. The pride of

being militant is complemented with a sense of "us against the world", which strengthens

internal unity.

This narrative is particularly curious in that it runs counter to what many in the

labour movement express about Local 401. During the author's years at the AFL and in

dozens of informal conversations with union members and leaders during the data

collection phase of the study, a more common sentiment was that the local is politically conservative, authoritarian and difficult to work with. However, there is also a widespread recognition that the local's track record in taking on tough fights is commendable and valid. This variance points to the purpose of the narrative – to shield the local from criticisms that challenge its internal logic.

Member Narratives

Four narratives create a picture of who Local 401 members are and the role of leadership within the union. The first framing is that Local 401 represents members who are difficult to mobilize, somewhat passive and looking for a strong leader. Second, Local 401 has a very accessible, down-to-earth leadership. Third, strong leaders actively advance their members' interests on their behalf. And finally, one narrative speaks to the nature of the external forces waging against the local necessitating quick, centralized, strong leadership.

Local 401 Members

Many participants highlighted the types of members Local 401 represents poses particular challenges. Members were portrayed as passive, marginalized, hard to mobilize, prioritizing results over process, and trusting the leadership to do the right thing. The reasons ascribed for these qualities related to the nature of their jobs – part-time, short-term, working multiple jobs – and to characteristics of the workers themselves – young, immigrants, less education. Here are a few examples:

> *The makeup of our membership is lots of part-time, lots of vulnerable people because there's new Canadians, lots of young workers, very high female*

percentage of the workforce as well. I mean these are all groups of people who have historically in the workforce been underrepresented and been marginalized and not been given their due. ... They're scared to speak up so they tend not to get their issues addressed, and so it's the makeup of our membership that creates that, really. (staff, 2)

From where East Indian ladies come from. Not educated family, not broad family. Far away, farmer's people mostly you see here. ... First off we have fear in the family. Ladies, girls have no right to say anything. They can't go out, you won't see them drink in the bar with husband. (member, 17)

It's just hard to get young people involved. Young people just quit, most young people quit. (member, 16)

Embedded within this narrative is a message that it is either impossible or at least far more difficult to engage a membership with these characteristics, so that while the union wants to have them involved, there is only so much they can do.

The second aspect of the narrative fills the void created by the lack of activism. Members want the leadership to take an active role in representing their interests.

When you have part time workers you may end up with a structure that in order to give them meaningful representation you are going to have to make some decisions that they neither have the time nor the interest in making themselves. ... I think the member cares about the product. ... The value of a union to them [is] in two things: what does our collective agreement say? What rights do I have, what wage do I make, what benefits do I have and does my union enforce it? Are they visible and do they enforce it? That is what people care about. (Hesse)

The combination creates a picture of the local responding to the realities that face them regarding who their membership is and what they want.

It is interesting to note that, to a degree, this narrative turns the "colour-blind" narrative, described earlier, on its head. There is no race/age/gender "problem" in the local, but it is the immigrant/young/female make-up of the local that makes the members hard to mobilize. The lack of activism rests on the members, not the leadership. However,

within the confines of the local's internal logic, the two narratives work together to

justify not taking any pro-active steps to accommodate diversity within the local.

Accessible Leadership

Chapter 4 discussed in some detail the narrative constructed in Local 401 that

O'Halloran and the leadership team are informal, relaxed, very accessible and responsive

to the membership. This approach to leadership is believed to be more important than

whatever formal structures the local has in place through its bylaws. The narrative arc

continues by saying that this accessibility has built two things for the local: a high degree

of trust for the centralized authority of the President; and an informal feedback and

accountability loop that is more effective than GMs and other formal structures. Readers

seeking evidence of this narrative are encouraged to review the quotes provided in

Chapter 4 under this topic. Questions can be raised of whether such informal practices

can effectively lead to real accountability and if the practices privilege certain types of

feedback (i.e., positive) over others, and will be discussed further below.

Strong Leadership

Similarly, Chapter 5 examined closely the perceived role of leadership in Local

401. The narrative constructed argues that strong leaders that actively "take care" of their

members, aggressively pursue issues on behalf of their members, and make decisions in

their best interests. Virtues of leadership include taking action when necessary, even

without consultation, but with a clear eye on why action is being taken. Proof that the

leaders are doing the right thing rests in the outcome they achieve. Do they bargain good

agreements? Are they successful in certifying? Secondarily, the narrative points to

members' faith and trust in the leadership as evidence that the leadership is performing its

role appropriately. And that trust is based upon getting results: "you can place your trust

in the union because they can make things happen" (member, 29). This narrative

intertwines heavily with narratives around the accessibility of the leadership. It also

further embeds male notions of leadership (re-inforcing the father narrative) within the

local and short-circuits potential criticism of the leadership's behaviour by pointing

exclusively to "results" at the expense of process.

External Forces

The nature of the external forces – corporations, capitalism, globalization – figure

large in UFCW 401's self-narratives. They justify many of their actions and approaches

by the necessity of dealing with large players who are becoming more aggressive in the

21st century. In Chapter 4 we saw that they view their increasing aggressiveness in

communications as paralleling the aggressiveness of employers. In Chapter 6, their

narratives about their internal processes, like acting quickly through centralized decision-

making, are linked to external necessities (e.g., Hesse's lemons metaphor). In general,

their approach of strong, centralized leadership is portrayed as both necessary and, if not

virtuous, at least responsive to reality. Once again, Hesse says it most clearly:

> *Employers are at you quickly [snaps fingers]. They move hundreds of millions of*
> *dollars around and make quick business decisions. And you've got to be able to*
> *turn on a dime. Do you call a union meeting every single time you need to want a*
> *decision on a grievance? … CUPE's structure, as it is presented, is much more*
> *democratic than ours. Little local unions, lots of local autonomy, the president*
> *works in the plant. And some members say to me that was really nice in fairy tale*

times, really nice. But I don't want to count on a co-worker to represent me now when labour relations [are] more complicated. They got an MBA and four lawyers. I don't want that anymore. ... you need money and resources to take on capital now. In an ideal world, if there is 10 plants you should have 10 locals, each with a working president from the plant, 50 shop stewards, 100% turn out at union meetings. In this socio-political and economic context? Right! You could look at 401 and say, oh my god, they are top down. And you can try to hang on to that model and watch yourself die. (Hesse)

This narrative has two dimensions. First, it places a limitation on what is possible. Greater internal democracy is desirable, but not feasible due to the nature of capitalism. Second, it places Local 401 as forward-thinking and pro-active. They recognize the threats and rather than hang on to what they had, they are responding to new realities and, it is implied, surviving and thriving.

Hesse's comments might strike one as over-stated. While the accuracy of the threat (aggressive globalized capital) is unquestioned, his choice for unions is over-simplified. He establishes a straw-man of ultra-democracy to bat down with his argument of modern realities. Taking away a middle alternative is essential for the narrative's ability to support the local's internal logic of strong, authoritarian leadership.

Meta-Narrative

As stated earlier, the narratives outlined above intertwine and layer upon one another. More importantly they mutually re-inforce one another to create a larger meta-narrative that describes who UFCW 401 is and why they do what they do. On their own, each narrative explains one portion of who UFCW 401 is. Together, a more complete picture emerges. While there is value in isolating the individual narratives, analyzing their creation and reproduction, reception and role is best conducted by seeing them as a

multi-faceted whole. Therefore the discussions to follow will approach the notion of

UFCW 401's narratives as a collective entity. This is not intended to diminish the unique

structure of each narrative, but instead to integrate them into a broader analysis of how

narrative construction operates within the local. We will know turn to how the narratives

have been received by members.

Reception and Interpretation of Narratives

Audience is important in narrative. Not only are they the intended recipients of

the storyline being narrated, they, in turn, become active in the re-production (or lack

thereof) of the narrative. Each person, coming from their own perspective, identity and

assumptions, potentially will interpret and translate the narrative differently, giving

narratives an element of dynamism. The design of this study permits an analysis not only

of the narratives themselves but also how different groups within the union (the audience)

interprets and translates the storylines. This section will look at how much members

"buy-in" to the leadership's narrative constructions and whether different groups of

members accept and interpret the narratives differently. It will also examine explicitly the

links between identity and the local's narrative reproduction.

Member Reception of Narratives

In general there is a high degree of buy-in by member participants in the study.

The author was surprised by the similarity in language, and even usage of specific terms,

across participants. This noticeable consistency in framing is a central feature of UFCW

401 and understanding their dynamics. All unions experience, to some degree, some level

of homogenization of message within their ranks, but in this researcher's years of practical experience working with unions, most unions do not have agreement in narratives to this degree.

Particularly noticeable is the shared language around the external narratives. The use of "aggressive" and its synonyms in describing Local 401 was almost universal among members, regardless of their background or experience with the local. Even new members with little interaction with the leadership adopted this frame. Related, most participants expressed a sense that something was different about Local 401 compared to other unions. Often the narrative is related very specifically, like internal cohesiveness, more member-driven or more willing to fight. One example offers an interesting perspective: "sometimes [unions] lose track a little bit but then they gotta pull themselves back on track. And during that time they're off it can cause some harm. I've never really seen, at least not in my 25 years, I've never seen 401 off-track" (member, 6). Sometimes this narrative was relayed in more general, generic terms – the participant could not pinpoint what made Local 401 different, but they expressed that somehow Local 401 is more responsive, more active, more aggressive. "Local 401 is the one that stands beside us, is the most, that will take [our issues] on compared to other locals" (member, 7). Regardless there is an implied sense of pride that Local 401 does their job better than other unions. While most participants did not talk in terms of "principles", the narrative is embedded in other narratives through a sense that the union is doing what it is supposed

to: "The union is there to represent you if there is unfairness, it is something they can do.
… [T]he union is there. I think they are doing a good job" (member, 14).

Similarly, internal and member narratives associated with how responsive the
union is to members were widely adopted. Members felt the leadership was both strong
and accessible and that they were listening to the membership. "They are definitely
listening to the members in terms of what the members want and they are not going to
buckle under if you will" (member, 37). Notably in this example the narratives about
militancy merge with ones related to being responsive. Almost all participants agreed
with the sentiment that they could "pick up that phone and reach the president" (member,
23). While a minority of participants actively used the term "family", there was also a
widespread sense that the local was an informal, relaxed, safe space where people relied
on one another. .

Not all narratives possessed such universal reproduction. Members were less
likely to accept the leadership's framing of the necessity of and value in strong,
centralized leadership. Some members express concern at Doug's "dictatorial"
tendencies. But even concerns about how tightly he controls the local are tempered with a
vague sense that someone needs to be "in charge". This example demonstrates the
tension:

> *I think Doug very much wants to be in charge – and he does need to be. … I know*
> *the executive feels bullied sometimes. The only time I ever really saw them*
> *challenge him was when he wanted Chris [O'Halloran's son and current Local*
> *401 staff member] to take over … Doug had health issues and was ready to step*
> *aside and, then they said Chris isn't ready. … I'm pretty sure Chris will take over.*

There will be an election obviously, but Doug usually gets what he wants. (member, 4)

Other members expressed concern that the leadership group is too tightly knit, at the exclusion of more broad-based decision making.

I don't want to say it's an old boys club because it's not quite an old boys club but it's definitely got a little bit of a feel of a family run, ... it just kind of looks like, well Doug is in charge, Theresa has always been his second hand, his son's coming up in the ranks and the education guy's daughter is married to the son. So it seems like this family thing. (member, 3)

The issue of who succeeds O'Halloran is highly contested within the local and one of the few examples of where the leadership's narrative is not adopted by the membership. The leadership consistently argued that succession would be determined by a democratic vote, but the membership appears highly skeptical of that framing, arguing the "fix is in" for either the president's son or a member of the leadership team.

The perceptions of nepotism, also discussed in Chapter 5, are both a product of Local 401's leadership style and a hint that the moment of succession will be crucial for the local – when the internal logic and meta-narratives begin to break down or prove themselves to be particularly sturdy. The issue of succession is one of the few examples in this study of the audience rejected the narrator's version, and therefore is one of the few points where Local 401's narratives are found to be ineffective. Ironically, it is at moments when narrative re-production breaks down when we can learn the most about how narratives serve power within unions.

At time the concern about the centralized control in the local surfaced as expressions of frustration at how the leadership uses activists. "It was sort of like being a

chess piece in a game. So I would show up and sometimes they would say, okay today

you're going to be getting pictures done for posters. And I didn't object to any of it. I

knew full well what was going on. But sometimes it kind of felt like the strings on my

hand were getting pulled this way and that" (member, 3). Again, the low level of

frustration at how activists are handled reflects a degree of tension between the narratives

of being member-driven and principled and the expressions from members of their

experiences.

The other narrative that had some contestation was who the members are. The

framing that Local 401 members are harder to organize due to their backgrounds and

respective positions in the labour market was widely adopted by the members

themselves. However, the members' framing differs in two important ways. First, they

are more likely to attribute lack of activism to a more complex dynamic. Some of it is due

to employer resistance to union activism:

> *I think its apathy and also there is a scare tactic that is being implemented. ...*
> *[I]f the manager don't like me then I won't get my shift, I won't get as much shift,*
> *you know what I mean? They use that tactic. ... You get five hour shift instead of*
> *eight hour shift, you know. ... They use the same tactic. Sometimes they use the*
> *wording on the collective agreement to scare their employees as well.* (member,
> 7)

Members see their co-workers not taking an interest in the union. They interpret this as

"complacency" or "disinterest", but they also see how power relations at work affect this

apparent complacency.

Second, the members are less likely to interpret the lack of activism as an implied

desire for the leadership to do it, although some expression of this is found. More

commonly members saw this as a challenge for the union requiring more education and more effort to bring the inactive co-workers around. "People need to be encouraged. Shop stewards, we have to be out speaking, encouraging our members. When someone say why that is not happening, I [teach] them that we have the meetings and it is good for them to come to the meeting and air also your concerns" (member, 14). Apathy and lack of involvement is not seen as a justification for centralized authority, but for more effort at building activists.

The members' partial rejection of the inactive member narratives is noteworthy. It speaks to a dis-connect between the leader's and the members' perspectives, something rarely revealed in Local 401. The membership seems to be saying they want the local to do more to encourage activism and to embrace diversity, yet the leadership continues to suggest the members don't want to be more active.

It is interesting that the clear dissonance on the issue of activism does not translate into any sustained dissent, suggesting that despite one or two holes in the narrative quilt, the threads of the meta-narrative are strong and numerous enough to prevent fraying or unravelling. Overall the narrative project of UFCW 401 is widely accepted and reproduced by its membership.

Differing Perspectives

As indicated above, most of the narrative constructions receive broad internalization across the membership, and little evidence was found of workers with a certain set of backgrounds reacting differently. No divergence in narrative reproduction

was found across industry, gender or whether the participant was a shop steward or not. However, there are elements where some groups of members did engage with narratives in noticeably different manners.

One of the most noticeable differences was among members born in Africa, South America or Asia (i.e., non-Caucasian). The narrative of family appeared more frequently and more fervently among this group, as did notions of loyalty within and to the union. This group was less likely to criticize the leadership or the centralized authority within the local, and more likely to express support for leadership actions. They also were more likely to express appreciation and reverence for O'Halloran. "How great a person he is, just like God" (member, 17). This narrative finding is supported by direct observations at union events. Members of colour seemed more expressive in their admiration of O'Halloran and more appreciative of the collectivity that is the union. In contrast, much of the contesting of the leadership narratives came from Caucasian members.

This result may result from the possibility the interviews drew out cultural sensitivities, such as a reluctance to speak ill of another not in the room. Cultural traditions, such as deference to authority, may also play a factor. It may also be attributed to the respondents' relative status and position. Non-Canadian workers may have greater awareness of power and/or are conscious of their relative vulnerability, making them both less likely to voice concern and more likely to invest in a positive manner. The study cannot determine with any degree of confidence the causes for this finding.

Two other differences were found, but are of lesser significance. First, young workers (under 30) were more likely to express enthusiasm about union, their involvement in the union and the union's prospects. In particular, they were more effusive in describing Local 401 as a militant, active union and were more likely to see the union as more member-driven. Second, new members (less than 5 years) and less active members (not filling a formal role) were less likely to communicate a connection with the leadership, leading to less agreement with their accessibility and responsive to the membership. However, in those cases the narrative transferred itself from the elected leadership to the member's staff representative, who became something of a proxy. Where O'Halloran became a more distant figure, the staff rep became the face of the local and the source of the accessibility, member-driven narrative construction. Newer and inactive members also seemed to relate more to the union's reputation as being aggressive and effective for its members.

It is unclear how the two latter findings further our understanding of UFCW 401's dynamics. It is not unexpected to find that new members and less active would have a narrower sense of the union's internal life. Young workers somewhat overlap new members (not in all cases). Both groups seem to turn to internalize the more external narratives to replace the lack of insight into other workings of the union. The more internal narratives simply have less meaning for them. However, witnessing how the source of narrative reproduction can shift from leadership to staff is an intriguing component in understanding how narratives embed themselves in organization.

Identity and Diversity

That little difference was found among different groups of members is not the end of the discussion. Dynamics around race, gender, age and sexual orientation do not only appear in the explicit words people choose. Just because some one says they have not experienced any racialized marginalization, for example, does not mean they haven't. Nor does it mean they don't see themselves as racialized in a more general way. Identity and diversity are more complex than a few interview questions. There is a need to probe the issue of identity and diversity within UFCW 401 a little more fully. What can the narratives teach us about how the local perceives and handles the issue?

The narrative of diversity and inclusion is a powerful one in UFCW 401. The union see itself as somewhat blind to colour, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.; a claim to a large degree internalized by the membership.

> *The union is doing a good job to educate people to live in harmony regardless of their diverse background.* (member, 14)

> *I think the union is doing good job. They give to everybody, it doesn't matter where you come from. Most of the people who work on the floor, in the production area, most of them are migrant.* (member, 15)

Many participants acknowledged some kind of negative experience due to their ascribed traits (i.e., race, gender, sexual orientation) at work or in the community, meaning they are not unaffected by or unaware of discrimination that can occur in our society. They choose, however, to see the union as a place of exception to the standard patterns of behaviour.

Two observations offer some context to this narrative. To a great degree, diversity is defined in terms of numbers. How many women are on staff? How many newcomers on the bargaining committee? For example, O'Halloran pointed to the recent hiring of an openly GLBT staff member as evidence of their inclusivity. To a degree this is legitimate. The membership needs to see itself reflected in its union. However, the more challenging aspects of inclusion are side-stepped by head counting. The efforts to accommodate different perspectives through altering structures and processes do not occur, and is claimed to be unnecessary due to the success of the existing efforts.

Second, while the union couches its approach as being inclusive and more "progressive" their own approaches in practice may not align with the narrative. In a particularly ironic example, Hesse criticizes an employer over a grievance as "just being pale, male and stale" (quoted in O'Donnell 2006, A1). Meanwhile, the notion of leadership adopted by UFCW 401 is very male and very white. The notion of a single, strong leader is one perpetuated throughout the labour movement and can be seen as a barrier to higher levels of inclusivity among unions (Hunt and Rayside 2007; Briskin 2011).

Among the activists of UFCW 401, their union identity seems to take some precedence, at least while engaging in union activities, over other aspects of their identity. They internalize the "blind" narrative and place being a UFCW 401 member as the defining characteristic in that context. We should not overstate this, as people's identities are always multiple and shifting. Yet, the degree in which members of all

backgrounds internalized and reproduced the union narratives is indicative of how powerful those narratives are in defining both the union and the activist themselves. The union identity is given shape by the narratives, which in turn permits a prioritizing of the union identity over others, at least in the specific context of work and union life. We will return to this point more below.

Construction and Reproduction of Narratives

There are only so many mediums available to the narrator to tell their story. Obviously, any time a person speaks to another person, the potential of narrative construction and reproduction arises. However, some media are more effective than others because they reach a greater audience and/or they find the audience in a more receptive space. The study examined where and how UFCW 401 narratives were created and maintained. In other words, what mechanisms were used to relay particular framings and stories to members and outsiders?

The analysis finds six primary vehicles for narrative construction and reproduction. Some are fairly expected, including union publications and communications, union education classes and conferences and informal rhetoric at union events. However there are some less expected sites of narrative creation, including the system of hiring relief representatives, the informal and relaxed relations between members and staff and leadership, and in the embodiment of the leadership style itself. The following section briefly examines the six locations as a precursor to looking at the role of narratives within the union.

Publications and Communications

Organization publications are natural sources of narratives. They are an opportunity for an unadulterated delivering of messages and they are designed to be persuasive with a targeted audience. UFCW 401 is no different. As has been discussed earlier, pamphlets and posters created by Local 401 deliver clear messages consistent with a number of the union's narratives, including their diverse and inclusive nature, their militant, unified stances and their outspokenness. The more recent members' magazine, *Your Voice*, also reproduces a variety of narratives. Headlines repeatedly include the word "strong" – e.g., "Food Workers Union Provides a Strong Voice for Workers at the Brooks Plant", and "Safeway Workers Strong – Sobeys Workers Strong". The word "fight" is found repeatedly as well. The NDP is given full page ads and two-page articles, highlighting the linkage between the two. There are multiple references to how members can get involved. However, it also provides a large soapbox for the leadership (most articles are written by staff or the elected officers) to promote its achievements "on behalf" of the membership.

An analysis of union publications finds a blunt, forward approach to messaging. The attempt to construct narratives in communications material lacks subtlety. It is as if the leadership is quite conscious that publications are moments of narrative construction. Consequently publications become a core mechanism for narrative reproduction. It also means the publications are reduced in their function as education and information vehicles as they become an active component of leadership's persuasion efforts.

Union Education

Union schools, workshops and conference are also expected sites of narrative construction. The union leadership and staff get unrestricted access to a group of members for multiple days. It is like a prolonged captive meeting. Of course, important information and training occurs, and members receive education that can serve them well in their workplaces and communities. But it would be naïve to think that union courses are also not an opportunity to entrench particular union narratives. To offer one example: the Superstore Shop Stewards' Conference provided important information about the new collective agreement, but it was also clear that the instructors had a mandate to "sell" the provisions. Key sections were talked up for their ground-breaking nature or for how much they would "empower you with your boss" (field notes). Union education events offer a dual opportunity – substantive education and narrative education. The leadership of Local 401 seems quite aware of the value of education to further persuasion efforts, and uses such moments unabashedly.

Informal Rhetoric

Union events also give opportunity for leaders to speak to their members. Their language usage and rhetoric also serves as a location for narrative. O'Halloran's speeches are peppered with coarse language and repeated reminders of his down-to-earth, populist style. Reports on units in bargaining are framed with "we will have a fight on our hands there" or other such references to the need to struggle (field notes). Informal rhetoric of this kind can often be highly effective as a method for delivering narrative for the

audience often is unaware they are listening to a storyline, as opposed to a factual report.

Informal rhetoric is an important component of narrative construction in UFCW 401 in

part because the local has adopted such informal mechanisms for leadership-membership

interaction. How the leadership expresses themselves in those moments can be just as

effective in delivering the narrative as formal communications. .

Relief Representatives

Described earlier, UFCW uses an elaborate system for training and evaluating

potential staff representatives. Activists identified by the leadership and staff are used for

vacation/leave replacement and special projects (organizing drives, campaigns, etc.).

They continue to receive their regular rate of pay, usually substantially lower than a

representative's pay. Since most hires come from within the local, the relief rep system is

the primary pathway in which a member can join staff. This system may seem an unlikely

source for narrative reproduction, but it actually is very important. It leads to perspective

homogenization. Not only are relief reps being trained in grievances, bargaining and so

on, they see firsthand how the internal processes of the union work and they are provided

with the language and storyline to accompany it. They are narrator-in-training. Those that

"fit in" by more fully adopting the narratives are more likely to be hired. A relief rep who

does not reproduce the right narratives can be weeded out, ensuring a more consistent

delivery of narrative by the staff. This weeding out process is openly acknowledged by

the leadership. The homogenization facilitated by the relief rep system goes beyond

rewarding loyalty and filtering out alternative viewpoints, although it achieves those

goals as well. It also reinforces the narratives that hold the local's internal logic together. Agreeing to the union's approach and learning how to talk about the union's approach go hand-in-hand. In this regard the relief rep system can be viewed as a narrative enforcement mechanism – it ensures alternative narratives do not infiltrate the local.

Informal Processes

Actions can also serve as a narrative source. Local 401 runs in a very informal, relaxed manner. Meetings are loose where formal items are de-emphasized and informal chatter becomes a key way information is shared. There is almost a visible disregard for formal aspects. At events the president is omni-present at coffee breaks, just hanging out. The union offices are equally relaxed and welcoming. These actions are telling a story. They create and bolster the narrative of an accessible leadership running an open and inclusive union which is responsive to members. While it may not come in words, it can be equally effective at reproducing a framing of who the union is. In fact, non-verbal narrative construction can be highly effective, given the unexpectedness of its delivery. The visibility of these informal practices can be very effective at masking less inclusive and open practices that occur behind the scenes.

Leadership Style

It is natural to think that the local's leadership style is a target or product of a narrative, rather than a source. It can serve as both. The embodiment of how UFCW 401's leadership performs its functions can be a site of narrative construction itself. A key narrative in the local is its strong, accessible leadership. This form of leadership, the

storyline goes, has led to the militant, active, aggressive union Local 401 is today. This narrative is reproduced by O'Halloran's commitment to be on every picket line, to lead every key meeting, to act as the last-minute closer in negotiations, and so on. His behaviour leads to the common notion of 401 as "Doug's local". In turn that belief allows for O'Halloran to be credited with the local's successes and ascribed as the creator of its personality. O'Halloran's actions become firmly linked to notions of strong leadership.

Role of Narratives in UFCW 401

It is important to understand what Local 401's narratives are and how they are created, as well as how they are interpreted and reproduced. Yet, we cannot stop at simply describing the narrative dynamics within the local. We need to ask what purpose they serve within the local. Whose interests are served? How do the narratives support the power dynamics in the local? These questions permit a deeper insight into the function of narratives and how they bolster the existing power regime within the union.

Equally important, examining the role of narratives in Local 401 allows for some integration with the earlier aspects of this study. Critical analysis of the narratives lays bare the local's internal logic and exposes the mechanisms that allow that which from the outside appears contradictory to hold together in practice. Narratives exist in the space between structure and action, which is where a union is defined. Therefore they reveal the heart of the organization.

This section examines why the specific narratives constructed and reproduced in Local 401 exist. It discusses the relationship between the narratives and the existing

power structures in the union. In particular, it explores three ways in which narratives help make sense of what has been observed about UFCW 401. First, the narratives build legitimacy for and create a sense of normalcy in the unique leadership structures and behaviours in the local. Second, they help create unity and decrease dissent within the local. Third, they create a framework for a managed form of change as well as strengthening stability within the local. Each of these functions will be discussed below.

Creating Legitimacy and Normalcy

One of the primary purposes of narratives in Local 401 is to build legitimacy around the decision-making structures and leadership style of the local. They also create a sentiment that this kind of leadership is normal and not out of the ordinary. There are a handful of ways in which the narratives lead to this outcome.

First, the narratives pull members' (and others') attention away from the formal aspects of the local's structure, with their firm-handed, top-down design, by arguing that formal structure matters less than other aspects of leadership, in particular being down-to-earth, accessible and responsive. When one accepts this framing, it does not matter that O'Halloran was originally appointed to his position by the UFCW Canada, nor is it important that he possesses all authority in the local. The narrative shows him to be populist, accessible and caring. His credibility rests not in his formal authority, but in his decades-long practice of being "out and about" with his members.

Formal processes such as GMs are downplayed, replaced, both in practice and rhetoric, by informal avenues, such as "picking up the phone". This process transfers

accountability from an act of collective responsibility to a series of one-on-one engagements. Interestingly, few participants took local elections seriously, assuming Doug would always win and upon his retirement select his successor. That this reality did not stir up resentment or anger speaks volumes at the effectiveness of the narratives in creating legitimacy for O'Halloran's presidency. Without the narrative defence of populism, such non-democratic sentiment might spark a sustained resistance to the leadership approaches in the local.

More than that, the autocratic leadership style exhibited by the leadership team is turned by the narratives into a point of strength for the local, rather than a point of critique. The phrase "Doug's union" is expressed both as reality and as shorthand for the union being strong, clear and focused. It is okay for Local 401 to be "Doug's local" because Doug is popular, accessible and perceived to be responsive to the members. The sentiment becomes that the local is lucky to have Doug, and members are encouraged to buy into a framing that his centralized authority is a sign of a strong leader.

Under normal circumstances ascribing a union local as being owned by a single individual would be a troubling statement, a signal suggesting a subversion of some basic union principles. That the phrase is instead used by members as a positive aspect of the local at first seems incomprehensible. Within the local's internal narrative logics however, the phrase becomes an indicator of strength, resolve and strong leadership.

By focusing attention on the achievements of the local, on their self-identity as "fighters", the narratives also establish a new ground for judging the leadership.

Democratic engagement, transparency or respect for minority opinion ceases to be measures of good leadership, replaced by an ability to take on the employer on behalf of members. Militancy becomes both an active tendency and a signpost for good leadership. Paired with the fighting union narrative is the principled union narrative, which post-hoc promotes the militant actions as serving a higher interest. Within the narrative logic, these are not acts of self-preservation, self-interest or otherwise ordinariness; they are done in the name of an unspoken higher principle.

By any objective measure the struggles taken on by Local 401 in recent years would be considered admirable and they clearly do point to a commitment, at some level, to defending the rights of workers. Any observer might agree that UFCW 401 takes on difficult fights. The narratives are not problematic in that respect. They serve the leadership's interests when they entrench a way of legitimizing leadership actions in a manner that papers over other more concerning aspects of that leadership. The lack of mechanisms for dissent, active member engagement in key decisions and weak accountability frameworks fall out of focus under the bright lights of so-called strong, principled leadership.

The danger for the leadership team in emphasizing fighting and principles is that if the leadership fails to deliver in this manner, they risk undermining their primary source of legitimacy. If they lose an organizing drive or sign a sub-standard collective agreement, the threads of the narrative threaten to fray. This risk is the reason we see their tendency to over-sell their accomplishments. The message to members is not "we

have a good contract", it is "we have the best contracts in this province, we have the best Loblaw's contract in Canada, we have the best Safeway contract in Canada" (staff, 24). With members' general inability to confirm the accuracy of such claims, the message is not easily disproven and thus helps hold the threads of the other narratives together. In this manner, the realities of bargaining (i.e., compromise) and incomplete achievements are subsumed under chest-thumping declarations of victory and the local ends up looking more effective than it may be in reality (for no union is ever as effective as they wish to be, such is the nature of the labour relations system).

Thus we can see the formation of a legitimation matrix. The informality and action-focus combine with the active effort on the part of the leadership to construct a model of leadership that emphasizes strong individuals, decisive action and minimal collaboration to create an interlocking network of mutually re-inforcing narratives. Each prevents the other from being undermined by the niggling details of reality. The role of leadership in this matrix is to equate the traits exhibited by the leadership – autocratic, "heroic" – as desirable traits. Thus when they act in an autocratic manner, ironically their legitimacy as leaders is confirmed, not challenged. Illustrating with an example, O'Halloran's practice of entering tough negotiations at the very end to be the "closer" becomes evidence of his strong leadership, not of his usurping the role of the bargaining committee at the last minute, which could be an alternative explanation for his behaviour. The narratives carve out the space the leadership needs to maintain its legitimacy and credibility while acting has it has for decades.

Two final pieces complete the legitimation matrix. Sketching a picture of a passive, difficult to mobilize membership that wants a strong, decisive leader to act on their behalf further supports Local 401's current structures and process and allows for less emphasis on member mobilization and member-based decision making. Further, the argument that the growing power of external forces render a more decentralized process ineffective (or impossible) closes off the possibility for an alternative model for the local. Not only is the leadership doing its job for the members, they would be placing the local at risk by decentralizing authority and allowing more rank-and-file input into key decisions.

Maintaining a stable, centralized leadership in a democratic organization during volatile times requires a number of pieces to fit into place. In the case of UFCW 401, the narratives play their role well by narrowing the range of possibilities, emphasizing certain criteria over others and ensuring characteristics and behaviours that could be seen negatively are marked as positive by the membership. No one could survive 25 years as a union leader, in particular a centralized, autocratic leader, without finding a way to earn and maintain legitimacy. The narrative logics within Local 401 play a large role in sustaining that legitimacy on behalf of the existing leadership of the local.

Building Unity and Reducing Dissent

The second function of the narrative constructions relate to increasing the level of solidarity and unity within the union and a commensurate decrease of expressed dissent. A variety of narratives feed into a process to connect members with the union, create a

sense of belonging and common cause, and motivate acts of solidarity. The flipside is that

many of these narratives also restrict opportunity for dissent and open debate within the

union.

The narrative that UFCW 401 works like a close-knit family is the most explicit

of the unifying functions. Members are given a sense that they belong to something

bigger than a collection of workplaces, that when they come together in the union they

are connected in some higher fashion. A sense of family invokes loyalty. It also feeds

into a notion of "fatherly" leadership styles which elevates the leader and subordinates

the members.

Both feeding into and fed by the family narrative is the informal nature of

accountability within the local. When members believe they can address issues directly

with the leadership, this leads to a sense of personal engagement, akin to a familial

relationship. However it is also a double-edge sword, for while it may engender trust and

connection, it also individualizes dissent. Members are encouraged to raise matters one-

on-one. This approach has the potential of preventing spaces for collective expression of

disagreement or concern. It reduces the opportunities for debate to occur in the open,

where dissent can be observed by others. The formulaic, almost flip manner in which the

GMs are run is indicative of this dynamic. Theoretically members can raise concerns

during the meeting, but the informal traditions of the local discourage that, replacing it

with conversations post-adjournment where a complaint or idea may not be recorded or

disseminated. The local's leadership style fosters unity and a sense of organic familiarity,

but also quietly closes off avenues of public debate and discussion. The ramifications of this closure cannot be understated. In any democratic organization the pressure to silence dissent is great for disagreement is often confused with disloyalty and priority is often given to the health of the organization over the value of free debate. The narratives employed in Local 401 exacerbate these tendencies and risk undermining the vibrancy and resilience that can come from open debate.

The unity created by internal narratives is bolstered by the storyline that Local 401 is different than other unions. Further, much of this narrative suggests many unions dislike the local or are jealous of its achievements. First, it creates a sense of us vs. them, which is always an effective tool for engendering internal unity and discouraging internal dissent. Indeed, it is one of the most common refrains used by leaders to "rally the troops" and diminish space for disagreement. The narrative creates pride in 401's uniqueness and fosters a perceived need to defend it against outside criticism. Second, the narrative inoculates against members internalizing any of the criticism they hear. Local 401 is often accused of being a business union, top-down, right wing along with possessing various other negative qualities. The different-than-others narrative creates an automated response: they are envious or do not understand how 401 works. This response makes it less likely members may seriously reflect upon the nature of the criticisms and raise uncomfortable questions internally.

The relief representative program and its purpose of winnowing potential staff, enforces the unity consequence by fostering homogeneity of narrative among the staff

and also entrenching an expectation of staff behaviour. This program, intentionally or not, sends a message to ambitious activists about desired modes of action and rhetoric, further entrenching dominant narratives.

The case of diversity is a particularly interesting dynamic. The purpose of the open and inclusive narrative is two-fold. First, it has the very real outcome of creating a welcoming environment where everyone is welcomed and respected. The creation of such an atmosphere (and from direct observation, the atmosphere is welcoming and respectful) is bound to instill loyalty among members of minority groups and create a sense of solidarity between groups. However, the way the narrative is constructed, that Local 401 is "blind" to race, gender, etc., also serves to limit the story to easier aspects of accommodating diversity. It becomes an easy way to "whitewash" more perplexing issues related to race, gender and age. The more challenging issues of recognizing multiple locations of power and confronting how union structures entrench particular inter-group relations can be dismissed as not relevant to Local 401. In this way, paradoxically, the narratives legitimize diversity of identity but simultaneously sideline it. Other identities are rendered secondary to "UFCW Local 401" union identity, a prioritization internalized by members themselves. This particular vein of the narrative network is not so much about diminishing dissent as it is about restricting heterogeneity within the union. In this fashion, diversity is embraced but also contained, allowing for other narratives to step into the forefront. Fully embracing diversity would require asking serious questions about how the union is run, who runs it and how people may be

differentially included in its locus of power. Those questions by necessity point to the leadership structures themselves, potentially causing the entire power dynamic to unravel. Thus, diversity is a force that must be constrained, and the narratives of inclusivity, family and unity help keep it a narrow box.

Unity is a difficult tightrope for unions. Solidarity is a core union principle. It is created through building a sense of belonging, mutuality and common interest. Unity lies at the core of that process and is a precursor to solidarity. However, striving for unity can also lead unions to see dissent, disagreement and internal debate as a threat. Too many identities and perspectives muddy the effort to create a single goal upon which to build solidarity. Narratives within unions necessarily serve the purpose of building unity by creating common storylines. The case of UFCW 401 shows us how those narratives operate to foster unity. It also shows us how the logical corollary of that fostering is a strangling of disagreement and dissent.

Frameworks for Managing Change

The narratives also serve to create a set of frameworks that facilitate leadership-managed change. The combination of narratives utilized in Local 401 lead to a logic of organizational innovation and the institutional environment to facilitate that innovation. However, it is very much a leadership-directed form of innovation, occurring when and how the leadership determines, meaning the frameworks also serve to strengthen stability for the leadership.

UFCW 401 has adopted a notion of leadership that legitimizes centralized authority and top-down decision-making. However, other narratives place upon the leadership a requirement to be active, responsive and militant in utilizing that authority. To maintain credibility they must deliver in some fashion. Cave too many times at the bargaining table, permit the membership to stagnate and shrink, become too distant from the member and the leadership risks losing support from the membership, which causes a cycle of narrative breakdown. The need to maintain an outward appearance of accomplishment creates a dynamic where the leadership is looking for new ways to improve their performance. Interacting with this motivation is the structural particularities of Local 401 that lower barriers to achieving innovation. This is "Doug's local"; if Doug wants to change something, he can. Often such centralized leadership structures lead to an inherent conservatism and lack of interest in innovation (Moody 2007). What may be different in Local 401 is the effect of the other narratives they have put into motion.

Of particular importance here are the narratives related to strong, responsive and accessible leadership and a militant, principled and member-driven union. They interact to define what the leadership is supposed to be and how they are supposed to be motivated. While they work to legitimize many aspects of the local's top-down structures and process, they also place a burden on the leadership to act in a fashion somewhat consistent with the narratives. While narratives are not deterministic, their ability to organize understanding through coherent stories will shape how the leaders themselves

interpret any given situation. 401's particular matrix of narratives fosters a tendency to try new things, be on the lookout for new organizing opportunities and to take tough stances against employers. The union's track record of change is, in part, a by-product of its narrative constructions.

However, these narratives also provide a framework for stability. There is little desire or opportunity for upheaval within the local. The likelihood of regime change is remote. Member unhappiness can be absorbed in a fashion that does not undermine legitimacy. The strong centralized control permits change to happen at a pace and in a manner that does not destabilize the organization. In short the leaders must act, but they have great latitude in ascertaining when and how to do so.

It is the combination of narrative motivation for change and stability that may create the unique dynamics observed in Local 401. The push-pull, which can create tension and fracture, instead, at least during the period of study, appears to create a sustainable degree of change within status quo.

Narrative Influence: Positive or Negative?

The above discussion outlined how narratives influence dynamics within Local 401. They serve the interests of the powerful within the union to maintain legitimacy, stability and the status quo. There are many reasons to ponder how other narratives, such as those coming from dissenters and minority groups or those offering alternative ways to run the union, are marginalized and silenced. It can be hard as an outsider to justify framings that squelch internal democracy, entrench highly centralized authority and form

notions of leadership residing in one strong (male) individual. However, as the discussion above reveals, the picture is more complex than that. Narratives also impose logic upon the powerful that restrict their available options. They are, of course, better positioned to create and amend the storylines, but that can be difficult to do if the existing narratives are effective at propping up the powerful. The end result is a more complicated matrix of consequences.

The picture is complicated further when we recognize that a narrative's impact is evaluated based upon the perspective one takes. Is organizing the unorganized a union's most important function? Should unions have a vibrant internal democracy with mobilized activists? Are unions' purpose to promote class consciousness? What one sees as most desirable in union action will colour how these narratives are judged. This question will be discussed more fully in the concluding chapter. For the moment a single example will serve as illustration. While working through the narrative constructions, the author informally discussed preliminary findings with friends. When relaying how the narratives created unity, one friend, looking at the case from a more psychological perspective, responded by praising their effectiveness at fostering feelings of inclusion, acceptance and belonging which they felt would both be beneficial for the members and make for a stronger organization. A second friend, coming from more of an activist background, was appalled at what they perceived as the union leadership's manipulation of its members to advance its own self-interest. The narratives and their effect did not change; the perspectives of the judges were different. That is why it is so challenging to

draw conclusions on whether narratives serve a positive or negative purpose. A more accurate appraisal might be that they do both at the same time.

Conclusion

Narratives have played a key role in shaping the trajectory of UFCW 401 over the past two decades. The leadership, like any powerful group, has employed narratives to create and maintain legitimacy and unity within the union. Narratives have also facilitated directed change within the local by creating particular logics that shape the nature of the change and stability. What was, from the outside, an apparently contradictory set of patterns in Local 401, gains coherence through an analysis of the narratives constructed and reproduced within the local. The decisions they have made and the behaviours that occur fit within a particular narrative matrix that can explain the nature of UFCW 401's tendencies.

The incorporation of narratives helps tie together the different components of this case study, and allow a more complete understanding of the dynamics. The discussion of the study's integrated conclusions will take place in the last chapter. This chapter concludes with some consideration about how a critical analysis of narratives can impact the broader study of unions.

Narratives have been under-studied in union literature. Until recently researchers have not examined the construction of internal dynamics within a union. Yates (2010) has done some interesting work on the importance of framing, a concept related to narratives, and Murray et al.'s (2010) referential unionisms concept addresses some aspects of

narrative outcomes. However, the extant literature has, for the most part, not considered the role narratives play in union behaviour. There are a few ways in which narratives can enhance our understanding of unions.

First, narratives show part of how power is exercised and maintained within a local. Power, of course, manifests in multiple ways, but the construction and reproduction of narratives is one of them. By breaking down the nature of the narratives, we can glimpse into the processes of how power is exercised. Narratives help us remember that unions are organizations of power relations, both internally and externally, and give us insight into the dynamics that flow from those relations.

If unions, as discussed earlier, are created at the intersection of structure and action, narratives can be seen as the link between them. Narratives make the dynamic active, giving it movement and shape. Metaphorically, narratives are the electrons moving back and forth between the two fields, creating the energy that propels. They do so by drawing connections between the two aspects of union existence, by allowing for some interplay between them. As we have seen in this study, narratives are used to legitimize and maintain the status quo in terms of structure and process. But narratives, by creating internal logics, also impel unions forward. The direction and nature of the movement is determined by the narratives that are constructed and how those narratives interact with structure and action.

Looking more specifically at union renewal, narratives can fill in some of the black box of internal union change. By revealing the process of constructing internal

logic and coherence, narratives can give us an understanding of how unions transform. Unions construct stories about themselves which lead to the formation of a self-identity. In turn as they respond to changing circumstances, they draw upon those self-identities. If and how they act is partly shaped by the stories they constructed earlier.

This process may sound similar to referential unionisms. Indeed, it is. They are related processes. Like referential unionisms, narratives shape how unionists interpret situations and how they make sense of who they are and how, therefore, they should respond. The question is what is the relationship between narratives and referential unionisms? A possible answer is that narratives are the mechanism through which referential unionisms are materialized. Murray et al. identify the existence of referential unionisms but offer few insights into how they come about. Narratives can fill in some of that empty space. Narratives are the stories unions tell about themselves to explain the immediate. Their explanatory power comes from the internal logic that forms out of the narrative matrix. However, as we have seen with UFCW 401, those internal logics launch a dynamic that affects a union's trajectory moving forward. The leadership uses narratives to maintain power, but the narratives also constrain and shape their actions as well. Over time these internal logics coalesce into a more sustained self-identity which leads directly into referential unionisms.

The upshot is that we may be able to examine the formation of referential unionisms by looking at narrative construction. Understanding how referential unionisms are built can advance our insights into how and when unions reform and revitalize

themselves. Therefore the study of narrative construction within unions has the potential to add another dimension to our knowledge about union renewal.

Narratives can also contribute to our evolving conceptualizations of union forms. Much of the literature regarding business and social unions cannot adequately account for contradictory characteristics within a union. Narratives can reconcile the apparent contradictions by revealing the internal logic upon which they are based. They give us deeper insight into the internal lives of unions by peeling back the surface appearances to examine the storylines that underpin it. Further they allow for a more fluid understanding of unionisms because narratives are not static, they morph and shift over time.

Ross (2007) and others when examining business and social unionism have highlighted the importance of looking beyond outward actions to interrogate the intent of those actions. They readily admit determining intent can be a difficult task, for it can be hard to get below the rhetoric and outward manifestations. Narratives may prove helpful in this regard as well. Critically analyzing the stories unions say about themselves can reveal much about how they approach their role and their motivations for engaging in certain actions. Narratives reveal things that other actions do not. The price, unfortunately, is simplicity. Narratives require an inherently complex understanding of how unions work and how they perceive themselves. A rigid dualism between the two forms of unionism may not be tenable under such an analysis.

This has only been a study of one union local. While rich in detail, a single case can only reveal so much about how narratives are constructed and reproduced and how

they relate to power relations within unions. Many questions about narratives and their

function in a union setting remain. Much more work is needed. Hopefully this case study

stands as an indicator of the insights that are possible through careful analysis of union

narrative construction and offers some initial observations upon which others can build.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Extensions

The previous chapters have focused on different aspects of the case study, examining UFCW 401 from multiple angles and addressing specific aspects of its structures and actions, culminating in Chapter Seven's collection of the key narratives driving the local and its internal logics. Now is the moment to draw the final conclusions, to return to the initial research questions, integrate the various elements and extend the findings into a broader academic and practical context. It is also the moment to remind ourselves that this study aimed to engage in a dialogue with two specific aspects of the dominant perspectives on unions. Other perspectives possibilities for understanding unions exist. This study assumes to speak to an audience familiar with widely held approaches to interpreting the actions of unions.

This final chapter will start by briefly offering some final thoughts on UFCW 401 itself, highlighting some of the key questions and issues that arise after closely examining this complex case. It will then turn to the original research questions that drove the study to ascertain what has been learned about them. Third, this conclusion will summarize the key contributions the results make to the study of unions and how the findings can be integrated theoretically with the extant literature. Finally, some considerations of the study's weaknesses and shortcomings as well as some future research questions will be articulated.

The Contradictions of UFCW Local 401

When I began this study I knew embracing contradiction was the key to making sense of what I was observing. I found that is easier said than done. When explaining the case to others, I found often the response was to emphasize one aspect or diminish another to maintain a more straightforward understanding of the local. Those who insisted they were a business union focused on their authoritarian leadership and dismissed their innovations and the subtleties of their political project. On the flipside, defenders of Local 401 would glide over the stunted democratic structures of the local and point to their achievements over the past 15 years.

I even struggled myself as I tried to fully grapple with the immense complexity of it all. At times I would vacillate between naïve admiration and cynical dismissiveness depending on what aspect I was focusing my attention that day. The task of taking in the whole was harder than it looked. As I worked my way through the analysis I found I returned to two, very disparate, quotes to help re-calibrate my attention. For my head, I would recall the essential quote from Richard Hyman about the very nature of industrial relations, and by extension unions: "there is an inherent dialectic in the processes of control over work relations: conflict and accommodation are two contradictory but inescapable aspects of industrial relations" (Hyman 1975, 199). For my heart, I remembered something told to me years ago by a student at the end of a week-long union school course I taught. As the class was saying their goodbyes a man who worked at a small industrial plant in rural Alberta approached to thank me and left me with this

thought: "I always opposed my union getting involved in politics. What did that have to do with us at the plant? I thought it just took away from the job they were supposed to do. Now I see that they have to do both. Without politics, they leave us vulnerable to bad labour law, but if they don't represent us properly, they got nobody backing them when they take on the politicians".

Each in their own way these two quotes powerfully remind that contradiction is the name of the game for unions. They are borne in it and they are confronted with it each and every day. We try to erase the contradiction to ease the task of understanding "who" a union is, but the act of simplifying strips away some of the important insights we can learn from the contradictions. That is what makes UFCW Local 401 a useful case to examine.

So, what are we to learn from Local 401? First, in UFCW 401 we see a union in its entirety, warts and all. It wears neither a white hat nor a black hat. If we choose to see the lesson, UFCW 401 teaches us to view unions in their totality, open to the contradictions that force their way into the picture. UFCW 401 is rife with contradictions, but those contradictions are merely manifestations of the same kind contradictions all unions face. Forcing Local 401 into one category or another is an exercise in over-simplification.

Second we see a union in motion. When we look over the entire period of study, we find the local has changed in significant ways. It has repudiated, to a degree, the UFCW International model of voluntary recognitions and tame negotiations. It has

branched out to new industries and found ways to attract workers under-represented by unions, adopting innovative organizing strategies along the way. It has become a fairly militant union, when measured in terms of strikes and rhetorical approaches. It is becoming more engaged with politics, not just with the NDP but by increasing their engagement with community-based groups such as Migrante Alberta, Parkland Institute and others. It has begun, somewhat belatedly, to improve its communication and engagement with members. Seeing the span of the historical context helps makes the contradictions less intractable. Certain tendencies appear and it becomes clearer that the centralized leadership, normally a barrier to change of this nature, has actually facilitated change. This tendency does not, of course, justify the authoritarian approaches within the local, but it does render the pairing less of a contradiction.

Of course, the development of the local is incomplete and bounded. They have reached out to diverse groups of workers but have not taken the more difficult steps to truly integrate young, female and/or racialized workers into a place of equality within the union. Similarly they have empowered members to a degree on the shop floor and on picket lines, but they have not created spaces for those members to exercise their democratic muscles. Again, this result is simultaneously contradictory and not; the authoritarian structures limit the degree of internal openness that can occur, but do not inhibit growth in other ways.

This observation brings us to internal logics. What appears contradictory and intractable from the outside can gain a degree of coherence on the inside. Narratives and

other self-identity mechanisms build a link between the various aspects of structure and action in the local. When read from within their meta-narrative constructions, the actions of Local 401 make sense. For the story to hold together, one must accept certain assumptions and sub-narrative creations, but the story does hold together under those conditions. Emphasizing the function of the internal logics runs the significant risk of being accused of apologizing for the local, or whitewashing critiques. Those who may make such a criticism fail to recognize the relationship between understanding and judgment. If we rush to judge, we will fail to understand. However, understanding can be a precursor to judgment. We are still free to reject the underlying assumptions of their narratives. In the case of Local 401, understanding leads to more dynamic, complex, and multi-layered possibilities for judgment.

A number of questions remain about the local. Yes, they are growing more political, but their politics are not really about transformation or substantial social change; they are about practical electoral and community politics. How are we to assess their approach? Does it meet the standard required of a so-called social union? How much less are they really doing than most unions in Canada these days?

Second, how are we to evaluate their approach to union democracy? The dynamic within Local 401 forces us to confront the difficult question of what is the balance between participatory democracy (a central tenet of unionism) and the capacity to act decisively and quickly in response to crises. Are these aspects in conflict, as the Local 401 narrative suggests, or is there a way to achieve both?

Third, is the role and function of narratives within UFCW 401 a positive or negative force? As discussed at the end of the last chapter, how one views the impact of the narrative constructions depends heavily on one's perspective. What aspects of organization does one prioritize? What principles matter more in our assessment of this union local's actions and outcomes? There is no easy answer in this regard.

In a way evaluating Local 401 entails a series of partial answers accompanied by caveats. "Yes, but…", "No, but…". I have come to believe this lack of certainty is a good thing, not bad. It suggests we understand the contradictions are unavoidable and there is no one way in which to evaluate an entity as complicated as a union local. Instead, the over-arching evaluation needs to be replaced by a series of partial assessments, examining components of what they do in the context of the whole. In particular, within the context of understanding that unions' fate is one of contradiction. The contradictions simply manifest themselves in a way unique to this local. Maybe their manifestations are starker and more naked to the external observer than others, but that is saying something profoundly different than Local 401 is an anomaly in the labour movement. Every union has its contradictions. The former CAW went shilling for subsidies on behalf of their employer. They embraced strategic voting, an act requiring them to support one set of bad guys to prevent a worse set of bad guys. Throughout those actions, CAW's efforts around building activism, advancing gender equality, arguing for a greater role for workers in the economy, among others, are not diminished. Neither, then, are UFCW 401's efforts to extend unionization to racialized workers, young workers and women

diminished because of their rather top-heavy approach. But neither do those actions defend their leadership styles and autocratic structures.

Answering the Research Questions

From the beginning, this study has never been solely about UFCW 401 alone. Their story was used as an instance upon which to foster generalizable insights. The study posed four questions related to conceptualization of unions in the 21st century. It is beneficial to return to those questions directly to summarize what this case study offers in terms of provisional answers.

Contradiction and the Unionism Duality

The first question focused on the consequences of contradictory tendencies within a union on our perceptions of business and social unionism. As was discussed extensively in Chapter Six, UFCW 401 is not easily categorized within the duality as it exists because neither in solitude fully describes the characteristics of this local. The case teaches us that the reality is much more multi-dimensional and complex.

Paradoxically, the contradiction we see in union action is both inevitable and illusory. It is inevitable because unions have a contradictory existence; their relationship to capitalism and the need to both work within it and challenge it produces a raison d'etre that is imbued with contradictory tendencies. How each union responds to this contradiction is unique to their context, history, structure, and action. The dualist conception of unionisms fails to recognize the consequences of this embedded contradictory nature.

But contradiction is also illusory. The actions of a union earn an internal coherence if we adopt a more fluid approach to interpreting how unions behave. A new approach necessitates no longer seeing unions as static institutions that can be identified by skeletal observations of structure and outward appearance of action. Unions are bodies in motion. They are also bodies tethered to their history and structure, creating a form of bounded creation and re-creation. When we observe unions in their context, what may initially seem contradictory begins to reconcile. There is a tendency to assess unions based upon "snapshots" of their existence. That is where contradiction arises. Seen more fully within their context and history, the picture becomes clearer.

We must also develop more fluid notions of union forms, ones that allow for a union to exist in multiple spaces simultaneously. To repeat the metaphor adopted in Chapter Six, current theorizing about unionisms adopts a Newtonian physics paradigm, when a shift to Quantum physics is required. The latter allows for what the former cannot explain. If we accept that all unions possess contradictory tendencies, simply manifested in different ways, then we can more easily evaluate what they do without over-simplification. If we can acknowledge that a union can embody aspects of both business and social unionism (in fact is likely to), then we can build a more nuanced understanding of how unions function.

One of the barriers to adopting a more fluid and nimble conceptualization of unionisms is how we use the terms in practice. Often it is not to edify, but to strategically position. The act of categorizing unions is not as dispassionately clinical as identifying

species of birds by their plumage. Both those active in unions and those who study them are invested in the outcomes. There is a political and strategic agenda at play; we want unions to act in a certain way and wish to steer them onto the proper course. This interest drives the tendency toward over-simplification. However, we may be doing unions a disservice, for we create unattainable markers, leading ultimately to disappointment and confusion. There is a need to use the terms with greater care and subtlety.

So how should we deal with the business/social union divide? The terms social and business union serve a practical purpose as shorthand for the general priorities of particular unions, but they do so with the unintended consequence of stunting our understanding of how and why unions act. Therefore we need to find a way to open the concepts up to greater fluidity. This one study cannot confidently answer that question, but it may open the door to a possibility. Rather than evaluate unions on a single criterion (social/business) we need to recognize that unions exist on multiple planes and should be understood as such. In other words, rather than rely upon a single continuum, we should construct a matrix which incorporates the various aspects of union structure and action. By isolating each aspect and permitting them to potentially conflict and contradict one another, we can build a richer picture of union life. A preliminary sketch of this matrix would include measures for the union's formal structures, informal processes, leadership style, role of members/staff, member activism, approach to employer relations, organizing methods, political activism, among others. The union's narrative constructions

are also a necessary element of the matrix, for they create internal logic that ties the separate components together.

The terms social union and business union will persist, they are simply too handy. However, we need to enrich the terms with greater complexity and subtlety, allowing for multiple locations within a matrix of union actions and structures. In doing so we will be embracing the contradictions and furthering our knowledge of union function.

21st Century Challenges

The second research question probed whether the observed contradictions reflect the challenges facing unions from globalization, neo-liberalism and shifting identities of workers in the 21st century. The answer is most assuredly yes, but primarily because these external forces are part of the lived experience of the men and women active in unions. As the UFCW 401 case demonstrates, union leadership and membership do not experience, in a real way, "neo-liberalism" or "globalization". Instead, they experience employers who grow more resistive and demanding. They experience governments passing laws making union work more difficult. They experience greater difficulty mobilizing and engaging increasingly distracted membership. They experience less homogeneous workplaces. Of course, they are not stupid and can see the patterns and link their experiences to theory. They can come to understand their experiences in a broader context of 21st century shifts. But unions are entities of the moment. They act and respond to what is in front of them. This is not to say they do not plan or have long term vision, but that vision is informed by daily experience.

UFCW 401 did what it felt it needed to do to survive, to grow and to be effective for its members and for workers in general. I argue this is common among all unions; they strive to do that which is necessary to fulfil their functions. The reality is they are doing so in an environment where corporate power is on the rise, the state is more openly aiding and abetting capital and traditional approaches to organizing workers are stumbling. The work of unions is much more complicated today than it was 40 years ago.

Thus it is reasonable to argue that we will observe more apparent contradictions than before, simply because there is a wider range of responses possible today. Contradiction, as suggested earlier, has always been a part of unionism. Only today, in the early 21st century, it manifests itself in more ways, reflecting the more diverse, scattered and demanding context in which unions operate. In that regard, unions are responding to the challenges of the 21st century, but mostly because they have no other choice.

Understanding the Response

The third question turned the study's attention to the internal world of unionists. It sought to draw out insights into how the leaders and members themselves come to understand their own actions and responses. Actors' interpretation of events is an under-examined phenomenon in the study of unions – we seem pre-occupied by cataloging *what* unions do and thus lose sight of *why* they do it. However, critical narrative analysis opens a window into the internal world of unionists, allowing us to see how they come to

understand their actions while still being able to question both the actions and the interpretations of them.

The case study makes clear that how activists and leaders understand the forces acting on them and interpret their own actions in response have very real consequences for union action. Narratives play a critical role in constructing internal logics that propel certain actions while limiting others. With UFCW 401, those narratives created space for a particular kind of change while simultaneously entrenching leadership styles that benefit those in power in the local. Other unions might come to understand their situation differently, and those narratives would shape a different form of union action.

We learn that the narrative constructions both arise from and shape a union's history, structure and context. Therefore the manner in which a union's members and leadership come to understand the forces acting upon them and their responses to them will both be internally consistent and varied from union to union. How a union responds to the challenges of the 21st century is highly contingent on context.

Dynamics in Revitalization

The final research question explored how the internal processes and dynamics found within unions advances our knowledge of how unions revitalize and renew. The case revealed that the pathways to renewal are more varied than the literature anticipates and the process is more uneven and can be less planned than previously thought.

UFCW 401 did not set out to revitalize, yet a degree of renewal occurred. It also took the shape of bounded change within a context of leadership stability. Both of these

occurrences are unexpected and unaccounted based upon the renewal literature. The case reveals that there are more possible pathways for renewal than currently anticipated. It also shows that reform need not necessarily arise out of a grand plan or strategy; it can emerge through the compiled logic of moment-specific decisions.

The increased field of possibility exists because unions are created at the nexus of structure and action. Different unions possess different structures and different unions engage in renewal actions in a manner that is consistent with their context. The combination creates far more possible pathways than has currently been acknowledged.

Part of the reason for this lack of acknowledgment may be that much of the renewal literature has looked at the more obvious cases of intentional, planned renewal. The most famous, SIEU's Justice for Janitors, possessed a scope and range that left an indelible mark on the renewal literature. Other, more ground-up, reforms arose from dramatic local events and thus were also highly noticeable. Change at UFCW 401 took place under the radar, so to speak. No one really saw the transformation because it was never announced as a plan and it occurred in slow motion, over many years. Further masking the renewal was the unmoving personality of its senior leadership, giving the impression of inertia rather than change.

The lesson is that, at times, we need to look more closely at what is happening inside unions to ascertain whether renewal is occurring, for it is not always obvious from the outside. They dynamics that foster (or inhibit) renewal can be both more subtle and

more complex than they first appear. Renewal can appear in multiple forms and via myriad processes.

Contributions, Limitations and Future Questions

All that remains is to outline succinctly and clearly the study's contributions to the study of unions, as well as to consider some of its limitations and shortcomings. Finally a few thoughts on future research questions that arise from the study's findings will be offered.

Contributions

The study contributes to our understanding of unions in three discreet ways. First, it raises pointed questions about the rigidity of the business union/social union duality. The study offers a concrete example of a union exhibiting complex and contradictory characteristics that defy simple categorization. The results suggest the dualism over-simplifies the nature of union behaviour and they surface the notion that a more flexible, multi-layered conceptualization is both possible and desirable. Although this study stops short in outlining the tenets of the new conceptualization, it does offer a glimpse into what might populate a matrix of union forms.

In many respects, this study simply extends the realizations of the recent literature, which has been circling around an awareness of the complexity. Some writers, most notably Stephanie Ross, have begun to grapple with what a more flexible and nimble conceptualization will look like. In this regard, this study can be viewed as a companion to Ross' (2012) elements of union action (collective action frame, strategic

repertoire, internal organizational practices), which demonstrates to be rather useful in breaking down simplistic assessment of union behaviour. The results of this study should further prod researchers to reach into the complexity of union action, rather than shy away from it.

The second tangible contribution of this study is to highlight another possible pathway for union renewal, here coined accidental revitalization. The revitalization witnessed in this case is not truly accidental, but the term remains apt because it arose out of the consequences of in-the-moment decision-making rather than planned strategy. It also deviates from previously recorded renewal efforts due to the location of its innovation, coming from long-term local leadership, normally perceived as a source of resistance to renewal. Accidental revitalization is a source of so-called stable change. It is impossible to know how widespread this form of renewal is, but the study demonstrates it is possible to establish the conditions that lead to accidental revitalization through a stable yet motivated leadership.

The existence of this path to renewal does not repudiate or render inaccurate current descriptions of the revitalization process. Instead, it is best seen as a new possibility for renewal processes. It may well be that the bulk of union renewal efforts occur via either planned strategy from above or directed change from below. We now have a third avenue for revitalization.

The third contribution is to draw attention to the role of narratives in shaping union action, as well as to the value of critical narrative analysis (CNA) in drawing out

new insights about unions. Narrative constructions play a clear role in union dynamics. They organize experience and build a self-identity upon which internal logics are formed. These internal logics propel the union forward, creating a coherency behind the apparent confusion of union action. Narratives are crucial to creating solidarity and member affinity with the union. They help create what it means to be a member of Union X. They can also functions as tools for maintaining power structures within the local, as they also create rationales for the status quo.

Narratives provide insights into the internal life of unions. They reveal things not observable through other means. In this regard they contribute to our understanding of unions in multiple ways. They provide glimpses into the motivations and perspectives of union actors, helping us better ascertain what forms of unionism exist. They also provide a valuable link in understanding when and how unions revitalize. They are the conduit between experience and self-identity. Specifically, narratives are the mechanism through which referential unionisms materialize, furthering our understanding of the processes of renewal (or lack thereof).

In turn, the use of CNA can expose how power is exercised in unions. By recognizing that narratives are not neutral, CNA can isolate the methods in which the powerful legitimize their power within the union. CNA provides us deeper insights into how union actors understand and interpret their actions, but it also allows us to remain critical of those actions by revealing the interests being served through narrative construction.

The study has been comprised of a single case study. However, through detailed, rich investigation into an admittedly complex case, a series of related insights emerge that hopefully build upon work already performed and inform work yet to come.

Limitations

Every study has its limitations, and this one is no different. The most obvious is that it is a case study, examining a single union local and trying to draw broader lessons from it. Caution is always required in such situations. It is possible that UFCW 401 is an anomaly, a creature created by such a unique set of circumstances that the conditions are virtually unrepeatable.

In one sense, replicability is not the issue, as case studies steadfastly hold onto specific context in which to draw out their insights. However, the case needs to, in some fashion, reflect what happens in an average union local. I believe it does, although others are free to think otherwise.

More significant is the findings' relevance could be called into question because they arise from a single case. The lessons from UFCW 401 need to have import for other unions if they are to be worth learning. If the findings are too specific or too self-containing, they lose their capacity to reveal something about unions in Canada. Relevance is the key to generalizability, and it rests on the study's ability to demonstrate a broader application. All case studies run the risk of failing to demonstrate relevance and often only time can adequately determine whether they pass or fail.

The methods also created some limitations. The recruitment of interview participants poses the risk of selection bias in that those agreeing to participate will share traits or perspectives skewing the results. Further, there remains some concern, despite the steps taken to minimize the risk, that the interview participants are not representative of the local's membership as a whole.

Further it cannot be known if the researcher's presence at general membership meetings and conferences led members to alter their behaviour is some fashion. Did they not say something they might otherwise? A related concern is whether the participants consciously withheld their full opinions for the purpose of looking good, saving face, avoiding uncomfortable issues or some other motivation. This is a concern in any qualitative research involving human participants.

The researcher's history with the Alberta labour movement may also have shaped the study outcomes. A number of participants were aware of my background and relationship to the labour movement and that awareness may have had some unmeasurable impact on their participation. Inversely, those who were wary of the researcher's purpose and motivations may also have altered their responses. Steps were taken in both cases to maximize full and honest participation, but the effectiveness of those measures can never be fully known.

Finally, one of the strengths of the study is also a potential shortcoming. The reliance on narratives meant, to a degree, taking participants at their word. There is no way to confirm or contradict a person's stated explanations of their state of mind.

Triangulation and critical analysis helps minimize this risk, but cannot eliminate it entirely.

Future Research

The findings in this study offer some initial thoughts in a number of areas, but leave unresolved many other matters. None of us can ever be sure where future research will lead, but here are a few ideas of possible directions.

One question that rumbled just under the surface during the entire study effort was what happens when Doug O'Halloran retires? The dynamics in the local rely heavily on the particular presence of O'Halloran and his larger than life personality. Upon his departure many aspects of how the local operates will change. How will that affect the actions of the local? What people and approaches fill the void? A follow-up study, at the time of his retirement and after, might draw out additional insights into how unions evolve and morph over time.

This study has raised a number of questions about how we re-think our notions of union forms to allow for more fluidity. As discussed above, the next step is to begin formulating new ways of evaluating union action and structure to create a more complex matrix of union forms. Part of this work is theoretical, trying to re-formulate our categories, but it will also require additional empirical research to unlock the patterns of union behaviour and identify links between the various aspects that define unionisms.

More work is also required to confirm and refine the possible new pathways for union renewal. A first step would be to search for other examples of accidental

revitalization to ascertain just how common this mode of renewal is. Future research could also explore more thoroughly the conditions required for accidental revitalization and how those conditions compare to more common elements facilitating renewal. More work is also required to understand how this affects our existing conceptions of union renewal and its processes.

Finally, there is much potential in the use of critical narrative analysis in the study of unions, in particular in uncovering the role of narratives in producing and reproducing power dynamics within unions. Research examining how union activists and leadership make sense of that which they are doing and what is going on around them could glean innovative insights into the function of unions. In particular, it may be fruitful in exploring the complexities of union internal democracy, leadership approaches to bargaining, organizing and other union functions, or member attitudes about their union.

Conclusion

This dissertation was born on a picket line with a curious observation that something was going on with this union. What started as a local and specific question – what is up with UFCW Local 401 – slowly morphed into a contemplation of how we think and talk about unions. Local 401 is just one union. It peculiarities and quirks are its own. Yet even one local can reveal larger truths about unions if we approach it asking the right questions. That is what I attempted to do in this study. I wanted to better understand why UFCW 401 exhibited the characteristics it did, but more than that, I wanted to see what its unique blend of behaviours and structures could tell us about unions in general.

As a case Local 401 did not disappoint. It is complex, rich and stubbornly un-categorical. Yet I believe it was also able to shine light on some of the difficult questions labour researchers have skirted over the years. They may only be one local, but because I approached them with some bigger questions in mind, they proved to be up to the task of revealing the grander aspects of the study.

I am hardly the first person to have attempted to tackle questions of union conceptualizations and union renewal. In fact many have come before, and it is upon their work that this dissertation builds. It is my sincere hope that those who read this find it offers some degree of contribution to the honourable tradition of labour research. Unions continue to serve as the working class' last, best hope for justice and dignity. Understanding how unions work is essential if we are to help them perform their work better. It is in the spirit of that goal, of making labour stronger and more vibrant, that this dissertation was conducted. And as a final word I wish that in some way it aides working men and women in their daily struggles and in the grand project of building a more just world.

Appendix A: UFCW 401 Timeline

1953: First Safeway store in Edmonton organized. Edmonton local of Retail Clerks International Union created, dubbed Local 401. Over the next few years, all Safeway stores organized, with two locals serving the province, divided geographically (south was Local 397).

1974: Edmonton local launches first strike against Safeway. It lasts 5 days.

1979: United Food and Commercial Workers union created via a merger of Retail Clerks International Union and Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America. Edmonton Local changes its name to UFCW Local 401.

1984: The Northern Alberta and Southern Alberta locals representing retail clerks merge to form a province-wide UFCW Local 401.

1985: UFCW Local 402, representing Co-op grocery workers, merges with Local 401.

1985: Tom Hesse hired as a Representative for Local 401, a position he holds until 1997 when he becomes an International Representative for UFCW Canada.

1988: UFCW Canada created as a semi-autonomous branch of UFCW International

1989: Doug O'Halloran appointed President of Local 401.

1992: UFCW Local 740-P, representing meat packing workers in Lethbridge, merges with Local 401.

1992: O'Halloran first wins election for President, defeating a challenger for the position. He is subsequently re-elected in 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012.

1993: Accept rollbacks at Safeway, significant member unrest results.

1997: Safeway Strike. Settlement failed to make desired gains.

1997: Local 661, representing a grain milling plant in Lethbridge, merges with Local 401.

2001: Tom Hesse returns to Local 401 as Executive Director of Labour Relations.

2002: Theresa McLaren appointed Secretary-Treasurer. She is elected in 2004 and re-elected in 2008 and 2012.

2002: Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton organized. Successful First Contract Strike.

2004: A pair of challengers runs against O'Halloran and McLaren. Both incumbents are re-elected.

2005: Lakeside Packers in Brooks organized. Successful First Contract Strike.

2007: First contract strike at Palace Casino in Edmonton.

2007: UFCW Local 373A, representing meat cutters in southern Alberta, merges with Local 401.

2008: Local formally affiliates with Alberta NDP

2009: Lockout at Old Dutch in Calgary. Settled via landmark Labour Relations Board ruling that Rand Formula is constitutionally protected.

2013: Province-wide strike at Superstore over concessions. Employer backtracks after 3 days.

2013: Supreme Court decision relating to 2007 Palace Casino strike rules that privacy legislation is unconstitutional for restricting rights on a picket line

Appendix B: UFCW Local 401 Employers

NOTE: Some employers have multiple bargaining units. Representation may include all locations of the listed employer or only single locations.

Alberta Beverage Container Recycling Corporation

ARAMARK Refreshment Services

Archer Daniels Midland Company

Avis Rent-A-Car

Baccarat Casino

Black Velvet Distillers

Buffalo-Metis Catering

Burnbrae Farms Ltd

Calgary Refrigerated Warehouse/Lucerne Commissary

Canada Safeway Limited

Canada Safeway Edmonton Distribution Centre

Canada Safeway Limited - Liquor Store

Canadian Forces Base - Edmonton Garrison

Compass Group Canada

Connacher Lodge

Core-Mark International Inc.

Cott Beverages West

CSPD - The Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities

Devon Lodges / PTI

Gate Gourmet Canada Inc.

International Union of Operating Engineers

Joslyn Lodge

Kinosis Lodge / Aramark

Lakeside Packers

Lilydale Inc

Lucerne Foods Ltd.

Mackay River

Maple Leaf Pork

Maple Leaf Potatoes

McKesson Canada

Medicine Hat Co-op Ltd.

Medicine Hat Meats Co-op Ltd.

Nexen Long Lake/Aramark

P & H Milling Group

Palace Casino

Premier Horticulture Ltd.

Old Dutch

Rahr Malting Ltd

Red Deer Co-op Ltd

Richardson Oilseed Ltd.

Securitas

Service Corporation International

Shaw Conference Centre

Sobeys Capital Incorporated

Spectrum Supply Chain Solution

Swiss Chalet Restaurant

The Real Canadian Superstore

The Real Canadian Superstore - Liquor Store

Trophy Foods Inc.

UPS

WOW! Factor Desserts

X. L. Fine Foods

X.L. Beef

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Interview Questions: Members

1. How long have you been a member of the union?
2. How do you feel about your job?
3. What are your general impressions of the union? Is it effective?
4. Have you gone to the union for any work-related issues?
5. Have you gotten involved in the union? Gone to any meetings?
6. In your opinion what opportunities for involvement does the union have?
7. Would you call the union democratic? Why?
8. What do you think would happen to a member or group of members who vocally disagreed with the leadership?
9. Can you relate any experiences you have had with the union?
10. [IF RELEVANT] Tell me about [strike/event]? Did you get involved? How do you feel about it now?
11. Who would you consider the "face" of the union?
12. What are your thoughts on your union's current leadership?
13. How do you feel about your union's involvement in politics? Should they do more or less of it?
14. What kind of things would you like to see the union doing?
15. What would get you to be more active in the union?
16. Some people talk about two kinds of unions – business unions that focus solely on workplace issues, and social unions that are more engaged in politics and social change. Which do you think best describes your union?

Interview Questions: Leadership

1. What do you see as your role in the union?
2. Describe your membership. Who are they?
3. How does the union address the diversity of your membership?
4. Would you say you have an active membership? Why?
5. What opportunities are there for members to get involved in the union?
6. Describe the union's decision making processes. How are meetings run? Who makes what decisions?
7. How do you balance democracy in the union with the need for clear, fast decisions on important matters?
8. How do you handle dissent and disagreement within the union?
9. Tell me about [key strikes/events] you have been involved with?
10. You use many methods for pursuing your agenda – organizing, campaigns, legal challenges, etc. Can you explain your approach?
11. How has the union changed over the past 20 years?
12. How do you see the role of the union for its members? For society?
13. What is a union's role in politics?

14. Some people talk about two kinds of unions – business unions that focus solely on workplace issues, and social unions that are more engaged in politics and social change. Which do you think best describes your union?
15. Your union has a reputation of being a business union. What is your response to that?

Interview Questions: Other Knowledgeable

1. Describe your role/relationship with the union.
2. Tell me about [event/situation] and your interactions with the union?
3. What do you take away from it [event/situation] in terms of your opinion of the union?
4. How would you describe the kind of union it is?
5. Did you get any insights into how the union operates internally? If so, what are they?
6. In your opinion is the union leadership-driven or member-driven?
7. The union uses a variety of strategies. What is your opinion about that?
8. It is a very diverse local. What do you think accounts for that?
9. Generally speaking what do you think a union's role should be in politics?
10. Some people talk about two kinds of unions – business unions that focus solely on workplace issues, and social unions that are more engaged in politics and social change. Which do you think best describes the union?

References

Abts, Koen, and Stefan Rummens. 2007. "Populism versus Democracy." *Political Studies* 55 (2): 405–24. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2007.00657.x.

Adams, Roy. 1999. "Why Statutory Union Recognition Is Bad Labour Policy: The North American Experience." *Industrial Relations Journal* 30 (2): 96–100. doi:10.1111/1468-2338.00112.

Alarie, Benjamin, and Matthew Sudak. 2006. "The Taxation of Strike Pay." *Canadian Tax Journal* 54 (2): 426–339.

Alberta Federation of Labour. 2001. *The State of the Unions: Trends in Unionization in Alberta*. Edmonton: Alberta Federation of Labour.

Albo, Gregory, Sam Gindin, and Leo Panitch. 2010. *In and out of Crisis the Global Financial Meltdown and Left Alternatives*. Oakland, Calif.; London: PM Press. http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=487617.

Baines, Donna. 2010. "In a Different Way: Social Unionism in the Nonprofit Social Services - An Australian/Canadian Comparison." *Labor Studies Journal* 35 (4): 480–502.

Batstone, Eric. 1977. *Shop Stewards in Action: The Organization of Workplace Conflict and Accommodation*. Warwick Studies in Industrial Relations. Oxford: Blackwell.

Black, Simon. 2005. "Community Unionism: A Strategy for Organizing in the New Economy." *New Labor Forum* 14 (3): 24–32.

Boje, David. 2010. "Narrative Analysis." In *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, edited by Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe, 592–95. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Briskin, Linda. 2011. "Union Renewal, Postheroic Leadership, and Women's Organizing: Crossing Discourses, Reframing Debates." *Labor Studies Journal* 36 (4): 508–37.

Briskin, Linda, and Patricia McDermott. 1993. *Women Challenging Unions : Feminism, Democracy and Militancy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Broadway, Michael. 2007. "Meatpacking and the Transformation of Rural Communities: A Comparison of Brooks, Alberta and Garden City, Kansas." *Rural Sociology* 72 (4): 560–82. doi:10.1526/003601107782638701.

———. 2013. "The World 'Meats' Canada: Meatpacking's Role in the Cultural Transformation of Brooks, Alberta." *American Geographical Society's Focus on Geography* 56 (2): 47–53.

Bryman, Alan, Emma Bell, Albert Mills, and Anthony R. Yue. 2011. *Business Research Methods*. Canadian ed. Don Mills Ont.: Oxford University Press.

Camfield, David. 2011. *Canadian Labour in Crisis: Reinventing the Workers' Movement*. Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood Pub.

Campolieti, M., Robert Hebdon, and Douglas Hyatt. 2005. "Strike Incidence and Strike Duration: Some New Evidence from Ontario." *Industrial & Labor Relations Review* 58 (4): 610–30.

Chaison, Gary N., and Joseph B. Rose. 1991. "Continental Divide: The Direction and Fate of North American Unions." In *Advances in Industrial & Labor Relations*, 5:169–206. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.

Coates, Mary Lou. 1992. *Is There a Future for the Canadian Labour Movement?*. Current Issues Series. Kingston: Queen's University.

Cornfield, Daniel B, and Holly J McCammon. 2003. *Labor Revitalization: Global Perspectives and New Initiatives*. Amsterdam; London: JAI.

Cranford, Cynthia. 2004. "Gendered Resistance: Organizing Justice for Janitors in Los Angeles." In *Challenging the Market: The Struggle to Regulate Work and Income*, edited by Jim Stanford and Leah Vosko, 309–29. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Cranford, Cynthia, and Deena Ladd. 2003. "Community Unionism: Organising for Fair Employment in Canada." *Just Labour* 3: 46–59.

Creswell, John W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Crouch, C. 1982. *Unions and the Logic of Collective Action*. London: Fontana.

Crow, Dan, and Greg Albo. 2005. "Neo-Liberalism, NAFTA, and the State of the North American Labour Movements." *Just Labour* 6&7: 12–22.

Das Gupta, Tania. 2006. "Racism/Anti-Racisim, Precarious Employment, and Unions." In *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity in Canada*, edited by Leah Vosko, 318–34. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Dawson, Jane. 2010. "Thick Description." In *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, edited by Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe, 942–44. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Duckworth, Archie. 2007. Alberta Labour History Institute Oral History Interview.

Dufour, Christian, Gregor Murray, David Peetz, and Charlotte Yates. 2010. "Rethinking Collective Representation: Introduction EN." *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 16 (3): 291–97. doi:10.1177/1024258910374276.

Early, Steve. 2011. *Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers' Movement or Death Throes of the Old?*. Chicago, Ill: Haymarket Books.

Edwards, P. K. 1986. *Conflict at Work: A Materialist Analysis of Workplace Relations*. Warwick Studies in Industrial Relations. Oxford; New York, NY, USA: B. Blackwell.

Edwards, P. K., and Hugh Scullion. 1982. *The Social Organization of Industrial Conflict: Control and Resistance in the Workplace*. Warwick Studies in Industrial Relations. Oxford: Blackwell.

Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. 1989. "Building Theories from Case Study Research." *Academy of Management Review* 14 (4): 532–50.

Emerson, Peter. 2004. *Critical Narrative Analysis in Psychology: A Guide to Practice*. Houndmills, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fairbrother, Peter, and Charlotte Yates. 2003. "Unions in Crisis, Unions in Renewal?" In *Trade Unions in Renewal: A Comparative Study*, edited by Peter Fairbrother and Charlotte Yates, 1–31. New York: Continuum.

Fairclough, Norman. 2010. *Critical Discourse Analysis : The Critical Study of Language*. 2nd ed. Harlow, England; New York: Longman.

Finkel, Alvin, ed. 2011. *Working People in Alberta: A History*. Working Canadians, Books from the CCLH. Edmonton: AU Press.

Fletcher, Bill, and Fernando Gapasin. 2009. *Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path toward Social Justice*. Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press.

Flyvbjerg, B. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (2): 219–45. doi:10.1177/1077800405284363.

Foley, Janice R, and Patricia Louise Baker. 2009. *Unions, Equity, and the Path to Renewal*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Foster, Jason. 2006. "Conflict and Solidarity: How the Lakeside Workers Won Their Union." *Our Times*.

Foster, Jason, and Bob Barnetson. 2012. "Justice for Janitors in Alberta: The Impact of Temporary Foreign Workers on an Organizing Campaign." *Journal of Workplace Rights* 16 (1): 3–29.

Foster, Jason, Alison Taylor, and Candy Kahn. 2015. "The Dynamics of Union Responses to Migrant Workers in Canada." *Work, Employment & Society*, 1–18.

Frager, Ruth. 1983. "No Proper Deal: Women Workers and the Canadian Labour Movement, 1870-1940." In *Union Sisters : Women in the Labour Movement*, edited by Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz, 44–66. Toronto, Ont., Canada: Women's Press.

Freeman, Richard B., and James Medoff. 1984. *What Do Unions Do?*. Scranton: Basic Books.

Galabuzi, Grace-Edward. 2006. *Canada's Economic Apartheid the Social Exclusion of Racialized Groups in the New Century*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars's Press.

Gamson, William, David Croteau, William Hoynes, and Theodore Sasson. 1992. "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 18: 373–93.

Gindin, Sam. 1995. *The Canadian Auto Workers : The Birth and Transformation of a Union*. Toronto: J. Lorimer.

Godard, John. 2002. "Institutional Environments, Employer Practices, and States in Liberal Market Economies." *Industrial Relations* 41 (2): 249–86.

———. 2011. *Industrial Relations, the Economy, and Society*. 4th ed. Concord, Ont.: Captus Press.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1969. *Soviets in Italy: 10 Essays*. Nottingham: Institute for Workers' Control.

Haiven, Larry. 2006. "Expanding the Union Zone: Union Renewal through Alternative Forms of Worker Organization." *Labor Studies Journal* 31 (3): 85–116.

Haiven, Larry, Christian Levesque, and Nicolas Roby. 2006. "Paths to Union Renewal: Challenges and Issues Introduction." *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations* 61 (4): 578–88.

Hargrove, Buzz. 1998. *Labour of Love: The Fight to Create a More Humane Canada*. Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross.

Harrison, Martin. 1985. *TV News, Whose Bias?: A Casebook Analysis of Strikes, Television and Media Studies*. Hermitage, Berks.: Policy Journals.

Hartley, Jean. 2004. "Case Study Research." In *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*, edited by Catherine Cassell and Gillian Symon, 323–33. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications.

Heron, Craig. 1996. *The Canadian Labour Movement : A Short History*. Toronto: J. Lorimer.

Hickey, Robert, Sarosh Kuruvilla, and Tashlin Lakhani. 2010. "No Panacea for Success: Member Activism, Organizing and Union Renewal." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 48 (1): 53–83. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8543.2009.00743.x.

Hjalte, Lorraine. 2005. "Focus Shifts to Healing as Lakeside Strike Ends." *Calgary Herald*, November 5.

Howell, David, and Bill Mah. 2005. "Doug O'Halloran Traces His Passion for Workers' Rights to His Decade in a Packing-Plant Cooler." *Edmonton Journal*, October 7.

Hoxie, Robert F. 1923. *Trade Unionism in the United States*. 2nd ed. New York; London: D. Appleton and Company.

Hrynyshyn, Derek, and Stephanie Ross. 2011. "Canadian Autoworkers, the Climate Crisis, and the Contradictions of Social Unionism." *Labor Studies Journal* 36 (1): 5–36.

Hunt, Gerald, and Judy Haiven. 2006. "Building Democracy for Women and Sexual Minorities: Union Embrace of Diversity." *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations* 61 (4): 666–83.

Hunt, Gerald, and David Rayside. 2000. "Labor Union Response to Diversity in Canada and the United States." *Industrial Relations* 39 (3): 401–44.

Hunt, Gerald, and David M Rayside, eds. 2007. *Equity, Diversity, and Canadian Labour*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Hurd, Richard W. 2008. *Collective Bargaining in the Era of Grocery Industry Restructuring*. 284. Articles & Chapters. Cornell University ILR School.

Hyman, Richard. 1975. *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction*. London: MacMillan Press.

———. 1989. *The Political Economy of Industrial Relations : Theory and Practice in a Cold Climate*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

———. 2004. "An Emerging Agenda for Trade Unions." In *Labour and Globalisation: Results and Prospects*, edited by Ronaldo Munck, 19–33. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Inkster, Dana. 2007. *24 Days in Brooks*. Documentary. National Film Board of Canada. http://www.nfb.ca/film/24_days_in_brooks.

Jackson, Andrew. 2006. "Rowing against the Tide: The Struggle to Raise Union Density in a Hostile Environment." In *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experiences*, edited by Pradeep Kumar and Christopher Schenk, 61–78. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press.

———. 2010. *Work and Labour in Canada: Critical Issues*. 2nd edition. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Jenson, Jane, and Rianne Mahon. 1993. *The Challenge of Restructuring : North American Labor Movements Respond*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Johnson, Phil, and Joanne Duberley. 2000. *Understanding Management Research: An Introduction to Epistemology*. London; Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Jones, Robert G., ed. 2011. *Nepotism in Organizations*. SIOP Organizational Frontiers Series. New York: Routledge Academic.

Kaminski, Michelle, and Elaine K. Yakura. 2008. "WOMEN'S UNION LEADERSHIP: CLOSING THE GENDER GAP." *WorkingUSA* 11 (4): 459–75. doi:10.1111/j.1743-4580.2008.00219.x.

Kent, Gordon. 1997. "Safeway, Workers Still at Bargaining Table; Union Ready to Pay Strikers $1.2 Million a Week If Deal Can't Be Reached by Wednesday." *Edmonton Journal*, March 24.

Kirton, Gill. 2006. "Alternative and Parallel Career Paths for Women: The Case of Trade Union Participation." *Work, Employment & Society* 20 (1): 47–65. doi:10.1177/0950017006061273.

Kleiss, Karen. 2009. "Safeway Strike Could Be Long." *Edmonton Journal*, September 10.

Krippendorff, Klaus. 2013. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles; London: SAGE.

Kumar, Pradeep. 1993. "Collective Bargaining and Women's Workplace Concerns." In *Women Challenging Unions : Feminism, Democracy and Militancy*, edited by Linda Briskin and Patricia McDermott, 207–30. University of Toronto Press.

Kumar, Pradeep, and Gregor Murray. 2002. *Innovation and Change in Labour Organizations in Canada: Results of the National 2000-2001 HRDC Survey*. Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada.

———. 2006. "Innovation in Canadian Unions: Patterns, Causes and Consequences." In *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experiences*, edited by Pradeep Kumar and Christopher Schenk, 79–102. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press.

Kumar, Pradeep, and Christopher Schenk. 2006. "Union Renewal and Organizational Change: A Review of the Literature." In *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experiences*, edited by Pradeep Kumar and Christopher Schenk, 29–60. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press.

Kvale, Steinar, and Svend Brinkmann. 2009. *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Lane, Carrie M. 2011. *A Company of One: Insecurity, Independence, and the New World of White-Collar Unemployment*. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press.

Legault, Marie-Josee, and Johanna Weststar. 2010. "Is the Very Notion of 'Representation' Relevant for the Regulation Game of Video Game Developers?." presented at the Challenges for Work and Workers in the Knowledge Economy, Halifax N.S., October 29.

Lenin, Vladimir. 1902. *What Is To Be Done?*. London, England: Penguin Books.

Levesque, Christian, and Gregor Murray. 2010. "Understanding Union Power: Resources and Capabilities for Renewing Union Capacity." *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 16 (3): 333–50. doi:10.1177/1024258910373867.

Lévesque, Christian, and Gregor Murray. 2013. "Renewing Union Narrative Resources: How Union Capabilities Make a Difference." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 51 (4): 777–96. doi:10.1111/bjir.12002.

Levesque, Christian, Gregor Murray, and Stephane Le Queux. 2005. "Union Disaffection and Social Identity: Democracy as a Source of Union Revitalization." *Work and Occupations* 32 (November): 400–422. doi:10.1177/0730888405279077.

Lynk, Michael. 2003. "Union Democracy and the Law in Canada." *Just Labour* 1: 16–30.

MacDonald, Ian Thomas. 2014. "Towards Neoliberal Trade Unionism: Decline, Renewal and Transformation in North American Labour Movements." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 52 (4): 725–52. doi:10.1111/bjir.12040.

Martinello, Felice F., and Charlotte Yates. 2004. "Union and Employer Tactics in Ontario Organising Campaigns." In *Advances in Industrial & Labor Relations*, 13:157–90. Bingley: Emerald.

Mayring, Philipp. 2000. "Qualitative Content Analysis." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 1 (2): 1–10.

McGinnis, Sarah. 2005. "Union Boss Hurt in Crash: Multiple-Car Collision near Brooks." *Calgary Herald*, October 15, sec. City & Region`.

McMeckan, Christine, and Tom Hesse. 2014. "We Did It Together!" *Your Voice*.

McQuarrie, Fiona A.E. 2011. *Industrial Relations in Canada*. 3rd ed. Mississauga, Ont.: J. Wiley and Sons Canada.

Merit Contractors Association. 2006. "The Oilsands Challenge." *Open Mind*.

Michels, Robert. 2001. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche Books.

Milkman, Ruth. 2006. *L.A. Story*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Mills, Albert J., Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe. 2010. "Introduction." In *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, edited by Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe, xxxi – xxxiv. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Milton, Laurie P. 2003. "An Identity Perspective on the Propensity of High-Tech Talent to Unionize." *Journal of Labor Research* 24 (1): 31–53.

Mittelman, James. 2000. *The Globalization Syndrome: Transformation and Resistance*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press.

Moody, Kim. 1988. *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism*. The Haymarket Series. London ; New York: Verso.

———. 2007. *US Labor in Trouble and Transition: The Failure of Reform from Above, the Promise of Revival from below*. London; New York: Verso.

Morton, Desmond. 2007. *Working People*. 5th ed. rev. and updated. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Murray, Gregor, Christian Dufour, Adelheid Hege, and Christian Lévesque. 2010. "Referential Unionisms and Globalization: A Comparative Study of Workplace Union Dynamics." *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 16 (4): 311–32. doi:10.1177/0959680110385752.

Murray, Gregor, Christian Lévesque, Christian Dufour, and Adelheid Hege. 2013. "Workplace Representatives: Strategic Actors of Union Renewal?: Workplace Representatives and Union Renewal." *Industrial Relations Journal* 44 (4): 340–54. doi:10.1111/irj.12021.

O'Donnell, Sarah. 2006. "Popularity of Piercing Pokes Holes in Traditional Workplace Standards." *Edmonton Journal*, March 12.

Offe, Claus. 1985. *Disorganized Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

O'Halloran, Chris. 2013. "Improving the Lives of Working Albertans." *Your Voice*.

O'Halloran, Doug. 2005. Alberta Labour History Institute Oral History Interview.

———. 2007. Alberta Labour History Institute Oral History Interview.

Panitch, Leo, and Donald Swartz. 2003. *From Consent to Coercion: The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Paradowski, Cheryl. 2009. "Government Invests in Canada's Grocery Workforce." *Canadian Grocer*, May.

Parkin, Frank. 1979. *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Parrot, Jean-Claude. 2005. *My Union, My Life: Jean-Claude Parrot and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Pub.

Poole, Emma. 2005. "Lakeside Managers Hit with Bans in Wake of Highway Crash." *Calgary Herald*, October 21.

Prasad, Pushkala. 2005. *Crafting Qualitative Research: Working in the Postpositivist Traditions*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

Rachleff, Peter. 1993. *Hard-Pressed in the Heartland: The Hormel Strike and the Future of the Labor Movement*. 1st ed. Boston, Mass.: South End Press.

Richards, Lyn, and Janice M. Morse. 2007. *Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks Calif: Sage Publications.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. n.d. "Narrative Analysis." In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, edited by Lisa Given, 539–40. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Robertson, David, and Bill Murninghan. 2009. "Union Resistance and Union Renewal in the CAW." In *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experiences*, edited by Pradeep Kumar and Christopher Schenk, 161–84. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Robinson, Ian. 1993. "Economistic Unionism in Crisis: The Origins, Consequences, and Prospects of Divergence in Labour-Movement Characteristics." In *The Challenge of Restructuring: North American Labor Movements Respond*, edited by Jane Jenson and Rhianne Mahon, 19–47. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

———. 2000. "Neoliberal Restructuring and U.S. Unions: Toward Social Movement Unionism?" *Critical Sociology* 26 (1-2): 109–38. doi:10.1177/08969205000260010701.

Rose, Joseph B., and Gary N. Chaison. 2001. "Unionism in Canada and the United States in the 21st Century." *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations* 56 (1): 34–65.

Rosenfeld, Herman. 2007. "Canadian Auto Workers Surrender Right to Strike, Shop Floor Independence in Magna Agreement." *Labor Notes*. November 26. http://labornotes.org/2007/11/canadian-auto-workers-surrender-right-strike-shop-floor-independence-magna-agreement.

Ross, Stephanie. 2005. "The Making of CUPE: Structure, Democracy and Class Formation." Toronto: York University.

———. 2007. "Varieties of Social Unionism: Towards a Framework for Comparison." *Just Labour* 11: 16–34.

———. 2008. "Social Unionism and Membership Participation: What Role for Union Democracy?" *Studies in Political Economy* 81 (Spring): 129–57.

———. 2011. "Social Unionism in Hard Times: Union-Community Coalition Politics in the CAW Windsor's Manufacturing Matters Campaign." *Labour/Le Travail* 68: 79–116.

———. 2012. "Business Unionism and Social Unionism in Theory and Practice." In *Rethinking the Politics of Labour in Canada*, edited by Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage, 33–46. Labour in Canada. Halifax: Fernwood Pub.

Rudy, Preston. 2004. "Justice for Janitors', Not 'Compensation for Custodians." In *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement*, edited by Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Sainsaulieu, Ivan. 2006. "Critical Unionism and Institutional Challenge: Towards the Individualization of Militancy?" *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations* 61 (4): 684–707.

Savage, Lydia. 2006. "Justice for Janitors: Scales of Organizing and Representing Workers." *Antipode* 38 (3): 645–66.

Schenk, Christopher. 2003. "Social Movement Unionism: Beyond the Organizing Model." In *Trade Unions in Renewal: A Comparative Study*, edited by Peter Fairbrother and Charlotte Yates, 244–62. New York: Continuum.

———. 2004. "Reorganizing Unions. Union Organizing: An Ontario Labour Perspective." *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 74: 181–90.

Schenk, Christopher, and Elaine Bernard. 1992. "Social Unionism: Labor as a Political Force." *Social Policy*, no. Summer 1992: 38–46.

Schmidt, Diane E. 1993. "Public Opinion and Media Coverage of Labor Unions." *Journal of Labor Research* 14 (2): 151–64.

Shantz, Jeff. 2009. "The Limits of Social Unionism in Canada." *WorkingUSA* 12 (1): 113–29.

Smith, Doug. 2004. *Stickin' to the Union: Local 2224 vs. John Buhler*. Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood Pub.

Souto-Manning, Mariana. 2012. "Critical Narrative Analysis: The Interplay of Critical Discourse and Narrative Analyses." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, December, 1–22. doi:10.1080/09518398.2012.737046.

———. 2013. "Critical for Whom?: Theoretical and Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Approaches to Language Reseach." In *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, edited by Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn, 201–22. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Stake, Robert. 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Stanford, Jim, and Leah Vosko. 2004. *Challenging the Market: The Struggle to Regulate Work and Income*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Stinson, Jane, and Morna Ballantyne. 2009. "Union Renewal and CUPE." In *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experiences*, edited by Pradeep Kumar and Christopher Schenk, 145–60. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Swartz, Donald. 1993. "Capitalist Restructuring and the Canadian Labour Movement." In *The Challenge of Restructuring: North American Labor Movements Respond*, edited by Jane Jenson and Rhianne Mahon, 381–402. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Taylor, Alison, Robert McGray, and Bonnie Watt-Malcolm. 2007. "Struggles over Labour Power: The Case of Fort McMurray." *Journal of Education and Work* 20 (5): 379–96. doi:10.1080/13639080701814257.

Thomason, Terry, and Silvana Pozzebon. 1998. "Managerial Opposition to Union Certification in Quebec and Ontario." *Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations* 53 (4): 750–71.

Tufts, S., and M. P. Thomas. 2014. "Populist Unionism Confronts Austerity in Canada." *Labor Studies Journal* 39 (1): 60–82. doi:10.1177/0160449X14530705.

Turner, H.A. 1962. *Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy: A Comparative Study of the Cotton Unions*. London, England: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

UFCW 401. n.d. "UFCW Website." Union. *UFCW 401*.
http://www.gounion.ca/portal.cfm.

UFCW Canada. 2008. "UFCW Canada Constitution: As Amended and Revised at the 6th
Regular Convention 2008."
http://www.ufcw.ca/templates/ufcwcanada/images/constitution.pdf.

UFCW Canada, and Agricultural Workers Alliance. 2011. *Report on the Status of
Migrant Farm Workers in Canada, 2010-2011*. Rexdale, ON: United Food and
Commercial Workers Canada.

UFCW Local 401. 2007. *Building a Stronger Union: Funding for Our Union Operations*.
Edmongon: United Food and Commercial Workers Local 401.

———. 2009. *Bylaws of United Food and Commercial Workers Canada Union Local
No. 401*. Bylaws. Calgary: UFCW 401.

———. 2011. "UFCW Local 401 Facts."
http://www.877gounion.ca/page.php?pageId=9.

Vosko, Leah F. 2000. *Temporary Work : The Gendered Rise of a Precarious Employment
Relationship*. Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.

Voss, Kim. 1996. "The Collapse of a Social Movement: The Interplay of Mobilizing
Structures, Framing and Political Opportunities in the Knights of Labor." In
*Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities,
Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, edited by Doug McAdam, John D.
McCarthy, and Mayer Zald, 227–58. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics.
Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2010. "Democratic Dilemmas: Union Democracy and Union Renewal."
Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research 16 (3): 369–82.
doi:10.1177/1024258910373868.

Voss, Kim, and Rachel Sherman. 2000. "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Union
Revitalization in the American Labor Movement." *American Journal of Sociology*
106 (2): 303–49.

———. 2003. "You Just Can't Do It Automatically: The Transition to Social Movement
Unionism in the United States." In *Trade Unions in Renewal: A Comparative
Study*, edited by Peter Fairbrother and Charlotte Yates, 51–77. New York:
Continuum.

Webb, Sidney, and Beatrice Webb. 1920. *Industrial Democracy*. New York: Augustus
M. Kelly Books.

Whyte, William Foote, ed. 1983. *Worker Participation and Ownership: Cooperative
Strategies for Strengthening Local Economies*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Wolfram Cox, Julie, and John Hassard. 2010. "Triangulation." In *Encyclopedia of Case
Study Research*, edited by Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe,
944–47. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Yates, Charlotte. 1998. "Unity and Diversity: Challenges to an Expanding Canadian
Autoworkers' Union*." *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de
Sociologie* 35 (1): 93–118. doi:10.1111/j.1755-618X.1998.tb00224.x.

———. 2002. "Expanding Labour's Horizons: Union Organizing and Strategic Change
in Canada." *Just Labour* 1: 31–40.

———. 2003. "The Revival of Industrial Unions in Canada: The Extension and
Adaptation of Industrial Union Practices to the New Economy." In *Trade Unions*

in Renewal: A Comparative Study, edited by Peter Fairbrother and Charlotte Yates, 221–43. New York: Continuum.

———. 2010. "Understanding Caring, Organizing Women: How Framing a Problem Shapes Union Strategy." *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 16 (3): 399–410. doi:10.1177/1024258910373870.

Yin, Robert. 1993. *Applications of Case Study Research*. Newbury Park, Calif.: SAGE Publications.

———. 1994. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.