Social Justice Teacher Activism and Social Movement Unionism: Tensions, Synergies, and Space

Lois Weiner[1]

1) Deborah Cannon Partridge Wolfe College of Education, New Jersey City University, United States of America.

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Lois Weiner
New Jersey City University

Abstract

Though the titles and acronyms of policies differ from one country to another, throughout the world a political project has taken root with the assumption that to reduce poverty and inequality, governments should privatize school systems, alter teaching from a career to contract labor, use standardized tests to make students and teachers accountable, and curtail the power and legal rights of teachers unions. This article explores how teacher activists might help reverse neoliberal educational politics by developing mutually-respectful collaborations among teachers, parents and youth in poor communities, in school-based and system-wide partnerships that involve teachers unions. Analyzing events as they were experienced and influenced by a New York City-based NGO of teachers committed to educational justice, the author examines the landscape of educational reform politics and the creation of new spaces and organizational forms not confined by collective bargaining jurisdictions and traditional bargaining demands. The study suggests that development of a social movement of teachers that might edge teachers unions in the direction of social movement teacher unionism may not occur in a linear fashion. Rather, a complex push-pull dynamic occurs with each change, opening and retracting space, remaking networks and influencing longstanding personal ties among activists.

Activismo del Profesorado por la Justicia Social y Movimiento Social Sindical: Tensiones, Sinergias y Espacio

Lois Weiner
New Jersey City University

Resumen

Aunque los títulos y acrónimos de las políticas difieran de un país a otro, en todo el mundo, un proyecto político basado en la suposición que para reducir la pobreza y la desigualdad, los gobiernos han de privatizar los sistemas escolares, está alterando la docencia desde la promoción hasta el contrato laboral, el uso de tests estandarizados para rendir cuentas con el profesorado y el alumnado, así como el recorte del poder y de los derechos legales de los sindicatos de profesorado. Este artículo explora como el activismo del profesorado puede ayudar a cambiar la política educativa neoliberal estableciendo colaboraciones de mútuo respeto entre profesorado, familias y jóvenes de comunidades en desventaja, en un sistema de partenariado con base en la escuela y que involucra a los sindicatos del profesorado. Analizando los eventos promovidos por una ONG de profesorado comprometidos con la justicia educativa en Nueva York, la autora examina como se crean nuevos espacios y formas de organización no confinadas a procesos de negociación colectiva tradicionales. El estudio sugiere que el desarrollo de un movimiento social de profesorado que pueda acercarse al de un movimiento social de profesorado podría no ocurrir de forma lineal. Más bien , resultaría fruto de dinámicas complejas de acción-reacción a cada cambio, apertura o cierre de espacios, regeneración de redes e influencia de lazos personales duraderos entre activistas.

Palabras clave: Sindicatos de profesorado, política educativa, neoliberalismo.

T hough the titles and acronyms of policies differ from one country to another, throughout the world a political project has taken root with the assumption that to reduce poverty and inequality, governments should privatize school systems, alter teaching from a career to contract labor, use standardized tests to make students and teachers accountable, and curtail the power and legal rights of teachers unions (Compton & Weiner, 2008; Lipman, 2011; Robertson, 2000). Although the stated purpose of this global project, described as "neoliberal" in much of the world, is to increase educational opportunity, critical analysis about its effects in the global south (Klees, 2002; Klees, 2008; Ramos, 1999; Stromquist, 2002) and the US (Lipman, 2004; Gandara, 2009; Ravitch, 2010) indicates that these policies, in fact, do the opposite, intensifying social stratification and poverty.

This article explores one aspect of the struggles through which teacher activists might help reverse neoliberal educational politics: by developing mutually-respectful collaborations among teachers, parents and youth in poor communities, in school-based and system-wide partnerships that involve teachers unions. The study focuses on the nexus between social justice activism and union reform, drawing on analyses about the need for labor to adopt the self-conception of "social movement unionism" (Moody, 2007; Ross, 2007) to explore how teachers might develop new spaces and organizational forms not confined by collective bargaining jurisdictions and traditional bargaining demands, spaces to support development of a social movement of teachers that would, in turn, edge teachers unions in the direction of social movement teacher unionism (Weiner, 2013).

Gindin (2012) and Aronowitz (2011a, 2011b) argue that unions have been sufficiently weakened by the neoliberal assault that they can no longer depend on traditional contract fights to protect economic gains. To push back on neoliberalism, Gindin and Aronowitz suggest that unions and workers need to create new spaces and organizations, a space such as the

Greater Toronto Workers Assembly (Dealy, 2010), that develop networks and campaigns across sections/industries, redefining the union's purposes and operations through collaborations with communities and social justice activists.

In this article, I draw on a study I conducted jointly with Sally Lee, Director of Teachers Unite (TU), presented to the American Educational Research Association Special Interest Group on teachers' work and teachers unions in May 2013. Our study examined how Teachers Unite (TU), a membership organization of teachers in New York City supporting educational justice among students, parents, teachers, and the teachers union, city-wide and at the school site, might help create new space. In this article I use findings from that study but recast the analysis (Sally has contributed ideas about the new analysis but the ideas are my own and I am solely responsible for its conclusions). In this article I describe the original study and then explore alternative ways of understanding our findings.

TU has commitments to youth and parent organizing and to "social movement unionism" (defined subsequently). From its inception, TU conceptualized the project of improving schooling for all children as requiring transformation of the city teachers union, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the controlling force in the national union (American Federation of Teachers, AFT) and the Education International (EI), the international confederation of teachers unions (Weiner, 2012). TU is allied with community groups on restorative justice projects, such as altering school climate to support learning and disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. It also supports teachers who are trying to build democratic, progressive union chapters that work as respectful equals with parents, students, and other school workers.

Theoretical Framework

Like other labor unions, teachers unions have experienced a significant erosion of political and economic power, a result of neoliberalism's political

ascendancy and success in turning back the egalitarian initiatives of the welfare state (Stevenson, 2010). The neoliberal project has been marked by sustained attacks on teacher unions in order to weaken their capacity to protect systems of public education and erode their capacity to protect teachers, who play a key ideological role in the society (Compton & Weiner, 2008; Stevenson, 2010). Union reformers in the US have for decades attempted to replace "business" or "service" union approach with "social movement unionism," a model more prevalent outside the US (Moody, 2007; Early, 2009). In North America, the term "social justice unionism" is often used to identify an alternative to the "business" or "service" model. Therefore, a clarification of terms is essential.

The model of "service" or "business" unionism, dominant for decades in US teachers unions, configures the union as a business that exists to provide services to members, including lower rates for auto insurance; benefits from a welfare fund; pension advice; negotiating a contract, and perhaps filing a grievance. Officers and staff make decisions on the members' behalf. Other than voting on a contract and electing officers every few years, members are passive. They are obliged to pay dues and accept the leadership's expertise.

In response to what was, in retrospect, the first iteration of the neoliberal project in the 1992, some progressive education activists, researchers, and teacher union officials argued that teachers unions should respond to the calls for "excellence" and "accountability" in education by spurning stances that made them resemble "industrial unions." Teachers unions, they argued, needed to be more conciliatory about changes to schools that would benefit students. One group, advocates of "professional unionism," argued for eliminating collective bargaining agreements, replacing them with "trust agreements," so as to jettison the contentiousness of labor-management struggle. Teachers should be professionals who assumed responsibility for educational outcomes (Kerchner and Koppich, 1993). Another segment of teacher activists argued for a "social justice teacher unionism" that would advocate on social justice issues in education and society, making support

for these broader struggles an essential element of the union's identity (Petersen, 1997). One critique of "social justice teacher unionism" pointed to its reluctance to address traditional concerns about work and wages and its confusion about how to respond to reforms that introduced the management-labor collaboration heralded in private industry (Weiner, 1998). "Trust agreements" would replace contracts and traditional collective bargaining. Unions were pressed to accept peer evaluation procedures to rid schools of unsatisfactory teachers and a new category of "master teachers" to give superior teachers an economic and professional incentive to remain in the profession. Teacher union activists and officials who contested these changes were often cast as - and considered themselves - advocates of the kind of collective bargaining associated with industrial unions. They argued that a salary schedule basing pay increases only on years of education and teaching experience was essential to protect teachers from administrative fiat and that supervision of teacher quality was the responsibility of management (administration), not teachers themselves. Though it is interesting to note the relationship of this earlier debate to current policies linking "pay to performance" based on students' standardized test scores and administrator evaluations, exploration of that question goes beyond the scope of this study.

Ross (2007) argues that in categorizing a union, one must examine both its stated objectives and how the aims are operationalized, in the union's internal life and its work with allies. She observes that while a union that states a commitment to social justice may "may mobilize members, they can do so in conditions largely defined by leaders...[that] can be easily accommodated within and could even reinforce top-down practices." (p. 13). Drawing on Gindin's work, she notes the distinction between "mobilizational and democratizing approaches to union renewal, and in particular, how tactics are framed and utilized." She advances Gindin's description of "social movement unionism" as combining an "an anti-economistic, anti-sectionalist, and transformative vision with mobilizing repertoires and organizational forms in which workers don't just

'participate': they 'actively lead' and have democratic control over 'the fight for everything that affects working people' in their union, their communities and their country." (p. 28). To understand how this distinction might be applied to teacher unionism, I suggest that though the British Colombia Teachers Federation calls itself a "social justice teachers union," it probably resembles much more closely a "social movement union" as Ross (and Gindin) define it.

While there is consensus that unions have been greatly weakened, some union officers and activists argue that as weak as unions are, they provide needed protections; collective bargaining and contracts should not be jettisoned in the search for new forms of organization (Perez, 2012). Lier and Stokke (2006) suggest that creation of new spaces and organizations that express workers' interests and yet draw support and involvement from poor people raises problems that social movement unions have not anticipated.

Background and significance of the study

In pursuing the idea of new spaces for teachers unions, it's important to clarify that unions have longed formed coalitions with other unions and with community groups. However, most often these coalitions with labor unions have existed on a "purely transactional,'I'll-scratch-your-back-if-you-scratch-mine' basis" (Dean & Rathke, 2008, p. 56). Elsewhere I explain that neoliberalism's usurpation of the rhetoric of combatting educational inequality (Compton & Weiner, 2008) has made creation of alliances with parents more urgent and establishes the importance of examining what is happening when teachers try to create those spaces, as does this study.

Moreover, creating spaces in which teachers, teachers unions, poor and working parents, students, and communities collaborate in struggles for social justice needs to be understood as simultaneously local and global, configured by the history of an educational authority and community as well as by the "leaning between hegemony and conspiracy" (Kuehn, 2004) that

characterizes neoliberalism's global project in education. One factor that influences creation of space is the extent to which school control has been contested by parents, as well as relationships between teachers and parents in these struggles (Lipman, 2011). For instance, current efforts by the reform leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) to develop alliances with parent and community activists occur in a school system that saw many low-income parents seize the opportunity to make changes when School Councils were created (Fine, 1993; Wong, 1998; Shipps, 1997). On the one hand, the CTU did not block legislation creating the School Councils, but on the other hand neither did it actively support their development. In contrast, in New York City, parental voice in schools has been considered problematic by teacher union officials for decades, a legacy of the bitter Ocean Hill-Brownsville strikes waged by the New York City teachers union against community control (Berube, 1988). Given these disparate histories, respectful alliances between teachers, their union, and poor parents of color are, arguably, more needed - and more difficult to develop in New York than in Chicago. Chicago's history cannot be duplicated but we may be able to produce an operationally equivalent space in New York, one that supports mobilization of union members, parents, community and students in its push against neoliberal reforms. The study Sally and I conducted sought to illuminate what occurs when activist teachers try to build the union and simultaneously work side-by-side with poor parents of color, in a city that has few, if any, models of these two tasks being joined.

Methodology and study design

Our study adapted the methodology and theoretical framework used by Lier and Stokke (2006) in their analysis of relations between the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), a union that self-identifies as a social movement union, and the Cape Town Anti-Privatisation Forum, a network of community groupings, NGOs, activists and trade unions opposed to

privatization of services. Union activists pressed SAMWU to pull together the Forum, to broaden SAMWU's base among poor residents in Cape Town and build a coalition that would protect the interests of the poor and workers on diverse social issues. Following the methodology used by Lier and Stokke (2006), we planned data collection to include notes of meetings the authors attended and interviews with key figures in the organization's creation; archival data, including the organization's mission statement and minutes of meetings. As explained later in the findings, we altered our data collection strategies to address the shifting political terrain of educational politics, locally and globally, as well as our capacities as participant-observers.

While Lier and Stokke's study examined a new space and organization formed by a self-described social movement union, our study looked at the effort to develop a new space outside the official union organization, one that had the intention of affecting the formation of a reform caucus within the union. The UFT's mode of organization and expressed goals align it with the "service" model. In contrast TU undertakes projects that are smaller in scale but equivalent in their intent to the Forum. TU members have served as allies, partners, and steering committee members in the Dignity in Schools Campaign in New York City as well as working side-by-side with youth organizations. Simultaneously, TU has sponsored workshops to help teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to develop union chapters (school site organizations) that are democratic and defend concerns of teachers, students, and parents. As do some workers' rights organizations, TU at one time helped to connect workers (teachers) with jobs, with a job bulletin board on its website to connect teachers with NYC public schools that are looking to hire progressive teachers. TU has no official relationship with the UFT. However, in the 2010 election of union officers, TU officially endorsed candidates of a coalition of two, small, long-standing reform caucuses. Because it is an advocacy group but has more than one focus and partners with community and youth organizations but is teacher-run, we

grappled in our study with how to characterize TU. The group is difficult to characterize organizationally using the usual schema of non-profit/ non-governmental organizations (Samatt, 2004; Klees, 2008). Still, Klees (2008) could be describing TU's challenge when he notes that "NGO's which are dedicated to progressive social change are in an incredibly difficult position" due to scarce resources and "available funding directs most NGOs to service provision" (p. 24). TU may be in an especially difficult situation for funding because its membership, teachers, are often not considered an appropriate target for grassroots progressive organizing.

The original study addressed four closely-related questions:

1. In what regards, if any, is TU a model for a "new organizational form" that Gindin and Aronowitz argue workers, in this case, teachers need? How? Why?

2. In what regards, if any, is TU creating a new space that will support activist teachers to develop meaningful alliances with parents and students at their school sites? How? Why?

3. In creating new space, what role, if any, might we expect of teachers who view themselves as committed to progressive or social justice teaching but at the same time are uninformed, ambivalent or hostile to teachers unions?

4. What relationship, if any, should there be between the "new space" and "new organizational form" TU may be modeling, in its work with the UFT and the newly-created reform caucus in the UFT, MORE (Movement of Rank and File Educators)?

TU's founder and Executive Director, Sally Lee, and I, a university faculty member who is a former New York City teacher and the author of empirical and theoretical work about teachers' work and teachers unions, collaborated as participant-observers. We met in 2008 and have discussed the political landscape of teacher unionism in New York City informally since then. Our formal collaboration began when, at Sally's invitation, I joined TU's board of directors in 2012, in my capacity as a researcher who

has studied teachers unions and has informal connections to teacher union activists and activist scholars in many places. I was interested in supporting TU's work and in fleshing out how TU might be able to develop connections between teacher union activists, teachers who identify themselves as committed to social justice, and community and student groups organizing for social justice, the three "pulses" I hypothesize should be present in a social movement of teachers (Weiner, 2012).

The context of the study was the shifting NYC political landscape of teacher activism on issues of social justice and teacher union reform, from April 2012- April 2013, into which we intervened. In our study design, developed in July 2012, we decided Sally would assemble and analyze material from three data sources, email exchanges with teacher, parent, and community activists;   information from blogs of teacher activists; and minutes of TU meetings, including those of the board of directors. I was assigned to collect and analyze data from email with education activists, including faculty and teachers. I also was assigned to refine the study's theoretical lens by examining relevant scholarship. We decided to limit our data collection to these strategies because of time restraints.

Though our original understanding of "space" was local, that of New York City, as we examined our data in our "first cut" analysis, we realized that events out of the city were impacting the NYC landscape, a factor we had not anticipated in our the first design of our study. Another element that we had not planned to include was background material describing the evolution of union and activist politics of the past several years. Although it was and is not our intention to make this a historical study, as we examined how TU was affecting creation of spaces, we realized that a significant factor was how longstanding personal and political networks had been altered. To address this, Sally developed a created a display to capture a "snapshot" of the current organizations and networks and a timeline leading up to the present situation.

I identified factors in the NYC landscape that might have been informed by events outside the city. One event was the September strike of the Chicago Teachers Union, under the leadership of what had been a reform caucus, CORE (Caucus of Rank and File Educators), that inspired formation of MORE. But as Ilooked at factors influencing my intervention, I realized that during the period of the study, international factors came into play. I had traveled to Toronto where I met with teacher activists involved in the Toronto Workers Assembly, as well as Sam Gindin, whose work had inspired the study's notion of "new space." Other meetings with teacher union reformers, in Cincinnati, Chicago, and Los Angeles informed my involvement in TU, primarily by clarifying how activists and unions might respond to school closings, school reconstitutions, and the contractual frameworks in which debates about teacher evaluation occur. To address these unanticipated influences, I added a data source, texts of my presentations to activists, annotated with comments about issues that had arisen in audience remarks following the formal addresses.

When the TU board members were asked to take charge of projects, Iagreed to help form a support group of academics for TU. However, as I made contact with teacher education faculty Sally knew, we developed a different strategy, forming a network of academics who wanted to influence education policy and practice in NYC and would make support of TU the first project. Metro Academics for Democracy and Justice in Education, (MADJE), resulted from this effort. (The founding call for MADJE is in appendix A.)

To assemble and analyze my data, I created a chart with three columns, displaying events coded as occurring in three periods, Summer 2012, Fall 2012, and Winter 2013. One column listed key events in TU. Another column listed my activity, including meeting with teacher activists in Newark NJ, Chicago, New York, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Toronto and NYC. This column included significant contacts other than physical visits with teacher union reformers and education activists in other locales, for

example exchanges about coming to the curriculum fair sponsored by Philly TAG, the Teacher Activist Group affiliate in Philadelphia. This column also contained my interventions in the landscape on behalf of TU, including MADJE's creation. The third column contained external developments.

In analyzing this display, four distinct themes emerged:

1. National and state factors, including the September CTU strike and the legislative agreement approved by the state AFT about teacher evaluation

2. Personal, professional and political networks, including connections of activists, who shared histories of social justice activity in education; left-wing sectarian groups; and academics who know each other through their own university and/or their involvement in the American Educational Research Association.

3. Connections made through social media, primarily FaceBook and blogs of activists.

4. Funding problems

Sally and I examined data together after each of us had assembled and analyzed our data independently. In this process, Sally added to the chart I developed. A significant factor I had missed was TU's expanded use of social media, explained by the TU organizer's having participated in grant-funded training about how non-profit organizations can communicate their messages. Another factor Ihad omitted, one related both to funding and social media, was TU's launch of a new online fundraising campaign to produce a documentary and supplementary resources to help teachers use restorative justice practices in schools (a project described in the MADJE call, in the Appendix).

Our study design called for formative analyses of the changing political landscape and TU's role in it through periodic phone calls and face-to-face meetings, with final data analysis in March 2013. As we had planned, in phone calls, generally every 3-4 weeks during the period of the study, as well as four face-to-face meetings, we analyzed how the landscape had changed, what these changes meant for TU's goals and organizational

structure, and how these developments were impacting creation of connections among teacher activists involved in union activity, social justice teaching, and social justice work with communities and youth, in schools and communities. This formative analysis resulted in our making changes to TU's actions and my role as a supporter of both MORE and TU. For example, when strains between TU and MORE deepened in Fall 2012, I sponsored a book launch party as a joint fundraiser for TU and MORE, to bring activists together in what I intended to be a community-building event.

Understanding the landscape

In New York City, the largest organizational actor in educational politics is the United Federation of Teachers, (UFT) Local 2 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). UFT officers and staff are almost exclusively drawn from the Unity Caucus and its allies. In part because of the UFT's "winner-take-all" election rules, no opposition or reform group has yet successfully challenged Unity's control of the union apparatus. Therefore, the leadership of the Unity Caucus is the de facto leadership of the UFT (Weiner, 2012). The UFT describes itself, with 200,000 members as

> the sole bargaining agent for most of the non-supervisory educators who work in the New York City public schools. We represent approximately 75,000 teachers and 19,000 classroom para-professionals, along with school secretaries, attendance teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, adult education teachers, administrative law judges, nurses, laboratory technicians, speech therapists, and 60,000 retired members. We also represent teachers and other employees at a number of private educational institutions and some charter schools.

In addition, the UFT represents 2,800 registered nurses of the New York City Visiting Nurse Service and several private New York City hospitals and health care institutions. Over 28,000 New York City family child care

providers "became the UFT's newest members after a successful organizing drive that gained collective-bargaining rights in 2007"

(http://www.uft.org/who-we-are/union-basics).

The UFT dwarfs independent parent and student organizations in size and political connections. The landscape of education activism contains a wide array of non-profit membership organizations with budgets that range from $300,000 to over $1 million, mostly based in low-income communities of color and immigrant of color communities. These groups, too numerous to describe, number in the dozens and belong to diverse coalitions. However, many of the groups and coalitions have indirect ties to the UFT through the union's involvement in and domination of on-going and ad hoc political coalitions. Educational activism in NYC requires engaging with the UFT in the process of moving specific issues and galvanizing support and resources.

As the union representing teachers in New York state's largest city, the UFT is able to dominate the state teachers union, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). The UFT leverages its power in NYSUT to dominate national policies on educational reform (Weiner, 2012), and the UFT, NYSUT, and AFT generally adopt similar, even identical, policies on controversial issues. During our study, teacher evaluation procedures were decided in New York State. NYSUT agreed to provisions which paralleled those the AFT had advocated, linking teacher performance and pay to student test scores.

Despite the union's indirect involvement in the creation of a new parent group and a campaign for a new direction in educational reform, its efforts seem not to have generated activity independent of its direct or indirect control. One politically seasoned parent activist observed that the UFT's new initiatives were viewed as "the same people wearing a different hat" by those experienced community and parent groups organized without the UFT's direct or indirect support (comment at a TU Board meeting, January 26, 2013). In contrast, the CTU strike and its mobilization of teachers, parents, and community in a broad struggle against the neoliberal reforms

opened up new space for activism (Gutstein and Lipman, 2013).

Aside from TU and the UFT, two groupings seemed key to our study of teacher activism in NYC during the time we collected data: MORE, (Movement of Rank and File Educators), a newly-organized reform caucus in the UFT, modeled on the caucus now leads the CTU; and NYCoRE, (New York Collective of Radical Educators), which is affiliated with the national Network of Teachers Activist Groups.

During the study, TU had a budget of $120,000 and two paid staff. TU described itself to potential funders by noting three distinct activities in which members resist the school-to-prison pipeline as allies to their students (archival data from TU records, retrieved April 2013).

1. TU is involved in planning, strategizing, mobilizing and advocating that the Department of Education (DOE) provide support for alternatives to current punitive discipline policies at the local and national level through participation in the Dignity in Schools Campaign of which TU is a lead member (at both local and national levels).

2. TU members lead restorative practice projects in the schools where they teach. As an organization, TU supports this work through professional development workshops, training institutes and conferences, and facilitating relationships between members' schools and available funding. TU chairs the Pilot School Working Group of the Dignity in Schools Campaign, and its staff and members have been instrumental in developing the campaign's platform for the DOE to provide support for expanding pilot schools.

3. TU conducts trainings as well as producing tools and resources that support the implementation of restorative justice practices in schools. A major initiative is "Growing Fairness," a documentary with a companion toolkit created by educators and member-led training component that supports school community's implementation of restorative programs.

In analyzing our findings for the paper, Sally and I grappled with how to characterize TU. One question for me was whether its status as a non-profit organization could clarify how it operated or how it related to other activist

groups. Ultimately we agreed that being a non-profit was not a salient factor in our analysis. In searching for a grammar and vocabulary to capture TU's mix of goals and its structure, I found exchanges in critical studies in comparative education about the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) more useful than typologies in labor studies. In being funded by foundations and private donors and in tackling issues of social justice, TU resembles a socially progressive NGO and faces many of their challenges (Klee, 2008). However, TU members were involved in two other activities not directly related to the work for which TU received funding: involvement with reformers aiming to make the UFT a social justice/social movement union; and opposition to mayoral control of the schools, so as to increase parent, student, teacher, and community voice at the school site and system-wide.

As Sally and I realized in looking for support for TU's "Growing Fairness" initiative, higher education faculty are a potentially important part of the landscape of educational activism in NYC. Among teacher activists most connections to higher education faculty, both liberal arts and teacher education faculty, seem to occur within NYCoRE, especially at its annual conference. In considering how best to involve higher education faculty with TU, I contacted a few teacher educators who have been supportive of TU's work. The consensus was that rather than forming a group of academics that would focus only on TU would further fragment the landscape. We agreed on an alternative, which Sally endorsed, creating a network of higher education academics that would focus on school reform, Metro Academics for Democracy and Justice in Education (MADJE). MADJE's first meeting focused on introducing participants to TU and establishing a temporary steering committee.

Analyzing the activism landscape: four categories of issues

As Sally and I analyzed our data, we identified four categories of educational issues that dominated the landscape: "social movement" concerns (e.g. school-to-prison pipeline); community issues (e.g. school closings); issues directly related to contract negotiations (e.g. teacher evaluation and "pay for performance"); and broad questions of political control (e.g. mayoral control, racial and economic histories of communities that emerge in social justice struggles). Different groups and networks focus on these issues in ways that shift over time. After MORE coalesced, activists from the Grassroots Education Network (GEM) became key activists in MORE. During the period in which we collected data, school closing mobilizations seemed were less visible. It may be that MORE's formation and a focus on running candidates in the UFT election absorbed energy that might otherwise have been focused on organizing against school closings. As our data did not include interviews with GEM or MORE activists, we suggest this as a possibility. Our data do indicate that TU activists felt that after making the decision to form a slate for the election, MORE activists' communication with supporters involved in challenging school closings became problematic. One TU teacher who was also a MORE member helped organize a meeting to oppose a possible closing of her school and was chagrined to see MORE activists arrive and speak on issues without having consulted with her first (personal communication with a TU/MORE activist, January 26 2013).

Space for progressive educational activism in NYC seems affected by a very complex push/pull dynamic within and among activist groups, personal networks, political sects, individuals, and issues. This was illustrated by MORE's emergence, a complicated process that simultaneously solidified alliances and created tensions among long-time allies, bringing in new activists in new schools and making some long-time activists question whether union reform should be a focus of their political work. TU had long

championed the idea of activism to transform the UFT, and Sally helped coordinate initial meetings with NYCoRE and smaller groupings about the efforts to democratize the UFT, making it more politically progressive. Several TU activists were involved in these talks. As MORE acquired a separate organizational identity it drew new teachers into union activity, expanding space for educational activism while simultaneously changing it. Yet for TU activists, some of whom are MORE members and many of whom are sympathetic to MORE's aims, MORE's lack of what appeared to be a democratic, representative structure posed challenges for collaboration. TU's defined roles and procedures for decision making, inspired by ideals of some the advocacy groups with which it partners, complicated its endorsement of and participation in coalitions that have no formal mechanisms for representation - including MORE. Hence, when MORE was launched, TU was not, as an organization, a sponsor.

Moreover, for a period of months, MORE's formation left TU without a direct involvement in union reform, a tenet central to its previous political identity. Several key TU members shifted the focus of their activism, becoming leaders in MORE. In a parallel development not directly related to MORE's formation, TU's funding dropped to a nadir. In response to all of these factors, TU regrouped organizationally, re-focusing its mission on restorative justice work. Camilla, (not her real name), a key TU activist who had led her school's union chapter and reorganized it on principles in line with concepts of social movement unionism transferred to another school, re-focusing her own activity on TU's restorative justice work. But as Camilla and other TU members focused on the restorative justice projects, their organizing unexpectedly morphed into activity that started to transform the school's UFT chapter, encouraging teachers to strengthen the School Leadership Teams (still legally required under mayoral control) and build alliances with parents, community, and students on restorative justice and other struggles. Camilla described the restorative justice work as a "Trojan horse" that provided a cover for the kind of chapter-building TU activists

want to see MORE undertake (personal conversation at MADJE meeting, March 22 2013). Hence, advocacy work on restorative justice created new space for progressive union principles, an issue I address later, under question 2.

Klees (2008) observes that for socially progressive NGO's, service delivery projects can serve as a cover for advocacy. What we see with TU is that its service delivery projects, (developing and delivering restorative justice materials and training) has become a cover for advocacy about creating more democratic space at the school site and within it, a different kind of union presence. On the one hand, TU's privately-obtained funding, by foundations, private donors, and membership, allows it to do much-needed work. But as has occurred in neoliberalism's realignment of the private and public (Karmatt, 2004), TU now provides a service that should, arguably, be done by the NYC DOE or perhaps the UFT. On the other hand, TU's use of restorative justice work to build socially progressive union chapters that democratize the school *counter*s neoliberalism's use of NGO's to *replace* traditional organizations, such as trade unions (Kamatt, 2004). Moreover, in rethinking TU's mission, Sally articulated the goal of making TU obsolete; if it fulfills its goals and mission, the UFT and DOE will be transformed, from the bottom-up, and be democratic, dismantled as systems of oppression (comment at Board meeting, January 26 2013).

As we analyzed communication that had occurred over points of conflict between MORE and TU activists and compared it to publicity about MORE's activities, we noticed that MORE's public face and activities began to reflect issues on which TU was most identified, specifically the fight against the school-to-prison pipeline and, to a lesser extent, the promotion of engagement with School Leadership Teams. MORE activists led a study group in NYCoRE on the school-to-prison pipeline and included restorative justice concerns in their platform for election. Notably, the first study groups sponsored by NYCoRE included one named "Rethinking Discipline", led by TU founder Sally Lee and founding TU board member Daniel Jerome.

The four questions

In this section I return to the four questions Sally and I originally proposed, modifying the responses in our paper with ideas from debates about the functioning of NGO's in international aid projects.

1. In what regards, if any, is TU a model for a "new organizational form" that Gindin and Aronowitz argue workers, in this case, teachers need? How? Why?

As explained, we had difficulty in classifying TU. It has "non-profit" status but this has little analytical value because the category is so broad. I propose that critical research about NGO's in developing nations is more useful in understanding what TU represents organizationally and use Klees' categorization of NGO's (2008) to suggest how TU falls into several different classifications. TU is a local NGO (LNGO) but is affiliated with DSC, a national NGO (NNGO). TU's involvement with restorative justice and the DSC make it an advocacy NGO (ANGO) and perhaps a public-interest NGO (PINGO). TU is a membership organization though it is dependent on donor and foundation, characteristics of a Community Based Organization, or CBO (Klees, 2008). It is not a "new organizational form" but rather a socially progressive hybrid NGO which, like other socially progressive NGO's, must be prepared to re-invent itself organizationally as the landscape changes, including funding and funders.   However, it may be that TU's hybridity is suggestive of what is needed for a "new organizational form" of teacher activists.

2. In what regards, if any, is TU creating a new space that will support activist teachers to develop meaningful alliances with parents and students at their school sites? How? Why?

The unforeseen and unplanned morphing of restorative justice work into chapter-building suggests that TU is fostering new ways of organizing at the school site that can promote development of alliances with other

constituencies. Several factors seemed to have supported the "Trojan horse" development Camille described.

Although its funding sources and projects shifted over the course of the study, a key element of TU's mission statement permeated its projects: the belief that schools can only be transformed when educators work with and learn from parents and youth to achieve social and economic justice.

We should clarify, as does Gindin, that creation of "new spaces" and "new organizational forms" does not preclude sectoral organization of workers (comments in a meeting of Rank and File Education Workers in Toronto, March 11, 2013). Although TU is an organization of teachers, that is, it is organized sectorally, its projects rely on and advance collaboration among education's constituencies. For example, TU's current collaboration with the Center for Urban Pedagogy's Making Policy Public program will result in 1,000 copies of a foldout guide and poster that gives the idea of democratic participation in schools visual appeal through graphic design and information. Related to this project is TU's initiative to develop workshops that will support active participation in SLT's, to spark interest among activists about how school-site collaboration between teachers, parents and young people supports a vision of school governance that counters the top-down policies of mayoral control.

The idea of collaboration at the school on issues of social justice is reinforced in TU's "Growing Fairness" documentary and companion toolkit, created by teachers. The project contains a TU member-led training component that supports a school community's implementation of restorative programs. The framework is essentially a site-based organizing campaign on restorative justice, but the intention is to give a school community a collaborative, democratic process by which to make school change on any front through collective action.

Finally, TU's vision of school reform is mirrored in and reinforced by its work as co-chair of the Pilot School Working Group of the DSC-NY, which uses pilot schools to promote models of restorative justice practices that are

entirely led by educators and students in a school. The aim is to ratchet up the number of schools that adopt the model, to win support from the DOE, that is, to make the DOE adopt this model. TU's staff organizer works with schools in the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn on the Pilot School project in various ways, including strengthening relationships between schools and youth organizing programs such as Sistas and Brothas United (Bronx) to develop school-based student leadership councils with active teacher support.

Although TU did not set out to build union chapters as it organized on restorative justice, its mission, which permeates its work, promoted this development. This suggests to us that a self-conscious commitment by teacher activists to support collaboration between all of a school's constituencies to make schools more socially just may create opportunities for collaboration that may not otherwise occur - and that these collaborations can help regenerate union organization at the school site.

3. In creating new space, what role, if any, might we expect of teachers who view themselves as committed to progressive or social justice teaching but at the same time are uninformed, ambivalent or hostile to teachers unions?

In examining our data, we realized our initial study design was flawed in not including data collection strategies that would produce empirical evidence to allow us to respond to this question. To address this question we needed to include interviews with teachers who not active in MORE or TU, or with the TU organizer who conducted DSC workshops and interviews at school sites with teachers, including those who are not in the TU/MORE orbit. By the time we noted this limitation of our study design, it was too late to collect and analyze the relevant data.

4. What relationship, if any, should there be between the "new space" and "new organizational form" TU may model and union work with the UFT and MORE, the newly-created reform caucus in the UFT?

To address this question in the paper, Sally and I analyzed the organizational structures and practices of TU, MORE, and NYCoRE in data we had collected, noting shifts. All three groups do advocacy work and all are committed to social justice in the society and in education; we expected to see overlaps in activity and personnel, which we did. However, beyond these shared principles are salient organizational differences illuminated by the distinction between "organizing" and "activism" we take from the Social Justice Leadership Transformative Organizing Institute

(http://www.sojustlead.org).

Organizing: Those affected by unjust conditions build their collective leadership and power to bring about change. Most often this occurs with strong support from professional organizers.

Activism: Volunteers not directly affected by unjust conditions exert pressure through direct action and confrontation. The strategy of activists is to build education of the general public or segments of it most open to change.

A full description of how MORE and NYCoRE are structured and operate was beyond the scope of the study, but in our paper Sally and I argued they can best be described as advocacy groups that operate as "volunteer collectives" committed to social justice. Neither group has professional organizers and work is shared by members. Both groups seem to occupy a middle ground between the definitions of "activism" and "organizing" because they focus on teachers, who are workers affected directly by regulations and practices that are disempowering. Teachers are, however, simultaneously advantaged vis-a-vis poor parents and communities. Further, MORE and NYCoRE operate with what can appear to those outside the core activist group as amorphous policies and structures for on-going, formal representation of members' desires. In their organizational structures MORE and NYCoRE seem to inhabit the territory of social movement more than unionism. MORE's organizational practices echoed those of a union that states a commitment to social justice but "may mobilize

members… in conditions largely defined by leaders...[that] can be easily accommodated within and could even reinforce top-down practices" (Ross, 2007, p. 13).

In her examination of our response to this question subsequent to our writing the paper, Sally proposed that we refine our conclusion, drawing on Miniieri et al (2007). The work of these groups mainly takes the form of political education spaces and resource production, strategies that lend itself to creating an environment around an issue, which is what activism does. Organizing focuses on building collective power through strategic base-building, leadership development, successful campaigns and movement building.

During this same period TU struggled with defining its policies for members to decide how decisions should be made. As a partner in the DSC, which requires transparent decision-making policies based on principles it articulates, TU holds itself to expectations of accountability to the youth and community organizations with which it works. This mode of functioning reinforces TU's ideological commitment to democracy, reiterated in its work to build SLT's. Like MORE and NYCoRE, in some ways TU resembles the "organizing" type of group but as TU's membership is teachers, so too might it be placed into the "activism" category in the distinction between "activism" and "organizing." TU activists are working on issues that most directly impact low-income Black and Latino communities, but they're also advocating on issues that impact their working conditions. In fusing a commitment to organizing with a vision of democracy at the school in which teachers, parents and students struggle in common for social justice, we suggest that TU combines elements of "activism" and "organizing." In so doing TU, more than MORE at this point, prefigures the tensions that arise in social movement teacher unionism (Weiner, 2012), though of course on a far smaller scale.

In comparing TU, NYCoRE, and MORE to the UFT, it is essential to keep in mind that unions are bound by legal restrictions that activist groups

are not. Locals in the AFT (and National Education Association) are constrained by legal requirements of contracts, most especially in no-strike pledges and the scope of bargaining. Yet simultaneously, legal requirements about how elections must be conducted can protect democratic norms and procedures, even if the unions have practices that discourage members' participation and oversight (Weiner, 2012).

During the period of our study TU began to tease out how NYC teachers, who are simultaneously advantaged vis a vis the communities most serve and yet disempowered as workers, can develop collective voice for teachers at the school site while building mutually respectful alliances with community partners. Formation of MADJE in March 2013 brought into the constellation of teacher activism yet another network, academics in higher education. The effects, if any, of this new grouping remain to be seen. However, the group's formation also illustrates the "push/pull" dynamic identified previously. Originally conceptualized as a support group for TU, the idea for a network quickly morphed into a proposal for a more diverse group of higher education faculty who could collaborate with one another on various projects. In the process, TU experienced a "pull," a retraction of organizational capacity, loss of the possibility of having a group of faculty who would be committed to support TU's projects. However, creation of a network of higher education faculty who want to support the broad aims of democracy and social justice in education could possibly create more possibilities for all three activist groups, as well as other projects yet to emerge. This is the "push" of the process.

Conclusions

In arguing for the progressive potential of Advocacy NGOs, Kamatt (2004) notes "The events of Seattle, Genoa and D.C. demonstrate that advocacy NGOs, supported by social movements and trade unions, are in a position to disrupt and stall the formation of the global capitalist market, a task that new

economic institutions take as their primary goal" (p. 165). The modest study Sally and I conducted supports Kamatt's contention by illuminating how a small organization of teachers in NYC committed to principles of democratic control of education and teacher unionism allied with communities of poor and working community simultaneously acts on and is acted upon to push back on neoliberalism's global project.

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Lois Weiner is Professor in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education at New Jersey City University.

Contact Address: Direct correspondence to the author at Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, New Jersey City University, Office PSB 312, 2039 Kennedy Boulevard, New Jersey City, NJ (United States of America) – 07305-1597. E-mail address: lweiner@njcu.edu. Twitter: @drloisweiner.

Appendix A

Metro academics for democracy and justice in education

We invite you to join us in founding New York Metro Academics for Democracy and Justice in Education (MADJE).

We hope this new group will bring voices and resources of higher education faculty to the work of defending public education through the promotion of social justice and collective action between youth, parents and teachers. An essential part of this undertaking is supporting development of rank-and-file teacher union leaders who are committed to authentic solidarity with low-income parents and communities, in the schools and the city.

One of our first projects will be supporting Teachers Unite (TU), an organization of teachers in New York City that is creating new spaces for

collaborations for educational justice among students, parents, and teachers, city-wide and at the school site. TU also aims to support teachers who are trying to build democratic, progressive union chapters that work as respectful equals with parents, students, and other school workers.

In coalition with the Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC), Teachers Unite has been organizing teachers as key stakeholders who advocate alongside youth and parents for policies that will end student pushout. TU has received a matching grant to produce a teacher-developed video/toolkit about how to implement restorative justice ideas in the classroom and in the school. Sally Lee, TU Executive Director, explains the project in this video: http://www.indiegogo.com/GrowingFairness.

In conjunction with the Community Development Project, TU helped produce a study documenting the adverse impact of mayoral control. A new project being launched examines the disappearance of Black and Latino/a educators in New York City schools. Please contact Gary Anderson (gary.anderson@nyu.edu) if you would like to participate. A researcher who has time to contribute expertise in quantitative analysis is especially needed.

MADJE will shortly announce a salon/fundraiser at which you can mingle with like-minded researchers and learn more about TU and its work. Please join us in MADJE, adding your name as a member of MADJE, publicizing this call to other academics, and should you have the time, helping us with the salon and TU's on-going projects.

To add your name as a member of MADJE and be placed on our email list, please reply to Lois Weiner at drweinerlo@gmail.com.

[Names and organizational affiliations of 12 higher education faculty followed]