



Emotional Motivators that Influence Teacher Activism: Chicago Public School System Strike and School Closings

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Abstract

Recent education reform efforts, such as school closings, have encouraged teachers to mobilize in protest. Various emotions will motivate activism, accompany activism, and evolve during the activism itself. Dr. Michalinos Zembylas' (2006) theory on the politics of emotions describes how emotions influence the "power relations, resistance, and transformation" of education. Zembylas' (2010) theory of spaces for coping aimed to "identify the spatiality and politics of emotional relations and understanding of teachers' responses to educational reform." This qualitative study seeks to examine the emotional influences that shape how teachers from the Chicago Public School (CPS) district define, become involved in, and respond to activist efforts.

Chicago Public School Teachers Union

"For 75 years the Chicago Teachers Union has been in the forefront of education advocacy and public school reform in Chicago. The Chicago Teachers Union represents nearly 30,000 teachers and educational support personnel working in the Chicago Public Schools and, by extension, the students and families they serve. CTU, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers and the Illinois Federation of Teachers, is the third largest teachers local in the country and the largest local union in Illinois. The Chicago Teachers Union is an organization of educators dedicated to advancing and promoting quality public education, improving teaching and learning conditions, and protecting members' rights."

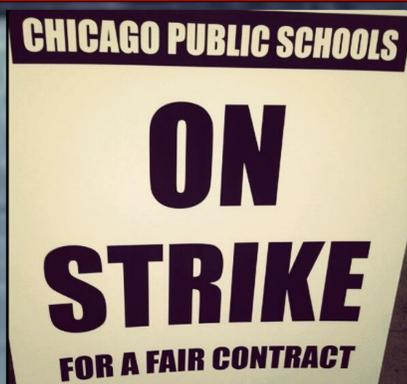
www.ctunet.com (website)

Materials and Methods

This study used a snowball sampling of four subjects: of the four subject interviews, two of the teachers have taught for seven years and the other two have taught for 20 plus years. Each of the interviews were conducted over the phone. The phone interviews ranged from eleven minutes to thirty-four minutes per interview. The subjects were asked 9 baseline questions and additional probing questions were asked as the interviews permitted. It is important to note that this study is not generalizable to the entire population of teachers within the CPS school district who do or do not identify as activist. Rather it is a small look into the emotional motivators and implications that a small demographic associate with the CPS school closing and strike.

Results & Conclusion

Preliminary results support Zembylas' theories on the politics of emotions and spaces for coping, further indicating that emotions are not only essential to the evolution of activism among teachers but they are socially and politically charged. Three main themes emerged from the collected data: (1) Anger & Fear, (2) Joy & Unity, (3) Hopelessness & Resignation. This study is not generalizable to all CPS teachers; however, it identifies some emotional motivators that may be key to understanding the mobilization of and educational reform efforts of teacher activist.



Rally Flyer & Poster Board

Theoretical Framework

Dr. Michalinos Zembylas' (2006) theory on the politics of emotions describes how emotions influence the "power relations, resistance, and transformation" of education. Zembylas' (2010) theory of spaces for coping aimed to "identify the spatiality and politics of emotional relations and understanding of teachers' responses to educational reform."

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