

Running Head: TEACHER UNION PARTICIPATION FACTORS

Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers

Denise N. Wood

Vancouver Island University

Masters of Educational Leadership

2014

Abstract

This study investigated factors that encouraged teachers to participate or discouraged them from participating in their union. Surveys were distributed to teachers in School District 68, and 144 surveys were returned (response rate 18.3%). Survey respondents indicated ways and to what degree that they participated both formally and informally, and responded to open-ended questions about the factors that motivated their level of participation. Open-ended responses were grouped by theme and frequencies were tallied. Three focus group interviews were conducted with high level participants, medium level participants, and low level participants. Focus group interviews were compared to survey results. Lack of time was cited as the main reason that teachers did not participate formally in their union. The predominant factors that kept teachers from participating informally were a lack of knowledge, or disagreeing with union advice. High level participants generally reported more positive factors. Certain groups of teachers appeared to be more disengaged than others, and it may be useful to consider targeting these groups separately in efforts to make connections with them. Teachers are supportive of professional development opportunities provided by their union. This avenue provides a promising way to engage more teachers. The majority of teachers in this study reported a desire to be supportive of their union, and a willingness to become involved if an issue was important enough.

Acknowledgements

Though I am listed as the sole author of this research study, many people contributed to its completion, and to them I owe a debt of thanks. First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Rachel Moll, Ph.D., who provided both encouragement and support (not to mention fierce editing) throughout this process.

Second, I would like to acknowledge President Mike Ball and the Nanaimo District Teachers' Association for allowing me to conduct research on teacher union participation within the local union membership. Many teachers helped me, by completing surveys, participating in focus group interviews, and listening to my theories and concerns. I appreciate the time and energy they shared with me.

To my classmates who made this journey so enjoyable: thank you for sharing this adventure with me. I enjoyed learning about and from you, and I look forward to seeing and hearing about the amazing things you will continue to do. Special thanks to Wendy Woollven, for the Friday night debriefing sessions, and to Terri Zolob, kindred spirit. I am so fortunate that you are my friends!

And lastly, I thank my family. Kaeli, I am proud to be your mother. Thank you for your support and understanding, but especially for your love these past several months. You are teaching me patience, by modeling it for me rather than testing it in me. Kip, you are so much more than a friend, partner, husband, cook, and proof-reader. You believe in me, and continue to push me to be a better person. I know I can be, because you love me.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	vii
List of Tables	viii
Chapter One: Problem to be Investigated	1
Purpose of the Study	1
Justification of the Study	3
Research Question and Hypothesis	6
Definition of Terms	7
Brief Overview of the Study	8
Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature	10
Social Identity Theory	10
Volunteerism	12
Union Participation	16
Chapter Three: Procedures and Methods	27
Research Design	27
Sample	27
Instruments Used	31
Procedures Followed	35

Discussion of Validity and Reliability	37
Data Analysis	37
Chapter Four: Findings and Results	40
Demographic Information of Participants	40
Survey Responses	41
Teachers Categorized by Level of Participation	56
Summary of Results	73
Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions	75
Summary of the Study	75
Discussion of Key Findings	76
Limitations	79
Suggestions for Further Research	81
Recommendations for Union Work	81
Conclusion	83
References	84
Appendix A: Survey Instrument	91
Appendix B: Invitation to Participate (Survey)	96
Appendix C: Focus Group Interview Questions	98
Appendix D: Focus Group Consent Form	103
Appendix E: Informal Participation Categorized by Survey Question and Demographic Group	105

Appendix F: Identified Factors Categorized by Survey Question and Level of Participation

109

List of Figures

Figure 4.1: Number of Teachers by Level of Involvement	43
Figure E.1: Informal Participation: "I stay informed about union matters"	105
Figure E.2: Informal Participation: "I provide information and support to colleagues"	106
Figure E.3: Informal Participation: "I follow union advice regarding contractual issues"	107
Figure E.4: Informal Participation: "I actively participate in professional development opportunities"	108

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Number of Teachers	29
Table 3.2: Number of Teachers by Years of Experience	29
Table 3.3: Focus Group Participants	31
Table 4.1: Mean Hours Spent on Non-Classroom Activities per Week	41
Table 4.2: Formal Participation: Level of Involvement and Number of Meetings	44
Table 4.3: Reasons Given for Attending Meetings or Not	45
Table 4.4: Voting at the Annual General Meeting	46
Table 4.5: Holding a Position in the NDTA	48
Table 4.6: Reasons Given for Holding a Position or Not	49
Table 4.7: Responses to Questions about Informal Participation	50
Table 4.8: Reasons Given for Staying Informed or Not	51
Table 4.9: Reasons Given for Providing Information to Colleagues or Not	52
Table 4.10: Reasons Given for Following Union Advice or Not	53
Table 4.11: Participation in Professional Development Activities	55
Table 4.12: Reasons Given for Participating in Professional Development or Not	56
Table 4.13: Number of Teachers by Level of Involvement	58
Table 4.14: Number of Teachers by Level of Involvement, Other Demographic Information	58
Table 4.15: Summary of Responses--Formal Participation	59
Table 4.16: Mean Responses--Informal Participation	60

Table 4.17: Reasons Given for Attending Meetings or Not- High Participating Teachers	68
Table F.1: Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Meetings	109
Table F.2: Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, AGM	110
Table F.3: Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, NDTA Positions	111
Table F.4: Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Staying Informed	112
Table F.5: Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Informing Others	112
Table F.6: Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Following Union Advice	113
Table F.7: Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Professional Development	113

Chapter One: Problem to be Investigated

Purpose of the Study

“I am the BCTF” became a popular slogan of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF); these words were spoken in October 2005 by a picketing teacher in response to a television reporter’s question about what she thought of the BCTF’s continuation of the job action (Sims, 2005). Bascia’s (2000) research suggests that an individual teacher’s level of union participation can be predicted by a number of factors, one of which is a critical incident in a teacher’s career involving the union. This researcher began teaching in the fall of 1990, and in the following March was on strike for 15.5 days over class size, class composition, and salary issues in School District 68 (SD68). The Nanaimo District Teachers’ Association (NDTA) made notable gains in all three areas, with strong class size and composition language and sizable salary improvements. After walking the picket line for just over three weeks, through wind, rain, sun, and even snow, giving up pay and spring break, getting to know colleagues in new ways, a unionist was born. While a critical incident turned this researcher into an activist, what might other teachers identify as factors that have encouraged them to participate, or discouraged them from participating, in union activities? It was the purpose of this study to ask teachers to identify those factors.

The BCTF is a union of teachers, and thus a union of professionals. The core values of the BCTF since its inception in 1916 have been “to foster and promote the cause of education in B.C., to raise the status of the teaching profession in B.C., and to promote the welfare of the teachers in B.C.” (BCTF, 2001, sec. 1). The BCTF is a union with a large membership representing 41,000 teachers with disparate views and beliefs. It may be impossible for the BCTF to be all things to all teachers, but teachers should be able to identify with its core values.

As a democratic organization it represents the views and goals of the majority of teachers, or at least the majority of voting teachers. In times of political struggle, during contract negotiations, large percentages of teachers take part in voting procedures (75% took part in a strike vote on February 29, 2012 (“B.C. teachers to start 3-day strike”, 2012)). During times of relative labour peace, however, many members take a more passive role, and attendance at meetings and participation in other formal activities decreases. This behaviour is consistent with the research findings of Kawakami and Dion (1995) and Kelly (1993) regarding social group identification and threat to the group. However, it is impossible to be a true democracy if the majority is not taking part.

Education is a global topic of discussion. Many jurisdictions have mandated education reform, and *B.C.’s Education Plan* (BC Ministry of Education, 2011) is an example. It is this researcher’s belief that teachers must be involved in the reform discussions, and in a united way. In order to “foster and promote the cause of education in B.C.” (BCTF, 2001, sec.1), teachers need to have a representative voice at the table. The BCTF is the voice of teachers. Change can be done to teachers, or teachers can be a part of the change. In order for the BCTF to accurately represent the views of teachers, teachers must be willing to share those views with their union. They need to stay active and involved.

In conservative ideology, unions have been portrayed as a threat to progress. In North America, particularly in the United States but also in Canada to a lesser extent, there has been an attack on workers’ rights and collective bargaining (Hogler & Henle, 2011; Mattera, 2012; McCartin, 2012). Teachers in British Columbia may not have felt the repercussions as yet, but it is very likely that a day of reckoning will come. A strong and united BCTF will be better able to

withstand the attack, “to promote the welfare of the teachers in B.C.” (BCTF, 2001, sec. 1) and adapt to the new conditions.

The purpose of this research was to ask teachers to identify the factors that encouraged them to participate or discouraged them from participating in their union. This information could be valuable in efforts to re-connect teachers with their union, and thereby strengthening the union. It was the goal of this researcher to help teachers reaffirm the statement “I am the BCTF”.

Justification of the Study

While every public school teacher in British Columbia is a member of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF), active participation has been waning and is much discussed in union leadership circles, according to Kip Wood, former president of the Nanaimo District Teachers’ Association (NDTA) and member at large on the BCTF executive committee (personal communication, December 2, 2012). As an example, for the past several years average attendance at the five yearly general meetings of the NDTA has been fewer than one hundred members (in a local that has over 1200 members). In 2007 the NDTA amended the definition of a quorum to read “the members present” so that business could proceed (Nanaimo District Teachers’ Association, 2011, p.18). Prior to the amendment the business of the local often had to be deferred to future meetings because a quorum was not in attendance.

The literature provided insights into the various reasons that teachers may or may not choose to participate in union activities. “I just don’t have the time” is an oft repeated phrase one hears when soliciting help. Whether the organization in question is a community group, a sports league, a school structure, or a professional organization, people often say they are too busy to get involved. Teachers are no different in this regard. In *The Worklife of BC Teachers in*

2009, published by the BCTF, Naylor and White (2010) found that teachers worked long hours outside of the instructional day. “Doing preparation (6.6 hours) and marking (4.5 hours) take up the most amount of time (on average, per week)... [a]dministrative tasks also take up considerable time... ranging from an average of 1.5 to 1.8 hours per week” (p. 8). Additionally, “[t]eachers, especially in the secondary program, spend considerable time outside of the regular school day on extra-curricular activities. Almost one-half of teachers (44%) are involved in a professional learning community or some other form of collaboration” (p. 8). Not surprisingly “[a]t least two-thirds of the teachers surveyed say their stress level and workload increased compared to five years ago and four out of ten report decreased job satisfaction” (p. 11).

Time constraints, workload, and other job related stress are all reasons teachers may give for not attending meetings or volunteering for positions with the union at the school, local, or provincial level. There may be other reasons, though, that teachers are not participating fully in their union. Fullagar and Barling (1989) found that if a union is perceived by its members to be instrumental in achieving improved working conditions, members were more likely to be loyal to and participate in union activities. Given the poor relationship between the BCTF and the provincial government (Fleming, 2011), and the lack of significant improvements to salary, benefits, or working conditions in the past twenty years, it is possible that BC teachers may have given up on the ability of their union to “do the job”. This study explored this possibility, by asking respondents to identify their own reasons for not participating.

The trend towards disinterest in becoming involved is not isolated to the BCTF. Current voter participation rates in civic, provincial, and federal elections tell the same story (e.g., “Record low voter turnout”, 2009; Elections Canada, 2012). There appear to be societal factors causing people to oppose external interference by institutions and government, and isolate

themselves from democracy. Putnam (1995) argued that the decline in civic engagement in post-World War II generations could be attributed to the rise in television viewership and viewing time. Given the date of his study, one could add online activities to television viewing. Other researchers (Edwards & Foley, 1998; Rich, 1999) questioned Putnam's findings, however. Indeed, Rich (1999) argued that voluntarism is *not* on the decline, but that in fact citizens were choosing to volunteer in different organizations from those of previous generations. A study conducted by Rotolo (1999), which used American data over twenty years (1974 to 1994), found that aggregate participation in voluntary organizations declined for the first ten years, then rose again over the next ten. Rich (1999) and Rotolo (1999) suggested that teachers may be choosing to involve themselves in organizations other than their union.

One measure of civic engagement is membership in trade unions, which is voluntary in many unions (though mandatory in the BCTF). Much research has been done in regards to trade union membership. The literature distinguishes between union satisfaction, union commitment, and union participation. Union satisfaction can vary with day to day occurrences, but union commitment must be developed over a long time frame, and has to do with the member's identification with the union's goals and values (Kuruvilla, Gallagher, & Wetzel, 1993). Union participation has been seen as the main consequence of union commitment (Barling, Fullagar, & Kelloway, 1992).

Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981) classified union members into five categories: reluctant members, passive dues payers, selective activists, apolitical stalwarts, and ideological activists. Flood, Turner, and Willman (2000) argued that each type of union orientation had a different pattern of participation and must be studied separately. Union participation can be defined in terms of formal or informal involvement, as explained in the longitudinal study by

Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark, and Carroll (2004). They defined formal activities to include voting in elections, ratifying contracts, authorizing strike action, attending union meetings, filing a grievance, and serving in an elected office. Informal activities occur more often and on an unstructured basis, and would include speaking up at union meetings, helping another member learn about the union, discussing work-related issues with a union officer, and encouraging other members to support the union. In the context of teacher unions, this researcher would also add taking part in union sponsored professional development activities. These kinds of informal activities are more difficult to observe, and require a teacher to self-report their involvement in order to measure them. Through survey responses and focus group interviews, this researcher hoped to provide the opportunity for teachers to indicate the level and degree to which they are involved in union activities.

Very little research has been done in the current context of the BCTF. This researcher would argue that gender balance (Bascia, 1998; Greene & Kirton, 2003; Kirton 2005), diversity of values and expectations, and the current economic and political climate of British Columbia all bear consideration when observing union participation. It is the belief of this researcher that studying the unique concerns and current challenges of the teachers in BC, as this study hoped to do, will contribute to the general understanding of teacher unionism and may be able to enhance the effectiveness of the BCTF in representing all of its members.

Research Question and Hypothesis

Given the decline in participation of teachers in the BCTF, at least in observable, formal activities, and considering the demographic uniqueness of the BCTF and the current climate in BC (both economic and political) this researcher asked: What are the factors that affect teachers' participation in their union?

This researcher believed that the reasons that teachers would give for being an active participant in the union would include examples of egoism, altruism, collectivism, and principlism, (Batson, Ahmad, & Tsang, 2002). Bascia (2000) outlined specific factors that have been shown to promote union participation by teachers, which corresponded with Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang's four motives. Bascia's factors were: a) an experience in a teacher's career where the union has helped them solve a problem may have engendered loyalty (egoism); b) helping another member with a union issue was one way that union members can participate (altruism); c) a teacher may exhibit a collectivist nature if they have a family history of unionism; and d) teachers may feel it is their duty to stand up against perceived injustice (principlism).

It was believed that the reasons teachers would give for not actively participating in the union would be many and would depend on factors such as gender, age, and experience. Some of these might include the difficulty in finding steady employment, the demands of family, or the health of the teacher, to name a few. Additionally, teachers may be involved in other activities that they feel are more important than union activities. This researcher was particularly interested in factors that may be currently relevant, such as the trend towards individualism and disconnectedness from the group as well as negative feelings towards the union.

Definition of Terms

To answer the research question, "What are the factors that affect teachers' participation in their union?" teachers were asked to identify factors in open-ended survey questions and during focus group interviews. A factor is defined as one of the elements contributing to a particular result, in this case participating (or not). A factor that may cause a teacher to

participate would be the desire to help a colleague. A factor that may cause a teacher to not participate may include a lack of time.

To affect means to influence or have an effect on. In this study, the researcher was interested in which factors influenced teachers' decisions to participate or not.

Teachers in this study were members of the Nanaimo District Teachers' Association (NDTA), and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF). They taught in Nanaimo-Ladysmith Public Schools (SD68), or were employed by the district to provide services to students outside of the regular classroom, as counsellors, special education teachers, psychologists, or other support teachers. This study included teachers teaching on call (TTOCs).

For the purposes of this study, participation in union activities was divided into both formal and informal categories, as defined by Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark, and Carroll (2004). Formal participation included attending meetings, voting in elections, filing a grievance, and holding union positions. Informal participation included staying informed, complying with behaviours that support union actions, taking part in professional development, and providing information or support to colleagues on union-related matters. Union participation did *not* include joining the union, as membership in the BCTF is mandatory.

Brief Overview of the Study

This study used a mixed methods design to study the factors that encouraged or discouraged participation in the local (NDTA) teacher union. Participants in this study volunteered to anonymously complete a paper survey. Consent information and information about the purpose of the study were provided in the introduction to the survey. The survey included questions about demographic information such as gender, age, marital status, number of dependents, experience, and teaching assignment. Respondents were also asked to provide an

estimate of hours spent at various typical activities. Questions about union participation were both close-ended and open-ended. At the end of the survey was an invitation to participate in a focus group with other teachers whose union participation was at the same level, where participants could further discuss and elaborate upon their responses.

Responses to the survey were analyzed for emergent themes. Thematic information was coded and frequencies were used to quantify the results. Demographic information was compared to the sample population (NDTA members), and used to compare groups within the survey respondents. Focus group interviews were conducted to verify and compare with survey results.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that teachers reported either encouraged them to participate or discouraged them from participating in their union. This researcher hoped that information gathered could help to strengthen the representative voice of the BCTF.

The literature reviewed has been organized into three main themes: social identity theory, volunteerism, and union participation.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity refers to a person's self-concept as it pertains to their membership in a particular group. Public school teachers in BC are required by law to be members of the BCTF, but the degree to which a teacher is involved in the union may be related to the degree to which they identify with being a union member.

In studies of university students in the Netherlands, it was determined that choice positively influenced both social identification and the psychological sense of community (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Obst & White, 2007). In other words, respondents that perceived a greater degree of choice in belonging to a group reported a greater sense of community. Additionally, Ellemers et al. (1999) found that if the group turned out to have relatively high status, members identified more strongly with the group, regardless of whether they chose to belong initially. Members of the BCTF do not choose whether or not to belong, which may contribute to an unwillingness to participate.

The details of two field studies were outlined in a paper by Simon et al. (1998) which looked at participants in an older people's movement in Germany and a gay movement in the United States. In both studies it was found that there were two main determinants of willingness

to participate in a collective action. Members of the group chose to participate if the benefits outweighed the costs of doing so, or if they identified strongly with the social movement itself. It is worth mentioning that identification with the broader social group was not predictive of participation. In terms of teacher union members, simply being a teacher is not reason enough for a teacher to identify with the teacher union. This study indicates that teachers who choose to participate to a high degree may either feel that it benefits them to do so, or they may identify with being an activist and the union provides them with an opportunity to express their activism.

Kawakami and Dion (1995) and Kelly (1993) added to the research on social identity with the finding that when a group was under threat, social identity with the group became stronger and more individuals were willing to participate, particularly when they believed that the collective action would be effective. In times of peace, reluctant members would take a more passive role. This was confirmed by Griffin, Tesluk, and Jacobs (1995) who found that teachers were more active in their union depending on whether or not a new contract was being bargained. In years without contract talks, teachers were less willing to participate.

One study looked at whether the Internet was useful in collective action movements (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002). The researchers argued that group members did not have to physically meet in order to be social and share a social identity. They concluded that online actions were more popular among those who do not usually participate, and therefore could provide an entry point for newer members of the group.

Research showed that identification with the group may be an important factor to consider, but identity is enhanced by choosing to belong to the group. In the case of BC teachers who are members of the union by law, other factors must be considered in order to encourage

union participation, particularly in times of relative labour peace, when the threat to the group is low, but there is still work that needs to be done.

Volunteerism

Participation in a union consists for the most part of volunteer work: without pay and performed on behalf of others, usually on top of regular paid work. Many countries measure volunteer participation through social surveys, and the information collected on the surveys can be used by researchers in a variety of ways. The research on volunteerism can be categorized into two themes: factors which appear to foster volunteerism (antecedents) and trends in volunteering.

Antecedents of volunteerism.

There is research that combines volunteering with the concept of identity. One such study was done in Finland and used interviews with twenty-four young adult volunteers (Gronlund, 2011). Seventeen of the respondents were found to self-identify with being a volunteer, and the researcher categorized their value identity groups into five categories. The *influencer* identity used volunteer work to fight against injustice and to make the world a better place. The *helper* identity was benevolent and compassionate, and volunteered to bring comfort and understanding. The *faith-based* identity volunteered as part of their religious beliefs. The *community* identity valued communality, loyalty, solidarity, and family values. The *success* identity volunteered because they sought out leadership roles in order to use their talents and wanted to be a good responsible citizen. The current research involving union volunteerism will likely find four of these five identities (union work is not faith-based) present in the sample population.

These five categories of identity correspond somewhat with the four motives for community volunteering as defined by Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang (2002). The authors differentiated between egoism (increasing one's own welfare), altruism (increasing the welfare of others), collectivism (increasing the welfare of the group), and principlism (upholding one or more moral principles). They suggested that volunteer recruitment efforts should consider all four motives and the interplay between them, because an individual volunteer may be motivated by more than one, and yet the different motives may work against one another. Batson et al. recommended strategies that combine motives so that the strengths of one motive overcome the weaknesses of another.

John Wilson (2012) wrote a review essay that organized, described, and synthesized the research on volunteerism published since 2008, with a focus on survey research results. Wilson's review found that the factors identified in the research as contributing most to a willingness to volunteer included the personality traits of extraversion and agreeableness. Education was also a factor, with more educated people volunteering more frequently, however Wilson found there was growing evidence that the degree to which education was a factor depended on a wide distribution of educational qualifications (within the teachers in a union, qualifications and education are similar). Part-time workers volunteered more than full-time workers or the unemployed, and among full-time workers, volunteer hours increased as the number of paid work hours increased. Middle income earners were more likely to volunteer than low-paid or well-paid earners. Additionally, volunteer hours increased with hours spent on unpaid work (childcare, housework, etc.). People who volunteered more were more likely to have had parents that volunteered, to come from a private school (but not a Catholic school), or to have taken part in extracurricular activities in school. A person was more likely to volunteer if

they were connected to their community. While the current research does not target all of these factors directly, some of the anecdotal survey responses and focus group interview material may touch on many of these antecedents.

Wilson's (2012) review also found that many people would only volunteer if it were in their best interests, which may explain why a personal invitation is a successful recruitment strategy. If a perceived social superior invites a person to help out, the cost of refusal is high as is the benefit of acceptance. Men and women had very different volunteering patterns, in terms of rates, hours, and activities. Social connections were only a factor if the volunteer opportunity was particularly difficult and required a collective effort (as in union work). He also found that a lack of resources in terms of knowledge or time was a leading factor in preventing people from volunteering. Poor health also inhibited volunteering.

Wilson (2012) cautioned that survey results could be misleading because respondents are asked to self-report their volunteer hours, and they may have over- or under-estimated that time (depending on several factors). Also, the lower the response to the survey, the higher the apparent volunteer rate, because people who choose to volunteer were more likely to participate in the study. In the current research, survey respondents may be those members who are more likely to participate. The focus group with low level participants may provide insights lacking in the survey data.

Trends in volunteerism.

Robert Putnam (1995) of Harvard was concerned about the decline in civic engagement in the US, and attributed it to the rise in television viewership and the subsequent rise in actual time spent viewing television. His assertions sparked a rich debate, with many experts disagreeing with both his findings and his reasoning. Edwards and Foley (1998) criticized the

use of the existing survey data as inadequate to answer the questions posed. Rich (1999) and Rotolo (1999) argued that volunteerism is not on the decline at all, but rather that people are volunteering in other organizations than they have in the past. Rich argued that the proportion of voluntary association memberships in charitable and non-profit organizations, and social service clubs actually doubled from 1977 to 1990. Rotolo further clarified that participation in all but four types of organizations (one of which was labour unions) increased or remained stable from 1984 to 1994. He speculated that decreased union membership was likely because of political (elimination of unions) and economic (declining union jobs) reasons.

Putnam (1995), Edwards and Foley (1998), Rich (1999), and Rotolo (1999) were all concerned with volunteer trends in the United States. Wilson (2012) also discussed trends in volunteering, but from a global perspective. Individual, episodic volunteering appeared to be increasing, but there is little research in this area. Also lacking are studies on the rise of online volunteering. In Canada, time-use survey data up to 1990 indicated that voluntary association memberships remained relatively stable over a thirty year period, even with increased television viewing time, and increased paid work and childcare for women (Anderson, Curtis, & Grabb, 2006) which refutes Putnam's claim that TV was the leading cause of civic disengagement. The Anderson, Curtis, and Grabb (2006) study compared association memberships in four countries (Canada, Netherlands, UK, and the US) and found that the only country that recorded decreased association activity was in the US, and that was for US women only.

The research on volunteerism provides insights into the factors that may encourage or discourage union participation. Of particular interest are gender differences, and social connections. The current study will be able to similarly compare union participation levels and the factors that predict them between various demographic groups. Additionally, because

respondents were asked to identify ways in which they currently spend their time, it may be possible to determine if they are choosing to volunteer in ways other than as union members.

Union Participation

Unions can operate without the involvement of their members, but individual participation is essential for political campaigns, bargaining support, and also to continue the democratic tradition (Edwards, 2008). In *The Dynamics of White Collar Unionism*, Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981) stated that “to be a member of a union is not like being a member of another organization” (p.5). A union is voluntary, in terms of participation and often membership, egalitarian, bureaucratic, reflexive, and industrial-political. The members of a union share values and ideals, have a common enemy, count on protection against injustice, and enjoy the opportunity to debate and control the quality of their working conditions.

This section will review the literature regarding union participation. Research has been used to categorize union members into specific types, and to categorize union participation into different types, which was particularly important for the current study. The literature also identified factors which appeared to foster union participation (antecedents). Finally, this section will discuss the issues faced by union leaders in terms of union participation.

Types of union members.

Nicholson et al. (1981) classified union members into five categories: reluctant members, passive dues payers, selective activists, apolitical stalwarts, and ideological activists. There were significant differences in participation between the types, and while there have always been only a small proportion of activists in the union movement, apolitical stalwarts and ideological activists were critical to union activism (Flood, Turner, & Willman, 2000). Flood et al. argued that the different types of members must be studied separately, which is why the

current study attempted to distinguish between three or more levels of union participation, in order to hear from all the different types of members.

Newton and Shore (1992) took a different approach and developed a theoretical model that recognized eight specific types of members, and included those members who have negative views, a group that has not been given much attention in the research. Their model integrated members' views on union instrumentality (the ability of the union to do its job), commitment to the union, and opposition to the union. The current research hoped to study this under-represented group, as well.

Types of union participation.

Researchers agree that it is worthwhile to distinguish between different types of union participation (Flood, Turner, & Willman, 2000; Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark & Carroll, 2004; Kelloway & Barling, 1993; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; McShane, 1986; Nicholson, Ursell, & Blyton, 1981). McShane (1986) not only recognized different types of union participation but weighted the types differently. Holding office, for example, was considered by McShane to be a higher degree of participation than attending a meeting. Fullagar et al. (2004) defined formal versus informal participation, which this researcher used to structure the survey used in the current research. McShane (1986) only measured formal participation which included being involved in the running of the union; casting a ballot in a major vote; and attending a meeting. Fullagar et al. (2004) added seeking support from a union officer, and suggested that informal participation would include staying informed (by reading bulletins and emails), giving advice to colleagues, and following the directives of the union. In the current research, attending professional development activities was added, as these activities are sponsored by the union.

Other researchers used different means to differentiate types of union participation. Kelly and Kelly (1994), for example, distinguished participation activities as “easy” (the individual is not visible, such as voting) and “difficult” (the individual is visible, such as speaking at meetings or holding office). It is important to note that in some research, joining the union is considered participation. This definition is not applicable in the current research, as BC teachers are members of their union by law.

Antecedents of union participation.

Union participation has been seen as the main consequence of union commitment (Barling, Fullagar, & Kelloway, 1992). Organizational commitment can be defined as an individual’s connection to the organization, identifying with its values and goals, willing to work for and stay a member of the organization (Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson & Spiller, 1980; see also Snape, Redman, & Chen, 2000). Studying only white collar employees whose union membership was voluntary, Gordon et al. developed a thirty item measure of commitment using four factors: union loyalty, responsibility to the union, willingness to work for the union, and belief in unionism. Their research found that the most important basis for union commitment was the benefits that a union provided to its members, and that a commitment to the union was necessary in order to be willing to work for the union or even to follow the routine activities of membership. Barling, Fullagar, and Kelloway (1992) found that the willingness to work for the union followed the feeling of responsibility towards it.

In the current research, “responsibility to the union” refers to willingness to participate in informal activities, and “willingness to work for the union” refers to participation in formal activities, as defined by Fullagar et al. (2004). Many studies of union participation draw on the considerable work of Fullagar and various colleagues from the late 1980’s until more recently.

The 2004 study of Fullagar et al. used data initially collected in March of 1992 through a survey of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), and compared it with follow up survey responses from 134 respondents still active in NALC ten years later. The researchers wanted to empirically establish the “causal nature of the relationship between a member’s commitment to the union and his or her union participation” (Fullagar et al., 2004, p.730). The study found that after ten years there were no significant changes in union loyalty and willingness to work for the union, but that responsibility to the union had increased. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, early attitudes of commitment towards the union were important determinants of participation in informal activities ten years later. As discussed earlier, surveys where participants self-select may establish higher rates of participation than actually exist. Also, reported increases in participation may simply have been the result of having ten more years of opportunities to participate. Regardless of the possible overestimation of participation rates, these findings imply that unions would do well to establish positive relationships with new members, and this was confirmed by several other studies (Edwards, 2008; Gordon et al., 1980; Pogodzinski, 2012).

In other research, having a collectivist orientation and the degree to which management was seen as a threat were factors that promoted union participation, but the strongest factor associated with willingness to participate was found to be the strength of the respondent’s sense of group identification (Kelly & Kelly, 1994). Kelly and Kelly’s work suggested that a potential activist was someone firmly committed to an “us and them” mentality, with a strong sense of identification with the group.

Other studies showed that union participation can be predicted by job dissatisfaction and the leadership style of shop stewards, and that shiftwork and family responsibilities can inhibit

participation (Kelloway & Barling, 1993). Larger unions have more centralized decision making and bargaining structures which discouraged members from participating (Barling, Fullagar, & Kelloway, 1992). In a study that used teachers as subjects, “lack of time” was reported a significant hindrance to union participation (Edwards, 2008). In a survey of UK teachers, Edwards found that “lack of time due to work commitments” was reported by 28.35% of respondents, and was the most important reason why members of the teachers’ union did not attend meetings, even more so than “lack of time due to family commitments”. In addition to survey analysis, Edwards conducted interviews with 45 members of the union, representing a cross-section of age and teaching assignment, including some union officers. Subjects reported that a lack of time at work to interact with colleagues was interfering with union members’ ability to form union identities, organize collective action, and transmit cultural knowledge. Informal networks, where they existed, had a positive influence on union participation. Edwards’ findings were examined with focus groups in the current research.

Bascia’s (1998, 2000) work provided a basis for focus group questions used in the current research. She found that teacher union participation can be predicted by a number of factors, including a family history of unionism, a critical incident in a teacher’s career, a readiness for new challenges, a union-centred social group, a personal history of leadership, and a sense of personal empowerment and entitlement. The current researcher asked focus group participants that self-identified as highly participative which of these motives were key factors in their own union involvement.

Professors share some of the same hardships as BC teachers, in that it is difficult to obtain full-time employment and pay increases have not kept up with inflation (Goldey, 2010). In a large public research university facing a possible union re-certification election, it was found

that when the union was perceived to be supportive, participation increased, and when management was seen to be supportive, participation decreased (Goeddeke & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2010). So participation in the union depended not only on the instrumentality of the union, but also on the nature of the relationships (supportive or not) with the union and administration. In the Goeddeke and Kammeyer-Mueller (2010) study, the General Union Attitude scale developed by McShane (1986) was used. In both the Goldey (2010) and Goeddeke and Kammeyer-Mueller studies, union membership was voluntary, and joining the union was considered participation, which is different from the definition of participation used in the current study.

Leadership considerations.

Hammer, Bayazit, and Wazeter (2009) studied the relationships between union leadership, union commitment and union participation. They hypothesized that the time and effort that union presidents expended on both internal (working with members) and external (negotiating, bargaining, etc.) behaviours would be positively related to members' perceptions of the utility of the union and both procedural and distributive justice (wage equity), and that the relationship would be partially mediated by members' perception of these characteristics. The subjects in the study were 326 presidents and 4,363 public school teachers in grades K-12 from union locals, and 51 state-level staff members of the National Education Association in the United States. The locals represented 65% of the 501 school districts in a northeastern state that had a compulsory bargaining law. Presidents and field staff were interviewed. Primary data also came from financial, demographic, and salary information from the state education association's archives. Survey questions were constructed by utilizing items from several instruments that the current study also draws upon, including the scale developed by Gordon et al. (1980) and a scale

developed by McShane (1986) to measure members' participation in the union. The study did not measure participation and commitment directly, but rather the relationship between leadership behaviours and members' attitudes. In agreement with other studies mentioned earlier, men and women responded differently, with women reporting more loyalty but less behavioural commitment. Seniority was negatively related to perceptions of instrumentality and wage equity but positively related to union commitment and participation. Wages had positive effects on perceptions of wage equity and instrumentality, as well as on behavioural commitment and union participation, but wages did not contribute to union loyalty. In larger unions, members were likely to report less procedural justice, and less willingness to work for, show responsibility toward, and participate in the union. These results imply that union leaders should spend more time with the rank-and-file, bringing a union utility message to the membership. An effective local president should make sure members are aware of the union and what it is doing for them all the time, and ensure that members are included in union decision making. Hammer, Bayazit, and Wazeter (2009) were confident that the results should be generalizable to any union.

Unions concerned only with workplace issues, however, are unlikely to connect with, and may even discourage certain sectors of the labour force, particularly those in social service jobs (Baines, 2010) like teaching. A social activist model of unionism with bottom-up initiatives was more likely to encourage participation in Canadian unions (Baines, 2010; Ross, 2008). Baines and Ross disagreed on the level of leadership, however. Based on her empirical findings, Baines argued that leadership is required for resources and support for member initiatives, but in Ross's opinion, it was the hierarchy of leadership that inhibited participation, and she went so far as to suggest that leadership was not necessary. Increased participation will lead to deeper democracy

and enhanced legitimacy, particularly in the eyes of the public, and therefore a stronger labour movement, which is necessary in the struggle for a more egalitarian democracy (Ross, 2008).

Using interview data from teacher-union presidents in ten districts in Michigan and Indiana in the 2007-2008 school year, Pogodzinski (2012) studied the mechanisms employed to socialize new teachers into their union, and evaluated the content and effectiveness of those socialization efforts. A framework of union attachment developed by Newton and Shore (1992) was used, and it was hypothesized that new teachers would actively engage if they felt that there was a benefit to doing so, and if their personal values and goals aligned with those of the teachers' union. Pogodzinski concluded that it was unclear whether the socialization efforts were adequate to form union attachment under the framework, nor to ensure that the roots of unionism were established, however, given that union presidents were interviewed rather than new teachers themselves, it would be difficult for Pogodzinski to effectively measure levels of attachment. Many of those interviewed felt that new teachers were too overwhelmed with the day to day responsibilities of teaching to get more involved in the union, and in some cases, it would be difficult for a new teacher to be re-hired if they were involved. The current study requested level of experience of teachers in order to distinguish newer teacher issues in terms of participation. Additionally, newer teachers were recruited for focus group involvement in order to further elaborate on their issues.

Edwards (2008) agreed with Pogodzinski (2012) that socialization of young members was important for developing union activists. Young members have grown up in an environment where unions are treated with suspicion and hostility, and they have little prior knowledge about what unions do. She cautioned that the dated image of trade unionism has little appeal for

potential young activists. Her study found that members viewed union membership as an insurance policy rather than a political or participatory activity

Bascia's (1998, 2000) research provided more advice to teacher union leaders. She cautioned leaders to pay attention to the demographics of teachers that hold positions of importance in the union, because often there will be a large number from a certain school, program, or subject area, which will lead to perceptions of exclusion of other groups. She advised listening to teachers, especially those who feel disenfranchised, and consider factors like the structure and scheduling of meetings. Perhaps the current research will uncover some of these concerns. It was certainly the goal of this researcher to provide information that could lead to a more inclusive union.

The research in the field of union participation provided a useful framework for the collection and analysis of data from the current study. It will be helpful to look at the demographics and ideologies of survey and focus group participants when considering the factors that they report. The issues that new teachers face are different from more experienced teachers and bear special consideration.

There is no research in the BC context, however. While Bascia (1998; 2000) has recently studied Canadian teacher union participation, her research was centred in Alberta and Ontario, two provinces whose education systems and politics have many similarities with BC but also many differences. There have also been various studies conducted in the United States (Hammer, Bayazit, & Wazeter, 2009; Pogodzinski, 2012) but because of "right to work" legislation in the US which allows teachers to opt out of belonging to a union, the nature of teacher unionism is very different. There is also at least one recent study from the United Kingdom (Edwards, 2008), which again is quite different from BC. BC teachers have not been

asked about their own union participation. BC teachers have not been asked to identify the factors that encourage them to participate or discourage them from participating in their union and thus the current study aims to contribute to the body of research around union participation with data from the BC context.

A review of the available literature on social identity theory indicated that BC teachers may be less inclined to identify with being a member of their union than members of other social movements, as they did not choose to join the union, but became members by law (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Obst & White, 2007). Identification with the group was a theme in some of the research on union participation, as well (Gordon et al, 1980; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; see also Snape, Redman, & Chen, 2000). There were other themes that connected the research on social identity, volunteerism, and union participation. For example, when there was a benefit to the individual, willingness to participate in social movements and organizations increased (Batson, Ahmad, & Tang, 2002; Gronlund, 2011; Simon et al., 1998; Wilson, 2012). Inhibitors of participation included both a lack of time and a lack (real or perceived) of knowledge or ability (Edwards, 2008; Wilson, 2012). The literature strongly recommended further research to acknowledge different types of identities (Flood, Turner, & Willman, 2000; Gronlund, 2011; Newton & Shore, 1992; Nicholson, Ursell, & Blyton, 1981), and different types of participation (Flood, Turner, & Willman, 2000; Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark, & Carroll, 2004; Kelloway & Barling, 1993; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; McShane, 1986; Nicholson, Ursell, & Blyton, 1981), and the current study will attempt to do so. The research further encouraged studying women's (Anderson, Curtis, & Grabb, 2006; Hammer, Bayazit & Wazeter, 2009; Wilson, 2012) and new members' (Edwards, 1008; Gordon et al., 1980; Pogodzinski, 2012) issues separately. The current research will distinguish between different demographic groups as well as different

participation levels when determining the factors that encourage BC teachers to participate, or discourage them from participating in their union.

Chapter Three: Procedures and Methods

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to ask teachers to identify the factors that encouraged them to participate or discouraged them from participating in their union in order to facilitate union representation that is more responsive to member needs.

This study used a mixed methods design. Participants in this study volunteered to anonymously complete a paper survey (Appendix A). Consent information and information about the purpose of the study was provided in the introduction to the survey (Appendix B). The survey included questions about demographic information such as gender, age, marital status, number of dependents, experience and teaching assignment. Questions about union participation were both close-ended and open-ended. At the end of the survey there was an invitation to participate in a focus group with teachers of the same level of union participation, where participants could further discuss and elaborate upon factors illuminated by the survey.

Close-ended and Likert scale responses to survey questions were tabulated and used to calculate means, modes, and standard deviations. Open-ended responses to the survey and transcripts from focus groups were analyzed for emergent themes. Thematic information was coded and frequencies were used to quantify the results. Thematic information was also used to inform interpretations of the quantitative results of the close-ended survey questions.

Demographic information was compared to the sample population (NDTA members), and used to compare groups within the sample.

Sample

The target population of the current study was public school teachers in British Columbia, and members of the BCTF. There are currently approximately 41,000 members of

the BCTF, including TTOCs, retired teachers, and associate members. The BCTF is the bargaining representative for all public school teachers in B.C., and as such the union is considered a “closed shop”. A teacher becomes a member of the BCTF upon employment. The sample population for the current study consisted of teachers in Nanaimo-Ladysmith Public Schools (SD68) who were members of the Nanaimo District Teachers’ Association (NDTA), a local of the provincial union. This sample was chosen out of convenience and proximity to the researcher, as this is the researcher’s own local.

There were 1272 teachers listed in the NDTA database in March of 2013, including classroom teachers, support teachers, and approximately 275 teachers teaching on call (TTOCs). (R. Adams, personal communication, March 1, 2013). However, only 785 surveys were distributed, and from these, 144 usable surveys were returned. Demographic information is presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, with demographic information provided by the B.C. Ministry of Education about contract teachers in the province and in School District 68 (BC Ministry of Education, 2013) for comparison. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 include contract teachers only (not TTOCs) so the total numbers differ as compared to the NDTA database, but they provide some idea of demographic ratios of the target and sample population during the year previous to the current study. It was assumed that the ratios would be approximately the same in the year the current study was done (2013/2014).

Data regarding number of years of experience from the survey responses, and both the target and sample populations are included in Table 3.2. Edwards (2008) and Pogodzinski (2012) argued that beginning teachers have a different relationship with the union as compared to experienced teachers, so it was important to identify these teachers by asking on the survey to mark the number of years of experience. While there were not a large number of beginning

teachers in BC or in SD68, their motives for union participation are likely to be distinct from those of more experienced teachers, and are worth considering separately.

Table 3.1

Number of Teachers

	BC	% of Total	SD68	% of Total	Survey Responses	% of Total
Total	33427	100	804	100	134	100
All full-time	25155	75	558	69	107	80
Female full-time	17052	51	371	46	75	56
Male full-time	8103	24	187	23	32	24
All part-time	8272	25	246	31	27	20
Female part-time	7214	22	200	25	20	15
Male part-time	1058	3	46	6	7	5

Note. Adapted from BC Ministry of Education, *Provincial reports: Teacher statistics-2012/13*, and retrieved from <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/>

Table 3.2

Number of Teachers by Years of Experience

	BC	% of Total	SD68	% of Total	Survey Responses	% of Total
Total	33427	100	804	100	141	100
Less than 1 year	864	3	17	2	0	0
1-4 years	6002	18	115	14	9	6
5-9 years	7680	23	159	20	23	16
10-19 years	11429	34	301	37	38	27
20 years or more	7452	22	212	26	71	50

Note. Adapted from BC Ministry of Education, *Provincial reports: Teacher statistics-2012/13*, and retrieved from <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/>

The average years of experience of teachers in the province was 12.6, while in SD68 it was 14.0, and for the survey responses it was much higher at 19.0 years of experience. Additionally, the average age of teachers in B.C. was 44.4 years (44.1 for females and 45.1 for males) while in SD68 the average age was 47.0 years (46.7 for females and 47.8 for males) (BC

Ministry of Education, 2013). Survey respondents reported an average age of 47.5 years (47.0 for females and 48.7 for males).

Efforts to improve response rates, and therefore internal validity, were taken and included using a short (ten question) paper survey with a convenient means of return, and targeted recruitment (with free informed consent) of particular groups from within the sample for further focus group interviews. The response rate to the survey instrument was 18.3%. Six work sites did not receive surveys, mostly elementary schools, because they did not have a representative volunteer to distribute them.

Focus group participants were volunteers and recruits from the sample population. There were three teachers recruited for the low participation group, three teachers (both recruits and volunteers) for the medium participation group, and five teachers (both recruits and volunteers) for the high participation group. Table 3.3 summarizes focus group participant demographic information. New teachers (less than ten years' experience) were recruited for the low participation group so that less experienced teachers' views would be represented.

Table 3.3

Focus Group Participants

Participant	Age	FTE	Years of Experience	Level Taught
1F1	25-29	1.00	1-4	Secondary
1F2	25-29	0.75	1-4	Secondary
1F3	30-34	1.00	5-9	Secondary
2M1	>60	1.00	>20	Secondary
2M2	>60	1.00	>20	Secondary
2M3	45-49	1.00	10-19	Secondary
3F1	55-59	1.00	10-19	Both
3F2	50-54	1.00	>20	Secondary
3F3	50-54	1.00	10-19	Elementary
3M4	40-44	1.00	10-19	Elementary
3M5	45-49	1.00	>20	Secondary

Note. 1F1 denotes low participation, female, participant number 1; 2M2 denotes medium participation, male, participant number 2; 3F1 denotes high participation, female, participant number 3, and so on; FTE is full-time equivalent so that 1.00 FTE means a full-time assignment.

Instruments Used

The instruments used in the current research were informed by the literature in the field of union participation. A paper survey (Appendix A) was chosen in order to maximize response rate. Consent information and information about the purpose of the study were provided in the introduction to the survey (Appendix B). The survey included questions about demographic information. Questions about union participation were both close-ended and open-ended. At the end of the survey was an invitation to participate in one of three focus groups: teachers who reported low or no union participation, teachers who reported some union participation, and teachers who reported participating to a high degree. Teachers responded to the invitation and were asked to self-select into one of the three groups. In the focus group sessions, participants

could further discuss and elaborate upon survey questions (Appendix C). A meal was provided to participants in the focus groups.

The survey questions were divided into three sections. The Union Democracy Survey (UDS) developed by Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981) provided assistance in constructing survey questions (Appendix A) to determine demographic information, in particular the level of teaching assignment and years of experience. Other demographic information collected included whether the teacher was male or female, whether the teacher was a primary classroom teacher, an elementary classroom teacher, a secondary classroom teacher, a TTOC, or a support teacher (counsellor, librarian, support services teacher, etc.), and whether the teacher was part-time or full-time in order to determine which groups were represented or not, and to determine whether survey respondents were representative of the sample population. Teachers were asked to provide their age and number of years of experience in order to distinguish beginning teachers (less than five years' experience) from more experienced teachers. This information allowed the researcher to determine if a group was underrepresented, and to take actions to try to encourage participation from that group during focus group interviews. The literature indicated that there may be gender (Anderson, Curtis, & Grabb, 2006; Hammer, Bayazit, & Wazeter, 2009; Wilson, 2012) and experience (Edwards, 1008; Gordon et al., 1980; Pogodzinski, 2012) differences in participation rates, and so it was important for the current study to distinguish between these and other groups of teachers. Teachers were asked to indicate their marital status and number of dependents, to infer if their home situation may be a contributing factor to their overall union participation rates. Teachers were also asked to indicate how many hours per week they thought they spent doing various activities outside of regular classroom hours, such as marking,

preparation, housework, childcare, eldercare, and so on, to try to determine what teachers were spending their time doing.

This researcher wanted a sample of teachers who did participate in union activities, and a sample of those who did not. Survey questions were designed to distinguish between these two actions. In reading the literature, one finds that several researchers are proponents of a multidimensional approach to studying union participation. McShane's results (1986) "strongly suggest that union participation is not unidimensional...but rather that there are several relatively distinct types of union activity which should be studied separately" (p. 185). He identified three specific types, involvement with the administration of the local, voting, and attending union meetings, but allowed that there were probably more. The current study assumed a multidimensional approach, but further expanded on the model by identifying both formal and informal participatory activities as suggested by Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark, and Carroll (2004). Adapting these two models for use in a teacher union context, and loosely basing question design on those of Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981) on the UDS, the remaining two sections of the survey were divided into formal and informal activities.

Item 4 on the UDS was borrowed almost in its entirety and allowed respondents to categorize their level of involvement as either "I am only a member because I have to be", "I don't mind being a member", "I become more actively involved over certain issues", "I am a loyal and active member most of the time", or "I'm an active member". In the original UDS, these last two categories were more specific, allowing respondents to distinguish between having no concern for the political or ideological nature of a trade union, and considering involvement in the union as an extension of beliefs.

Using items adapted from McShane (1986), participants were then asked whether they had participated in any of the following four formal activities in the past year: attending meetings, voting in the election of local executive committee members, holding a position with the local union, or asking for union support or assistance. Open-ended response space was provided for participants to further elaborate on the reasons why they did or did not participate in the stated activities.

Questions about informal participation activities were phrased as five-point Likert scale items, with choices from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, and three being “neutral”. These four questions asked whether the participants kept themselves informed of issues, shared information about union issues with colleagues, followed union advice, and participated in professional development activities. All of these activities except professional development participation were recognized by Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark, and Carroll (2004) as informal ways that union members can participate in union activities. Again, open-ended response space was provided after each scaled item for participants to further elaborate on the reasons why they did or did not participate in the stated activities, which allowed for qualitative information to be collected.

Teachers that participated in focus groups self-selected into one of three groups depending on their stated level of participation with the union: very involved, somewhat involved, or little involvement, meant to loosely replicate the categories of union members identified by Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981). Each group was asked different questions depending on their union participation levels (Appendix C). Focus group questions for the highly involved group were developed from factors that Bascia (2000) identified as typical for teacher unionists, such as a family history of unionism, a critical incident in their career, a need

for more challenges, or a highly unionist social group. Questions for all three focus groups followed from survey items, in order to elaborate further on the reasons why participants mainly do not participate in union activities. The interview was semi-structured, to allow for follow up to any topics that may have come up about union participation.

Procedures Followed

The purpose of the current study was to ask teachers to identify the factors that encouraged them to participate or discouraged them from participating in their union in order to facilitate union representation that is more responsive to member needs, thereby strengthening the union.

Ethics approval of this study was sought in April, 2013, and granted in June, 2013. A letter of permission was then sent to the President of the Nanaimo District Teachers' Association (NDTA) asking for his permission and support in contacting teachers in the NDTA to participate in the study. The researcher then attended a meeting of staff representatives of the NDTA to introduce the study and ask them to volunteer to distribute surveys to teachers' mailboxes at their school site. All but six worksites had representative volunteers. The six worksites that did not have surveys distributed did not have a representative in attendance at the meeting.

A paper survey printed on coloured paper was used to provide an opportunity for as many members of the sample population to participate in the study as possible (Appendix A). The paper survey was delivered to classroom teachers by staff representatives via their staffroom mailboxes. TTOCs and other itinerant teachers were invited to participate by email. A survey was mailed to those teachers who requested one. Surveys were returned, in a sealed envelope, to the mailbox of staff representatives at each school, and staff representatives returned the surveys

to the NDTA office. This researcher was able to retrieve all of the surveys in this manner, thus maintaining the anonymity of participants.

The surveys were stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. Data from the surveys were tabulated on the researcher's own computer, which was password protected both upon login and for each file. All information was only accessible by the researcher.

Some focus group participants self-selected through an invitation at the bottom of the survey, but some of the high and medium level union participation and all of the low union participation category focus group participants had to be recruited by the researcher. Word of mouth or snowball recruitment was used, where participants who had already volunteered suggested others who might be interested. These identified teachers were invited to attend, and the researcher was able to meet with a group of teachers for a focus group discussion.

Focus group participants were provided with a consent statement to sign and a copy to keep (Appendix D). They were informed that the session was neither confidential nor anonymous, but that information that they provided would not be used by the researcher in any way that would identify them. Participants were asked to use first names only, and to speak only of their own experiences. They were also asked to keep the membership of the group confidential, although it was explained that the researcher could not guarantee that. Focus group sessions were videotaped in order to facilitate transcription. Tapes were kept in a locked filing cabinet until they were transcribed, and then the tapes were erased and the transcription files were password protected on the researcher's own computer.

The quantitative and qualitative results from the surveys were tabulated and factors that teachers identified in both the surveys and focus groups as encouraging them to participate or

discouraging them from participating were grouped and frequencies counted. Qualitative data were used to help interpret the quantitative data.

Discussion of Validity and Reliability

In order to improve the external validity of this study, triangulation of data was used. A survey with both close- and open-ended questions was developed using items from the literature in order to improve construct validity (McShane, 1986; Nicholson, Ursell, & Blyton, 1981). Focus group interview data were combined with survey data to provide multiple ways (both qualitative and quantitative) of collecting information about teacher union participation. Focus group interviews allowed this researcher to share some of the survey results with focus group participants to determine if data interpretation was accurate. Extensive demographic data were collected to determine the extent to which the results of this study could be generalized internally (Maxwell, as cited in Mills, 2011) and to possibly transfer (Guba, as cited in Mills, 2011) to other local teacher unions with similar demographics in British Columbia, particularly if the local was of a comparable size to the NDTA.

Survey questions and focus group questions were tested by administering them to a teacher known to this researcher. The test subject was timed, and subsequently provided feedback to improve the wording and format of the questions. The length of the survey was carefully considered, as well as presentation, to ensure that participants would be more likely to complete it.

Data Analysis

This study used a mixed methods approach to obtain data from teachers regarding the factors they identified as encouraging them to participate or discouraging them from participating in the union. The first instrument used was a survey with both close- and open-

ended questions (Appendix A). Then focus group interviews were conducted using three focus groups, representing teachers with high levels of union participation, teachers with little or no union participation, and teachers who fell somewhere in the middle (Appendix C).

All of the survey data were inputted into an Excel spreadsheet program to facilitate analysis. Demographic information allowed responses to be compared in several ways. First, this researcher compared ratios of full-time male, full-time female, part-time male and part-time female participants to those of the sample population (Table 3.1). The same comparisons were made with years of experience (Table 3.2). Demographic information also allowed this researcher to compare teachers with various assignments, to determine if views were more prevalent in a particular type of assignment, for example. The time that teachers reported they spent on activities outside of the classroom was compared as well.

The first question on the survey which asked participants to describe their involvement with the NDTA allowed this researcher to classify survey respondents as high participators, low participators, or somewhere in between. Close-ended questions throughout the survey either supported or refuted this classification, and adjustments were made to the classification system if necessary. From within each of the three groups, open-ended responses were coded for participant identified factors, and emergent themes were sought. The frequency of occurrence of themes was used to further quantify the data, but representative quotes from survey responses were also recorded to support these interpretations. Frequency tables and charts were created from the data in order to display and interpret it.

The focus group interviews were videotaped in order to facilitate transcription so that the researcher knew which participant made each comment. Factors identified by participants were coded and grouped, and compared to survey responses. Thematic overlap with survey responses

was sought, as well as any new themes that emerged. Representative quotes were recorded to support interpretations.

Chapter 4: Findings and Results

The purpose of the present study was to determine the factors that teachers identified as encouraging them to participate or discouraging them from participating in their union. This researcher hopes that the findings of this study could help re-connect teachers with their union, in order to provide teachers with a unified, democratic voice.

Paper surveys (Appendix A) were distributed to teachers in Nanaimo-Ladysmith Public Schools (SD68) in September 2013. There were 144 surveys returned from a total of 785 distributed, which indicates a response rate of 18.3%. Eleven teachers volunteered to take part in focus group interviews, representing high union participation, medium union participation, and low union participation. The low union participation group was comprised of three relatively new teachers (less than ten years of experience), so that the view point of new teachers could be represented.

Findings of the study were analyzed and are reported in two sections in this chapter. In the first section, survey responses were analyzed by comparing different demographic groups. In the second section, survey responses and focus group data were analyzed by comparing different levels of union participation.

Demographic Information of Participants

The number of survey respondents in various categories (full-time, part-time, male, female, and number of years of experience) was previously summarized in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. This data indicated that full-time female teachers were slightly over-represented and part-time female teachers were under-represented. More experienced teachers dominated the survey results. The majority of respondents were married (64.3%) and reported dependents (63.6%). Exact numbers of elementary and secondary teachers were not available to this researcher, but

rough estimates indicated that NDTA members (excluding TTOCs) are approximately 60% elementary teachers compared to the survey respondents who were 49% elementary teachers.

Focus group participants were both male and female, although most participants were secondary teachers. This was probably because this researcher is a secondary teacher and knows more secondary teachers than elementary teachers. Focus Group 1 (low level participants) were selected by level of participation, and also experience, in order to include newer teachers in the study. Table 3.3 previously listed the demographic information of focus group participants.

Survey Responses

Questions on the survey were divided into three sections: background information, which included demographic information and hours spent on various activities, formal participation, and informal participation. Table 4.1 summarizes the mean hours that teachers reported that they spent on non-classroom activities per week. Median and mode were reported as the standard deviation was quite large, indicating a wide spread in the data.

Table 4.1

Mean Hours Spent on Non-Classroom Activities per Week (N=144)

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Family time	12.8	10	0	12.1
Prep. and marking	11.0	10	10	5.6
Watching TV	5.6	4	0	4.9
Household chores	5.1	4	2, 5	3.7
Other volunteer work	1.5	0	0	3.3
Union work	0.6	0	0	2.0

Only activities that averaged more than five hours per week were recorded in Table 4.1, and for comparison, mean hours spent volunteering outside of school or on union work. It

appears safe to say that teachers are not spending time on other community volunteer work that is taking them away from union work. Most teachers in the sample were not volunteering (outside of school) in any capacity, whether in their union (70%) or otherwise (68%). It is important to note that twenty-five teachers in the sample reported no hours spent with family, but they did report childcare (mean=2.8 hours) so respondents did distinguish between the two. The standard deviation for “family time” was quite high, but it is difficult to determine the cause, although one might expect that teachers with children spent more time with family, and teachers without children spent more. Forty-three teachers listed no dependents, but reported a mean number of hours spent with family as 10.6, and a standard deviation of 11.1. Eighty-two teachers listed one or more dependents, and the mean number of hours spent with family was 14.4, standard deviation 12.4. Responses to this question varied considerably.

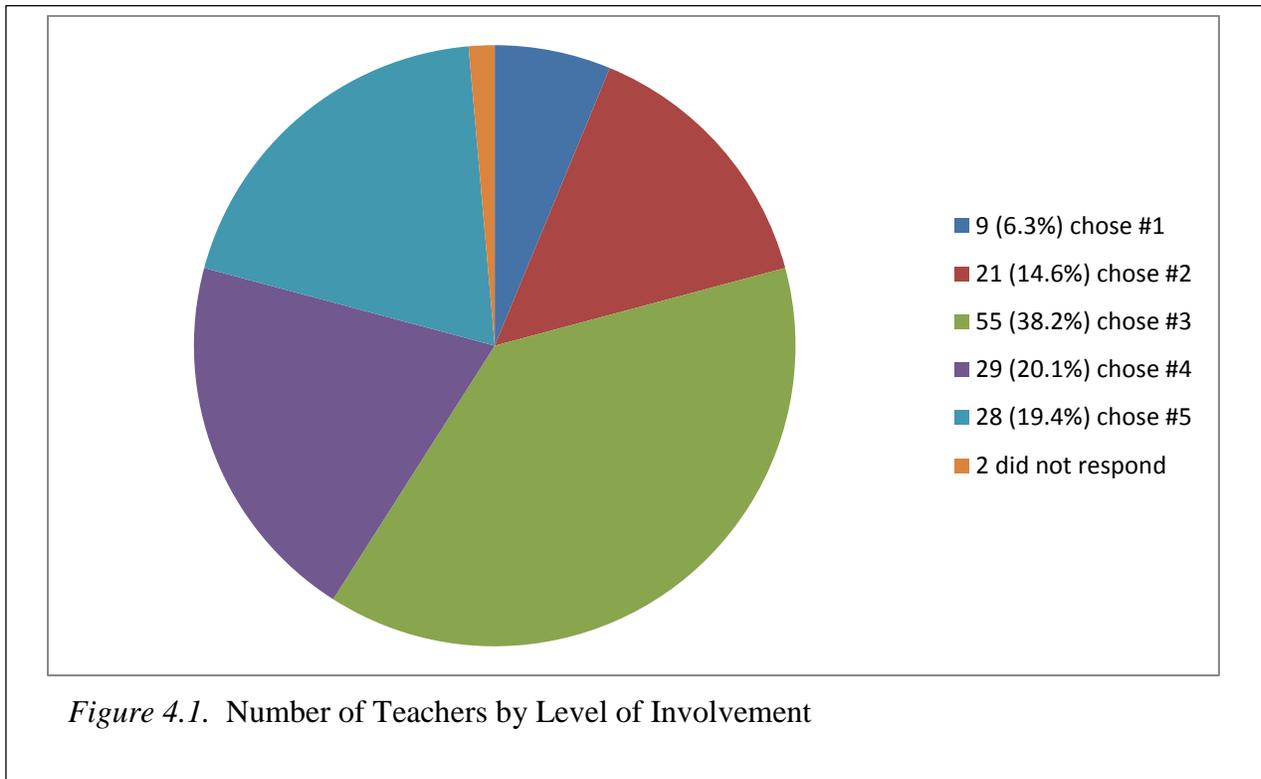
Formal participation.

Survey questions about formal participation asked teachers to report how many meetings they had attended, whether or not they voted at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), whether they had ever held a position with the Nanaimo District Teachers’ Association (NDTA), and whether they had ever asked for assistance from the NDTA. The first three of these questions requested an open-ended response so that respondents could explain their response. Respondents were also asked to self-describe their involvement in the union by choosing one of five statements adapted from Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981):

1. I am only a member because I have to be. I wouldn’t be in a union otherwise.
2. I don’t mind being a member but I don’t have any interest in union activities.
3. Most of the time I don’t get involved in union affairs but I become more actively involved over certain issues.

4. I am a loyal and active member most of the time.
5. I am an active member.

Participant choices are pictured in Figure 4.1. The mean choice was 3.3 (standard deviation 1.17).



The next formal participation question asked respondents how many general meetings (out of a possible total of 6) they attended last year (2012/2013). Mean responses to both of these questions for different groups are compared in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Formal Participation: Level of Involvement and Number of Meetings

	Number of respondents	Mean level of involvement	Mean number of meetings
All responses	144	3.3	2.3
All full-time	107	3.3	2.5
All female	104	3.2	2.2
All male	40	3.5	2.7
Female full-time	75	3.3	2.3
Male full-time	32	3.5	2.9
All part-time	26	3.3	1.9
Female part-time	19	3.2	1.9
Male part-time	7	3.7	2.1
Less than 9 yrs. Exp.	32	3.0	1.8

Male teachers rated themselves slightly higher than female teachers in terms of level of union involvement, with part-time male teachers being the most involved overall. Full-time male teachers attended, on average, the most meetings. Less experienced teachers were the lowest ranking in terms of union involvement, and also attended, on average, the fewest meetings, closely followed by part-time female teachers.

Teachers were asked in an open-ended question why they did or did not attend meetings. The most common reasons teachers gave for not attending meetings are listed in Table 4.3. “Too busy to attend” could include work, childcare, or family commitments, and often teachers reported feeling pressured by all these commitments at once, and more. This woman was representative of many teachers in the survey sample:

[I am a f]ull time teacher, mother, dog owner, performing artist, doing a post-graduate diploma, home owner, trying to fit in exercise, driving my kids to and from

activities....So many demands upon my time. It gets overwhelming. I do appreciate everything my union does for me... It is hard to fit in the time. I am a work-a-holic and am trying to find balance and spend more time with my children.

Teachers who did not like the meetings found them too negative (9.7% of all open-ended responses), too long (20.8%), or both. Some complained that there was only an appearance of democracy (7.6%). “[I attend the] AGM meeting for executive election. [I attend n]o other meetings because they are too long and consistently focus on negative aspects of teaching in SD68.”

Table 4.3

Reasons Given for Attending Meetings or Not (N=144)

	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Too busy to attend	58	40.3
Does not like the meetings	37	25.7
To stay informed	20	13.9
Inconvenient location	13	9.0
Fatigue, illness	10	6.9
Duty	9	6.3
Depends on topic	7	4.9
To influence decisions	6	4.2
Solidarity	5	3.5
Did not respond	15	10.4

One respondent stated “I like to be informed on issues and see (and occasionally) take part in the discussions. It's important for me to know what other members think; I learn a lot about the issues.”

There were 32 teachers who indicated on the survey that they had nine years or less experience, which for the purposes of this study was considered a new teacher. Meeting attendance was very low for this group of teachers. The majority of new teachers (56%) cited other commitments or lack of time as the number one reason they did not attend meetings. Another 18% did not like the meetings themselves, due to the negative tone or length of the meetings. One teacher stated that she didn't attend meetings because "I find them time consuming and I dislike the negative discourse".

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) occurs each May for the main purposes of electing a new executive and setting the annual fee. As shown in Table 4.4, new teachers are the least likely to vote at the AGM, followed by part-time teachers.

Table 4.4

Voting at the Annual General Meeting

	Number of respondents	% yes	% no	% dnr
All responses	144	47.2	50.7	2.1
All full-time	107	53.3	46.7	1.9
All female	104	45.2	51.9	2.9
All male	40	52.5	47.5	0
Female full-time	75	49.3	48.0	2.7
Male full-time	32	62.5	37.5	0
All part-time	26	37.0	59.3	3.7
Female part-time	19	36.8	63.2	5.3
Male part-time	7	42.9	57.2	0
Less than 9 yrs. Exp.	32	25.0	71.9	3.1

Teachers were asked in an open-ended question why they did or did not vote at the AGM. One respondent said: "I believe that it is my responsibility to attend the Annual General Meeting and

vote for people I feel will best represent NDTA members both locally and provincially. It bothers me that most of my colleagues do not feel the same way.” Other respondents who voted “yes” commented on the importance of the meeting (9.2% of all open-ended responses) to choose good leaders (18.4%) and to exercise their democratic duty (12.1%). The main reason for not voting was, again, too busy (14.2%). Sixty-two percent of male elementary respondents (n=13) and 48% of male secondary respondents (n=27) voted at the AGM whereas the ratio of female elementary to female secondary reporting that they voted was 2 to 1.

Voting at the AGM was not a high priority for new teachers compared to survey responses as a whole. Respondents listed the number one reason that they did not vote as a lack of time or conflict with other commitments (28% of new teachers, n=32), such as this teacher, who didn't vote “because I couldn't manage to pick up my children after school and then make it to the meeting”. Other new teachers, however, said “[t]hat is the most important meeting of the year so it is my highest priority. I want to be a part of choosing our executive because that has an impact on all of our union business”. Eighteen percent of new teacher respondents agreed that it was important to attend the AGM and elect an executive.

Survey respondents were asked to complete a checklist of positions that they may have held with the NDTA. The results are summarized in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Holding a Position in the NDTA (N=144)

	Number of respondents	%
Never held office	71	49.3
NDTA committee member	30	20.8
Delegate to BCTF AGM	16	11.1
Staff representative	47	32.6
Executive member	17	11.8
Did not respond	10	6.9

It is important to note that respondents could check more than one item, and all respondents who checked “delegate to BCTF AGM” had also been involved in some other way. Additionally, the question asked if the teacher had *ever* held a position, whereas all the other questions to this point referred to formal activities in *the past twelve months*.

Teachers were then asked in an open-ended question why they chose to hold a position or not. Factors that teachers identified as affecting their decision to get involved or not are listed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Reasons Given for Holding a Position or Not (N=144)

	Number of respondents	%
Too busy	34	23.6
Family commitments	11	7.6
Negative aspect of role	17	11.8
Wants to contribute	18	12.5
Finds work interesting/enjoyable	26	18.1
Did not respond	37	25.7

Note. “Family commitments” was a subset of “Too busy”. In other words, teachers that responded that they were too busy specifically because of family commitments are recorded in both groups.

This teacher succinctly responded to why they have been a committee member, a staff representative, and an executive member: “Conflict in the workplace. Felt supported by the union. Wanted to help my fellow colleagues. I liked it!”

In response to the question about holding a position with the NDTA, 43% of female teachers (n=104) and 45% of male teachers (n=40) had done so, with elementary teachers more likely than secondary teachers, both male and female. Thirteen (41%) new teachers (n=32) had held a position with the NDTA, whereas 53% of more experienced teachers had done so (n=109). New teachers that had held positions with the union mainly said that they wanted to learn more about the union (24%), and enjoyed the challenge (12%), like this teacher: “I wanted to be more involved so I could know more about the issues we are facing. I feel I can't really complain about issues in the district unless I am well-versed in what they are”. There were nine (28%) new teachers who did not comment on their reasons for not holding a position. For those who did respond, lack of time was the largest negative factor (24%), followed by lack of knowledge (9%) and a general dislike of the union (9%).

I currently do not know a lot about our union, and it's intimidating and daunting to think about taking on a role (e.g. staff rep.) where others expect you to know the contract inside out and seek your advice about it. I would need someone to help guide me through at first in a small role, before I would be comfortable enough to voluntarily put myself out there for the roles listed.

Informal participation.

In questions six through nine, survey respondents were asked to rank their participation in various activities using a five point Likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Respondents were also encouraged to explain their response in an open-ended format. Likert scale responses are summarized in Table 4.7, followed by a summary of open-ended response themes in Tables 4.8 through 4.11.

Table 4.7

Responses to Questions about Informal Participation (N=144)

	Mean	Mode	Standard deviation
Q6. Stays informed about union matters	3.9	4	0.95
Q7. Provides information/support to colleagues	3.3	4	1.46
Q8. Follows union advice on contractual issues	4.3	5	0.96
Q9. Participates in professional development	4.3	5	0.91

Note. 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree

Question 6 (Q6) on the survey asked participants why they stayed informed, or what factors kept them from staying informed. Likert scale responses by demographic group are shown in Appendix E, Figure E.1. Themes from the open-ended responses are summarized in Table 4.8, below. Participants also volunteered the ways that they kept informed. The most common ways that teachers reported staying informed were through meetings at the school level

(n=31, 21.5%) or by reading email bulletins from union representatives (n=28, 19.4%). Some respondents indicated why they felt it was important to stay informed. For example one respondent said: “it is important to know what's going on as it affects my job. Staff reps and regular email updates keep me informed as well as the NDTA portion of school staff meetings”. Another respondent stated “I stay informed to help decide how actively to participate.”

Table 4.8

Reasons Given for Staying Informed or Not (N=144)

	Number of respondents	%
Information affects my job	22	15.3
To stay up-to-date	20	13.9
Part of being in a union	20	13.9
To influence decisions	15	10.4
Depends on the topic	13	8.3
To support union/colleagues	12	7.6
Important	9	6.3
Too busy	7	4.9
Lack of faith in union and/or mgmt	6	4.2
Did not respond	21	14.9

Question 7 (Q7) on the survey asked participants what factors motivated them or kept them from providing information and support to colleagues about union matters. Likert scale responses by demographic group are shown in Appendix E, Figure E.2. Themes from the open-ended responses are summarized in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Reasons Given for Providing Information to Colleagues or Not (N=144)

	Number of respondents	%
To support union/colleagues	28	19.4
Lack of knowledge	24	16.7
Part of role (staff rep)	13	9.0
It's the right thing to do	6	4.2
Too busy	6	4.2
It's not my job	5	3.5
Too negative	5	3.5
Did not respond	33	22.9

One staff representative, whose role is to share information with members, stated, “As staff rep. I have info. to share and if I don't know, I will find out. I have depended on the union for support. I know what the union has fought for”. New teachers (n=32) rated themselves much lower on “provides information” than most survey respondents (See Figure E.2). Twenty-four percent of new teachers attributed this to their lack of experience, agreeing with the statement of this teacher: “I am not comfortable enough in my knowledge of union matters to be someone to provide information and support my colleagues”.

Question 8 (Q8) on the survey asked participants why they followed union advice (or not) regarding contractual issues and supported union initiatives (or not) like job action. Likert scale responses by demographic group are shown in Appendix E, Figure E.3. Themes from the open-ended responses are summarized in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Reasons Given for Following Union Advice or Not (N=144)

	Number of respondents	%
Solidarity	31	21.5
To support union	25	17.4
Disagrees with union	20	13.9
Believes in unionism	14	9.7
No other option	13	9.0
Trusts union executive	12	8.3
To protect worker rights	7	4.9
Not if extracurricular is involved ^a	6	4.2
Puts students ahead of action	5	3.5
Did not respond	30	29.8

^aDuring a recent job action, teachers were asked to refrain from volunteering for extracurricular activities, which some teachers disagreed with.

Following union advice was rated highly (mean =4.3) by teachers compared to the first two informal participation questions (See Table 4.7). The most common reason (31%) was to show solidarity with each other, as in “I think it is important to stay united and fight for contractual rights” and “a union is as strong as its members”, even when a member disagrees with the decision, as in “the word union means power comes from acting together. Even if I may disagree with a decision or find it inconvenient I follow the [executive committee] advice”. Thirteen respondents (9%) felt that they had no choice but to follow union advice, either because of pressure from peers or that there were no other options available to them. One teacher stated that he followed union advice because “I don't want to be blacklisted by my colleagues, but I'd rather not”.

Question 9 on the survey (Q9) asked respondents to rate their level of participation in professional development activities supported by the NDTA and the BCTF. Professional development is one facet of union life that respondents invariably felt positively about, and the mean score for Q9 was 4.3 (agree or strongly agree, see Table 4.7). Likert scale responses by demographic group are shown in Appendix E, Figure E.4. Question 10 (Q10) had respondents choose from a list of possible activities, as well as explain their responses to Q9 and Q10 through an open-ended response, explaining why they participated in these activities, or why they did not. Nearly all (97.2%) respondents indicated on Q10 that they actively participated in school based professional activities in the past year. Participation in specific types of professional development and other activities are summarized in Table 4.11. Table 4.12 lists the most common reasons teachers cited for participating or not in professional development activities, as reported in response to the open-ended question on the survey.

Table 4.11

Participation in Professional Development Activities (N=144)

	Number of respondents	%
School based pro-d	140	97.2
School based pro-d committee	49	34.0
District Day, February 2013	127	88.2
Pro-d presenter/facilitator	36	25.0
NDTA Pro-d Committee	9	6.3
Member of LSA or PLG	56	38.9
Attended PSA conference	65	45.1
Member of a PSA	44	30.6
Other ^a	16	11.1
Did not respond	0	0.0

Note. Respondents could choose more than one activity; LSA stands for Local Specialist Association, PSA stands for Provincial Specialist Association, and PLG stands for Professional Learning Group.

^a Other activities included some union sponsored activities, but most were not union sponsored, for example national and international conferences, or employer in-service activities.

Table 4.12

Reasons Given for Participating in Professional Development or Not (N=144)

	Number of respondents	%
Personal growth	53	36.8
Professional growth	31	21.5
Networking with colleagues	15	10.4
To stay current	14	9.7
Required attendance	10	6.9
To contribute to profession/colleagues	9	6.3
Enjoyment	9	6.3
Motivating	7	4.9
Depends on topic	7	4.9
Disagrees with offerings and/or union involvement	6	4.2
Positive experience	5	4.2
To protect teacher right to choose PD	5	3.5
Did not respond	35	24.3

Typical responses included professional development “improves my teaching, but it's also fun (usually) and a good way to network with like-minded colleagues” and “I participate because I believe strongly in life-long learning. I want to be the best educator I can be”. Some teachers recognized that the union provided the activities: “Pro-D is one of the most important and the most positive things that our unions (NDTA and BCTF) do. I have been and always will be a supporter and advocate for Pro-D”. Very few teachers listed negative factors.

Teachers Categorized by Level of Participation

The literature indicates that there are different types of union participation, as well as different types of union members. In addition to female, male, full-time, part-time, and less

experienced teachers, survey responses can be categorized by level of participation. This section will compare the demographics of each of three levels of union participation (low participation, medium participation, and high participation), as well as compare the responses of the different levels to one another. Focus group interviews were also grouped by participation level, and that data is included in this section. Tables that compare stated factors by percentage for each of these three groups are included in Appendix F.

Question 1 on the survey asked teachers to choose their level of formal participation in union activities. Teachers who felt they were best described by either the statement “I am only a member because I have to be. I wouldn’t be in a union otherwise” or the statement “I don’t mind being a member but I don’t have any interest in union activities” were grouped into the category of low level participators. There were twenty-nine teachers who responded to the surveys and chose one of these descriptors, which represents twenty percent of all the survey respondents. Twenty of the twenty-nine indicated that they didn’t “mind being a member”. Teachers who responded to the survey question describing their involvement in the NDTA as “most of the time I don’t get involved in union affairs but I become more actively involved over certain issues” were classified as medium level participants. Teachers who responded to the survey question describing their involvement in the NDTA as “I am an active member” were classified as high level participants. Table 4.13 shows the number of teachers in each demographic group by level of participation. Table 4.14 summarizes other demographic information collected on the survey.

Table 4.13

Number of Teachers by Level of Involvement

	Low level participants	Medium level participants	High level participants
All responses (N=144)	29	55	28
All full-time (n=107)	24	40 ^a	22 ^b
All female (n=104)	20	42	15
All male (n=40)	9	13	13
Female full-time (n=75)	16	31	12
Male full-time (n=32)	8	9	10
All part-time (n=26)	5	11	5
Female part-time (n=19)	4	8	2
Male part-time (n=7)	1	3	3
Less than 9 yrs. Exp. (n=32)	10	13	3

^aThree teachers did not respond, and one was a TTOC

^bOne teacher did not respond

Table 4.14

Number of Teachers by Level of Involvement, Other Demographic Information

	All responses (N=144)	Low (n=29)	Medium (n=55)	High (n=28)
Mean age	46.2	41.0	46.4	52.3
Mean yrs. experience	18.7	17.4	18.9	19.8
Mean no. dependents	1.2	1.1	1.4	0.9
Married	106	21	42	21
Elementary	66	12	18	16
Secondary	68	14	34	11

Teachers who classified themselves as “I am a loyal and active member most of the time” (n=29) are the only group not classified as low, medium, or high level participants in this study.

An argument can be made for classifying these teachers as either medium or high, because they do participate, and most of the time, but this researcher felt that it would be more useful to distinguish between what Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981) described as “selective activists” and “ideological activists”, leaving the “apolitical stalwarts” aside. Demographically, there was a higher percentage of women (86%), married teachers (86%), and elementary teachers (66%) in this group than either the medium or high level groups. The number of new teachers was comparable to the medium level group, as was the average number of dependents.

Table 4.15 summarizes the results of survey questions two through five (Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5) regarding the formal participation of teachers in the study classified as low, medium, or high by level of participation. Teachers were asked to state how many meetings they had attended (Q2), whether they had voted in the AGM (Q3), whether they had held a position in the NDTA and which ones (Q4) and if they had called on the union for support (Q5). The factors that influenced their decisions were reported in open-ended response space on the survey, and are compared in Appendix F (Tables F.1, F.2, and F.3).

Table 4.15

Summary of Responses--Formal Participation

	All teachers (N=144)	Low (n=29)	Medium (n=55)	High (n=28)
Q2. Mean no. of meetings	2.3	0.7	1.5	4.8
Q3. Voted in AGM	47.2%	13.8%	32.7%	92.9%
Q4. Never held a position	49.3%	86.2%	76.4%	10.7%
Q5. Asked for union support	42.4%	20.7%	34.5%	71.4%

Low and medium participation teachers are less involved in formal participation activities than the high participation teachers, as expected, but they are also less involved than survey

respondents as a whole. The twenty-nine teachers not included in this data scored in the middle range of the medium and high level participants on all four questions, and so including the data in one of those two groups would have noticeably changed the results.

In questions six through nine, survey respondents were asked to rank their participation in various activities using a five point Likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. The mean values of Likert scale responses are summarized in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16

Mean responses--Informal Participation

	All teachers (N=144)	Low (n=29)	Medium (n=55)	High (n=28)
Q6. Stays informed	3.9	3.3	3.6	4.5
Q7. Provides information*	3.3	2.3**	2.7	4.5
Q8. Follows union advice	4.3	3.4*	4.3	4.7
Q9. Participates in PD	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.5

* standard deviation greater than one

** standard deviation greater than one, *and* mode=1

The mean Likert responses from the “apolitical stalwarts” (n=29) not included above were very similar to the high level participants on the informal participation questions.

Low level of union participation.

Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981) referred to this group as “reluctant members” and “passive dues payers”. This group was younger on average (mean age 41 years) and 66% of them had at least one child living at home. The majority of teachers (52%) in this group did not attend any meetings last year. There were three main reasons for teachers in this group to not attend meetings (see Table F.1): they considered themselves to be too busy (24%); they felt that there was no point in attending as no decisions would be made by the membership (21%); or

they considered the meetings to be too long, negative, or boring (24%), as in this teacher who did not attend

[b]ecause I have small children in daycare, so timing is poor, but even if it was better I wouldn't go--they go on and on; I get the Cole's notes from my rep. in 10 minutes or less, and I'm really not interested.

They did not vote at the AGM because they either did not know or did not support the candidates (24%) or didn't care about voting (14%). The four who voted said it was important to choose the candidates (see Table F.2).

Twenty-five of the respondents in this group had never held a position with the NDTA, but four of them had: two committee members and two staff representatives (see Table F.3 for reasons). One of the staff representatives commented "I enjoyed being a liaison between the staff and the NDTA. There was a strike at this time and a conflict between the BCTF and the government." Both of the respondents who indicated they had been staff representatives were nearing retirement, and since the question asked if they had *ever* held a position, one can assume that they were staff representatives previously, but now they rarely involved themselves with the union. Only six of the respondents had called on the union for support.

Approximately one quarter of respondents did not answer any of the open-ended questions in the section on informal participation. Respondents stayed informed because they were interested (17%) and did not stay informed because information was too negative (10%). Respondents did not provide information because they felt they lacked the knowledge (24%) or disagreed with the information (17%). They followed union advice because they felt it was important to stay united (28%), or they felt they had no choice (14%), but they did not follow the advice if they disagreed with the position (24%), for example, "I do not always agree with union

decisions and I do believe Canada is a democracy. Unions are like a dictatorship”. (See Tables F.4, F.5, and F.6 for comparisons to the other levels).

Focus group participants who self-selected into “low level participation” were also teachers with less than nine years of experience, because this researcher specifically invited these teachers in order to fill out the data on new teachers more fully. The interview reiterated many of the points made by new teachers in the survey. All three participants reported lack of time as the main reason that they did not attend meetings. Participant 1F1 complained “basically...I’m finding it really hard to find time to do anything. Like, I’m just busy with my classes and prep and marking and then by the end of the day I’m just kind of exhausted and I would rather just go home and sleep”. Participant 1F2 complained about how difficult it is for new teachers to get recognized in order to be hired:

It’s hard to be a newbie, I think. We are asked to be involved in so much because we apparently have so much time. [But] I am coaching and being involved in all this other stuff at the school just to get my name in at the school a little bit more. There’s not a lot of time.

They reported that they would attend a meeting if there was a specific item on the agenda that had relevance to their personal situation, for example “I went to the stuff about the strike and everything, because I felt like that was going to affect me, but I don’t really know much about the meetings in general, so I don’t go”. One of the participants always attended the AGM, but otherwise did not attend general meetings very often. They felt there was an opportunity to stay informed, but, as one participant put it “I don’t really know about the issues so it is kind of overwhelming for me to even read”. They attended professional development activities, but did not participate in the planning of them. They all felt comfortable calling on the union if they

needed help, and two of them had done so in the past. They felt that union dues were a kind of “insurance policy”, so that the union would be there when they needed it, although they had no idea how much their union dues were. Only one of the participants expressed an interest in becoming involved in the future, but she felt that she would need an extensive amount of training before she would feel comfortable volunteering.

Medium level of union participation.

Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981) referred to these members as “selective activists”. The main reason teachers in this group did not attend meetings was that they were too busy to attend (55%), but respondents also complained that meetings were too long and too negative (20%) (See Table F.1). Seven teachers felt there was no point in attending meetings as the decisions had already been made, and seven teachers did not respond. Five did not attend because of the location of meetings. “I do not live in Nanaimo...with all the extra hours I put in (I don't leave the school until 4:30 daily) I haven't time. I would then have to give up something else.” Sixty-five percent of teachers in this category did not vote at the AGM, again because they were too busy (27%) (See Table F.2). Five teachers indicated that they did not vote because they did not attend the meeting. However, 24% responded that it was important to attend this meeting. “That is the one meeting I always attend because I want to have a say.”

Only 13% of teachers in this group indicated that they had held a position in the NDTA at one time in their career, as either a staff rep (two) or an executive member (four), and three members had held more than one position. Seventeen (31%) did not respond as to the reason why, but the same number indicated that they were too busy (See Table F.3). Not interested (13%) and lack of knowledge (7%) were other negative reasons cited, and a desire to “do my part” was the only reason given (by 11% of respondents) as to why teacher might choose to hold

office. Sixty-five percent of teachers in this category had not needed union support in the last twelve months.

When it came to informal participation, medium level participants had higher means in all four categories as compared to low level participants, but were similar to the mean of the survey respondents as a whole (Table 4.15) except they were still rating themselves lower on “provides information and support”.

Thirty-five per cent of respondents indicated *how* they stayed informed, rather than providing reasons as to why they chose to be informed. Six teachers (11%) did not respond, but the other comments referred to factors that influenced teachers to stay informed. “I feel it is important to know what's going on as it affects my job” was similar to 16% of responses. “I want to be a part of my union”, and “I do feel it's important to be informed though I don't often attend meetings” each reflected the sentiments of 9% of teachers (see Table F.4). Another 9% agreed that information would help them make decisions about their own participation, as in this teacher, who stated “I stay informed to help decide how actively to participate.”

Teachers in this group did not provide information to others because they felt they didn't know enough (25%) or that the information was too negative (7%), as in: “I am not political in this way as it is much too negative/draining” or that it was not their job (5%). Positive responses included to help others (18%), to support the union (9%) and to educate other members (7%) (See Table F.5). One teacher responded “I do support my union's positions and help my colleagues the best I can.” Twenty percent did not respond to this question.

Medium level participants followed union advice mainly because they felt solidarity was important (18%), as in “a union is as strong as its members”, a general belief in unionism (16%) as stated by one respondent, “because I strongly believe in unions and what they do”, they

appreciated the work of others (11%), or they believed in democracy (5%). Others felt that it depended on what the advice was (16%), they were afraid of the consequences of not following job action (5%), or they felt they had no choice in the matter (4%). Seven teachers did not respond to this question (See Table F.6).

Teachers in this category were strong supporters of professional development (PD), with 95% attending school based PD, 80% attending District PD day in February 2013, and 40% attending Professional Specialist Association (PSA) conferences. These results were consistent across the different types of teachers (See Table F.7).

The participants who made up the medium level participation focus group were three male secondary teachers, with an average age of 57 years and an average experience level of 30 years. They have all had some experience working in formal roles in the union, sitting on committees, working with Professional Learning groups, and serving as staff representatives, but they all three felt that they should not be classified as “high level participants”, as they are selective about when and where they participate.

All three of them spoke of discontent with management, and a desire to help colleagues as reasons for their involvement. Respondent 2M2 said, about being a staff representative and speaking to colleagues “You’re really there as a helper and so that’s what I always felt that position was, to help your colleagues out.”

The reasons that they were not more involved differed between them. Two of the teachers were nearing retirement and were passing on their roles to newer teachers, and the one who was not retiring soon felt that he did not yet know enough to be more involved within the union. This teacher credited a mentor at his worksite for helping him to learn how to be involved to the extent that he has been.

All three were unsure whether they felt their personal values were aligned with union values. The less experienced teacher (of the three), 2M3 explained:

I'd have to say that the stated values in our strike campaign, yeah, I agree with those values, but I would be hard pressed to really identify more than that in the union values. Again, because I don't know enough of the internal workings and the decisions and how they're made--what values are used to come to conclusions about decisions that affect the membership.

The more experienced teachers, 2M1 and 2M2, wanted to be clear that they were not unionists, but they went on to describe how important the union was for working people and for teachers, and to complain that:

Teachers aren't really very good union people. Until there's something that's really pressing, they don't want to be involved and how do you change that so that the regular general meetings become a pressing thing that should be of concern to everyone? [2M2]

When discussing the survey results, 2M2 agreed that attending meetings was important in order to stay informed and to be a part of the decision making, but he added that he attends in order to show support for the union and the union executive. He understood that people would find the meetings too long, but he felt that democracy meant that everyone had a voice, and sometimes that meant longer meetings. He was unsympathetic to teachers who were too busy to attend, because "When you say 'I'm too busy' you're really saying 'I choose not to be involved'. I'm not sure if it's busy, but rather it's a choice that you make not to be involved."

Respondent 2M3 noted that when the membership feels that the leadership is doing its job well,

It almost makes it so that we really don't need to do anything. The executive is doing such a good job, we don't really need to be involved..., we can't counter them intelligently kind of thing. And so, we don't really need to be here.

He, too, commented on and was concerned by poor attendance at meetings.

It's a little annoying to me... that we'll go to a school, and I've travelled a little out of my way... but teachers in that very school are not showing up to that meeting... Like, how more convenient could it possibly be for you to be here, walk down the hall? Bring your marking with you if you need to do some marking or something because it's not like your attention is needed every minute of the meeting. But be there, be involved, swell the ranks. And again, seeing the numbers dwindle over the years is discouraging for being involved. It doesn't take too many meetings where we had, how long ago was it that we had to vote where "quorum equals the members present" because we had a few decisions that couldn't go through because there wasn't enough people for quorum? That's not good. Yeah, I actually prefer it when there are a lot of people and there's a variety of speakers and a variety of people going up and talking about it and there's a speakers' list and stuff like that-- it's far more interesting than when, you know, it's a half empty room and a couple people get up and there's really not much discussion going on, there's not enough variety of opinion. Sometimes my opinion has swayed back and forth on an issue, 'oh yeah, yeah, that was such a good speaker', but then the next person will come up and... that's democracy, that's the way to do it and it's hard to do in a small group.

These three focus group participants were slightly more involved than the majority of survey respondents who sorted into the medium level participation group, but they were reluctant to classify themselves into the highly involved group. Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981)

would likely categorize them as “apolitical stalwarts” rather than “selective activists”. They were representative of male teachers in the medium level group, however, who were slightly more active than female teachers.

High level of union participation.

Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981) called highly involved union members “ideological activists”. Teachers in the high participation group were, on average, older and more experienced than the other two groups. They also reported fewer dependents, on average than the other two groups. They attended an average of 4.8 meetings last year, with all but two teachers attending four or more. The main reason was to stay informed but they also felt a sense of duty, particularly in their union role, as this teacher states, “It is my duty to keep informed and to serve my membership.” Other positive and negative factors are listed in Table 4.17 (see also Table F.1).

Table 4.17

Reasons Given for Attending Meetings or Not – High Participation Teachers (N=28)

	Number of respondents	%
To stay informed	16	57
Sense of duty	6	21
To contribute	5	18
To influence decisions	5	18
To support Executive Committee	5	18
Important for the profession	3	11
Did not respond	2	7
Too busy	5	18
Too long	2	7
Location	2	7

All but two of the respondents in this category voted at the AGM, and 50% of them said they wanted to choose their leadership. Eighteen percent cited the importance of democracy, 7% a general belief in unionism, and 7% agreed with the statement “Every union member should contribute in some form, over whatever time period one is a member. I consider it part of our duty!” Eleven percent voted simply because they were at the meeting when the election was held, and 11% did not respond. One teacher forgot to attend the meeting. No one said they were too busy (see Table F.2).

All but three of these teachers had held a position with the NDTA at some point in their career, and half of them had held more than one. The main reasons they were involved were for the challenge or experience of it (39%), out of a sense of duty (21%), in order to help out (21%), to protect the rights of teachers (11%) or for the pleasure of it (11%). Fourteen percent were too busy, and 14% did not respond (Table F.3). Only eight teachers had not asked for support from the NDTA in the past twelve months, but presumably some of these requests were from staff representatives looking for support and advice for other members.

Informal participation Likert scores, as expected, were higher for this group of teachers compared to all other groups, and compared to the general survey responses (N=144), as shown in Table 4.16. For these teachers, staying informed and providing information to others was very closely linked. There was a strong sense of duty, and a strong desire to help others. One teacher stated “I stay informed out of a sense of self-preservation, duty, and service,” a sentiment that was echoed by 43% of teachers regarding duty to stay informed, and 21% of teachers who felt they needed the information in order to share it with others. Other reasons these teachers stated that they stayed informed were the general importance of doing so (32%), in order to make informed decisions (29%), the implications for their job (14%), and they did not trust the

information from management or the government (11%) (Table F.4). Only two said they might not attend meetings to get information if they were too busy, and one said they might not if they were ill. Two teachers did not respond. The reasons they provided information to others were in order to provide support (54%), or because of a sense of duty (25%). One teacher felt they were too busy and one felt that they did not have enough knowledge (Table F.5). The factors that influenced their decision to follow union advice were solidarity (61%) and a belief in unionism (18%). No one indicated a negative factor, although 18% did not respond (Table F.6).

Professional development was similarly well supported by these teachers. Everyone attended school based PD and only one missed District Day last year, but indicated that they were ill on that day. Forty-three had sat on school-based PD committees, but only one had been a member of the NDTA PD committee. Many (57%) had attended a PSA conference, and 39% had presented their own PD workshops. Fourteen teachers in this group indicated the importance of learning individually, and five agreed with “The professional side of the union is important,” linking PD with unionism. Four teachers enjoyed the opportunity to share with colleagues during PD, and four teachers lamented the lack of choice in local PD offerings (Table F.7).

The focus group with teachers who indicated a high level of participation had the most participants, with three women and two men, representing both secondary and elementary teachers. They discussed factors that influenced them in becoming involved to such a high degree, and the main factors that they agreed on were mentorship, injustices they had seen and/or experienced, and the need for greater challenge in their work lives.

Three participants attributed their union involvement to the modeling of a mentor or mentors.

There was a long list of mentors from day one and that explains a lot of my activism... and what was happening when we started. I started in 1990 and it was historic stuff happening. I didn't realize it at the time but lots of mentors taught me that it was historic. [3M5]

3M4 felt that mentorship wasn't why he began his union involvement, but that "mentorship played such a key role in staying involved and being motivated to grow and being part of the union."

All of the participants listed injustices that they had witnessed or experienced as motivation to become involved with the union movement.

You know, when I was in university a lot of those critical incidents or injustices I became aware of, much more aware than in high school or younger and the union just provided a space for me to fight some of those things. [3M5]

One participant (3M4) could name the date that he became a union activist: January 27, 2002 (when the government passed legislation removing parts of the teachers' collective agreement and the right to bargain those items in the future).

I had more of an impression of collegiality among the levels in an organization and realizing on that day that there isn't that collegiality between the levels of the organization and feeling powerless and... looking for an outlet to feel empowered and to create positive change.

3F2 told us about an incident that happened when she had first started teaching and she had felt an administrator had misused his power by trying to intimidate her. She had union support from her school based staff representative, and has been grateful to the union, and highly involved,

since then. Members of this focus group indicated that incidents like that were common reasons that members become more involved in union activities.

Focus group participants also indicated that they felt that they needed more of a challenge in their work lives, and that advancement into management would not provide the opportunities that they were looking for. 3F3, an elementary teacher, described what she enjoyed about her union work: “You’re thinking more about how it’s organized or the bigger picture--the idea of it--than just what is going on in the classroom.” A secondary teacher, 3F2 felt “the only route to go where you were heard and felt supported was the union.... [T]he union’s a safe place to be and you can trust people whereas in management you can’t.” Another elementary teacher, 3M4 felt that in his union work

there is a lot of room for creativity and autonomy and putting forth new ideas and those were opportunities that I didn’t see available going the other way, going the management route so it seemed the route that suited my needs best.

Focus group participants understood the survey respondents who said union work was a duty. “I think part of any job is being knowledgeable and I think that the union piece you need to know, you need to know your rights and responsibilities. Yeah, I think it’s your duty” [3F2]. They all had difficulty with the negative connotation of the word “duty” and none of them felt that their involvement was encouraged by a sense of duty. They also understood that other teachers would argue that they did not have enough time to be involved in the union, but that “It’s just priorities....It’s like your New Year’s resolution to exercise... it’s your choice whether you fit it in or not. You can fit anything in you want to” [3F2]. There was a general acknowledgement that mothers with young children may have a difficult time attending meetings

if they do not have a supportive or available partner, and that meeting attendance appears to be more male dominated, even at BCTF functions.

At this point, the conversation turned to suggestions for the union in encouraging more participation. One idea was that the union needed to acknowledge and value the small contributions that members make, because “You can contribute a lot to the NDTA and not attend any meetings” [3M5]. Another suggestion was to ensure that the union had representatives at every work site that were willing to be there for their colleagues, to help them out when they are in need, and to provide mentorship, especially for new teachers. Certainly, the factors that have been suggested by teachers in the surveys and in focus groups may help to direct that conversation, and encourage more participation in union activities.

Tables that compare common reasons teachers reported for open-ended questions, compared by participation level, are available in Appendix F.

Summary of Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that teachers identified as encouraging them to participate or discouraging them from participating in union activities. Teachers were asked to distinguish between their involvement in formal and informal activities (Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark, & Carroll, 2004). Formal activities included attending meetings, voting, and holding office, and informal activities included staying informed, providing information and support to others, following union advice regarding contractual matters, and participating in professional development.

The most common factor that teachers stated for not participating in formal union activities was lack of time, either because of work commitments, family commitments, or volunteer commitments (such as coaching or committee work at school—not community

volunteering, for the most part), and this lack of time affected teachers in every group to some degree. The factors that teachers identified as encouraging them to participate in formal activities were that they wanted to stay informed, they felt a sense of duty to the union and to their colleagues, and they enjoyed the challenge of contributing in a recognized role. These positive factors were stated most often in the group of teachers that identified as being highly participative.

Factors that teachers identified for informal activities depended on the activity, and their own level of involvement. Teachers stated that factors that discouraged them from staying informed was the negative tone of the information provided. They would not share information with colleagues because they felt they were not knowledgeable enough or they disagreed with the information. If they disagreed with union advice they would not follow it. These negative factors were reported most often within the low and medium level participatory groups. Factors that teachers stated encouraged them to stay informed included the fact that the information directly affected them and their work situation, and they felt a responsibility to stay informed. They also wanted to support and inform others, and needed information in order to do this effectively. These positive factors were reported most often in the high level participatory group. Teachers reporting positive factors also cited the need to stay united when following union advice and this factor was reported across demographic and participatory groups. Participation levels in professional development activities were scored highly in all demographic and participatory groups. The main factor that teachers cited for being involved in PD activities was for individual growth.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Summary of the Study

This study investigated the self-reported factors that encouraged teachers to participate or discouraged them from participating in their union. This researcher was interested in why some teachers participate to a high degree in union activities, and why some teachers do not. A union is a democratic organization, but without the input of its members, a union cannot accurately and effectively represent its members' views. It was hoped that data from this study might help the union to re-connect with members who have become disengaged and thereby strengthen the union.

A review of relevant literature indicated that members of a group will identify more strongly with the group when the choice to belong is voluntary (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Obst & White, 2007). Public school teachers in BC are members of their union by law, however. The literature also showed that while voluntarism in some organizations (like unions) may be in decline, voluntarism in general is still prevalent in North American society (Anderson, Curtis, & Grabb, 2006; Rotolo, 1999; Wilson, 2012), and can be predicted by factors such as gender and social connections (Wilson, 2012). Literature on union participation informed the development of the survey (Appendix A) and focus group interview questions (Appendix C) used in the current study, and provided a framework for the analysis of data collected. The literature indicated that it would be worthwhile to consider gender differences (Anderson, Curtis, & Grabb, 2006; Bascia, 1998; Greene & Kirton, 2003; Wilson, 2012) and new teachers (Edwards, 2012; Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark, & Carroll, 2004; Gordon et al., 1980 ; Pogodzinski, 2012) when studying the factors that encouraged or discouraged union participation.

Surveys were distributed to teachers in Nanaimo-Ladysmith Public Schools (SD68) in the fall of 2013, and three focus group interviews were conducted the following January. Focus group participants were sorted to represent high level participants, medium level participants, and low level participants, as defined by Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981). The low level participants also represented new teachers, as all teachers in this group had less than ten years of teaching experience. Demographic information was collected, as well as both quantitative and qualitative data. Open-ended survey question responses were analyzed for themes, and the frequencies of themes were tallied. Focus group transcripts were used to verify and support data from survey responses.

Discussion of Key Findings

The literature cautioned that a lower response rate might yield a higher apparent volunteer rate (Wilson, 2012) as people with a propensity for volunteering would be more likely to complete the survey. The demographic information provided indicated that the survey sample was not representative of the sample population in terms of part-time female teachers and elementary teachers, who were both under-represented and experienced teachers, who were over-represented. Lack of representation by part-time teachers could be due to a lack of familiarity with the union. This researcher is an experienced secondary teacher, which may explain why survey respondents were more likely to be experienced and secondary. Focus group teachers were also predominantly secondary teachers.

While participation in formal observable activities, such as attending meetings or voting at the AGM, appears to be in decline for many unions including the NDTA (Kip Wood, personal communication, December 2, 2012; see also Flood, Turner, & Willman, 2000), teachers in this study reported that they do, indeed, support the union. Over 77% of survey respondents chose to

describe their level of involvement by indicating that, at least some of the time, or for certain issues, they would choose to participate in union activities. In some groups, that number was higher, for example 79% of female elementary teachers and 81% of male secondary teachers chose “Most of the time I don’t get involved in union affairs but I become more actively involved over certain issues”. The survey did not ask teachers to elaborate which issues would cause them to participate more often, but the literature predicted that teachers would be more active during bargaining years (Griffin, Tesluk, & Jacobs, 1995).

The main deterrent to formal union participation was a lack of time due to family or work commitments. Lack of time was cited as the main reason that teachers do not attend meetings, vote at the AGM, or hold union positions, which is consistent with the literature (Edwards, 2008; Naylor & White, 2010). Lack of time was of special concern for new teachers, in this study and in others (Edwards, 2008; Pogodzinski, 2012). Focus group data indicated that new teachers are too busy trying to obtain and maintain steady employment to be involved in their union.

Lack of time was not a factor that teachers reported frequently when it came to informal participation, however, which may explain why informal participation rated more favourably with teachers in the study. All groups in the study tended towards choices of “neutral”, “agree”, or “strongly agree” as the average response to the four survey questions about informal participation, even teachers categorized as low level participants. Respondents reported that they received information from the union through school staff representatives, emails, and newsletters on a regular basis. However, teachers still felt unprepared to provide information or support to others. In fact, the predominant factors that kept teachers from participating informally was a lack of knowledge when it came to supporting colleagues, or disagreeing with union advice. The importance of following union advice and the appreciation of professional development

offerings were both rated very highly (“agree” or “strongly agree”). Hammer, Bayazit, and Wazeter (2009) provided encouragement that union members must feel a responsibility to the union (indicated by informal participation) before they are willing to work for the union (formal participation). Gender divisions were less noticeable when it came to the factors that teachers identified as influencing their informal union participation, although Greene and Kirton (2003) suggested that informal participation may be more suited to women and others who are unable to participate in traditional union roles.

As the literature suggested, different types of members had different patterns of participation. In particular, this study looked at patterns between low, medium, and high levels of participation in teachers, or as Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton (1981) referred to as “reluctant members/passive dues payers”, “selective activists”, and “ideological activists”. One study in the literature (Flood, Turner, & Willman, 2000) that used Nicholson et al.’s (1981) categorizations found that lack of participation was much lower than this study, with 52% categorized as low participation, compared to 20% in this study, 26% categorized as medium level participants, compared to 38% in this study, and 7% categorized as high level participants, compared to 19% in this study.

The low level participants in this study appeared to be slightly less experienced teachers, who were too busy to get involved with their union, or did not like or agree with union philosophy. Medium level participants cited lack of time as the most important factor that kept them from participating in formal ways. However, both of these groups stayed informed for the most part, and participated in, and were positive about professional development. High level participants generally reported more positive factors, although lack of time was not ruled out

entirely, which leads this researcher to believe that lack of time is a very real reason for teachers, and not just an excuse for lack of engagement.

In terms of the stated hypothesis and related literature (Bascia, 2000; Batson, Ahmad, & Tsang, 2002), very few survey respondents mentioned a family history of unionism, and only a few survey respondents mentioned loyalty to the union because of past support, while all participants in the high level focus group could name an event in their career that caused them to be more involved. Providing support to others was mentioned frequently by high level participants in both the focus group and the survey as a reason to keep doing the work of the union. Standing up to injustice was a frequent theme, although it was referred to more as “duty” and “the right thing to do” or “supporting the profession” (Bascia, 2000; Batson, Ahmad, & Tsang, 2002; Gronlund, 2011).

Limitations

Limitations to the internal validity of the study included the fact that survey participants were self-selected, and therefore were not necessarily representative of the entire sample population. Staff at six work sites did not receive surveys, as these sites did not have a staff representative available to distribute surveys, and the researcher did not have permission to address these sites herself. This meant that teachers at four elementary schools, district learning support teachers, and alternate school teachers were not represented in the sample. Additionally, part-time teachers and elementary teachers were under-represented, and experienced teachers were over-represented in the survey responses, as compared to the sample population.

Teachers who tend not to participate in union activities were likely under-represented, as would be expected (Wilson, 2012). Even though the introductory information included with the surveys (Appendix B) reinforced that the study was interested in both positive and negative

viewpoints, since the survey was distributed and collected by staff representatives of the union, teachers with a negative opinion of the union may have been reluctant to complete it.

Additionally, as a member of the union local under study, this researcher could have introduced personal bias to the analysis of the data.

Survey participants were free to complete the survey in the environment of their choosing, so this researcher had no control over the administration of the survey apart from providing it to them. The survey question that asked teachers to report hours spent per week engaged in various activities proved difficult for respondents to complete, as it was a long list and missed some key activities, notably “exercise”. Further, “family time”, “childcare” and “eldercare” were overlapping categories that created some confusion. It may have been better to use fewer, broader categories, as the main goal of this question was to find out how teachers were spending their time compared to the time they spent doing union work. Teachers also found this question difficult because the activities they spent time on can vary from week to week and month to month. In any case, self-reporting information of this nature has its own limitations, due to the difficulty in remembering and accurately accounting for time spent.

In the analysis of high, medium, and low level participants, twenty-nine teachers were deliberately omitted from the data because this researcher felt that they could not be categorized as either medium or high level participants, but were rather somewhere in the middle, and would have reduced the ability to make comparisons between these two levels of participation. It may have been more useful to consider five levels of union participation, following Nicholson, Ursell, and Blyton’s (1981) categories as used in the survey, instead of just three. The low level participants were comprised of both “reluctant members” and “passive dues payers”, and while both of these categories were not participating much, their reasons for doing so were likely quite

different. Only three categories were used due to the difficulty of finding focus group participants.

Suggestions for Further Research

This researcher was pleased that the response rate to the survey was 18.3%, but it also meant that there was a large amount of data collected from seven open-ended response questions, as well as three focus group interviews, which made it difficult to compare different combinations of demographic groups thoroughly.

There are some indications that support teachers are less engaged in union activities than other teachers, and it would be worth finding out more about that. Additionally, female secondary teachers appear to be slightly less involved than their female elementary counterparts, but this study did not obtain enough information about the sample population in order to adequately compare secondary and elementary data. Given that there are several variables that would be the same for both groups, it may be worth investigating whether differences that pertain to their union participation rates are significant.

Additionally, work and family commitments appear to be important factors for teachers when considering whether to participate in union work or not. It could be worthwhile to delve more deeply into those concerns, in order to find opportunities to engage teachers and re-connect them with their union.

Recommendations for Union Work

Teachers are busy with work, family and other commitments. Study participants commented on lack of time repeatedly, and in all demographic and participatory groups. Efforts to re-engage teachers with their union must consider this factor as the most important to overcome. Highly involved teachers have made union work a priority in order to fit it in to their

busy lives, but less involved teachers are reluctant to do so. It is this difference between the two groups that creates misunderstandings between the leadership (highly involved) and the membership (less involved). It is this difference that needs to be understood and resolved in order to bring more teachers into union work. Perhaps the findings of this study can help to shed some light on these differences and help to bridge the differences.

Certain groups of teachers appear to be more disengaged than others, and it may be useful, as recommended by Bascia (1998, 2000) to consider targeting these groups separately in efforts to make connections with them. Female secondary and support teachers are two groups that appear to be less involved than others. Again, these teachers are very busy, and efforts to engage them should be mindful of that. Providing childcare at meetings will not likely be the answer, as teachers value their family time and it is their job that is keeping them from both their family and their union. They appreciate the information that is available to them at their work site or via email, but allowing for easy access to two-way, rather than one-way, communication through expanded use of email and social networking applications may prove to be an effective solution during busy times (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002).

New teachers appear to be lacking in knowledge about union benefits and responsibilities, and they are too busy to come to “orientation sessions” or other events that would require more time from them. Initiatives to engage less experienced teachers early in their careers in ways that are less time-consuming and less formal could be fruitful, such as mentorship from school colleagues rather than union officers (Edwards, 2012; Pogodzinski, 2012).

Teachers are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative of professional development opportunities provided by their union. This avenue provides a promising way to engage more

teachers, as professional development days are some of the few times that teachers are free to collaborate and communicate with each other, and in so doing, share their collective union stories and histories, as recommended by Edwards (2008). Additionally, high level participants in both the survey and focus group appreciated the learning opportunities provided by holding NDTA positions. If NDTA committee positions were promoted as professional learning opportunities rather than time commitments they may be more attractive to less involved teachers.

Conclusion

The majority of teachers in this study reported a desire to be supportive of their union, and a willingness to become involved if an issue was important enough. Many more teachers are involved informally than might be assumed from attendance at meetings and this informal participation needs to be recognized and appreciated as important. Efforts to encourage teachers to participate more formally with their union must take into account the needs of the individual, especially in terms of their busy lives. A study such as this one, which considered both the positive and negative aspects of union participation, may provide an opportunity to begin a respectful dialogue about teacher union engagement, and hopefully lead to ways to re-connect teachers and the union that represents them.

Any actions that arise from this study will not realize immediate results. However, as this thesis was written, BC teachers were engaged in over a year of unsuccessful contract negotiations, and have voted 89% in favour of a strike in order to expedite a settlement. While job action in this jurisdiction is not new or even rare, many believe there is more at stake this time around. If so, teachers will need to become more active soon.

References

- Andersen, R., Curtis, J., & Grabb, E. (2006). Trends in civic association activity in four democracies: The special case of women in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, *71*(3), 376-400. doi:10.1177/000312240607100302
- Baines, D. (2010). In a different way: Social unionism in the nonprofit social services--an Australian/Canadian comparison. *Labor Studies Journal*, *35*(4), 480-502. doi:10.1177/0160449X10365543
- Barling, J., Fullagar, C., & Kelloway, E. K. (1992). *The union and its members: A psychological approach*. New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press.
- Bascia, N. (1998). Women teachers, union affiliation, and the future of North American teacher unionism. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *14*(5), 551-563. doi:10.1016/S0742-051X(98)00005-5
- Bascia, N. (2000). The other side of the equation: Professional development and the organizational capacity of teacher unions. *Educational Policy*, *14*(3), 385-404. doi:10.1177/0895904800014003003
- Batson, C. D., Ahmad, N., & Tsang, J. (2002). Four motives for community involvement. *Journal of Social Issues*, *58*(3), 429-445. doi:10.1111/1540-4560.00269
- BC Ministry of Education. (2011). *BC's education plan*. Retrieved from <http://www.bcedplan.ca/theplan.php>
- BC Ministry of Education. (2013). *Provincial reports: Teacher statistics – 2012/13*. Retrieved from <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/>

- BC Teachers' Federation. (2001). History of the BCTF from 1919 to 2001. Retrieved from http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/About_Us/HistorySummary.pdf
- BC Teachers' Federation. (2012). *Members' guide to the BCTF 2012-13*. Retrieved from <http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/public/AboutUs/MembersGuide/guide.pdf>
- Brunsting, S., & Postmes, T. (2002). Social movement participation in the digital age: Predicting offline and online collective action. *Small Group Research*, 33(5), 525-554.
doi:10.1177/104649602237169
- Editorial: Record low turnout in B.C. election [Editorial]. (2009, May 13). *CBC News: British Columbia*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/15/13/bc-low-voter-turnout.html>
- Edwards, B., & Foley, M.W. (1998). Civil society and social capital beyond Putnam. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42(1), 124-139. doi:10.1177/0002764298042001010
- Edwards, G. (2008). The 'Lifeworld' as a resource for social movement participation and the consequences of its colonization. *Sociology*, 42(2), 299-316.
doi:10.1177/0038038507087355
- Elections Canada. (2012). *Voter turnout at federal elections and referendums*. Retrieved from <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&dir=turn&document=index&lang=e>
- Ellemers, N., Kortekaas, P., & Ouwerkerk, J. W. (1999). Self-categorisation, commitment to the group and group self-esteem as related but distinct aspects of social identity. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29(2-3), 371-389.
- Fleming, T. (2011). *Worlds apart: British Columbia schools, politics and labour relations before and after 1972*. Mill Bay, BC: Bendall Books.

- Flood, P., Turner, T., & Willman, P. (2000). A segmented model of union participation. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 39(1), 108-114. doi:10.1111/0019-8676.00155
- Fullagar, C., & Barling, J. (1989). A longitudinal test of a model of the antecedents and consequences of union loyalty. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74(2), 213-227. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.74.2.213
- Fullagar, C. J., Gallagher, D. G., Clark, P. F., & Carroll, A. E. (2004). Union commitment and participation: A 10-year longitudinal study. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(4), 730-737. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.89.4.730
- Goeddeke, F. X., Jr., & Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D. (2010). Perceived support in a dual organizational environment: Union participation in a university setting. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31(1), 65-83. doi:10.1002/job.629
- Goldey, G., Swank, E., Hardesty, C., & Swain, R. (2010). Union professors: Framing processes, mobilizing structures, and participation in faculty unions. *Sociological Inquiry*, 80(3), 331. doi:10.1111/j.1475-682X.2010.00337.x
- Gordon, M. E., Philpot, J. W., Burt, R. E., Thompson, C. A., & Spiller, W. E. (1980). Commitment to the union: Development of a measure and an examination of its correlates. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 65(4), 479-499. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.65.4.479
- Greene, A., & Kirton, G. (2003). Possibilities for remote participation in trade unions: Mobilising women activists. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 34(4), 319-333. doi: 10.1111/1468-2338.00278

- Griffin, M. A., Tesluk, P. E., & Jacobs, R. R. (1995). Bargaining cycles and work-related attitudes: Evidence for threat-rigidity effects. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 38(6), 1709-1725.
- Grönlund, H. (2011). Identity and volunteering intertwined: Reflections on the values of young adults. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 22(4), 852-874. doi:10.1007/s11266-011-9184-6
- Hammer, T. H., Bayazit, M., & Wazeter, D. L. (2009). Union leadership and member attitudes: A multi-level analysis. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(2), 392-410. doi:10.1037/a0013613
- Hogler, R., & Henle, C. (2011). The attack on public sector unions in the United States: How regional culture influences legal policy. *Labor Law Journal*, 62(3), 136.
- Kawakami, K., & Dion, K. (1995). Social identity and affect as determinants of collective action: Toward an integration of relative deprivation and social identity theories. *Theory & Psychology*, 5(4), 551-577. doi:10.1177/0959354395054005
- Kelloway, E. K., & Barling, J. (1993). Members' participation in local union activities: Measurement, prediction, and replication. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78(2), 262-279. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.78.2.262
- Kelly, C. (1993). Group identification, intergroup perceptions and collective action. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 4, 59-83. doi:10.1080/14792779343000022
- Kelly, C., & Kelly, J. (1994). Who gets involved in collective action? Social psychological determinants of individual participation in trade unions. *Human Relations*, 47(1), 63-88. doi:10.1177/001872679404700104

- Kirton, G. (2005). The influences on women joining and participating in unions. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 36(5), 386-401. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2338.2005.00366.x
- Kuruvilla, S., Gallagher, D. G., & Wetzel, K. (1993). The development of members' attitudes toward their unions: Sweden and Canada. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 46(3), 499-514.
- Mattera, P. (2012). Unions in the crosshairs. *Social Policy*, 42(1), 59.
- McCartin, J. A. (2012). Beyond human rights: Understanding and addressing the attack on public sector unions. *Human Rights Review*, 13(3), 399-403. doi: 10.1007/s12142-012-0234-2
- McShane, S. L. (1986). The multidimensionality of union participation. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 59(3), 177-187.
- Mills, G. E. (2011). *Action Research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Nanaimo District Teachers' Association. (2011). *Constitution & bylaws and policy statements of the Nanaimo District Teachers' Association*. Retrieved from <http://www.ndta68.ca/constitution>
- Naylor, C., & White, M. (2010). *The worklife of BC teachers in 2009: A BCTF study of working and learning conditions*. (BCTF Report). Retrieved from <http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Issues/WorklifeWorkload/2009/FullReport.pdf>
- Newton, L. A., & Shore, L. M. (1992). A model of union membership: Instrumentality, commitment, and opposition. *Academy of Management Review*, 17(2), 275-298. doi: 10.5465/AMR.1992.4279541
- Nicholson, N., Ursell, G., & Blyton, P. (1981). *The dynamics of white collar unionism: A study of local union participation*. London: Academic Press.

- Obst, P. L., & White, K. M. (2007). Choosing to belong: The influence of choice on social identification and psychological sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(1), 77-90. doi:10.1002/jcop.20135
- Pogodzinski, B. (2012). The socialization of new teachers into teacher unions. *Labor Studies Journal*, 37(2), 183-202. doi: 10.1177/0160449X11433361
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Tuning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 28(4), 664-683.
- Rich, P. (1999). American voluntarism, social capital, and political culture. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 565(1), 15-34.
doi:10.1177/000271629956500102
- Ross, S. (2008). Social unionism and membership participation: What role for union democracy? *Studies in Political Economy*, (81), 129.
- Rotolo, T. (1999). Trends in voluntary association participation. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 28(2), 199-212. doi:10.1177/0899764099282005
- Simon, B., Loewy, M., Stürmer, S., Weber, U., Freytag, P., Habig, C., . . . Spahlinger, P. (1998). Collective identification and social movement participation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(3), 646-658. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.74.3.646
- Sims, J. (2005, November/December). We are the BCTF. *Teacher Newsmagazine*, 18(3).
Retrieved from <http://bctf.ca/publications/NewsmagArticle.aspx?id=7186>
- Snape, E., Redman, T., & Chen, A. W. (2000). Commitment to the union: A survey of research and the implications for industrial relations and trade unions. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 2(3), 205-230. doi:10.1111/1468-2370.00039

Wilson, J. (2012). Volunteerism research: A review essay. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 41(2), 176-212. doi:10.1177/0899764011434558

Appendix A: Survey Instrument



FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Vancouver Island University
900 Fifth Street, Nanaimo,
British Columbia, Canada V9R 5S5
Tel (250) 740-6221 Fax (250) 740-6463
<http://www.viu.ca/education/>

**Factors That Affect (both positively and negatively) Union Participation by Teachers
Participant Survey**

Part One: Background Information—PLEASE DON'T IDENTIFY YOURSELF IN ANY WAY

Gender: _____

Marital status: _____

Age: _____

Number of dependents: _____

FTE: _____

Years of teaching experience including this
year: _____

Usual Teaching Assignment
(select all that apply):

_____ Classroom teacher – primary

_____ Classroom teacher – secondary

_____ Teacher Teaching on Call

_____ Other (please specify):

_____ Classroom teacher – intermediate

_____ Support teacher

After school, evening and weekend activities.
Please mark with estimated **HOURS SPENT**
per week:

_____ Prep work for school

_____ Coaching

_____ Union work

_____ Volunteer work

_____ Childcare

_____ Housework

_____ Yardwork

_____ Internet (not work related)

_____ Other (please specify):

_____ Marking

_____ Other school activities

_____ Credit course work

_____ Time with family

_____ Eldercare

_____ Running errands

_____ Television

_____ Reading for pleasure

Part Two: Formal Participation

1. Which of the following statements best describes your involvement in the NDTA? (Select one only. "Active" here means to take part in union functions, e.g. meetings, etc.)

_____ "I am only a member because I have to be. I wouldn't be in a union otherwise."

_____ "I don't mind being a member but I don't have any interest in union activities."

_____ "Most of the time I don't get involved in union affairs but I become more actively involved over certain issues."

_____ "I'm a loyal and active member most of the time."

_____ "I'm an active member."

2. How many local general meetings did you attend in the 2012/13 school year? There were two meetings in September and one in each of November, January, March and May. _____

Why do you or do you not attend general meetings? (Please attach another sheet if you need more room for **any** of the open-ended responses in this survey.)

3. Did you vote in the election for executive positions at the Annual General meeting in May 2013? _____

Why or why not?

4. Have you ever held a position in the NDTA? (Select all that apply.)

- Never held office
- NDTA committee member
- Delegate to BCTF AGM
- Staff rep
- Executive member

What factors encouraged you to take on this position? Or what factors discouraged you from volunteering or running for a position?

5. Have you asked for support or assistance, either through your staff rep or through the local office in the last twelve months?

- Yes
- No

Part Three: Informal Participation

Use a five point scale to evaluate your level of informal involvement, where

1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

6. I stay informed about union matters.

- 1 2 3 4 5**

Please explain your response. Why do you stay informed, or conversely, what factors keep you from staying informed?

7. I provide information and support to colleagues about union matters.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

Please explain your response. Why did you respond as you did? What factors motivated you to or kept you from providing information and support?

8. I follow union advice regarding contractual issues and support union initiatives like job action.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

Please explain your response. Why did you respond as you did?

9. I actively participate in professional development opportunities supported by the NDTA and the BCTF.

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

10. I have participated in the following professional development activities in the past year (select all that apply):

School-based professional development

School-based professional development committee

District Day, February 2013

Professional development presenter/facilitator

NDTA Professional Development Committee

Member of a Local Specialist Association or Professional Learning Group

Attended a PSA conference

Member of a PSA

Other (please specify): _____

Please explain your responses to numbers 9 and 10 above. Why do you participate in these activities, or why don't you?

Please feel free to attach another sheet with more thoughts you would like to share with me about union participation.

Thank you for taking the time from your busy life to complete this survey!

The return of your survey indicates your consent to participate in this research and for the information you provided to be included in the study results. Please return this survey to the box indicated by your staff rep.

**If you would be interested in meeting with teachers that feel the same way that you do in a focus group interview, please contact
Denise Wood**

A light meal will be provided to focus group participants.

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate (Survey)

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Vancouver Island University
900 Fifth Street, Nanaimo,
British Columbia, Canada V9R 5S5
Tel (250) 740-6221 Fax (250) 740-6463
<http://www.viu.ca/education/>

Invitation to Participate**“Factors That Affect Union Participation by Teachers” survey**

September, 2013

Dear Colleague,

As part of my Masters in Educational Leadership at Vancouver Island University, I am conducting research into the factors that may encourage teachers to or discourage teachers from participating actively in the Nanaimo District Teachers’ Association (NDTA). You are being invited to participate because you are a member of the NDTA. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and I would appreciate your help.

To participate in this study, you are asked to complete the attached anonymous survey. The survey asks for some background information as well as 10 questions regarding the factors that you feel either encourage you to or discourage you from participating in a list of union activities. Once you have completed the survey, please seal it in the envelope provided and return it to the box provided by your staff rep. **Please do not provide any identifying information about yourself, your school, or name any other person in the survey.** At the end of the survey you will also be invited to volunteer, by emailing the researcher, to participate in a focus group session or follow up interview about this issue.

My supervisor and I will be the only persons with access to the research data. Completed surveys and other data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and will be shredded in approximately three years’ time. Electronic files will also be deleted at that time. Until then, they will be password protected.

The results from this research will be reported in a written thesis as a requirement of my program. The results will also be shared with all teachers in the NDTA. This survey is neither initiated nor administered by the NDTA, but is my own personal thesis question. I am interested in hearing from *all* teachers, both positive and negative views. Please consider completing the survey, as I hope that the results will provide information that may foster a more active union

membership, with a wider representation of teacher views. Information about this research will not be made public in any way that identifies you or your school.

There are no known harms associated with your participation in this research. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to participate or not without explanation or penalty. You may choose to submit an incomplete survey. Please note, however, that once you place your survey into the box, your information cannot be removed from the research results as it will not be possible to distinguish your responses from others that will have been submitted.

If you have any questions about the research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at the email address at the bottom of the page. If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext. 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

By completing the survey and returning it, you are consenting to participate in this research. Please detach and keep this letter for your records.

Denise Wood
Masters of Education Student
Vancouver Island University

Rachel Moll, PhD, Supervisor
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
Rachel.Moll@viu.ca

Appendix C: Focus Group Interview Questions



FACULTY OF EDUCATION
 Vancouver Island University
 900 Fifth Street, Nanaimo,
 British Columbia, Canada V9R 5S5
 Tel (250) 740-6221 Fax (250) 740-6463
<http://www.viu.ca/education/>

Focus Group Questions (semi-structured)

Preamble: Consent statements will be provided to participants, in duplicate (one to sign and return, one for them to keep). I will further remind participants not to mention any non-present members by name. Participants can choose not to answer any question.

Demographic information will be collected from each participant. Participants will be reminded that I cannot guarantee that their participation in the focus group sessions will be confidential. All conversations video recorded by me will be coded upon transcription, and data will be stored separately from names. Personal information will not be used in my data or final thesis that could identify any participant.

Demographic Information collected from each participant

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Marital status: _____

Number of dependents: _____

FTE: _____

Years of teaching experience including this year: _____

Usual Teaching Assignment
 (select all that apply):

_____ Classroom teacher – primary

_____ Classroom teacher – intermediate

_____ Classroom teacher – secondary

_____ Support teacher

_____ Teacher Teaching on Call

_____ Other (please specify):

Focus Group One: Little or no participation

1. What factors keep you from attending meetings?
2. How informed do you think you are in regards to union issues? What factors prevent you from being informed? How well does the union communicate with you?
3. Are you involved in professional development activities? To what extent?
4. What is your impression of the usefulness of the union? Have you ever needed union support?
5. What is your opinion about union fees? Do you think that the membership gets good value for their fees?
6. Survey results indicate that some of the reasons members do not participate are as follows. Do you agree?
 - a. Over 40% of respondents indicated that they were too busy to attend meetings; meetings conflicted with work, family, or personal commitments, or were too sick or too tired to attend.
 - b. The negative or political tone of meetings
 - c. The length and structure of meetings
 - d. The lack of representation/respect for all views
 - e. Lack of interest
7. If you were advising the union on ways to engage more members like you, what would you advise?
8. How involved are you in pro-d activities and planning?

Focus Group Two: Medium level participation (attends meeting and/or stays informed and/or participates in professional development)

1. Please describe your level of involvement in the NDTA.
2. Why have you felt that you needed to be involved in this (these) way(s)?
3. What has kept you from becoming more involved? What has kept you from participating in more formal ways?
4. Do you have friends (at work or otherwise) that are more involved than you are? Do you think that your friendships play a role in your participation?
5. How well informed are you about union issues? Why or why not?
6. Do you attend meetings? Why or why not?
7. How well do union values align with your values? In what ways do they differ? Could values be a factor in your decisions to be involved or not involved?
8. Do you have other commitments that keep you from being more involved, or as involved as you would like to be otherwise? Work commitments? Family commitments?
9. Survey results indicate that some of the reasons members participate are as follows. Do you agree?
 - a. To be a part of the decision making
 - b. To stay informed
 - c. Participation is a duty and/or a right of being a union member
 - d. Out of interest, the opportunity for learning, and enjoyment
10. Survey results indicate that some of the reasons members do not participate are as follows. Do you agree?

- a. Over 20% do not like the structure of the meetings (too long, same people talking, etc.) and nearly 10% did not like the negative and/or political nature of the meetings
- b. Over 40% of respondents said they were too busy to attend meetings
- c. Feel underqualified
- d. Not interested

Focus group three: High level of participation

1. You have all participated in union activities to a high degree, either as a staff rep, a committee member or an executive member. This focus group is to try to determine why that is, what factors may have contributed to your involvement. For example, the research says that a family history of unionism is often a contributing factor. Would you agree in your situation?
2. Was there a critical incident in your career that caused you to become more union-oriented?
3. Did you feel like you were ready for a different challenge, one that union work could provide?
4. Are many of your friends and associates also active union members? Was this always the case, or more so now that you are involved?
5. Are there other reasons or factors that you think may have contributed to your union activism?
6. The survey responses seem to indicate that these factors influence union activism and participation. Do you agree? Do any of these factors apply to your own situation?
 - a. Union involvement is a duty or a right

- b. To stay informed
 - c. To be a part of the decision making
 - d. A belief in the philosophy of unionism
 - e. To support colleagues
 - f. Social reasons
 - g. To give back
 - h. Learning opportunity/interest
 - i. Improve education for teachers and kids
 - j. No one else will do it
7. Over 40% of respondents said they do not attend meetings because they were too busy. You are busy people, too. How do you manage your time in order to participate in the union?
8. How do you balance work and family commitments with union commitments?
9. What could the union do to encourage more participation?
10. A survey of UK teachers found that lack of time at work to discuss, reflect, collectivize was a factor in teachers not participating in their union. Would you say that over the course of your career, interactions with your colleagues have decreased?
11. Do you identify with being an activist?

Appendix D: Focus Group Consent Form

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Vancouver Island University
900 Fifth Street, Nanaimo,
British Columbia, Canada V9R 5S5
Tel (250) 740-6221 Fax (250) 740-6463
<http://www.viu.ca/education/>

**Consent Form for
“Factors That Affect Union Participation by Teachers” Focus Groups**

November, 2013

Dear Colleague,

As part of my Masters in Educational Leadership at Vancouver Island University, I am conducting research into the factors that may encourage teachers to or discourage teachers from participating actively in the Nanaimo District Teachers’ Association (NDTA).

During this session, you will be asked for some demographic information including teaching assignment for comparison purposes, and then I will be facilitating a discussion about the reasons why focus group participants participate or do not participate in a number of union activities. Your participation will require approximately two hours of your time, and will be video-taped with your permission to make individual comments easier to distinguish and transcribe.

There are no known harms associated with your participation in this research. I cannot guarantee that your participation or the information you provide in the focus group sessions will be confidential, although your participation will be kept confidential by me, and I would ask that all participants do the same (though I cannot guarantee that will be the case). I also ask that all participants treat each other with respect, and not respond negatively to anything that is shared today. I would further remind participants not to mention any non-present members by name, and to mention each other by first name only. With your permission, all conversations will be video-recorded by me and will be coded upon transcription, and data will be stored separately from names. Video-recordings will allow me to make sure that I do not miss any of the conversation, and to match your responses to your demographic information, so that I may be able to make general statements in my research about a particular demographic. With your permission, I may use quotations from the transcription, but no quotations will be used that could identify you in any way. In fact, no personal information will be used in my data or final thesis that could identify any participant. Video-recordings themselves will not be used after transcription.

All records of participation will be kept strictly confidential, such that only I and my supervisor will have access to the information. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet within my home office. Data will be destroyed by shredding at the end of the project, approximately June 2017. Electronic files and video-recordings will also be deleted at that time. The results from this study will be reported in a written research report and an oral report during a class presentation. Information about the project will not be made public in any way that identifies individual participants.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time for any reason without explanation and without penalty. You may choose not to answer any question for any reason.

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext, 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor at the e-mail address below:

Denise Wood
Masters of Education Student
Vancouver Island University

Rachel Moll, PhD, Supervisor
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
Rachel.Moll@viu.ca

I have read the above consent form and consent to participate in the focus group. I also consent to be video-taped.

Participant's signature

I consent to be quoted in the final research report. I understand that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be reported.

Participant's signature

Date

PLEASE KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS

Appendix E: Informal Participation Categorized by Survey Question and Demographic

Group

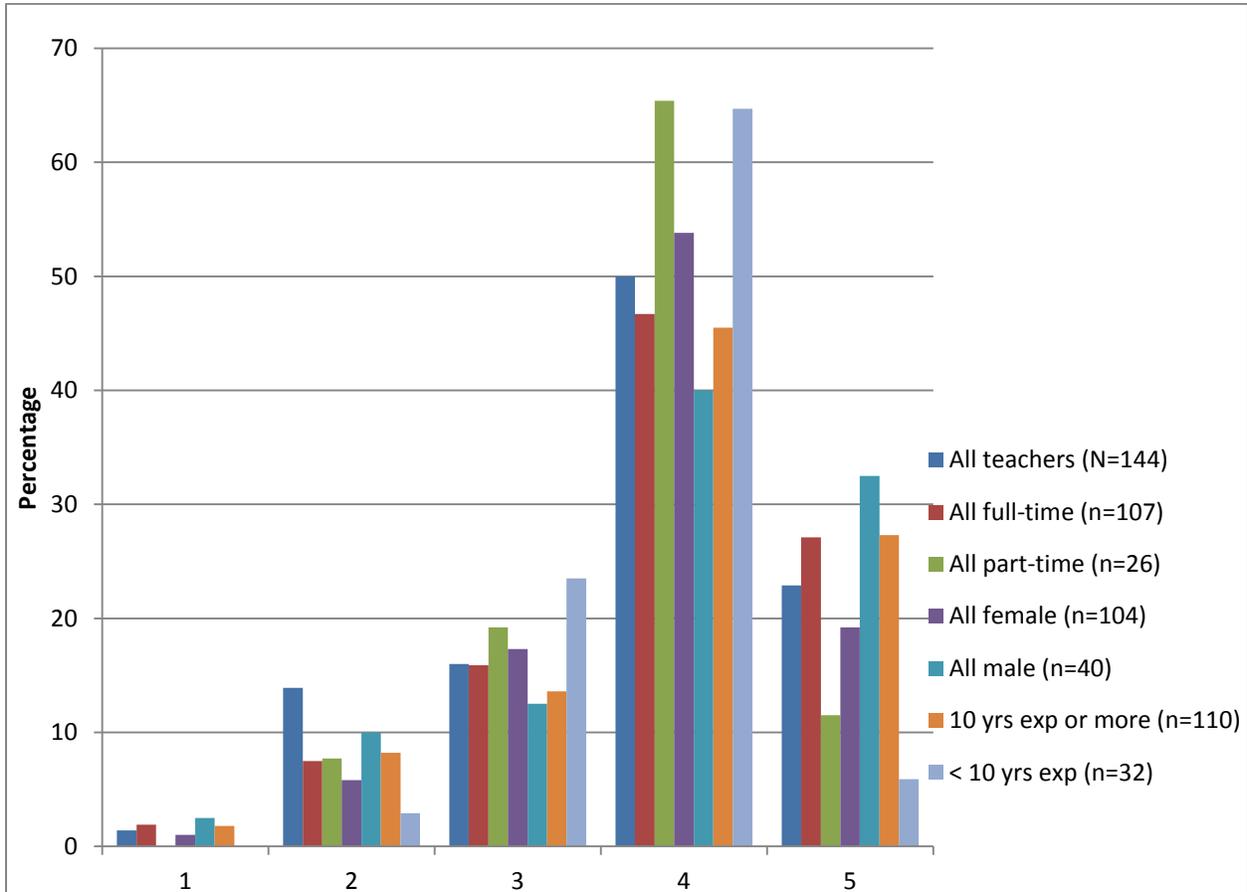


Figure E.1. Informal Participation: "I stay informed about union matters"

Percentage of teachers who chose:

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neutral

4=agree

5=strongly agree

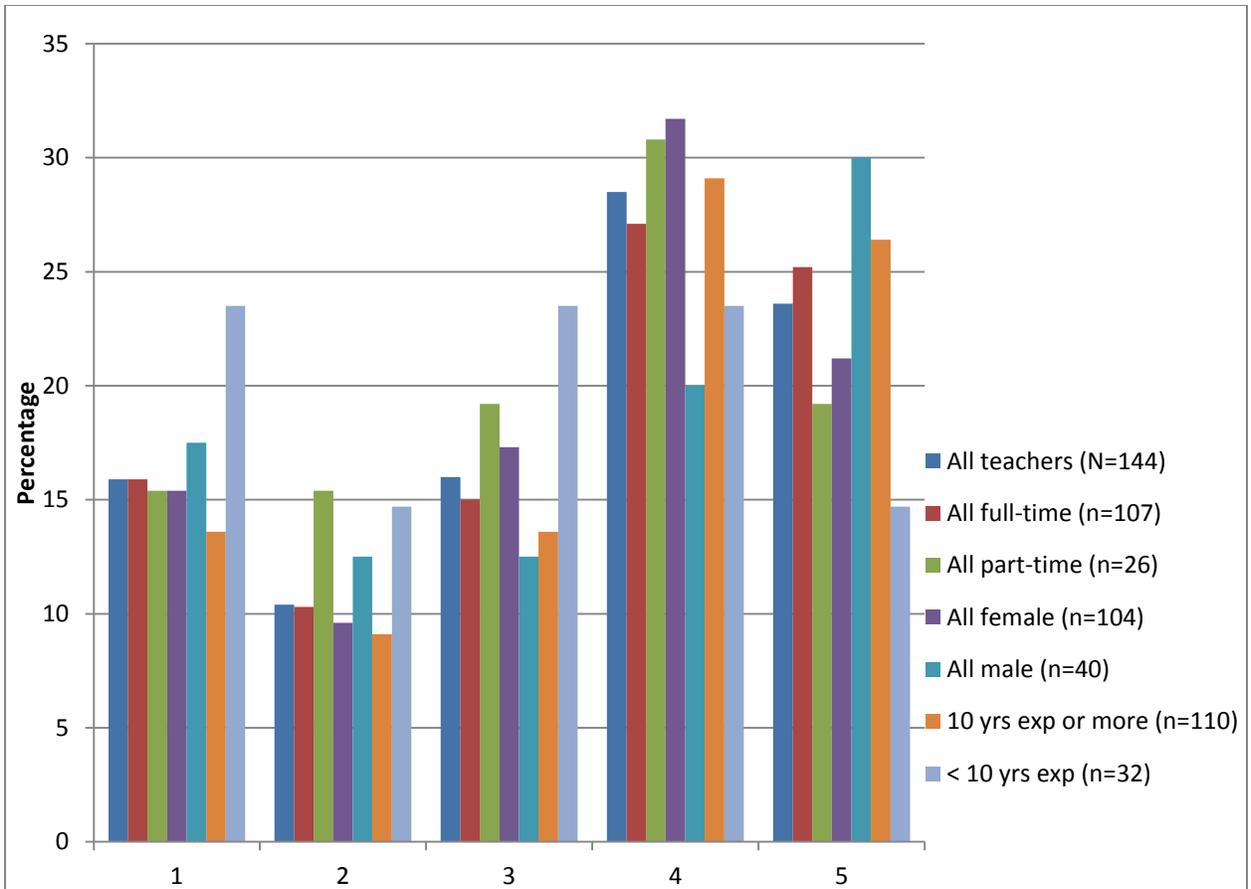


Figure E.2. Informal Participation: "I provide information and support to colleagues"

Percentage of teachers who chose:

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neutral

4=agree

5=strongly agree

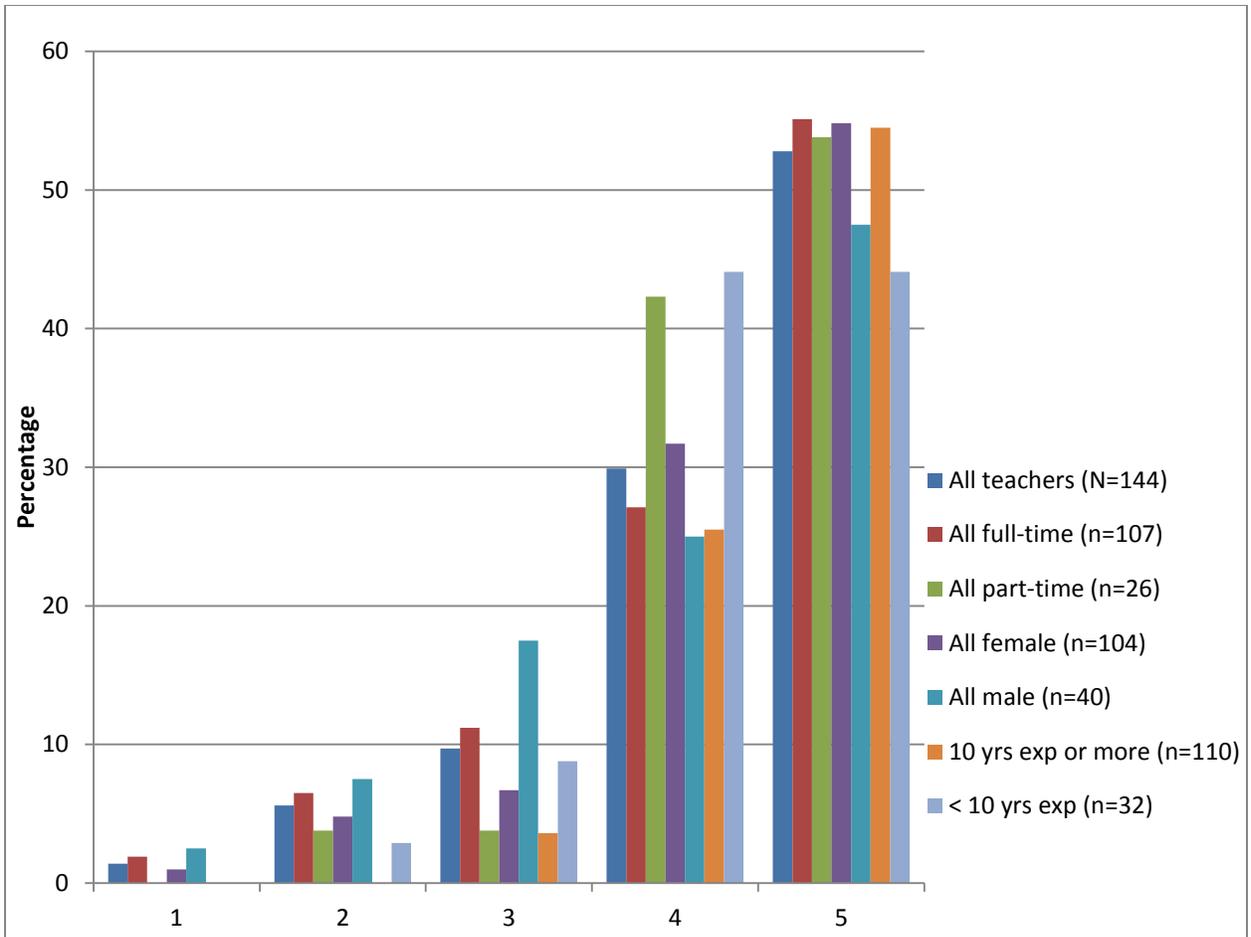


Figure E.3. Informal Participation: "I follow union advice regarding contractual issues"

Percentage of teachers who chose:

- 1=strongly disagree
- 2=disagree
- 3=neutral
- 4=agree
- 5=strongly agree

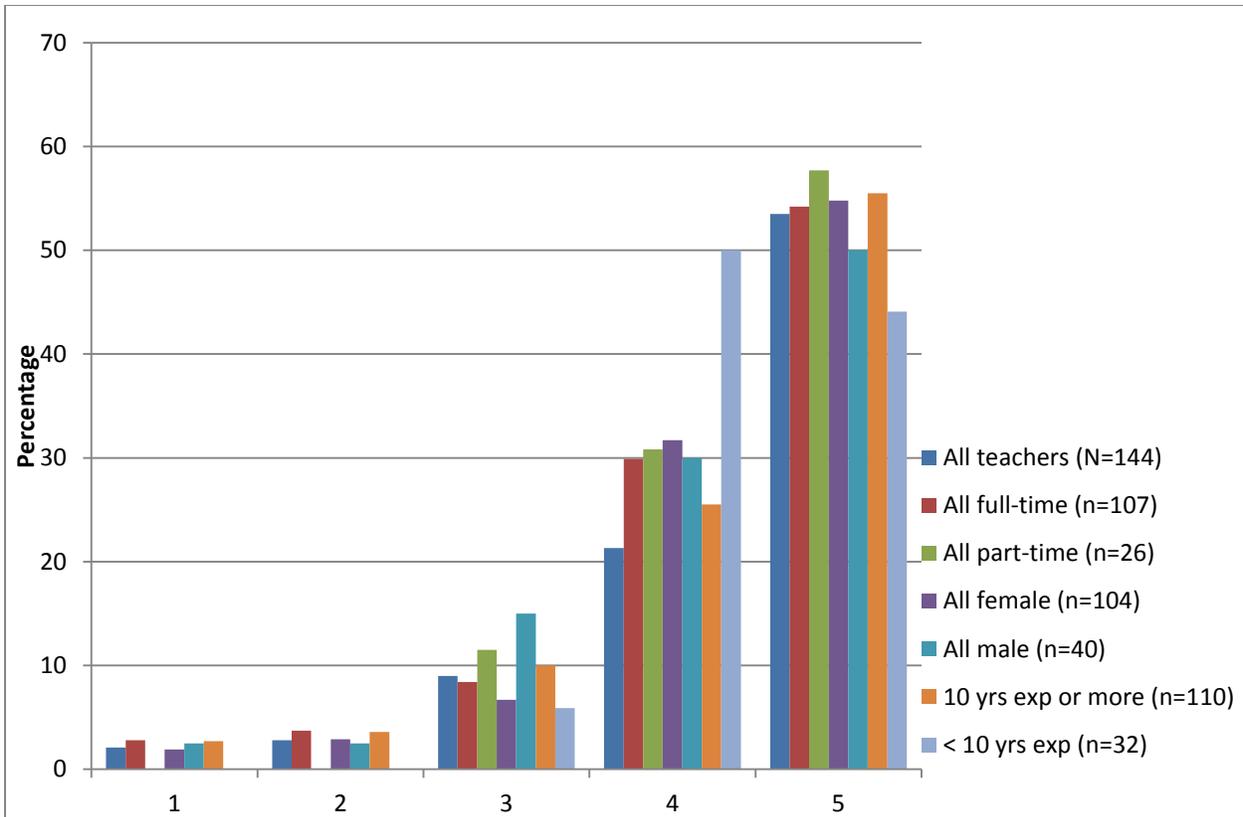


Figure E.4. Informal Participation: "I actively participate in professional development opportunities"

Percentage of teachers who chose:

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neutral

4=agree

5=strongly agree

Appendix F: Identified Factors Categorized by Survey Question and Level of Participation

Table F.1

Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Meetings

	% Low level participants (n=29)	% Medium level participants (n=55)	% High level participants (n=28)
Too busy	24	55	18
Lack of democracy	21	29	0
Too long/neg/boring	24	13	15
To stay informed	0	0	57
Sense of duty	0	0	21
To contribute	0	2	18
To influence decisions	0	0	18
To support executive	0	0	18
To support profession	0	0	11
Did not respond	14	13	7

Table F.2

Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, AGM

	% Low level participants (n=29)	% Medium level participants (n=55)	% High level participants (n=28)
To choose leadership	0	24	50
To support democracy	14	0	18
Attended meeting	24	0	11
Too busy	10	27	0
Did not attend	10	0	0
Did not know/support candidates	24	2	0
To influence decisions	0	0	18
Did not care/forgot	14	0	4
Did not respond	28	18	11

Table F.3

Factors that Affect Union Participation by teachers, NDTA positions

	% Low level participants (n=29)	% Medium level participants (n=55)	% High level participants (n=28)
Too busy	34	31	14
Dislikes the union	24	0	0
Not interested	7	13	0
Too negative	0	11	0
Sense of duty	0	11	21
Experience	0	0	39
To help out	0	0	21
To protect rights	0	0	11
Enjoyment	0	0	11
Did not respond	31	31	14

Table F.4

Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Staying Informed

	% Low level participants (n=29)	% Medium level participants (n=55)	% High level participants (n=28)
Sense of duty	0	0	43
Important	17	9	32
Inform decisions	0	9	29
Inform others	10	0	21
Affects my job	0	16	14
Don't trust mgmt./govt	0	2	18
Too negative	0	0	18
Did not respond	14	13	7

Table F.5

Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Informing Others

	% Low level participants (n=29)	% Medium level participants (n=55)	% High level participants (n=28)
Lack of knowledge	24	25	4
Disagrees with info	17	7	0
To help others	0	18	54
Sense of duty	0	0	25
Did not respond	28	20	7

Table F.6

Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Following Union Advice

	% Low level participants (n=29)	% Medium level participants (n=55)	% High level participants (n=28)
Solidarity	28	18	61
General belief in unionism	0	16	18
Depends on advice	0	16	0
Appreciates work of others	0	11	4
Do not agree with advice	24	0	0
No choice	14	9	4
Did not respond	24	13	18

Table F.7

Factors that Affect Union Participation by Teachers, Professional Development

	% Low level participants (n=29)	% Medium level participants (n=55)	% High level participants (n=28)
To learn and grow	41	42	50
Important for the profession	17	0	18
Required to attend	10	9	4
To share with colleagues	0	15	14
Enjoyable	0	13	0
To stay current	0	11	0
Did not respond	28	16	11

