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Don't forget about the me in AFSCME: An analysis of collective bargaining in municipalities

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Don't Forget About the Me in AFSCME

An Analysis of Collective Bargaining in Municipalities

(TITLE)

BY

Michael L. Woods, Jr.

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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2005

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Abstract

Collective bargaining in the public sector is inherently political. Public unions negotiate either directly or indirectly with elected public officials. This thesis explores the political bargaining strategies adopted by municipal public unions and the inherent factors that surround the collective bargaining process (e.g. trust, state of the economy, community interest groups, and media). The intentions of this study were to see if these variables influenced negotiated wage increases and the likelihood of experiencing bargaining impasses. The findings suggest that public union political bargaining strategies positively affect negotiated wage increases. Trust, however, seems to evolve as the most important variable. Building a trusting labor-management relationship has a far-reaching effect. Municipal bargaining units that possess a high level of trust for the city government officials are more likely to receive sizeable wage increases and less likely to reach a bargaining impasse, than bargaining units that possess a low level of trust for the city government officials.

Don't Forget About the Me in AFSCME
An Analysis of Collective Bargaining in Municipalities

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04-25-05
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Don't Forget About the Me in AFSCME

Thank You

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Public Sector Collective Bargaining

Public sector labor-management relationships are different from those in the private sector. In private industry, labor unions are able to apply economic pressure to the company or corporation for whom they work. Striking employees can halt production until the union and management negotiate an agreement. Outside of striking, private unions can conduct informational picketing and promote issues through the media. Regardless of the strategy, there is typically a serious intention of applying economic pressure upon the management. Public unions use a different bag of tricks. They deal either directly or indirectly with public officials. Many times these officials are vulnerable through the electoral process. Thereby, a different environment is created for the union to implement countering strategies to receive improvements in wages, healthcare, job security, and working conditions. Chandler and Judge (1998, 151) state "negotiations between unions and management do not occur in a vacuum." Political, economic, and legal environments exist and affect the likelihood of an impasse and quality of the negotiated contract.

Municipal public unions have received less scholarly attention than those at the state and federal levels. Scholars have conducted research on particular strategies used by public unions such as strikes (Erickson and Mitchell 1996), and endorsing and lobbying candidates (Smith 1985, Swanson 1993, Gely and Chandler 1995, Masters 1997, Masters 1998). The scholarly world however lacks a serious examination of the likelihood of municipal unions implementing these strategies (e.g. informational picketing, lobbying elected officials, petitioning, going public through the media and

striking) to gain leverage in the collective bargaining process. Also, we are unaware of the direct benefits of using a particular strategy or combination of strategies.

Strategies

Smith (1985) explains that the collective bargaining process is political in nature. Gerhart and Krolikowski (1980) classify the political aspect of the labor-management relationship as a potential non-monetary bargaining cost. Strategies such as, petitioning, mailings, informational picketing, going public through the media, and striking, help exploit the vulnerability of a publicly (politically) elected official. Gerhart and Krolikowski (1980) explains that the labor-management relationship involves much more than monetary factors. They briefly draw attention away from the cost of the management rewarding the union with wage increases, healthcare, and other types of benefits of monetary worth. Public unions implement strategies to accommodate the surrounding political, social, and economic environments.

Strikes

Granting public employees the right-to-strike has been a highly controversial topic. States may enact laws that grant public employees a limited right to strike (Aboud and Schram 1984). They may instead decide to outlaw strikes while choosing to encourage collective bargaining. Less labor friendly states may outlaw strikes in addition to discouraging collective bargaining. States have adopted several different versions of right-to-strike laws.

Public unions use a strike as a strategic tool in grievance and collective bargaining negotiation procedures. Numerous scholars have focused on the frequency and effectiveness of public sector strikes (Aboud and Schram 1984, Johnston 1994, Devinatz 1997, Hebdon and Stern 2003). Johnston (1994) contends that in order for a public union to successfully use the strike mechanism, it must; 1) frame its demands in terms of the public interest; and 2) effectively build strong and successful coalitions with other labor unions and public groups. Demands should be framed around ambiguous issues such as social or racial justice, comparable worth, and pay equity. A public union striking for comparable worth within the public agency can exaggerate its message by saying that it is fighting for women all across the country. Johnston (1994) believes that framing the demands in such a way is essential to the success of a public union strike. The weakness of his study lies in his examination of only one municipal public union: AFSCME Local 101, which represents municipal employees in San Jose, California.

Devinatz (1997) tests the validity of Johnston's (1994) hypothesis by examining seven different case studies that extend the data pool to other states across the country. San Jose's case could be a unique environment for a public employee strike. Different cities have distinctive political, social, and economic environments. Devinatz (1997) finds that unions do not necessarily have to frame their demands in terms of the public interest. Three of the seven unions involved in his case studies attempt to frame their demands around the interest of the public, but only one could conclude that its strike was successful. Devinatz (1997) however determined that Johnston (1994) was partially correct with his two hypotheses. Forming coalitions during the strike is an important element to the success of the strike. Two of the seven public unions formed coalitions

during the their respective strikes, and each one was classified as having received a successful outcome.

Erickson and Mitchell (1996) examine the media coverage of unions that went on strike. Although they primarily focus on unions within the private sector, their findings can also be applied to public unions. They find that strikes conducted within industries of unusual importance seem to receive significantly more attention than other industries. Prominent unions received more coverage than the lesser-known unions. The article to strike ratio was 12.2, whereas the article to nonstrike ratio was 1.0 (Erickson and Mitchell 1996). Media coverage gravitates towards those workers/unions that choose the path less traveled of striking. Erickson and Mitchell (1996) do not study the effectiveness of a work stoppage at gaining a more successful contract for the union. Their findings however provide information that can be helpful for scholars studying public unions. Industries of unusual importance received greater attention than other industries. Several public unions operate within "industries" of unusual importance. These employees deliver a plethora of government services that the general public often takes for granted.

Endorse Candidates/Monetary Contributions to Campaigns

AFSCME, being one of the nation's largest public unions, commonly endorses candidates and contributes monetarily at all levels of the political arena. Its original mission strongly promoted collective bargaining and lobbying as the most democratic and effective ways to improve wages and working conditions (Masters 1998). Unlike the private sector, public unions can use political activities to influence the outcomes of collective bargaining contracts (Gely and Chandler 1995). Public unions contribute to

the political process by engaging in endorsements and campaign funding (Gely and Chandler 1995). Gely and Chandler (1995) insist that political activities are the most direct way to influencing the collective bargaining process.

Gely and Chandler (1995) conduct research on the significance of political activities for protective service unions. They find that union political activities, such as candidate endorsements and campaign contributions, influence the departmental expenditures. Wages and employment are both positively affected by the unions' political activism. Public unions such as AFSCME use political strategies to establish a favorable political environment that will allow the union to gain influence. For example, in the late 1980's the Austin, Texas municipal employees, represented by AFSCME, increased their role in electoral politics (Swanson 1993). The funding for political contributions was allocated to the local unions from the national AFSCME headquarters in Washington (Swanson 1993). Having access to such a large bank account enhances public unions' ability to influence politics at the local levels of government.

Lobbying, Calling Legislators, Going Public Through the Media, Petitions

Basic grassroots political strategies of public unions are lobbying, calling legislators/councilmen, sending letters to local elected officials, calling elected officials, going public through the media, and petitioning (Smith 1985, Swanson 1993, Gely and Chandler 1995, Masters 1997, Masters 1998). In the 1960's public unions frequently resorted to the political strategies of endorsing candidates and lobbying. In 1968, Paul Gerhart from the Brookings Institute found that public employee organizations made candidate endorsements in 80 percent of the cities in his study (Smith 1985). Also, these

organizations engaged in some sort of local level lobbying in 60 percent of the cities (Smith 1985). Lobbying can be in the form of letter writing, phone calling, television/radio informational campaigns, or face-to-face contact. Smith (1985) mentions that political tactics are used during the collective bargaining process due to the political nature of the labor-management negotiations. For example, AFSCME Local 1624 in Austin, Texas used the political tool of going public through the media. The local press gave them a considerable amount of coverage. This publicity allowed the union to gain a favorable image in the public's eye (Swanson 1993). The city manager acknowledged that the union was gaining favorable media coverage. In order for her to maintain a positive public image, she would need to make a concentrated effort to compromise with the union's requests.

Larger cities generally experience higher levels of union political activism (Smith 1985). Large cities can encompass diverse populations and interest groups. This type of a political environment increases the likelihood of union political activism (Smith 1985). The membership size of the union also positively affects the influence of the union's political activities (Babcock et al 1997). Public union members have the ability to influence the votes of their friends and families. A large membership reiterates the concept that strength is in numbers. Studies that were conducted in the 1960's and 1970's showed the importance of public unions in swing elections (Babcock et al 1997). As a result of their successful political activism, they were shown to receive substantially large wage increases (Babcock et al 1997)

Political activities by public unions climaxed in the 1960's (Smith 1985). Ever since, their political activism has declined. Unions still endorsed candidates, but to a

lesser extent. They rely more on state-level lobbying due to the state governments' ability to regulate local labor relations. In general, municipal public unions have garnered less attention from the scholarly world than the bargaining units at the state level. Since public unions are more politically active at the state level, scholars tend to ignore the bargaining units at the local level.

Informational Picketing

Informational picketing is a grassroots union strategy that has commonly been used in both the private and public sectors. This activity informs the public about the issues that are of the union's concern, such as, wages, benefits, and working conditions. Informational picketing and holding rallies are typical tactics practiced by public unions (Swanson 1993). Public unions counter management's threats with these tactics, thereby emphasizing the political nature of the labor-management relationship in the public sector. Previous empirical research that I have conducted on public unions allowed me to observe the effects of informational picketing.¹ Holding signs with catchy phrases and distributing literature can easily turn a low-profile bargaining process into a highly publicized event that is shown as the top story on the six o'clock news.

Factors that Surround the Collective Bargaining Process

State of the Economy

The economy ebbs and flows like the waves of the ocean. Governmental entities experience the difficulties of dealing with economic shifts when prosperous economies fall into recessions. Recessing economies are an obvious impediment to governmental

revenues. States, counties, and municipalities find themselves faced with increasing financial obligations, but fewer revenues to accommodate their constituents' needs. The state of the economy affects all levels of government and all aspects of the policy making process. Some factors, such as the state of the economy, are out of a public union's control and even the most labor friendly management cannot provide for all the union's requests if it simply cannot come up with the money.

City governments are feeling the negative effects of the worst federal and state fiscal crisis in decades (Hoene and Pagano 2003). Cities for the first time in over a decade have found their state-funding cut. Balancing budgets is difficult, and cutting services seems inevitable. Hoene and Pagano (2003) discuss the drastic change that cities across the country have experienced in their state government funding. Twenty-four states cut aid to cities in 2003 and 2004, whereas in the mid-1990's states were allocating money to city governments at the rate of a 4.6 percent increase annually (Hoene and Pagano 2003).

Municipal governments recently have been finding themselves with less money to work with than in the previous fiscal year. During recessions public unions understand that management has fewer monetary resources to bring to the bargaining table. Negotiated wage increases are lower in times of a distressed economy (Cimini 1994, Hoene and Pagano 2003). The early 1990's were a prime example of public unions being caught in the midst of an economic recession (Cimini 1994). Davy and Hennessy (15, 1997) stated that, "balancing a municipal budget was becoming a nightmare." Many municipal public unions started to realize the importance of job security. As Cimini

(1994) and Hoene and Pagano (2003) expressed, the state of the economy forces unions to alter their priorities.

Trust

Trust can be the foundation of any relationship and is not built overnight. In a labor-management relationship, the collective bargaining process can be an indicator of the level of trust that the two sides hold for each other. In the case study involving the city of Indianapolis, Rubin and Rubin (2003) show the effects of having trust built into the labor-management relationship. The city reformed the bargaining process by shifting away from a traditional bargaining mechanism and started to encourage employee involvement in the process, which is commonly referred to as collaborative bargaining. By implementing this new type of bargaining, management was able to acquire a much higher level of trust from the union. Not only was a more civil relationship established, but also both sides benefited in many other ways. The union received high wage increases of approximately 6 percent. The contract negotiations were expedited, which lowered the likelihood of an impasse. In addition, the city showed that union members were more productive - happy workers are productive workers. Privatization also tends to be contemplated when there is a distrusting, adversarial union-management relationship (Chandler and Feuille 1991). A poor relationship leads to intense contract negotiations that can potentially lengthen the negotiation process to the extent of an impasse.

Priorities

Unions generally will go into contract negotiations with a few top priorities on their agenda. There may be times when members of a specific bargaining unit are receiving significantly lower wages than other comparable public employees. In this case, the public union wants parity for its workers. Wages are likely to be the top issue on the bargaining table. Healthcare and other benefits are likely to be classified as lower priorities for the upcoming contract.

-Wages

Unionization in the public sector has been shown to positively affect the wages of the union members (Trejo 1991). States that permit collective bargaining for public employees are more likely to possess higher levels of unionization in the public sector (Feuille (1991). As a result, wages and employment increase from unionization. Wages essentially can be increased for both union and nonunion sectors of government. Unions within a municipality (or within the surrounding communities) exert a spillover effect (Ichniowski et al 1989). This spillover is commonly referred to as the threat effect. Municipal employees that are not affiliated with a union still obtain wage increases due to the unionized workforce in other departments or neighboring municipalities (Ichniowski et al 1989). Management provides comparable compensation for the nonunionized workforce to try to deter the employees from feeling the need to organize.

A significant amount of research has shown that public unions are very successful at acquiring sizeable wage increases for their members (Balkin 1984, Ichniowski et al 1989, Valletta 1989, Feuille 1991, Babcock et al 1997, Mohanty 1998, Meyerson 2000). Unionization is associated with higher wage increases. Mohanty (1998) found that local

government is an attractive level of government for people seeking employment. Local governmental departments generally provide better compensation packages than the private sector. When public unions enter into the picture of local governments, those same jobs that were attractive before are now even more desirable. His study indicates that a job seeker's desire for union status is a major determinant of a worker's choice to apply for local government jobs.

-Job Security

The early 1990's brought an attenuated economy. Unemployment levels increased and public unions experienced difficulty in negotiating wage increases. Wasilewski (1996) and Cimini (1994) found that union employees kept receiving lower wage increases than the previous negotiated contract. In 1993, 1.7 million (63 percent) of the 2.7 million state and local government employees experienced some form of contract negotiations (Cimini 1994). This marked the fourth consecutive year that the current contract brought smaller wage increases than the contract that it was replacing. Local government employees received the lowest wage increases averaging just 1.9 percent. Approximately 339,000 local government employees did not receive wage increases, while 46,000 employees received wage cuts. From 1984 to 1990, the average wage increase for public employees ranged from 4.6 percent to 5.7 percent (Cimini 1994). Then in 1993 the average change in wage rates for the 2.7 million public employees was only 2.8 percent. Such a low pay increase does not necessarily signify that the public unions lost their bargaining edge or political influence. Instead, Cimini (1994) found that public unions placed wages and other economic incentives farther down their priority list. In 1996 local government employees were found to receive only a 2.7 percent wage

increase over the life of their negotiated contract, whereas state and federal employees received 3.3 percent and 2.9 percent wage increases respectively (Wasilewski 1996).

The public labor movement's response to a recessing economy in the 1990's was to negotiate for job security instead of significant wage increases. According to Cimini (1994), public unions decided that their top priority was to secure the future of their members and avoid layoffs as much as possible. Job security can be a top priority for public unions at the local level, especially when the economy is slumping and municipal governments are running deficits.

The 21st century brought budget deficits to all levels of government. To close some of the largest budget gaps cities have ever experienced, often times they cut government programs and services (Hoene and Pagano 2003). Since personnel costs typically account for 60 to 80 percent of a department's budget, when services are reduced layoffs usually are inevitable (Garza 2003). Numerous scholars have paid special attention to the frequency of laying off public employees and the importance of job security for public unions (Cimini 1994, Wasilewski 1996, Garza 2003, Hoene and Pagano 2003).

Local governments also have the option of privatizing public services. Privatization is labeled as being an answer to derailing the public union movement and driving down the costs of public services (Devinatz 1999). Much of the reason for public unions focusing their bargaining efforts on job security is due to the privatization and subcontracting of work to outside firms. Devinatz (1999) and Cimini (1994) would both agree that job security started gaining prominence as a union priority in the early 1990's.

There are a couple of ways to help ensure job security for the union members. Cimini (1994) first showed that public unions were willing to accept lower wage increases. Lowering the rate of wage increases helps relieve some of the fiscal constraint off the departmental budgets. In addition, the length of the contract can be extended. In 1993, public unions negotiated longer contracts than in previous years. Contracts, for state and local government settlements, averaged a 26-month length replacing the previous contracts that averaged only 22 months (Cimini 1994).

-Healthcare

Healthcare is another top priority for unions in both the private and public sectors. With healthcare costs rising to astronomical rates, unions are trying to keep management from pushing financial burdens on the employees. In 1993 health care costs were rising at the rate of 18 percent annually (Parsons et al 1998). Then and now, public unions want to maintain a quality healthcare package through the collective bargaining process. They generally attempt to bargain for improvements in drug prescription, vision, and dental plans (Wasilewski 1996). Wasilewski (1996) states that according to data gathered from the Employee Benefits Survey, 92 percent of all full-time union members are granted employer-provided medical care benefits.

Local governments are finding ways to reduce administrative costs and achieve balanced budgets. If management does not choose to layoff employees, it finds other ways of lowering departmental costs, such as forcing employees to share the costs of healthcare benefits (Wasilewski 1996). Brainerd (1998) cited a case in Ramsey County, Minnesota where healthcare costs were causing tense labor-management relations. In

1990 the issue was so serious that the public employees, represented by AFSCME, chose to strike.

Community Activism

Chandler and Feuille (1991) examined the likelihood of municipalities privatizing their sanitation services. They found that the presence of a unionized sanitation workforce lessens the probability of the city contracting out its sanitation services to a private firm. The two scholars cited examples in California and Massachusetts where the voters joined together to adopt propositions that concerned tax limitation measures. The outcomes of the votes were a response to the suppressed economic times that many states were experiencing during the late-1970's and early 1980's. Communities were facing a serious loss of jobs while still being obligated to fund costly government services. Public unions are typically seen as one of the reasons for the rising costs. Chandler and Feuille (1991) explained that the major motivation for privatizing is cost saving.

Community activism can evolve from a desire to lower the costs of delivering government services. Devinatz (1999) described a portion of this population of activists as angry taxpayers that have grown to distrust government officials. Their animosity towards government has spilled over to public unions. These hostile community groups organize to pressure public officials to privatize public workforces. At the very least, they would like for the government to base public employee compensation and job security on the private sector model (Devinatz 1999). Issues such as these occasionally bring community groups face to face with public unions. Chandler and Feuille (1991) show that public unions are effective when they demonstrate their ability to utilize their

organizational skills. For example, the Chamber of Commerce and proponents of lower taxes might view the union contracts as driving up personnel costs. Unions have one distinct advantage over most community groups. Public unions are well organized and experienced at expressing their approval of or opposition to contracts or elected officials, whereas community activist groups are typically less organized, less experienced, and under funded to try to oppose the likes of a large public union.

Literature Review Conclusion

The literature regarding collective bargaining in the public sector highlights the variety of union strategies and intrinsic factors that shape the bargaining process. Most scholars tend to focus only on one strategy or factor that affects the quality of negotiated contracts. The available literature fails to create a complete and thorough examination of the collective bargaining environment in the public sector, especially at the municipal level. However, much like assembling a puzzle, we are capable of painting our own picture of the bargaining process by considering studies conducted by other scholars. One author might examine the advantage that a public union gains by going out on a strike (e.g. Erickson and Mitchell 1996), while another can contribute another piece of the puzzle by examining the effects of the state of the economy on the bargaining process.

Research Focus and Hypotheses

Literature and previous empirical research have provided me with the necessary information to conclude that bargaining strategies employed by the union and the

inherent factors that surround the negotiation process influence public sector collective bargaining. The hypotheses presented in the following section attempt to reveal the most important elements that make up any collective bargaining situation. This thesis will focus only on municipal level bargaining units. The scholarly world is lacking a thorough examination of collective bargaining at the local levels of government.

The title "Don't Forget about the ME in AFSCME" refers to the tendency of scholars to ignore the municipal level bargaining units in the collective bargaining process. Most scholarly research that covers the issue of public sector collective bargaining has concentrated on public employees that are represented by state level bargaining units. We must not forget that nearly 50 percent of the AFSCME locals in Illinois incorporate municipal bargaining units.

Hypothesis 1

Municipal public unions in larger cities adopt a wider array of politically oriented negotiating strategies than municipal public unions in smaller cities.

One of the primary objectives of this thesis is to understand the likelihood of municipal public unions implementing political negotiating strategies at particular times and places. Negotiating strategies are used by all unions, regardless of the size of the bargaining unit or the population of the city. Smith (1985) suggests that larger cities experience higher levels of union political activism than smaller cities. Unions have the ability to implement a wide range of bargaining strategies. This thesis identifies seven negotiating strategies that are politically oriented: (1) Petitioning, (2) Going public through the media, (3) Lobbying the city council, (4) Informational picketing, (5) Asking members to call local elected officials, (6) Asking members to write letters to the editor,

and (7) Asking members to send letters to local elected officials.² The collective bargaining environment in the public sector is characterized as being inherently political. The city government officials are vulnerable to the electoral process. Municipal public unions have the ability to exploit politicians' vulnerabilities by exercising politically oriented negotiating strategies.

This hypothesis is not suggesting that municipal unions in small cities enter the collective bargaining process with no strategies. Instead, this hypothesis is based on Babcock et al (1997) and Smith's (1985) previous findings that suggest that public unions in large cities tend to be more politically active. Likewise, we anticipate discovering that bargaining units in larger cities adopt a greater assortment of political bargaining strategies than bargaining units in smaller cities.

Hypothesis 2(a)

Municipal public unions that possess a high level of trust for city government officials are less likely to use politically oriented bargaining strategies than unions that possess a low level of trust for city government officials.

Literature points out that developing a relationship out of trust leads to a more expedient negotiation process (Chandler and Feuille 1991, Chandler and Judge 1998, Rubin and Rubin 2003). The two sides find themselves less polarized and are promptly able to reach a compromise; thereby signifying that conflict is often avoidable. In addition, since trusting relationships lead to a more expeditious negotiation process, there is less time for the union to adopt collective bargaining strategies. This thesis would not be astonished to find that under such a relationship, most political bargaining strategies are completely omitted from the bargaining process.

Hypothesis 2(b)

Municipal public unions that possess a high level of trust for city government officials are more likely to negotiate higher than average wage increases.

The literature indicates that negotiated wage increases are positively affected when the public union and the city government officials develop a trusting relationship. Rubin and Rubin (2003) conducted a case study on the City of Indianapolis. Both sides of the bargaining table benefited after trust was built into the relationship. The negotiated wage increase was approximately 6 percent, which we can safely assume was higher than the nation's average annual wage increase. This thesis expands off of the findings of Rubin and Rubin (2003). I expect to discover that union-management relationships that are built on trust will produce wage increases that are above average.

Hypothesis 3

Community groups and the local media do not significantly affect a municipal public union's negotiated wage increase.

This thesis expects to find that community groups and local media networks are rarely involved with the collective bargaining process at the municipal level of government. Literature involving this topic might be relevant for public unions representing state level bargaining units, but the literature has failed to examine the effects of community groups and the local media on municipal level collective bargaining. In 2004, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local #73 was involved in contractual negotiations with the Illinois Secretary of State's Office. The management side ended up conceding to several of the union's demands, but it is unlikely that the media played much of a role in the union's success. In the midst of controversy,

the bargaining process did not garner massive media coverage. Also, when SEIU lobbied the state legislature during legislative hearings, there were no state or community interest groups lobbying against or for the union. We have no reason to believe that collective bargaining at the municipal level is any different than the SEIU case.

This particular bargaining unit encompassed over 2,500 Secretary of State employees, whereas a municipal bargaining unit can typically consist of less than 50 employees. If a 2,500 employee bargaining unit receives minimal media coverage, then bargaining units with significantly smaller memberships should receive little to no media coverage at all. Therefore, this hypothesis anticipates that community groups and local media outlets have no effect on negotiated wage increases.

Hypothesis 4(a)

Municipalities that claim to be facing budgetary problems are more likely to allocate lower wage increases than municipalities that claim to be financially stable.

The literature has shown that the state of the economy does influence the collective bargaining process. Public unions have altered their priorities from wages to job security to accommodate a slumping economy and to avoid layoffs. Much like in the early 1990's, the new millennium has brought a suppressed economy and budget shortfalls at all levels of government. This thesis attempts to discover the likelihood of municipal public unions considering wages as a top priority especially when they are employed in a municipality where the city government officials claim to be running a budget deficit. This hypothesis indicates that financially strapped municipalities allocate lower wage increases than municipalities that are financially stable. Possibly, the union is receiving lower wage increases because wages were not a top priority of the union. On

the other hand, the union might be receiving smaller wage increases because its strategies during the collective bargaining process were not effective enough to overcome the hindrance of a suppressed economy on the collective bargaining process.

Hypothesis 4(b)

Municipalities that claim to be facing budgetary problems are more likely to reach a bargaining impasse than municipalities that claim not to have budgetary problems.

For operational purposes, the term bargaining impasse is referred to as the inability to reach a contract agreement before the expiration of the previous contract. This hypothesis suggests that when municipalities are facing budgetary difficulties, the city government officials will demonstrate hard-nose, no-compromise bargaining that will likely lead to an impasse. As Chandler and Judge (1998) reveal, 40 percent of the surveyed cities experienced a bargaining impasse with their unionized police forces. The scholars' data were based on a survey distributed in 1992. The focus of the study was on the importance of management choosing a chief negotiator. However, Hypothesis 4(b) addresses the weakness of Chandler and Judge's (1998) conclusions. Their study was based on a survey conducted in the early 1990's when the nation was facing a suppressed economy. However, they failed to examine or discuss the likelihood of a weak economy causing a bargaining impasse. They concluded that bargaining strategies used by the chief negotiators are better determinants of an impasse than the collective bargaining environment. Hypothesis 4(b) does not suggest that Chandler and Judge (1998) were wrong, but that they failed to thoroughly examine all the aspects that contribute to the collective bargaining environment.

Hypothesis 5

Municipal public unions that emphasize politically oriented bargaining strategies receive higher than average negotiated wage increases.

We could possibly discover that public unions benefit more by not implementing political bargaining strategies. This thesis, however, expects to find that political strategies help the union surpass the status quo wage increases. The literature has shown that public unions are effective at using the political nature to their advantage. Since the collective bargaining environment in the public sector is inherently political, public unions have found numerous ways to exploit the political nature and the vulnerability of elected officials. Most of the strategies, such as informational picketing, petitioning, going public through the media, striking, etc., have been a common union practice for much of the last century. However, the scholarly world is lacking a study that focuses solely on the effectiveness of using a strategy or a combination of strategies. This thesis expects to do more than just discover that political bargaining strategies are effective at achieving the union's objective of receiving higher wage increases. I want to make an attempt at discovering the most effective strategies and those that have only negligible effects on negotiated wage increases.

Hypothesis 6

The longer the negotiation process, the more likely that the municipal public union will receive higher than average wage increases.

Lengthening the negotiation process allows the union more time to implement negotiating strategies to apply pressure to city government officials, especially if an agreement on a new contract is not reached by the expiration of the previous contract.

This thesis expects to discover that a longer negotiation process results in more political bargaining strategies implemented by the union, which in turn has a positive effect on union negotiated wage increases. This hypothesis moves us closer to understanding one of the underlying questions of this thesis, which is to identify the effectiveness of a union's political bargaining strategies.

Methodology

This thesis explores the most common and effective collective bargaining strategies implemented by municipal public unions. For operational purposes, the effectiveness of strategies will be measured by overall wage increase and annual wage increase. This paper also examines the factors that surround the collective bargaining process in the public sector. Today we recognize that most areas of government are experiencing budgetary difficulties. Several scholars have discussed the impediments that distressed economies place on city government officials (Hoene and Pagano 2003, Cimini 1994, Davy and Hennessy 1997). However, we are still unaware of the extent that the state of the economy affects the collective bargaining process. Once again I will be using the unions' negotiated wage increases to explain the role that the economy plays in the bargaining process.

This thesis contains numerous variables that must be operationalized in order to test the presented hypotheses. The collective bargaining process is the procedure of negotiating and administering a collective bargaining agreement or contract between a union and the employing organization (Lunenburg 2000). In this particular examination,

municipal public union is often referred to as the labor side of the bargaining table, while the city government officials are the management side.

This thesis involves terms and phrases, such as *state of the economy*, *impasse*, and *community activism*, that help describe the atmosphere surrounding the collective bargaining process.³ These terms are ambiguous; therefore this thesis attempts to provide a universal definition for each one. All of these terms are essential to understanding the collective bargaining environment. When I refer to the *state of the economy*, I am actually describing the city government officials' perception of budgetary difficulties at the municipal level. The individuals that are responding to my survey might not recall the actual budget deficits or surpluses during the time of their last contractual negotiations. However, they most likely have a recollection of whether the city government officials claimed to be facing budgetary difficulties. I also asked the respondents about the union's perception of budgetary problems within the municipality. Asking the respondents these two questions gives us the opportunity to better understand the overall perception of the financial stability of the municipal budget. This thesis defines an *impasse* as the period between the expiration of the previous contract and an agreement on a new contract. This thesis refers to *community activism* as community groups responding to contract negotiations by lobbying or contacting the city government officials.

This thesis is a quantitative analysis that examines collective bargaining processes in municipalities by implementing both purposive and convenience sampling methods. Purposive sampling is commonly employed to observe hard to reach populations. The investigator uses his judgment to determine which units will be selected from the

population (O'Sullivan et al 2003). The investigator also has the responsibility of justifying how the nonrandom sample represents the overall population. Convenience sampling is also a nonrandom sampling technique that is based on the availability of units (O'Sullivan et al 2003). This type of sampling method is generally used for exploratory studies.

Purposive and convenience sampling techniques are both nonrandom sampling tools. Studies have shown that there are limitations and advantages to nonrandom sampling (Faugeir and Sargeant 1996, Peckover 2003, Ember and Otterbein 1991).⁴ Researchers have limited budgets, time, and human resources. Nonrandom sampling helps keep the project within affordable boundaries.⁵

The research was conducted through the distribution of surveys. The AFSCME office in Springfield, Illinois assisted me with circulating the questionnaires.⁶ AFSCME Council 31 encompasses over 300 union locals throughout the state. Municipal bargaining units are involved in 123 of its union locals; the remaining locals are for state level employees. With the assistance of AFSCME, I sent out a survey to each of the 123 AFSCME local presidents that preside over a municipal bargaining unit.⁷ Due to the uniqueness of Cook County in comparison to the other 101 counties, no surveys were distributed to the municipalities within this county. The survey consisted of close-ended questions. Accompanying the survey was two cover letters, one from Springfield's AFSCME office and the other from myself.⁸

I was unable to get the Springfield, IL AFSCME office to distribute a second round of surveys. The additional distribution was essential to this thesis, considering the low response rate (32 percent) that I received from the first round of surveys. In order to

increase the number of respondents, I was required to expand my survey process to neighboring states. Since Illinois did not contribute enough respondents to warrant its own study, my objective shifted to maintain a midwestern focus. Therefore, this thesis can be applied to municipal public unions that reside in the Midwest region of the country.

Initially, I contacted Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, and Minnesota. All four states were unwilling to send my surveys to their municipal bargaining units. They also denied my requests for the names and addresses of the union local presidents within their states. AFSCME upholds this policy to keep solicitors from harassing the union local officials. Even though my study regards scholarly research and not solicitation, I am still affected by AFSCME's privacy policy. Since all four states denied any form of access to their database, I was forced to employ a convenience sampling method to retrieve information from these states. My only option was to see if any of the state councils put the e-mail addresses of business representatives, local presidents, or district vice presidents on their AFSCME council websites. Iowa and Minnesota were the only two states that made this information accessible. I e-mailed 18 business representatives in Minnesota, 7 of whom agreed to fill out my surveys. As for Iowa, I e-mailed 15 district vice presidents, 5 of which agreed to cooperate with my survey process. Extra surveys were sent to each person that responded to the e-mail in case they represented multiple municipal bargaining units.⁹

The empirical research was conducted to obtain the information necessary to illustrate the collective bargaining environment at the local level. The intent of the survey was to further understand the political, social, and economic climates of each

municipality and the strategies used by the municipal public unions to respond to the challenges that these climates place on the collective bargaining process. The effectiveness of strategies that unions use during the collective bargaining process and the quality of the negotiated contract are operationalized by the negotiated wage increase.

By using the AFSCME office as the distributor of my surveys, I inevitably run into ethical issues. AFSCME had the opportunity to review my survey and cover letter before they were sent out to the union's locals. They approved the survey in full, while no questions were altered or omitted. AFSCME was never involved in the process of constructing the questions.¹⁰

Having AFSCME distribute the surveys enabled me to access a large audience in a timely and efficient fashion. The statewide union has a database that can print out address labels for each local president that presides over a municipal bargaining unit. Bypassing the AFSCME office in Springfield to get to each municipal bargaining unit would have been possible if time permitted. However, discovering the localities where municipal employees are organized would be extremely time consuming and expensive. Therefore, AFSCME's willingness to stay neutral in this study was greatly appreciated. This allowed me to conduct my research in an independent and non-biased manner.

The union local presidents who responded to my survey provide a source of expertise to this thesis. These union officials are familiar with the union contracts and the collective bargaining process. I asked them to refer to their local's most recently negotiated contract at the municipal level. Since most locals represent multiple bargaining units, the most recently negotiated contract would probably be the freshest in their memory. With that in mind, I enhanced the possibility of receiving accurate and

precise responses. The presidents were only asked to fill out one survey. Since most union locals represent multiple municipal bargaining units, this might be considered a weakness. Out of consideration for the respondents' time and other obligations, I felt that asking them to fill out multiple surveys would be requesting too much and would likely lower my response rate.

The method that I have chosen to conduct this empirical analysis assures that I will receive a wide variety of examples that present different collective bargaining situations.¹¹ This thesis attempts to gather responses from as many cases of collective bargaining as possible in order to minimize the amount of influence that the extremely unique cases have on my overall findings. The appropriate steps were taken to garner a diverse database.

Chapter 2: Findings on Collective Bargaining in Municipalities

A total of 59 surveys were returned throughout the months of August to November. The initial round of surveys was distributed to 123 Illinois AFSCME local presidents during the month of August. By November, I had received 39 responses from these local executives, which results in a 32 percent response rate. I was optimistic about sending a second round of surveys out to the same presidents in hopes of increasing my response rate. As noted earlier, upon several attempts at contacting the Springfield AFSCME office, I was unable to receive any further assistance.

My second round of surveys was sent to Iowa and Minnesota. I sent surveys to 7 business agents in Minnesota and 5 district vice presidents in Iowa. Since each person was given multiple surveys, a total of 20 surveys were returned throughout the months of October and November.

Hypothesis 1

Municipal public unions in larger cities adopt a wider array of politically oriented negotiating strategies than municipal public unions in smaller cities.

Larger cities experience higher levels of union political activism than smaller cities (Smith 1985). Hypothesis 1 suggests that the population of the city influences the activities of municipal public unions. Earlier we argued that the collective bargaining environment in the public sector is inherently political. Therefore, the activities and strategies used by the municipal bargaining units are forms of political activism.

The respondents were asked to provide the population of their city based on the following categories: (1) Less than 10,000, (2) 10,001 to 25,000, (3) 25,001 to 50,000,

(4) 50,001 or more. To analyze the collective bargaining strategies, the respondents were asked to check each of the following strategies that they adopted during the time of negotiating their last contract: (1) Petitioning, (2) Direct mailings to union members, (3) Going public through the media, (4) Lobbying the city council, (5) Informational picketing, (6) Asking members to call local elected officials, (7) Asking members to write letters to the editor, (8) Asking members to send letters to local elected officials, (9) Striking. These bargaining strategies are the basic grassroots efforts that are adopted to influence the negotiating process. All nine of the strategies are considered to be politically oriented except for direct mailings to union members and striking.¹² Therefore, this hypothesis is not concerned with these two negotiating strategies.

Table 1 displays a crosstabulation of the unions that adopted politically oriented negotiating strategies and the population of their respective cities. The table compresses the city population category from four categories into two categories: (1) 50,000 or less and (2) 50,001 or more. The political bargaining strategies are displayed as ordinal level data: (1) Bargaining unit did not adopt any political bargaining strategies and (2) Bargaining unit adopted 1 or more political bargaining strategies.¹³

Table 1: Politically Oriented Collective Bargaining Strategies By Population of City Crosstabulation

	Population of City	
	50,000 or less	50,001 or more
Politically Oriented Collective Bargaining Strategies 0	23 59.00%	9 45.00%
1 or More	16 41.00%	11 55.00%
Total	39 100.00%	20 100.00%

N=59

Fifty-nine percent of the bargaining units in cities under 50,000 did not adopt any political bargaining strategies, whereas forty-five percent of the bargaining units in cities above 50,000 did not use any political bargaining strategies. Table 1 shows that both categories of cities possess a large percentage of bargaining units that were unable to identify any political bargaining strategies. This table also shows a difference in the amount of union political activism in small and large cities. We see a 14 percent difference between the two categories of cities. Fifty-five percent of the bargaining units in cities above 50,000 adopted political strategies, whereas only 41 percent of the bargaining units in cities 50,000 or less adopted these strategies. Hence, municipal public unions in large cities are more likely to adopt political bargaining strategies than municipal public unions in small cities.

Hypothesis 2(a)

Municipal public unions that possess a high level of trust for city government officials are less likely to use politically oriented bargaining strategies than unions that possess a low level of trust for city government officials.

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of trust for city government officials based on a five-point scale: Strongly Trust, Trust, Neutral, Distrust, Strongly Distrust. These five were then recoded into three separate categories: (1) Trust, (2) Neutral, and (3) Distrust. Strongly trust and trust were coded into the Trust category, neutral into the Neutral category, and distrust and strongly distrust into the Distrust category. Relationships that are built on trust lead to more expedient negotiation processes (Chandler and Feuille 1991, Chandler and Judge 1998, Rubin and Rubin 2003). This hypothesis suggests that if a union trusts the city government officials and the negotiation process is moving quickly, there is no need for the union to implement political bargaining strategies.

Table 2 provides a crosstabulation of the unions that adopted political bargaining strategies and the level of trust that those unions held for city government officials. A total of 58 respondents answered both of these questions. Figure 1 shows that 52 percent of the respondents distrusted their respective city government officials. Only 11 (19 percent) of the respondents felt that there was a trusting labor-management relationship in place during the time of their last contractual negotiations.

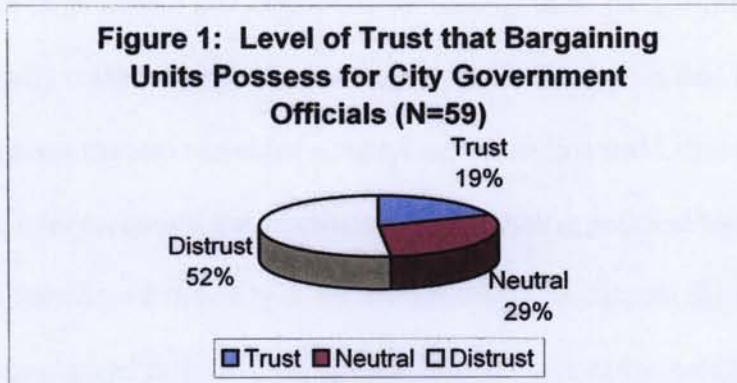


Table 2: Union Adopted Political Bargaining Strategies By Union Trust Crosstabulation

		Union Trust for City Government Officials		
		Trust	Neutral	Distrust
Politically Oriented Bargaining Strategies	0	8 72.70%	10 58.80%	14 46.70%
	1 or More	3 27.30%	7 41.20%	16 53.30%
Total		11 100.00%	17 100.00%	30 100.00%

N=58

Nearly 73 percent of the respondents that trusted their city government officials claimed that their union did not adopt any political bargaining strategies during their last negotiation process. Only 46.7 percent of the respondents that identified a distrusting labor-management relationship did not adopt any political bargaining strategies. Table 2 shows that the bargaining units that trusted the city government officials were more likely not to adopt political bargaining strategies.

Of the 30 respondents that distrusted the management, 16 (53 percent) adopted at least one politically oriented bargaining strategy. Table 2 suggests that there is a negative relationship between the two variables – Adopting Strategies and Level of Trust. As the union's level of trust increases, the likelihood of it adopting political bargaining strategies decreases. Not only does a majority of the bargaining units distrust the management, but they also seem to express their distrust through one or more of the bargaining strategies discussed in Hypothesis One.

Hypothesis 2(b)

Municipal public unions that possess a high level of trust for the city government officials are more likely to negotiate higher than average wage increases.

This hypothesis was examined by asking the respondents to identify their level of trust for management and their negotiated wage increases. Averages were calculated for each wage category.¹⁴ The average overall wage increase was 7.9 percent. The overall wage increases ranged from 0 to 22 percent over the lifetime of the contract. The second wage category was annual wage increase. The average annual wage increase was calculated by dividing the overall wage increase by the length of the contract. For example, a 15 percent overall wage increase over 60 months equals a 3 percent average annual wage increase. This thesis found the average annual wage increase to be 2.8 percent. The wage categories were then recoded into two categories – Below average and Above average. Table 3 represents the relationship between the union's trust for city government officials and its overall negotiated wage increase.

Table 3: Average Overall Wage Increase By Union Trust Crosstabulation

		Union Trust for City Government Officials		
		Trust	Neutral	Distrust
Average Overall Wage Increase	Below Average	3 33.30%	9 75.00%	14 50.00%
	Above Average	6 66.70%	3 25.00%	14 50.00%
Total		9 100.00%	12 100.00%	28 100.00%

N=49

The bargaining units that trust the city government officials negotiated an above average wage increase two-thirds of the time. However, only 9 respondents were placed into this category. At best these results are only suggestive that a trusting labor-management relationship leads to higher negotiated wages. The Distrust category had 28 responses. Fourteen (50 percent) of the 28 respondents received an above average overall wage increase, while 14 (50 percent) negotiated wage increases that were below average. These findings suggest that a distrusting relationship does not necessarily equate to lower wage increases.

We must acknowledge the limitations of the average for the overall negotiated wage increases. Wage increases over the lifetime of a contract will commonly fluctuate depending on the duration of the contract. For example, one bargaining unit only negotiated a one-year contract for a 1.5 percent wage increase, whereas another bargaining unit negotiated a five-year contract for an overall wage increase of 15 percent. If we were to average these two contracts together we would get an average of 8.25 percent. At times, using the overall wage increase to compare bargaining units might

distort the real numbers because actually these two bargaining units are much more comparable than it might appear. The first unit negotiated a 1.5 percent yearly wage increase, whereas the second unit negotiated a 3 percent annual wage increase. Table 6 provides a crosstabulation of the average annual wage increase and the level of trust that the union holds for the city government officials.

Table 4: Average Annual Wage Increase By Union Trust Crosstabulation

		Union Trust for City Government Officials		
		Trust	Neutral	Distrust
Average Annual Wage Increase	Below Average	2 25.00%	6 50.00%	14 51.90%
	Above Average	6 75.00%	6 50.00%	13 48.10%
Total		8 100.00%	12 100.00%	27 100.00%

N=47

Table 4 presents similar results to that of Table 3. Table 4 suggests that a distrusting relationship does not hinder the union's ability to negotiate higher wage increases. Thirteen (48.1 percent) of the respondents' annual negotiated wage increases exceed the 2.8 percent average wage increase, whereas 14 (51.9 percent) of the bargaining units received wages that were below the average. Like on Table 3, Table 4 does not allow us to analyze or make bold suggestions on the importance of maintaining a trusting relationship. Only 8 bargaining units claimed that they trusted the city

government officials. Such a small sample limits the degree of generalization that I can provide on the topic of trust.

Hypothesis 3

Community groups and the local media do not significantly affect a municipal public union's negotiated wage increase.

This hypothesis was analyzed by asking the respondents two different questions regarding the collective bargaining environment. The first question asked the union official if community groups responded to the contract negotiations by lobbying or contacting the city government officials. The second question asked the respondent to describe the media coverage during the last negotiated contract: (1) Very Supportive of the Union, (2) Supportive of the Union, (3) Neutral, (4) Supportive of the City Government Officials, (5) Very Supportive of the City Government Officials, (6) The media did not make any reports on the negotiation process. These two questions enabled me to visualize the role of third parties, such as community groups and the media, in the collective bargaining process.

Figure 2 shows the number of bargaining units that experienced the involvement of community groups during their last negotiated contract. A total of 47 (90 percent) respondents identified that community groups did not lobby the city government officials in regards to the collective bargaining process, whereas only 5 (10 percent) respondents claimed that community groups performed some form of lobbying.

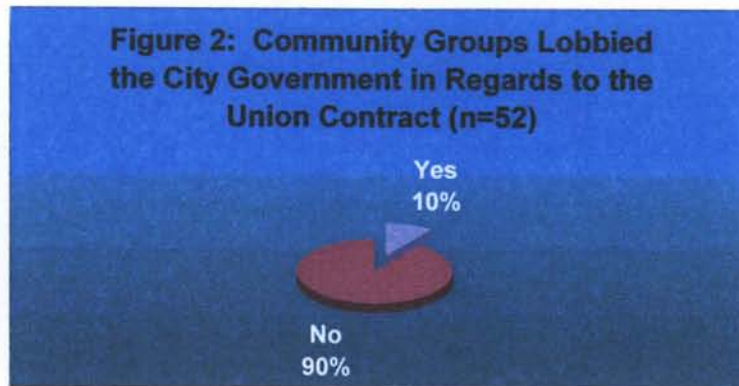
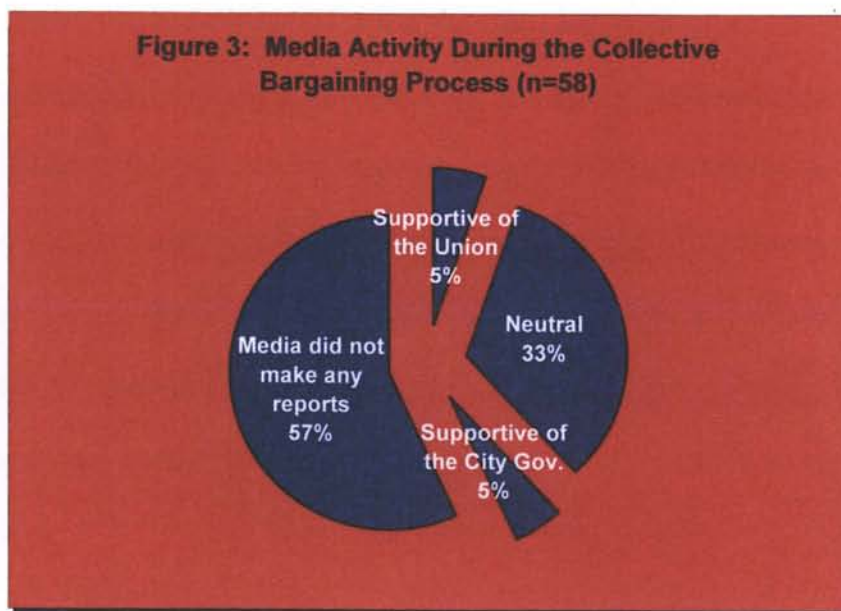


Figure 3 focuses on the activism by the local media regarding the collective bargaining process. The media can cover collective bargaining in newspapers or television. The respondents were asked to describe the stance taken by the media on the bargaining process. The majority of the respondents claimed that the media did not report on the negotiation process. The next most frequent response was that the media were neutral when reporting. Thirty-three percent of the respondents described the media coverage as unbiased. The results suggest that the bargaining process at the municipal level is somewhat low key. Many citizens of the community are probably not aware when the two sides are negotiating a contract. The collective bargaining process does not seem to be a highly publicized event. These results support Hypothesis 3 and suggest that community groups and the media rarely affect municipal level collective bargaining.¹⁵



Limited coverage is not the same as inability to influence. The media have the capability of accessing a large audience in a timely manner. This hypothesis is not suggesting that the media are ineffective at influencing public opinion, rather that the collective bargaining process typically is not a story of interest to the local media outlets.

Hypothesis 4(a)

Municipalities that claim to be facing budgetary problems are more likely to allocate lower wage increases than municipalities that claim to be financially stable.

This hypothesis was analyzed by asking the respondent to describe the city government's perception of the state of the economy. The survey specifically asked if the city government officials claimed to be facing budgetary difficulties during the time of the last negotiated contract. The dependent variable in this hypothesis is average

annual wage increase. As mentioned in Hypothesis 2(b), each average annual wage increase was calculated by dividing the overall wage increase by the length (duration) of the contract. I found the average annual wage increase to be 2.8 percent. These wage increases were coded into ordinal level data: Below average and Above average. A total of 47 respondents completed both of these questions on the survey. Table 5 displays a crosstabulation of the average annual wage increase and the city government officials' perception of budgetary problems.

Table 5: Average Annual Wage Increase By City Government Officials Claimed to be Facing Budgetary Problems Crosstabulation

		City Government Officials Claimed to be Facing Budgetary Problems	
		No	Yes
Average Annual Wage Increase	Below Average	4 40.00%	18 48.60%
	Above Average	6 60.00%	19 51.40%
Total		10 100.00%	37 100.00%

N=47

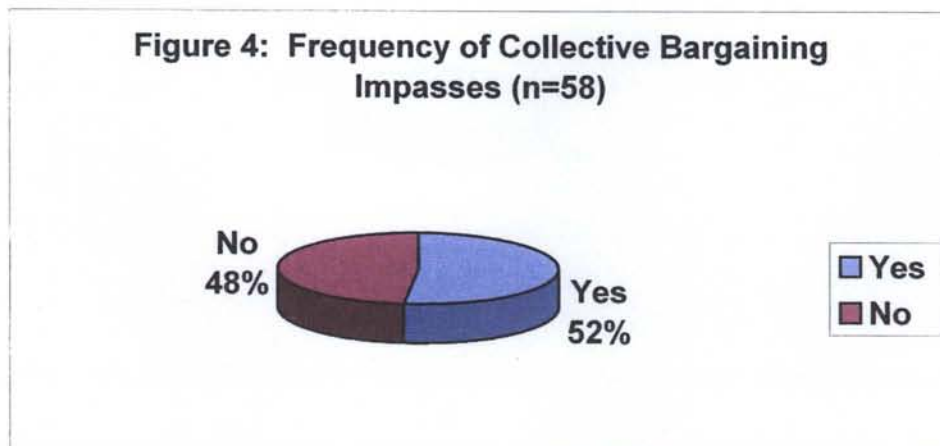
The crosstabulation for Table 5 was able to use the responses of 47 of the respondents. Nearly 79 percent (37 respondents) of these 47 respondents identified that their respective city government officials claimed to be facing budgetary problems. Of those 37 respondents 51.4 percent received above average wage increases. Sixty percent of the respondents in cities that were not facing budgetary difficulties negotiated above average annual wage increases. Table 5 shows approximately a 9 percent difference

between bargaining units in financially stable cities from those in cities with budgetary problems. We are seeing only a marginal difference between the two categories. Table 5 is supportive of the Hypothesis 4(a), but not to the extent that I had anticipated.

Hypothesis 4(b)

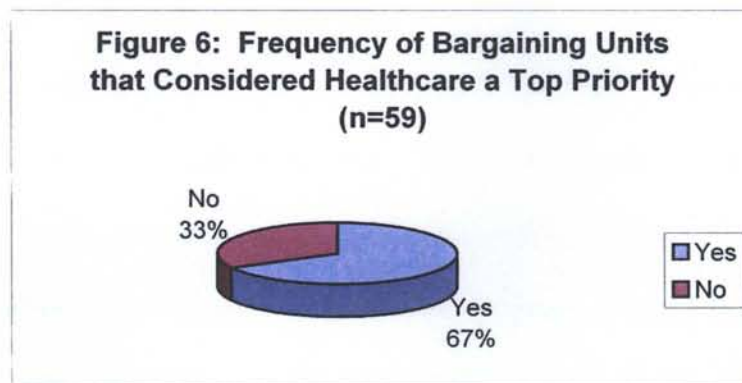
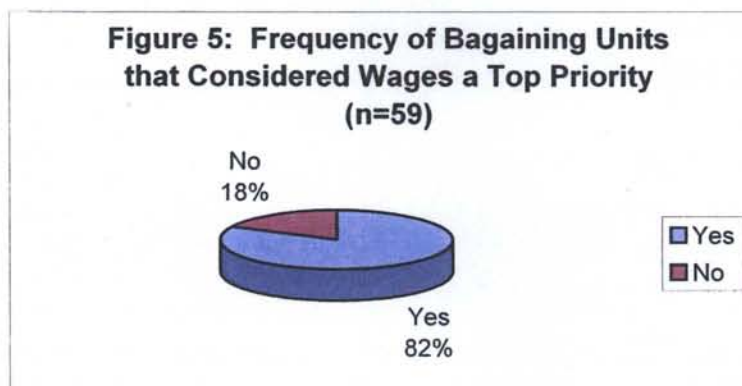
Municipalities that claim to be facing budgetary problems are more likely to reach a bargaining impasse than municipalities that claim not to have budgetary problems.

This hypothesis shifts the focus away from bargaining strategies and negotiated wage increases. Hypothesis 4(b) suggests that we need to analyze two other aspects of the collective bargaining process: State of the economy and bargaining impasse. Figure 4 shows the number of collective bargaining impasses that the 58 respondents reported. Fifty-two percent of the respondents claimed that their bargaining units and city government officials were unable to reach an agreement on a new contract before the expiration of the previous contract.



An argument could be made that unions do not always consider wages to be their top priority. Noneconomic issues, such as grievance procedures and working conditions,

also frequently come to the forefront. I asked the respondents to identify their top two priorities that they negotiated for in their last contract. Figure 5 shows that 46 of the 56 respondents identified wages as a top priority. Figure 6 shows that 37 of the 56 respondents claimed healthcare was one of their top priorities. Both of these issues are economic issues.¹⁶ The state of the economy affects the city's ability to pay for these demands made by the union.



Hypothesis 4(b) was analyzed by looking at the responses that each union official provided regarding the city government's perception of fiscal problems and whether or not the negotiation process reached an impasse. Figure 4 shows that a large amount of collective bargaining processes experience an impasse. It is arguable about what actually

causes an impasse. Table 6 displays one of the possibilities. It shows a crosstabulation of the state of the economy and the result of an impasse. In this case the state of the economy is determined by the city government's perception of budgetary problems. Impasse is reached when an agreement on a contract is not achieved before the expiration of the previous contract.

Table 6: Impasse By State of the Economy Crosstabulation

		City Government Officials Claimed to be Facing Budgetary Problems		
		No	Yes	Don't Know
Agreement Before Expiration of Previous Contract	No	4 33.30%	25 55.60%	1 100.00%
	Yes	8 66.70%	20 44.40%	0 0.00%
Total		12	45	1

N=58

The table suggests that the city government's perception of budgetary problems does affect the collective bargaining process. Figures 5 and 6 show that a vast majority of the bargaining units considered economic issues such as, wages and healthcare, as one of their top priorities. So we can only assume that if unions are demanding higher wages and better healthcare, while the city government officials claim to be facing budgetary difficulties that the bargaining processes are likely to result in gridlock. Table 6 supports this assumption, but not with strong evidence. Fifty-six percent of the bargaining units in cities with budgetary problems experienced an impasse, while only 33 percent of the bargaining units in cities without budgetary problems experienced an impasse. The

results here are suggestive. Consideration must be given to the limited number of responses that were received from cities that were not experiencing budgetary problems.

Hypothesis 5

Municipal public unions that emphasize politically oriented bargaining strategies receive higher than average negotiated wage increases.

Public unions are known for using the political nature of the collective bargaining environment to their advantage. This hypothesis refers to the same seven political bargaining strategies that were listed in Hypothesis One. The average negotiated wage increase is measured by the average annual wage increase (2.8 percent). Table 7 attempts to discover the potential effects of political bargaining strategies on negotiated wage increases. It displays a crosstabulation of the average wage increase and bargaining units that adopted political bargaining strategies.

Table 7: Politically Oriented Collective Bargaining Strategies By Average Annual Wage Increase Crosstabulation

		Politically Oriented Bargaining Strategies	
		0	1 or More
Average Annual Wage Increase	Above Average	11 44.00%	11 50.00%
	Below Average	14 56.00%	11 50.00%
Total		25 100.00%	22 100.00%

N=47

The data presented in Table 7 slightly support Hypothesis Five. The majority of the bargaining units did not choose to implement political bargaining strategies. Of the 25 respondents that did not use political strategies, only 44 percent received above average wage increases, while 56 percent received wages that fell below the average annual wage increase. Twenty-two of the 47 respondents employed at least one political bargaining strategy. Eleven of those negotiated higher than average wage increases.

Table 7 does not provide much support for Hypothesis 5. Since half of the bargaining units that used at least one political bargaining strategy received below average wage increases, we have grounds to assume that the bargaining strategies might not be as effective as originally anticipated. However, 50 percent of the respondents that used political bargaining strategies negotiated higher than average wage increases, whereas only 44 percent of those that chose not to use political strategies negotiated above average wage increases. My results do not suggest that the strategies are a major influence, but then again my results do not suggest that the strategies are harmful to the union. A larger pool of responses could paint a clearer picture of the effectiveness of these strategies.

Hypothesis 6

The longer the negotiation process, the more likely the bargaining unit will receive a higher than average wage increase.

Lengthy bargaining processes give the unions more opportunities to implement political bargaining strategies. The respondents were asked to identify the duration of the bargaining process during their last negotiated contract. I received responses that ranged

from one month to twenty-two months. We can assume that unions are more likely to implement political bargaining strategies in a twenty-two month period, than they are in a one-month period. I found the average duration of the bargaining processes to be 5.03 months. The duration of the bargaining processes was recoded from interval level data to ordinal level data – Below average and Above average.

One of the primary objectives of this thesis is to discover the effectiveness of municipal public union collective bargaining strategies. Since longer bargaining processes give the unions more opportunities to implement political bargaining strategies, one way of determining the effectiveness of those strategies is to look at the average negotiated wage increases. Table 8 displays a crosstabulation of the average duration of the bargaining process and the average annual wage increase.

Table 8: Duration of Bargaining Process By Wage Increase Crosstabulation

		Average Duration of the Bargaining Process	
		Below Average	Above Average
Average Annual Wage Increase	Above Average	17 50.00%	5 41.70%
	Below Average	17 50.00%	7 58.30%
Total		34 100.00%	12 100.00%

N=46

The table suggests that the duration of a bargaining process does not affect the negotiated wage increase. Contrary to what the hypothesis anticipated, the table shows

that bargaining units actually fare better when the negotiation process is shorter than average. This leads me to believe that even though lengthier bargaining processes give unions more opportunities to use political bargaining strategies, there is something more influential on negotiated wage increases than these political strategies.

For a moment we need to shift our attention away from political bargaining strategies and focus on the factors that help expedite the bargaining process. The literature reveals that a trusting labor-management relationship is very effective at speeding up the bargaining process (Rubin and Rubin 2003). Table 9 provides a crosstabulation of the duration of the bargaining process and the level of union trust for city government officials.

Table 9: Average Duration of the Bargaining Process By Union Trust Crosstabulation

		Union Trust for City Government Officials		
		Trust	Neutral	Distrust
Duration of the Bargaining Process	Below Average	10 90.90%	13 76.50%	16 55.20%
	Above Average	1 9.10%	4 23.50%	13 44.80%
Total		11 100.00%	17 100.00%	29 100.00%

N=57

Trust seems to be an important variable concerning the duration of the bargaining process. Table 9 suggests that trusting relationships help accelerate the collective bargaining process. Ninety percent of the trusting bargaining units were able to reach an agreement on a new contract in less than 5.03 months (average duration of the bargaining process). Only 55 percent of the distrusting bargaining units completed the negotiation process within a five-month period.

Chapter 3: Analysis of Findings on Collective Bargaining in Municipalities

This chapter focuses on interpreting and analyzing the findings presented in Chapter Two. The literature and findings discussed in the previous two chapters reveal interesting patterns about collective bargaining in the public sector. The first portion of this chapter provides an analysis for each hypothesis discussed in the previous two chapters. The second section of this chapter is devoted to exploring some general patterns revealed in Chapter Two. This section presents some new tables that help us understand and visualize the emerging patterns in public sector collective bargaining.

Analysis of Findings

The responses that I received from the union officials allowed me to create a picture of the collective bargaining environment in the public sector. Even though the response rate was low, I was still able to produce a respectable exploratory study on the activities, strategies, and inherent factors that are involved in public sector collective bargaining. My findings suggest that there are several variables that can directly affect the negotiation process. Not all of the hypotheses are supported with strong evidence, but we still are able to gain knowledge from the acquired information.

Hypothesis 1

Municipal public unions in larger cities adopt a wider array of politically oriented negotiating strategies than municipal public unions in smaller cities.

The findings suggest that there is a positive relationship between city size and union activism. As the size of the city increases, the likelihood of public unions adopting political bargaining strategies increases. Smith (1985) also claims that larger cities experience higher levels of union activism. Large cities are more likely to have political environments that contain interest groups and emphasize party politics. Unions that reside in these large city environments are more likely to participate in political activities (Smith 1985). Smith (1985) regularly refers to two studies conducted by the Brookings Institution (1968) and UCLA (1972). Both of these studies regarded the political activities of public unions. These two studies found that the most common political activities used by public unions were endorsements, monetary contributions to candidates, local and state level lobbying, and publicity campaigns.

Smith (1985) included candidate endorsement and monetary contributions as part of his list of political strategies. These two political tactics were included in my survey, but not as two of the seven politically oriented collective bargaining strategies. I felt that these two political activities were not necessarily responses to the collective bargaining process. Public unions frequently endorse and give financial support to candidates, but these two political activities are not reliant on the negotiation process. I consider these to be intended more for electoral politics than negotiating politics.

Hypothesis 2(a)

Municipal public unions that possess a high level of trust for city government officials are less likely to use politically oriented bargaining strategies than unions that possess a low level of trust for city government officials.

We assume that trusting labor-management relationships are less likely to use political bargaining strategies. Each side of the bargaining table does not view the other as an enemy, but instead they see each other as friends or problem-solvers. Fisher and Ury (1981) believe that trust and mutual respect are key elements to a successful collective bargaining process. Hard positional bargaining is the procedure of pressuring, distrusting, and threatening. Obviously, trusting labor-management relationships seldom evolve from this style of bargaining.

Rubin and Rubin's (2003) case study of Indianapolis highlights a trusting labor-management relationship. This particular public union did not focus on adopting political bargaining strategies. It was more concerned about participating in a dialogue with management where everyone's concerns could be brought to the table. These collaborative efforts are not generally present in a distrusting labor-management relationship. We find that both unions and management take a much more adversarial approach. My findings suggest that municipal public unions are more likely to adopt political bargaining strategies when they distrust their city government officials. Since most public unions distrust their city government officials, they will respond to these public officials by means of political bargaining strategies.

Rubin and Rubin (2003), Peightal et al (1998), and Brainerd (1998) give examples of large cities and counties that have adopted new cooperative bargaining mechanisms. They are all examples of local government entities that have drifted away from traditional

bargaining relationships. My findings suggest that the traditional bargaining relationship is still very present. We still see the basic characteristics that are involved in traditional bargaining. The unions seem to hold an antagonistic view towards management. They also continue to feel the need to exploit the political nature of the collective bargaining process by adopting political bargaining strategies.

Hypothesis 2(b)

Municipal public unions that possess a high level of trust for city government officials are more likely to negotiate higher than average wage increases.

I hypothesized that a trusting labor-management relationship yields higher than average wage increases. Two case studies concerning the City of Indianapolis and Ramsey County, Minnesota provide examples of the positive effects of building trusting relationships (Rubin and Rubin 2003 and Brainerd 1998). Collaborative bargaining and interest-based bargaining provide the negotiators with more flexibility than traditional bargaining mechanisms. Each side of the bargaining table view themselves as problem-solvers instead of adversaries.

In each one of these case studies, wages was considered a primary issue for the union. Monetary demands are commonly met with controversy, especially when the public sector is experiencing economic difficulties such as they are today. Rubin and Rubin (2003) and Brainerd (1998) suggest that a collaborative bargaining approach limits the amount of conflict and increases the chances of a win-win bargaining outcome. In both Indianapolis and Ramsey County, Minnesota the union received satisfactory wage increases. Also, in both cases the union felt it had developed a relationship with the city government that was built on trust.

These two examples are reasons for us to explore the relationship between trust and negotiated wage increase. Both examples were focused on enhancing their trusting relationship. This thesis does not focus on the different bargaining styles, such as traditional, collaborative, and interest-based bargaining. However, I do look at the positive aspects that evolve from these bargaining mechanisms. One of the primary elements that I focus on is trust.

The findings suggest that there is a positive relationship between trust and negotiated wage increase. As the union's trust for management increases, the negotiated wage increases. These findings are consistent with those of Rubin and Rubin (2003) and Brainerd (1998). Trusting relationships are more likely to yield higher wage increases. Even though this is a very positive relationship, one main problem still remains. We are not seeing a sudden influx of municipalities adopting bargaining styles that build trusting relationships. Collaborative and interest-based bargaining do not seem to be common bargaining styles.

The findings suggest that one of the first steps to increasing union wages is for the unions to build positive relationships with the city government officials. There is a lot of work yet to be done considering nearly 50 percent of the respondents claim to distrust the management. My findings suggest that if the distrusting bargaining units work on their relationships with the city government officials, they should see positive results through their negotiated wage increases.

This hypothesis assumes that a trusting relationship is built before the union negotiates higher wage increases. We however must acknowledge that the sequence of variables can be reversed. Unions may trust their city government officials because they

were able to negotiate higher than average wage increases during their last negotiated contract. Even though this thesis does not examine the variable from this perspective, it is important for us to acknowledge the possibility that wages can influence trust as easily as trust can influence wages.

Hypothesis 3

Community groups and the local media do not significantly affect a municipal public union's negotiated wage increase.

The average duration of a collective bargaining process is slightly over five months. In most cases it is a very slow process. Every word in each sentence of the contract is critiqued and analyzed. For an outsider looking in, the collective bargaining process is generally not an exciting affair. Therefore, the media are not motivated to cover the progress of negotiations.¹⁷ If the public is not going to be interested, then neither is the media. The only time that the public is going to be concerned with the progress of negotiations is when there is a threat of work stoppage or government shutdown. These are rare occasions, but under these circumstances the media would likely cover such stories. Even under these rare instances, the media may be uninterested in the story. In Chapter One I referred to the bargaining situation between SEIU Local #73 and the Illinois Secretary of State's Office. The union threatened to strike if the office did not provide its members with wages that were equal to other comparable state employees. A strike of this magnitude could have shut down several driver's license facilities throughout the state. The media reported on the negotiations, but the reporting

still remained somewhat limited. I believe that the union's success in this particular situation was not due to the media involvement.

This hypothesis also addresses the influence of community activism that surrounds the collective bargaining process. At the local level, community activism can be spurred by a desire to drive down the cost of delivering government services. Devinatz (1999) describes the people that are involved in these groups as angry taxpayers that have grown to distrust government officials. Their hostility tends to spill over to the public unions. Public unions are sometimes targeted as one of the reasons behind the rising cost of delivering government services.

In several communities, however, there are no active interest groups that regularly lobby the city council. In larger communities we assume that there is a greater likelihood of community activism. The populations are more diverse, and there are higher levels of political activism (Smith 1985). Since there are more small communities than large communities, I anticipate that most of the bargaining units did not experience any form of community activism during their last negotiated contract.

My findings suggest that neither community groups nor the media are commonly involved in the collective bargaining process. We are unsure of exactly why community groups and the media refrain from actively participating in the bargaining process. Through my previous experience of observing and studying the collective bargaining process, I can come up with two reasons why community groups and the media are not involved in the negotiation process. First, as I have already mentioned, the collective bargaining process is a very slow endeavor. If we watch the evening news or read the local newspaper, they are not as concerned about such sluggish storylines. Second, the

size of the community might matter. Larger cities may have more media outlets and higher levels of community activism.

Hypothesis 4(a)

Municipalities that claim to be facing budgetary problems are more likely to allocate lower wage increases than municipalities that claim to be financially stable.

The twenty first century brought in record budget deficits for all levels of government (Hoene and Pagano 2003). The early 1990's experienced a recessing economy, much like we were experiencing in the early twenty first century. Public unions in the early 1990's understood the difficulty in negotiating over the economic aspects of a contract during the time of a recession. Therefore, they adjusted their bargaining priorities from wages to job security. The end result was lower wage increases, but longer contract durations. Hypothesis 4(a) reflects upon the collective bargaining environment during the early 1990's. Since most municipalities once again claim to be facing budgetary constraints, we would assume that the majority of the bargaining units are negotiating lower wage increases. However, this is not the case. Of the 47 respondents, we see that 10 municipalities claimed to be fiscally stable, while 37 claimed to be facing budgetary difficulties. If we focus on the cities with alleged budgetary problems, the data show that approximately half the bargaining units received above average wage increases. Eighteen negotiated below average wage increases, while 19 were above average. The average annual wage increase was 2.8 percent.

In the early 1990's, the average wage increase for public employees was 2.8 percent annually (Cimini 1994). Cimini (1994) found that the wage increases negotiated

by public unions were on the decline for the better part of a decade. Organized labor in the public sector was receiving an average annual wage increase of 5.7 percent in the early 1980's. That number steadily declined throughout the 1980's and into the early 1990's. My data suggest that the decline in negotiated wages has halted. The average annual wage increase for the 59 respondents to my survey was 2.8 percent, the same number that was recorded by Cimini nearly ten years ago.

Hypothesis 4(b)

Municipalities that claim to be facing budgetary problems are more likely to reach a bargaining impasse than municipalities that claim not to have budgetary problems.

Determining the cause of a collective bargaining impasse is very difficult. Several inherent factors and union strategies could potentially influence the likelihood of an impasse. Chandler and Judge (1998) believe that choosing an appropriate chief negotiator might be the most important influential factor. Hypothesis 4(b) suggests that we need to not only look at the union and management bargaining tactics, but we also need to focus on the broader picture. We need to look at some of the conditions that surround the collective bargaining process. The state of the economy has a far-reaching effect. Without sufficient funds, the city is unable to provide lucrative wages or healthcare for the union employees. Money is as important to the collective bargaining process as gas is to a car. Once the gas supply is depleted the car no longer has the ability to move forward. Likewise, if the city government has no money in the treasury then several of the economic issues in the bargaining process cannot be addressed. Therefore, the likelihood of an impasse is much greater.

Hypothesis 4(b) suggests that bargaining units located in cities facing budgetary problems are more likely to reach a bargaining impasse than those that reside in cities without budgetary problems. Nearly 56 percent of the bargaining units in cities facing budgetary difficulties experienced a bargaining impasse, whereas only 44 percent reached an agreement before the expiration of the previous contract. When we examine the cities without budget problems, we see that two-thirds of the bargaining units reached agreements without having to experience a bargaining impasse. The major limitation of this hypothesis is that responses were not evenly dispersed. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents identified that their respective city government officials claimed to be facing budgetary problems. That leaves us with only 12 cities (21 percent) that were fiscally stable. It is important for me to acknowledge that we can only draw limited conclusions with a 12-city sample. Nonetheless, these findings serve as a respectable basis for future research.

Hypothesis 5

Municipal public unions that emphasize politically oriented bargaining strategies receive higher than average negotiated wage increases.

Public unions exploit the political nature of the collective bargaining process by adopting political bargaining strategies. The strategies are employed to help the unions gain their top bargaining priorities. According to the results, 82 percent of the respondents claimed that wages was a top priority for their respective bargaining unit. Since wages is a top priority then public unions must employ political bargaining strategies to gain better wages. In essence, politically oriented bargaining strategies are

intended to bring higher wage increases. Hypothesis Five tests the effectiveness of collective bargaining strategies by establishing the negotiated wage increase as the dependent variable.

I found that political bargaining strategies had a marginal effect on negotiated wage increases. However, we are left believing that there are other variables that contribute to a public union's ability to negotiate higher wages. Several scholars have presented different variables that can influence the collective bargaining process. For example, Rubin and Rubin (2003) focus on collaborative bargaining and developing a trusting labor-management relationship. Cimini's (1994) study centers on the effects of a distressed economy. Chandler and Judge (1998) look at the role of chief negotiators and how they are able to control the bargaining process. All of these scholars have been successful in discovering variables that affect collective bargaining in the public sector.

I acknowledge and agree with their findings. Initially, I overestimated the effect of the political bargaining strategies of municipal public unions. Even though my results support Hypothesis Five, there is not enough evidence to unequivocally determine that political bargaining strategies have a major effect on a union's negotiated wage increase.

Hypothesis 6

The longer the negotiation process, the more likely the bargaining unit will receive a higher than average wage increase.

This hypothesis anticipated that as the duration of the bargaining process increases, so should the negotiated wage increase. I expected that longer bargaining processes would give the unions more opportunities to employ political bargaining

strategies. In return, the pressure placed on the city government officials by the political bargaining strategies would allow the union to negotiated higher than average wage increases. However, I discovered that this simply was not the case. My findings suggest that shorter bargaining processes increase the likelihood of public unions negotiating above average annual wage increases. Even though my results were contrary to what I had originally anticipated, we are still able to build off of the information that we received.

Rubin and Rubin (2003) and Brainerd (1998) would also disagree with my hypothesis. These authors found that unions are more successful at negotiating higher wage increases when the bargaining process is expedited. These scholars do not concern themselves with the political bargaining strategies of unions. Instead, they focus on bargaining styles that help avoid the controversy that triggers unions to adopt these political strategies. Cooperative and collaborative bargaining build trust, not conflict. The findings suggest that trusting relationships are more important than political bargaining strategies.

Interpretations

Endorsing and Lobbying

Smith (1985) assesses the political activities of public unions. He claims that most of the negotiating tactics utilized by public unions are inherently political. He provides a list of activities that include candidate endorsements, campaign contributions, lobbying (State and Local levels), publicity campaigns, and referendum campaigns.

Smith (1985) tracks these political activities of public unions from 1968 to 1980.¹⁸ In the late-1960s and early-1970's candidate endorsements and lobbying were found to be the most frequently used public union political strategies. By 1980 public unions less frequently endorsed political candidates, but more frequently lobbied the state legislature. Smith (1985) claimed that by the early-1980's public unions relied on a wider variety of political activities.

My findings suggest that there has been a change in the frequency of public unions using the political activities discussed by Smith (1985) and Hallem et al (1972). In 1968 eighty percent of public unions endorsed political candidates. In 1972 that number decreased to fifty-four percent. Smith (1985) found that public unions were less frequently endorsing political candidates. By 1980 only 34 percent of these unions were making endorsements. My findings suggest that this trend has continued. Only 12 percent of my respondents endorsed local political candidates.¹⁹

Secondly, in the late-1960's sixty-percent of public unions lobbied at the local level. By 1972, UCLA reported that only 45 percent of public unions participated in lobbying activities (Hallem et al 1972). These activities include letter writing, direct face-to-face contact, and television/radio informational campaigns. My findings suggest that public unions are less frequently lobbying the local government officials, such as those sitting on the city council. Only 24 percent of my respondents claimed to have lobbied the city council during their last negotiated contract.

In most cases we must be careful of the conclusions that we draw from varying studies. A term such as lobbying is very ambiguous. Each scholar will define the term differently. For example, the UCLA study defined lobbying as letter writing, face-to-face

contact with political officials or the public, and television/radio informational campaigns (Hallem et al 1972). Its definition of lobbying was very broad. My survey simply asked the respondents if they lobbied the city council. Respondents were required to provide their interpretation of the term "lobbying." Regardless, I still believe that we can safely assume that public unions less frequently lobby the local level of government than they did nearly forty years ago.

Trust

Trust is possibly the most important term in this thesis. In Chapter Two we discovered that a trusting labor-management relationship has a positive effect on a union's negotiated wage increase. Also, when unions trust city government officials, they are less likely to adopt political bargaining strategies, thereby establishing a less controversial collective bargaining environment.

The literature also provides us with evidence of the positive effects of building trust into the collective bargaining process. Rubin and Rubin (2003) and Brainerd (1998) conducted case studies on the City of Indianapolis and Ramsey County, Minnesota. A trusting labor-management relationship was present in both cases. The authors found that the unions negotiated a higher than average wage increase and each of the collective bargaining processes was completed in a very efficient manner. Brainerd (1998) also found that the Ramsey County employees were able to negotiate longer contracts. Table 10 displays a crosstabulation of the level of trust that the unions possess for city government officials and the length of the negotiated contract. I found that the average contract duration is slightly over 38 months. Table 10 displays the life of the contract as

ordinal level data: Above average and Below average. A total of 57 respondents are included in this table.

Table 10: Duration of Contract By Union Trust Crosstabulation

		Union Trust for City Government Officials		
		Trust	Neutral	Distrust
Duration of Contract	Below Average	5 50.00%	14 82.30%	19 63.30%
	Above Average	5 50.00%	3 17.70%	11 36.70%
Total		10 100.00%	17 100.00%	30 100.00%

N=57

Table 10 suggests that when public unions trust city government officials, there is a greater likelihood of the duration of the contracts being longer. Fifty percent of the bargaining units involved in a trusting labor-management relationship negotiated contracts durations that were above average, whereas only 36.7 percent of those involved in distrusting relationships negotiated contracts that were longer than average. We must also make note of the 82 percent of the bargaining units that identified a neutral labor-management relationship negotiated above average contract durations. My results are very similar to those discovered by Brainerd (1998) in the Ramsey County, Minnesota case study.

I also found that developing a trusting relationship helps speed up the bargaining process. Therefore, I assume that trust decreases the likelihood of a bargaining impasse. Table 11 displays a crosstabulation of the level of trust that the unions possess for city

government officials and if they reached a bargaining impasse. A bargaining impasse is reached if the two sides fail to come to an agreement before the expiration of the previous contract. A total 57 union officials are included in this table.

Table 11: Impasse By Union Trust Crosstabulation

		Union Trust for City Government Officials		
		Trust	Neutral	Distrust
Agreement Before Expiration of Previous Contract	No	2 20.00%	7 41.20%	21 70.00%
	Yes	8 80.00%	10 58.80%	9 30.00%
Total		10 100.00%	17 100.00%	30 100.00%

N=57

Table 11 suggests that trusting relationships are much less likely to experience bargaining impasses. Eighty percent of the respondents that trusted the city government were able to reach an agreement before the expiration of the previous contract, whereas only 30 percent of those that distrusted the city government officials were able to do the same. Distrusting relationships are much more likely to result in a bargaining impasse than trusting relationships. Table 11 confirms the findings of Rubin and Rubin (2003) and Brainerd (1998).

Initially, my interest in examining the effects of trust on bargaining impasse and contract duration was based on theoretical assumptions. I assumed that trust positively affects both of these variables. After collecting my data and comparing it to other literature, I can safely suggest that trust positively affects negotiated wage increases and

contract duration. It also has a negative effect on the length of the bargaining process and the likelihood of a bargaining impasse. As the level of trust increases, the duration of the bargaining process decreases. Likewise, as the level of trust increases, the likelihood of a bargaining impasse decreases.

Traditional Bargaining

Traditional bargaining, otherwise known as positional bargaining, seems to be the most commonly employed negotiating mechanism. Byrnes (1986) mentions that the participants in this style of bargaining see each other as adversaries and distrust one another. My findings suggest that most of the respondents viewed their city government officials as enemies. I am able to come to this conclusion by referring to the 51 percent of the bargaining units that claimed to distrust management. Collaborative, cooperative, and interest-based bargaining are all negotiating styles that embrace trust and problem solving (Rubin and Rubin 2003 and Byrnes 1986).

Rubin and Rubin (2003) also show that collaborative bargaining helps the negotiating teams reach an agreement on a contract in a timely fashion. In the case involving the city of Indianapolis, the bargaining teams were able to negotiate the entire contract in approximately 40 hours. My findings suggest that the municipal public unions in this region are not taking a collaborative approach. The average duration of the bargaining process was slightly over 5 months. I also found that the majority of the respondents reached a bargaining impasse. My findings concerning distrust, duration of the bargaining process, and impasse suggest that these bargaining units are using traditional bargaining styles.

Chapter 4: Summary on Collective Bargaining and Municipal Public Unions

The collective bargaining process in the public sector is different than in the private sector. Several scholars have examined public sector collective bargaining and the political strategies involved in the process (Rubin and Rubin 2003, Swanson 1993, Gely and Chandler 1995, Masters 1997, Masters 1998, Smith 1985, and Brainerd 1998). Each author examines a small piece of the collective bargaining process. However, we are lacking scholarly literature that analyzes the bargaining process in its entirety. The objective of this thesis was to take on that role.

I constructed each hypothesis with variables that were used and tested by previous scholars. My intentions were to create as complete a picture of the collective bargaining process as possible. Each hypothesis focuses on different issues that concern each public union. I look at trust, wages, impasses, and the state of the economy. Public unions cannot control all aspects of the bargaining process, so they must have the knowledge to overcome obstacles, such as recessing economies. At times, unions are forced to alter their strategies or change their priorities.

Wages are an important bargaining priority, but so are job security and healthcare. This thesis focused mainly on the wage issue, due to the simplicity of calculating negotiated wages. Job security and healthcare are important issues, but tend to be very difficult to measure from a research standpoint. We are well aware that these two issues are becoming more prominent, since we have been forced to deal with a recessing economy and the rising costs of healthcare.

Initially, this thesis was primarily intended to learn about the effectiveness of political bargaining strategies. I find it hard to ignore the political nature that surrounds

the collective bargaining process in the public sector. The management side of the bargaining table typically involves city government officials that are vulnerable to the electoral process. I was expecting to find that political bargaining strategies would have a large effect on the collective bargaining process. My findings however suggest that the political bargaining strategies only have a marginal effect on negotiated wage increases, which I considered to be the most important dependent variable of this thesis.

I experienced several pitfalls throughout the months of constructing this thesis. Nonetheless, I am confident that I took the appropriate measures to gather a large database. Municipal public unions are not easy populations to survey, which might be the reason why the scholarly world is lacking research regarding these organized groups of employees. I believe this study has been successful, though the response rate to my surveys was only 32 percent. I maintained a commitment not to overstate my findings, but rather to report them as suggestive.

My study serves as a solid foundation for future research. Future scholars will be better able to study the activities of municipal public unions if they are able to access a large database for these groups. One could also conduct extensive interviews with several local union officials. This process would be very time consuming and expensive, but would allow the researcher to get thorough responses from these union officials.

The Future of Municipal Public Unions

Unionization in the public sector is on the rise. Over the past 50 years this country has witnessed the evolution of public unions. Unionism in the private sector has fallen to an all-time low. The days of Jimmy Hoffa and John L. Lewis are long gone for groups like the Teamsters and United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). These unions have not disappeared, but their memberships have drastically declined. During the 1970's in Illinois, the UMWA had approximately 18,000 members. Today the membership has fallen to roughly 1,500 (Angleton 2005). This is not an uncommon story for unions in the private sector, where the labor movement has been severely disrupted by free trade agreements and clean air policies.

In 2001, only 9 percent of the private sector workforce was unionized, which is devastating considering in 1950 over a third of the workforce belonged to a union (Bennett and Masters 2003). In the public sector we have seen the exact opposite. In 2001, 37.4 percent of the public sector workforce was unionized, compared to only 12.3 percent in 1950 (Bennett and Masters 2003).

Even though unionization in the public sector is increasing, there are still challenges that face the future of public unions. Politics, budget deficits, and performance demands are obstacles that will continue to confront public unions. In order for unions to continue their successful organizing campaigns, they must address each one of these three challenges. Failing to recognize the seriousness of these issues could be detrimental to the future of public unions.

First, politics is always going to be a challenge for unionization, especially in the public sector. A federal law mandating collective bargaining rights for state and local

government employees does not exist. Therefore, collective bargaining rights for public employees differ on a state-by-state basis. The majority of the surveys for this thesis were distributed to municipal bargaining units in Illinois. In 2002, Democrats in Illinois experienced sweeping victories by taking control of all statewide offices except for one. The largest feat of all was regaining the governorship after 26 years of Republican rule. The labor movement played a large role in shifting the power back to the Democratic Party. The labor movement in Illinois should feel fortunate that it continues to have a legitimate voice in state government, considering the damaging effects that their union brothers and sisters are experiencing in the neighboring state of Indiana. Democrats controlled the Indiana governor's office prior to 2005. The Republican challenger defeated the Democrat incumbent governor. Shortly after taking office, the Republican governor banned all collective bargaining rights for public employees. A shift in state politics can have damaging effects on all public employees.

Since this thesis examines collective bargaining in municipalities, we must recognize the effects of local politics on municipal employees. The bulk of the surveys for this thesis were distributed to downstate Illinois. Over the past decade, we have seen this region of the state become a Republican stronghold; however, I do not foresee this being a large impediment upon municipal public unions in this portion of the state. Most municipalities do not elect city commissioners or council members on a partisan basis. As I discovered through this study, most municipal unions choose not to get involved in these nonpartisan-municipal elections. Therefore, we should see less of the partisan political battles between public unions and elected officials at the local level than at the state level. I am not implying that municipal public unions should let their guard down;

rather they always need to be aware of wolves dressed in sheep clothing. I am suggesting that they continue to recognize the broad effects of state politics on local employees.

Second, each level of government will always have trouble balancing the budget. The federal government is facing record budget deficits topping \$400 billion. Entitlement spending is increasing, but revenues are shrinking. The budgetary problems have trickled down to state and local governments. In 2002, nearly two-thirds of the states reported that they were experiencing budgetary shortfalls (Bennett and Masters 2003). These stressful economic conditions have far-reaching effects, especially to public employees. Some employees are forced to forfeit their annual wage increases, whereas others are laid off. Regardless, all levels of government are seeking ways to save money. This will always be an impediment to public unions and the collective bargaining process. When available funds are scarce, both sides of the bargaining table tend to polarize, which leads to controversial bargaining environments.

Third, the public is always going to demand better public services. Time and cost efficiency are important to each and every taxpayer. Public unions have been stigmatized as being a major element behind the inefficient and expensive public services. They have been accused of restricting managerial flexibility and innovation (Bennett and Masters 2002). These opinions commonly lack adequate proof, but they will continue to be the arguments against public unions.

These three challenges are going to continue to cause tension in future labor-management relationships in the public sector. At this time, we are unable to anticipate the effects that these challenges will place on public unions. It is possible that these challenges will cause an increase in unionization in the public sector. For example, if

nonunion public employees start to see that their annual wage increases and health benefits are continuing to decline, then they might begin to realize that they need a unified voice in government. In this case we will see that the growing trend of unionization in the public sector will continue.

Also, I believe that these challenges can be addressed by adopting cooperative and collaborative negotiating styles in public sector collective bargaining. These negotiating styles revolve around trust. As we have seen through previous literature and this thesis, trust seems to positively affect both sides of the bargaining table. If these negotiating styles are practiced, not only will unions likely see more lucrative wage increases, but also the public will see improvements in their services that they receive from the government.²⁰

Notes

¹ Informational picketing is one of several political bargaining strategies used by public unions. SEIU Local #73 used informational picketing to inform the public about the pay inequities of its members compared to other comparable state employees. The union members held up signs with catchy phrases. Shortly after this tactic was implemented, the union reached an agreement on a new contract with the Secretary of State's office.

² The respondents to the survey were asked to identify which of the following bargaining strategies that they adopted during their last negotiated contract: (1) Petition, (2) Direct mailings to union members, (3) Going public through the media, (4) Lobby the city council, (5) Informational picketing, (6) Ask members to call local elected officials, (7) Ask members to write letters to the editor, (8) Ask members to send letters to local elected officials, (9) Strike. All nine of these strategies are considered to be politically oriented except for (1) direct mailing to union members and (2) strike.

³ Refer to Appendix C to review the survey questions.

⁴ Scholars have addressed the issues regarding the limitations and advantages of using nonprobability sampling methods. Faugier and Sargeant (1996) focus on the processes involved in sampling hard to reach populations. Nursing and other healthcare professions have welcomed the practice of nonrandom sampling. People infected with HIV, homeless people, prostitutes, and drug addicts are all considered hard to reach populations. Developing a method that would randomly sample these groups would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. However, as Faugier and Sargeant (1996) suggest, this should not stop the healthcare professions from continuing to research the characteristics and needs of these groups.⁴ In order to do so, investigators typically have to adopt nonrandom sampling techniques, such as snowball, purposive, and convenience sampling. The social sciences fields need to investigate the presence of public

labor unions, much like the healthcare fields need to research the HIV epidemic. Both of these topics are emerging quickly and becoming prominent issues in their respective scholarly fields.

⁵ We can still conduct a quality study with implementation of nonrandom sampling methods (Haluska et al 2002, Ember and Otterbein 1991, Peckover 2003, and Faugier and Sargeant 1997).

⁶ Illinois' AFSCME Council 31 was the most convenient source of information for me to obtain. Springfield is only eighty miles from my hometown.

⁷ Each survey and cover letter was printed by a union print shop. I was optimistic that by having the union bug placed on the materials that the response would be higher.

⁸ Each survey was accompanied by two cover letters. Refer to Appendix A to review the personal cover letter and the AFSCME Council 31 cover letter.

⁹ Each union official that replied to the email received multiple surveys. In the letter, I mentioned that they were not obligated to fill out all of the surveys. I sent each person anywhere from three to ten surveys a piece. Refer to Appendix B to review the letter that was sent with the surveys to Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

¹⁰ AFSCME Council #31 did not review the responses that were received from the survey.

¹¹ Too often scholars conduct specific case studies on collective bargaining in the public sector and then try to apply their findings to all unions in the public sector. Devinatz (1999) examines the importance of a public union promoting the public's interest as the union's reason for striking. His study only involved three cases; The 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike, the Florida Education Association walkout in 1968, and the 1975 Cook County Hospital House Staff Association strike. Conclusions cannot be drawn from only looking at these three cases. All of Devinatz's (1999) examples were unique situations and cannot be applied to other collective bargaining processes in the public sector. The 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike took place during an era that involved hostile civil rights issues. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke on behalf of the union and soon thereafter was assassinated. The appearance and assassination of King were highly publicized events. The city government officials were receiving bad publicity during these controversial times. We cannot compare the collective bargaining environment that was created during the 1968 Memphis strike to those that exist in the average municipal bargaining environment. Most public unions do not have such a world-renowned public figure speaking on their behalf and they are not placed in such a controversial setting.

¹² Direct mailings to union members and striking are not considered to be political bargaining strategies, but originally were included in the survey. These two strategies are omitted from the study because they are not intended to be directed towards city government officials. All seven political bargaining tactics exploit or take advantage of the management being vulnerable to the political process, whereas the two omitted strategies are not considered to be responses to the political nature of public sector collective bargaining. Direct mailing to union members is the most common of the nine strategies. The purpose of these mailings may only be to inform the union members about the status of negotiations or the details of the contract. The other nonpolitical strategy, striking, is used to draw attention to the union, instead of towards the public officials that are negotiating with the union. Even if striking was included as the eighth political bargaining strategy, it would only have a negligible effect. Of the 59 respondents, only one identified that its union chose to strike during its last negotiation process.

¹³ Table 1 condenses the politically oriented strategies from seven categories to two categories. According to the questions presented on the survey, a bargaining unit could adopt seven different political bargaining strategies. I consolidated this information into a more readable format. The primary interest of Hypothesis 1 was to examine the difference between the cities that possessed bargaining units that adopted these strategies compared to the cities that possessed bargaining units that did not adopt any political bargaining strategies.

¹⁴ The average wage increases are not national averages. The averages are relative to the 50 respondents that identified their overall wage increases. The average annual wage increase was calculated by dividing the overall wage by the length of the contract. For example, a 15 percent overall wage increase over 60 months equals a 3 percent average annual wage increase.

¹⁵ It must be noted that I did not study the actual media behavior from any newspapers or television networks. All information regarding media coverage was received from the union officials that responded to my survey. Therefore, each piece of information can be considered a union official's perception of the media coverage.

¹⁶ Other top priority categories that were included in the survey were job security, due process procedures, retirement, and working conditions. I consider all four of these to be noneconomic issues or secondary economic issues. I refer to secondary economic issues as those that will not require immediate funding (e.g. job security and retirement). It is important to note that these four categories were not frequently identified as top priorities for the unions. Therefore, these categories were omitted from my study.

¹⁷ The negotiation process generally is not open to the public or media.

¹⁸ Smith (1985) used two studies to help provide information from the late 1960's and the early 1970's. The Brookings Institute conducted a study on the political activities of public sector labor unions in 1968. UCLA conducted a similar study in 1972.

¹⁹ Public unions probably endorse candidates at a slightly higher rate than I have recorded. The wording of the question regarding "candidate endorsements" in my survey might have deterred some respondents from identifying that they engaged in political endorsements. First, I asked if their last negotiation process took place during an election year. If so, I asked them if they endorsed local political candidates in that election year.

²⁰ Rubin and Rubin (2003) suggest that collaborative bargaining styles increase worker productivity.

Appendix A

Dear Local Union Officer,

My name is Mike Woods Jr. I am a graduate student in Political Science at Eastern Illinois University who is working on my M.A. thesis in order to complete the requirements for my degree. Most of my undergraduate and graduate research has been on labor unions in both the private and public sectors. I am contacting you in hopes that you can set aside approximately 10 minutes to complete a brief survey that I have enclosed with this letter. This information is essential for me to complete my thesis and fulfill my graduation requirements.

My research will examine the union strategies and inherent factors that are involved in the collective bargaining process at the municipal level. Previous scholarly publications have failed to examine such a broad array of variables that affect the quality of a negotiated union contract. In order to answer this survey I need for you to reflect back to the process of negotiating your last contract. Since your union local most likely represents multiple municipal bargaining units I ask that your responses on this survey refer to the most recently negotiated contract at the municipal level.

Your assistance in answering the survey's questions to the best of your recollection will be appreciated, and please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential and the results will be reported in an anonymous way. Specifically, your responses for this research project will not be associated in the write-up with any identifiers such as your name, city, county or union chapter. In addition, I guarantee the university and SEIU that my findings will be reported in a credible, independent, and nonbiased manner.

I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Once you have completed this survey please return it in the envelope provided.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Woods Jr.

Appendix A (continued)

TO: AFSCME LOCAL PRESIDENT

FROM: AFSCME COUNCIL 31

RE: SURVEY

This survey has been authorized by Council 31 in order to assist a future Labor Leader.

Please plan to participate.

Appendix B

Mike Woods
201 Douglas Dr.
Tuscola, IL 61953

To Whom It May Concern,

I have enclosed a few extra surveys just in case you represent multiple municipal bargaining units. By no means do you need to feel obligated to fill them all out.

My research will examine the union strategies and the inherent factors that are involved in the collective bargaining process at the local level. My objective is to look at as many bargaining units as possible. In essence, each survey represents a different bargaining unit (and a different contract).

I have surveyed over 35 municipalities in Illinois however my research requires more responses. This is one of the reasons why I am expanding my study to neighboring states.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.
217-840-5577
woods8@yahoo.com.

I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope for you to return the completed surveys. Thanks for all your help!

Sincerely,

Mike Woods
Member, AFSCME (Illinois) Local #1019

Appendix C

If your union local represents multiple bargaining units I ask that you please respond to all questions by referring to your local's most recently negotiated contract at the municipal level.

1. What is your position with the union? _____

2. During your last negotiated contract did you have a role in the collective bargaining process? (Circle)
 - Yes
 - No

If Yes: Please identify your role: _____

3. Which category best identifies with your bargaining unit? (Circle all applicable categories that best describe your local's most recently negotiated contract at the municipal level)
 - White collar
 - Blue collar
 - Professional
 - Public Safety
 - Technical
 - Other (If so, please identify _____)

4. How many public employees are represented by AFSCME in your respective bargaining unit? _____

5. How many individuals represented the union at the negotiating table? _____

6. How long did negotiations last (months)? _____

7. Were you able to reach an agreement on a contract prior to the expiration of the previous contract? (Circle)
 - Yes
 - No

8. What were the union's top two priorities? (Circle two)
 - Wages
 - Working Conditions
 - Healthcare
 - Due Process Issues (grievance procedures, disciplinary actions, bumping rights, etc)
 - Job Security
 - Retirement
 - Other (If so, please identify: _____)

9. How would you describe the level of unemployment during the time of your last contract negotiations? (Circle)
 - High
 - Average
 - Low
 - Don't Recall

10. What is the population of the city where you are employed? (Circle)

- Less than 10,000
- 10,001 to 25,000
- 25,001 to 50,000
- 50,001 or more

11. During the process of negotiating your last contract did your organization choose to implement any of the following strategies?

(Put an "X" by each strategy that your union adopted)

Petitions_____

Direct mailings to union members_____

Going public through the media_____

Lobby the city council_____

Informational Picketing_____

Ask members to call local elected officials_____

Ask members to write letters to the editor_____

Ask members to send letters to local elected officials_____

Strike_____

12. Did negotiations for the last contract take place in a year in which candidates for local government were on the ballot? (Circle)

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If Yes:

A. Did your union endorse any local candidates? (Circle)

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

B. Did your organization contribute (monetarily) to the political campaigns of local candidates? (Circle)

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

13. What was the first year wage increase negotiated by the union? (percent)

14. What was the overall wage increase over the lifetime of the contract?
(percent)

15. What was the duration of the negotiated contract? (Please respond by
signifying the number of years that the union was covered under that specific
contract.)

16. During the time of negotiating your last contract how well did your union trust
the city government officials? (Circle)

- 1-strongly trust
- 2-trust
- 3-neutral
- 4-distrust
- 5-strongly distrust

17. During the time of contractual negotiations did city government officials
claim that the municipality was facing budgetary problems? (Circle)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

18. Did the union believe that the municipality was facing budgetary problems?
(Circle)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

19. Did other community groups respond to the contract negotiations by lobbying
or contacting city government officials? (Circle)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

20. What was your perception of the general stance taken by the majority of
these community groups? (Circle)

- Supportive of the City Government Officials
- Neutral
- Supportive of the Union
- Don't know

21. During the time of your last negotiated contract how would you describe
the coverage by the local media (including television and newspaper)? (Circle)

- Very Supportive of the Union
- Supportive of the Union
- Neutral
- Supportive of the City Government Officials
- Very Supportive of the City Government Officials
- The media did not make any reports on the negotiation process.

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