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University of Connecticut, 2020

This qualitative case study sought to explore how teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches interact with each other in collaborative, data team meetings, as well as how the essential features of micropolitics instantiated during the collaborative meeting times between these three types of roles. The ethnographic data collection technique offered an insider view into the nuances of the group dynamics and interactions with one another and as a whole. Results indicate that teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches engaged with each other in collaborative meetings through the use of structures and protocols, airtime, relational discourse, non-verbal communication, and agency or ownership. Additionally, results demonstrated how the essential features of micropolitics instantiated themselves in collaborative meetings between teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches. Findings showed that individuals were able to influence the attention of the group to topics that they wanted to discuss, that the team members in various roles engaged in exploring their boundaries of influence, and that the school-based collaborative teams were inextricably linked with and influenced by the system of the school district at large as pieces of its ecosystem.

The findings offer insight into the ways that school and district leaders, as well as educational peers, can work to improve the collaborative sessions that educators engage in, working to make the collaborations more effective and efficient in the interest of better supporting students.

Teacher Leaders, Coaches, and Teachers: A Case Study of Micropolitics in Data Team Meetings

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APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Education Dissertation

Teacher leaders, coaches, and teachers: a case study of micropolitics in data team meetings

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This doctoral journey has been invaluable, and I have learned so much and improved my own practice, as well as grown as a professional and a person. In a constantly shifting climate in my district, my journey was also one of constant self-examination and what grew to be a valuable way to make sense of the educational landscape that I worked within every single day. The path that I took with designing my research and subsequently the research that I engaged in has supported my own development as well as offered a critical and systemic lens to each layer of our work.

Throughout this time, my husband, Christopher Dutton, has supported me unwaveringly, with humor and patience, and for that I am grateful. I also would like to thank my mother and father, who were soundboards and thought partners on more family visits than not over the years. Dr. Sarah Woulfin, my primary advisor, has been a champion and a steadfast support. I am very thankful to have been selected by her to advise, as not only is she a brilliant scholar and researcher but has been a caring and pragmatic guide along the way. I would like to also extend gratitude to my committee members, Dr. Eric Bernstein and Dr. Rachael Gabriel, for their guidance and support. While not an advisor or on my committee, Dr. Jennie Weiner played an important role in my overall experience as well, introducing me to the policy and systemic layers of our educational field that offered frameworks to apply and language to seek to understand the occurrences that we experience and see on a daily basis. I am also grateful to the UConn IRB for the review of my research. Most importantly, I am very grateful to the educators who welcomed me into their collaborations and worlds, as well as the school and district leadership that reviewed my research and approved it to take place.

Collaboration between staff can be very powerful in school reform efforts, perhaps even more powerful than the facilities or resources made available for the school to use (Fullan, 1992; Raywid, 1993; Ronfeldt, et al., 2015). Therefore, there is a major need for collaboration between teachers and teacher leaders, as well as other staff, to learn effective practices and strategies from one another and improve to address the challenges that school improvement requires. Fullan (1997) discusses the need for school leaders to realize that “the goal is to engage the majority of teachers in creating collaborative work cultures by deepening the focus on inquiry, assessment, teacher interaction and sharing, and continuous problem solving” (p. 38). However, how collaborative time between school staff, once established and protected, is used to make key decisions about the educational experience for students served by the team is not always productive (Boudette, 2014), as Fullan (1997) declares necessary. Tensions, such as the push and pull of who has authority over what and whom, that exist in relationships between teachers and teacher leaders contribute to teacher leaders not always maximizing use of their informal and formal power during collaboration with teachers (Blase, 1991; Lindle, 1999). These tensions influence the nature of the often minimal time to collaborate for sharing student information and effective strategies, as well as planning for and aligning efforts that teachers and teacher leaders have.

Shared decision-making, the process of decentralizing decision-making, has been heralded by many practitioners and researchers as another related mechanism for driving change in schools (Halvorsen, 2013). Shared decision-making requires collaboration between those who make the decision together. Creating the conditions of having high functioning teams that share decision-making within which a school community can build “collective capacity”, the ways that

staff work in concert and collaboration in the service of their students (Walker and Riordan, 2010), is essential, as “collective capacity ... produces many more quality teachers who operate in concert” (Fullan, 2010). In a survey conducted of 1,210 teacher leaders by the Teacher Network (Barnett, 2010), it was found that “many teachers reported receiving a great deal of satisfaction and professional motivation from working as leaders and innovators in their schools – contributing both to (teacher) effectiveness and retention” (p. 4). Distributed leadership, leadership where multiple actors interact and share the burdens of leadership through a “collective process” (Bolden, 2011), and collective capacity of educational staff can be derailed or lifted up when the relationships between collaborative staff are influenced by micropolitics (Lindle, 1999), the balance between influence and power dynamics that exists between any people that interact with each other. Micropolitics are ever present, interwoven in every interaction between beings, and can be identified when carefully examining the culture of the interactions between players. According to the MetLife Survey of The American Teacher from 2013, “Half (51%) of teachers currently have a formal leadership role in their school, such as department chair, instructional resource, teacher mentor or leadership team member” (2013, p. 49). If collaboration between all school staff is key to the improvement of the school, as research states (Ronfeldt, et al., 2015), this paired with the fact that many teachers are formal leaders and informal leaders, leads to a layered and nuanced culture that exists in teacher collaborative time that must be waded through and made sense of to get down to the very important and focused work of school improvement.

What teachers and teacher leaders focus on and how they spend their time as they collaborate is of interest to school leadership. There is a growing set of literature on data use in schools, noting that data use occurs in several formats (Boudette, 2014; Schifter, et al., 2014).

Teachers can engage independently with data on their students, sharing it with their students and families to communicate effectively about what the student knows and what they need to do to move forward in their work. Teachers can also engage with student data in grade level or content level teams, as well as with the whole school staff (Mandanach & Jackson, 2012). Sometimes data is used to compare schools with other context-alike school communities, to norm reference points. The purpose of data use is to highlight areas of growth and strengths, and to help to guide the work of the teams, school, or teachers moving forward (Herman, Wardrip, Hall, & Chimino, 2012). This data-driven focus has also supported the growth of collaborative structures for staff to participate in to engage with data together, known as data teams.

In this capstone, I will first discuss current literature on relevant topics, focusing on teachers and teacher leaders, data teams, and micropolitics (through authority and decision-making). My capstone research used the lens of micropolitics to examine how teacher leaders hold authority and support decisions being made, leveraging their role and status.

Literature Review

In this literature review, I will first discuss the importance of collaboration within school communities, specifically between teachers, and collaborative structures, specifically data teams. I will then examine research on teacher leaders, as well as decision-making. Lastly, I will discuss micropolitics, as a theory that enabled me to understand how decisions are reached in data team meetings. I used these areas of educational research to gain an understanding of the culture that exists in data team meetings that are attended by teachers, coaches, and teacher leaders.

Teacher Collaboration

Researchers have determined that teachers and quality teaching strongly influence student achievement (Harris and Sass, 2011; Hanushek, 2011; Phillips, 2010). An effective teacher can

make a difference in student achievement, as demonstrated in a study completed by Sanders and Rivers in 1996 on teacher effectiveness, which found that “students benefiting from regular yearly assignment to more effective teachers (even if by chance) have an extreme advantage in terms of attaining higher levels of achievement” (p. 7). Furthermore, to ensure that more teachers are indeed considered effective or working to become more effective, Fullan, among other educational researchers, has stated the need to build capacity of the teaching staff collectively (2010), and describes teacher collaboration as a high leverage point of the work for educators today to drive improvement. Collaboration among teachers has come to the forefront of educational focus as teachers are no longer expected to work in silos. This is evidenced by the focus of many teacher evaluation frameworks and competencies or standards having indicators tied to collaboration through professional responsibilities and interpersonal relationships, as can be seen in the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric for Effective Service Delivery in Domain Four- Indicator 4b. Collaborating to develop and sustain a professional learning environment to support student/adult learning (CSDE, 2015). The question has been posited on how exactly collaboration between teachers affects students. Researchers have found that higher levels of teacher collaboration positively impacts student achievement (Goddard, et al, 2017; Reeves, Pun, and Chung, 2017; Ronfeldt, et al., 2015). The increased expectation for teachers to collaborate at all and, to collaborate effectively, has led to more attention on the structure and focus of teacher collaboration time (Darling-Hammond, & McLaughlin, 2011; Little, & Crawford, 2002; Ronfeldt, et al, 2015).

Data Teams as a Structure for Collaboration

Teacher collaboration is vital to school improvement efforts, and can take form in various structures, such as data teams and professional learning communities. Scholars and practitioners

have emphasized that collaborative structures, such as “communities of practice” (COPs), “professional learning communities” (PLCs), and “data teams” can be engaging, empowering, and drive change for the staff and students of a school (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). Research shows that teacher collaboration is vital to move a school community forward (Fullan, 1997). In a case study of effective practice of accountability and school improvement completed in the early 2000’s in the complex urban district of Norfolk Public Schools in Virginia, “the most effective schools made time for collaboration very frequently and in some cases, did this every day,” (2004, p. 67). Collaboration breaks down the walls between classrooms, offering teachers solidarity, camaraderie, and support from their peers; growing and spreading effective practices when at its best and resulting in inefficient and ineffective behaviors at its worst.

There are multiple ways for teachers to engage in collaboration- professional learning communities, communities of practice, and data teams, among others (Levine & Marcus, 2010; Vicente, 2017; Voogt, 2016). Data teams are a structured collaborative time during which teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators dive into school and grade-level data with the end result of driving instruction and the efforts of teachers in the classroom forward (Huguet, Marsh, Farrell, 2014). During data teams, teachers, teacher leaders, administration, and support staff delve into student data of all kinds, beginning with standardized assessment data, to collaboratively analyze student outputs. The data analysis process can guide the work of the teams and individual teachers (Schifter, et al., 2014). Keeping the work grounded in data gives the teachers direction for their instruction and supports- and informs them as to the areas of growth and strength that exist within their classrooms (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2016; Wayman, 2012). As Reeves (2004) discusses, “this analysis allow(s) them (the teachers) to focus their

teaching strategies on the needs of their students” (p. 71), thus creating opportunities for more effective instruction addressing specific needs of their students. This study will focus on the collaborative culture in data team meetings- a time when teachers, coaches, and teacher leaders work together to support and bolster student achievement.

Teacher Leadership

School leadership, including teacher leaders and administration, work to shape the culture and structures of the school, which also influences the nature of teacher collaborative time (Barnett, 2010). Teacher leaders consist of those teachers who assume roles of responsibility that reach beyond their classroom walls and support the work of the school community (Barnett, 2010; Campbell and Wenner, 2017). Teacher leaders can work under a variety of job titles, such as coach, specialist, and department lead, among others, leading to teacher leaders having the ability to “potentially fit into a variety of positions and meet the needs of any situation” (Campbell and Wenner, 2017), offering the school community a flexible resource. In support of the importance of the role of teacher leaders is Sergiovanni’s (1995) assertion that the greatest factor that can influence change and reform in a school is the leadership, and specifically that even though administration takes the helm as the leader of the entire school, that sharing the leadership is most effective. This undergirds the assertion that “teacher leadership is also necessary for Professional Learning Community (PLC) success, and is a prerequisite for long-lasting school change and improvement (Sergiovanni, 1995)” (Draper, et al., 2014, p.36).

Scholars have begun focusing additional attention on the roles of teacher leaders (Barnett, 2010). A teacher leader, per Danielson (2007), is a teacher “whose vision extends beyond their own classrooms— even beyond their own teams or departments” (p. 14), through informal or formal roles, that affect the school community in school-wide policies and programs, teaching

and learning, and communication and community relations. According to Danielson (2007), teacher leaders “are selected for a formal leadership role or spontaneously assume an informal role... effective teacher leaders...exhibit important skills, values, and dispositions. Teacher leaders call others to action and energize them with the aim of improving teaching and learning” (p. 16). Teacher leaders shape the work that is done as an overall school community, offering expertise, support, and guidance to the staff of the school.

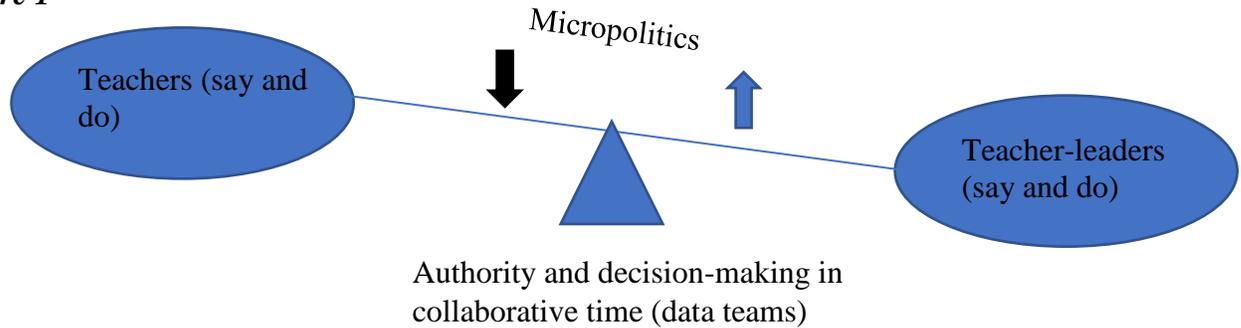
Teacher leaders also have access to much information that pertains to the school community due to their relationships with teachers, school leaders, and administration and apply this information in the multiple school contexts that they navigate in their roles. Since teacher leaders serve as “boundary-spanners”, those whose work overlaps the worlds of both teachers and administration, they have informal power within work groups due to the information and influence that they have access to in each peer group. As Russ, Galang, & Farris (1998) discuss, “boundary spanners are able to maintain their influence through astute management of information that portrays their continued usefulness” (p. 125). It is important to note that this contribution to hierarchy and therefore teacher leader roles may influence the collaborations between staff power dynamics in collaboration. Anicich, et al. (2016) asserted “status and power are the foundational bases of hierarchical differentiation in groups, organizations, and societies...defining status as respect and admiration in the eyes of others and power as asymmetric control over valued resources. Both constructs (status and power) have important organizational implications and form the basis of formal and informal hierarchies in the workplace” (p. 124).

In addition to teacher leaders that are still in direct contact with students as classroom teachers, this study will also examine instructional and various content area coaches. Such

coaches are teacher leaders with specific job descriptions and varying, mostly minimal, levels of direct student contact, depending upon their post. Instructional coaches are often utilized in a variety of teacher leadership capacities (Galluci, et al., 2010; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017) and in the context of this case study are participants and leaders in the data teams. These varying uses of instructional coaches contribute to varying levels of leadership and authority that are held by the coaches and teacher leaders. In particular, Wolpert- Gawron (2016) point out that “this position is defined differently from location to location—and that's its biggest challenge and greatest asset” (p. 56).

Authority

Authority is held in multiple ways by teachers, coaches, and teacher leaders (Hasegawa, B., & Kegan, Robert, 2003). As we acknowledge the variety of roles and responsibilities that teacher leaders take on, it becomes evident that for every variant of teacher leadership there are also varying levels of ability and authority held by each. These roles of teachers and teacher leaders offer varying levels of authority, voice, and power that can influence decision-making. Teachers are authorities in their own classrooms and in their content areas, as experts (Pace, 2003). These levels of authority of teachers and teacher leaders can be looked at through Weber’s foundational work on authority, as discussed by Coser (1976), which describes three overall types of authority: legal-rational, traditional, and charismatic (p. 226-227). Building upon these foundational categories of authority, teacher leaders potentially hold what is known as positional and expert authority. Formal authority held by various actors is a factor in micropolitics and can influence the ways that culture manifests (Spicer, 2010).

Figure 1

Decision-making

Collaboration between school staff in data teams results in decisions made about teacher instruction and how teachers and staff can work to address the needs of the students, applying decided-upon and various, shared strategies to their classrooms. Researchers discuss the phenomenon of decision-making as a social process (Park, 2017). Park (2017) states that, “when making decisions in a group, individuals can adapt their initial beliefs according to the social influence produced by the opinions of other individuals in the group” (p. 2). I will examine decision-making in data teams with a focus on understanding how activities, such as controlling the agenda or meeting outcomes, reflect issues of power and authority.

Due to the dynamics of organizations, decisions are made, as discussed prior, in a more shared fashion than in the past (Aronow and Shapiro, 2006; Fusarelli, L., Kowalski, T., & Petersen, G., 2011). According to Halvorsen (2013), “workers no longer function simply as individuals performing designated tasks in defined hierarchical structures, but rather take part in participatory practices and teamwork in a flexible relation to the ever-changing organization” (p. 274). The new reality of organizational dynamics show that through increased collaboration and cross-disciplinary work, “team decision making is becoming an increasingly crucial activity that

needs to be understood within the framework of contemporary workplace reforms” (2010, p. 274). This study seeks to understand how decisions made collaboratively by teachers and teacher leaders are made within the culture of data teams, taking into account the varying dynamics that exist between the members of the team. These dynamics that display authority can be observed as micropolitics.

Micropolitics

To explain both the power dynamics between teachers and teacher leaders, as depicted in Figure 1 on page nine, I used micropolitics as a theoretical framework. As Burns (1961) notes, micropolitics concentrates on the notion that it is “through political action, in small as in large social systems, that changes in the structure of society have occurred” (p. 281). Micropolitics explains the nature of how work carries on in a smaller grain size, influencing the larger work of an organization, through the smaller and sometimes almost imperceptible nuances of a group’s culture. Furthermore, Ryan (2000) defines, “micro-political strategies are the behaviors people adopt in pursuing their interests” (p. 81). I applied this framework to study teacher leadership and power dynamics in collaborative groups because micropolitics provides tools for explaining how change happens through influence and the politics that exist in all social organizations.

Micropolitics is the exercising of power in the smaller moments of life and, according to May (1993), draws attention to the ways in which power does not manifest solely in the large “local operation of power” and that “the concentration of power should not be mistaken for its source” (p. 4).

Power and influence in interactions of teacher collaboration do not always manifest with a single person who holds an authoritative position, such as a formalized role of teacher leader (Spicer, 2013). Rather, power and influence surfaces in the smaller interactions and shifts of

resources and alliances between the staff. I tracked those shifts in resources and alliances to understand how decisions were made in the data teams. I used this theoretical framework as the rationale for looking at the power dynamics involved with teacher leader roles because Marshall and Scribner's (1991) research on micropolitics says that "school micropolitics focus on the strains and tensions that stem from diverse sources of power, rival interests, and intractable conflicts within and around schools" (p. 352).

Furthermore, teacher leaders often struggle with balancing roles between various peer groups due to micropolitics (Struyve, et al., 2014). I fully examined the cultures of two teams, with the lens of micropolitics, as micropolitics are "about different ways of achieving and using power in order to affect the manner in which things are understood and governed" (Eilertson, et al., 2008, p. 295). This study addressed the following research questions:

RQ 1) How do teacher leaders, coaches, and teachers engage with each other in collaborative meetings?

RQ 2) How are the essential features and elements of micropolitics instantiated during collaborative meetings?

Methods

To answer my research questions, I conducted a qualitative case study that used ethnographic techniques for observations. The case study approach, per Creswell, involves "... a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary-bounded system (a case) or multiple-bounded system (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audio visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes" (2013, p. 97). This

definition of a case study, also supported by Yin (2003), is applicable to the data that I collected in my research, as I collected data from two real-life situations (the two data teams that met), that were bounded by a time limitation and a site limitation, that resulted in a description of the culture of the groups and a synopsis of themes that surfaced as the data was analyzed. I conducted an instrumental, collective, with-in site case study, since I used micropolitics as a lens to investigate two cases in one site.

To carry out a case study, as Creswell (2013) discusses, I chose “clearly identifiable cases with clear boundaries” and needed to “seek to provide an in-depth understanding of the case” (p. 98). So, I purposefully sampled two content area data teams, Math and English, at the high school that were also convenience samplings due to access to the teams. Creswell (2013) discusses the case study unit of analysis as being the cases that I chose to examine (p. 97), and I examined multiple cases at a single site. I focused on Math and English as content areas, as they have similar responsibilities of accountable standardized assessment preparation and are considered foundational, as well as the fact that they operated similarly in terms of staffing and collaboration. It is also necessary to point out that these sites and teams were sampled because I did not work directly with the high school. As such, there was a minimized possibility that my own role in the district as a district support staff for schools influenced the culture of the team in a direct way.

Data Collection

Location and Participants

I gathered data from two collaborative teacher teams of English and Math at a neighborhood high school in an urban district. This urban district has many shifting dynamics

that externally affect the culture of the school and therefore also will play a peripheral role in the culture of the data teams: there are shrinking resources, looming school consolidations, a revolving door of district and school leadership, transient student and family population that attend, as well as high accountability and focus on standardized assessment scores. The teacher leaders, teachers, and district coaches were observed within teacher collaborative team meetings known as data teams. I chose this school since the structure of data teams existed, operated with teacher leader and coach input, and the coaches and teacher leaders were highly collaborative with the administration and utilized in supporting teachers in their work. The participant demographic make-up of the participants of the collaborative meetings were as follows: 50% white non-Hispanic, 37.5% Hispanic, and 12.5% black American. Teacher leaders in this context include teachers who have held or currently held various teacher leader roles, such as school union representative, blended learning coach, teacher prep academy theme coach, and various club and activity leadership roles as well as department leads. Additionally, there were district instructional coaches who were present at these meetings- the Math district coach, and the Humanities district coach. It is important to note that each of these coaches and teacher leaders may have had different capacities and types of authority, due to their varying levels of experience and expertise.

To answer my research questions, I collected interview and observational data. I gathered information from both interviews of the eight data team participants from the two teams and observations of eight data team meetings. Prior to collecting the following types of data, I obtained the proper permissions and was also transparent in my purpose for attending the meetings and conducting interviews. Creswell (2013) states that culture “consists of what people do (behaviors), what they say (language), the potential tension between what they do and ought

to do, and what they use such as artifacts” (p. 95). This guided my plan to collect these multiple forms of data, as the various forms of data combined to offer a holistic view of the culture of the data teams.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each team member of the data teams prior to participating in the meetings and collecting data. These interviews consisted of three and five members from each of two teams. These interviews served the purpose of providing background on the demographics of the teams to portray the individual members of the team before they came together as a whole group. These interviews also served to provide context on the group and offered potential explanations as to why the micropolitics of the culture manifested itself in certain ways. Here are sample questions from the background interviews (the background section of the interview protocol is displayed in Appendix A.):

1. How did you become a teacher/ teacher leader/coach?
2. What other roles do you currently have?
3. What other roles have you held in the past?

During these background interviews, there was also a section of questions on data teams and decision-making. For example, I asked about collaborative structures that the interviewee engaged in. These interview questions built upon the background interview questions and were conducted in conjunction with the background interviews, gathering deeper information on the team members’ perceptions of the culture of the group. I also asked about who had authority over what, conflict, and breaches in norms of teacher/ leader relationships, such as what happens when a teacher leader overstepped bounds.

Observations

In addition to interviewing eight teachers, coaches, and teacher leaders, I observed meetings and gathered field notes from Grade-level Data Team meetings of both English and Math that met intermittently for 12 total weeks, for a total of eight meeting observations, that were each an hour long. I attended every other week or third week to collect data, with the time spanning over 12 total weeks in the Fall to Winter of 2018-19.

I collected data by observing teachers' work with teacher leaders and coaches in data team meetings as a participant in the meetings. The observations were necessary and appropriate to "gather information in the context or setting in which the group works" (Creswell, 2013, p. 95). During these meetings, the teacher leaders and coaches were coordinators and facilitators of the teacher collaborative time, for a total of eight meeting observations. I applied ethnographic techniques in observations of data team meetings so that I could learn about the dynamics of teacher leader relationships, study the culture of the teacher leaders interacting with the teachers, and study the patterns of social behavior that occurred during data team meetings. These patterns of social behavior demonstrated the spread of authority, as well as the patterns of decision-making that showed the authority and power dynamics between the teachers and teacher leaders. To build understanding of the power dynamics, I focused on authority in the data team meetings and how that manifested. Specifically, I observed and made note of the following, driven by the research in the literature review, to answer my research questions: demographics, make-up of the team, quality and nature of interpersonal relationships, body language, passive/ passive-aggressive/ aggressive behaviors and communications, influence, reactions and interactions between the team members, compulsion of attendance, extrinsic authority on data teams, scope

of authority, who sets and keeps the agenda, airtime, final say, and lastly, decisions made and what led up to it. I made these decisions to capture the culture of the teacher leader and teacher team and the interactions highlighting the power dynamics of relationships between teacher leaders and teachers.

Participant Observation. To answer questions about the culture between teachers and teacher leaders during data team meetings, I carried out the ethnographic technique of participant observation to understand more about the culture of the teams that meet in the data teams. I observed eight meetings and took field notes. Being both a researcher and a participant offered me an insider view of the culture of the group, a view that was necessary to answer my research questions. As Jorgensen explains, “the ordinary, usual, typical, routine, or natural environment” is the “world of everyday life” to the participant researcher or observer (p. 15). This insider view was necessary to understand the authority in the group, as authority can often be construed in explicit and implicit ways – ways that may be hidden from the view of the casual observer.

Field Notes and Recordings. During all observed data team meetings, I wrote field notes that capture the dynamics of the culture. General field notes enabled me to obtain useful data on the culture, as I could observe body language and interactions that occurred that would not be captured on audio recordings. I wrote these field notes on my laptop, as was appropriate, or in notebooks, in an organized fashion with the date, time and meeting type as well as attendees, using a field note protocol that I discuss further later. As I recorded observations in my field notes, I paid attention to all interactions, then afterwards, I returned to the data to engage in coding, discussed in the data analysis section, although I kept a list of the most important items to observe at the top of my field note protocol, to remind myself of what I wanted to pay attention to. This list of observations to look for worked as a guide, to show myself what I knew

I was going to pay attention to. At each meeting, I audio-recorded the meetings, as to not miss any potentially pertinent details. I had the recordings professionally transcribed with encryption of their data to ensure confidentiality.

Artifacts

I gathered documents, including data meeting scope and sequences, schedules and minutes or agendas. I analyzed these artifacts as they helped to guide and supplement the information gathered from the observations and surveys to add to understanding of the authority and decision-making. I used the agendas as supplemental materials to highlight the decision-making and authority of whomever sets the agenda.

Data Analysis

Coding

I used both deductive and inductive codes to analyze my data. The deductive codes that I selected were based in the literature on teacher collaboration and teacher leadership, as well as decision-making and authority. I crafted a comprehensive list of deductive codes that encompass many angles regarding teacher collaboration. I created this initial list of deductive codes from the literature on authority, decision-making, and micropolitics. These initial codes were also based upon teacher collaboration experiences that came from my initial conceptual frameworks of authority and micropolitics, as Miles, et al. (1994) suggest. I utilized the program Dedoose to upload my documents and to engage in coding.

As I systematically reviewed the data gathered, important codes became apparent to focus on to answer my research questions, and I employed these codes during inductive coding. After revisiting the literature, I was able to examine my data, research questions, and plan and refocus my research with the narrower scope of specifically examining power dynamics of

teacher leaders, coaches, and teachers in the data team meetings- my own reflexivity was necessary as the study and analysis unfolded to be an *in situ* emergence of understanding of the culture (Creswell, 1993, p. 262). This refined focus was applied as I revisited my data and coding. The inductive nature of my thematic analysis led me to recreate my codebook after my data collection, although I entered into the data collection with a theoretical lens (micropolitics) that drove my work. I also carried out inductive coding as I collected and analyzed the data. Prior to data analysis, I created matrices to compare the data gathered from the two data teams.

Thematic analysis

I applied thematic analysis to the data corpus (the data collected in entirety). Flick (2009) discusses the method of thematic analysis as where a researcher predefines the views and definitions yet remains open to the varying approaches that the group experiences their culture, as I engaged with the data. This kept my focus on the observable elements of culture that showed the patterns of micropolitics and allowed for the necessary flexibility that the case study methodology required to respond to my research questions. I used thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data gathered through interviews and field notes. Thematic analysis was the ideal method of analyzing my data, as the data I collected shaped my approach as I delved through my resources. I applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) definition of theme to my work as, "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 10). Furthermore, as I experienced and observed the culture of the group that I observed, I paid attention to certain themes that rose to the surface in response to my research questions. The method of thematic analysis was "a method which works both to reflect reality, and better understand the 'reality'", as stated by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 9). I created matrices to compare data collected from the

two teams. The juxtaposition of both teams' data in side-by-side table columns and rows not only represented the data (Creswell, 2013), but also allowed for interpretation of the observed elements of the culture, allowing for thematic analysis through the data displays in an organized fashion.

Reflective memos

I revisited my field notes and transcription, writing reflective memos, because, per Miles, et al. (1994) this helped with deriving more general themes (p. 71) on the topics related to the leadership and structures of the data team meetings that teachers, coaches, and teacher leaders participated in. This process allowed me to narrow in on the data collected and coding that gave me information to answer my research questions in a focused manner. As I reviewed the data documents, I kept notes in a memo form on patterns that I saw and thoughts and questions that arose that helped me to analyze the codes, as Miles, et al. (1994) states that “a formal write-up usually will add back some of the missing content (in field notes) because the raw field notes, when reviewed, stimulate the field worker to remember things that happened at that time that are not in the notes” (p. 71). In addition, by juxtaposing the in-coding memos with the Dedoose analysis element of co-occurring and occurring codes, findings surfaced.

Limitations

This study has the limitation of being narrowly focused upon one school community. This limitation affects the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, as a case study, this research was focused on a particular pair of collaborative teams within the one large, urban high school in a district that had undergone much change in the past decade. Factors that may lead to minimizing the transferability of these findings and recommendations are that there was staff turnover (Two staff left-one from each team), there was a switch in district initiatives during the

span of observations (“data teams” switched to “Data Wise”), the staffing that led the collaborative teams was district-level (District coach leads both teams- in both at first, then eventually when switched to DW, teacher leaders “took over” facilitation), that most staff these teams had worked at the school and together for some time (except newer teachers were on the math team) and lastly, that there was new leadership at the school. This study’s findings are generalizable to relevant contexts, such as in other urban education situations, or even in other school communities that have unstable conditions in which they exist. I acknowledge the complexity of the context of the urban district and school that I selected to observe and gather data from as factors that must be honored and realized as the norm for some, although not all, other school systems.

In addition, it is important to note that as a participant researcher, my own perspective and influence was an embedded piece of the culture of the group, and very well may have been enmeshed, although as limited as possible due to the sample chosen for the case study. Specifically of note to my role in the data collection is the fact that, as Eilertsen (2008) asserts, upon entering a system that has such interplay at work, a participant observer must acknowledge that they are contributors to the micropolitics, due to becoming involved with the culture of the groups. Although my intent was to not intervene to lead the data team in a particular direction, it is wise to acknowledge that all participants in a team or group offer elements that affect the cultural dynamics of the group. A related, last point to consider for limitations of this study was the need for bracketing, ensuring that the researcher and data collector is engaged in processes to separate out any preconceptions, such as my own biases that have developed with my own experiences, i.e. feeling like older teachers may not be as willing to engage in collaboration as

younger teachers, etc. It was important to remain as objective as possible when gathering data and analyzing it, so that the story of the culture is as free of bias as possible.

Significance and Implications

Examining the dynamics and nuances that exist between teachers and teacher leaders during scheduled data team meetings can point us in the direction of how both positive and negative forces of micropolitics influence the outcomes of data team meetings. This is of interest to school leadership and policy makers to narrow in on ways to maximize the use of collaboration time between teachers, coaches, and teacher leaders. This case study offers lessons and thoughts on how to breed a positive culture of collaboration between teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches. Organizational operational effectiveness, the alignment of efforts to successfully address issues, and improve as an organization, calls for policy created both at school and district leadership levels to support the creation of conditions for the effective use of time during the school year. This may include driving the professional learning of staff on structures and protocols to use during data team times, as well as norms and roles to be implemented and followed with fidelity (West, 1999). The structures could include a set of steps to follow at each meeting to examine student data, and expectations such as preset agendas.

Professional learning on these topics would need to be followed up on with accountability for continuation of application of these, once first established. Other school staff –based actors involved can support the effective use of data team time by holding themselves and their team members accountable for outcomes and staying true to the topic of the meetings while focusing on student work and grounding all conversations in data (Boudette, 2014). Furthermore, engaging in practices that create a “we” internal culture in teams will be beneficial socially to teachers even beyond professional satisfaction, thus positively affecting their teamed work

efforts (West, 1999). Parents can support their children by asking teachers and teacher leaders what their collaborative time looks and sounds like, as well as asking what the intended outcomes are for each meeting. Community stakeholders, such as those who volunteer as reading tutors can ask to be involved to the extent that the law allows in analyzing data and the process that the data teams engage in.

This study has internal validity, as the instruments that were designed, the interview protocol and data collection tool, were designed to capture the culture and relevant information influencing the team collaborating in the data teams. In terms of external validity, or transferability or generalizability, factors such as demographics, school structures, inner and outer forces that act upon the school community that may affect the study could vary site to site. As this is a case study, we have the benefit of a comprehensive view of the culture, as well, although it is just the one culture. Using the case study methodology to examine the power dynamics between teachers, teacher leaders and coaches during data team meetings will offer practitioners a view into what contributes to those conditions in the context of these two cases.

For theory and future research, it is important to think of adult learners as actors in data teams, loosely and tightly coupled systems as influencing data teams, organizational learning as how the teams learn how to interact and grow, and systems theory to further examine the topic of how to have the most beneficial outcomes of data team work that will have a positive effect on student achievement. Future research could be focused upon what the conditions for success are for data teams including teachers and teacher leaders. In addition, it would be beneficial to complete mixed-methods studies for studies that are larger in scale, examining student achievement data paired with qualitative and observational data of the cultures of the teams of teachers that teach those sets of students. This would help to determine the effect of high

functioning teacher and teacher leader teams upon student achievement and vice versa. Other scholars who engage in these types of studies should consider my work due to the foundational anthropological view of culture in the data teams as teacher leader roles grow even more so in popularity and use in schools that embody the model of distributed leadership. Lastly, micropolitics is omnipresent, existing in every interaction between people and must not be overlooked when examining how teams of workers complete their tasks. To know and understand the ways that micropolitics can influence a group's behavior and outputs will help to guide the work of teams and collaboration in general.

Findings

Micropolitics helps us to see the manner in which teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches engage with each other. I drew on micropolitics to analyze observations of collaborative team meetings and interviews of team members. Teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches interacted with each other in micropolitical ways that continually influence the relationships between peers and the ecosystem of a team. Additionally, each individual team member varied in standing within the team and interaction with the rest of the team- due to role, background, experience, and relationships, among other variables- which surfaced through the micropolitical factors evident in each meeting observed. Teachers varied in the nature of their interactions with other team members based upon tenure (e.g. A novice teacher in years one to three of their role and a more senior teacher in years four plus of their role) and experience, but were similar in their focus being always with the lens of their own and their students' interests. Furthermore, teacher leaders navigated the borders between administration, district staff, and school staff who are not systemically intertwined with the district level work or connect their work only to the school site and this manifests in their verbal and non-verbal communications. Lastly, coaches in the context

of this case study were directly connected to district leadership in their roles and this afforded them a level of positional authority that was awarded to them by school employees in collaborations. In the following section, I explain how the authority of district coaches was observed, as school staff looked to them for answers and guidance in meetings. In sum, my findings paint a picture of continual shifts of alliances, engagement, and support that occur during team collaboration.

How Teacher Leaders, Teachers, and Coaches Engage With Each Other in Collaborative Meetings

In response to research question one, teacher leaders, teachers, and coaches interacted in verbal and non-verbal ways, demonstrating level of interest, engagement, and level of attention provided by each individual to the topics discussed. One notable nuance that I observed was that teacher leaders and teachers interacted in patterns that suggested a higher level of comfort and vulnerability with each other as compared to coaches. For instance, during observations, I detected evidence of this such as knowing more details about their life outside of work and inside jokes from within the walls of their schools. By contrast, coaches interacted in a lively manner, putting more effort in to try to align themselves with the teachers, while at the same time making statements on behalf of the district that asserted their authority in the collaborative meetings. For example, in the English meetings, I observed the English coach making jokes and drawing connections between the teachers and himself. It appears this occurred to remind teachers of the connections that they shared from being direct coworkers in the past, as he had worked at that school with these teachers in the past- “remember when Principal (x) gave us all mirrors and we had to reflect on ourselves and our work” (field notes, 2018). In addition, I observed the English

coach referencing the templates provided by the district, joking that the formatting was not good, but he was not in charge of that, however, he understood why others wouldn't like it. He also stated that they had to use those templates- these comments showed him in one breath distancing himself from the district work protocol and aligning himself with the teachers, and also stating that they had to complete it and upholding the district protocols. Similarly, I observed the math coach mentioning her strategies from being in the classroom at the same school specifically with the assessment data tracking and made reference to the codes and annotations that she used. This was an attempt to draw a connection between herself and the work that the teachers are engaged in day-to-day.

The verbal and non-verbal communication demonstrated teachers being highly engaged in discussing practices that could be used to better support their students. For example, in all four observed English meetings, I noticed teachers talking animatedly about the topic, leaning into the group while discussing, offering ideas and thoughts that move the conversation along. I also observed teachers as engaged when discussing assessment practices during the English meeting for English Learners to advocate for their students and also demonstrating higher levels of interest verbally and non-verbally within the same meeting when discussing specific strategies that are considered resources, such as intervention programs that could help to address the needs that they are identifying in their students. Further, in one English meeting session, it was clear that the team members were all leaning in towards each other specifically as they discussed the topic of assessment and subgroups, discussing the exact skills that they were working towards assessing. While they were discussing these topics, I observed all teachers and teacher leaders leaning in, heads on their hands and elbows on the table, towards each other and the coach as he

directed the conversation. In sum, observing non-verbal behaviors demonstrated individuals' engagement in the collaborative meeting.

Additionally, verbal and non-verbal communication during collaboration meetings were indicative of lower levels of engagement. For example, during multiple meetings I detected teachers looking at other materials on their devices during the discussion, body language such as leaning back with arms crossed and making statements that indicate a lack of alignment or desire to align with the work. A teacher discussed non-verbal communication when members are not pleased with the topic of a meeting, "I think, just in their facial expression, you can kind of see the aggravation with some things, with the facial expressions and ... body language and facial expressions give a lot away" (personal communication, 2018). These actions indicate low engagement, as the teachers chose to place their attention and energy in a different focus than on the content of the meeting that they are in attendance of. I observed such lower levels of demonstrated engagement through actions such as both Math and English teachers looking at their devices and email when discussing district initiatives such as mandated curriculum and looking up to express that they know their students' needs. This same behavior was also indicated in an interview with a teacher who reflected on a meeting where teachers do not agree with the topic, "you know, this kind of ... 'Why are we here?' (attitude) Or there was teachers there who just took their work with them, and just started grading papers, just in the meeting, which meant they didn't want to be there. They wanted to just get this work done" (personal communication, 2018). In sum, it appeared that there was lower engagement when staff members felt that the topic of the meeting did not directly pertain to their work or honor their voices as professionals.

Use of structures and protocols. Teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches relied on structure and protocols to set boundaries on time use and hold teachers and other educators accountable for the work, thereby assisting with productivity. Specifically, the coaches and teacher leaders took the role of maintaining the agendas and crafting the structures and protocols for the team to engage in. For instance, they created agendas on each collaborative meeting, either facilitating the meeting themselves or providing the agenda to those who would be. They also designed the structure for providing feedback to each other and holding each other accountable in the meetings. Ultimately, these efforts translated into manifestations of the coaches' own authority in the collaboration, as the agendas and structures designed by the coaches demonstrated their approval of the way the team was engaging in their work.

Structures, such as agendas and norms, did provide opportunities for the designer of the structure to exert influence. For example, if an objective was deemed eligible for the agenda once proposed by a teacher, the coach or teacher leader would be the one to input it into the agenda, formalizing the objective as an item to be paid attention to by the team. The various roles of a "team member" offered a formal platform for use of power/ influence, as evidenced by the coach and teacher leader roles owning the structures (i.e. agenda, meeting time, meeting topics). Further, teachers used the rolling agendas to review and follow up on their work, and teacher leaders would use the agendas to capture notes on next steps for accountability purposes. In addition, coaches would use the agendas to check on the implementation of the work in between meetings, as well as to guide the work for each meeting.

Coaches and teacher leaders who crafted the agendas for the sessions also used the agenda to frame the work for the sessions, thus demonstrating the rolling agenda as a tool for the construct of the time. Across all four meetings, the English coach consistently made reference to

the agenda and used it as a grounding and guiding tool for their collaborative work. For example, in the first observed meeting, as the session began, he was typing in the agenda and offered two choices for the work for the day, both delineated in the agenda. Teachers would have some input into the agendas, but their input would be legitimized by approval of their input as an addition by a teacher leader or a coach who was driving the work of the team.

Structures and protocols were discussed by teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches as being useful tools to drive and guide collaboration in seven out of eight of the individual interviews. For instance, a teacher discussed the use of norms on her team:

“We're also really good about being accountable and holding each other accountable. So, even in a joking way in our English meetings, if somebody is being negative we're quick to call them out on that. And I think you've seen that in our meetings, but we do it in a loving way. It's not in a, we don't like you for being this way. We accept you for who you are. Let's remind ourselves that this is what we're here for kind of thing. Because it's ... you can't expect everybody to be bubbly and sunshine 24/7. So I think just making sure that everybody knows they care for each other and that we're here for you” (personal communication, 2018).

And, a coach discussed their role in organizing the work for their team through the agenda, “we are working to set the agenda and keep organized minutes and notes. I think my role along with one of the other coaches is to help organize and provide purpose for those meetings” (personal communication, 2018). Another coach acknowledged their authority with the rolling agenda, and their desire to shift the ownership more to the teachers, “And so we have a rolling agenda. We do try to make an effort to set the agenda before we leave the meeting for the next meeting, so that ideally even if I am not there, then next meeting's agenda is already typed up and ready to go” (personal communication, 2018).

Additionally, I observed the math team referencing their norms consistently with the role of a norm checker in place to report out on how the team held to their norms throughout the meeting, demonstrating two structures- norms and roles for the meeting. I also observed the role of time keeper with teachers often taking this role, in the ELA meeting, a teacher would set her phone timer and ask the team for guidance about which times to set, as a strategy to hold the group accountable to her role and the agenda set times. As demonstrated by the observations and the interviews, specific structures and protocols supported and added meaning to the work of a collaborative team, yet oftentimes, those controlling the structure or protocol were identified as having formal authority over collaboration.

Airtime. While structures and protocols offer tools to shape the meeting, the collaboration is always crafted of conversations. In conversations, meeting participants can share their ideas to the team and can use airtime while addressing the team. When you talk in a meeting and the other participants listen, it is often referred to as “airtime”. There was a large degree of variability in participants’ airtime. That is, some meeting participants chimed in a lot, while other teachers did not participate in collaborative conversations.

Sharing airtime in a meeting means that not any one or two people speak more than the others during a collaborative meeting (Yates, 2018). I observed shared airtime to a certain extent in both content meetings, although I discerned nuances to the patterns of airtime. Specifically, in both of the observed content area meetings, sharing airtime and fluid discussion during meetings demonstrated team group thinking, but was limited to careful collaborative conversations by all three types of participants. Specifically, I observed the math teachers often wanted to be told what to do or complete to be clear that they were doing what needed to be done. For example, when the math teachers discussed the interim assessments and capturing the data, both math

teachers asked and looked to the math coach and teacher leader to tell them where to record the data and in what format.

Coaches also played a role in shaping airtime in collaborative meetings. Math and English coaches made efforts to uphold the district marching orders while maintaining authority and positive relationships. For example, when the English Coach mentioned that he was not responsible for the format in a data collection tool on English assessments, but then moved to say that they still had to fill it out. However, teacher leaders were primarily focused on conversations that built relationships with their teammates and still very focused on their classrooms and how they were running them and implementing the curriculum.

The teachers and teacher leaders would discuss the needs of students, contextualizing the collaborative work to their students' needs, while district staff clearly had the agenda of upholding the district messaging. This was evident through the redirection of conversation topic by the district coaches to the expectations of the district on multiple occasions, for example when the English Coach would invoke the name of the Director for the content area and say that he would check with him on a topic that a teacher was questioning. Sharing airtime is a necessary task to honor all participant voices in a collaborative meeting, however, the content of what is said by each role type demonstrated that not all airtime, although equal in time, is equitable in content and focus.

Engaging in workplace discourse that extends beyond the topics of work. As the teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches all used their airtime in ways that worked for their role and purpose, the content of the conversations also is a factor to be considered. Conversations occur before, during and after a meeting, and sometimes, the conversations that occur before and after the scheduled time of a meeting takes place can shed light on the professional and personal

relationships existing among teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches. Workplace discourse is relational in nature when people engage in conversation that is light and playful, and the communication turns to topics about their lives outside of and extended beyond the workplace. This engagement matters because choosing to share life outside of shared experiences and shared work topics shows that the teammates are investing time in getting to know each other; it is a signal of opening up to be more vulnerable with people when someone engages in authentic relational banter (Slugoski, 1988).

My qualitative data indicates that relational banter was evident between team members that demonstrated a level of comfort with each other or a desire to establish or strengthen relationships. Participants were observed continuing discussions after an official meeting closed out, talking about various topics including personal life or work-related items. For instance, they discussed plans for lunch during half days prior to parent/ teacher conferences or other school events, and educational pursuits of their own. A teacher reflected on the nature of these interactions in her interview:

“We hang out together. I'm not even joking. Our ninth grade team, we have ... last week we planned a lunch during midterms and we all just went out to eat as a team. And also, during the day if I feel stressed, I'll go to x's room and say, 'I'm feeling stress for this and I feel like I can trust you. I feel like I can count on you.' Because we all do take care of each other on the team” (personal communication, 2018).

This observed and discussed banter helped to build relationships with a demonstrated voluntary use of time to continue interaction with their colleagues. One teacher shared a story after the official close to a meeting about her being so lost in her thoughts that she tried to get in the driver's seat of a car that was not hers in the parking lot, causing the team to laugh and

empathize with discussion of their own feelings of being overwhelmed. A teacher leader reflected upon the need for relationships between coworkers in her interview, stating that “teaching is lonely, we need to connect” (personal communication, 2018). Another teacher discussed the need for relationships between group members to be necessary, but that the connections need to be organized and not perceived as a waste of time, not just sitting around and talking. However, the more casual discourse was observed as occurring most often in a team that was self-reported in interviews by all team members as being highly productive. All of these listed observations and shared experiences led to the following understanding- discussions that extend in topic beyond the workplace demonstrate a team that is or has formed connections to strengthen ties to each other; they are invested in each other as human beings.

Visible non-verbals. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words, thus, in addition to the verbal words that are spoken, we can also observe the non-verbal interactions. I determined that non-verbal cues and body language, including proximity to each other in the meeting space or mirroring each other’s movements and mannerisms, tended to influence a measure of positive (collaboration time that ended with a productive tone), neutral (collaboration went through the motions of the agenda items), or negative (the collaboration left questions unaddressed and teammates at odds with each other) interaction.

I identified examples of non-verbals, such as leaning in on arms or hands towards the other members of the group during a conversation, nodding heads, sitting back with arms crossed, looking at their computer screen and being off task during a meeting and so on. These non-verbal cues matter because they indicate how an individual relates to the content and members of the collaborative time. I observed various non-verbal behaviors when topics such as

curriculum, assessments, individual teacher instructional moves were discussed. I will discuss three specific examples of these in this section.

Interactions observed tended to be positive to neutral in nature regarding their interactions with the team and each other, as well as the content of the meetings, albeit careful and with concrete margins based upon the team's make-up and experience with each other. An example of a positive non-verbal interaction would team members sitting near each other, as a group clustered at one end of the table for a meeting and leaning in towards each other as they spoke on the topic of work styles, as well as mirroring each other's body language, crossing arms, leaning their chins on their hands. One example of when this occurred was when the English team was engaging in the working styles protocol and the team all leaned in and looked together at the computer. At this time, they leaned in to speak to each other and maintained eye contact with each other as they were sharing.

An example of neutral to negative non-verbals was when the Math teacher leader was looking for input into the math data team process when the Data Wise process was being introduced as being led by the teacher leader and asking the district math coach to hold her accountable, to which the coach replied, "I will hold you accountable to the process". During this same meeting time, a math teacher continually got up to answer the door for students (multiple times in each meeting), indicating that she was not protecting the time for the group collaboration. I observed this same math teacher also often looking at her fingernails or hands and leaning back with her arms crossed during team discussions, demonstrating a lack of engagement and connection to the topic of the collaborative meeting. The non-verbal cues, including looking at nails and crossing arms, even eating food, checking email and texting during

the team meetings, translated into body language that spoke to the teacher's lack of interest in the content of the meeting.

I also observed non-verbal cues as occurring very prominently in positive connotation situations. The balance of positive, neutral, and negative non-verbal cues observed in the case study of two teams leaned towards positive the most, neutral next, and negative the least. This is visualized in the below table, as evidenced by Body Language being tagged in observational data a total of 31 times in co-occurrence with the tag Engagement and 27 times co-occurring with the tag Scope of Authority, meaning that observation of Body Language was often occurring in tandem with positive reactions. Whereas, Body Language was tagged in co-occurrence with more negative mannerisms less times: Aggressive Behavior once, Passive Aggressive Behavior seven times, and Passive Behavior 14 times:

Code	Body Language	Positive Connotation	Negative Connotation
Co-occurrence Code			
Engagement	31	x	
Scope of Authority	27	x	
Aggressive Behavior	1		x
Passive Aggressive Behavior	7		x
Passive Behavior	14		x

However, it is important to note that just because people demonstrate with their non-verbal cues that they are engaging in the conversation in a positive way, does not mean that the collaboration is necessarily productive or pushing the team to the next level of work. Non-verbal interactions deepen the understanding of the story of relationships, engagement and support within a team collaboration.

Observed role of ownership/agency in meetings. A key element of engagement that is demonstrated through verbal and non-verbal communication is the need for members of a team to feel a sense of ownership and control over their own actions. Teachers and teacher leaders were concerned with issues of autonomy and ownership of their own decision-making in their roles. This topic was a theme that threaded throughout the observed collaborations and interviews. In one interview, a teacher stated, “In the past, where you enter a collaborative space where not everybody is on the same page and working towards a positive goal, that makes for a really, really negative experience. And it makes you not want to share as a person. You're like, I'm not going to offer my ideas if it's going to be laughed at or if it's not going to be taken seriously or if people truly don't want to be here” (personal communication, 2018).

Furthermore, in interviews, teachers stated that when decisions are made in meetings, they still contextualize the decision to their own classrooms and the needs of their specific students, demonstrating a level of autonomy that keeps the teachers engaged in the implementation of decisions. One coach reflected on how teachers do so, “ultimately what happens in the classroom doesn't change because they don't buy into what I'm kind of ... my viewpoint as a teacher leader. ... I think the teachers actually hold the most authority in the school...”. The coach continued on to discuss a specific collaborative meeting and topic as an example, “I think that is the direction of the decisions we want to go where the teacher then

decides to plan differently in their classrooms. That's what happened after that meeting” (personal communication, 2018).

Finally, in an interview with an ELA teacher discussing when they feel a meeting is productive, they stated, “we are making decisions on what's happening in our classroom and they're thoughtful and good decisions” (personal communication, 2018). When the teachers feel ownership and a sense of collective agency, this aforementioned interpretation by participants of a collaboration being productive and meaningful expands. One teacher discussed a team from their past experiences during an interview, stating, “...it worked well because we were all familiar with each other's strengths, and we kind of leaned on each other for different things. We knew what we could depend on each other for. And a lot of that was just based on our personalities. So we all had the same core belief that all of the students could learn, that wasn't a stretch for anyone. I think we all had a common vision, we just worked really well together” (personal communication, 2018).

I observed collaborative meetings with statements and conversation by the teachers that demonstrated agency and ownership often observed alongside body language that indicated a person's reaction to the perceived level of autonomy. When a teacher or teacher leader felt they had a say in the decision-making or crafting of a strategy, protocol, or meeting, they were engaged on a deeper level. For example, in the ELA meeting, the teacher leader wanted the team to complete a working style assessment called “Compass Points” and a teacher requested to identify the team members' Harry Potter houses (ie. Slytherin, Hufflepuff) instead, effectively addressing the same need, but enacting a conversation that they teacher got to direct and own while blending in their own personal interest. Another example of this is discussed by a math teacher, “If we have any concerns, or something we want ... yeah. We have input. So, for our last

meeting, we wanted to focus on trying to set up our Carnegie, so that was our input on it, and she said, ‘Okay.’ Had no problem with it.” When the teachers felt they could influence the work, they would be willing to invest the time and energy in implementing it effectively.

On the other hand, a non-example of teachers feeling like a collaborative meeting protocol or activity was worth their time and they felt that it was not a good use of their time was discussed in an interview, “we went over the guide book for the attendance policy of the school, and just going over it section by section. To me, that's something, I think, that ... we could just read this. But instead, they have us kind of reading through it, answering questions. I mean, which ... I get what they want us to do. That they want us to really go into it. But I feel like we can go into it at a time if we're uncertain about something. I didn't think we needed to be there for an hour discussing that” (personal communication, 2018). Similarly, another teacher reflected on what happens when team members don't believe in the work in a meeting, “I can tell you right off the bat that when people are not, they don't buy into what you're doing, then they check out” (personal communication, 2018). The sense of autonomy and ownership that a collaborative participant feels within a team plays an important role in how participants engage in the meeting. If the team member felt agency over the implementation of their work, they were more invested in a successful collaborative session on the topic, as well as the successful outcome of the implementation of a strategy from the collaborative meeting.

As I observed and determined how the teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches engaged with each other in the collaborative meetings, I also paid careful attention to the components of micropolitics and how they played a role in the collaborative meetings.

Instantiation of Pillars of Micropolitics during Collaborative Meetings

In response to Research Question 2, the essential features and elements of micropolitics were instantiated during collaborative meetings in multiple ways that indicated the ever-presence of small-scale political occurrences. The observations of collaboration meetings and how they aligned or differed from self-reported perceptions of collaborations during the interviews indicated that sometimes individual interpretation varied from observed interactions. Although those of us who are involved in collaborative meetings are not always sharply aware of micropolitical interactions, they are ever-present, and we are always influenced by them. The following key elements of micropolitics were evidenced in the interviews and observations of this study: individual influences on group attention to topics, boundary exploration, and systemic influences on the school-based group.

Individual influences on group attention to topics. The micropolitical foundation, individual influences on shifts of power or the fragile balances of formal and informal power, was evident in the avoidance or welcoming of conflict. This showed the willingness of a team to shift resources, including time and attention of the group, to move an agenda forward, such as implementing a structure for an assessment. Both interviews and observations showed evidence of support or lack thereof for what was deemed as worthy of time and resources. Depending upon who was flexing their power at the moment, either the teacher, teacher leader, or coach would endorse moving forward with a topic, thus driving the work of the group. For instance, I observed a district coach navigate the meeting conversation back to the skills that students need for an assessment, as was indicated on the agenda, when teachers were talking off this topic. When teachers had the opportunity to direct the topic of the work during a collaborative meeting,

the topics trended as practical, tangible, and student-centered. I observed one example of this to be enrolling students in online course lists in the math team.

Coach or teacher-leader driven work tended to be more sensitive to the ecosystem of the school, as an example, working on scheduling English students in assessments that would not interfere with other school events. I observed another example of individual participants influencing the whole group's focus in the English meeting, when a teacher leader who was granted authority over the "Data Wise" data team implementation when the shift occurred mid-year to this topic. The district coach sat back and said, "I am not responsible for facilitating the Data Wise meetings", which effectively took an endorsement away from the Data Wise process, while at the same time granting the teacher leader leadership of the meetings. I observed a district employee communicating lack of ownership in a way that could confuse some teachers or other school staff. This was an interesting and complex occurrence which showed some friction in terms of district employee support of a district initiative, as the Data Wise process is a district initiative.

Additionally, in interviews, it surfaced that teachers perceived themselves as having the ability to shift the focus of what they would work on in any given meeting based upon their interest in the topic. One teacher noted "so in our ninth grade meetings, it's really more ... the casual ones, not the data wise meetings. It's more about who really feels passionate about this certain topic of the week. So, if we're doing ... like I have a really great idea for a celebration, I'll say I have the meeting next time." Since group participants can influence the topics and content of the meeting, it is important to note that having a clear vision and shared goals is vital to keep the work moving forward and not veering off to address individual pet projects or topics. As stated in an interview with a teacher, "where you enter a collaborative space where not

everybody is on the same page and working towards a positive goal, that makes for a really, really negative experience. And it makes you not want to share as a person” (personal communication, 2019). In sum, there was evidence on the role of how each individual in a collaborative meeting can support the topic and content of the session or not. These delineations in role and topic influence make for intersections in meetings where different role holders explore what they each hold authority over.

Boundary exploration. I also determined that teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches navigated the space between roles and responsibilities according to perceived and actual ownership and territory for the work. Boundary exploration between different roles and stances in an organization means that individuals carefully discuss content, exploring through conversation what they hold authority and ownership over versus the other people in the conversation (Aldrich and Herker, 1977). These explorations manifested as questioning dialogue, probing statements, bids for information and attention to a specific area of work, and often teachers, teacher leaders, or coaches looking to each other to identify who held information about what, especially when that information might affect their daily roles or themselves in practice. For example, the teachers in the math collaboration sessions would look to the district math coach for specific guidance on expectations for the record keeping they were held accountable for, recognizing that the district may have a protocol and structure for the teachers to follow, therefore lending authority to the district coach as a representative of the district office.

Often, teacher leaders specifically would lead conversations that attempted to assert their authority, while acknowledging that the teachers held the real authority. For example, an English coach stated that “teachers hold the authority, because they own the student data and bring it to the meetings” (personal communication, 2018). This framing demonstrated a lack of

understanding of the coaches' own authority and can be extended to other topics, such as the district coach holding authority over the district assessment calendar, as evidenced by him providing a template for planning throughout the year with the district assessments mapped out for the teachers, and the teacher leader holding some authority over the scope and sequence of the agendas of their collaborative time, although always seeking input for the next meeting. Therefore, the boundaries that exist within organizations offer a gray area space for staff who interact with each other from various vantage points to the work to explore and determine what they can control and have autonomy over, as the schools are inextricably linked to the district office and greater ecosystem of the district at large.

Systemic influences on the school-based group. A key piece of micropolitics, the influence of macro-level context and environment to the smaller organization (the school) was demonstrated in collaborative meetings. This was evidenced by the district coaches observed as holding high amounts of authority in the collaborative meetings. Clear examples of this were observed in both English and Math meetings where the district coach was consistently turned to for confirmation statements or answers when discussing topics such as curriculum, assessment calendars, and data team processes and expectations.

Both the Math and English district coaches were also members of the school leadership team, attending meetings with the school principal and assistant principals where decisions about scheduling and structures for the school community are made, which contributed to the authority of the district coach word. In interviews, teachers mentioned this fact and that the district coaches were members of the school leadership team, as were the assistant principals (APs) of the school, but the APs did not attend the leadership meetings. A teacher discussed this further, stating "To me, he (the director) has the authority over what we're doing, because he's the one

who's saying, 'This is what we do with the curriculum.' And then (the coach) then takes that (and brings it to our school leadership)" and also mentioned was that "(the coach) is getting directions from other people (the district) for what he needs to present" (personal communication, 2018). Lastly, the coaches are discussed as having the influence over what is done at the meetings: for English, it is discussed, "We work together and then our coach comes in and he has the agenda and kind of what we want to focus on"; it is also discussed for Math, "(the coach) is the one kind of in charge of the meeting. She leads it. She, you know, sends out the emails about it, and ... whatever we went over, emails on it, too, so we can have the information" (personal communication, 2018). The coaches' roles in the school leadership team meetings in this case study context, as well as data reviews with district leadership, offers a specific through-line from cabinet level to the district department, to the school, to the classroom staff, and thus the students. Together, it is clear that systemic influences do shape collaborative teams.

Additionally, teachers mentioned multiple times in interviews the district top down management of initiatives- in speaking of the Data Wise process, a teacher discusses this, "So, we're kind of given this model to follow, this process and that's what we're doing. It was provided by the district... It was dictated by the district" (personal communication, 2018). This is relevant to the collaborative team time, as this top-down decision by the district changed the focus, structure, and process of the English collaborative meetings to become a Data Wise meeting, from the more general data-informed collaborative meeting.

This decision also changed the dynamic of the English department, as the district coach was told explicitly that it was not their role to run the Data Wise English meeting, that to build school-base staff capacity, teacher leaders would be planning for and facilitating the Data Wise meeting. I observed the teacher leader in the English meeting coming in mid-year and taking the

reins of the English meetings, offering observations of (and insight to) the change in group dynamics. The teachers welcomed the leadership of the teacher leader; however, they needed to shift their own understanding of and interaction with the English collaborative meeting time, as they were used to the leadership from the district coach.

The perception of district work being compliance driven was also demonstrated in the coding from observations and interviews, with the code Connections to the District co-occurring with the code tag Compliance 23 times and co-occurring 20 times with the tag for Agendas (Set or Kept), meaning that connections to the district were perceived by members of these two collaborative teams as setting and keeping the agendas for their meeting times and also as a relationship of compliance on their part. Also of note, the work observed in this study as completed in collaborations was often “safe” and within the parameters of expectations. The collaborations, thus, did not push the limits of collaboration to direct dissent or conflict, indicative of the climate of the district with high accountability and a desire by all staff to adhere to what was expected.

Discussion

In summary, teachers, teacher-leaders, and coaches interacted with each other during collaborations in various ways that demonstrated their relationships and connections, as well as influenced their work. While research on micropolitics has paid attention to general organizational influences, current research has paid less attention to the microprocesses of small group collaboration which collaborative teams within a school engage in. By observing teams made up of educators holding different types of roles in a school district, this study offers insight into how micropolitical features instantiate during collaborative meetings. In particular, I determined that while teachers can influence the work of a meeting by the proximity that they

offer to the students and the work on the ground, the coaches offer proximity and access to the district leadership and can influence the meeting content and approach by using their access to information from the district central office. Additionally, the research on coaching in the field of education discusses how coaches can best work with teachers one on one but pays less attention to the role of coaches as they sit in collaborative team meetings, as active participants and colleagues. My findings reveal that coaches hold positional authority and are looked to as experts and guides to the work, as well as bridges to administration at the school and district level.

This study applies the theory of micropolitics to view how coaches interact with teachers and teacher leaders during such meetings. I observed that various ways that the teacher leaders and coaches use structures and tools to aid and support the collaboration included formal structures and collaborative tools put into place (such as agendas and roles in meetings), conversation and verbal connections (such as relational banter), non-verbal cues and interactions (such as body language that indicated their reactions to the people and topics in the meeting), and informal flow of work in the meeting space and time (such as how decisions are made and what the next steps are). The formal structures, as well as the roles of the team members influenced the interactions and they relied on the collaborative tools to engage in the working collaborations. Additionally, I observed that the make-up of the team offered influence on how the team interacted. For example, the math team had less years of experience working together and it was made obvious in the novice teachers wanting to follow the lead of the more experienced teachers and coach more than demonstrating their own agency in the meetings.

As teachers and teacher leaders were concerned with issues of autonomy, this means that effective collaboration with teachers and teacher leaders should take this factor into account and allow for teachers' ownership and agency. The members of the math team also had less relational

conversations, but as the year went on, this increased in occurrence to five plus observed comments that would constitute as relational banter throughout a meeting from none in the first observed meeting. These pieces combine to craft an relationship between each individual on the team, adding up to a web of overall interrelationship that depicts the way of work of a team through the nature of interactions paired with micropolitics. The micropolitics that were ever present were individual influences on topics of focus, systemic influence, and boundary exploration by all team members in their various contexts. These pieces worked in concert with the nature of the interactions between team members, highlighting the specific roles of teacher, teacher leader, and district coach, especially when juxtaposed with one another.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations for District and School Leadership

My capstone offers insights into how teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches engaged with each other in collaborative meetings through the use of structures and protocols, airtime, relational discourse, non-verbal communication, and agency or ownership. I found that the use of structures and protocols were strategic tools used to organize the time and the work, both during collaborative meetings and in between, when the work and decisions from the collaborative meetings was being implemented in practice. Additionally, I found that teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches engage with each other using airtime during meetings to share their thinking and move the work forward, depending upon who would utilize the airtime. Third, I found that relational discourse was an important way that teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches built up their relationships and connected with each other. Fourth, non-verbal communication was a backchannel of communication that made it evident how collaborative team members were engaging with each other, beyond what was verbalized. Lastly, I observed the vital role of team

member agency and ownership of the meeting content or topics was an essential component of how teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches engaged with each other.

This research study also explored how the essential features of micropolitics instantiated themselves in collaborative meetings between teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches. I found that individuals were able to influence the attention of the group to topics that they wanted to discuss, that the team members in various roles engaged in exploring their boundaries of influence, and that the school-based collaborative teams were inextricably linked with and influenced by the system of the school district at large as pieces of its ecosystem.

The findings that arose from my research offer implications for district and school leadership, in order to maximize the effectiveness of the collaborative meetings that take place during limited time opportunities during the school day. These implications offer insight into how school and district leadership can strategically use district support staff, how to leverage and support teachers and teacher leaders, as well as the importance of creating the conditions where collaboration between teachers, teacher leaders, and coaches can thrive. Foundationally, it is important for district leadership to plan for the success of their schools. Since systemic influences are clear in school-based collaborative teams, it is important for the district to have a clear vision and strategic operating plan to guide school-based work and the school-based teams to have clear alignment with the district, guided by the school leadership.

District leaders, including district staff that support the work of the school-based staff members, should be supported and deployed by other district leaders, such as school leadership directors and human resources, as well as the academics leadership, with intentionality. The role of a district coach should be defined in a way that creates more of a partnership in the work, rather than places them as an authoritative figure. To support this further, there should be careful,

strategic, and intentional training for district support roles, such as district coaches, to develop knowledge, skills, and tactics of district staff that engage in collaboration with school staff on a regular basis as a part of their roles. For instance, district coaches should receive professional learning on effective team processes, how to manage working with their peers, how to empower and provide agency to their collaborative team members, and how to effectively span the boundaries of each role in support of the students that are serviced. Additionally, the leaders of the district support staff should plan for and implement calibration and checkpoints throughout the year for all district staff who engage with school staff in collaborative meetings.

Teachers and teacher leader roles and engagement are a vital piece of the work of adults in education in supporting the creation and development of school communities that effectively educate our youth. District and school leadership should identify multiple and various ways for teachers and teacher leaders to engage in input to and ownership of decisions made that affect them and their students. Additionally, to help clear the way for teacher and teacher leaders to work effectively, leaders need to have clear and defined roles for teacher leaders that include specific roles and responsibilities. Lastly, leaders should establish a check-in process to re-engage disengaged employees (teachers specifically) that will uphold their professional efficacy beyond informal and sporadic efforts.

Lastly, school and district leaders should create the conditions for collaboration. There should be consistent collaborative meetings for teams throughout the year with a specific focus and structures, scheduling, and protocols that support the collaboration on a consistent basis. School and district leaders need to maintain consistent staffing as much as possible, to provide staff with time to assimilate to each other and their ways of work, as well as ensure that the staff have knowledge of the tools of their work. Finally, it is important for school and district

leadership to push the team beyond polite and ineffective collaboration to their zones of proximal development with the use, consistent application of norms to guide behaviors and reactions. If these recommendations listed prior are worked into educational collaborative spaces and roles, my research suggests that collaborative time will then increase in productivity and efficiency, as well as increase overall participant satisfaction, leading to actionable results in participants' practice.

Appendix A. Background Section Interview Protocol:

Question #	Question
1	Please share your demographic and general background (age, gender identity, race and ethnicity).
2	How did you become a teacher/ teacher leader?
3	How long have you been in your role? - How long have you been at this school?
4	What other roles and responsibilities do you currently hold at this school?
5	What roles and responsibilities have you held in the past? - At this school - At other schools or jobs
6	What is your highest degree? - Do you plan to pursue a higher education?
7	What are your professional goals, do you aspire to do work beyond teaching in the classroom?

Appendix B. Data Teams and Decision-Making Section Interview Protocol:

Question #	Question
1	What collaborative structures do you engage in in your school community with other teachers and teacher leaders? - Can you describe these collaborative structures?
2	Who has authority over what in your data teams? How do you know?
3	Please describe the most and least productive collaboration that you have been a part of? - What were the factors contributing to the productiveness? How did you know they were productive or not productive?
4	Can you describe what happens if conflict arises between teachers and teacher leaders? How does this conflict manifest and how is the conflict handled?
5	What types of decisions are made during data teams?
6	How are those decisions made? How do you know?
7	What are the outcomes from decisions made in data teams?
8	<i>Is there anything else you would like to add to your responses on your role, your data teams, or your school culture?</i>

Appendix C. Structured Field Notes/ Data Gathering Protocol:

The below data collection tool is designed to ensure that I make note of and capture the important elements of the culture of the team that the research.

Meeting Title and Type:
Meeting Time and Date:
Meeting Attendees:
<p>Foci (Topics/ Items to Note- codes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demographics (see background interviews for this information) ● Make-up of the team (see background interviews for this information) ● Compulsion of attendance ● Who sets and keeps the agenda ● Passive/ passive aggressive/ aggressive behaviors ● Reactions and interactions between team members ● Influence ● Scope of authority ● Body language ● Air time ● Final say ● Decisions made ● What led up to the decisions made
Field Notes (running and general)
Time:
Time:
Time:

Time:

Time:

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