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Authority, Status, and the Dynamics of Insider-Outsider Partnerships at the District Level

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As school districts move toward systemic approaches to instructional reform, they are increasingly collaborating with outside organizations in this complex work. While emerging research touts the benefits of insider–outsider collaboration, we know little about the underlying processes by which partnerships are negotiated and maintained at the district level. Drawing on data from a longitudinal case study of a collaborative effort between an urban school district and a university-based research center, we investigate the role of authority and status in an insider–outsider partnership at the district level. We use conceptual tools from frame analysis and sociological theories of authority to describe the process by which authority and status relations develop. We then show that both authority and status shape how negotiation between insiders and outsiders unfolds. We argue that those with authority have a greater range of tools for negotiation and thus have greater influence. Status relations are important but are often mediated by authority relations. In addition, we argue that the organizational structure of the district shapes how the process unfolds in consequential ways. We conclude with implications for scholarship on and the practice of insider–outsider collaborations at the district level.

Now more than ever before, school districts are attempting ambitious reform initiatives intended to improve instruction in schools throughout the district. As school districts move toward systemic approaches to instructional reform—as they attempt to foster instructional improvement at scale—they are increasingly reaching out to a range of external service providers to support them in this ambitious task (Burch, 2002; Gamoran et al., 2003; Glennan & Resnick, 2004; Honig, 2004; Marsh et al., 2005). Indeed, existing evidence suggests that collaboration with outside service providers can have positive outcomes for districts including increased capacity (Gamoran et al., 2003; Marsh et al., 2005) and greater access to research-based resources (Corcoran & Rouk, 1985; Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006; Spillane & Thompson, 1997).

In spite of this optimism about partnerships, research on insider–outsider collaboration in education suggests that establishing productive relationship can be fraught with difficulty. Different parties can come to the table with different priorities and agendas (Firestone & Fisler, 2002; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Heckman, 1988; Kornfeld & Leyden, 2001; Vozzo & Bober, 2001). Differences in status between researchers and practitioners can lead to tensions and conflict (Bickel & Hattrup, 1995; Freedman & Salmon, 2001; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Osajima, 1989). Unclear or unfamiliar roles and relationships on both sides can create uncertainty and misunderstanding (Freedman & Salmon, 2001; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Handler & Ravid, 2001; Hasslen, Bacharach, Rotto, & Fribley, 2001).

To date, most research on the dynamics of partnership has been done at the school level. Thus, we know little about the underlying processes by which partnerships are negotiated and maintained at the district central office level. Furthermore, although existing research has highlighted the role of unequal status in shaping collaborative relationships, it has paid little attention to the role of authority relations. Yet those working in a district central office are embedded in a web of complicated authority relations that characterize complex organizations. And those outside of the district have an uncertain position with regard to district authority relations.

Here, we draw on data from a longitudinal study of a collaborative effort between a midsize urban school district and a university-based research center to investigate the role of authority and status in insider–outsider partnerships at the district level. We draw on frame analysis and sociological theories of authority to investigate the dynamics of negotiation between outsiders and insiders as they set strategic priorities for their work with one another. In so doing, we uncover the process by which authority relations and status attributions develop in a partnership, arguing that they are situational and evolve over time. We further argue that both authority relations and status, once established, are crucial because they shape the microprocesses of negotiation between insiders and outsiders. Authority relations are especially important because those with formal or informal authority have a greater range of tools that they bring to the negotiation and thus have greater influence. We further show that the organizational structure of the district shapes

how the process unfolds in consequential ways. We close with implications of this research for scholarship on and the practice of insider–outsider collaborations at the district level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing research on insider–outsider partnerships is replete with the challenges involved in creating productive working relationships. Tensions around whose knowledge is valued can emerge as outsiders' knowledge is often accorded greater status in the culture at large than practitioner knowledge, especially if the outsiders are researchers or academics (Bickel & Hattrup, 1995; Gifford, 1986; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Osajima, 1989; Sinclair & Harrison, 1988). University researchers and school people also come from distinct cultures with different work practices, incentives, and senses of urgency about their work (Bickel & Hattrup, 1995; Brookhart & Loadman, 1992; Gifford, 1986; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Keating & Clark, 1988; Schlechty & Whitford, 1988). In addition, a history of poor relationships between academics and schools can make trust difficult to establish in new school–university partnerships (Gates-Duffield & Stark, 2001; Gifford, 1986; Hasslen et al., 2001; Lieberman, 1988; Rosen, 2008; D. D. Williams, 1988).

Existing research on insider–outsider partnerships has focused on collaborations at the school level (e.g., Boostrom, Jackson, & Hansen, 1993; Erickson & Christman, 1996; Firestone & Fisler, 2002; Lieberman, 1988; Osajima, 1989; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Sinclair & Harrison, 1988) or outside of the school or district context in university-based curriculum development projects or task forces (e.g., Bickel & Hattrup, 1995; Heckman, 1988; Keating & Clark, 1988; Lieberman, 1988; D. D. Williams, 1988). This work has yet to investigate the dynamics of insider–outsider collaboration at the district central office level. The district central office is much more complex organizationally than a school. Decision making at the district level is often stretched across multiple levels and multiple divisions, involving those with different levels of authority (Coburn, Honig, & Stein, in press; Spillane, 1998). Studying insider–outsider partnerships at the district level thus creates the opportunity to more fully understand the role of organizational structure in influencing how collaborative efforts unfold.

Furthermore, although existing research on insider–outsider relationships has focused a great deal of attention on the role of status, it has paid little attention to the role of formal and informal authority. Authority relations between those outside the system and those inside the system are at best uncertain. Technically, those in the district have formal authority over any given initiative under their jurisdiction. Those outside schools do not. Yet we know little about how authority relations are negotiated in the face of uncertainty and how they influence the

process of insider–outsider negotiation. Nor do we understand the relationship between authority and status in these partnerships.

Finally, most of the published writing on insider–outsider collaboration is not research. Rather, the literature is filled with reflective pieces written by the researchers or the practitioners involved in the collaboration (Bickel & Hattrup, 1995; Firestone & Fisler, 2002; and Rosen, 2008, are exceptions here). Although these pieces provide much insight into the key factors influencing the dynamics of partnership, they do not investigate the role of these factors systematically.

To understand the role of authority and status in insider–outsider partnerships at the district level, we focus attention on the dynamics of negotiation between outsiders and insiders as they set strategic priorities for their work with one another. When insiders and outsiders come together to collaborate on a new initiative, they often come with conflicting ideas about the direction they should take their shared work (Gifford, 1986; Heckman, 1988; Keating & Clark, 1988). Different visions of the problems that need to be addressed or appropriate solutions to pursue must be resolved in order to move forward. We draw on frame analysis and theories of authority from organizational sociology to understand the dynamics of this negotiation.

Frame analysis represents a set of conceptual tools for investigating the way ideas are produced and invoked to mobilize people to action. It helps us understand the process by which people come to understand the nature of the problem and potential solutions through social interaction and negotiation. Thus, in the case of insider–outsider collaboration, frame analysis helps us understand how directions for joint work get negotiated as individuals from districts work with those from the outside over time. Frame analysts identify two kinds of problem frames that individuals and groups invoke in their on-going interaction: diagnostic and prognostic (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1992). Diagnostic framing involves defining problems and attributing blame. How a problem is framed is important because it focuses attention on some aspect of the problem and not others, identifies some individuals or groups as responsible for the problem, and thus identifies those responsible for change (Cress & Snow, 2000; Stone, 1988). Prognostic framing involves articulating a proposed solution to the problem. In so doing, a prognostic frame puts forth particular goals and suggests tactics for achieving those goals (Benford & Snow, 2000; Cress & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1992). Diagnostic and prognostic framing are often closely intertwined, as prognostic framing often rests implicitly on problem definition and attribution that is part of diagnostic framing.

The act of framing is an interactive one constituted by two related processes: frame alignment and resonance. *Frame alignment* refers to the actions taken by those who produce and invoke frames to connect these frames with the interests, values, and beliefs of those they seek to mobilize (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986; R. H. Williams & Kubal, 1999). Individuals and groups attempt to

construct ways of framing the problem that provide "conceptual hooks" (Zucker, 1991) that allow targets of mobilization to link the frame with other things they know, experience, and/or believe (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 1986). But frame alignment activities are always dependent on how the individuals and groups respond, or what frame analysts call *resonance* (Snow et al., 1986; R. H. Williams & Kubal, 1999). Resonance is the "mobilizing potency" of a particular frame: the degree to which a frame is able to create a connection—a "deep responsive chord" (Binder, 2002, p. 220)—with individuals and motivate them to act.

Framing is often a contested process. Prognostic and diagnostic framing may be challenged as others offer counterframes that put forth alternative portrayals of the situation, often with contrasting implications for roles, responsibility, and resources (Benford & Snow, 2000; Fligstein, 2001; Stone, 1988). These frame disputes, as Benford and Snow called them, may stretch over time as frames are reconstituted and reframed in negotiation and interaction (Davies, 1999; Gamson, 1992). Furthermore, this negotiation among and between frames is likely to be shaped by relations of authority (Coburn, 2006; Fligstein, 2001; Isabella, 1990).

However, although some frame analysts acknowledge the role of authority in the problem framing process, few investigate it explicitly. Thus, the relationship remains undertheorized. For this, we turn to Dornbusch and Scott's work on authority from organizational sociology. Authority can be defined as legitimized power relations (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). In any social relationship, whether it is in formal organizations or informal group settings, relations of power and control come to be legitimized by rules and social norms (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975). Authority can be *authorized* as when those higher up in the organizational structure grant power to certain individuals. In this case, authority is power that is sanctioned by norms from above. But authority can also be *endorsed*, as when power relations are defined and enforced by those who are subject to the exercise of that power (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975; Scott & Davis, 2007). Authority relations in a given setting are likely to be most stable when they are simultaneously authorized from above and endorsed from below. However, in the absence of agreed-upon norms legitimizing power relations (either authorized or endorsed), authority relations fail to materialize. In the absence of clear authority relations, joint work is characterized by conflict, power struggles, and an inability to move forward (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975).

Authority can be formal or informal. Formal authority is power that is "coded into structural design" (McAdam & Scott, 2005, p. 10). That is, it is the authority that comes with a particular role or position in an organization and can be exercised by any person holding that position (Scott & Davis, 2007). Thus, in insider–outsider partnerships at the district level, district leaders have formal authority over people involved in any initiatives that emerge from the collaboration, although their degree of formal authority depends upon where they are in the district hierarchy. Outsiders do not have formal authority over the individuals they work

with in the district. Informal authority, by contrast, is authority that is acquired by an individual that is related to some special characteristics, such as specialized expertise or their position in a social network (Scott & Davis, 2007). Both insiders and outsiders can be accorded informal authority if they are either authorized to lead by those who have formal authority or endorsed by those who do not.

Status is also negotiated in social interaction. Individuals grant status to others in a social setting when they perceive that they have specialized expertise or skill that they can bring to bear in ways that benefit the joint work (Dornbush & Scott, 1975; Scott & Davis, 2007). Balkwell (1994) called status "unobserved performance expectations" (p. 124) that often result in power and prestige in group interaction. At times, individuals grant status in groups based on characteristics that are valued in the larger society, such as class background, race, or gender (Cohen, 1994). Sociologists call this phenomenon ascribed status. Prior research on insider–outsider partnerships suggests that individuals also grant others status based on occupational prestige or academic background—a form of what is known as achieved status—leading to greater influence for university researchers in the dynamics of partnership (Bickel & Hattrup, 1995; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Osajima, 1989; Sinclair & Harrison, 1988). It is important to note that those who are perceived to have greater status in a group—either ascribed or achieved— may be granted informal authority, either through authorization or endorsement (Cohen, 1994; Dornbush & Scott, 1975). But, status alone does not lead to greater authority in the absence of normative agreement from above or below that the person with status warrants greater authority in the collaboration.

Preliminary work on the role of authority in frame dynamics suggests that those with formal authority have greater influence in frame debates than those without formal authority. Individuals in positions of authority have greater access to others and can use this access to make their case. They also can control the focus of discussion or the agenda, and they often have the ability to control who participates in the decision process. Those with formal authority are able to use these features of their position to leverage their ideas, thus supporting their ability to persuade others of the wisdom of their view of the problem and prescription for solutions (Coburn, 2006; Coburn, Toure, & Yamashita, in press). However, even with those advantages, individuals with formal authority are not always able to persuade others of their position (Coburn, 2006). In this case, they may resort to more direct uses of authority, such as compelling others to act (Coburn, Toure, & Yamashita, in press). Finally, framing activities—especially frame disputes— can be occasions where authority relations are renegotiated and reshaped as well (Coburn, 2006).

Yet there is still much to learn about the role of authority, its relation to status, and the influence of both on the framing process. Here, we add to the research on insider–outsider relationships and research on framing in three ways. First, we uncover the dynamics by which authority relations are developed, paying

careful attention to how the philosophy of partnership influenced how participants constructed roles in relation to one another. Second, we illustrate how authority relations and status influence the tactics that individuals use while framing arguments and the degree to which these tactics are successful. Finally, we bring organizational structure into the equation, showing how the structure of the district creates the conditions within which authority relations develop, shift, and are renegotiated over time.

METHODS

To understand the role of authority in insider–outsider negotiation, we draw on data from a longitudinal case study of one midsize urban school district involved in a partnership with an outside support provider. At the time of the study, the district served approximately 50,000 students, the majority of whom were low-income students of color and one fourth of whom were classified as English Language Learners. The partnership—which we call Partnership for District Reform (PDR)[1]—brought together members of a university research center and the school district to join research knowledge with clinical expertise in support of continuous instructional improvement at scale.

PDR

According to the tenets of PDR, the collaborative work in the initiative was guided by the principle of co-construction, which called for district and external partners to collaboratively identify problems and develop and implement solutions that would be informed by research but adapted to local conditions and capacities. This approach emphasized the importance of both research knowledge and clinical knowledge for solving the problems the district faced. It was to be a partnership where diverse forms of knowledge were valued, stakes were shared, and differences of opinion were adjudicated with reference to evidence. Thus, in many ways, this initiative sought to address the status problems identified by prior research on insider–outsider collaborations by intentionally and publicly granting equal status for diverse forms of knowledge.

The outside research center coordinated a large number of external partners who came to the district to participate in this endeavor, including researchers from the research center, professors from several local universities, and experienced practitioners who were working as national consultants. In the second year of PDR, a second organization—a national organization devoted to district systemic

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[1]Partnership for District Reform is a pseudonym.

change—was brought on board to provide additional capacity to support the initiative. On the district side, PDR involved district personnel at multiple levels of the district, including the superintendent, assistant superintendents, directors of key divisions, and professional development providers in the division of curriculum and instruction. Thus, PDR took care to actively involve key individuals at the uppermost levels of the district, something that is frequently called for by the literature on insider–outsider relationships (Gifford, 1986; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Sinclair & Harrison, 1988).

During the initial years of the partnership, insiders and outsiders worked together on a number of interrelated initiatives, including redesigning the district's system of professional development to provide more coherent and sustained approaches to fostering teacher learning in reading and mathematics, the creation of frameworks in mathematics and reading to guide district policy making and professional development, and the preparation of a plan for coordinated leadership development, to name a few.

Research Design and Data Collection

The database for this study emerges from two interlocking research projects that studied PDR from its inception in fall 2002 until spring 2005. The first author of this study led a team of researchers who studied PDR as part of a broader research project that sought to understand the relationship between research and practice in a range of school improvement efforts. We were not participants in the insider–outsider partnership itself nor were we evaluators of PDR. Rather, we were funded to investigate the dynamics of this partnership as they unfolded over time. We collaborated with a research team led by Joan Talbert at Stanford University that was funded to document the progress of the PDR project and provide formative and summative feedback to the district, the university collaborators, and the foundation that funded the initiative.[2] The two research projects collaborated on research design, protocol development, and data collection to ensure that research activities met the goals of both projects while minimizing burden to the site.

The joint research effort relied on in-depth interviewing (Spradley, 1979), sustained observation (Barley, 1990), and document analysis. Over the course of three years, researchers from the two teams conducted 71 interviews with 38 members of the central office and 3 union officials. We also conducted 36 interviews with 19 external partners who were working on the project in some capacity during the time of the study. As a supplement to this data, our research

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team conducted an additional 9 interviews with 8 members of the central office during follow-up data collection in the 2006–07 school year. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The two teams supplemented the interviews with observations of 33 planning meetings. These meetings were at multiple levels of the central office from executive leadership meetings to planning meetings at the department level to project design meetings between district staff and external consultants. The observations were recorded with detailed fieldnotes, but on some occasions key meetings were audiotaped and transcribed. In addition, members of the two research teams observed 36 days of professional development for teachers and school leaders. This provided insight into both the fruits of the collaboration and the ways in which experience doing the professional development fed back into ongoing deliberation. Finally, numerous documents related to the partnership were collected and analyzed. These documents include minutes and agendas of meetings, draft and final copies of policy and planning documents as well as written feedback provided on draft documents, and reports to the funder from the district and the external partners.[3]

Data Analysis

All data were entered into NUD*IST, a software program for qualitative data analysis. We began our analysis by identifying seven instances of collaboration within the overall initiative. Each instance had different foci and mission. Each also involved a different, although at times overlapping, configuration of actors. (See Table 1 for a description of each instance of collaboration.) We reviewed our complete corpus of data to identify all data that were relevant to each instance, and we created a longitudinal record of the interaction between insiders and outsiders for it. Next we developed a coding scheme rooted in prior theory and then elaborated and extended in dialogue with the data using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We were particularly interested in coding cognitive aspects of the collaborative process (including conceptions of high quality professional development, conceptions of high-quality instruction, conceptions of leadership, conceptions of "research based," and conceptions of partnership), organizational aspects of the collaborative process (including authority, status, resources, linkages, trust, and staff turnover), and political aspects of the process (including politics of race, politics of language, and politics of instruction). The three authors of this article coded all data for one entire instance together (15% of the overall data) to develop interrater reliability. The rest of the instances were

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[3]In addition to the district-level research activities described here, the two research teams also conducted longitudinal analysis in 10 case study schools in the district. We do not draw on these data in this article.

TABLE 1
Description of the Instances of Collaboration

	Description	Key Actors
Overall initiative	Discussions and decision-making at the executive level about the direction of the PDR. Those involved in this work negotiated how to focus their efforts at the overall initiative level and how various PDR activities would be developed and implemented.	• Superintendent • Assistant superintendents • Executive council • Departmental directors • Three members of external research center
Leadership development	Work focused on the development of a coherent leadership program for school leaders in the district. This included planning summer institutes for leadership and investigating different approaches to leadership development used in other districts to guide their own work.	• Assistant superintendents • School principals • Leadership council • Two member of external research center • An external consultant
Research and assessment	Work focused on using student assessment data to improve academic achievement in the district. This included a project to make individual student data and classroom data available to teachers through the internet and a project to identify district teachers who were consistently raising student test scores and learning about what practices these teachers used to ensure their success.	• Director of district's research office • Staff of district research office • Two members of external research center
Literacy framework	Work focused on the development of the district's central policy document on literacy. The framework was intended to guide the district's efforts towards developing teachers' understandings of teaching literacy.	• Assistant director of professional development • District staff developers • Expert teachers • Two members of external research center • Four external consultants • National panel of reading experts

TABLE 1
Description of the Instances of Collaboration (*Continued*)

	Description	Key Actors
Literacy institute	Work focused on the design and development of a weeklong professional development experience for teachers on literacy. The district offered the summer institute over successive years to ensure the eventual participation of all the district teachers. The goals of the summer institute were to highlight current research and evidence-based practices.	• District executive administration • Director of curriculum unit • Assistant director of professional development • District staff developers • Expert teachers • Three members of external research center • Five external consultants
Math framework	Work focused on the development of the district's central policy on mathematics education. The framework was intended to bring together national and state standards, district curriculum, and grade level expectations in order to guide the district and teachers in improving math instruction.	• Assistant director of professional development • Director of math • District staff developers • Expert teachers • One member of external research center • National panel of math experts • Two external consultants
Math institute	Work focused on the design and development of a weeklong professional development experience for teachers on math. The district intended to offer the summer institute over successive years to ensure the eventual participation of all the district teachers. The goals of the summer institute were to highlight current research and evidence-based practices.	• District executive administration • Director of curriculum unit • Assistant director of professional development • Director of math • District staff developers • Expert teachers • One member of external research center • Four external consultants

Note. PDR = Partnership for District Reform.

coded by a single coder, although we engaged in periodic spot checks of coding to ensure that consistency of coding was maintained throughout the coding process.

After all the data were coded, we analyzed how each dimension shaped the dynamics of framing during deliberation and debate. This initial analysis suggested that authority relations and status were particularly important. Therefore, we reanalyzed the data to get a more precise understanding of the roles these factors played. Because each instance of collaboration involved multiple actors in different stages of the process and because status and authority relations shifted over time, it would be imprecise to analyze authority relations and status for an instance as a whole. Instead, we opted to identify key decision points in each instance and analyze the particular configuration of status and authority of the individuals involved at each decision point. This strategy allowed us to do a more fine-grained analysis of the role these two factors played in the dynamics of negotiation.

First, we identified those with formal and informal authority in the configuration of actors in each decision point. To establish formal authority, we relied on the organization chart along with interview data that provided information about formal roles and responsibilities. To establish informal authority, we relied on interview data to assess the degree to which there was normative agreement that particular individuals should play a particular role. In the absence of agreement of all involved, we did not consider an individual to have informal authority. We also paid attention to the presence of power struggles and breaches, where individuals acted in ways that violated others' sense of appropriate action. We took these things as indications that authority relations had failed to materialize or existing authority relations were being contested.

To analyze status relations, we identified instances where individuals accorded achieved status to others in the collaboration—that is, when they viewed a given individual as having resources that were particularly valuable to the joint work in which they were engaged. We paid particular attention to the criteria by which individuals accorded such status. In our data, individuals accorded status to those that they perceived to have specialized skill or expertise rooted in professional or personal experience or garnered through academic or other training. After analyzing the criteria by which others were seen to have status in the collaboration, we then analyzed who in the partnership was seen to have status, along what dimensions, in what context, and according to whom.

We then analyzed how authority relations and status influenced frame dynamics at each decision point. We paid particular attention to the kinds of frame tactics that individuals with different forms of status and authority used in deliberations and the success of these tactics. We used a series of matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to analyze patterns across decision points within a given instance and then compared patterns across instances.

We were also interested in how participants' beliefs about the given topic that was the focus of the collaboration shaped frame dynamics. For each instance of collaboration, we identified the key foci of discussion. We then created typologies of beliefs of the participants for each main foci. To create the typologies, we drew deductively from existing research and inductively from our data to capture the range of beliefs. Ultimately, we created the following typologies: conceptions of high-quality professional development, high-quality instruction in mathematics, high-quality instruction in literacy, what constitutes good research, and appropriate approaches to leadership development. We then drew on interview data to analyze where all individuals involved in a given instance fit on the relevant typologies. This analysis allowed us to ascertain the degree to which frame dynamics were playing out in contexts of shared or diverse beliefs. It also lent insight into when and under what conditions solution frames were persuasive to others. Again, we used a series of matrices to analyze and confirm patterns across instances.

AUTHORITY RELATIONS AND STATUS DYNAMICS

As suggested by Firestone and Fisler (2002), organizations involved in collaborative relationships are not unitary. Rather, they are collections of individuals and subgroups, each with their own characteristics, resources, and expertise. Indeed, this was the case with the PDR project. Each instance of collaboration involved multiple individuals—both insiders and outsiders—in different aspects of the discussion at different times. Deliberations about the work moved up and down the system as the broad parameters for the direction of the work were negotiated between insiders and outsiders at the executive level and were subsequently elaborated, adapted, and at times transformed during insider–outsider collaboration at the lower levels of the system. Authority and status relations were central to the way that these negotiations played out at multiple levels of the system. But these relations varied according to the particular configuration of individuals involved in a particular aspect of the process.

In this section, we analyze the nature of authority relations and status in different aspects of the collaborative work. We begin with authority relations, arguing that they are contextual, evolve over time, and develop through a variety of routes. We then discuss the dynamics of status. We argue that status relations are much more complicated than prior scholarship would suggest. There are multiple criteria for granting status that are at work simultaneously and attributions of status to an individual are often quite specific; thus, status might be accorded to an individual along one dimension but not others. Ultimately, we show that in spite of this complexity, insiders tended to have greater authority and outsiders tended to have greater status in negotiations.

The Dynamics of Authority Relations

The language of "collaboration" or "partnership" often obscures issues of authority. Yet scholars who study group processes suggest that authority relations are likely to emerge as individuals work with one another, even in informal settings and temporary collaborations (Dornbusch & Scott, 1975; Wheelan, 1994). Indeed, authority relations emerged in all but three instances of collaboration. In fact, clear authority relations actually enabled productive working relationships. In the absence of established authority relations, the interaction was characterized by conflict, mistrust, and the inability to get work done.

There were three principal ways that authority relations were established in insider–outsider groups. First, in some instances, authority relations were established *contractually* as part of the terms of employment for the outside partners. In spite of the fact that PDR advocated a partnership characterized by co-construction where all partners jointly set the terms of their work together, when school district leaders took responsibility for identifying and hiring outsiders to work on the project, they often hired them under terms that established a much more traditional consultant relationship. In the traditional consultant relationship, authority is held by insiders who establish priorities for joint work and can take or leave any advice or ideas that the outsider offers.

For example, one of the central goals of the second year of the project was to develop an overarching framework for mathematics to guide policymaking and professional development around mathematics instruction for the district. The district mathematics staff took the lead and hired external consultants to do the extensive work of crafting the framework. Under the terms of the consulting contract, district mathematics leaders set the parameters, but the consultants produced drafts of the frameworks for the district leaders to review, and revised them in light of district feedback. In this instance and others like it, roles and authority relations rooted in a traditional consultant model were agreed upon in advance and were clear to all involved. And, when the district leaders were unhappy with the performance of the consultants or the direction they were advocating as they were in two cases, they fired them or did not invite them back to work with the district.

The second way that authority relations were established was when someone with formal authority *authorized* an individual—insider or outsider—to take the lead on a particular initiative, thus granting him or her informal authority over others involved in the work. In this approach, those with formal authority let others know that it was his or her expectation that a particular person would play a leadership role in the work. For example, in the first year of the initiative, the superintendent authorized a senior member of the research center to lead in the design and development of the summer institutes, even though this individual, as an outsider, had no formal authority over anyone in the district. In consultation

with the director of the curriculum office, this senior member of the research center hired external personnel to work in a collaborative design process with district staff and expert teachers. He set expectations for how the process should unfold and articulated desired outcomes, reviewed and signed off on plans, communicated with the senior administration about the progress of the planning, and also mediated disputes that arose between insiders and outsiders in what was, at times, a stressful and challenging process. As suggested by Dornbusch and Scott (1975), granting authority via authorization was most likely to create stable authority relations when authority was also endorsed from below. In this example, not only was the senior leader of the research center authorized by the superintendent, but those involved in the design of the summer institutes uniformly saw him as the legitimate leader of the work. For example, those in the district—including those quite high up in the department of curriculum and instruction—consistently chose to run key decisions by this senior member of the research team to make sure he approved.

The third and most common way that authority relations were established in PDR occurred when normative agreement on authority *emerged* as a result of interaction among insiders and outsiders. Rather than being established in advance by contract or authorization, authority relations were negotiated among the individuals involved in the collaboration through the process of doing the work. Over time, roles were gradually defined in relation to one another, and some individuals came to be seen by others as having greater authority over key decisions.

In PDR, emergent processes led to quite varied authority relations between insiders and outsiders. For example, in the collaboration around leadership development, several members of the research center worked with an assistant superintendent to craft plans for districtwide professional development for school leaders. In spite of initial understandings that they would co-construct the work with one another, members of the research center reported in interviews that they felt the assistant superintendent wanted them to act as staff to the initiative, rather than share the leadership with her as they expected. According to an external consultant, the assistant superintendent "insisted on controlling [the leadership work]. . . . They wanted [an external consultant] to write stuff and give it to them." Yet, although the outsiders were not happy with this arrangement as it evolved, they accepted it and the collaboration moved forward, governed by this set of authority relations.[4]

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[4]Dornbusch and Scott (1975) made an important distinction between the perceived validity of authority relations and perceived propriety of authority relations. It is possible to believe that the authority relations are appropriate (perceived validity), without personally liking the authority relations as they have developed (perceived propriety). In this instance, there appeared to be normative agreement about the appropriateness of this set of authority relations (validity), even though outsiders involved in the relationship did not much like them (propriety).

In contrast, a different set of authority relations emerged in the collaboration between outside partners and the district research office as they worked on a project to identify teachers in the district who had better than expected test results with poor students and students of color and use these teachers as demonstration teachers from whom others in the district could learn. In this instance of collaboration, the director of research initially spoke about needing a particular external partner to sign off on his plans and later said that he depended too much on this person in the early stages of the work. He expressed, "There was never a sense that [the external partner] was dictating anything in what we did. If anything, I might have depended on him too much because he was so knowledgeable to kind of come up with the next steps." Eventually, the relationship evolved away from this dependency relationship such that they discussed all major decisions and did not move forward until both the external partner and the director of the district research department felt comfortable with the direction they were going. Thus, their partnership evolved into an arrangement of shared authority.

In PDR, it was common for authority relations to be established primarily through emergence, especially in the first year. This may be because the philosophy of co-construction, which set the parameters within which the collaboration unfolded, was silent on authority relations. Under the project's version of co-construction, individuals with different knowledge were to bring their knowledge to bear on pressing problems of practice. When there was a difference of opinion, the differences were to be resolved with reference to evidence. But, the theory did not specify norms of appropriate authority relations in this process. Furthermore, this is an unfamiliar form of partnership for school districts (Bryk, Rollow, & Pinnell, 1996). Indeed, as we see, many of the people involved in the initiative, including some of the outside partners affiliated with the research center, were uncertain about appropriate roles and relationships under the theory of co-construction.

At times, this emergent process was quite bumpy. In three instances, there were moments where the collaboration was marked by struggles for control or by what ethnographers call breaches (Feldman, 1995), whereby one partner acted in ways that violated others' sense of appropriateness, leading to conflict. For example, during the first year of the initiative, the collaboration to design summer professional development in literacy was particularly challenging. The overall process was led by a senior member of the research center who had been authorized by the superintendent. This individual hired external consultants—some of whom were academics at a neighboring university and others of whom were former or current practitioners—to work with the district professional development staff and experienced teachers to collaboratively design a series of weeklong summer institutes for district teachers. They were told that they were to co-construct the institutes.

However, members of the district and external consultants came to the table with very different understandings of high-quality professional development and had very different ideas about the approach they should take in the joint work. For example, one district staff development provider described the difference between outside partners from the university and the views of the district professional development providers in the following way:

> The University doesn't understand our audience and . . . [doesn't] realize that this has to be concrete, real, practical, take it tomorrow and use it, really use. And the University is really good at making you think about what you're doing and reflect, but we wanted more real experiences for the institute that teachers could model their instruction after, and not so much heady thinking time, but more: This is a technique. This is a method. This is an approach. This is the way. This is a model of how you would do this strategy.

In contrast, outside partners argued for a quite different model of professional development:

> [It] needs to be a thoughtful and careful combination of talking about hard issues in reading instruction and something useful. By useful, I mean it could be ways to look at your classroom data or ways of looking at texts to determine the appropriate level for text selection. But in doing the useful things, [you] need to tie it back to why these things are important and underlying conceptual issues so it's not just: This is what you need to do.

Discussions about the appropriate approach to professional development stretched across multiple meetings with little movement on either side. Tensions rose and relations of trust began to fray. In part, insiders and outsiders were unable to resolve the debate because they were uncertain about who was supposed to take the lead. For example, one district staff developer stated, "When there was a problem that needed to be solved, no one knew who was in charge. We didn't know if it was the [external] people in charge or who it was that was in charge of the whole thing." And similarly, an outside consultant explained,

> So, this [approach to partnership] is very new to me. And I think that's why I'm very, very tentative. I'm very unsure of myself. I'm very worried about offending people. And at the same point in time I'm very concerned about people going off in directions that I as a professional . . . feel are ill-advised. And yet being very unsure of when to step in and say "That just is really not sound."

In this instance, normative agreement about authority relations between district staff and external consultants failed to emerge.

As predicted by Dornbusch and Scott (1975), it was very difficult to engage in joint work in the absence of clear authority relations. Work on the literacy institutes stalled as those in the district and the external consultants could not resolve their very different ideas about next steps for the summer professional development. Ultimately, the senior member of the research center—who had informal authority—stepped in, authorized the district professional development staff to take the lead, and scaled back the participation of external partners. From that point on, the external partners moved into a more traditional consultant role, providing feedback at the request of the district professional development staff and stepping in to give a talk during one segment of the summer professional development. The conflict was diffused and tensions eased. Authority relations had been established, in this case with district staff developers in charge.

Authority is inherently relational and therefore contextual. That is, an individual has authority only in relation to others. Thus, one could have authority in one configuration of participants but have little authority in another configuration, even within the same instance of collaboration. For example, the external partner who was authorized by the superintendent to lead the summer institutes had a great deal of authority when he worked with some division directors and mid-level administrators like the district professional development providers. At the same time, this person had little authority when interacting with the executive leadership in the district on the literacy institutes. Similarly, the same individual had shared authority with the director of the district research division as they worked together to identify demonstration teachers but had little authority with the assistant superintendent in the leadership development work.

Finally, authority relations were not stable. Rather, they were likely to evolve through interaction and social negotiation (see also Pace & Hemmings, 2007, on this point). In fact, over the course of the initiative, authority relations gradually evolved such that insiders had greater authority than outsiders in collaborative groups. In the first year of the initiative, outside partners had greater authority than insiders in aspects of four of the seven instances of collaboration. By the end of the second year of the initiative, authority relations evolved or were explicitly renegotiated such that district personnel had greater authority in insider–outsider collaborative groups in all but one instance of collaboration.

Status

Prior scholarship on insider–outsider relationships has argued that outsiders are frequently accorded status in collaborations, especially if they are academics (Bickel & Hattrup, 1995; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Osajima, 1989; Sinclair & Harrison, 1988). For example, Osajima contended that school personnel have historically been situated in a subordinate position in insider–outsider collaborations

because scientific theory and knowledge is privileged over the practical knowledge of school people. However, we found a more complicated scenario than this. Individuals often granted status to others when they perceived them to have special skills or attributes, particularly knowledge of research, knowledge of practice, or practical experience. Although some individuals did grant others status because of their academic credentials or specialized training, both insiders and outsiders were more likely to attribute status to others because of practical experience than research knowledge or academic credentials. Furthermore, attributions of status to an individual were not comprehensive but rather were quite specific. That is, they were accorded to an individual for a particular domain of work but not for others.

There were multiple criteria for attributing status among both the insiders and outsiders involved in the partnership. Some insiders and outsiders did in fact grant others status for their academic knowledge or credentials, as suggested by prior scholarship. For example, a member of the research center mentioned that she saw two academic researchers as highly valued members of the collaboration because of what she perceived to be deep knowledge about the research literature. She reports thinking to herself, "Okay, good. Two people that really know the content. I mean, I really asked them a lot of questions when I first met them, and really felt like these are two very good people, they're highly qualified to do this, and they would be good on a team." However, many insiders and outsiders also granted or denied status to individuals based on their practice-based knowledge. For example, one district employee denied the status of another colleague in the district, saying,

> I sat in some of those preplanning meetings across from a psychologist who never taught a day in that person's life in the classroom, telling me how to teach and what's important for first graders. I'm like screw that. Completely. Because you don't know. You've read a lot of stuff, but you don't know that when I have 25 first graders in my room, there's five different ways I need to teach reading and you think that because you read this research, and you revere it to be whatever, that that's the way I'm supposed to teach my kids to read? I don't think so.

Furthermore, insiders and outsiders granted status based on an individual's clinical knowledge, particularly experience in urban schools serving ethnically and linguistically diverse children. For example, several insiders accorded status to an outside academic because "he also is still very much involved in a school setting that has some of the same demographics that we'd see in the schools here in [the district]."

Contrary to the findings from prior scholarship, insiders and outsiders alike were more likely to grant others status based on having practical experience than having research knowledge or an academic credential. As can be seen in Table 2, 64% of those interviewed accorded status to others in the partnership based on their teaching experience or experience providing professional development, whereas

TABLE 2
Criteria for Granting Others Status

	Insiders	Outsiders	Total
Credential/Academic training	24%	8%	18%
Academic knowledge/Knowledge of research	66%	50%	60%
Practical experience/Practitioner knowledge	57%	75%	64%
Specialized knowledge of urban schools, teachers, or children	29%	8%	21%
Other	33%	33%	33%

Note. N = 21 insiders; 12 outsiders.

60% of individuals accorded status based on knowledge of research and 18% accorded status on the basis of an academic credential. Furthermore, outsiders were actually more likely to accord status based on practical or professional experience than insiders. Seventy-five percent of outsiders accorded status to others based on their practical experience, whereas only 57% of district personnel did. As noted earlier, individuals did not make blanket attributions of status to others. Rather, status attributions were conditional on particular dimensions and came into play only when the joint work touched on those dimensions. For example, the outsider involved in the difficult negotiation related to the literacy work was accorded status for her expertise in reading instruction by some of the same individuals who denied her status in professional development. Similarly, a key leader of mathematics in the district was accorded status for her content knowledge in mathematics but was disparaged for her lack of experience teaching the particular curriculum at the heart of the summer professional development.

Ultimately, both insiders and outsiders were more likely to grant status to outsiders for both research knowledge *and* practical experience. Thus, 12 outsiders involved in the collaboration were granted status by others based on knowledge of the research (all 12 were accorded status by insiders, and 3 of those 12 were also accorded status by outsiders). In contrast only 2 insiders were accorded status based on their knowledge of research, all by outsiders. Nine outsiders were accorded status for their practical experience as classroom teachers or professional development providers (8 were accorded status by insiders and 1 by outsiders). In contrast 7 insiders and the staff of two divisions were accorded status for their practical experience as classroom teachers or professional development providers (5 individuals and one division by outsiders and 2 individuals and one division by insiders). Insiders were also much more likely to receive negative attributions based on lack of practical experience than outsiders. Thus, 8 individuals in the district and five entire divisions were disparaged for their lack of practical experience (mainly by insiders, but outsiders also critiqued four individuals). In contrast, and

perhaps surprisingly, only two outsiders were disparaged for their lack of practical experience.

Although analytically distinct, attributions of status were, at times, related to authority relations. Those with formal authority were more likely to authorize someone—granting them informal authority—if they accorded status to that person because of his or her expertise. In all but one instance where an insider or outsider was granted informal authority to lead an aspect of the work, this individual was also granted status by the person doing the authorizing. At the same time, in the three instances where authority relations failed to emerge through negotiations between insiders and outsiders, insiders did not grant outsiders status and outsiders did not accord insiders status. For example, in the case of the literacy institute described earlier, both insiders and outsiders saw themselves as having expertise in professional development and neither saw the other as being particularly knowledgeable or experienced in it. As neither side granted status to the other, neither side endorsed the authority of the other. Progress stalled until a senior researcher with informal authority authorized the district staff developers to take the lead in the joint work. However, in spite of these links between status and authority, in nearly all instances of collaboration, there were individuals with authority and no status, and also individuals with status but no authority.

INFLUENCE OF AUTHORITY RELATIONS AND STATUS ON FRAME DYNAMICS

Authority relations and attributions of status were consequential because they shaped the process by which insiders and outsiders negotiated the direction of their joint work. In nearly all instances of collaboration, there were times when there were differences of opinions about the best course of action. When this happened, individuals put forth ideas about particular goals and suggested tactics for achieving those goals. In the language of frame theorists, they engaged in prognostic framing (Snow et al., 1986; R. H. Williams & Kubal, 1999). In so doing, they made arguments to one another, drawing on research, previous experience, and the facts on the ground in an attempt to persuade others of the direction to go. Ultimately, groups were only able to move forward in their planning once a given proposal began to achieve what frame theorists call resonance. That is, once a particular solution frame began to "make sense" to others in the group, it generated momentum and the work was able to progress in a particular direction.

We found that those with formal or informal authority had different tools available to them to bring to the persuasive process than did those with limited authority in the collaborative group. Status also played a role, but it was less influential and, at times, mediated by authority relations. Finally, individuals chose to use different tools in the effort to persuade, and those tools had different degrees

of success when collaborators held diverging views versus when the views were more homogeneous. Here, we illustrate these claims by describing the tactics individuals who were differentially positioned in collaboration used to argue for their position. We also evaluate the degree to which these tactics mobilized others and shaped the direction of the work.

Authority and Status

A small number of individuals involved in collaborative efforts as part of PDR had authority (formal or informal) and were granted status by others in their collaborative partnerships. Mostly, those with both authority and status were insiders, but there were at least two key outsiders who had been granted informal authority and status. Those with both authority and status tended to rely on persuasion to influence the direction of the collaboration. That is, they put forth ideas about appropriate solutions and backed them up with arguments that drew on their analysis of the nature of the district; their own prior experience; or, at times, references to research. Those with both status and authority were remarkably successful in their framing activities. We judged success by the degree to which others in a group took up and argued for a given position as their own (a key indicator of the resonance of a frame) or the degree to which the frame shifted the central terms or direction of the debate.[5]

For example, in the initial discussions of the overall design of the professional development, outsiders argued for a strategy of depth suggesting that the district could make use of its resources by focusing more intensively on a subset of its schools. However, the superintendent—who had formal authority but also was accorded status by insiders and outsiders alike—offered a counterframe, arguing that they should include all schools in the professional development initiative. She justified this approach by drawing on recent research on the importance of systemic approaches to instructional improvement and argued that what the district really needed was a uniform approach to instruction. She contended that including all schools in the initiative would best foster a uniform approach to instruction that would meet the needs of the districts' highly mobile student population. This argument was persuasive to both insiders and outsiders involved in this decision point, who were generally familiar with and supportive of the notion of systemic reform. As an indicator of the resonance of this argument, insiders and outsiders alike repeated this logic to one another in subsequent conversations. Ultimately, the summer professional development institutes were designed to include teams from every school in the district. In all but one decision point that involved individuals with both status and authority, prognostic frames put forth by these

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[5]For more details on the dynamics of resonance, see Coburn (2006).

individuals generated resonance with others, shaping the direction of the joint work in consequential ways.

One reason for the success of their framing activities is that individuals with status and authority were able to use their authority to create conditions that would make their frames more likely to resonate. We identified two key strategies that those with both authority and status used. First, they frequently set the agenda for discussions in ways that privileged approaches that they were advocating. For example, in the case of collaboration around the mathematics institute, the mathematics leadership favored including Lesson Study as a central part of the professional development strategy in the second year. Although there were many ideas for ways to continue the work started in the first year, the mathematics leadership put discussion of this approach on the agenda of a key planning meeting. The team discussed the approach and decided to include it. Although the mathematics leader did not in any way compel the mathematics team to embrace the approach, she did privilege the approach by putting it and not other approaches on the agenda. In this way, she used her authority to play an influential role in the ongoing debate about the future directions of math work.

Second, those with authority and status influenced frame debates by controlling who participated in the discussion, often inviting those who were like-minded to participate, a tactic we call narrowing participation. For example, in the face of controversy in the district about appropriate ways to teach mathematics, the district mathematics leadership, who favored constructivist approaches to mathematics instruction, sought out other district personnel and outside consultants who were knowledgeable about and committed to using the constructivist curriculum that the district had adopted to participate in design work. In so doing, the mathematics leadership created a team of insiders and outsiders that had remarkably similar points of view about what constituted good mathematics instruction. This created a very different context within which frame dynamics unfolded than in the design of the literacy institute, which involved representatives from the many diverse views about good literacy instruction inside and outside the district.

Those with status and authority used agenda setting or narrowing participation in 40% of the decision points in which they were involved. But, it is also important to note that those with authority and status were also quite successful in the absence of these tactics, suggesting that their individual credibility and skill at framing also supported their influence in negotiations with their partners.

Authority Only

Some individuals involved in the collaboration had authority, but not status. This was most common with upper-level administrators who had a great deal of

authority but did not have credibility with either the outsiders or those below them on matters of instruction and professional development that were at the heart of PDR. Those with authority but not status were much more likely to use tactics such as agenda setting or narrowing participation to support prognostic framing than did those with both status and authority. They used these tactics in more than two thirds of the decision points in which they participated. Again, these tactics were almost always successful, as frames put forth under these conditions were more likely to generate resonance with others involved in the deliberation about future directions.

However, individuals with authority but no status also used their authority directly to influence the direction of the negotiation, without attempting to persuade or in other ways bring along others. We saw several instances when those in authority rejected, overturned, or stalled the work done in partnerships at lower levels in the district. For example, in the case of leadership development work, members of the outside research center worked with the principal's leadership council to develop plans for systemwide professional development for school leaders. This group put forth a plan that was substantially different from what the district currently did and, as it turns out, from ideas about good principal professional development held by a key assistant superintendent. This assistant superintendent, in turn, never responded to the work publicly in the context of a planning meeting, although she criticized it privately to a few people. The plan was never acted upon and the work stalled.

We also saw instances where individuals with authority but not status compelled those below them or outside partners to take the work in a particular direction. For example, one of the assistant superintendents who favored adopting a behaviorist math program as a supplement to the district's constructivist math textbook insisted that the math team incorporate the supplemental program into the summer institute work and the follow-up professional development. As one of the math staff developers explained, "The fifth grade has an additional piece in that politically we have this [supplemental program] issue. And because that is something that is coming down from the top, and we're being scrutinized, we had to build that in to this follow-up as well." In these instances, the direction of the work was altered not because those in the partnership had been persuaded that it was the most appropriate route to go, orchestrating what Binder (2002) called an ideological shift. Rather, the direction of the partnership was shaped because partners were compelled, as those in authority orchestrated what Binder called a political shift. It is important to note that those with authority were most likely to engage in this set of tactics when they had quite different beliefs about the appropriate way for the initiative to go than others in the collaborative group. Ultimately, individuals who used their authority in this way were quite successful in shaping the direction of the collaborative work; direct uses of authority were successful

in shaping the direction of the work in every decision point where they were used.

Status Only

There were numerous individuals involved in PDR who had status but not authority. Most of these individuals were outsiders who had limited authority either through the terms of their contract or as the result of an emergent negotiation of authority relations that granted insiders greater authority. Like those with status and authority, those with status alone relied primarily on persuasion to influence the direction of collaboration. However, unlike those with status and authority, those with status alone were not nearly as successful in persuading others of the direction they thought the work should go. They were only successful in generating resonance for their frames in half of the decision points in which they were involved. Furthermore, they were most successful when they were engaged in collaboration with others who had similar beliefs about what constitutes good instruction or high-quality professional development. In other instances where there were more diverse views about the appropriate direction to go, those with status alone were less able to frame ideas in ways that generated resonance with those with greater authority in the group, although it did happen from time to time.

Neither Status Nor Authority

Finally, some insiders and outsiders had neither status nor authority in collaborative partnerships. In this case, attempts to persuade others were uniformly unsuccessful. This phenomenon is perhaps best illustrated by an outsider whose status was denied in the first year by insiders but who then came to be seen as quite knowledgeable by some of the same insiders in the second year. This outsider made many of the same arguments for the direction of the literacy work in both years, but the arguments were rejected by insiders in the first year when the outsider lacked status. She was subsequently influential in the direction of the work in the second year once she came to be seen as having expertise, providing evidence for the important role that credibility plays in the success of framing activities.

In the absence of success using persuasion, some individuals with neither status nor authority resorted to other tactics to influence the direction of the collaborative work. The first strategy these individuals used was to have others who they saw as having status or authority promote their ideas. This happened at four decision points. For example, in the second year of the initiative, there was controversy about whether a particular approach to reading instruction was appropriate for the

poor students and students of color that the district served. One African American member of the planning team explained,

> Personally, one of my feelings is that if … we don't start to look at the cultural piece—in that if I'm different than these children and I don't respect what they bring to the table—then [this program] is not going to address that.

A key advocate for the instructional approach who was White responded to this criticism by bringing in an African American academic she knew to advocate the approach she favored in order to help develop credibility for her argument. This academic explained why he was brought into the work in the following way:

> It's very difficult to sometimes be a prophet in your own land. Like, [the district insider] had a concern about "they've been hearing from me and hearing from me and hearing from me, and we need for someone to parrot what I say, but a different face—and you do just that, you and I are in synch, and they're going to listen to you."

This tactic, which we call the use of frame articulators (Turner, 2008), was successful at all four decision points where it was used. In this instance, those who were initially skeptical raved about the instructional approach and the outside academic, pointing to both his academic expertise and his experience as an African American as contributing factors to his ability to be helpful. One former skeptic said, "So he was helpful there. Just, he is African American so he has personal experiences to draw from as well." The controversial approach to literacy instruction became the centerpiece of this team's professional development in the second year of the initiative.

The second strategy employed by those without status or authority was to enlist others with authority to intervene on their behalf. Two insiders used this strategy at separate decision points. For example, when the literacy team was involved in a dispute about which approaches to promote during the second year of their professional development initiative, one member of the literacy team got an assistant superintendent to intervene to mandate the approach that this member of the literacy team favored. In both instances, this tactic was successful as the intervention from those with authority shaped the direction of the work.

Finally, one outsider sought to gain legitimacy for his approach by invoking the authority of others—in this case, the authority of the foundation that was supporting the initiative. Unlike the other two strategies for gaining leverage for those without status or authority, this strategy backfired. Those in the district saw it as a breach, and it, along with several other incidents, prompted a call for clarification of authority relations and an explicit renegotiation of appropriate roles for insiders and outsiders in the second year of the initiative. As was the

case with those with authority but no status, those with no status and no authority were most likely to attempt these power tactics when they were negotiating with others who had substantially different ideas about the direction to proceed in the collaborative group.

All of this suggests that the tactics used in frame debates were greatly influenced by an individual's position in relation to others in the group. Authority relations were particularly influential, considerably more so than status relations. Those with authority had a much greater range of strategies for influencing the direction of collaborative work and felt free to use them. Those with authority were more successful than those without authority when using tactics available to both groups. For example, those with authority were two times more likely to persuade others on the basis of prognostic framing alone than those with status but no authority. Those with status were most able to be influential to the degree that they gained informal authority by being authorized from above or endorsed from below. In this way, authority relations often mediated the influence of status in negotiations between insiders and outsiders.

This analysis also suggests that the use and success of framing tactics depends upon the diversity of beliefs in a given group. Persuasion was less likely to be successful—even for those with authority or status—when there were divergent views about the appropriate direction to go. In fact, those with authority often used their position to limit negotiation to those who shared their point of view, a tactic that enabled greater influence in the deliberation process. Similarly, individuals were much more likely to use—or get others to use—direct control strategies in the face of diverse views. This suggests that authority relations are even more important in determining the direction of collaborative work when there is a diversity of beliefs in a given partnership.

INSIDER–OUTSIDER PARTNERSHIPS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

Most research on insider–outsider partnerships investigates the phenomenon at the school level or in out-of-school settings. Yet the district central office level is considerably more complicated, politicized, and fluid than a school setting. Many school districts have highly complex and departmentalized organizational structures (Hannaway, 1989; Meyer & Scott, 1983; Rowan, 1986; Spillane, 1998). There are multiple levels of the system from the executive level, to directors of divisions, to frontline administrators who are often charged with carrying out the details of the work. There are also multiple divisions that are implicated in matters of instruction, typically including curriculum and instruction divisions, assessment and testing divisions, and special education divisions, to name a few (Spillane, 1998). Furthermore, organizational structure and authority relations are often fluid

as changes in upper level administrators lead to reorganization and shifting roles. This complex and fluid structure influenced the role of status and authority in insider–outsider negotiations in at least four ways.

First, in this district as in many districts, there were uncertain authority relations among different levels and divisions of the district. The main lines of authority went from the superintendent to the assistant superintendent in charge of each level of schooling (one each for elementary, middle, and high) to school principals. But there were uncertain authority relations between these assistant superintendents and the heads of the main divisions involved in instruction, including Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, a division in charge of English Language Learners, and Special Education. In the second year of the initiative, the district appointed a chief academic officer with responsibility over all these divisions, but the relationship between the assistant superintendents and the instruction divisions remained ambiguous. Uncertain authority relations *within* the district led to complications for insider-outsider partnerships that stretched across the multiple divisions. For example, in the second year of the initiative, outsiders worked with the mathematics division to identify an outside provider who could provide professional development to school leaders in high quality mathematics instruction. The outsider conferred with the chief academic officer—the supervisor of the Curriculum and Instruction division—to gain approval of the plan but did not confer with the assistant superintendents. The assistant superintendents, in turn, saw professional development for school leaders as under their purview. Thus they viewed this move as an affront to their authority and saw the outsider as out of line. Thus, it is not just authority relations between insiders and outsiders that influenced insider–outsider partnerships but also authority relations *within* the district itself. These authority relations were made more complicated by the complexity of the district central office.

Second, the organizational structure of the school district also shaped negotiation because of the rather loose linkages between different levels of the district hierarchy. In all but two instances of collaboration, outsiders worked simultaneously with individuals at multiple levels of the system to negotiate the direction of the work. Negotiations between outsiders and top-level administrators led to broad directions for the work. The details of implementation were then developed in negotiation with frontline administrators who were responsible for carrying out the work. In the absence of tight linkages between the top and bottom of the system, there was often a somewhat tenuous relationship with the collaborative decisions made at the top and those made by inside–outside partners at the bottom of the system. For example, in the first year of the initiative, the superintendent made it clear that she wanted attention to issues of diversity to sit at the center of summer institutes in reading and mathematics. Yet because it was not a priority for frontline administrators and because the frontline administrators either had informal authority over outsiders (in mathematics) or there were contentious

authority relations (in literacy), the resulting design paid only symbolic attention to issues of diversity. It was difficult for outside partners to coordinate between levels of the system in the absence of mechanisms within the district to achieve that coordination themselves.

There was another outcome of the multilevel design process just described. In five of the seven instances of collaboration, outside partners worked most closely and in most detail with frontline administrators. During the course of that joint work, there was a process of mutual influence whereby outsiders persuaded insiders and, in some instances, insiders persuaded outsiders of particular directions to go. However, executive-level decision makers rarely took part in this level of conversation. Thus, they did not have the opportunity to participate in the frame debates or be persuaded by them over time. For this reason, executive-level decision makers who had formal authority over the proceedings were particularly likely to reject the work done by those at lower levels of the system or insert things into the process that were not in line with the ongoing direction of the conversation at lower levels of the system. We saw this phenomenon in three of the seven instances.

Finally, turnover is endemic at the upper levels of school districts, and this district was no exception. During the three years covered by our study, the district lost its longtime superintendent, had an interim for a year, and then at the end of our study hired a new superintendent. Turnover at the top of the system had a ripple effect on the authority relations guiding the negotiation. Those with informal authority were particularly vulnerable. For example, the first superintendent authorized several outsiders to take the lead on key aspects of the initiative. These outsiders, in turn, were endorsed by others in the district. But once the superintendent left and a few of the key positions in the next layer of the district leadership changed, this history of authorization and endorsement was lost. Thus, when these outside individuals took the lead in a manner consistent with the established authority relations under the prior superintendent, new members of the district leadership viewed the outsiders as overstepping their role. Normative agreement about appropriate roles for the outsider that was forged under the original superintendent began to unravel with the presence of new people with formal authority. Ultimately, this was not resolved until there was an explicit renegotiation of the role for outsiders throughout the initiative, which resulted in shifting authority more firmly to the insiders, especially at the executive level.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As districts seek to create instructional improvement at scale, they are increasingly reaching out to external organizations to assist them with this endeavor. Yet the

potential of these relationships for bringing about instructional improvement is related to not only the quality of the advice or assistance these organizations offer but also the nature and dynamics of the relationship that outsiders and insiders are able to forge with one another. Our analysis suggests that status and authority relations play a key role in shaping the nature of these relationships. Authority relations are particularly important because the absence of normative agreement about authority can lead to conflict, misunderstandings, and an inability to move the work forward. But authority relations are also important because they shape how negotiation unfolds. Those with authority are privileged in the social negotiation about directions for the partnership. They have a greater range of tools for persuasion at their disposal and the ability to use more direct mechanisms of control to impact the direction of the partnership. Attributions of status are also important, but often less so than authority. If outsiders or insiders have status but not authority, they must rely on their personal credibility and the wisdom of their arguments to persuade those who have authority to move in particular directions.

All of this is more complicated and challenging when negotiation unfolds in the context of a district central office. The multileveled structure of school districts, combined with their uncertain authority relations and loose connections between levels, makes it more difficult to forge and maintain normative agreement about authority. Endemic turnover requires that authority relations and status hierarchies be negotiated repeatedly as new individuals become involved in partnership activities, creating new expectations for roles and relationships and new and sometimes different attributions of status.

These findings have several implications for our understanding of insider–outsider relationships. First, this research highlights the importance of careful attention to authority relations. Those involved in crafting partnerships may shy away from explicit attention to authority because it seems contrary to democratic ideals embedded in the notion of collaboration.[6] Although it may seem counterintuitive to some, this study suggests that the development of clear authority relations actually enables productive working relationships. Shared understanding of appropriate roles and relationships provides guidance for interaction and decision making, and for mitigating against breaches, power struggles, and misunderstanding. In fact, as suggested by Dornbusch and Scott (1975) and illustrated by this study, in the absence of clear authority relations, it can be very difficult to move forward.

This finding has implications for partnerships like PDR that seek to craft alternative forms of relationships between insiders and outsiders. The leaders of PDR intended to create a new kind of partnership, with the goal of maximizing the rich knowledge that researchers, experienced practitioners and professional development providers outside of the district, as well as individuals at multiple

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[6]See Pace and Hemmings (2007) on this point related to classroom authority.

levels inside the district have to offer. The approach to co-construction guiding the partnership was supposed to mitigate against status issues that privilege academic knowledge and to create shared stakes and shared decision making. Yet the fact that this form of partnership was so unfamiliar to both insiders and outsiders involved in the work probably contributed to some of the difficulties in establishing normative agreement about appropriate authority relations. In addition, although the partnership strove to create a sense of shared stakes, it can be argued that the district personnel had much more to gain and lose than the external consultants. Authority relations were most clearly defined—and normative agreement was easiest to develop and sustain—when the terms of the partnership resembled a traditional consulting role. Relations were most likely to be bumpy and conflictual when authority relations developed emergently and when insiders and outsiders had different ideas about what role each was supposed to play. This suggests that initiatives that seek nontraditional partnerships must work extra hard to develop and communicate clear models of authority relations and clear expectations about what it means for insiders and outsiders to work with one another in this fashion.

Second, this study raises questions about prior scholarship on the importance of status in influencing insider–outsider relationships. It suggests that status relations are less unitary, more situational, and more fluid than that portrayed in prior scholarship. Furthermore, it suggests that there may be multiple criteria for attributing status operating simultaneously. Individuals, both in districts and outside of districts, grant status not only to outsiders who they perceive to have research knowledge or expertise but also to those who they perceive to have great practical knowledge or extensive experience. It is possible that the large percentage of outsiders who granted status based on perceptions of practical experience in this project was related to the fact that the leaders of PDR promoted the value of knowledge from practice so strongly. But this does not explain why so many insiders were more likely to grant status to others on the basis of practical experience than on the basis of research knowledge. This suggests that rather than *assuming* that the privileging of academic knowledge over practical knowledge in the larger environment influences how individuals make status attributions in the context of a local partnership, it is important to *investigate* the nature of status attribution directly.

Third, this article contributes to the scholarship on insider–outsider partnerships by highlighting the role of organizational structure in the dynamics of negotiation and, ultimately, in how partnerships unfold. Investigating the dynamics of framing at the district central office level brings the role of organizational structure into relief. It suggests that organizational structure shapes negotiation in part because of the way it structures authority relations. Individuals in different positions of the district hierarchy are accorded different levels of formal and informal authority. Outsiders, even those who are accorded informal authority, are differently positioned depending on whether they are interacting with those at the top or those at

the bottom of the system. These authority relations, in turn, influence the dynamics of negotiation in substantial ways.

The connections between different areas of the district are consequential for negotiation. Uncertain authority relationships between district divisions create ambiguity and increase the opportunities for missteps and breaches. Loose connections between the bottom and the top of the system create great challenges for communication and coordination. Thus, although partnerships at the district central office level may seek to help districts solve some of the vexing organizational challenges that appear to impede their ability to foster instructional improvement at scale, the partnerships are subject to some of the same organizational dynamics themselves.

Fourth, this analysis also has implications for attempts to use collaborative partnerships to leverage district change. More specifically, it suggests that outsiders are most likely to be able to leverage change in the district when they have similar points of view as those on the inside. In this study, insiders were more likely to have formal or informal authority in collaborative groups, especially as the partnership evolved over time. Outsiders were more likely to have status. Given that authority was much more influential than status, outsiders (and some insiders) found themselves mainly relying on their ability to persuade those with authority of the wisdom of their approach. However, persuasion was less likely to be successful under conditions of diverse views about appropriate directions for a particular initiative. This suggests that in the absence of shared beliefs about the direction for the collaborative work, those with status may face considerable difficulty if they attempt to promote approaches that diverge substantially from those approaches that are valued by those in positions of authority in the district. Indeed, in PDR, outsiders with status but no authority were most likely to be successful in shaping the direction of district work when they had shared understandings with at least a subset of insiders with whom they collaborated. Attempts to promote directions for the initiative that departed substantially from what those with authority were familiar with and believed in were frequently unsuccessful, as was the case with the leadership development work proposed by outsiders. This suggests the promise of a more incremental, long-term approach to systemic change than is typically sought, at least for collaborative partnerships operating under this set of authority relations.

Finally, this work suggests the benefit of future research on partnerships with different configurations of authority. This investigation provides insight into the development and importance of authority and status relations. But it raises the questions: Will insiders be more likely to have authority and outsiders be more likely to have status under different strategies for establishing partnerships? Will authority relations be as challenging to establish and maintain as with this approach? It is only through continued investigation of the nature and role of authority that we will begin to better understand how different configurations of

authority relations and status create conditions that are more or less conducive for partnerships to support district improvement over time.

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