HANDBOOK OF EDUCATION POLITICS AND POLICY

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Contents

Preface: The Need for a Politics of Education Handbook — vii
James G. Cibulka, Lance D. Fusarelli, and Bruce S. Cooper

Editors — xi

Contributors — xiii

1 Introduction: Researching Toward a New Politics of Education — 1
James G. Cibulka, Lance D. Fusarelli, and Bruce S. Cooper

I: FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL POLITICS OF EDUCATION

2 Federalism, Equity, and Accountability in Education — 19
Kenneth K. Wong

3 Understanding Education Policy Change in the American States: Lessons from Political Science — 30
Michael K. McLendon and Lora Cohen-Vogel

4 Political Cultures in Education at the State and Local Level: Views from Three States — 52
Karen S. Febey and Karen Seashore Louis

5 Understanding School Board Politics: Balancing Public Voice and Professional Power — 73
Patricia A. L. Ehrensal and Patricia F. First

6 Urban Regime Theory and the Reform of Public Schools: Governance, Power, and Leadership — 89
Dorothy Shipps

7 Judicial Impact on Education Politics and Policies — 109
Martha McCarthy

8 Hitting a Moving Target: How Politics Determines the Changing Roles of Superintendents and School Boards — 126
Thomas L. Alsbury

9 Beyond Pluralistic Patterns of Power: Research on the Micropolitics of Schools — 148
Betty Malen and Melissa Vincent Cochran

10 The Evolving Political Role of Urban Mayors in Education — 179
Fritz Edelstein

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Beyond Pluralistic Patterns of Power: Research on the Micropolitics of Schools

Betty Malen and Melissa Vincent Cochran

The micropolitics of schools is an evolving but arguably underdeveloped field of study (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Scribner et al., 2003). Its conceptual boundaries and distinctive features remain elusive and contested. Its empirical foundation is broad in scope but uneven in quality. For example, studies span the space from community politics to classroom and corridor dynamics, employ various theoretical orientations, focus on different units of analysis, encompass a maze of loosely defined formal and informal arenas, and address an array of salient topics and prevalent policy issues. Some studies unpack the dynamic, power-based and interest-driven processes through which conflict is regulated and make clear the basis of judgments rendered; others do not. Some studies explain how and why cases were selected; others do not. Some studies support broader generalizations; others are more "existence proofs." These attributes of the field confound the prospects for developing an exhaustive, integrated and definitive review of literature on the micropolitics of schools. Thus we adopt more modest aims.

PURPOSE AND PERSPECTIVE

We seek to update and extend the findings of an earlier review of research on the micropolitics of schools that focused on "mapping the multiple dimensions of power relations in school polities" (Malen, 1995, p. 147). The power-relations emphasis was, at the time, a unifying theme in the empirical and theoretical literature on the micropolitics of schools (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991; Bowles, 1989; Hoyle, 1986). It remains a unifying construct in the broader politics of education field (Malen, 2001b), as well as in the parent discipline. As Hochschild writes, "That...power would unify otherwise disparate articles is hardly surprising; if our discipline [political science] has any center toward which its many peripheries gravitate, it is the study of power in all of its many manifestations" (2005, p. 213).

Although power is a core element and a unifying component of political analysis, the early review (Malen, 1995) noted that studies draw on different conceptions of power and its companion terms, authority, influence, and control. Some employ "pluralist" views that concentrate on the overt manifestations of power evidenced by influence (or noninfluence) on visible, contentious, and consequential decisions. Others draw on "elitist" views that expose the more covert expressions of power apparent in the suppression of dissent, the confinement of agendas to "safe" issues, the management of symbols, and the "suffocation...[of]...demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges" (Bacharach & Baratz, 1970, p. 44). Still others draw on "radical" or "critical" views that delve into the more opaque "third face" of power and derive inferences on how power relations shape aspirations and define interests through subtle but presumably detectable processes of socialization and indoctrination that elude the awareness of individuals who succumb to them but may be evident to the analyst who searches for them (Gaventa, 1980; Lukes, 1974). All these views have their advocates and critics (Clegg, 1989; Geary, 1992). All these views are reflected in studies of the "micropolitics" of schools.

We draw on this multidimensional view of power to anchor our review of research on select but significant aspects of the micropolitics of schools. Since this field of study has not arrived at a consensus definition of "micropolitics," we adopt a general and inclusive construction. In our view, micropolitical perspectives characterize schools as minipolitical systems, nested in multilevel governmental structures that set the authoritative parameters for the play of power at the site level. Schools face difficult and divisive allocative choices when they are confronted by multiple, competing demands, chronic resource shortages, unclear technologies, uncertain supports, critical public service responsibilities, and value-laden issues. Like actors in any political system, actors at the site level manage the endemic conflict and make the distributional choices through processes that pivot on power exercised in various ways in various arenas (Malen, 1995). With others, we maintain that micropolitical perspectives cast schools as "arenas of struggle" (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991) where actors use their power to advance their interests and ideals; where conflict, competition, cooperation, compromise, and co-optation coexist and where both public and private transactions shape organizational priorities, processes, and outcomes. Always conditioned and often constrained by broad institutional, economic, and sociocultural forces, these actor relationships, interactions, and exchanges, and their impact on the distribution of valued outcomes, become the foci of study.

We analyze adult relationships, namely the professional-patron, principal-teacher, and teacher-teacher interactions that occur in select formal and informal arenas in public school systems in the United States because they provide telling glimpses into the micropolitics of schools. We synthesize information on the sources of tension, the patterns of politics, and the outcomes of transactions in those arenas. Although most definitions of micropolitics direct attention to "those activities and strategies used by organizational participants to influence decisions that allocate scarce but valued resources within the organization" (Johnson, 2001, p. 119), scholars recognize that context situates and mediates the play of power in organizations generally and in schools more specifically (e.g., Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Townsend, 1990). Therefore, we highlight policy developments that condition the play of power at the school site to set the stage for our analysis of key aspects of politics within U.S. public schools.

Our analysis is based on studies identified through a search for research-based articles that directly address the micropolitics of schools, for articles that might enable us to draw inferences about power relationships in school contexts even though the term *micropolitics* is not used in the text, and for articles that examine the manner in which policy developments in the broader context may affect the autonomy of schools and the discretion afforded site actors. We began our search with major refereed journals dating from 1992 to 2006, and then expanded it to include citations uncovered in that process as well as other books and research reports that addressed the major themes we were uncovering. While we located and reviewed over 200 articles and over 75 additional works, we do not cite all the sources we consulted. Rather we use citations selectively, to illustrate the major themes we uncovered in the literature and to highlight

disconfirming as well as confirming evidence regarding the observations and interpretations we set forth.

Since much of the research takes the form of case studies, we underscore that the political dynamics we describe are not necessarily typical of the dynamics found in the vast universe of U.S. public schools. We draw on this research to generate insights, not to make definitive claims, about the micropolitics of schools and how the broader policy context may be shaping those dynamics.

THE POLICY CONTEXT

Our analysis suggests that the broad policy context may be affecting the micropolitics of schools by narrowing the parameters for influence at the site level, by creating alternative organizational forms, and by injecting more "external" actors into the governance, management, and operation of schools. We discuss each of these developments in turn.

Narrowing Parameters for Influence at the School Level

The initial review of literature (Malen, 1995) alluded to the modest degrees of discretion afforded site actors, given resource constraints, the "web of rules" governing site decision making, and the weak design of the various policies that were advanced to ensure that site actors had considerable (and additional) decision-making authority. This review reinforces that observation, and then argues that site autonomy has been constrained even more, by the packages of federal, state, and local policies that further circumscribe the power, limit the discretion, and restrict the influence of site actors.

The Unfulfilled Promise of Greater Discretion. Reforms aimed at "empowering" schools and the people who work in them became prominent in the mid- to late 1980s with countless calls for site-based management councils, school-level budgeting and decision making, school improvement teams, advisory committees, and other structural arrangements that presumably would grant site actors the autonomy and the authority required to reform their schools (Bauch & Goldring, 1998; Ingersoll, 2003: Malen & Muncey, 2000). Several lines of evidence suggest that, to date, the promise of greater discretion has been largely unfulfilled.

First, the scope of "new" authority delegated to schools is still modest and temporary. Save for settings that permitted school councils to hire and fire their principals, we found little evidence of a fundamental expansion of decision-making authority in any, let alone all the critical areas of budget, personnel, and instructional programs (Croninger & Malen, 2002; Handler, 1998; Odden & Bush, 1998; Summers & Johnson, 1996). Moreover, it has become clear that whatever "new authority" was decentralized could be recentralized (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Shipps, 1998; Shipps, Kahne, & Smiley, 1999). Thus site actors do not appear to have more extensive or more dependable degrees of freedom (Malen & Muncey, 2000).

Second, resource constraints and the "web of rules" embedded in the broader system continue to restrict site autonomy. Oftentimes site actors are empowered to manage budget cuts, not to initiate program improvements (Croninger & Malen, 2002; Fine, 1993; Handler, 1998). While some state governments have tried to relax rules and regulations for "high-performing" schools or to engage in various forms of "differential regulation," these exemptions have not operated to enhance, significantly, site autonomy (Fuhrman & Elmore, 1995). On the contrary, they may further limit autonomy because these policies remind schools that states can deploy the punishment of a takeover as well as the reward of regulatory relief (Malen & Muncey, 2000). Whether other forms of deregulation such as charter schools, choice plans, and for-profit educational management arrangements will enhance the discretion afforded site actors remains an open, empirical question (Crawford & Forsythe, 2004; Johnson & Landman, 2000; Mintrom, 2001). But for "traditional" public schools, and particularly for low-performing schools, rule and resource constraints still limit the autonomy of site actors (Malen & Muncey, 2000; Sipple, Killeen, & Monk, 2004; Timar, 2004).

Third, the responsibilities of site actors have intensified, in part because policy packages exacted a price (stronger accountability for the promise of greater autonomy) and in part because policy rhetoric located the blame for low performance squarely on the school (Elmore, 2002; Malen, Croninger, Muncey, & Redmond-Jones, 2002). Schools have been given additional assignments, such as developing school improvement plans, implementing curricular frameworks, incorporating new testing procedures, adapting to various "external partners," and otherwise "demonstrating" that they are meeting the terms of more stringent "results-based" accountability systems. These responsibilities have come in addition to, not in lieu of, other demands and obligations (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Booher-Jennings, 2005; Mintrop, 2004; Sunderman, 2001; Wong & Anagnostopoulos, 1998).

In short, for site actors, various "empowerment" reforms resulted in a substantial increase in responsibility but not a commensurate increase in authority, a dependable increase in relevant resources, or a meaningful measure of relief from the sets of regulations and obligations that guide and govern what site actors may and must do. While "empowering" reforms did little to expand and much to limit the latitude of site actors, other initiatives, launched primarily at the state level and reinforced by federal legislation and district reaction, further constrained the autonomy of site actors (Anagnostopolous, 2003; Conley, 2003; Timar, 2004). Recognizing that data are limited, we point to the standards and high-stakes accountability policies to illustrate that observation.

The Stark Reality of Stricter Accountability. During the 1980s and 1990s states intensified their efforts to control schools. Under the auspices of stronger accountability and coherent policy, states stepped up their efforts (1) to articulate curriculum content through various requirements, frameworks and tests; (2) to define school programs through mandates that make schools select programs for at risk students from a fairly short list of state-approved options, and, in so doing, to regulate the professional development that school staffs receive; and (3) to issue public sanctions ranging from public listings of "low performing schools" to focused state interventions or full-scale reconstitution, privatization or takeover actions (Ladd, 1996; Malen, 2003). While not all states have been equally active in all domains of education, generally speaking, states appear to be coupling policy instruments in potent ways and asserting unprecedented levels of control over schools (Conley, 2003; Malen, 2003; Neuman-Sheldon, 2006; Timar, 2004).

Since the mid-1990s, the federal government also stepped up efforts to control public schools with its rhetorical press for "results-based" accountability and its formal endorsement of graduated but stringent sanctions for schools that fail to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. While federal policies have been contested, they represent a renewed effort to influence the core of schooling (Cohn, 2005; McDonnell, 2005; Superfine, 2005). Likewise, districts in some settings have generated initiatives and developed responses that may limit the latitude of site actors (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Booher-Jennings, 2005; Ogawa, Sandholtz, & Scribner, 2003; Sunderman, 2001; Wong & Anagnostopoulos, 1998).

A small but growing body of evidence indicates that these policies are changing (for better or worse) the content of curriculum (Dorgan, 2004; Firestone, Fitz, & Broadfoot, 1998; Firestone,

Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1999;; Sandholtz, Ogawa, & Scribner, 2004; Trujillo, 2005); the pace if not the pedagogy of instruction (Dorgan, 2004; Finkelstein et al., 2000; McNeil, 2000; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002) and the allocation of time and personnel (Dorgan, 2004; Wong & Anagnostopoulos, 1998). In some cases schools "pull resources away from the most needy students...[in order to concentrate] on students most likely to improve school-wide achievement test scores" (Sunderman, 2001, p. 526; see also, Booher-Jennings, 2005; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Elmore, 2002; Neuman-Sheldon, 2006). Although the evidence is not as extensive, it appears that these policies are changing other important aspects of schooling, such as: the nature of professional development (Fairman & Firestone, 2001; Firestone et al., 1999); the substance and structure of site-level school improvement deliberations (Finkelstein et al., 2000; Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006); the nature and attractiveness of teachers' work (Anagnostopoulous, 2003; Dorgan, 2004; Finkelstein et al., 2000; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002); conceptions of the primary purposes of schooling; views of the appropriate roles of governmental units (Malen & Muncey, 2000); and views of what counts as good teaching (Booher-Jennings, 2005). Although the effects vary depending on the severity of the stakes attached to accountability systems and, at times, the level of schooling, survey and case study data suggest that standards and accountability policies are limiting the autonomy of site-level actors (Dorgan, 2004; Finkelstein et al. 2000; Pedulla et al., 2003).

While external policies are not the only factor shaping what site actors do, and while site responses vary (Grant, 2001; Pedulla et al., 2003; Zancanella, 1992), the developments highlighted here suggest that school level actors may not be in a position to evade, remake, or rebuff directives from afar as readily as they have in the past (Cohen & Spillane, 1992; Hill, 2001; Kirp & Driver, 1995; Rossman & Wilson, 1996; Schon, 1981). Rather, it appears that through various combinations of symbols, sanctions, rules, regulations, and exhortations, the broader system has exerted considerable control over the agenda of public schools, rewritten the rules of the game, and created what Mazzoni terms "a new set of givens" that restrict the range of options open to and the degree of discretion available to site actors (Malen & Muncey, 2000).

While it appears that these policy developments may be marginalizing site actors, we are reminded that "reforms that appear to be centralizing control over schools might well serve to promote local democratic practice" (Mintrom, 2001, p. 638). For example, standards and accountability policies have the potential to produce information that attentive publics or what Gamson (1960) terms "potential partisans" might use to press for school reforms that they view as key (Cibulka, 1991; Mintrom, 2001). Mintrom notes that more drastic measures, such as the creation or imposition of new organizational forms or "top-down takeovers of schools," might "clear new spaces for democratic practice to emerge" (Mintrom, 2001, p. 638). Thus, these new organizational forms along with other changes in the policy landscape hold important implications for our understanding of the micropolitics of schools.

Generating Alternative Organizational Forms

Charter schools along with other alternative organizational forms have gained prominence over the past decade (Mintrom, 2001; Wasley et al., 2000). The policies governing charter schools and the profiles of them vary considerably within and across states (Manno, Finn, Bierlin, & Vanourek, 1998). Generally speaking, however, these schools are freed from select constraints and afforded opportunities to recruit "like-minded staff," to control their budgets, to select curricula, and to recruit students (Bulkley & Hicks, 2005; Johnson & Landman, 2000, p. 102; Lovelass & Jasin, 1998). Often relatively small, these schools may engender a different political dynamic since school staffs are likely to be more homogeneous and since parents and educators choose to be part of the organization. Because some charter schools are run by private, for-

profit companies and some traditional public schools are being turned over to private, for-profit education management companies (a trend that may accelerate if sanctions for chronically low-performing schools are enforced), we have yet another class of organizations to explore as we try to understand, more fully, the micropolitics of schools. Although data on the micropolitics of charter schools, privately managed schools, reconstituted schools (Hess, 2003; Malen et al., 2002), various versions of autonomous small schools (Wasley et al., 2000) and other alternative organizational forms are thin, we incorporate insights from studies that illuminate the political dynamics in these new arenas.

Injecting New Organizational Actors

Largely as a result of more stringent accountability pressures and local capacity constraints, some schools, notably low-performing schools, are developing, or are being required to develop various partnerships with external organizations or to work more closely with various networks that offer assistance and support (Hess, 2003; Honig, 2004; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2001; Weschler & Friedrich, 1997; Wohlstetter, Malloy, Chau, & Pohlemus, 2003). At times these arrangements inject new actors like monitoring teams, instructional coaches, after-school programmers, and organizational consultants into the school and alter the size and composition of school-based leadership teams (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Wong & Anagnostopoulos, 1998). Since data regarding how these new players affect the micropolitics of the school are limited, this potentially important development gets short shrift in this review.

PROFESSIONAL-PATRON INTERACTIONS IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL ARENAS

Principals, teachers, parents, and community residents interact in formal arenas, such as program-specific advisory committees, school-wide improvement teams, and school-based governing boards. These long-standing avenues for citizen engagement are rooted in ideals of local, democratic control, criticisms of unresponsive bureaucratic systems, and issues surrounding the quality and fairness of educational programs and services. As such, they provide a strong starting point for uncovering the micropolitics of schools. Ironically, we have "surprisingly few accounts of how deliberations actually occur on the ground" (Fung, 2004, p. 133). But surveys of participants' responses, summaries of case study findings, and several more detailed accounts of professional-patron dynamics help unpack the play of power in these formal arenas. Anecdotal references to private exchanges and several more detailed accounts of professional-patron relationships suggest how power may be exercised in informal arenas.

Sources of Tension

Consistent with the findings of the initial review (Malen, 1995), professional-parent tensions still center on who has the legitimate right to decide policy and whether the school has provided appropriate and equitable educational services to various groups of students within the school. Since professionals realize that, at any time, their constituents can level criticisms that threaten the stability and legitimacy of the school (Greenfield, 1995; Johnson & Fauske, 2000; Malen, 1995), anxieties about the school's ability to withstand scrutiny and to contain conflicts rooted in divergent views of appropriate and equitable policies, programs, and services are ever-present. These enduring tensions are brokered through patterns of politics that reveal the capacity of professionals and select parents to gain, at least momentarily, a relative power advantage.

Patterns of Politics in Formal Arenas

The patterns of politics in formal arenas range from exchanges that avoid and suppress conflict to those that inflame and expand it. We begin with the avoidance/suppression patterns that protect established interests since they are the most pronounced in the literature.

Suppressing Conflict—Protecting Established Interests. Much of the early literature on site-based councils documents that the underlying tensions between professionals and parents are managed and minimized through ceremonial exchanges that avert conflict and reinforce traditional patterns of power wherein professionals control school policy and instructional programs and parents provide support. More recent research indicates that "strong professional control remains intact regardless of the extent of parental empowerment at the school site" for many of the schools that are part of Chicago's relatively ambitious effort to grant parents real power in school governance (Wong, 1994, p. 174; see also Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Hess, 1996, 1999c; Lewis & Nakagawa, 1995), as well as for schools located in other settings (Bauch & Goldering, 1998; Croninger & Malen, 2002; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999).

Even though school councils have not redistributed power in substantial and durable ways, they do appear to serve important political functions. Repeated references to council topics as "trivial," council functions as "rubberstamping" decisions made elsewhere, and council processes as "manufacturing consent" (Seitsinger & Zera, 2002, p. 352) or as "socializing parents" into submissive roles as "trustees of the status quo" (Seitsinger & Zera, 2002, p. 340; Nakagawa, 2000) suggest that councils may serve as fairly effective mechanisms for suppressing conflict. The councils may operate to co-opt parental concerns, to deflect criticisms of schools (Anderson, 1998; Croninger & Malen, 2002; Lewis & Nakagawa, 1995), and to diffuse the influence of parents "who wish to say something about the pattern of resource inequities [or uneven accomplishments] across schools" (Shipps, 1997, p.103). These and other features and functions of parental participation in site-based governance bodies indicate that opportunities for meaningful participation in school governance may be rare, especially for parents of children from low-income, minority, and migrant populations (Croninger & Malen, 2002; Hess, 1996; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

Even more troubling is evidence suggesting that "participatory reforms" may not only curb the ability of parents to voice their concerns but also divert attention from the life circumstances that must be addressed before parents can be involved in school governance (Lopez et al., 2001) and from the underlying sources of educational inequities (Anderson, 1998). They may do so by putting the focus on innocuous topics, organizational "tinkerings," and symbolic reassurances that "mean little when neither leadership nor revenue is there to meet the challenges of poverty and racism" (Lewis & Nakagawa, 1995, p. 173).

As noted elsewhere (Malen, 1995) the suppression of conflict and the exclusion of interests patterns of politics are produced by a combination of factors, such as the principal's capacity to control the agenda and the information flow, and, at times the composition of the council; the willingness of teachers to align with the principal to protect what they view as professional prerogatives; the ability of professionals to reroute contentious issues to more private subcommittees; and the reluctance of parents to challenge these dynamics. These patterns are further reinforced by ingrained norms surrounding the topics that can be raised and the degree of disagreement allowed, the formal powers granted site council members, the availability of resources to assist and support the work of council members, and by the broader forces of race, ethnicity, and economics that converge to structure access and influence in our educational and social systems.

Managing Conflict—Acknowledging Diverse Interests. At times, professionals and parents engage in council exchanges that appear to be more open, deliberative, and representative. In fact, about one third of the elementary schools in Chicago exhibited signs of this pattern (Bryk et al., 1998). While a few additional "existence proofs" are present in the literature (Murray & Grant, 1995), an in-depth analysis of what researchers termed "strong sites" in Chicago is particularly instructive (Fung, 2004). Although the author concedes that patterns of participation uncovered were not equal or ideal, the analysis illustrates how site-based governance councils can foster "the inclusion of disadvantaged residents," civic engagement in education and meaningful changes in local schools (Fung, 2004, p. 226).

A critical factor in this dynamic seems to be the alignment of parents with civic associations and activist organizations that monitor the implementation of participatory structures, mobilize parents and community residents, enhance their capacity to advocate through training and technical assistance, and provide "ordinary parents and residents the confidence and presence of mind to deal as equals with the street-level public servants in forums such as...LSC [local school council] sessions" (Fung, 2004, p. 229). Even when these alignments are present, however, the evidence suggests that parents often approve decisions made by others and that professionals perpetuate a clear division of labor that keeps important decisions about school policy, curriculum, and pedagogy beyond the reach of parental influence. For example, in these cases, professionals often "took the lead in formulating school proposals and developing strategies to implement them, and then sought the approval and sometimes active contribution of lay participants to execute those strategies...lay persons served primarily as monitors and supporters rather than as fully equal innovators" (Fung, 2004, p. 143).

Studies of efforts to organize communities so that residents can become effective advocates for school reform tend to corroborate these findings (Gold, Simon, & Brown, 2005; Fine, 1993). Even with support from external actors, parents in general and low-income parents in particular find it hard to break the power advantage that professionals, most notably principals, often hold (Fine, 1993; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lewis & Nakagawa, 1995). Although principals are constrained by cross-cutting demands, governmental regulations, and community expectations, they can, by virtue of their positions as gatekeepers, filter demands and structure relationships in ways that minimize and marginalize some external influences. As Baum put it, "A community organization's chances of influencing a school depend greatly on a principal's interest in having the school influenced...community organizations may influence schools when interventions leave basic academic policies and practices untouched" (Baum, 2003, pp. 258–259).

Likewise, studies of various partnerships between schools and community organizations illustrate that principals are able to compartmentalize initiatives, regulate communications, structure work relationships, and otherwise exert considerable control over the degree to which these initiatives affect school priorities and practices (Kahne, O'Brien, Brown, & Quinn, 2001; Smylie, Crowson, Chou, & Levin, 1994). Principals appear to be a key factor in determining whether these partnerships provide ad hoc support for existing arrangements or whether they operate to alter, significantly, organizational roles, relationships, and responsibilities (Croninger & Malen, 2002; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Generally speaking, studies of both large-scale initiatives and more localized efforts suggest that community partnerships are not dependable mechanisms for engendering more inclusive forms of governance or meaningful levels of parent influence on school policies, priorities, and practices (Croninger & Malen, 2002; Gerry, 1999; Riehl, 2000; Smrekar & Mawhinney, 1999; White & Wehlage, 1995).

At times, principals and professionals "reach out" to parents and related constituencies in an apparent effort to cultivate parental participation and community engagement by creating new

arenas for educators, students, and patrons to come together to discuss educational concerns (Amatea & Vandiver, 2004; Cate, Vaughn, & O'Hair, 2006) or by mobilizing parents and residents to support some action (Giles, Johnson, Brooks, & Jacobson, 2005). However meritorious the new forms of parent conferences and community engagement may be, these initiatives tend to confine parental involvement to areas that professionals deem appropriate. For example, professionals invite parents to be involved in their child's education and to mobilize around student safety issues in the school's immediate environment. Such gestures may cultivate good will, enable professionals and patrons to identify shared interests, and engender some improvements in social relationships and environmental safety. But these overtures do not challenge existing patterns of power in school governance.

Whether professionals can retain this degree of control over the micropolitics of schools in the alternative organizational forms that are being promulgated is an open, empirical question. For example, parents in choice schools may be more likely than nonchoice parents to report that they can influence educational policies and priorities in their schools (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999; Yu & Taylor, 1997); but, evidence that they actually do so, directly, is thin. For example, few choice parents serve on governance councils or advisory boards or participate in formal decision-making arenas (Yu & Taylor, 1997). Moreover, the kind of parent involvement encouraged in choice and charter schools appears to embrace the "serve and support" norms and to reflect the class bias found in invitations that professionals extend to parents in more traditional public schools (Becker, Nakagawa, & Corwin, 1997; Croninger & Malen, 2002). However, some parents—notably middle and upper middle-class white parents who comprise a "local elite"—may be able to exercise influence indirectly and informally, through a host of strategies including but not limited to threats to withdraw their children from the school (Lipman, 1997; Wells & Sterna, 1996) or threats to expand the scope of conflict beyond the formal boundaries of the school.

Mobilizing Conflict—Activating Interests. Interactions between professionals and patrons are not confined to measured exchanges. At times conflict escalates and erupts. The formal arenas are unable to contain the conflict as parents and community residents link up with each other and with broader networks, adopt more confrontational tactics, ignite the deep divisions that exist within and among groups, and otherwise alter power relationships in the schools by taking the political battle beyond the calm arenas of the individual school to the volatile amphitheaters of public protests and "street brawls" (Schattschneider, 1960). Parents are inclined to mobilize when events (e.g., desegregation plans, curricular changes, schools closures) signal that their core values have been violated and that the school is not taking their concerns seriously or responding appropriately (Apple, 1996; Malen, 2006; Zimmerman, 2002). In the current context, efforts to promote the rights of gay and lesbian students, to distribute condoms in secondary schools, or to make clinical services and day care centers part of the school program have evoked evangelical responses, public protests, school boycotts, and other confrontational tactics that can alter, at least temporarily, the relative power of patrons (Sharp, 1999).

To be sure, not all eruptions take on adversarial forms. Community activism may be instigated or embraced by professionals who want to alter the system through public but peaceful demonstrations that dramatize shared interests and collective commitments. Perhaps because these and other scope-expansion dynamics are so unpredictable and so unnerving, professionals generally seek to keep conflict in the orbit of the organization. That aim is accomplished, not only through the formal structures but also through informal exchanges that apparently operate to preempt conflict and to preserve the existing balance of power.

Patterns of Politics in Informal Arenas

References to middle-class and upper-middle class advantage are prevalent in critiques of school systems and in characterizations of the micropolitics of schools, but the dynamic processes through which these advantages are procured are not well-documented. We rely on a few of the more detailed accounts to illustrate how these informal exchanges reinforce patterns of power and privilege evident in the broader society.

Containing Conflict—Protecting Established Interests. In the initial review (Malen, 1995), principals surfaced as key actors whose primary political function was to prevent or to contain conflict through public reassurances that the school is in good hands, through the selective application and enforcement of school policies, and through other private compacts with middle-class and upper-middle class parents who might expand the scope of conflict or exercise the exit option if their preferences were not accommodated. The more recent literature affirms that the middle-class and upper-middle class parents still have the edge, not just because school personnel may make private deals, but because administrators and teachers anticipate their interests and adjust accordingly (Brantlinger, 2003). One adjustment involves confining agendas to safe issues. For example, Lipman (1997) documents how teacher work groups confined their conversations to nonthreatening issues and effectively shut down those who tried to raise challenging issues, especially regarding racial disparities in school practices, in part because they, like the principal, anticipated intense parental reactions and feared that "powerful White parents would withdraw their support—and their children from public schools" (Lipman, 1997, p.31). Another adjustment involves scaling back reforms like detracking that call into question the entitlements that children of the "local elites" have traditionally received (Wells & Sterna, 1996). Such accommodations may appease parents who reputedly have the power to affect the careers of school employees, to alter the composition of the student population, and to undercut the legitimacy of the system by withdrawing their children and their support from the school (Wells & Sterna, 1996).

The pattern of middle-class advantage in the micropolitics of schools is produced in part by "middle-class networks" that encourage parents to confront the school and provide resources that parents can use to challenge the expertise and the authority of professional educators (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2004). Described as "uniquely able to mobilize the information, expertise or authority needed to contest the judgments of schools officials" (Horvat et al., 2004, p. 319), these networks command attention and accommodation. The middle-class advantage is also perpetuated by the willingness of professionals to accede to their demands, by the inability of other parents to offset their resource advantages, by the norms of conflict containment that exist in school systems and by the broader societal scripts that frame middle-class demands as "entitlements" that educators are expected to protect (Wells & Sterna, 1996).

Whether these patterns of power will hold sway in the new organizational forms that are becoming more prevalent remains to be seen (Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Schneider & Buckley 2002). The evidence indicates that the threat of exit, when leveled by middle-class parents or "local elites" may help these parents gain leverage in the schools they presently attend. Whether these parents maintain comparable leverage in the micropolitics in alternative "choice" and charter sites is not clear. We suspect that leverage in those sites may be contingent on the number of students waiting to enter and on the characteristics of parents threatening to exit the school.

Mobilizing Conflict—Recognizing Broader Interests. Many parents "enter the contested sphere of public education typically with neither resources nor power. They are usually

not welcomed by the schools, to the critical and serious work of rethinking educational structures and practices" (Fine, 1993, p. 682; see also Eccles & Harold, 1993; Nakagawa, 2000). Like other less powerful individuals and groups in society, these parents may require infrastructures of support and assistance so their chances of getting a favorable hearing can be improved (Fine, 1993; Walker, 1991). Some argue that choice options and charter schools would empower parents who have little power in the current system; others disagree (Andre-Bechely, 2005; Fine, 1993). At this time, the data are not available to settle this debate. What can be said is that the manner and degree to which parents acquire influence in schools are contingent on many factors, including but not limited to the norms and features of the school itself. Studies of the power dynamics in new organizational forms might help us understand more fully, how institutional arrangements shape the exercise and the distribution of power among parents and professionals.

Outcomes of Professional-Patron Interactions

Professional and patron exchanges in formal and informal arenas beget mixed reviews that closely resemble those noted in the initial review (Malen, 1995).

Formal Arenas. Across studies, professionals continue to express appreciation for the support parents provide on site councils and concerns about the time invested and the stress generated when parents raise issues or make demands in areas that fall outside the accepted domains for parent "input." Likewise, parents continue to express appreciation for the intrinsic awards that can accompany participation (e.g., a sense of belonging, a sense of importance, new knowledge about school programs and operations) and concerns about the time commitment and the "token" involvement (Lewis & Nakagawa, 1995; Ryan et al., 1997; Seitsinger & Zera, 2002). Assessments that go beyond the impact of these arrangements on the participants suggest that school councils may stimulate marginal adjustments in school operations, but these changes, in and of themselves, do little to alter school performance or the distribution of educational gains (Lewis & Nakagawa, 1995, p. 126; Heck, Brandon, & Wang, 2001: Robertson, Wohlstetter, & Mohrman, 1995). While encouraging signs are present in some settings (Bryk, Hill, & Shipps, 1999; Designs for Change, 2005; Ryan, et al., 1997), the literature reveals "an awesome gap between the rhetoric and the reality of SBM's [site-based management's] contribution to student growth" (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998, p. 23; see also Finkelstein & Tritter, 1999; Smylie, Lazarus, & Brownlee-Conyers, 1996; Summers & Johnson, 1995).

Some have tried to reconcile these competing assessments by looking to Chicago's experiment with "democratic localism" because it is the most thoroughly documented study of a broad effort to alter the relative power of professionals and patrons on site-based governance councils and to use that change in governance as a force for improving students' educational opportunities and academic accomplishments. According to Bryk and colleagues (1998), roughly one third of Chicago's underperforming elementary schools developed strong patterns of participation and made noticeable improvements in the organization of teachers' work, the quality of instruction, and the relationships between parents and other local actors (Bryk, 1999). Despite these changes, initial analyses of Chicago's governance reforms found achievement gains to be negligible across the district and modest in most schools, including those schools with active local councils (Hess, 1996), in part because fiscal shortfalls meant schools had to use their resources to maintain basic operations, not launch new initiatives (Hess, 1999c).

Subsequent efforts to sort out the possible achievement efforts underscore the difficulty of linking achievement gains to this reform not only because measurement is highly problematic but also because gains are unstable across years, vary by subject, and may be attributed to a host of

factors that go well beyond local school council activities (Hess, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c). Nonetheless, studies using fairly sophisticated techniques and controls for student mobility show greater gains in achievement than earlier studies and these gains appear to be strongest in schools with active local councils and supportive principals who have adopted school improvement plans that address professional development, social relationships, and student achievement (Bryk, 1999). An analysis of reform initiatives in Chicago's elementary schools maintains that "144 inner city Chicago elementary schools" all of which were low-performing in 1990, "have shown 15 years of substantial sustained achievement gains" in reading (Designs for Change, 2005, p. i). Like other studies (Hess, 1999b), this analysis attributes student achievement gains to a combination of effective practices including, but not limited to local councils that carry out their formal responsibilities, organize politically to lobby the district, and select "strong but inclusive" principals who seek broad participation in decision making, monitor school operations, develop faculty capacity, and foster trust among professionals, parents, and community residents.

Informal Arenas. Evidence of the impact of informal exchanges between professionals and parents remains thin. The private deals may be a source of frustration and resentment for educators, particularly if those agreements violate their conceptions of sound educational practice and fair treatment (Malen, 1995). They also may placate the demands of select parents in ways that are unfair to less vocal or powerful constituencies (Brantlinger, 2003; Lipman, 1997; Wells & Sterna, 1996). The most obvious effects may be to "maintain smooth operations by deflecting fundamental challenges to those operations" (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993, p. 7) and to reinforce existing patterns of power and privilege (Rollow & Bryk, 1993).

PRINCIPAL-TEACHER INTERACTIONS IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL ARENAS

Principals and teachers interact in an array of formal arenas, often referred to as "professional communities" or classified as forms of "organic management" (Miller & Rowan, 2006). Various structures, such as site based management councils; school improvement teams; leadership councils; grade-level, department or school-within school teams; teacher leader or mentor teacher positions; and peer review committees purportedly enable teachers to influence aspects of organizational life long considered to be the prerogative of principals. These diverse arrangements typically seek to create quasi-administrative roles for select teachers, introduce status differences into an otherwise egalitarian teaching profession, and cast leadership as a shared but zero sum phenomenon. These micro arenas have been the subject of studies that yield different portraits of their dynamics and contested propositions about their effects.

A smaller body of literature examines principal and teacher interactions in a variety of collaborative groups, also referred to as professional learning communities or "distributed leadership" configurations (Spillane, 2006). Although these initiatives are introduced in traditional hierarchically organized schools, they bow to the egalitarian norms of teaching, mute status differences, and place no fixed cap on who may be viewed as a leader in the school. Some of these studies examine how principals and teachers interact in settings that deliberately assemble a small, "like-minded" faculty and staff in a relatively flat organizational form designed to mute status and ideological differences and preempt competition for a limited number of formal, teacher leadership positions. In all these varied organizational contexts, principals and teachers also engage in informal exchanges. Many allude to the political nature of these "everyday interactions," but few array their dynamics (for exceptions, see Blase, 1991; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1999).

Sources of Tension

Consistent with the findings of the initial review (Malen, 1995), this review affirms that principal-teacher tensions still center on who has the legitimate right to make decisions about budget, personnel, programs, and services; who has the right to regulate classroom practice; who has the right to determine school-wide policy; and who has the right to control the academic and social functions of schools (Ingersoll, 2003). This review also indicates that high stakes accountability systems may be intensifying these endemic tensions between principals and teachers. For example, in some schools, accountability pressures sharpen the principal-teacher divide over what counts as appropriate supervision and regulation of classroom instruction; what subjects really matter; who is responsible for the sanctions imposed on schools, and what remedies, if any, should be enacted (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Booher-Jennings, 2005; Finkelstein et al., 2000; Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006; Mintrop, 2004). In some schools, accountability provisions alter the size and composition of leadership teams (Camburn et al., 2003), inject new actors into the work lives of principals and teachers, and otherwise alter the interests and alignments that play out in schools (Datnow, 2000; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Hess, 2003; Sunderman, 2001; Wong & Anagnostopoulos, 1998). Ways of dealing with the long-standing tensions and the current accountability pressures undoubtedly unfold in unique and nuanced ways, but several broad patterns are evident in the literature.

Patterns of Politics in Formal Arenas

The patterns of politics in formal arenas vary across settings. We begin with the conflict avoidance/suppression pattern that legitimates the principal's power since this pattern is the most pronounced in the literature.

Suppressing Conflict-Legitimating Principals' Power. Like the initial review (Malen, 1995), this review indicates that principals and teachers continue to manage the various tensions they experience through cordial, ceremonial exchanges that affirm the power of the principal. For example, studies report that teachers still view participatory decision-making structures as "empty gestures" that do little if anything to alter power relations in schools (Brooks, Scribner, & Eferakorho, 2004, p. 258), and as readily-available mechanisms for legitimating decisions made elsewhere (Wall & Rhinehart, 1998). Studies document that principals are still inclined to allow input but to curb influence (Bredeson, 1993; Bryk et al. 1998; Somech, 20025a, 20025b; Weiss, 1993).

They do so by strategically managing if not effectively controlling the school's agendas, information flow, work assignments, personnel evaluations, and professional development opportunities (Anderson & Shirley, 1995; Copland, 2003; Riehl, 1998); by handpicking members of leadership teams (Datnow & Castellano, 2001); by shaping the norms of interaction (Riehl, 1998; Uline et al., 2003) and the meaning of initiatives (Coburn, 2005); by supporting or sanctioning teachers in public meetings or private conversations (Blase & Blase, 2002a, 2002b; Boohers-Jennings, 2005; Copland, 2003; Uline, Tschannen-Moran, & Perez, 2003); by defining the givens in key decision situations (Datnow, 2000); and by overturning collaborative decisions by not implementing them. Studies also reveal the pronounced tendency of teachers to "self-censor" (Weiss, 1993, p. 89), to be "deferential" (Riehl, 1998, p. 119), to form "a society of the silent" that refrains from expressing controversial views (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993, p. 468) that might get them labeled as a trouble maker or might jeopardize their relationships with administrators and teachers.

To be clear, teachers may exert influence in subtle ways because principals at times anticipate teacher resistance and adjust accordingly (Datnow & Castellano, 2001). For example, principals may select initiatives that involve only minor changes in instructional practices or organizational routines (Datnow, 2000), modify initiatives to make them more palatable to teachers, or keep initiatives vague and flexible enough to preempt or to minimize conflict (Brooks et al., 2004; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Smylie, et al., 1994). In addition, principals may work to cultivate support as well as to temper resistance through strategies associated with "facilitative power" (Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993) and collegial styles of play (Blase & Blase, 1999, 2002a; Copland, 2003). The broader point to be made, however, is that despite participatory structures and various "empowering" reforms, teachers typically exert relatively modest influence vis-à-vis principals on key aspects of the organizations in which they carry out their work.

An exceptionally fine grained and conceptually sound analysis of the distribution of power and control in schools gives credence to that claim. Drawing on national survey data and case study findings, Ingersoll (2003) uncovers "a steep hierarchy of organizational control within schools across the nation" (p. 83). He writes, "Principals sit at the top of that hierarchy when it comes to issues regarding personnel, budget, teacher assignments, school discipline, and student placements in classes and programs. Teachers exercise some influence on curriculum and related academic matters, but principals exercise considerable control over the key resources on which teachers are dependent and over key policies and issues that directly affect the jobs of teachers" (Ingersoll, 2003, pp. 126–127).

Thus, principals, like other managers, have "a range of inducements, rewards, and punishments with which they can control employees" (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 126). That leverage does not go unnoticed by teachers who recognize the potential costs and consequences of taking on the principal and accede to the principal's preferences. A prevalent theme in studies of principal-teacher interactions in various committee, conference, and council structures is that teachers are inclined to take their cues from the principal, to limit their involvement to areas the principal deems appropriate, and to display deference to administrative authority (Goldstein, 2003; Riehl, 1998; Waite, 1993). But this pattern is not universal.

Expressing Conflict—Evoking Teacher Influence. Like the initial review (Malen, 1995), this review uncovered instances where teachers voiced concerns through union-backed grievance processes (Finkelstein, et al., 2000; Malen, 2001a) and mobilized to check the principal's capacity to control policy decisions and to override the principal's initiatives (Johnson & Pajeres, 1996; Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006; Murray & Grant, 1995). We found references to teachers who align with principals around shared interests (Blase & Blase, 1999; Reitzug, 1994) and engage in more democratic and more critical deliberations (Cate et al., 2006; Uline et al., 2003). We also found examples of principals who adopted a more collegial style of play (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1999, 2002b; Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Scribner, Hager, & Warne, 2002). But these apparent exceptions and "existence proofs" do not override the prior claim. Even in these cases, teachers often operated within the boundaries set by principals. Their ability to exert influence on school policies, priorities, and practices is highly contingent on what their principals permitted or encouraged them to do (Ingersoll, 2003; Mangin, 2005; Weiss, 1993). The preponderance of evidence from studies in established public schools indicates that site actors exert influence within a fairly narrow band of discretion and that within those increasingly circumscribed parameters, principals tend to hold the relative power advantage.

Preempting Conflict—Creating Like-Minded Groups. Some of the alternative organizational forms being advanced rely on the idea of "like-mindedness" as a mechanism

to pre-empt conflict among professionals in schools. For example, some autonomous small schools, pilot schools, charter schools, and privately managed schools seek to recruit principals and teachers who agree on key issues such as the primary purpose of schools and the process of teaching and learning (Bulkley & Hicks, 2005; Holland, 2002; Johnson & Landman, 2000; Reisner, Rubenstein, Johnson, & Fabiano, 2003; SRI International & American Institutions for Research, 2003). The degree to which teachers have influence over school-wide decisions and instructional programs varies in these new organizational settings. In some new, autonomous small schools, teachers report having more voice in reform efforts (Holland, 2002; Wallach, Lambert, Copland, & Lowry, 2005); more opportunities for leadership (Sporte, Kahne, & Correa, 2004); and in general, greater influence on decision making (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). However, other studies report that teachers have diminished opportunities to exert influence and experience greater risks if they seek to influence school policies and practices because they may not have the due process, grievance, and related employment protections embedded in union contracts (Johnson & Landman, 2000) or the reserves required to withstand the intense conformity pressures (Johnson & Landman, 2000; Neufeld & Levy, 2004). In essence, those who disagree may be forced to depart (Bulkley & Hicks, 2005). Thus, teacher influence may occur within an ideologically circumscribed zone of acceptance that prestructures the content, intensity, and outcome of disputes among teachers as well as between principals and teachers.

Patterns of Politics in Informal Arenas

The patterns of politics in informal arenas reflect the pronounced tendency to avoid or suppress conflict. We illustrate this dominant pattern and the exceptions to it.

Suppressing Conflict—Reinforcing Traditional Patterns of Power. Drawing largely on the pioneering work of Blase (1988) and Ball (1987), the initial review (Malen, 1995) highlighted an array of control strategies that principals may employ in their informal interactions with teachers. For example, principals may confine conversations to safe issues, consult with teachers selectively and ritualistically to preempt or co-opt resistance, grant favors to dispel criticism, and engender loyalty and otherwise stifle the expression of dissent. These strategies, along with other more intense control tactics, are evident in the more current research (Blase & Blase, 2002a, 2002b). For example, Blase and Blase (2002a) argue that given their positional assets, principals can create and perpetuate a "culture of fear" wherein they may intimidate, mistreat, and abuse teachers without retaliation (Blase & Blase, 2002a). As the researchers explain, "teachers victimized by abusive principals seldom had viable opportunities for redress...teachers rarely complained to district-level administrators because they expected 'no help' and because they 'feared' reprisals" (Blase & Blase, 2002a, p. 715). In these settings, victimized teachers found it difficult to transfer for many reasons, including fear of damaging recommendations, self-doubt, fatigue, and other debilitating feelings that accompany abuse (Blase & Blase, 2002a).

Again, drawing largely on the pioneering work of Blase (1988), the initial review (Malen, 1995) highlighted protective strategies that teachers use to insulate themselves from the social and professional sanctions they may receive from principals and peers and promotional strategies that teachers use to advance their views and values. It also uncovered "preparatory strategies" (Malen, 1995) that teachers employ to accumulate resources that might be converted to influence at a later time. These strategies are still evident in the literature. Teachers continue to protect themselves by quietly disregarding directives, by deliberately "retreating" to their classrooms or by tacitly limiting their interactions to a small cadre of trusted colleagues (Malen, 2000). They continue to promote their interests by voicing concerns diplomatically and obliquely (Blase & Blase, 2000b; Riehl, 1998) and to prepare themselves to exert influence by acquiring expertise, taking on special projects, and by assisting other teachers (Little, 1995; Mangin, 2005).

The major change we found in this review is that the tacit mutual noninterference pacts (Malen, 1995), wherein principals purchase unfettered control over school policies by assuring teachers that they will not interfere in their classrooms may be harder to uphold in the current policy context. It appears that high-stakes accountability policies and pressures may be prompting districts to apply more pressure on principals and principals to apply more pressure on teachers to adjust the content and pace of instruction (Anagnostopolous, 2005; Finkelstein et al. 2000), to demonstrate that they are in compliance with the broader system's curricular priorities and schedules (Diamond & Spillane, 2004) and to work with district-approved external partners to alter their instructional practices (Anagnostopolous, 2003; Wong & Anagnostopoulos, 1998). To be sure, teachers still have ingenious ways to resist what they perceive to be unwarranted attacks on professional autonomy and to create the appearance that they are complying with the expectations voiced by the principal, the monitoring teams, or the external consultants that may be part of the school polity (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Finkelstein et al., 2000). But, a primary source of power—the ability to veto directives by closing the classroom door—is being challenged, at least in some settings (Anagnostopoulos 2003).

Whether principals and teachers can continue to manage these pressures through the cordial and ceremonial interactions and measured exchanges noted here is hard to determine. At present, it appears teachers cope with these tensions individually as opposed to collectively. They may file a grievance or express concerns among a small group of trusted colleagues, but they have not banded together in organized resistance. The response tends to be, to expand Hirschman's (1970) typology, exit or "retreat" rather than voice or loyalty (Malen, 2001a).

Managing/Embracing Conflict—Reconfiguring Power Relations. As was the case in the initial review, we found references to principal-teacher interactions that were marked by efforts to recognize diverse views, blur hierarchical distinctions, and modify, if not equalize the balance of power between principals and teachers (Blase & Blase, 1999; Cate et al., 2006; Henkin & Dee, 2001; Reitzug, 1994). We also found references to principals as supportive agents who fostered teachers' professional growth and development (Blase & Blase, 1999), helped teachers deal with the dual demands of classroom instruction and committee service (Scribner et al., 2002), and otherwise enabled teachers to carry out their work (Mangin, 2005). However valuable these more cordial and collegial interactions may be, we found little evidence that such exchanges altered patterns of power between principals and teachers (Ingersoll, 2003).

Outcomes of Principal-Teacher Interactions

Formal Arenas. Principal-teacher interactions in formal arenas continue to get mixed reviews on multiple dimensions of interest (Harris, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). For example, some studies indicate that teachers prefer to focus on "instructional" rather than "institutional" responsibilities (Bakkenes, de Brabander, & Imants, 1999). Others document the frustration teachers experience when they can't influence the broad organizational policies that shape the conditions under which they carry out their work and identify teachers' lack of control over their work environments as a major factor affecting teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2003; Smith & Rowley, 2005; Stockard & Lehman, 2004), particularly in high stakes accountability environments (Malen et al., 2002; Malen & Rice, 2004; Mintrop, 2004). Some studies suggest that various participatory arrangements enhance commitment to the organization and foster innovation (Somech, 2005a, 2005b). Others point to overload and burnout (Smylie et al., 1996) as major risks if not inevitable

outcomes for both principals and teachers. Some studies document that teacher participation in decision making has little impact on services rendered to students (Jenkins et. al., 1994) and on select areas of student achievement (Heck et al., 2001), while others suggest that when shared decision-making forums focus on curriculum, assessment, and instruction, teacher pedagogy and student performance may improve substantially (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Since levels of teacher influence, satisfaction, and frustration vary within and across sites, the emerging consensus seems to be that participatory structures of one form or another may be necessary but not sufficient to realize classroom effects and to precipitate major changes in organizational performance (Marks & Louis, 1999). A recent, relatively sophisticated analysis of national databases makes the point. Various participatory structures and leadership styles do not appear to be "a particularly powerful determinant of student achievement" at either the elementary or secondary level (Miller & Rowan, 2006, p. 219), though they "might have effects on student achievement when other conditions are present" Miller & Rowan, 2006, p. 245). Scholars have employed prominent theories of organizational effectiveness and comparative studies of participatory structures like site based management in an effort to clarify the conditions under which these arrangements might lead to instructional innovation and organizational improvement (Robertson et al., 1995), but a consensus on those conditions is not yet evident in the literature.

Informal Arenas. Principal-teacher interactions in informal arenas also continue to get mixed reviews. As one might expect, the control strategies, particularly in their more abusive forms, have debilitating effects on teacher engagement, satisfaction and well-being (Blase & Blase, 2002a, 2002b). The more respectful, collegial styles of play can foster teacher commitment and enhance their individual, if not their collective performance. Consistent with the findings of the initial review (Malen, 1995), the "politics" of principal-teacher interactions is a source of stress for principals; particularly in high-stakes accountability environments where their job security can become a real issue (Finkelstein et al., 2000). In terms of organizational effects, it appears that informal exchanges between principals and teachers operate to reinforce conventional roles and relationships and to make organizational change, for better or worse, an incremental if not an incidental outcome.

TEACHER–TEACHER INTERACTIONS IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL ARENAS

Teachers interact in a variety of formal and informal settings. The formal structures, often termed "professional learning communities," presumably create opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively to improve their practice and to improve student outcomes. Configurations of teacher community include whole-school arrangements (Achinstein, 2002b; Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Louis & Marks, 1998; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Scribner, Hager, & Warne, 2002; Westheimer, 1999); grade level or cross-grade groups (Supovitz, 2002); subject-based clusters at the secondary level (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Little, 2003); and interdisciplinary school-within-school teams at middle schools and high schools (Muncey & McQuillan, 1996; Pounder, 1999). Participation in these communities may be voluntary (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999) or it may be a required component of school reform initiatives (Supovitz, 2002). Whatever their configuration, these formal "communities" and the informal conversations and "everyday interactions" (Blase, 1991) are "arenas of struggle" (Ball, 1987) and outlets for exploring the micropolitics of schools (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991). While these arenas were not included in the initial review (Malen, 1995), they clearly warrant attention, particularly given the move to frame leadership as a horizontal as well as a hierarchical phenomenon and to redefine the scope and target of teacher influence through policies that encourage teachers to focus their conversations on instructional as opposed to broad organizational issues and to focus their influence on teachers' practice rather than organizational policy.

Sources of Tension

Historically, teachers have worked in egalitarian communities where organizational status differences were virtually nonexistent save for a few early, intermittent experiments with differentiated staffing. In the 1980s and 1990s, with the advent of formal teacher leadership posts designed to increase teacher influence in administrative functions, curriculum development, and staff development (Cobb, McClain, Lamberg, & Dean, 2003), teacher roles and relationships became what Little (1995) termed "contested ground." Conflicts over what teacher leaders could and should do as well as conflicts between teachers who did and did not assume leadership positions surfaced (Harris, 2005; Little, 1995; Smylie, 1992). In response to these contested roles, new visions of teacher roles that emphasize inclusiveness emerged. Although schools still create formal leadership positions for a handful of teachers, they also form professional communities to encourage all teachers to exercise instructional leadership and to improve student learning.

Despite efforts to temper the "contested ground," tensions among teachers persist. In schools that continue to differentiate teachers' roles, we find tensions between those who hold formal leadership positions and those who do not (Little, 1995; Mangin, 2005; Muncey & McQuillan, 1996). In schools that organize around teams responsible for a subset of students, we find tensions within and across those groupings (Crow & Pounder, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Muncey & McQuillan, 1996; Pounder, 1999). In schools where leadership opportunities are distributed across all or nearly all teachers and in settings that hire "like-minded staff," we also find evidence of tensions among teachers (Bulkley & Hicks, 2005; Johnson & Landman, 2000). In short, none of the organizational structures and arrangements in schools eliminate teacher-teacher conflicts. To be sure, the school's history, structure, and culture shape the modes of interaction among members of that organization (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Little, 2003; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999), and the school's principal can affect how teachers interact with one another (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Blase, 2002a, 2002b; Coburn, 2001; Kardos, et al. 2001). But when teachers come together to work together, conflict is inevitable.

For example, teachers may not agree on the appropriate balance between their desire for autonomy and the pressure to adopt preferred group practices or to accept organizational priorities that may not be aligned with their individual views and values (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Scribner, Hager, & Warne, 2002; Uline & Berkowitz, 2000). Teachers may not agree about the relative importance of subject-based versus interdisciplinary instruction (Uline & Berkowitz, 2000) and pedagogical versus content knowledge (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Scribner, Hager, & Warne, 2002). Teachers may have different views regarding the appropriate balance between the demands of their classrooms and the demands of their new roles, particularly when those new roles challenge the norms of privacy, equality, and cordiality that are so pronounced in schools (Neufeld & Levy, 2004; Sporte, et al., 2004; Uline & Berkowitz, 2000). Teachers may have different views regarding how various teams or communities in the school should relate to each other or to the school as a whole (Conley, Fauske, & Pounder, 2004; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Muncey & McQuillan, 1997). At times veteran and novice teachers hold competing conceptions of what counts as quality teaching, what constitutes appropriate professional

conduct, and which teachers are in the best position to determine those matters (Datnow, 2000; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001). These and other divisions may be intensified in high stakes accountability environments where pressures to standardize instruction and to blame select teachers for problematic organizational performance may be especially pronounced (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Finkelstein et al., 2000; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Malen et al. 2002; Maxcy & Nguyên, 2006).

Since few studies focus explicitly on micropolitical dimensions of professional community, we rely heavily on exploratory case studies that examine how teachers deal with the "essential tension" (Grossman et al., 2001) between pedagogical and subject matter knowledge and between individual autonomy and organizational obligation, and how they cope with peer conflicts. We augment those detailed accounts with other writings on how teachers interact.

Patterns of Politics in Formal Arenas

Generally speaking, teachers manage the tensions by suppressing conflict or by embracing dissent and drawing on the diverse views and values of the group to scrutinize their work. We begin with the first pattern since it is the most prevalent in the literature (Achinstein, 2002a, 2002b; Gitlin, 1999; Westheimer, 1998).

Suppressing Conflict—Affirming Established Interests. When groups of teachers initially come together to form a professional community, they tend to "play community" (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001); in other words, members behave as if everyone holds the same beliefs and agrees on all issues. In part because in organizations "the benign `tyranny of peers' can substitute for the benign `tyranny of managers,' with conformity pressures as strong and sanctions for deviance as impelling" (Kanter, 1982, p. 1), teachers are reluctant to challenge one another's ideas. They are inclined to keep agendas on safe issues, such as how teachers might share materials and help each other do what they are presently doing.

Conversations typically focus on supporting rather than altering current practice (Mangin, 2005) on accepting rather than inspecting the assumptions that undergird how teachers carry out their responsibilities and how schools structure educational opportunities (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Gitlin, 1999; Lipman, 1997). In this pseudo-community, as some term it, teachers may voice concerns in private conversations with select individuals, but group processes and pressures operate to silence dissent when teachers assemble to engage in collaborative work. As one researcher describes it, teachers "outface" and disengage from opportunities to learn from each other (Coburn, 2001). They also relinquish opportunities to look beyond their own individual practices to examine the assumptions embedded in instructional programs, student groupings, resource allocations, and other organizational practices that shape the quality and equity of educational experiences available to students within the school (Lipman, 1997). In essence, teachers "effect a compromise, one in which all members get to behave and teach in ways most pleasing to their individual styles at the expense of delving into issues that touch on deeply held convictions" (Kruse & Louis, 1997, p. 280).

Embracing Conflict—Challenging Established Interests. A second pattern of interaction is one in which community and conflict form what Achinstein (2002b) calls an "unexpected marriage" wherein the community "explores divergent beliefs and practices of the community; acknowledges and owns responsibilities for conflicts that may result; opens the borders to diverse members and perspectives; and, at times, questions the organization's premises to change them" (p. 447). Teachers confront differences publicly. They discuss issues openly among themselves and take into account diverse perspectives and points of view. In these settings, "Typically, the principal resists the temptation to push politics underground and hands conflict back to the faculty to resolve" (Achinstein, 2002b, p. 436). Teachers and administrators alike develop protocols for school-wide decision making, seize opportunities for critical reflection, and assume responsibility for creating a trusting culture where teachers are more willing to express alternate viewpoints and to critique both classroom and organizational practices.

Patterns of Politics in Informal Arenas

In informal, teacher-teacher exchanges, teachers tend to rely on the same types of protective, promotional, and preparatory strategies they use in dealing with their principal. They shield themselves from criticisms and sanctions by maintaining a cordial demeanor, adhering to the tacit mutual noninterference pacts, avoiding difficult, divisive issues, "retreating" (Malen, 2001a) to the classroom, or by confining their conversations to a small group of teachers who hold similar views (Coburn, 2001; Grossman et al., 2001; Malen, 2001a). They may try to influence their colleagues through fairly delicate and diplomatic exchanges wherein they downplay their accomplishments, bring resources back to colleagues, and establish, albeit in a self-effacing fashion that "they have something worthwhile to say" (Hatch, White, & Faigenbaum, 2005, p. 1028).

Outcomes of Teacher-Teacher Interactions

Formal Arenas. Teacher-teacher interactions have individual, group, and organizational effects (Achinstein, 2002b; Little, 2003). They are a source of frustration and satisfaction as well as a source of stress and support for the individuals involved (Achinstein, 2002a, 2002b). While various teacher teams and collaboratives may be a mechanism through which teachers exercise greater influence on how students are grouped for instruction, how instructional time is allocated, and how the social and academic aspects of schooling are carried out (Pounder, 1999), they do not necessarily operate that way. Each pattern along the continuum (from suppressing to embracing conflict) has multiple consequences which we briefly summarize and arguably oversimplify.

Generally speaking, in professional communities where conflict is avoided or suppressed, teachers make modifications required to maintain organizational stability. As a result, the core values and norms of the organization are not questioned. Organizational theorists define this outcome as single-loop learning (Agryis & Schon, 1996) and posit that when group dynamics place the premium on group agreement rather than critical inspection, the prospects for major changes in the organization are sharply diminished (Achinstein, 2002b). In professional communities where conflict is embraced, individuals may gain new perspectives, learn to inquire about their practice, and benefit from the ideas that get aired and shared (Hatch et al., 2005). Groups that embrace conflict tend to be more willing to alter their instructional practice (Achinstein, 2002b; Grossman et al., 2001), to challenge existing organizational arrangements, and to engage in the "double-loop learning" required to make and sustain fundamental changes in organizational purposes, operations, and outcomes (Argyris & Schon, 1996).

Informal Arenas. The outcomes of informal interactions among teachers are not well documented. We know that teachers can impose painful social sanctions on their peers and that they can offer essential personal and professional support to some if not all of their colleagues (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Finkelstein et al., 2000; Malen, 2001a). In terms of broader, organizational effects, it appears that informal interactions among teachers operate to maintain rather than alter conventional practices in classrooms and in schools (Blase

& Anderson, 1995; Coburn, 2001). Indeed, studies of teacher interactions in both formal and informal arenas raise "important questions about assumptions that empowering teachers will facilitate school-based change.... Although teacher involvement and professional collaboration may be indispensable...without...a willingness to challenge existing power relations, there is little cause for optimism that teacher participation in reform will significantly alter the marginalization of low-income students of color in schools" (Lipham, 1997, p. 33).

OBSERVATIONS ON THE MICROPOLITICS OF SCHOOLS

This updated review of the literature warrants several more general observations about the phenomenon of interest and about the nature of research on this important dimension of schools.

First, in some respects, little has changed. The basic patterns of politics and power identified in the initial literature review are still prominent in the more recent research on the micropolitics of schools. Generally speaking, professionals have the relative power advantage vis-à-vis parents, particularly in formal decision-making arenas; and principals hold the relative power advantage vis-à-vis teachers in both formal and informal arenas. Insofar as parents or more precisely select, middle-class and upper-middle class parents gain leverage, they do so primarily through private agreements that reflect and reinforce their privileged position in the broader society and through tacit or explicit threats of exit that prompt professionals to accommodate their interests as a way to protect the legitimacy of the school. Insofar as teachers exert influence, they tend to do so within the boundaries set by the principal. These basic patterns have persisted, despite an array of participatory decision-making initiatives purportedly designed to grant parents and teachers significant influence on significant issues. They also are evident in the new organizational forms that are developing and in sites where external actors are part of the scene. In short, the patterns we found are durable features of the micropolitics of schools. In the research we consulted, the ever-present tendency to avoid, suppress, or contain conflict and to protect established interests trumped opportunities for more diverse interests to be expressed, embraced, and accommodated. In some cases, a more open, inviting pattern of politics seemed to be brewing and in other instances a more confrontational dynamic surfaced. But the prevalent patterns of politics in formal and informal arenas indicate that the balance of power within schools has remained remarkably constant. And, as one might expect, these patterns reflect the distribution of power in the hierarchy of school organizations and in the economic and sociocultural divides that structure access and influence in the broader society.

Second, although we discovered little change in the balance of power among site actors, we uncovered considerable change in the rules of the game. Developments in the policy context have reduced the discretion afforded site actors and narrowed the domains in which they may exercise influence. Be it through endemic resource constraints, tighter regulations, stricter accountability measures, "innovative" initiatives that prompt teachers to target the practice of their peers rather than the policies of the school, or participatory structures that foster the suppression rather than the expression of critical views, policy decisions made outside the school are shaping the politics in the school. To be sure, both longitudinal and comparative studies are required to gauge more precisely how actions taken at higher levels of the systems are permeating, if not dominating the micropolitics of schools. But the available research suggests that macro-forces may be controlling the agenda, limiting the latitude, restricting the scope of influence and otherwise circumscribing the power of site actors. If these findings hold, the macroforces in the policy environment may be among the most critical factors affecting the micropolitics in schools.

Third, research in the field is moving beyond pluralist perspectives on power. Most of the studies we reviewed challenged pluralist assumptions regarding the ability of diverse groups to gain access, to mobilize support, and to exert influence on authorities in the system. Most of the research also affirmed assumptions associated with elitist perspectives on power. The tendency to confine agendas to safe issues and to silence demands for changes in existing patterns of power and privilege was pronounced in professional-patron, principal-teacher, and teacher-teacher interactions. Studies that unveil these more subtle processes have added to our understanding of the second face of power. We have a stronger sense of how powerful actors can suppress conflict, instill conformity and censor criticism and why less powerful players succumb to the insidious pressures imposed upon them. While research is cutting deeper into the second face of power, the third face of power remains largely unexamined, perhaps because it is so very difficult to get at it. Attempts to study this more psychological, cognitive-cultural dimension of power confront a host of conceptual and empirical problems that some scholars have addressed by incorporating ethnographic methods, investing a great deal of time at the site of study, and generating exceptionally detailed descriptions of these more obscure aspects of power and politics (e.g., Gaventa, 1980). Given the prevalence of the more covert and murky manifestations of power, scholars who focus on the micropolitics of schools may have to make comparable investments to display, more fully explicitly and systematically, how all the faces of power might be manifest in schools.

Finally, research on the micropolitics of schools tends to emphasize process but slight outcomes. Like the initial review of literature (Malen, 1995), this review indicates that research focuses on how power is unequally allocated, strategically protected, and, at times, creatively mobilized in schools settings. As a result, we know a good bit about political processes in formal arenas and how those processes measure up to the ideals of equitable access, authentic participation, and democratic deliberation. We also know something about the impact of political processes in formal arenas on the principals, teachers, and parents who interact in these settings. For example, both case studies and surveys depict their levels of anxiety, frustration, satisfaction, and alienation. However, we know much less about the impact of political interactions in informal arenas and still less about the relationship between political dynamics and educational outcomes.

Some scholars have worked to trace the impact of various patterns of politics and power on teachers' sense of efficacy and effectiveness. Others have linked different patterns of politics and power to profiles of student performance. Despite these contributions, our knowledge of how the micropolitics of schools affects the core technology of schools, the quality of teaching and learning, and the production and distribution of educational gains is more limited than it needs to be. Moving beyond the process emphasis and beyond the pluralist perspectives on power should enable us to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between micropolitical processes, power dynamics, and educational outcomes.

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