Chapter 7
Negotiating Policy Meanings in School Administrative Practice: Practice, Professionalism, and High-Stakes Accountability in a Shifting Policy Environment

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Abstract Using a micro-sociological approach, this chapter examines how school leaders and teachers negotiate the meanings of emerging high-stakes accountability policy in formal school meetings. In doing so, the chapter examines how policy advanced at the macro level gets worked out at the micro level in school administrative practice. Exploring policy in school administrative practice, we uncover *how* school leaders work to advance the legitimacy of external policy, negotiate its meanings, and attempt to compel teachers' cooperation. School leaders in our study did so by deploying formal authority, as well as various tactics described in earlier theoretical work on social influence, such as invoking a shared in-group identity and/or underscoring moral worth. In deploying these social tactics, school leaders engaged not only in rhetorical *framing* but also rhetorical *footing* as they worked to convince teaching staff of policy's legitimacy and its meanings for classroom instruction. Our account demonstrates how these negotiations extended beyond the technical implications for instruction as school leaders and teachers renegotiated what it means to be a professional educator in a shifting policy environment, and who, or what holds authority on matters of teaching practice in particular.

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7.1 Introduction

Over a few decades, standards and high-stakes accountability tied to student performance on standardised tests have become commonplace in the United States (USA). While federal, state, and local governments increasingly exercise their political authority by crafting policies about instruction, school leaders and teachers are still the final policy brokers (McLaughlin, 1990; Schwille et al., 1983). They must make sense of policies—construct policy *meanings*—and implement (or not) those meanings in practice. Even in the case of prescriptive accountability policy, school leaders are left to negotiate with teachers a policy's particular meanings for local practice and to figure out how to compel them to comply. This negotiation is essential to how policy gets instantiated in practice.

In this chapter, we explore how government policy (macro level) about instruction gets taken up, negotiated, and used in practice in schools (micro level) by school leaders (e.g. principal, literacy coordinator, grade-level leader). Drawing on data from a longitudinal case study of one elementary school, we examine how school leaders work during formal meetings (e.g. grade-level meetings) to persuade others of policy's legitimacy and its meanings. Using a micro-sociological approach, we examine the tactics school leaders use to position government policy (macro level) as a legitimate source of direction about instruction, to justify proposed approaches for meeting accountability demands, and to convince teachers of particular policy meanings. In deploying these tactics, school leaders engage not only in rhetorical *framing*, by which they position *policy* in particular ways, but also in rhetorical *footing*. Rhetorical footing involves school leaders positioning and repositioning *themselves* vis-à-vis others as they work to persuade school staff of policy's legitimacy and its meanings.

7.2 Policy Implementation: A Problem of Legitimacy, Meaning, and Practice

High-stakes accountability policies, and their implications for classroom practice, figure prominently on school leaders' and teachers' radar screens (Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996; Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998; Malen, 2003; Valli & Buese, 2007). This is to be expected considering policymakers' efforts over several decades to hold schools—and, increasingly, individual teachers and school leaders—accountable for student performance. Yet, research offers varied, and sometimes conflicting, accounts of the depth and breadth of government policies' reach inside the schoolhouse. Some accounts suggest that such policies strongly influence instruction, which, in turn, standardises practice, narrows the curriculum, and stifles creativity (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Valli & Chambliss, 2007). Others suggest that school staff focus more on aligning surface aspects of practice with what they believe policies are asking of them (e.g. Booher-Jennings, 2005; Figlio & Getzler, 2002; Heiling & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

In light of these varied accounts, scholars have increasingly attended to how local agents make sense of government policy. From a sense-making perspective, local agents not only interpret but also author their environments by noticing some cues while ignoring others (Weber & Glynn, 2006; Weick, 1995). Applied to policy implementation, this perspective assumes that school leaders' and teachers' understandings of what policy *is* and *asks* of them will play a critical role in whether and how they respond by altering how they practice. Policy, then, warrants study not only as it is intended but also as it is *apprehended* day-to-day in schools (Ball, 1994; Coburn, 2005, 2006; Cohen, 1990; Spillane, 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002).

Yet, relatively few studies attend to how the meanings of policy emerge in practice (Anagnostopoulos, 2006; Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Coburn, 2005, 2006). Focused on micro-sociological processes, these works acknowledge that local agents not only make sense of policy *messages*; they make sense of *policy* itself, as well as other aspects of their environment, and the sense they make is negotiated in interactions with one another, shaped by formal structure (i.e. positional authority) and informal relations and critical to the enactment of future practice (Booher-Jennings, 2005, 2008; Coburn, 2001; Jennings, 2010; Louis, Febey, & Schroeder, 2005; Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 1989; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Vaughan, 1996; Weick, 1995). School leaders are influential in these negotiations: How school leaders come to understand policy can influence teachers' sense-making, as school leaders work to focus teachers' attention on some aspects of policy rather than others, define the range of appropriate responses, and provide interpretive frameworks that teachers adopt and use as they construct understandings of policy and its meanings for practice (Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Coburn, 2005, 2006; Park, Daly, & Guerra, 2013). Thus, school leaders are sense-makers and sense-*givers* (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Relatively little is known about the moves that school leaders make to give sense in order to mobilise others to act. Such moves are, we argue, of particular interest given the inherent tensions that arise as increasingly high-stakes and intrusive-to-instruction accountability policies collide with the norms of local control and teacher autonomy (Lortie, 1975, 2009). Indeed, the very idea of government policy as a legitimate source of direction for classroom practice represents a significant departure from schools' traditionally decoupled arrangements where teachers made decisions about instruction (Hallett, 2010)—a departure that may require particular kinds of sense-giving skill on the part of school leaders. Thus, whereas much of the sense-making literature dwells on how school leaders frame policy *ideas* about teaching, we explore how school leaders work to frame policy *itself* as a legitimate (or illegitimate) authority on classroom instruction.

Building on extant literature, we foreground school administrative practice as captured in the everyday interactions among school leaders and teachers in formal meetings, as it is in those interactions that policy becomes infused with meanings for local practice. Specifically, we ask: What happens when policy gets pulled into schools and more or less disrupts the social order by calling into question taken-for-granted ways of doing business? How are policies that press for such change in standard operating procedures in US schools made palatable on the ground? Most

of the education policy literature over the past three decades has focused on authority (e.g. state standards and accountability) and markets (e.g. school choice), with much less attention given to persuasion. We theorise the role of persuasion in education policy implementation (Lindblom, 1977).

7.3 A Micro-sociological Approach to Sense-Making

To anchor our analysis, we use three related constructs—*framing*, *footing*, and *social tactics*.

7.3.1 Framing

The concept of frame, for which Bateson (1972) offers a picture frame as metaphor, tells a viewer to focus on what is in the frame and to de-emphasise what lies beyond it. Frames direct attention, serving as vital tools for helping individuals decide what to select and what to neglect. Frames offer "principles of organisation which govern the subjective meanings we assign to social events" and provide methods of organisation that enable individuals to "locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of occurrences" (Goffman, 1974, p. 11). In this sense, frames are about focus *and* formula, providing logics for categorisation and proposing logical relationships among categories (Goffman, 1974).

Frames are not only interactive in the sense that they layer on and laminate one another (Diehl & McFarland, 2010; Goffman, 1974); they are also interactive in the sense that they are used to attribute meaning in social interactions. Snow and Benford define framing, as distinct from frame, as "a set of dynamic, negotiated, and often contested processes" (2005, p. 206) involved in the "production of meaning" (1988, p. 198). Frames tell us not only what to separate but what to combine and equate; framing represents the process by which frames are established, mobilised, amended, and transformed. While framing practices are universal, which frames get used and *how* they get used are situation dependent, and issues of power, authority, and deference often factor in determining which frames prevail, collapse, or recede (Coburn, 2006; Fligstein, 2001; Goffman, 1956; Isabella, 1990; Park et al., 2013).

In education, much of the work examining the role of framing in policy implementation focuses on how local agents frame policy messages. Though not their focus, these works also suggest that leaders' efforts to generate meaning and catalyse cooperation often involve not only framing policy meanings but framing people in order to manage impressions (Goffman, 1956, 1959), as well as framing available roles (e.g. the role of teacher) in order to manage what others understand to be "appropriate and legitimate" enactments of a given role in a given situation (Diehl & McFarland, 2010; Goffman, 1974, p. 1744). Thus, we attend to the framing of what teachers should *do*, how teachers should *be* in a shifting policy environment, and where *legitimate authority* resides on instruction.

7.3.2 *Footing*

Footing is related to framing, for footing is what one must regain when thrust in new situations (Goffman, 1981). When people interact, they position themselves—through speech—in relation to one another and in relation to types of discourse. In taking such positions, people not only refer to the categories and labels at their disposal but separate, adjoin, and otherwise *constitute* such categories (Bateson, 1972; Irvine, 1996). Goffman referred to these positionings as "footings" or "shifts in alignment of speakers to hearers within a segment of speech" (1981, p. 127)—ways of organising interactions. One can imagine a school leader, for example, switching "feet" in conversation—speaking as a superior, a concerned parent, or a co-conspirator—depending upon the situation and the speech partners at hand. Changes in "footing" are "persistent" and "natural" parts of how people make sense of and communicate their reality through talk (Goffman, 1961, p. 128). They are also potentially strategic, selected in relation to the contours of the situation, the characteristics of speech partners, and the outcomes of interest—both for oneself and for one's school. We argue that footing, like framing, represents a critical dimension of social interaction, whereby school leaders work to position themselves in relation to others.

7.3.3 *Social Tactics*

With social tactics, we turn our attention to what school leaders actually say and do in order to give sense and compel cooperation. We conceptualise tactics as elements of social skill that are aimed at producing "shared meaning for others" (i.e. sense-giving) and "attaining cooperation" (Fligstein, 2001, p. 113). They are micro-foundations of human agency—moves that actors make in their efforts to gain footing and advance frames in talk. Tactics are what school leaders do as they work to generate and communicate coherent interpretations and explanations of "what is going on here" and "what to do about it".

Such tactics have much to do with authority and persuasion, both of which are core mechanisms for social mobilisation, coordination, and control (Lindblom, 1977; Stone, 1997). Whereas authority, such as the power granted by formal position, depends upon individuals granting decision-making permission to the authority agent, persuasion—using ideas and language to influence others—typically involves nuanced social interaction around multiple, competing ideas (Lindblom, 1977; Weiss, 2000). Among mechanisms for coordinating behaviour, arguably "none is more pervasive, more complicated, or less well understood than persuasion" (Stone, 1997, p. 305).

Using the sociological literature on strategic social action (e.g. Gould, 1993; Lukes, 1974; Padgett & Ansell, 1992; Snow & Benford, 1992), Fligstein (2001) has theorised a range of tactics that "socially skilled actors" use to persuade others. These include capitalising on ambiguities and uncertainties, convincing others that

what was possible was preferable, joining groups to reorder preferences, and getting others to believe that they are in control (even if they are not). We apply and extend Fligstein's theorising concerning the role and content of social skill in our analysis, shifting our gaze from the macro-institutional or field level (of central concern to Fligstein) and taking a more micro-sociological approach.

7.4 Methods

Using transcripts of formal school meetings, supplemented by field notes, gathered over 4 years in an urban elementary school, we examine the tactics that school leaders employed as they worked to give teachers sense of policy and compel cooperation.

7.4.1 Study Context

The study was conducted over 4 years at the turn of this century (1999–2003). Data collection began 2 years *after* the introduction of the district's high-stakes accountability policy and 2 years *prior* to the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy. In 1996, leadership change in central office administration led to major policy initiatives that introduced high-stakes accountability and increased instructional standardisation in the district. First, the new administration designated schools as being on "probation" if 15% or fewer of their students were performing at or above grade level. Second, the administration required that students in third, sixth, and eighth grades meet certain scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in order to move to the next grade, thus attempting to curtail social promotion practices district-wide. Third, in 2000 (a year into the study), district officials announced a reading initiative that prescribed a minimum of 2 hours of language arts instruction daily and specified expected types of instruction. High-stakes accountability was finding its way into state and local government policy but had not yet been formalised in federal policy. Things were unsettled, and clashes were emerging between the prevailing logics of local control and teacher autonomy and the new logics of government accountability policy (Hallett, 2010). Our study's timing enabled us to explore how emerging logics of accountability and standardisation, pressed initially by district and state policy and later by federal policy, were negotiated in the course of administrative practice.

7.4.2 Research Site

Adams, a K-8 neighbourhood school located on Chicago's South Side, served a population of between 900 and 1200 African-American students, with a student mobility rate of 35% and with 97% of its student body qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Like many similar schools in the district, Adams experienced declining standardised test scores in the late 1980s. Unlike many such schools, however, Adams also experienced some upswing in performance during the 1990s. Dr. Williams, who served as school principal for a decade prior to the start of the study and for the first 2 years of our data collection, chose to leave her position just before the start of the 2001–2002 academic year. The school's literacy coordinator and assistant principal, Ms. Richards, took her place as principal and promoted another teacher, Ms. Kelly, into the literacy coordinator position.

7.4.3 Data Collection

We purposefully sampled different school meetings (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2001) including faculty, grade level, literacy committee, mathematics committee, and school improvement team meetings for observation, with the goal of accessing patterned administrative practice (Simon, 1976; Stene, 1940) (see Table 7.1). Meetings were selected for observation based on school leaders and teachers reporting them

Table 7.1 Data sources by year and routine

School Year	Number of sources
1999–2000	3
2000–2001	4
2001–2002	10
2002–2003	5

Routine type: description	Number of sources
Faculty meeting: meeting among all faculty, often addressing general school business	3
Literacy meeting: meeting focused on literacy curriculum and instruction	2
Math meeting: meeting focused on mathematics curriculum and instruction	3
Annual kickoff meeting: all-faculty meeting held at the start of the school year	4
Breakfast Club meeting: meeting held monthly in the morning before school, led by teacher leaders, and involving staff discussion of assigned readings selected by teachers and linked to school-wide instructional goals/foci	5
Grade-level meeting: meeting bringing together teachers at the same grade level(s)	4
Grade-level coordinator meeting: meeting of teacher leaders who served as grade-level leaders and, thus, played a role in planning and facilitating grade-level meetings	1

as central to their work. Observations were conducted at different times during the school year (Fall, Winter, Spring) and on different days.

A subsample of meetings were audio-recorded and/or video-recorded and subsequently transcribed, forming the core of this dataset since transcript data allow for a fine-grained analysis of where and how policy gets invoked in practice. We supplement these transcripts with field notes.

7.4.4 Data Analysis

Our analysis focused on the policy-pertinent sense-making and sense-giving tactics of school leaders. We applied macrocodes for policy, framing, and footing. For tactics, we included a set of subcodes initially developed based on Fligstein's work (2001) and then amended to fit our data better; this process was iterative, as we transitioned from Fligstein's categories to other categories that emerged from our open coding and as we articulated or collapsed codes and subcodes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We settled on seven categories of tactics, most encompassing a range of subcategories. We also coded all data according to participant/speaker, by group and by individual (see Appendix A).

We began by double-coding 10% of the dataset to ensure inter-rater reliability (Cohen's kappa of 0.7 or above) before applying codes across all data. Transcripts constituted our primary sources; field notes served as secondary sources, informing our thinking and analysis.

7.5 Findings

School staff negotiated the meanings of policy *in* practice and *for* practitioners in formal school meetings that were part of organisational routines designed and implemented by school leaders, in efforts aimed at recoupling government policy with both classroom instruction and school administrative practice. These organisational routines included Breakfast Club meetings, grade-level meetings, subject-specific committees, and so on (see Table 7.1).

We begin by looking inside those meetings and focusing on the contested content under negotiation. Next, we argue based on our analysis that in these meetings, school leaders not only appealed to *authority* but also used various other *tactics* to position policy as a legitimate source of authority on matters of instruction, to advance particular policy meanings, and to compel teachers to cooperate with the implications of those policy meanings for teaching practice. Exploring these tactics in school leaders' *sense-giving*, we show school leaders' *framing* of policy and its meanings involved, and at times depending upon *footing* as school leaders, positioning and repositioning themselves rhetorically vis-à-vis their audiences. School leaders' rhetorical footing involved shifting their alignment, framing themselves

differently in relation to teachers and policymakers, and, in so doing, communicating the kind of "good demeanour" associated with "discretion and sincerity; modesty in claims regarding self; … poise under pressure; and so forth" (Goffman, 1956). As school leaders used rhetorical footing to persuade teachers of their sense of policy entailments for instruction, they proffered prognostic frames about the appropriate spheres of influence for different entities and actors.

7.5.1 Negotiating Meaning During Unsettled Times

District and state policy figured prominently in interactions among school staff, as they negotiated the role that policy would and should play in decisions about teaching. Overall, policy was invoked 181 times across 20 of the 22 meetings, not surprising, as the threat of probation at Adams was real, permeating school administrative practice quickly and extensively. Our account also illustrates that implementation of high-stakes accountability was still ongoing 2 years after it was introduced, as school staff continued to negotiate its meaning. School staff, for example, regularly discussed the alignment (or lack thereof) between state assessments, standards, and curriculum materials as exemplified by the comments of Ms. Sunny, a third grade teacher and teacher leader, who noted during a mid-year mathematics committee meeting that "whatever it was they had on the International Students Admissions Test (ISAT), it was not on the math books that we had here" (01/18/01). Staff also referred to policy to justify the focus of instruction.

These discussions often involved explicit contestation concerning appropriate relations between policy and instructional practice as exemplified with the Five Week Assessment. The Five Week Assessment involved testing students every five weeks, in grades one to eight, in mathematics, reading, and writing. Based on an analysis of the ITBS, school leaders created benchmarks for student achievement and developed aligned assessments that mirrored the state tests in terms of format and assessed skills. School leaders used data generated by these assessments to focus on teachers' professional development, content coverage, reteaching, and attention to test-taking skills, enabling school leaders to invoke government policy indirectly, often without naming it, just by referencing the Five Week Assessment. In this way, the Five Week Assessment served as a "Trojan horse" for external government policy in school administrative practice.

Consider how Ms. Kelly, the literacy coordinator, framed and then reframed the Five Week Assessment's "purpose" during a grade-level meeting:

> It [the Five Week Assessment] is first of all so Miss Richards [the principal], Miss Andrews and Miss Wilmington [the Assistant Principals] can see how the school is doing in general. … And we get an idea of how we're gonna do on our [state] standardised test. But the main point of the assessments are for teachers; that's what they're really for. They're for you, so … you can see where the students seem to be struggling and you can think about what you need to do and discuss what you need to do to help them (11/01/02).

Ms. Kelly positioned the assessments as being primarily in the service of teachers rather than in the service of external government regulation. Thus, Ms. Kelly invoked the Five Week Assessment in ways that played up its local design and local ownership while playing down its genesis and ongoing connection to external policymakers. Indeed, government, as represented by the locally designed Five Week Assessment, was framed in the service of teachers' autonomy. Ms. Kelly's efforts to frame this locally designed assessment, as being in the service of teachers, rather than policymakers, are noteworthy considering teachers' resistance at times. Even as school leaders worked during unsettled times to advance a view of teacher professionalism that aligned with the demands of external policymakers, they sometimes failed to frame policy, and its relationship to practice, in consistent and/or compelling ways.

7.5.2 Tactics Documented

Implementing policy was not easy or effortless. School leaders had to persuade teachers to cooperate with policy meanings in practice. Our analysis uncovered seven tactics: appealing to authority; agenda setting (legitimating some topics but not others); invoking professionalism; asserting in-group identity; aligning policy messages with teachers' current practices, norms, and interests; narrating other people's speech and one's own neutrality; and engaging in public self-critique and ingratiating behaviour (Table 7.2).

Appealing to Authority As expected, school leaders appealed to formal authority, the first face of power (Lukes, 1974), including their own or colleagues' positional authority and the authority of government agents and agencies (Scott & Davis,

Table 7.2 Tactics

	Number of meetings within which code was applied	Percentage of meetings within which code was applied	Number of coding instances total	Average codes per meeting
Aligning	19	86%	280	12.7
Invoking professionalism	19	86%	225	10.2
Other-oriented ingratiating	19	86%	199	9.1
Authority	18	82%	195	8.9
Agenda setting	19	86%	145	6.6
Asserting in-group identity	15	68%	92	4.2
Narrating others' speech and own neutrality	14	63%	74	3.4

2007; Stone, 1997). Of the 195 discrete coding references, roughly a quarter involved school leaders, especially the two principals, making decrees about compliance with accountability policies. During a school year kickoff meeting, for example, Principal Richards used her position to demand teachers' cooperation in general, such as when she remarked, "when I request something, I do expect to get it" (08/29/01). Later in the same meeting, she spoke again from a position of authority, invoking the logic and language of external accountability policy as she placed a series of demands on teachers.

> This year we're talking about accountability; everything you do you have to sign off for. When you attend a meeting, you're gonna have to sign. Grade-level meetings, I want an agenda, I want who attended, I want what was discussed, I want what was solved … (08/29/01).

Reminding teachers of her positional authority, Richards shared her expectation that Adams staff would comply with demands like not missing work and participating productively in grade-level meetings.

Yet, with an average of nine uses per routine, school leaders did not rely mostly on their own positional authority; they more frequently invoked the authority of government agents and agencies, often by directly referencing policy texts, programmes, and tests and by framing those as legitimate sources of instructional guidance. Such references included Mrs. Jones, a mathematics teacher leader, advising an inquiring colleague to consult "the IOWA test and the ISAT and the state goals [which] tell you exactly what should be mastered by each grade level" (01/11/02), and Ms. Richards (the principal) reminding all staff to bring to a scheduled staff retreat "your state standard books… because whatever we do it has to compliment these standards" (05/20/03). School leaders framed *state* policy documents as legitimate sources of guidance on instruction and, in doing so, advanced expectations that teachers adhere to those policy documents in practice.

School leaders also appealed to the authority of *district* policies and curricular programmes as they worked to persuade teachers of their sense of the entailments of accountability policy for instructional practice. During a mathematics meeting, for example, Ms. Jones drew on the district's probationary policy to justify a new set of demands that she and other teacher leaders were placing on teachers.

> Now last year our math scores went down. And so this year we are gonna be held accountable. I have on here a schedule. I met with Mrs. Sunny, Mrs. Walters, this summer and we put this together… It shows you … what should be taught during that, it shows you what week… It also shows what chapters are going to be covered… It says at the bottom … a problem solving, open-ended question will be given every five weeks. You have to turn those in (08/31/01).

Ms. Jones explained that, while teacher leaders at Adams may not have previously held their colleagues accountable to teaching a structured mathematics curriculum, the school's past performance in relation to policy targets necessitated their current move to do so. In this way, school leaders invoked the formal authority of state and district agencies to rationalise and to advance *their own* more structured mathematics curriculum, one that prescribed content coverage by week and repre-

sented a substantial break from business-as-usual at Adams. At times school leaders also invoked government authority by referencing specific policymakers. The district's Chief Academic Officer (CAO), a well-known and respected former teacher and principal, figured especially prominently in school leaders' efforts to compel others to cooperate with their sense of policies. In this way, school leaders worked to augment the formal authority of the district and its policies by associating that authority with particular and preferred people. While invoking the authority of state and district entities or policymakers arguably served to advance the proposed courses of action supported and/or designed by school leaders, such invocations also involved framing accountability policies in ways that extend, explicitly or tacitly, the sphere of legitimate authority on instruction afforded to the state and the district.

Appealing to authority, school leaders often positioned themselves with the education system, a system that was pressing dramatic shifts in business-as-usual in schools. Positioning themselves in this way, school leaders ran the risk of alienating teachers, especially veteran teachers who expressed concerns about the implications of high-stakes accountability for instructional practice. To establish or regain their footing with teachers, school leaders had to rely on means other than formal authority. Though "authority is the essential backdrop to all policy interventions, it is not necessarily the mechanism that gets the job done" (Weiss, 2000, p. 88).

Narrating Others' Speech and One's Own Neutrality Related to, but distinct from, invoking authority, school leaders also leveraged their structural positioning to revoice the speech of others. We found 74 instances involving school leaders recounting for teachers the desires, demands, and warnings of other people, often external policymakers, while positioning themselves as mostly neutral, concerned bearers of the "message". This was the case, for example, when Ms. Kelly remarked during a grade-level meeting:

> The state this year is looking into severe measures … if our school is not improving on the ISAT test. They're looking for improvement. If they don't see it, if we go down … she said that she's not sure what they're gonna do but we can only imagine what severe would mean … they could have someone come into our school and say 'this is what you're gonna do. We wanna get rid of this, we're gonna put this in here. This is the curriculum you're gonna go by'. And we just definitely don't want that to happen. And they are serious this year because in the past years they've felt like the ISAT was a new test and so they didn't grade it as intensely; … And they don't think it's new anymore …We should be teaching towards those standards; …we wanna make sure that whatever we're doing in our classroom is related to … what they're gonna be tested on (01/11/02).

Ms. Kelly framed accountability policies as presenting significant, impending threats to school work norms, positioning herself alongside threatened school staff, even as she encouraged colleagues to heed policy demands. Specifically, she leveraged the uncertainty and ambiguity of the situation ("looking into severe measures") *and* the ambiguous reported speech of a respected district leader ("she's not sure on what they're gonna do… we can only imagine") to encourage teachers' cooperation on implementing standards-based instruction. In this way, school leaders found a

way to affirm and call into question policy messages and to position themselves alongside multiple constituencies simultaneously. This tactic distinguishes itself from appealing to authority because it involves reporting the speech of others in positions of authority while *also* cultivating and leveraging a neutrality vis-à-vis the content of that reported speech.

Agenda Setting We coded 145 instances of agenda setting, the second face of power (Lukes, 1974), wherein school leaders worked to define parameters for legitimate meeting discussions, including some topics while excluding others (Kingdon, 1984). School leaders engaged in agenda setting in a few core ways. First, they constructed agendas for meetings and then held staff to them. Second, they selected and assigned articles that teachers were expected to read and present, thereby setting parameters for participation within certain meetings and then moving discussion along with interjections like "next article please" (10/28/99). Third, they honed the discussion so that it aligned with, and also further specified, the official agenda.

School leaders also engaged in more dynamic agenda setting, shaping the flow of discussion. During a Breakfast Club meeting, Ms. Grovenor, a literacy teacher leader, controlled conversation by selecting individuals to speak, based on her knowledge of their instructional practices, stating explicitly "I'm calling on teachers who I know are using this" (02/14/01). School leaders also worked to shape discussion in relation to the agenda by attempting to engage particular people, such as when Ms. Holmes, a math teacher leader, remarked at another Breakfast Club meeting, "I'm sure there are others back there that have things to say (gestures toward two circular tables)" (11/14/00). Usually, agenda setting was transparent and clear, whether advanced by administrators or teacher leaders, such as when Principal Richards outlined the goal for a grade-level coordinators' meeting by noting:

> What I wanna talk about this morning is common planning time. And I guess I'm relying on the grade-level chairperson of the group a little bit more here. What are you doing during your common planning time? Are you actually taking advantage of your common planning time? Because that is very crucial (01/09/02).

In this excerpt, Richards established a focus (i.e. common planning time) for conversation, designated certain attendees (i.e. grade-level chairpersons) as preferred participants, articulated an agenda *for* the chairperson role (i.e. "taking advantage of common planning time"), and signalled to staff that the "very critical" value of common planning time, during which teachers were expected to collaborate in ways that aligned with accountability policies, was not up for debate. She directed participants' attention, suggesting not only which roles were available and legitimate but also which persons were eligible for which roles (Diehl & McFarland, 2010).

Aligning School leaders also played up alignment between (a) their framing of policy and its implications for instruction and (b) teachers' current practices, interests, values, norms, and goals. These alignment efforts involved emphasising the ways that policy compliance complemented, rather than challenged, prevailing practice and norms. We found 280 instances of aligning.

School leaders appealed to "common sense" and familiar practices in framing policy and its entailments. At a faculty meeting, Principal Richards aligned policy compliance with housekeeping, "so when somebody knocks on the door I don't have to go move the stuff", and encouraged teachers to "keep your house clean" and "keep everything in place" should external district accountability entities visit (08/28/02). At an another faculty meeting, she promised to show teachers video footage of a district meeting that she had attended, "just to let you get a feel of what we are in for", but then reassured them: "Adams, don't you ever, don't break out in any sweat, because we've been doing these things all along. Only thing we have to do is implement and keep doing what we've been doing and make sure that it's working" (08/29/01). Here leaders' efforts to persuade teachers to comply with district policies included arguing that the entailments of these policies were similar to what was already happening at their school. Indeed, by arguing that Adams staff just needed to "keep doing what we've been doing", Richards was "constructing coherence" between district policy and current practice at Adams (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012), which in turn advanced the legitimacy of policy via a connection to established local practice. By framing the novel as familiar, school leaders positioned existing practice as consistent with external policy, positioned themselves with teachers, and advanced a less threatening view of policy. At the same time, school leaders risked giving teachers the impression that they were already teaching in ways that were consistent with policy and thus did not need to change their current practice (Spillane, 2006).

School leaders' alignment efforts went beyond appeals to established instructional practice; in their efforts to persuade teachers, they also appealed to shared values and norms such as norms of egalitarianism (Lortie, 1975). Ms. Jones, for example, took pains to frame decisions to require teachers to follow a structured curriculum framework and publicly post classroom-by-classroom test scores in ways that would allay anxieties and sync these decisions up with shared values and goals:

> I know it's gonna be difficult with all these new things because all new things are difficult. But I think if we adhere to it and follow by it and please don't get offended when I post these scores because they will be in graph form. So please don't get offended. It's just to make us better and look good and I want us to come back up to where we were before. That's why I included Kindergarten; I don't wanna overlook anyone. I wanted everybody on the same page and know where we are (08/31/01).

Ms. Jones appealed to values of inclusiveness, transparency, and teamwork, deflecting attention away from any restrictive and evaluative dimensions of these decisions and playing up connections between these decisions and shared goals related to instructional improvement, thus reversing declines in test scores and restoring Adams' reputation for teaching excellence. In doing so, she also deflected attention away from the regulatory functions of state assessments and, instead, framed aspects of these policies as viable mechanisms for working towards shared goals and as useful tools in pursuing those goals.

Indeed, at times school leaders worked at persuading teachers by arguing that heeding and adhering to instruction-related policy requirements would enable them

to maintain and preserve cherished norms, especially their instructional autonomy as teachers. At a fourth grade meeting, for example, Ms. Kelly worked to persuade staff to cooperate with district accountability requirements by aligning them with a professional norm (i.e. teachers' autonomy in drawing on their own expertise to inform classroom practice). Arguing that adherence to accountability policy will ultimately protect teacher autonomy; she framed policy compliance as *not* necessarily undermining teachers' identities as autonomous professionals, but rather as being *potentially* consistent with them and with ensuring their autonomy in the classroom. At the same time, she positioned herself *with* teachers as the guardian of their autonomy and, simultaneously, as a willing, or at least passive, participant in top-down accountability.

Asserting In-Group Identity School leaders also used the tactic of asserting in-group identity to position themselves with teachers, as captured in 92 segments. Consider Principal Richards' remarks:

Please people, please be to work on time. … When I was in the classroom, and I'm not far removed, because I can go back to the classroom any day … because I love it… but when I … wasn't here early enough to plan, my whole day was just messed up. Get here early so you'll have time… Try it. (laughs) (08/29/01).

Richards communicated to staff the importance of coming to school on time, asserting her co-membership by reminding teachers of her classroom experience and using her proximity to classroom practice to legitimate her claim to "knowing". Asserting in-group school leaders positioned themselves with teachers, dislodging from the school system bureaucratic hierarchy so that they could use frames that implicated teachers' efforts, practices, and/or professionalism and that might function most compellingly when marshalled between co-members of the teaching profession.

Self-Critique and Ingratiating School leaders also framed policy messages as not being driven by or connected to their own self-interest but by their concerns for others as they leveraged teacher cooperation. We found 199 such instances of school leaders adopting a self-critical approach and admitting their own limitations, struggles, and areas for growth, in framing policy entailments for teachers. Principal Richards, for example, offered comments that acknowledged her own shortcomings, like that she, too, needed to be open to critique and self-improvement: "even though I'm working my tail off there still may be some things that you can identify that I need to do; that I, you know, in my busyness may have kind of pushed aside or may not have seen" (03/19/03). Teacher leaders used a similar approach, implicating themselves in what might otherwise seem arrogant or accusatory.

Another way that school leaders framed policy, and themselves, in other-oriented ways, involved emphasising to staff that they were in control—at times, even when they were not. In multiple excerpts, leaders like Ms. Kelly deployed this tactic when framing tests as "for you [teachers] firsthand", when framing teachers as possessing unique and critical knowledge that placed them in a position of relative power concerning instructional decision-making (e.g. "only you know your students") and

when framing the Five Week Assessment and her role in relation to it as democratic and teacher-centred (e.g. "We can do whatever you wanna do… I don't wanna dictate…"). At one point, a collaborating external consultant went so far as to suggest that the assessment, given its "local" nature and purpose, was not actually about implementing external policy: "It's for *our* purposes and we're not trying to meet any state mandate here, alright? Ultimately we have to but this, *this* is for us to use to improve" (11/02/01). Finally, as school leaders worked to frame their sense of policy and/or themselves as other-oriented and not self-interested, tactics also involved strategic uses of overt praise. Sometimes praise was used to open meetings, especially meetings in which leaders ran the risk of seeming authoritative and/or policy-focused rather than teacher- and student-centred, as well as meetings with an emphasis on strategies for improving students' performance on tests.

Invoking Professionalism Related to invocations of "good" teaching, school leaders and teachers often invoked notions of professionalism—225 times across the 22 meetings—as they negotiated policy meanings and, in so doing, opened up dialogue about the appropriate ways of being for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers in a shifting institutional environment. Consider an excerpt from a November 1999 Breakfast Club meeting, when Ms. James, a first grade teacher, led a discussion about an assigned reading on effective reading instruction. Addressing her colleagues from the front of the room, she first drew connections between the focal article's points and the specific reading programme ("the Cunningham Structure") in place at Adams and then shifted attention to questions of policy and practice relations.

> *Ms James:* …So if everyday we follow the Cunningham Structure and we use the multiple methods that we as skilled beginning reading teachers know, and if we have assessed our children, then each child will be taught what he or she needs to learn. (chuckles) It's like oh, this is really wonderful. So by the time I got down to question number four: What methods are available? I thought, "We know those…" It seems like this bottom part is a big controversy… who should decide what methods? …the teachers should be the ones deciding. That is my beginning, my opening statement. (chuckles) And I think we can discuss it.
> *Ms Hanes, a leader in charge of home/school connections, raises her hand.*
> *Ms James:* Yes?
> *Ms Hanes:* I like the fact that they [the authors] do give us credit as being professionals and us having the decisions that are made for our children instead of those being handed down…I had a question about the Read Write Well programme that the [school] board has instituted…Is that a mandate or is that just a guideline?
> *Teachers begin to discuss; most say it's mandated.*
> *Ms Hanes:* Mandated.
> *Ms James:* And the new booklets, well not booklets but notebooks that we got, the white notebooks [associated with the Read Write Well programme], I think are a good example of how we should make sure that we are defining ourselves as skilled beginning reading teachers as professionals. Because if we don't define ourselves as professionals who know how to assess our children and who adjust the balance and methods and our children are taught to, somebody will think we are *not* professionals and will not uh… I mean they will say that white notebook [sic] is what we should be following which is not uh… I'm not criticising it. I'm just saying that I think there's more (11/03/99).

In this excerpt, Ms. James opened by asserting teachers' knowledge as "skilled beginning reading teachers" and then labelled the tension between policy and teacher autonomy—namely, "who should decide" instructional methods—as a "big controversy". Taking up the issue of "who should decide", Ms. Hanes argued that "being professionals" involves teachers making such decisions based on knowledge of students, rather than having such decisions "handed down". She also raised a specific district initiative that could be seen as encroaching on teachers' instructional autonomy and therefore their professionalism. Seizing on this example, Ms. James then argued that teachers' own professionalism in the eyes of others largely depended upon teachers being able to define *themselves* as capable of skilfully making instructional decisions.

Negotiations invoked, and at times challenged, underlying assumptions about the appropriate spheres of influence for different actors. Ms. James framed policy as a potential threat to teachers' professional autonomy and used that threat and the threat of teachers ending up simply following scripts defined by external policymakers, to advance a view of professionalism grounded in teachers' expertise. While Ms. James, Ms. Hanes, and Ms. Walters all positioned themselves *as* and *with* teachers (a tactic we discuss in more detail below) and praised those who viewed teachers as professionals with the requisite knowledge for sound instructional decision-making, Ms. Walters challenged policymakers' knowledge and legitimacy in defining parameters for instruction.

Over the 4 years of our study, references to professionalism diminished in frequency as indicated by the average number of coding references per meeting for each academic year, which dropped from 19 in the first year of the study (1999–2000) to just under 6 in the fourth year (2002–2003). At the same time, they became increasingly intertwined with references to policy; whereas just over 20% of the transcript data coded as policy were also coded as professionalism for the 1999–2000 school year, that overlap increased to over 50% for the 2002–2003 school year. These references also increasingly framed policy and professionalism as complementary rather than oppositional to or threatening of teachers' professional autonomy. During a grade-level meeting in January of 2002, 3 years into the study, for example, when a teacher challenged the Five Week Assessment practice, it was another teacher—rather than a school leader—who chimed in to frame the assessment as diagnostic (i.e. "It's not a test for them to fail. It's a test for us to see…"), praised the Five Week Assessment for offering teachers "information about what [students] know and what they don't", and explained that this information helped her decide "what to teach" and how to maximise instructional time.

7.6 Discussion

Our account builds on and extends prior work on the micro-sociological processes of policy implementation inside schools, in particular work on the role of sense-making and sense-giving in policy implementation (Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Coburn, 2004, 2005, 2006; Spillane, 2006). Getting inside the black box of

policy implementation at the micro level, we extend previous work in several ways. First, we make an important analytic distinction, which is that when we study policy implementation, we must explore school leaders' efforts to compel others to adopt and act on particular policy meanings, *and* we must also explore their efforts to try, even more fundamentally, to compel others to regard government policies as legitimate sources of authority on instruction. This is especially important when government actors decide to regulate matters that they have not traditionally regulated, calling into question established spheres of influence.

Second, we illustrate how school-level micro negotiations about policy meanings go beyond ideas about instruction to encompass matters of professional identity. In negotiating the meanings of policy for instruction, school leaders and teachers also negotiate the *appropriate* spheres of influence associated with different positions in the education field (e.g. teacher, policymaker). Our account captures how dramatic shifts in the education policy environment get negotiated inside schools. During school meetings, school staff engaged with questions about who ought to have responsibility for what aspects of instruction and what it means—and who ought to determine what it means—to be a "good" teacher in a shifting policy environment. In this way, linking policy and professionalism through administrative practice served as both a mechanism and context for "continued redrafting of an emerging story"—in our account, an evolving story about what it means to be a professional educator—so that the story "becomes more comprehensive …and is more resilient in the face of criticism" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 415).

Third, in unpacking how school leaders frame policy meanings and meanings about instruction and professionalism, our account suggests that sense-making and sense-giving are also fundamentally about, and at times contingent upon, *rhetorical footing*, as school leaders organise interactions with staff by positioning themselves through speech in relation to one another and types of discourse (Goffman, 1981). We show how school leaders switch "feet" in conversation—speaking as monitors, fellow educators, co-conspirators, neutral reporters, and so on—depending upon the situation and speech partners at hand. While such footing represents persistent and natural features of social interaction, we find that they also appear selectively in relation to the contours of the situation, the characteristics of speech partners, and the outcomes of interest. Moving beyond its theoretical grounding, footing captures the ongoing positioning and repositioning vis-à-vis policymakers and teachers that school leaders engaged in as they worked to convince teachers of their sense of policy and its entailments. Footing then, like framing, emerges as a critical dimension of sense-making and foregrounds the micropolitics of the policy implementation process.

Fourth, while our account confirms prior research findings about the central role of the school principal in the sense-making processes (Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Coburn, 2005, 2006), it also points to the important role of *other* school leaders. While principals were critical in local negotiations about policy meanings at Adams, they were not the only school leaders engaged in sense-giving. Other formal leaders, including part-time leaders who worked as full-time teachers, were key actors in the sense-giving process about policy, its legitimacy, meanings, and entailments. In fact, looking at tactics by speaker category, teachers who held leadership roles accounted for 40% of the coded content (calculated by word) compared to

37.2% for principals and other administrators, 12.3% for other teachers, and 7.6% for other participants (e.g. external consultants). Our analysis thus underscores that principals are not the only school leaders that work to persuade teachers to comply with particular framings of policy meanings (see also Coburn & Woulfin, 2012). Further, we show that these leaders are not passive receivers and transmitters of policy; they are not "cultural dopes" (Giddens, 1984), but rather actively advancing particular policy meanings in their daily interactions with staff and, in doing so, repositioning themselves vis-à-vis policymakers and teachers.

Finally, our account sheds light on *ho*w school leaders work at convincing teachers to view policy as a legitimate source of guidance on instruction and to attend to and comply with particular policy meanings. Specifically, while school leaders appealed to formal authority, the first face of power, they also used several other tactics in their efforts to convince teachers about the legitimacy of particular policy meanings. Our account identifies and elaborates the *tactics* school leaders used in an effort to attain teachers' cooperation with these policy meanings. In doing so, we theorise persuasion, the least well understood of the three core mechanisms of control—namely, authority, markets, and persuasion—in political systems and policy implementation (Lindblom, 1977; Majone, 1989; Stone, 1997; Weiss, 2000). Our paper not only brings the complexities of persuasion, which is not limited to any one source (e.g. the state) and relies on individual interactions (Weiss, 2000), back into the conversation about education policy implementation in this era of standards and accountability; it also unpacks *how* persuasion operates at that micro level in the service of macro-level policies and control mechanisms (i.e. authority).

7.7 Conclusion

As policymakers incorporate and press radically "new" ideas, they produce uncertainty, puzzles, and ambiguity for those who are charged with implementing policy (micro level) in practice. The resulting uncertainties, puzzles, and ambiguities trigger sense-making and create a need for skilled sense-givers who can negotiate not only the meanings of policy for practice but also the very legitimacy of policy itself. School leaders, we argue, have been left to manage in the middle between teachers and policymakers with different expectations and norms about what it means to be a professional educator. Leaders in our study deployed a constellation of tactics as they attempted to advance the legitimacy of accountability policy, to frame (and reframe) policy messages, to position (and reposition) themselves vis-à-vis external policymakers and school staff, and to direct teachers' attention in ways that privileged particular ideas about instruction and teacher professionalism. What our study allows us to demonstrate in a theoretically generalisable manner is that during unsettled times, when logics are in contestation, school leaders at the micro level may be left (by default) to do the "heavy lifting" when it comes to giving others a sense of policy's legitimacy and its meanings and compelling others' cooperation in putting those meanings into practice. This heavy lifting is work that those making policy and supporting school leaders should take into account.

Appendix A: Codes and Examples of Coded Content

Macrocode/ subcode	Definition/usage	Coded content example *Additional subcodes (not exhaustive) and examples of coded content*
Policy	Here we code direct and indirect references to district, state, and federal policy; in other words, any instance when policy is invoked	They went to a meeting in Washington regarding this No Child Left Behind, which means if a school is not performing up to standards, the parent has the option to choose a school to send their child to a school that is a well-performing school…
Framing	Here we code any speech/tactic used in a way that appears intended to frame/reframe an issue/group/ person	And I agree with this but it's not, I don't feel it's the teacher's fault. I think the school districts as a whole you know they cut out art, they cut out music, they cut out you know, there's only gym one day a week. So students who have those other intelligences it's hard…
Footing	Here we code any speech/tactic used in a way that appears intended to gain footing with a constituent group or involves code-switching/ signalling the "move" to take up a new position in relation to those being spoken to/about	Please don't feel intimidated by it… we did that with National Board because we sat down together as a team and we critiqued each other's… we were harder on ourselves than the other people who were looking at us. But it made me grow as an individual because I'm thinking I had a smoking lesson. When I go back and look at myself… (group chuckles) …I'm like "Ooh, I did that?" or "I did that?" or "This could've been better" or…
Tactics/*agenda setting*	Setting parameters of discussion	This is a planning party; putting together strategic plans for next year…whatever we do it has to complement these standards. Bring them.
Tactics/*authority*	Drawing on direct, official authority to require/mandate something of others	They will say that white book is what we should be following…

Macrocode/ subcode	Definition/usage	Coded content example *Additional subcodes (not exhaustive) and examples of coded content*
Tactics/*invoking professionalism*	Referencing what it means or involves to be a professional or "good" teacher and/or referencing notions/norms of professionalism (e.g. caring about kids, returning graded work promptly, sharing ideas with colleagues, teaching to standards, etc.)	But if we don't define ourselves as professionals who know how to assess our children and who know, who adjust the balance and methods and our children are taught to, somebody will think we are not professionals…
		We as teachers have to be good listeners...
		We just cannot deal with the academics; we have to meet all of their needs…
Tactics/*asserting in-group identity*	Finding ways to join or express co-membership with groups in order to reorder preferences and develop new collective identities from "inside"	When I was in the classroom… I'm not far removed because I can go back to the classroom any day and I don't have a problem with it because I love it.
Tactics/*narrating others' speech/own neutrality*	Presenting oneself as a neutral reporter or informant and reporting the opinions, statements, and/or predictions of others; see additional subcodes ➔	(i) *Reporting someone else's speech:* Accountability was in here…And I'm just gonna read some of the comments that they made.
		(ii) *Associating policies with specific people*: [the CAO] is partnering up with [a scholar]…to put in place a city wide reading programme.
		(iii) *Leveraging uncertainty and unpredictable actors:* We might have people coming in, they might re-do our whole curriculum, they might…

Macrocode/ subcode	Definition/usage	Coded content example *Additional subcodes (not exhaustive) and examples of coded content*
Tactics/*aligning*	Asserting alignment of some kind of aligning, including appealing to common values or convincing others that what will occur (or needs to occur) is consistent with their identities and interests in some way; see additional subcodes ➔	(i) *Aligning with "common sense":* How many of you housekeep?… Teachers, keep your house clean. So that whoever comes in this building, if they ask for it, here it is...
		(ii) *Aligning something new with something familiar/already done:* Adams, don't you ever, don't break out in any sweat. Because we've been doing these things all along…
		(iii) *Aligning adherence with maintaining cherished norms/ideals/ autonomies:* …because who wants anyone to come in our school and tell us then how to teach...
		(iv) *Appealing to common value(s) or shared goal(s):* We keep talking about raising test scores. We cannot raise test scores if our children are at home…
Tactics/*other-oriented ingratiating*	Expressing appreciation and concern for others, their needs and desires, and not being wedded to any personal course of action; see additional subcodes ➔	(i) *Being modest or self-critical, emphasising own failings or struggles:* Patience is one of the things that we really need to work on… I should say in a lot of cases I need to work on.
		(ii) *Starting with flattery:* Many teachers throughout the system are hardworking teachers, we're all good teachers, but…
		(iii) *Emphasising to others that they are in control:* These are your assessments, you developed them, you know best…
		(iv) *Using self-deprecating humour or deflecting attention from oneself and/or one's expertise or authority:* Do I know everything? Heck no. Don't even come probably 1/3 of knowing everything…

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