

PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION: THE UNDEREXPLORED BUT CRUCIAL ROLE  
OF PRINCIPALS AS MIDDLE MANAGERS

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A thesis submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Master of Science

Graduate Program in Industrial Relations and Human Resources

Written under the direction of

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And approved by

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New Brunswick, New Jersey

October, 2020

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Partnership in Education: The Underexplored but Crucial Role of Principals as Middle  
Mangers

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This study looks at partnership in four K-12 public school districts in New Jersey, specifically addressing the role of the principal—the middle manager of education (Martin & Willower, 1981; Cascadden, 1998; Flessa, 2012). This is a qualitative study that takes an inductive and iterative approach to advance theories of middle management and partnership. It uses interviews conducted over the course of two years with principals, teachers, union leaders, and other educators (N=51, including teachers in focus groups) to examine the obstacles and constraints to the role of principals across schools implementing partnership in the 4 NJ districts. Additionally, as I was granted in depth access to educators, meetings, and numerous district events, this study will also utilize Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) (Ragin, 1987; Rihoux & Ragin, 2008), which is a set-theoretic approach that uses deep case knowledge as well as cross case patterns in order to appropriately address the causal complexity of outcomes—in this case, the effective implementation of partnership at the school level. This approach offers a way to measure an outcome that is directly related to the role of the principal and his/her involvement in partnership.

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## **Introduction**

The literature on labor-management partnership has been developing extensively over the past three decades, with empirical examples across numerous industries. However, many questions still remain regarding the operation and processes through which partnership occurs, and the roles that various actors play in its implementation, especially related to navigating the obstacles of partnership. As labor-management partnership is a collaborative structure designed to provide opportunities for employees to actively participate through their union in decision making with management throughout the whole organization (Kochan et al., 2008; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2016), it requires numerous actors to collectively implement this institutional arrangement, despite potential constraints to the various roles required for its success. Largely based on a pluralist approach to industrial relations theory, emphasizing the presence of both competing and shared interests between employers and employees in the workplace (Budd, 2008), partnership requires unions and management to collaborate around aligning interests while also pursuing their respective individual interests, such as favorable collective bargaining agreements for the union and its members, and profit and quality for management and employers.

Most empirical research on partnerships has addressed top level management and employees, and has shown positive outcomes for employees (Guest & Peccei, 2001; Avgar et al., 2016) and organizations (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1987; Appelbaum & Batt, 1994; Ichniowski et al., 1996; Freeman & Rogers, 1999; Appelbaum et al., 2000; Rubinstein, 2000; 2001; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Eaton et al., 2004; Deery & Iverson, 2005; Rubinstein & Eaton, 2009; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2016). Research has

also found there are numerous obstacles to implementing partnership (Kochan et al., 2008; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Rubinstein, 2003; Eaton et al., 2004; 2016; Roche & Geary, 2002), and argued that partnership is not binary (i.e.: partnership or no partnership), but rather exists in different degrees and levels of implementation and quality (Avgar et al., 2016). Indeed, studies have shown variation in these systems due to numerous factors (Rubinstein, 2003; Kochan et al., 2008; Eaton et al., 2016; Avgar et al., 2016). Other research is also mixed, with a focus on issues of initiation, governance, and sustainability (Kochan et al., 2008), and opposing visions and ambiguous roles at the middle of the organization (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1988; Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Kochan et al., 2008; Roche & Geary, 2002). Additionally, the literature has expressed competing and often incomplete interpretations of the effects of partnership (Roche & Geary, 2002), but has referenced the important role of the middle of the organization and middle management in the success of this type of collaborative arrangement (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1988; Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Kochan et al., 2008; Roche & Geary, 2002; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2012, Deery & Iverson, 2005). Thus, it is known that middle managers are key to partnership implementation, but it is much less clear as to what barriers are at the center of these organizations that can constrain this important role in partnership, and more importantly, how middle managers may challenge and overcome them.

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to bring attention to middle managers under a partnership system, and the crucial role they play in navigating the constraints to partnership. Viewing principals as middle managers (Martin & Willower, 1981; Cascadden, 1998; Flessa, 2012), this study uses a rich qualitative analysis based on

interview data across 4 school districts, and shows that principals face numerous obstacles to partnership from different levels (school, district) and sources (central office, union, teachers, managerial style, structure, external pressure), which can constrain their ability to act as facilitators and boundary spanners of partnership. However, data analysis further demonstrates ways in which principals and other key stakeholders in the district can navigate some of these constraints in order for principals to better facilitate partnership participation, and more effectively connect stakeholders to the partnership process throughout the district. Examples of these methods include, central office assistance, persistence and finding success in the partnership process, utilizing school union leadership, identifying and addressing pseudo collaboration, implementing informal structures, and using guiding language. Additionally, data from Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) suggest that principals as middle managers can help produce effective partnerships in their schools even without district level support from the central office or from the union—through improved working relationships between the principal and school union leadership, principal willingness to adapt, and structure and process quality. In other words, though district level support from the central office or union can be sufficient for school partnership success, neither may be absolutely necessary when these other school level process-oriented conditions are present. Yet, this is largely inconsistent to many findings of extant partnership research, which indicate that support from upper level management and union are necessary for the success of partnership (Kochan et al., 2008; Eaton et al., 2004; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Heckscher & Schurman, 1997). Therefore, this analysis adds an interesting complexity to the current knowledge of partnership, suggesting there may be methods that can be used

for middle management to address and even circumvent a lack of full upper level support (e.g.: from upper management or union leadership). Approaching the challenges to partnership by focusing on middle management takes a unique and useful perspective that can improve theories of partnership and middle management through examining the complexity of partnerships processes, which have found to be critical for partnership (Avgar et al., 2016), and the middle actors that can be challenged to facilitate them. However, little research has empirically addressed the specific role of management in partnership. One exception is a study conducted by Deery and Iverson (2005), which found that management was able to affect various measures of performance by sharing information with the union, facilitating union business, and providing fair system of organizational decision making. However, it is unclear in their data collection at which level of the organization managers were surveyed (i.e.: upper versus middle management), which could lead to substantively different findings and implications regarding management's effect on any organizational outcomes. Other research has addressed the role of middle management, but it has not been a direct focus, with in depth analysis on these roles and processes, (Kochan et al., 2008; Roche & Geary, 2002; Eaton et al., 2004), which suggests there is much more to uncover in the inner workings and middle management of partnership.

Consequently, though it may be known that middle managers face constraints under partnership, it is less clear specifically where in the organization these obstacles originate from, what ways in which middle managers and other stakeholders can address them for better partnership facilitation, and how they can mitigate constraints for greater partnership effectiveness. It is known that middle managers act as key leaders and

facilitators of organizational change (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; 2005; Currie & Proctor, 2005; Dutton et al., 2001; Floyd & Woodbridge, 1994; 1997; Hoon, 2007; Ling et al., 2005; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau, 2005; Westley, 1990), and of partnership (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1988; Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Kochan et al., 2008; Roche & Geary, 2002; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2012; Deery & Iverson, 2005), but there still needs to be exploration regarding how they face and potentially overcome the obstacles that are present in this kind of collaborative system, and more importantly, which methods are more necessary than others to help produce an effective partnership. This study begins to address these above questions, helping to further develop theories of middle management boundary spanning in decentralized work structures, and of partnership, which has been suggested is lacking a unified theory (Kochan et al., 2008). Additionally, this research is well suited to help answer the call for more emphasis on the partnership process, in which there is not a binary interpretation of partnership (i.e.: partnership or no partnership), but rather one that treats partnership as a system with varying levels of implementation and quality (Avgar et al., 2016). Answering these questions also has significant implications for middle management in organizations that are growing in complexity, as research has suggested that the role of middle managers during these complex changes will only continue to increase in importance (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). More broadly, this study helps reveal the complexity of new managerial relations and processes that are emerging inside decentralized organizations, and how managers may employ different processes of problem identification and decision-making that can lead to improved effectiveness.



This study looks at partnership in 4 K-12 public school districts in New Jersey, specifically addressing the role of the principal—the middle manager of education (Martin & Willower, 1981; Cascadden, 1998; Flessa, 2012). It takes an inductive and iterative approach to advance theories of middle management and partnership by using interviews conducted over the course of a year and a half with principals, teachers, union leaders, and other educators (N=51, including teachers in focus groups). In doing so, it examines the obstacles to the role of principals across the schools in the 4 districts implementing partnership, as well as how these constraints may be addressed or mitigated. Additionally, as I was granted in depth access to educators, meetings, and numerous district events, this study will also utilize Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) (Ragin, 1987; Rihoux & Ragin, 2008), which is a set-theoretic approach that uses deep case knowledge as well as cross case patterns in order to appropriately address the causal complexity of outcomes—in this case, the effective implementation of partnership at the school level. This approach offers a way to measure an outcome that is directly related to the role of the principal and his/her involvement in partnership. It reveals ways that principals can navigate the numerous role obstacles to help produce an effective partnership within their schools, with or even without upper district level assistance.

The next section of this paper will review literature on the complex role of middle management and issues of partnership, and will then apply this discussion to the public education industry. This will be followed by data analysis, implications, and conclusions.

## **Middle Management and Partnership**

It has been known for decades that middle management is difficult to research and evaluate due to the multidimensionality of the role (Lawler, 1967), and that research has uncovered what managers do but currently lacks the ability to fully interpret it (Mintzberg, 1973; 2009). Contributing to this complexity is how middle managers can be the boundary spanners of organizations, acting as mediators with important vertical and horizontal relationships especially during organizational change (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Pappas & Woodridge, 2007; Floyd & Woodbridge 1997; 2000). Indeed, more recent research has addressed management in this change context, which must be strategically implemented at the middle of the organization (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; 2005; Currie & Proctor, 2005; Dutton et al., 2001; Floyd & Woodbridge, 1994; 1997; Hoon, 2007; Ling et al., 2005; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau, 2005; Westley, 1990). However, much of this research focuses on middle managers as strategic agents that willingly and actively implement different types of strategic changes (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Floyd & Woodridge, 1997; Pappas & Woodridge, 2007). Some studies have focused on limitations and enabling conditions to middle manager strategic agency, through role expectations from top management (Mantere, 2008) and constraints imposed by top management (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; 2005). Yet, constraints to the role of middle management in new systems can emanate from various sources throughout the organization during strategic change, and persist even after the initial transition, which may have been designed to restructure the way of performing tasks and solving problems (e.g.: partnership). More importantly, still unknown is the process through which middle managers confront these obstacles and

navigate these constraints—with or without support from top-level management, which would help advance theory in both middle management and partnership. Moreover, these above studies approach change and middle management from a strategic management perspective, mainly focusing on how middle managers perceive and handle change. Although this is an important concept, it is also theoretically useful to address middle managers in collaborative work arrangements such as partnership from an industrial relations perspective, rather than from a strategic agency approach, with a focus on the obstacles to partnership and the resulting constraints to the middle management partnership role, even after the initial change.

As such, this study directly focuses on organizations that are not only changing their organizational strategy, but their industrial relations structure as well. Research still needs to examine the specific role of middle management in not only the strategic change process (Huy, 2002; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Johnson et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007), but also specifically in collaborative industrial relations systems (e.g.: partnership) that challenge traditional hierarchy and formally expand labor's role in managerial decision making. Research has already shown that middle management is critical to the implementation and success of these collaborative work arrangements (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1988; Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Kochan et al., 2008; Roche & Geary, 2002; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2012, Deery & Iverson, 2005), but the challenges they face that can constrain their role in partnership, and how they navigate them, have yet to be fully explored.

For example, in their study on the one of the largest partnerships in the country at the healthcare conglomerate Kaiser Permanente, Kochan and colleagues (2008) discuss

the numerous challenges of partnership related to initiation, governance, and sustainability of the system at the middle and lower levels of the decentralized organization. More specifically, they found that partnership presented numerous obstacles to middle managers, who therefore varied in acceptance of the partnership role. Similarly, in the context of partnership in Irish airports, Roche and Geary (2002) found that middle managers had negative levels of commitment to their own union, despite the lack of the union and union leadership support for the partnership. They also found that middle managers had the lowest levels of union commitment relative to other groups of workers, including supervisors, senior managers, and non-managerial employees. In addition, Eaton and colleagues (2004) studied over 50 examples of partnerships across the US in multiple industries and decades, finding a number of more internal factors (compared to factors that are external or industry related) that are key to the failures of partnerships, including the struggle to engage middle managers and mid-level union leaders in the system. These authors also cited the case of Kaiser Permanente, explaining that some middle managers perceived partnership as an initiative that would eventually pass if they ignored it, and may have not been comfortable engaging in it due to lack of appropriate training. As such, these above studies at least partially suggest that the constraints of partnership are most affecting those in the middle of the organization.

Other research has also addressed the obstacles to partnership, though not necessarily including the specific role of middle managers. In the steel industry, Rubinstein (2003) found that top-down efforts from the union and industry to push partnership through contract language, coupled with economic pressures to close plants and use concession bargaining, resulted in a lack of enthusiasm at local levels. Rubinstein

and Kochan (2001) also extensively studied the partnership between Saturn and UAW, and found that the biggest obstacle to the partnership was that it was never fully embraced by the UAW or General Motors (the parent company of Saturn), and thus the structures and processes of joint decision making between Saturn and the UAW were abandoned, Saturn was then disbanded when the company was absorbed back into the GM, while workers were forced to adopt the national UAW contract. Similarly, partnership was abandoned at more than a dozen hospitals in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota between the nurses' union and management. Preuss and Frost (2003) documented the rise and fall of this partnership, finding that a main obstacle leading to its demise was that macro-level structures designed at the top of the organization were inadequate for addressing unit-level issues, which also left key stakeholders out of the process. Other issues they found included contentious bargaining, a partial strike, and nurses' anger towards both management for not being collaborative and their union for what they considered irresponsible and unresponsive leadership.

Additional obstacles to partnership were found in Eaton and colleague's (2004) study, including the abandonment of union representation issues in favor of attending management meetings about management issues; union or management capacity to partner while also meeting other needs at workplace, collective bargaining, and strategic levels; failure to navigate pivotal events such as a transition to new leadership, or political or economic decline in an industry; and the union's tension of being aware of business plans at the strategic level with management, and still serving as a body of representative democracy towards its members, even when contentious business decisions are being made that the union knows about but is reluctant to share for fear of

being blamed. In their review of partnerships in the US, Eaton and colleagues (2016) also discussed the numerous internal and external pressures on partnership, largely focusing on institutional supports, or lack thereof, from state and federal policy. They argued that partnerships exist despite these obstacles, yet that in many cases institutional supports are necessary but not sufficient for them to flourish in the US, citing the need for a combination of state or local policy support, as well as that from unions and management associations.

Yet, although these studies discussed the challenges of partnership, most did not address the impact on middle managers and how they confronted and overcame them—or if they did. Additionally, whereas most research has focused on obstacles stemming from the top of the organization, which may indeed impact actors in the middle of the organization, my data reveal additional obstacles originating from different levels of the organization, including constraints from lower levels. Research and theory has shown that middle management is crucial to facilitating partnership (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1988; Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Kochan et al., 2008; Roche & Geary, 2002; Eaton et al., 2004), but it is still unknown exactly how they are impacted by this system. Therefore, this study seeks to build on these above findings, exploring the various obstacles to partnership and the constraints they can place on middle managers in a partnership role, as well as how middle managers may face and potentially overcome these challenges.

Furthermore, in taking a pluralist industrial relations approach rather than the predominant middle managerial strategic agency perspective of organizational change, this study offers a different point of view and provides an alternative to how this latter

perspective has been defined. According to Mantere (2008), “strategic agency” refers to an “individual’s capacity to have a perceived effect upon the individual’s own work on an issue the individual regards as beneficial to the interests of his or her organization” (p. 298). However, this definition applied to middle management inherently assumes the capacity for one individual to exert power, or agency, over an issue, which may not be the general incentive under partnership and other collaborative work systems, and may present new structural and social obstacles to middle managers. Instead, these systems facilitate cooperative relationships, processes, and actions that require a different role for middle managers, who are encouraged to give up a degree of agency and decision-making authority in order to actively collaborate with employees, with or without a union, to make better decisions around shared goals. Thus, in a system that is structured around horizontal communication and collaboration, an industrial relations approach is more appropriate to examine middle managers and how they face and navigate the obstacles in their new role.

For example, Godard (1997) took an industrial relations approach to strategic choice, studying managers’ industrial relations ideologies related to unions and employee involvement, and how they impacted their behavior. Although the study sampled top level managers, it found that managerial ideologies do have an effect on behavior. As such, this finding, combined with research that supports middle managers as boundary spanners (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Pappas & Woodridge, 2007; Floyd & Woodbridge 1997; 2000), key drivers of the strategic change process (Huy, 2002; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Johnson et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007), and critical to the successful implementation of collaborative work arrangements (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1988;

Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Kochan et al., 2008; Roche & Geary, 2002; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2012), demonstrates the importance of exploring the specific barriers that can constrain this crucial role of middle management during and after the transition to a collaborative partnership, and how they may tackle these issues..

There is a large literature on the transition from hierarchical and bureaucratic work systems to collaborative team-based arrangements, which has found that organizations adopting these horizontal systems can increase flexibility and responsiveness (Womack et al., 1990; MacDuffie & Krafcik, 1992; Tsai, 2002; Brass et al., 2004). However, though these collaborative systems should also specifically impact the middle players in the organization, it is still unclear exactly how this occurs. Furthermore, as is the case in this study—change in the context of public sector partnership, with the presence of a union that is encouraged to collaborate in decision making with management, also introduces a different dynamic of the obstacles and constraints to middle managerial role change. Analyzing this role in a collaborative context with greater employee participation in decision-making offers a different but important perspective on how middle managers may be enabled or constrained to facilitate this system, even beyond the initial change from a traditional system to a partnership system. As extant research on partnership has generally focused on either top management, employees, or the organization, addressing these issues middle management can further help advance the theory of partnership, which currently lacks a unified theory (Kochan et al., 2008).



The partnership literature has primarily focused on outcomes, mainly addressing employees (Guest & Peccei, 2001; Avgar et al., 2016) and more so organizations (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1987; Appelbaum & Batt, 1994; Ichniowski et al., 1996; Freeman & Rogers, 1999; Appelbaum et al., 2000; Rubinstein, 2000; 2001; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Eaton et al., 2004; Deery & Iverson, 2005; Rubinstein & Eaton, 2009; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2016). As the literature has also expressed competing and often incomplete interpretations of the empirical outcomes of partnership (Roche & Geary, 2002), and examined barriers to partnership mainly stemming from a lack of support and issues at the upper levels of the management and union, and how that impacts the rest of the organization (Kochan et al., 2008; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Rubinstein, 2003) this study offers an alternatively deep qualitative dive into the processes and constraints of partnership in the middle of school districts that are implementing the system across their schools. Thus, this rich and contextual study specifically addressing the middle of the organization, while focusing on principals as middle managers of the education industry (Martin & Willower, 1981; Cascadden, 1998; Flessa, 2012) across 4 school districts, is appropriately situated to help uncover how principals face the various challenges of partnership to better perform the role as partnership facilitators and boundary spanners across their schools and districts, and whether that can contribute to effective school partnerships. In focusing on these middle roles and inner processes so, it also helps answer the call for more research on the “partnership process and *how* labor management representatives interact, exchange information, and establish and accomplish goals” (Avgar et al., 2016, pp. 598).

## **Methods**

### ***Research Setting***

In 2016(?) researchers studying labor-management partnership founded a consortium in New Jersey focused on offering information, resources, and training to school districts around the state implementing labor-management partnerships in their schools. At the time of this study, there were 17 districts in the consortium. The research context of this study involves 14 schools across 4 school districts in the consortium that allowed me in depth access to their schools. Three of the 4 districts were fairly small. Two districts had 4 schools (in one of these districts, interview data were able to be collected from 3 schools), and another had 5. The other district was larger, with 9 schools, but only 4 were participating in the partnership consortium, and interview data were able to be collected from 2 of them.

In the partnership consortium, members of the teachers union and administrators, including district superintendents, principals, curriculum supervisors, and board members across the involved districts attended ongoing training sessions in order to learn how to implement and institutionalize partnership within their districts. Although the districts' decisions to adopt partnership was typically a top-down decision, made by the superintendent and/or the union leadership with little to no input from other stakeholders (e.g.: principals and teachers), the impetus for initiating partnership varied. Some districts were in crisis due to contentious bargaining or sour labor-management relations, and others were performing well and just wanted to improve, while others were somewhere in between, largely involving changes in (or even transient) district or union leadership. Nonetheless, as this system was not only a different organizational strategy, it was also a

different structure of industrial relations. Districts were also aware of the industrial relations research showing that partnership could improve student performance through school collaboration (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 201), and thus those leading the partnership adoption in their districts felt that it could benefit their schools, staff, and students.

Partnership is a very long process, and takes years to successfully implement from a more traditional system. Thus, the implementation of partnership (e.g.: collaborative structures and committees, and participation and buy-in) varied across the 4 districts of focus, as well as across schools within those districts, offering an appropriate setting to examine the different obstacles and constraints to the principal role under partnership, as well as how they may be navigated. This variance was largely due to three main reasons. First, there lacked uniformity across districts and schools regarding which district members attended partnership trainings. For example, in general the same members of districts attended most of the trainings, which may have hindered dissemination to other educators on how to implement and conduct partnership if it was not effectively communicated by the attendees back to their respective schools. Second, the trainings were based on showing districts how to implement and operate collaborative and representative committee structures at both the school and district levels, which were designed to communicate with one another to share important district and school ideas and projects to collaborate on. These were called School Leadership Teams (SLTs) and District Leadership Teams (DLTs). Yet, these teams also had varying levels of representation and actual labor-management collaboration within them, with projects varying from small building issues to those centered around teaching and learning.

Additionally, the vertical coupling and alignment between SLTs and DLTs varied across districts as well, while some schools and districts modified these structures to fit their specific needs. Third, and related to the latter issue, the 4 districts in this study transitioned to a partnership structure at different times. Some districts or schools were much further along in collaboratively addressing important school and educational issues, while others were still working on “low hanging fruit”. In some cases, the district that was leading the system, and in others, the schools had stronger partnership structures, despite the partnership being adopted as a district decision. In other words, buy-in and participation in the new collaborative system was mixed from both union leaders, rank-and-file members, teachers, and administrators (e.g.: principals).

### ***Data Collection***

The level of analysis for this study is at the school level with a focus on principals as middle managers positioned between the district and central office staff as upper management, and the teachers as employees. The specific definition of school-level partnership being used is: a system that provides formal and informal structures for teachers and the union to participate and collaborate with principals and school administration in decision making for different and better problem solving. As such, data from semi-structured in-person interviews were collected across the 4 NJ school districts over the course of a year and a half. I was granted in-depth access to district and school events, trainings, meetings, and conducted hundreds of informal conversations with educators from all levels throughout the districts. I formally interviewed 13 principals and 1 vice principal, who I then often asked to connect me with teachers and union

leaders of their respective schools in order to garner a potentially different perspective of the principal role in partnership. From this, I formally interviewed 33 teachers either individually or in focus groups. I also interviewed a curriculum supervisor, union president, and superintendent. In total, I formally interviewed 51 educators across the 4 school districts. I taped and transcribed over 90% of interviews, and took notes on the rest. All interviews lasted between a half hour and an hour, and focused on the principal role under partnership. Specifically, I asked all interviewees questions related to how the principal role was different under partnership compared to the previous traditional system, largely regarding relations with teachers and their union, supervisors, central office and the district, and other principals. I also asked questions about style and behavior before partnership versus afterwards, as well as obstacles and constraints to the principal role under partnership. Additionally, from my intensive observations and consistent communication and interaction with members across these districts, I learned deep case knowledge that could help triangulate and corroborate my findings and interpretations (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1984).

For QCA, an additional survey was designed to collect outcome data related to the effectiveness of partnership at the school level. Surveys were administered to those designated as “facilitators”, or educators across the districts in the consortium who volunteered to be trained in helping facilitate partnership across other participating districts, as well as their own. Facilitators included teachers, union leaders, principals, superintendents, and school board member across the districts, whose tasks included making presentations to the consortium on partnership projects and issues, visiting schools to speak to union leaders and administration about partnership, and serving as a

general resource to participating districts on partnership implementation and obstacles. As these facilitators were the closest to partnership implementation across the schools in my sample, a survey was administered to collect data on the level that partnership was functioning (from 1 “ineffective” to 7 “effective”) in each of the schools in my sample. The survey was delivered to 13 facilitators, and had 10 responses for a participation rate of 77%. This included one survey that was also administered to the full-release union president of one of the districts, since most facilitators did not have much experience with these schools, and since he acted as the “facilitator” in his own district.

## **Data Analysis**

The analysis takes a grounded theoretical approach, using an inductive and iterative process with the use of “open coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I examined the interview data by school, coupled with case knowledge of the district, in order to identify detailed classifications and patterns (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Similar to the findings of previous studies on the process of partnership (e.g.: Kochan et al., 2008; Eaton et al., 2004; 2016; Roche & Geary, 2002), I find a number of constraints to partnership. However, as I specifically focus on constraints to the role of middle management in partnership, I offer a more nuanced analysis from this perspective, and show there are multiple obstacles to this role from different levels of the organization, and that principals face them in different ways. In doing so, I help advance the theory of partnership and middle management by bringing attention to how middle managers may confront the constraints to the partnership role (e.g.: being constrained to act as boundary spanner), and how they may overcome them to better facilitate partnership. The next section will discuss the constraints to the principal role in partnership, and the following section will present instances of how principals faced and even overcome these challenges. Finally, outcome data will be analyzed with QCA to show what conditions may be necessary or efficient for an effective partnership at the school level.

### ***Constraints to Principal Role in Partnership***

Theoretical development on middle managers has largely demonstrated that these actors are the boundary spanners of organizations, acting as mediators by using their

vertical and horizontal relationships, especially during times of organizational change (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Pappas & Woodridge, 2007; Floyd & Woodbridge 1997; 2000). In the education context, this would mean that principals are linchpins between the school and the district levels, being the mediator between teachers and the district central office. Similarly, as partnership theory and empirical evidence suggest, this middle role is crucial for the facilitation of a collaborative industrial relations system such as partnership (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1988; Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Kochan et al., 2008; Roche & Geary, 2002; Eaton et al., 2004), however, this type of role can also be constrained during and after the initial change to the system (Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Roche & Geary, 2002; Eaton et al., 2004; Kochan et al., 2008). Importantly, my data reveal that these obstacles can also stem from different levels and sources of the organization, and that principals as middle managers (Martin & Willower, 1981; Cascadden, 1998; Flessa, 2012) vary in how they face them. Table 1 (see Appendix) presents the different constraints to role of principals in being facilitators and boundary spanners of partnership, which have been broken down by organizational level (district, school, or both) and specific source (central office, union, teachers, managerial style, structure, external pressure). Categorizing the level and source of constraints helps to more clearly identify where these issues come from, how principals are impacted by partnership, and what they may do to confront the challenges this system presents. It should also be noted that some constraints come from sources that are present in one level, while other sources of constraints can stem from both the district and school. For example, the constraint of leadership turnover stems from the source of the union, and persists at both the district and school levels because this turnover can occur among



district as well as school union leaders. In this analysis, I also address external pressures that principals face that are not included in Table 1, as they originate outside of district and schools.

### *Central Office*

Similar to other research, my data show obstacles to the to the principal role as a boundary spanner and a facilitator under partnership stemming from upper management. In the central office, which operates at the district level, there are numerous challenges that constrain the principal role to facilitate partnership. The main constraints from the district central office are a lack of support and/or representation, lack of involvement from curriculum supervisors, and accountability and power.

#### *Lack of Support and/or Representation (District Level)*

In Kochan and colleague's (2008) study on Kaiser Permanente's decentralized structure, they found how in the lower levels of the partnership, there was a lack of training, facilitation, leadership resource support from top level. My data support this finding, while also adding some nuance and complexity. Numerous principals cited an obstacle to their role in partnership being the lack of uniform training and expectations from the district central office. This lack of what some principals' deemed as necessary partnership support placed significant pressure on their role in the system. For example, one principal explained the misunderstandings it created:

I think the biggest pressure is the misunderstandings. So not everybody came on at the same time into the partnership work. Not everybody's received the same training. (District 3 Elementary School Principal)

This is also related to the fact that the participant attendance in the partnership trainings (including principals) varied across and within districts, which influenced different degrees of partnership structure implementation, participation, and buy-in within a particular district. It could also imply that those attending the trainings were not effectively communicating what they learned back to the rest of the district, especially from the district to the school level. Relatedly, another principal suggested that there had been different expectations and mixed messages among schools in the district, which was problematic for what partnership meant in each school and among school administrators:

I'll say I do feel pressure at times from the upper administration...and I get questions about what we're doing here [partnership], and whether or not if it's similar to their interpretation of what our groups should be accomplishing, which creates some tension at times. (District 2 Elementary School Principal)

Even some teachers noticed the constraints that the central office placed on principals in facilitating partnership in their schools, suggesting that there are still plenty of unpopular top-down decisions being made. One teacher focus group explained:

This is a particularly rough year, but I think our principal has been very supportive, but she's been hamstrung by the district...So it's not that she hasn't been supportive at all, because she certainly has been, but when decisions that are supposed to be collaborative, she hasn't had a say in it...It can only go as far as the top. She's hamstrung a lot, it's not her fault. Hard not to notice. (District 1 Elementary School 1 Teacher Focus Group)

Additionally, the idea of partnership in these districts was to have smoother communication and tighter coupling on school issues between the district and the school levels, through representation from schools on the DLT that would communicate directly with the SLT, and vice versa. Yet the DLTs set up by the district central office did not

always have principal representation from schools, which made some of them and their own union feel forgotten or undervalued as the middle people, and as if partnership was not benefitting all the actors for which it was intended. This was especially an issue in one particular district, in which a principal explained:

I honestly think I've been a little more vocal about us being the middle person in it [partnership] and saying well, you're asking us to have these roles in our schools with leadership teams, but where are we at the [district] table? We talk about union, labor-management, and so the only union that's represented in these things is the teachers union. Where's the administrators union? Where's the paraprofessional union? Where's the custodial union—like all the secretaries. We have 5 different unions here in our district, and it's like where's the representation for everyone? (District 2 Elementary School Principal)

This latter statement exemplifies a key constraint to the principal partnership role that stemmed from a lack of support and representation from the district central office. As the decision to adopt partnership was generally a district level decision, principals were rarely consulted in the process. As such, there was some sentiment that partnership was being forced upon them, which could then be exacerbated if they were also not included on the district committees that were supposed to be representative of all members of the schools. More importantly, it is an obstacle for principals to be facilitators of partnership and boundary spanners between the district and the school levels if they are not included in the processes at the upper level of the district. For example, one principal explained how he felt principals were the “forgotten people” in the system, and that the district central office was focusing on teachers more so than the administration in the partnership process:

When our superintendent came here he got into bed with [the union] and didn't care about the administrators. So it was all about what they [teachers] were doing, completely ignoring the administration. And to that end I think it still is the case.

At times we are the forgotten people...And that's fine. I'm fine with it, but...I just wish that—it's not that I would not have done it [partnership], but I don't think that the timing was right certainly for this building, because I wanted to make change and there were people here not ready for change. So they [teachers] put up their guard and just attacked [me]. (District 3 High School Principal)

In other words, this principal felt that since the district central office was primarily supporting teachers in the partnership process, it led to a change that he felt the school was not ready for, which allowed teachers with district level support to feel they could combat school administrators.

*Lack of Involvement from Curriculum Supervisors (District Level)*

Related to the issues above, data reveal another important constraint to the principal role as a facilitator and boundary spanner in partnership. Numerous principals, as well as teachers and other educators, expressed that curriculum supervisors, who are the district central office staff responsible for designing and leading curriculum in each subject across schools in the district, were largely uninvolved in the partnership process. Since these supervisors are in charge of curriculum, their absence was a significant obstacle to, as one principal explained:

There's an entire segment of our administrative team that's been on the peripheral that has not been brought into that...The supervisors are not involved in the work...[It's] a huge issue. (District 3 Elementary School Principal)

Another principal, who was once a curriculum supervisor in the same district and is still friendly with that staff, understood the disconnect between principals, supervisors, and the partnership process. She explained about the supervisors not being at the SLT meetings and the obstacle I could create for principals that were not close with them:

We're supposed to have one pushed into every SLT. We don't, and I don't know why. We just don't, so they're not at the table...I have a good relationship with them because they were my colleagues—I was one of them. [But] I can totally see the pressure that would exist balancing those two different roles, and if you go and interview other principals, you're going to get a totally different look. (District 3 Middle School Principal)

Even the one curriculum director I interviewed agreed that this was a constraint on principals that they had to deal with in partnership. He explained how since supervisors were not in the process, it made it difficult for principals to give instructional support to teachers, and that partnership could potentially provide that:

We need to get the supervisors more involved. That's where some issues are trying to creep up. People aren't happy with the math textbook about foundations. How does that come into the solutions committee [a partnership committee] and collaboration? And they [supervisors] would be open... We don't have a perfect alignment [between principal role in curriculum development]. I think principals here are still looking to us for curriculum. So I'm not sure we're in the place where teachers would go to a principal for instructional advice or support necessarily. We would love to get there—I would. (District 2 Math Curriculum Supervisor)

As this supervisor explains, however, if these staff would like principals to be involved in instructional support, which they are trained for, but supervisors are not participating in partnership, it can be a difficult task. The principal would be constrained to act as the facilitator of addressing curriculum issues through partnership without their involvement, as well as challenged to be boundary spanners connecting teachers to curriculum development, especially if principals themselves are not involved.

#### *Accountability and Power (District Level)*

Kochan and colleagues (2008) also demonstrated that accountability was a major issue contributing to the success or failure of partnership, in that accountability regarding

the joint-decisions made through partnership had to be clearly defined and expressed from top management to the rest of the lower organization in order for everyone to have the same understandings and expectations. Again, my findings support this argument, but also provide more nuance and complexity specifically regarding the power of middle management and principals.

Indeed, some principals felt they bore the responsibility and were accountable for decisions regardless of whether they were made through the partnership process. Many also still felt that if a partnership project or decision failed, they would still have to answer for it, thus they should still hold the power. One principal expressed this in terms of power relations, saying:

The principal I think sometimes, they get the idea, or they're correct... I am accountable. So it does give you license to say, well if I'm accountable for everything, then I get to say, because then it's all going to stop at my door. It just is. If you're able to dismiss that, because then you are surrounded by folks who you can give them responsibility--but at the end of the day, they're truly not accountable. They're truly not, it doesn't stop there right? So I think many of us can go well, I'm not handing over that power, I can't do that. (District 1 Middle School 1 Principal)

In cases where accountability was not clearly articulated from the district central office, it could lead to significant issues between the school administration, teachers, and the union (the next section will discuss union obstacles in more detail). Issues could potentially arise in cases of the union overstepping boundaries, or the institutional history of labor-management relations within a school, but they may also stem from confusion at the school level regarding what decisions are to be made through partnership and collaboration, who had power to contribute input, and who would be held accountable to answer to the district. For example, one vice principal said that partnership allowed

teachers and their union to feel as if they should have the ability to have input in every decision at the school, which put her in a tough spot of making simple decisions that might not be appropriate to be made through partnership. She explained, also in terms of power relations:

I feel like some of the teachers have interpreted it to mean that they, on certain things can almost act like my boss and tell me what to do and not to do. An example: I'm running a scheduling committee for the middle and the high school... So last year before it was a district goal something that was kind of on my mind, the guidance supervisor and I went to the high school scheduling workshop. I called a meeting with all the district admins just to share what we have gotten because we came back with a wealth of information. Then shortly after that we had a SLT meeting which I did not want to bring up the master scheduling stuff, because I didn't want it to be perceived that we were changing the master schedule without any kind of collaboration effort. The principal felt differently. He brought it up, and I was attacked in the meeting by the teachers for not having teachers at the meeting for scheduling committee. I said it wasn't a committee. I went to a professional development, as we encourage you to do when you go to a professional development. I brought back what I learned and shared with my colleagues, which is the way I would hope you bring something back and share it with your department members, That's all it was. But the union president said "but there weren't any union members present right", and I'm like no it was a supervisor, and there were no decisions made, and he was rude and it was out of line. And it typically comes from a few people in the teacher union leadership roles,... From the union leadership at the teacher level, has taken it [partnership] to mean that we in a way have to listen to them, and in some ways I've gotten the impression that, if I don't check with the teacher before I make a decision I'm going to be lambasted by some of the teachers. And when it comes down to it, the buck stops with us anyway. So I'm not going to ask their permission to talk to my colleagues. I'm not going to ask their permission to make a decision if I feel like I have to make it on the spot... I almost feel like my position sometimes isn't as well respected, because if I make a decision and I don't have teacher input it's like how could you even think of that? Well I could think of that because I went through the education and I got my masters, and I got my license. Just because now we're collaborating doesn't mean I am less capable. I was doing this job fine before we started this. I have to run stuff by them in a way that I never did before. (District 2 High School Vice Principal)

Similar to Kochan and colleague's (2008) findings, the conflict created here is related to the clear and articulate communication from the district central office to schools regarding the accountability of partnership decisions, as well as what should be decisions

made through partnership and what should be left to teachers or administration. Eaton and colleagues (2004) also documented how compared to management, union leaders may have different expectations of what partnership should address, while some union officials saw partnership as a way to be involved in all important strategic decisions. Nonetheless, this confusion can constrain the role of the principal in partnership, who may not know what to use partnership for, or who will have to answer to the district if a project or decision fails, potentially leading to a reluctance to align or general misalignment with the district in partnership.

### *Union*

Although the purpose of partnership is to utilize the union to help provide employees a voice in decisions throughout all levels of the organization, and has shown that the union serves as a vehicle for employee voice in co-management through its own communication and coordination network (Rubinstein, 2001) that can improve performance (Rubinstein 2000; 2001), the union can also present constraints in middle management in this type of system. My data reveal multiple constraints on principals stemming from both the district and school level union, including contentious bargaining, leadership turnover, institutional barriers and history, and issues between individuals.

#### *Contentious Bargaining (District Level)*

Although contract negotiations through collective bargaining occur at the district level between the teachers union and the school board, it can and does still certainly impact teachers at the school level as well as principals. Kochan and colleagues (1994) described how partnership requires a shift in conventional collective bargaining between



the union and management, and would frustrate change efforts towards partnership without doing so. Indeed, Kochan and colleagues (2008) argued that organizations using a traditional form of bargaining while having contractual issues off-limits to partnership would face a significant obstacle to the new system, especially from the union perspective. However, my data show that this can also be a significant constraint on the role of the principal under partnership, despite principals not even being a part of the bargaining process. As some districts in my sample were under or approaching negotiations during or after the initial shift to partnership, principals brought this up as a potential constraint if negotiations were contentious. In other words, principals had teachers union negotiations on their mind when asked about obstacles to their partnership role, largely because they knew they would be impacted. For example, one principal spoke about looming negotiations, and how he hoped they went well so he could better facilitate partnership:

I think the first one [obstacle] would be contract negotiations. I think if contracts are going well, it's going to be just having time to meet and having everybody have availability to keep this [partnership] going. It's a marathon right now. The energy is high. So I think that will be the big obstacle. But I think we can sustain that again—empowering my vice principals to be a part of this as well. So if there is truly something I can't be there for, they can be there in my place and they can certainly keep me in the loop. So I think that's a benefit for a larger school and having a good sized school leadership team [SLT] as a whole. (District 4 Intermediate School Principal)

In other words, this principal is explaining that contract negotiations could limit the availability or willingness of teachers to participate in partnership, which could be difficult for a principal trying to facilitate participation in a larger school. Yet, bringing in the vice principals would be a way to better facilitate this participation.

Though this principal was optimistic about negotiations and partnership, another principal was more critical, illustrating that the union entered partnership to try and gain more power, especially in a social and political climate that is largely negative towards organized labor, even referencing the Janus decision which eliminated the agency fee requirement. Yet, he also thought that partnership is not a top interest for most teachers, and would never be able to fix negotiations or budget issues that are important to teachers and their union, which could also impact his own role in the system. He said:

Honestly I do believe I see, skeptically, that the union is involved in this collaboration [partnership] for other reasons that aren't necessarily being put on the table. I think they're in—this happened to coincide with a negotiation year—which as collaborative as everyone is trying to be, the latest I heard, that's a mess. And not that—it was never presented as, let's do this, it will fix negotiations. It won't fix negotiations for...no one is pretending that just because of that [partnership], you've all of a sudden found the money to give people. But at the end of the day, clearly it was stated: how's this going? Well we'll see how it's going, negotiations are coming. So there's the reality there. And I do believe that with the Janus decision, I think that was another motivator to do that [partnership] because they do need now another way [to have power], because there's a good possibility that they're going to lose a lot of support and a lot of money. And if they do, they're going to have a real hard time functioning, and in other words, paying these 30 people in the room. They're not going to pay those people anymore. And once you stop paying those people, and I mean it in the best way, they're not coming [to partnership committee meetings]. They're not coming—they can't afford to be, they got bills to pay. So I have to say that I see a lot in that group of folk [the union] represent 400 people let's say. Well they can only do so much, they're not going to change the attitudes [of non-union members]. And I said, I do believe my teachers are not here about unions or what their organization can do for them. They want to do their jobs, they want to go home and take care of their kids. That's what they want to do. They're not interested in all this other stuff. So I hate to be skeptical about it, but I would say, for us, for me it has little impact, but at the higher levels the union is now sitting at committee meetings that they were never present for before. Once they get to see what the realities are, where the money is, where it's being spent... (District 1 Middle School 1 Principal)

This principal talks about the numerous challenges the union and organized labor in general are facing, including Janus, which may force them to operate differently. Yet, he also explains that partnership, which he essentially perceives as a way for the union to garner more power in light of weakening unionism, may not be what teachers are interested in, especially if there is declining membership, dwindling funding, and contentious or disappointing bargaining results. Importantly, although this principal explicitly states that these issues do not impact him, he also reveals that there is still an effect on the principal role in partnership. They may not affect his role as operating the daily operations of the school as a traditional principal would, but these issues certainly can constrain principal role in partnership if facilitating teachers to participate in partnership is hindered. Still, this principal viewed this task to facilitate uninterested union members as futile anyway. He illustrated, “I think it’s a fool’s journey to think that you’re going to go and change that [union] mindset” (District 1 Middle School 1 Principal). Thus, this district issue that impacted school administration constrained his boundary spanning ability as well as motivation.

#### *Leadership Turnover (District and School Levels)*

The turnover and leadership change of the champions of partnership, which some have called “pivotal events”, have been documented as a critical issue in partnerships (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1987; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Eaton et al., 2004; Kochan et al., 2008). My data also supports this—in one district a new union president was elected that was more apathetic, and at some times critical, towards partnership than the previous president, believing that administration was only ostensibly collaborative in the system. This created significant barriers to partnership not only at the district level, but especially

at the school in which the new president taught. For example, an administrator in the high school at which the union president taught explained how partnership may not have caused the growingly frustrating relationship between school administration and the union, but that this growth has impacted how collaboration and partnership was perceived in the school, and constrained administrators' roles. She responded to a question about her whether management style and relationship with the union in the school has changed after partnership, which she answered in terms of how it has instead become more vexed since the new leadership:

I don't think I can blame the collaboration effort [partnership], I think it's changed because of the tone of the teachers union now, that I'm getting a little impatient and annoyed with feeling like I'm under attack sometimes when I think that it [a decision] should be directed above, but then we [administrators] end up being the ones whose feet are held to the fire [by the union].

Contributing to this issue, she also expressed that in some cases the union leadership operated under what she considered was similar to a work to rule mentality, which impacted partnership facilitation by administrators. Relatedly, she further referenced a dispute about what partnership meant to the union versus what it meant to administration:

I think that some of the teachers had some pretty unrealistic expectations as far as what it meant by giving their input. I think they thought that collaboration meant "say", whereas it's "input", and it's different. (District 2 High School Vice Principal)

Thus, this misunderstanding and disconnect between the union leadership and administration regarding expectations of how partnership was supposed to be

implemented and utilized served as a significant obstacle to the facilitation and boundary spanning by administrators at the school level.

*Institutional Barriers and History (District and School Levels)*

Related to above, the institutional barriers and history at the district and school levels could also impact the principal role in partnership. Similar to research on the traditional labor-management relations and negotiations needing to change for partnership to be successful (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1987; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Eaton et al., 2004; Kochan et al., 2008), my data reveal barriers that were largely related to how the union traditionally functioned in districts, which had a salient effect on principals in partnership. One principal explained this issue in terms of how traditional union members were still cautious due to how the union viewed management in the past, compared with newer teachers who had not been a part of that old system:

Yeah I think it's institutional history. That's just what it is. I think the skeptics are just cautious. Is this like an accountability thing, do I have to participate. You get those types of questions. I'm generalizing but those are the folks that have been around for a while. I think the newer generation of teachers are excited to have space and a voice, and to participate on a committee, and to raise a concern or suggestion for improvement and go do something. (District 1 Middle School 2 Principal)

A teacher from the same school corroborated this, but went further in saying there was a decent amount of distrust that previously existed in the union towards management, which likely had still not been assuaged within their well-organized union membership, even after partnership. She explained:

We have a pretty strong union here. It's very well organized, it's well funded, well-staffed. But the approach has always been us against them—adversarial. It

would be nice if—we would be polite to each other sometimes, and not. But it was mostly grumbling in a big way about administrators behind closed doors, and administrators rolling their eyes at us too, and always supposedly with the common goal of helping students but it really wasn't. It wasn't bad people on either side, it just was that was the mentality.

This teacher also referenced a fear of the change to partnership and a reluctance to participate among union members, due to past relations as well as a general sentiment towards unions:

There's always—a fear is always at the base of not wanting to change. Unions are attacked anyway, so if we start playing nice, playing with the other side, what's going to happen to us? If you could be assured that I'll collaborate with you but you're not going to mess with my family's salary, then in different conditions you're not going to require them...then okay. Because everything is predicated on trust, and you can't just make a proclamation that I'm going to trust you and you're going to trust me now, it takes a while.

She also responded to issues with buy-in in terms of traditional labor-management relations, and how there was a significant amount of skepticism among union members regarding past initiatives that were short-lived or seemed like just a façade:

A lot of people who are not involved—there's a definite chunk of people [union members] who are rolling their eyes. There's no way that they're buying into this...It's really chipping away very slowly because you would think that if you don't believe me, why don't you [skeptical members] just join us. They don't want to join because it's another thing, and really it's almost like an abusive relationship. You [management] hit me so many times, what is to make me think that this time, just because you're being nice about it—not me but—we [the union] have been hit over the years with so many—this is the initiative, this is the initiative, and you work really hard to do it and then it's gone. Or they use it and then they've [management] slapped us with it. (District 1 Middle School 2 Teacher 1)

Regardless of whether this skepticism and even resentment referenced above stemmed from school administration and principals, district administration, or just the contentious institutional history, principals still had to deal with these union issues while trying to facilitate and mediate partnership, which were a significant barrier. Other teachers noticed this as well, while one agreed that some union members would never buy-in to partnership, even if their reluctance had nothing to do with the principal, mentioning they should be paid for the extra partnership work which had largely been done on teachers' own time:

There's two streams, those that are going to buy in and then those that won't. And it may not have anything to do with him [the principal], they just think it's a scam sort of thing. They want us to be in a committee after school are they going to pay us to be there? We should be paid.

This teacher also expressed how, though there are issues you can collaborate around that through partnership, others that are not open to partnership, such as those legally restricted by either the union or administration, can get in the way of the partnership process, which then influences others in the building to question partnership. He explained about a situation where an issue occurred in which the union had no legal recourse to discuss solutions with school administration, and how that can interfere with partnership because it allows members to perceive partnership as an ineffective system that cannot address important issues:

There are plenty [of issues to address through partnership]. It's just those that can get in the way. One's that—once you have your conspiracy theory...and you see something like that, nothing gets done. So the visual is that teachers see is nothing is being done. (District 2 Elementary School Teacher)

In other words, some teachers may see partnership as a way for their union to collaborate and participate in decision making with management on all issues, when in fact, there are legal restrictions that make this impossible. However, if the union rank-and-file is unaware of this, partnership can be wrongly attributed for certain failures, which can be a significant impediment to the system and principals' facilitation of getting people involved in it. Moreover, any mistake that is attributed to partnership can just reinforce any institutional history within the union that partnership is not a truly collaborative between the two parties, or is just another short-lived or ineffective initiative.

The union's own structure can also impact the principal role in facilitating partnership and being the boundary spanner that connects teachers and the union with the system throughout the school. A teacher illustrated how the traditional union structure restricted the use of the union building representatives, who are the union leaders in schools but not necessarily actively involved in partnership at the school:

I think we're still working in an old structure where our building reps are underutilized...I think it goes back to—it's an old structure. It goes back to a time when the union was more militant. It had to be to get what they needed. This was before my time. From hearing the old timers, they talked about how it was just a battle to get a decent wage. And I think the union was real strong in that...But I'd like to see them [the building reps] more involved in the process of collaboration [partnership]. I'd like to see them get a bit more of a stipend, and a part of the SLT more. And I think the union has been slow in that. Right now they just go to a meeting and they pass the information on to teachers. They're not really doing much. (District 1 Middle School 2 Teacher 2)

This teacher is referencing the need for more union leadership involvement.

However, a principal in such a school with a traditional union structure and institutional history of hard bargaining for decent wages, militancy, and union members doing



partnership work on their own time, can face a significant obstacle in facilitating this participation and reaching rank-and-file members through the union leadership in the building. The relationship between the principal, and the union building representative and leadership will be discussed in more detail in the section addressing how principals can overcome these constraints.

### *Issues Between Individuals (School Level)*

Individual issues between members of the union and administration can also impede a principal from facilitating partnership in the building. These issues may be unrelated to the institutional history within the union, district, or the school, but rather manifest as just a clash of personalities. Yet, they do impact members of both parties and impede the principal role in partnership. For example, one principal illustrated some of her confusion regarding her adverse relationship with the building union representative, who was in that position before she entered her role as principal. She explained:

My relationship stepping into the building with [the building union representative] hasn't been great. She probably has her reasons...I am not really sure where it went wrong. I used to have pretty good relationships with everybody. I'm not saying everybody loves me...but I rarely have problems with people. And so it has been difficult probably since day one. (District 4 Elementary School Principal)

Though the principal expressed it was unclear what specifically caused this tension, the adversity is critical, as the principal and the building union representative are two of the most visible positions in the school, both having a large influence over other teachers and administration.

Additionally, my data reveal other instances of adverse relationships that are more specific, and largely based on personality issues and difficulty adapting individual relationships to better align within a collaborative partnership. One teacher explained of the constrained relations between the principal and head building union representative, also referencing strong personalities and a lack of trust:

But [the union building representative] has a very feisty personality. Our head building representation is pretty feisty and is having a hard time transitioning from a traditional association role inside of collaboration. She's still working to find a balance between advocacy and inquiry so that she can really understand the administrative lens a little bit better, but [the principal] hasn't been fully transparent. So that trust factor has become an issue. (District 3 Elementary School Teacher)

Another principal also referenced her struggle in navigating the relationship with the building union representative, with whom she disagreed on certain issues involving partnership. She expressed:

She [the head union building representative] does not feel any of the non-tenure newer staff should have a voice in the [partnership]. She doesn't feel like they know enough to have a voice. She comes with an issue that's an issue and then the minute she's out of the room, [the other union members say] she doesn't speak for us. This is not our issue. But people won't say that when she's there. So there's that hesitancy for people. And I don't know how to navigate it.

This principal is illustrating the difficulty in managing what she sees as a union membership that does not necessarily agree with the head building representative, even though she wants to work with these teachers and other educators in partnership. This circumstance constrained her role in facilitating participation in the system without combatting or overstepping the building union representative. She continued, referencing her conversation with the union president:

If we had somebody who's supposed to be a part of this that is just road blocking everything—and based on informal conversations I had with the association president, it's not just an issue that I have, [it's] an issue within their own association as well. But that to me is the biggest obstacle because I believe the vast majority of the people on the school leadership team [SLT] want this to work and we want to be invested.

She also spoke with other administrators about strategies to use in order to deal with this issue:

I really struggle, and I read books and talk to other administrators—to make going to the association saying I need you to step in is the last resort... But if anybody has some ways to do that, because I feel like it is impacting the culture and climate in the building, that's adding to stress, keeping things from moving forward... And again I get it. The demands on our teachers have grown exponentially over the last several years. We're asking more and more and giving them less and less, and we're trying to advocate to the superintendent to give some relief to teachers from that end. (District 3 Elementary School Principal)

The quotes from this principal illustrate the conflict she faces between realizing the amount of pressure that teachers are under, while also trying to navigate these tense relations with a building union representative who she thinks is stonewalling partnership facilitation and progress, and may not represent the rank-and-file interests. Thus, these data above show that individual relationships between key visible actors in the union and administration can be an important impediment for partnership facilitation, especially if they have been adverse in the past and are constrained to improve due to individual differences or conflicting personalities. Although research has shown that communication networks and coordination are critical to partnership success (Rubinstein, 2000; Eaton et al., 2004), as well as the alignment between union leaders and managerial positions (Rubinstein, 2000), my data further demonstrate the importance of individual relationships in the middle of the organization. More specifically, strong individual

relationships between labor and management actors in leadership positions within a school, like the principal and building union representative, are crucial for partnership facilitation and reaching rank-and-file teachers, and an important boundary spanning link in this communication network. Specifically related to the principal, a contentious history or adverse relationship with an individual in the school union leadership can be a significant barrier toward partnership facilitation and boundary spanning by the principal.

### ***Teachers***

There is a difference between a principals' relations with the union and their relations with teachers. Although teachers are represented by the union, there are also constraints to partnership facilitation by principals regarding their relations with teachers outside of a union capacity.

### *Lumping "Administration" Together (District and School Level)*

The principals in my sample do generally meet regularly with the superintendent, curriculum supervisors, and other central office staff, however, principals are not district level employees. Despite this, the data show that at times principals can be perceived by teachers as associated with district administration, and with decisions that are made at that upper level. For example, one principal referenced teachers' misconception that school administration is affiliated with decisions that are made by curriculum supervisors that are district employees, which causes frustration among both parties. She explained:

There is such a disconnect. And that's been the staff's [teachers'] gripe since day one, and sometimes when things don't go well for myself and my assistant principal as building administrators, the frustration is—it's coming from supervisors, but they [teachers] kind of lump all of us in one. I literally said to my staff, yes this is completely ridiculous. I don't agree. I'm meeting with these people to talk about it, but here's where we're at. (District 3 Elementary School Principal)

This principal is voicing her concern that, though she disagrees with curriculum supervisors on certain decisions they have made, and is aligned with the teachers in these disagreements, teachers still view her as having been a part of the district level staff and decision making process. Another principal expressed similar concern, hoping that partnership would provide a better way for teachers to understand that some decisions he makes are not school level decisions he has control over, but rather ones that are determined at a higher level in the district. Responding to a question about partnership, he explained:

And I think the idea that staff will understand that sometimes, my decisions are not always easy, and also they're not always—sometimes there's very little decision and wiggle room I have in terms of making the decision. (District 4 Intermediate School Principal)

Both of these principals are illustrating that teachers' perceptions of their role, and what decisions they have control over or not, may be misplaced, which suggests there is a barrier to the understanding and communication surrounding the principal role. This also has implications for the principal role in facilitating and connecting teachers to the partnership structures. Teachers may be reluctant to be a part of the top-down decision of partnership, which was decided at the district level, when principals are lumped together with unpopular or difficult policies pushed down by the district that they may not have been involved in.

*Lack of Participation (School Level)*

Principals also faced obstacles regarding teachers' unwillingness to participate in partnership structures despite their facilitation efforts. The data show that numerous principals went to efforts to facilitate partnership and garner buy-in among teachers within their schools, but that some teachers were disinterested, or believed that their input would not matter and administrators were not truly collaborative because they had already made up their minds. Relatedly, principals were faced with other teachers who questioned what they would get out of partnership, and those who questioned the system due to a lack of noticeable impact. Indeed, partnership research has documented that the results of partnership may be ambiguous in the short-term and uncertain in the long-term, and that concrete and measurable results are a key to its sustainability (Kochan et al., 2008). My data further reveal that partnership is a long process, and concrete results can be difficult to produce, potentially making it difficult for principals to facilitate participation and create buy-in from teachers. Multiple principals referenced the lack of concrete results as a reason teachers are reluctant or apathetic towards partnership. For example, one principal in a district that has been under a partnership system for close to 5 years with a significant amount of awareness of the system among staff, explained that there were still teachers who were unwilling to participate for a lack of concrete results. He said:

I think that's the big thing. Every teacher knows what we're doing and I think every teacher knows why. I think there's teachers that say, what is this doing for me? What kind of impact is this having?... At this school I'd like to start getting—I'd like to find some tangible evidence or some data that says here's how we've made an impact. Those skeptical teachers are probably skeptical because—"What is this doing for me. It hasn't changed anything. I don't feel a difference."  
(District 1 Middle School 2 Principal)

Even teachers that were actively involved in partnership committees and meetings commented on how some teachers were consistently unwilling to participate. In responding to a question about what she would want out of partnership if she had a magic wand, one teacher explained:

The magic wand would have everybody involved, because I have heard some dissention from the ranks about [issue redacted]. They said some of the people were saying why are they doing that. And I'm thinking why didn't you come to me and ask... But that kind of thing... And I know you can, and we have offered it to everybody, but you can't do that and you can't make people sit on something [a partnership committee]. But if they disagree please let us know. We can hear your disagreement and we can tell you what we're doing about it and you still may disagree but please let us hear. (District 2 Elementary School 1 Teacher)

Lack of participation was common across schools, even though school administrators used different strategies to facilitate teachers to attend committee meetings. One high school vice principal demonstrated how she persuaded teachers to attend partnership meetings by providing free food, and encouraged them to voice their concerns at the meetings. She responded to a question about whether she encouraged this participation by saying:

Yes, I do. I start my pitch at the new teacher orientation over the summer, the new blood. I also try to bribe people with food in all the invitations we send out. I do try to encourage them. Whenever I have a teacher in that's complaining about something. I say, look you have to be there to give your input, you should come. So I do try to push people to come to the committee meetings.

She also explained that though she did this, most teachers were not giving partnership a chance because they felt their input would not matter:

I think that some of the teachers feel that it's not going to matter what their input is, and some may have a point. But I think the majority of them don't [participate or buy in]. I don't think that they necessarily have given the committee structure a chance. (District 2 High School Vice Principal)

As mentioned above, my data also revealed that some teachers questioned whether the partnership structures, which were intended to be collaborative and involve join-decision making between teachers and administration, were genuine. Some teachers believed that decisions were already made by school administration before the meetings and that partnership committees were disingenuous, or pseudo collaborative. One teacher illustrated that although the principal in his school had multiple committees in place even before partnership and was open to teacher input, teachers still thought decisions had already been decided beforehand. He explained:

No I don't think there's been a drastic difference [from when principal came in to start of partnership], and I think teachers would agree with that. Some of it was because he was always open, and another part is that there is a significant teacher group that thinks you can go to all the committees you want and blah blah blah, but they've [principal/administration] already made the decision. That's a pretty strong voice, and that's where the union president's fears and doubts come from. (District 2 Elementary School Teacher)

Thus, although in some cases justified and others not, teachers' lack of participation in partnership committees can constrain the principal role in facilitating partnership in the school. Though awareness about partnership within a school may be widespread, the buy-in among certain groups of skeptical teachers may cause a disconnect between those willing to participate and others more apprehensive, especially if there has yet to be any concrete outcomes. Even among principals who were seen as open to teacher input, buy-in and participation from teachers in their schools were still mixed. However, these barriers to partnership and the principal role in the system can also have much to do with principals themselves, as partnership requires a different type of managing that may conflict with typical and established managerial styles.



### *Managerial Style*

A principal's management style can have significant implications for their role in partnership. Although middle management theory views these actors as boundary spanners within an organization, and partnership theory suggests they can be facilitators of partnership, traditional managerial styles of these actors can impede this type of role. Indeed, most districts encouraged their school's principals to act in this role, however, my data show that their typical style of management could be a consequential impediment.

### *Top-Down Control (School Level)*

In the above sections, some principals referenced that they thought teachers and their union were overstepping their boundaries regarding school decision-making, with different expectations of the issues to be addressed through partnership and who was accountable for these types of decisions. Additionally, there were multiple teachers who suggested that their principals were not genuinely using partnership to collaborate and make joint-decisions with teachers, and rather still made decisions in isolation. As these findings differ in interpretation, this also lends weight to the idea that certain principals themselves may be reluctant to change, and partnership research has supported this argument (Roche & Geary, 2002; Eaton et al., 2004; Kochan et al., 2008).

Teacher interviews were the main source of data that revealed principals' reluctance to change from a top-down decision-maker to more of a facilitator of a collaborative partnership system. This is also related to data above showing confusion over whether partnership in practice meant teachers should have legitimate joint-decision

making ability, or just have input. For example, one teacher focus group in a district just starting partnership explained, “You can make suggestions, they’ll stop there” (District 4 Elementary School Teacher Focus Group 1). This group further said they believed most of the teachers in the school felt that the principal preferred to make decisions on her own rather than through collaborative structures, despite her thinking that she was collaborative. In another district, one teacher described how the principal was an obstacle to her own partnership role by resorting back to top-down decision-making after collaborative partnership structures were put into place with some successful outcomes. She explained how this contributed to declining morale and participation in partnership:

Morale is low. She's [principal] kind of like a micromanager on steroids right now. That's kind of the vibe that's happening in the building. And like I said she'll form a committee and collaboration was very well received here. We had a lot of people buy into the different initiatives that we started. But now in the last year people feel like it's not collaborative anymore—that like they'll do all the hard work to arrive at something that's a good fit for the students and the teachers in the building, and then she'll change some aspect of it, which really has...taking a step back from people's participation. (District 3 Elementary School Teacher)

This inability by the principal to relinquish decision-making authority and power was described by a teacher focus group from the same school, who suggested its principal was resistant to collaborate in partnership because it was a habit for her to just make decisions on her own. This is also related to what Heckscher and Schurman (1997) labeled as bureaucratic inertia, in which a manager feels threatened by employee contributions in a collaborative system and resorts back to top-down decision-making.

However, even among schools that had established and effective partnership structures that made joint-decisions through collaboration, there was still a sentiment among teachers that the principal was still in control. One teacher focus group in a school

that had strong partnership structures and outcomes, and was encouraged by the principal to have teacher-led committees, explained that the principal still “drives the bus” (District 1 High School Teacher Focus Group). Still, in certain cases, a principal’s managerial style can be a constraint to their own partnership role. However, due to the confusion of what decisions should be made under partnership, and who was accountable for them, the communication of decisions and the process used to address them was another critical obstacle to a principal’s partnership role.

*Lack of Frequent/Smooth Communication (School Level)*

The data show that a lack of frequent and smooth communication at the school was an issue for principals and affected their role and how teachers viewed them in a partnership system. Teachers cited numerous communication issues related to the traditional way principals had done business before partnership, including transparency and honesty. Although some principals were effective communicators, others that had a more authoritative style had difficulty communicating why certain decisions were made, especially regarding those made outside of partnership. As mentioned previously, at times principals were faced with decisions that they had little to no control over, yet, some were better than others at communicating this across the school. For example, one teacher in a focus group explained that he would like his principal to be more open and a better communicator, regardless of whether the two parties will agree on a topic or not.

He said:

For me here, I’d want my partner, [the] principal, to be more up front, honest, and unfiltered, because I feel there’s still a wall there. I’m open and honest. I’m telling it like it is. You don’t have to like it. I always find being outward and honest works best. And I know there’s something else back there [from the principal].

That's where the trust comes in. Now I know if you're not giving me everything—and I will say to her I can't tell you this, and I'll be honest about that. I'm holding back because there's something we haven't with the union yet. But that's still where the trust has to grow a little bit. (District 1 Elementary School 2 Teacher Focus Group)

Additionally, regarding this principal's management style, and her transition to more of a partnership role, this same teacher further explained how her personality was hard to read, and how though she was improving communicating in a partnership role, her management style did not directly fit in the system. He explained:

I'll be honest she's real hard to read. I could have a two-and-a-half-hour end of school evaluation with her where we have a normal post end-of-year evaluation, and then we spend the next couple hours talking about life. But then two to three days, later she's got her walls [up]. She's really hard for me to read on a given day, so sometimes I feel like her style has changed a bit because she's been forced into it, but not because this is her natural go to. Her natural go to is having a wall (District 1 Elementary School 2 Teacher Focus Group)

Other teachers in different districts voiced similar communication issues. For example, one teacher focus group put the principal's communication in numerical terms, suggesting that 80% of what staff needed to know was effectively communicated and the other 20% was not. This group further explained that the 20% of what was not communicated was largely unintentional, and mainly due to the principal not thinking that it was important, but that what she perceived as unimportant could be something actually salient to teachers. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, another constraint that principals can place on themselves in trying to shift to a partnership role is a lack of communication surrounding decisions that are out of their hands. For example, one teacher focus group explained that they wish the principal communicated the legal constraints they were under so they could have a better understanding of the principal

position. Similarly, another teacher who is a broker of partnership in her school, explained how she thought a large obstacle to partnership facilitation the principal would have to face is allowing school level data to be collected and communicated to the school without it seeming like a personal attack on her role as principal, potentially out of fear of the negative results they would produce and how she would be judged regarding them. This teacher further suggested that this would be an effective way to improve communication and transparency, but that her principal was reluctant to collect and release this type of information, even though other schools in the district had done so already. She explained:

The hurdle that [the principal is] going to have to overcome is looking at the [name of school survey redacted] data as an opportunity to improve processes instead of looking at it as a personal attack. And so my broker role in setting the stage for this [survey] has been to communicate with the SLT members that this isn't a personal attack. Regardless of your feelings about her. We're talking about processes we're talking about the environment—and everyone else in the district has done it. And people also have to understand that we don't know a lot yet as an SLT about what ceiling she has in kind of navigating what this school sees that it needs. We don't know what may have been a roadblock for her. But her opportunity is to communicate that a little bit more transparently... Whether it's a state requirement. And she needs to be legitimate with that. She needs to show it. The other thing I think that's going to support forward movement is becoming more data literate within the school, because right now data for us is a task. But it's the way that [the principal] functions. So for example, we're collecting data about student performance we're reporting data about student performance, but that loop is not closed for us and there's a direct line to that loop not being closed right to [the principal], right to the building administrator. So, we collect the data we report the data but teachers have never had a hand in this school in analyzing the data and interpreting the data. That's all been her role, and people feel because of her history, that she manipulates the data. So I think one thing that would be a huge thrust forward is to help teachers become literally more data literate, and use that, and using data. Because that's going to keep some of those personal feelings out of it. The data's going to speak for itself right? And teachers can have a role in providing that context to the data, or the story that impacts the data... We need to see the data. We need to understand the data, we need to commit to what the data tells us, and that I think will help smooth out some of the personalities. But [the principal] has been the keeper of the data for her whole tenure in the building.  
(District 3 Elementary School Teacher)

This statement also provides support for the argument that concrete results are necessary for both parties to be committed to partnership (Kochan et al., 2008), and further shows that although principals can be resistant to change their management style and communication due to lack of comfortability, or fear of the unknown or negative results, they can also help facilitate the system by allowing teachers to be a part collecting and then communicating data at the school.

*Pseudo Collaborative (School Level)*

Another interesting finding from the data that contributes to the obstacles for partnership facilitation by the principal is the existence of principals thinking they are collaborative when others in the school perceive it as only ostensible. Cases of pseudo collaboration were referenced throughout the data by teachers, and even by principals who eventually realized that they were not utilizing partnership to genuinely collaborate and make joint-decisions with teachers. Although being pseudo collaborative is related to a reluctance to relinquish top-down control, it can differ in that it may go unnoticed by some principals, who may truly believe they are using partnership to collaborate and make better decisions with teachers. In other cases, pseudo collaboration according to some teachers, is a way for a principal to only appear collaborative while having a decision already in mind. In the case of the former, one principal explained how, although he was always accepting of partnership, it took time to realize he was being pseudo collaborative in the system. He stated:

Always on board, yes. Always said, logical—makes sense. I think I had this false impression that I was actually collaborative. It took a while... But on paper this makes sense. This is what it should be... whatever you're calling these types of concepts [partnership] always made sense and was the way to do it, but I don't

know that I was actually putting it into practice. But through the training, really the self-reflection was the biggest thing—whoa, we really are not as collaborative as we think we are. (District 1 Middle School 2 Principal)

A teacher serving as a building union representative from the same school agreed.

She further illustrated how teachers reacted to the pseudo collaboration by the principal:

You're [teachers] kind of nervous about asserting any kind of voice, because you're not sure it really is wanted. And in the beginning it wasn't. It was pretty pseudo in the beginning for a long time. (District 1 Middle School 2 Teacher 1)

Another principal that was newer to partnership conveyed a similar pattern,

saying that staff may have been involved in some committee structures, but

acknowledging that genuine collaboration was not necessarily occurring. He explained:

I definitely tried to involve staff where I can—I would probably say there may be some pseudo collaboration. I was there for a while. I think that that's put me in check and say hey is it really purposeful collaboration or are you just doing it just to get a voice? (District 4 Intermediate School Principal)

The data also reveal that principals may fluctuate or change between being collaborative and pseudo collaborative, which can further cause confusion for teachers and be a barrier to the role of partnership facilitation. For example, although a teacher described her principal as having more of a top-down management style in the previous section, this teacher also described the transition of this same principal towards being pseudo collaborative, largely due to her confidence in leadership and decision-making.

She explained this transition:

But over the course of time she's gotten a little bit less collaborative and a little bit more pseudo collaborative. So she'll seek feedback and she'll form committees but then she'll change what our committee decided on at the last minute. Now she is the kind of person who's very confident in her leadership. So, she does kind of

have a reputation and can be prone to thinking that she's the smartest voice in the room. (District 3 Elementary School Teacher)

Teachers from another district expressed similar sentiment regarding the principal in their school. Their teacher focus group suggested there was pseudo collaboration in that, “It’s a lot of talk and lip service”, and “a fear of not controlling” from the principal (District 4 Elementary School Teacher Focus Group 1). These findings suggest this can be a crucial obstacle to the principal role in facilitating participation in partnership, as teachers who already question the system due to reasons discussed previously, may also perceive their principal as pseudo collaborative. Consequently, these teachers may be increasingly reluctant to commit time to participating in partnership committees and meetings.

### ***Structure and Process***

Theoretical development on partnership by Avgar and colleagues (2016) has suggested that the quality of the procedural infrastructure of partnership has a direct impact on employee voice. By also focusing on the structure and process of partnership, I seek to build on these findings by using the principal’s middle organizational perspective to explore how existing or new infrastructure and processes can impact and constraint the principal role to facilitate partnership and act as boundary spanner throughout the district.

### ***Traditional Hierarchy of Public Education (District and School Levels)***

Partnerships in a public organizational setting may be more constrained than what research has shown in a private setting, which has greater flexibility in reorganizing a



traditional hierarchy that is more conducive to partnership. Indeed, management research has documented how public organizations have a propensity for elaborate hierarchies and rules, and are resistant to change and the delegation of authority (Warwick, 1975), while they are generally evaluated in terms of conformity with higher authority and have no alternative to Weberian hierarchy (Meyer, 1979). Although research on partnership in public education has proved otherwise (e.g.: Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2016), public schools are certainly still constrained by bureaucracy. As mentioned in previous sections, in many cases there can be little authority that principals have over certain decisions, due to federal or state legal constraints, or policies enacted at the district level that they must follow.

The previous section also discussed how a principal's management style can lean towards top-down control and authoritative decision-making that makes it difficult to facilitate participation in partnership. Yet, these type of non-collaborative decisions by the principal, or those unable to be addressed through the partnership process, may also be largely due to the traditional hierarchical structure of public education. In other words, the principal may not have the ability or jurisdiction to offer up certain issues to be addressed in partnership. Though teachers may lump together principals with district administration, some are also aware of the limitations due to the hierarchy. For example, one teacher expressed how he believed his principal supported partnership and tried to facilitate the system, but that he was handcuffed by the district hierarchy. He explained:

I would think he [principal] does [support partnership], yes. I think he buys into it, but I think anybody in the hierarchy, they have a much harder time letting go of power and decision making, because ultimately they're still trapped in the hierarchy [and it] still says you make the call, you're to blame. And they're the

ones who are going to get the complaints from the superintendent or the parent, etc. (District 2 Elementary School Teacher)

This is clearly also related to the previously discussed accountability issues stemming from the upper hierarchy at the district level, as well as answering to the community through the school board and superintendent. Public education's traditional district structure makes these constraints hard to avoid and can limit this boundary spanning capacity of principals in partnerships. It may be difficult to act as mediators in partnership between the district office and teachers if certain parties are legally restricted to know certain information, or if decisions have already been made at the district level and principals are only responsible for their implementation.

Additionally, there is also the union's own hierarchy, accompanied with its own legal restrictions, that can contribute to this obstacle. Another teacher discussed how the union can limit the principal role in partnership, referencing how disciplinary issues between teachers can cause dysfunction in partnership and other meetings, and how the principal may have limited recourse to address them through the union, and vice versa:

That's a tricky one. I think the union should be able to offer it [assistance to principal role in partnership], but I think there are too many structures in the way. There's our own hierarchy of just the schools, then there's the union itself and what they want to share and don't share, and then there's the laws privacy that guide administration. It gets very tricky, especially when it comes to—there are teachers that are written up, even the union knows they should probably be better off, and those problems that that teacher has generally speaking aren't just with administration, they're with other team members within a grade levels. So if they're in those meetings the grade level doesn't function very well, the meetings begin to not function well because they're one of a group of 7 or 8. So then that mechanism gets broken. Then the other 6 in that group want to know that there's consequences for that person. So I can go to admin and say what're the consequences for so and so, but there's privacy that you can't know and they can't know. So I have to go back to the teachers and say you just have to trust that they spoke to her and things will change. And if they don't change they're like—

if the union could sit down with the superintendent or principal and say listen we know this individual has an issue can we change schools or do something, but we don't have any real mechanism and there are legal impediments. (District 2 Elementary School Teacher)

Principals also expressed similar sentiment regarding the inflexibility of decisions and their communication in the hierarchy, and how it still remains an issue despite trying to collaborate through partnership. He explained:

I do think that the times you are still making the “principal decision” you have to answer to why wasn't that collaborative? And sometimes it's just not, because sometimes there's things you probably know that they [teachers] might not be able to know. So to me that's still a cloudy grey area that is not even close to being worked out. (District 3 Middle School Principal)

#### *Creating Structures and Processes (District and School Levels)*

Supportive partnership foundations are critical for quality processes that allow for collaboration between labor and management (Avgar et al., 2016). However, if there is no foundation or vehicle for these types of processes, they must be created, which can be a difficult process of its own. In an education partnership, not only are structures needed at the school level for teacher participation, but structures are also needed that align the school and district levels for greater teacher input in decision making across the district. Additionally, without these structures, principals may face obstacles in acting as a partnership facilitator within their schools and as boundary spanners connecting different levels of the district.

Districts and schools in my sample varied in how they designed partnership structures and processes, as well as in their membership. The partnership training encouraged districts to adopt SLTs to make joint decisions at the school level and to be

co-led by a principal and union building representative, as well as DLTs, to communicate projects and issues with SLTs and have representation from educators on each SLT in the district. While certain principals had already enacted committee structures before partnership that were intended to be representative of teachers and collaborative, which could serve as the foundation for the SLT, others had to start from scratch. In some cases, this process was problematic for principals. For example, in one district, the superintendent had to step in to assist a principal in the facilitation and process of her school's SLT, which met once a week. A teacher from this school, who also served as a union leader of partnership in her district, described the lack of focus and concentration on any single topic in the SLT, and how the superintendent, who strongly supported partnership, stepped in to provide guidance on how the SLT process should operate. She explained:

The SLT function so far this year without recent intervention from [the superintendent] has been [a] ping pong...It's been a different topic every single week...She'll bring something to the table that's like a minutia that's bubbling up and she'll make that the focus of the meeting...He's [the superintendent] got a little bit more directive with her [the principal] in the last month or so, with a timeline. (District 3 Elementary School Teacher)

Unique to this district, and to further help the principal facilitate SLT functioning and process, the superintendent also adapted the structure of all the district's SLTs, requiring them to collectively decide on a third teacher to help the principal and union building representative lead the meetings, and to serve as a mediator for any potential tension between those two latter members. This triad structure of the SLTs in this district will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Further, though the goal was to have SLTs communicate with the DLTs for a process of information sharing and addressing issues between the district and its schools, this coupling proved problematic, especially for some principals. As discussed previously, there was one case in which a district's DLT did not have principal representation, which not only constrained principals' ability to boundary span in the partnership process, but also made them feel like forgotten middle actors who were not highly valued, thus affecting their own view the system. Another principal from this district illustrated how SLTs are largely working in isolation and missing some opportunity to share ideas with other schools in the district. He explained the relationship and process of SLT/DLT coordination, or lack thereof:

So right now principal are co-chairs of it [the SLT], and the principals communicate to the superintendent what's going on with the SLTs. But yeah this is problematic, for example, one school is talking a lot about social/emotional learning and when there's not a lot of communication. When an SLT is kind of working in isolation and just reporting to the superintendent, then there's a lot of opportunities for collaboration across schools or just building upon what's being done and right now, that's being missed. So if we did have someone [a principal] on an SLT from one school at a DLT with an SLT member from another school, they might be able to say well hey we're doing this. They might not even be an expert, but they know what's going in with their school and can say hey you might want to connect here. (District 2 Elementary School 1 Principal)

This statement suggests that a lack of coupling between district and school committees can constrain the principal role in spanning these boundaries of the district, especially if they cannot work with the district central office, or principals and teachers in other schools, through the district level partnership structures such as the DLT. Another principal discussed a similar circumstance in which principals in his district were not on the DLT, though it did have teacher representation from the schools. Although he

expressed some concern in having the SLT and DLT more tightly coupled, he shared he did not mind that he was not included on the DLT, because if the district was not involved with his role and school, that meant everything he and his staff were doing in the school was sufficient. He answered a question about if the SLT communicated and shared information with the DLT:

I don't know if we really have to be quite honest with you. I don't know if it has even been a formal thing. We had an hour and a half session where they [district staff] brought all of the SLTs together and they did a presentation...which was good. The stuff I knew before, I was in this room since the beginning [of partnership], but all the other SLT people didn't really know about it so they sort of brought everyone up to speed. We haven't really checked in that often with the DLT.

He continued, referring to how he did not mind being left out of the DLT:

It's one of those things that I look at as a resource in case we need something from the district. But at this point we really haven't. I sort of keep most—my opinion is if the central office doesn't know what we're doing and they have no problems, then we're all right. (District 3 High School Principal)

Nonetheless, this lack of coupling between the district and school structures can serve as a significant impediment to the boundary spanning role of principals in partnership, especially if the district does not require principal representation on district level partnership committees. Even if there is teacher representation on the district level committees, the lack of principal involvement can still create a disconnect, since principals may be less aware of what is happening in the partnership process across the district than teachers and the union. In turn, this can also limit the ability for principals to not only span the boundaries of the district organization, but also to serve as facilitators

of partnership participation, especially if they lack information about partnership issues or projects that teachers or the union may have knowledge on.

*Committee Overload (School Level)*

Conversely, in some cases, especially those in which committees had been established by principals before partnership, principals found difficulty in facilitating participation on the SLTs and other committees because teachers were overwhelmed by the amount of committees available. Some teachers referenced that the SLT was “just another committee” (District 4 Elementary School Teacher Focus Group 3) in which no outcomes have occurred yet, so they did not care to participate, while others valued the committees but thought there were overwhelmed with too many formal structures for input (District 1 High School Teacher Focus Group). Additionally, when asked how often he formally met with the principal to discuss school issues, one teacher explained how there were numerous committees that teachers could attend, and that they should be more streamlined:

I would say formally once a month. For me [to attend] it would be SLT, but there's a ton of committees. But the one that would be the main contact would be the SLT. There's a principal's advisory committee, which is another group of teachers—not me. So, we have different voices, and they're more about day to day complaints. I feel personally that we're getting “over committed.” I think a merge between principal's advisory and SLT would make sense. There's a couple advice ones that—how much advice can you get from so many different voices? It's good but I think it would be more channeled. (District 2 Elementary School Teacher)

The above statements suggest that although principals may embrace partnership, and even establish representative and collaborative formal structures before partnership adoption by a district, there can be a tipping point of the number committee structures

that overwhelms teachers, creating an obstacle for facilitating their participation by principals. Moreover, they also suggest that formal partnership committees should be meaningful with an intended focus on issues in order for teachers to value them. These findings add an interesting complexity to the research of Avgar and colleagues (2016), who argue that the quality of partnership processes contribute to employee voice. Although this current study is from the middle managerial perspective, and not directly related to employee voice in partnership, my data suggest that the quality of partnership processes can be impacted by the both the amount and content of formal structures that are either in place or established, but only up to a certain point.

### ***External Pressure***

There are also external pressures outside of the partnership, and even the school district, that can impact the principal role in facilitating partnership and being a boundary spanner in the system. Education research has extensively covered external issues that impact not only educational outcomes, but also affect principals in their role. For example, in his research on principals, Fullhan (2008) coined the term “initiativitis”, which is defined as “the tendency to launch an endless stream of disconnected innovations that no one could possibly manage” (pp. 1), and is partially driven by an accountability system that lacks thoughtful planning and is punitively driven. This is analogous to what management scholar Abrahamson (2004) called repetitive change syndrome, under which members of organization experience initiative overload and constant change that can create anxiety and burnout. In the context of public education, No Child Left Behind is an example of an external control system with high-stakes



accountability, not to mention other more local initiatives, that principals must respond to and be responsible for (Fullan, 2008). Thus, principals are faced with numerous external pressures that may fluctuate or wax and wane in relevance and importance, or which may just fall to the wayside as other interests or issues arise. Although partnership is an initiative that is adopted internally, principals may still view it in line with these other external pressures. Indeed, partnership research has found that many middle managers believed that partnership was just a fad and a “program of the month” that would disappear just as other programs had before it (Kochan et al., 2008) and just put their heads down to wait for it to pass (Eaton et al., 2004). Obviously, these beliefs would be an obstacle to the principal role in partnership, but as the districts in my sample show no signs of quitting partnership or completely failing at it, my data reveal other external constraints that principals can face that should be also be addressed.

### *Time*

My data reveal that the main external pressure that contributes to the constraint of the principal role in partnership is time. The processes of partnership, including joint-decision making through collaboration, committee and team meetings, and planning, takes a significant amount of time, and much more time than if one person such as the principal makes a decision on his/her own. Partnership research has documented how many middle managers think partnership is a useful idea in principle, but that practically it does not work because it takes too much time to train people, have meetings, and include multiple stakeholders in decision-making (Kochan et al., 2008). My data further support this, as partnership requires extra meeting time that teachers may be reluctant to attend, especially if they are outside of school hours and are not being compensated. For

example, one teacher focus group described how the principal encouraged participation from teachers, guidance counselors as well as curriculum supervisors on the SLT, but there were just so many committees taking up the time of multiple staff members:

She [the principal] does ask at the beginning of every year if anybody is interested in being on the school leadership team. It can change every year. We had a new guidance counselor this year so she came onto the SLT. We have a curriculum supervisor that is now on the team too. If you haven't yet figured this out, we are the district of meetings. We have a billion meetings, and that would be a negative to collaboration because of time. (District 1 Elementary School 1 Teacher Focus Group)

Another teacher in a different district agreed that the partnership process was slow, citing that it was frustrating to both his own, but also his principal's role as well. He explained how partnership takes more time to solve problems and make decisions that may not be that substantive:

The obstacle is timing meetings. Cause we really get over meetings and the process is sometimes slower. I think that frustrates people. I know that at first that's something that frustrated Cory. It's something that frustrates me too. It frustrates me too sometimes. It seems like it can take long to do something that's just not that big. (District 1 Middle School 2 Teacher 2)

A principal expressed similar feelings, and went further in explaining that sometimes there was really a limited amount of time to make a decision, so even if she wanted to offer it up to be addressed through partnership and not make it on her own, there would not be enough time. She said:

So much of what I do is based on time I have to get things done. Just the way—the logistics. And so you know in a perfect world every time you do a hire you're putting a committee together and you're doing all of those things and it doesn't always work right. You know you're just like, oh my gosh the next board meeting is when? Teachers are leaving when? And I need that long term sub on

Tuesday...So no, to get a whole committee together for that it's just not going to happen. (District 4 Elementary School Principal)

Time was such a crucial constraint to partnership and to the principal facilitating participation among teachers that the SLT in one school, led by this principal, made their first project to just design a schedule to allot a certain amount of time for their SLT meetings. One teacher from that SLT discussed how finding the time for the SLT to meet was a success:

Well first of all—that we can meet. Number one, we found a time, right? Everybody can meet. And coming together as a school... I see it as joining us together a little bit more. (District 2 Elementary School 1 Teacher)

### *Addressing the Constraints*

Using the theory of middle managers as boundary spanners and partnership theory that suggests they are critical facilitators of partnership, the previous section took a deep dive into the schools of 4 districts and inductively analyzed interview data to identify the constraints to this principal role under partnership. However, though research has demonstrated that middle managers are crucial to the facilitation and success of partnership (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 1988; Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Kochan et al., 2008; Roche & Geary, 2002; Eaton et al., 2004), still unaddressed is how they may face and potentially overcome the constraints to this role, some of which that were laid out in the above sections. This is what I aim to examine in this section, further using interview data from my sample. By doing so, this is useful contribution to the literature, as there is a decent amount of research on the obstacles to partnership (Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Rubinstein, 2003; Roche & Geary, 2002;

Preuss & Frost, 2003; Eaton et al., 2004; Kochan et al., 2008; Eaton et al., 2016), with some related to middle managers (Roche & Geary, 2002; Eaton et al., 2004; Kochan et al., 2008), yet there is a lack of necessary research on how middle managers overcome these constraints. Thus, exploring how principals as middle managers navigate these obstacles has significant theoretical and practical implications for better understanding the role of middle management in partnership, and the processes of partnership and how these challenges can be addressed (or not). Additionally, this analysis has implications for the success and failure of partnership, and for middle managers in horizontal and collaborative industrial relations systems.

The following analysis categorizes instances of how principals overcame the constraints to their role in partnership, and is presented in Table 2 (see Appendix), which is identical to Table 1, but with an added column on the right demonstrating the ways in which different constraints can be addressed. It must be noted that my data fail to show relief for certain constraints, and that some ways to address one constraint can also be used for another. My data also reveal that in some cases, principals were able to effectively navigate these obstacles on their own in order to better facilitate partnership and connect members within the district, and in others they needed assistance from different actors, such as the union leadership or the superintendent.

#### *Central Office Assistance*

Although addressed previously in partnership research that upper level support from an organization is critical and can assist in numerous aspects of partnership (Kochan et al., 2008 Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Rubinstein, 2003), my data and observations suggest that central office intervention can also improve the principal role in facilitating

partnership. For example, as discussed previously, in light of one SLT's struggle to maintain focus in addressing issues, one district superintendent required the principals of their schools to invite another teacher onto the SLTs, who would serve as the intermediary between the principal and the other union co-leader. This triad was an attempt to improve tensions between the principal and union leadership in one building, which had negatively impacted the function and process of the SLT meetings. Additionally, the superintendent intervened more directly with the principal, providing a timeline for the SLT in order to encourage communication and agenda setting between the three SLT leaders. One teacher in this school that was not on the SLT, but was a leader of the partnership in the district explained the goals of the central office assistance regarding the principal:

I think she's going to need to be collaborative. I think the fact that [the superintendent] has kind of gotten in the mix with her to clarify expectations with her on what her role is—and he was very candid and very vocal about his view of the partnership between the association and the building principal, and setting agendas and communicating jointly, which I think went a long way to kind of fortify the commitment of our head rep to stay involved in this. It comes down to style points here, and I think that's going to be the interesting thing to see that evolves over the next year because there's been some rough water between [the principal] and our association rep here. However, our head association rep is very credible in the building, so to lose her out of this process would be a huge factor. I think [the principal] get on board. I'm not sure it's because she wants to internally. I think it's because her hand will be forced from a performance standpoint. (District 3 Elementary School Teacher)

This statement suggests, that even despite principals' management style, which can be a barrier, they can essentially be forced to facilitate partnership by the upper administration, and be held accountable for those processes to come up with joint-decisions, which has significant implications for the relationship between upper and mid-

level management in partnership, and the accountability and power dynamics of joint-decisions.

*Persistence and Finding Success in the Partnership Process*

Research has shown that since partnership is a long process, and collaborating within the system requires a greater amount of time and effort, substantive results can be hard to produce but are necessary for its success and sustainability (Preuss & Frost, 2003; Kochan et al., 2008). However, although concrete results are certainly important, my data show instances of principals identifying small successes, and even touting them. Although of course, this is not the end goal of partnership, being persistent in the processes of this system, such as establishing and attending committee meetings, and even celebrating small “low-hanging fruit” projects to get started can bring positive attention to the system and be helpful for principals in their facilitation to garner more attendance. For example, one principal illustrated how he thought the partnership process itself that encouraged collaboration was more important than any concrete outcome. He explained:

My philosophy now is [collaborative] process is more important than product. So going through the process—I think the problem with collaboration is it takes time. That's the problem with it. There are decisions that I want to make that I know would be better off if we go through the process. Now we're going through the school improvement plan. We've done it before [without collaboration]. Now we're going to do this in the way I explained to the faculty and to my school leadership team—it's not going to be [my] project anymore. It's going to be our project. (District 3 High School Principal)

Another principal expressed similar sentiment regarding success of partnership structures and processes. He explained that he felt like “we've been able to get this up and rolling with the structures in place and processes in place, which I think is our huge

success” (District 2 Elementary School 1 Principal). Additionally, as referenced in the previous section, even teachers saw establishing formal partnership structures and the resulting processes as a small success. For example, one teacher focus group referenced the success of building a collaborative system compared one that encouraged “old school” adversarial processes, such as union grievances. The group explained, citing a small scheduling project to be addressed through partnership:

I think the structure is there to support it all, and I think you have more built-in success with a structure in place, because if not then it's more old-school adversarial relationships. And it doesn't usually end well that way because now it's dividing rather than working together and moving forward. Because you could have very easily said going old school, we're going to grieve this, come up with a solution, let me know when you have it, and I'll come over and look at it, versus the opposite of what we did. There still a little push back, but it was more of okay this is what we have, this is what people are unhappy with this is where we got to come to terms where we're going to meet the needs of the contract and the teachers and the students and let's come up with something we could all live with, even if it's not perfect but at least it's going to be something new for this year, and it ended up being completely teacher driven. (District 1 Elementary School 2 Teacher Focus Group)

These statements show that although the processes of partnership are not the end goal of the system, they can be important mini successes to creating and meeting larger more substantive goals. Moreover, as Avgar and colleagues (2016) argued, quality processes are critical to partnership, and these data demonstrate that persisting in, and acknowledging the value of these types of processes can help improve their quality. The principal role in facilitating and creating buy-in for partnership can also be improved if the structures and the processes that result from them are valued by teachers.

### *Identifying and Addressing Pseudo Collaboration*

As discussed previously, principals can be pseudo collaborative, or at least viewed as such by teachers, which can constrain their role in facilitating partnership. However, my data show instances of principals recognizing this type of management style, and actively addressing it to better align with partnership and genuine collaboration. Yet, both must occur for this to change, or there can be instances of what Heckscher and Schurman (1997) call bureaucratic inertia, in which a principal may feel threatened by teacher participation and therefore only appear to act collaborative, while resorting back to the comfort of top-down decision-making. Further, principals' acknowledgment of this can occur at varying times of partnership implementation. For example, two principals both discussed their recognition of being pseudo collaborative in partnership. One of the principals was fairly new to partnership, and recognized that he had been pseudo collaborative right away, while the other who had been under a partnership structure for about 5 years, said it took him years to realize. The former principal described how he thought his management style would change, and how he was willing to do this to grow the partnership. He explained:

I do think my style will change although I do feel I'm collaborative. But I think that this will really challenge me to be...not pseudo collaborative and be real about setting time aside. I think we're so rushed sometimes, having those set meetings is important to the growth [of partnership]. So I think that will be important. I think the style of even approaching if there is an issue with a staff member, thinking about it making sure that I'm looking at it from the teacher's perspective. Sure we'll have to have rules to live by. But I think if there's something that maybe someone's pulling their own way, maybe there's an issue, I might bring it to the SLT first and say, hey guys let me tell you what I'm looking at right now. Normally I may just e-mail the teacher directly, but say, hey look with no names. Let's talk about this. Do you feel that this is a fair course? And I may I may do that in the beginning, and they may say [referencing himself], look we don't want to hear everything you're dealing with, but hey it's good for us to know that the things you're looking at. (District 4 Intermediate School Principal)



Conversely, the latter principal recognized he was being pseudo collaborative after years of experience in partnership and through the communication of teachers he was working with. As previously referenced, he explained:

Always on board [to partnership], yes. Always said, logical—makes sense. I think I had this false impression that I was actually collaborative. It took a while.  
(District 1 Middle School 2 Principal)

A teacher from this same school supported these claims, and discussed how he witnessed the shift in the principal from a pseudo collaborative style, with certain teachers reluctant to challenge him over issues, to a genuinely collaborative management style in which teachers were welcome to provide their input, even if it went against his own.

I think that's absolutely changed. I think [the principal] was always open. You always felt like his door was open, come and talk to me. I've heard that from other principals we've talked to—but they [principals] don't always mean it or people [teachers] are afraid to [approach him with input]. It doesn't happen. And that's what was happening. [The principal] was friendly, his door was open, but people were not willing to go in and challenge him. I remember I challenged something he did and he was like—this is what I need, more people to challenge me! Of course I was diplomatic, I didn't say... you're doing it wrong. (District 1 Middle School 2 Teacher 2)

Thus, principals can help themselves in navigating their own management style to be better facilitators and actors within partnership, however, it can take time to recognize, and may also take teachers willing to challenge or speak up to their principal regarding pseudo collaboration.

### *Utilizing School Union Leadership*

When looking at middle managers, research has shown that they can resist employee and union involvement (Heckscher & Schurman, 1997; Roche & Geary, 2002;

Eaton et al., 2004; Kochan et al., 2008). However, research has also shown that employees and their union can provide value to management and organizations through their own communication and coordination networks (Rubinstein, 2001). In the context of this study, my data further suggest that if principals are cognizant of what teachers and the union can bring to the table, they can overcome obstacles to better facilitate partnership with the help of the union. More specifically, an interesting finding is how principals can utilize the school union leadership to reach more teachers, create more buy-in, and facilitate greater participation in partnership structures. As Rubinstein (2001) discovered, the union has its own communication networks outside of the management structure that can help disseminate information. My data show that some principals were able to navigate the union and access this network in order to better facilitate partnership, mainly through the head union building representative or another school union leader. Multiple principals discussed the importance of their relationship with the union leader in the building, and how it helped them address institutional barriers within the union and between union and management, and lack of participation. For example, one principal spoke about how she used her union building leaders to quickly identify small building issues before they grow larger, allowing for more time and focus to address substantive issues through partnership. She explained, “I have two building leaders that are my go-to person—like a heads up. This is coming down pike. I’m going to need to talk to so and so.” (District 3 Middle School Principal). Another principal addressed his relationship with his union building representative, emphasizing the importance of the union structure for him to better facilitate partnership and create willing participants in the system. He explained, hinting at the difference between collaboration at the school and partnership

between labor and management, which is facilitated by union involvement from strong teacher leaders—those of which he had utilized and made visible to the rest of the rank-and-file:

We've always been a collaborative building in the sense that collaboration from teacher to teacher is so important. But the union has to do their part. If the union decides to put leaders in place that are not interested, but more importantly are not credible, if I had the wrong teachers up in front, all the strongest teachers would be rolling their eyes and saying okay this is coming from you who never makes it to this on time, is always late. You're not the teacher we want to be. That's so critical. So the union has a huge, huge part in this...It's got to be those kind of people who want to get out and this and not just complain when something goes wrong.

He further discussed specifically how he directly faced issues of lack of participation in partnership by allowing his head union building representative to be public and vocal as a leader in the school that encouraged the system:

The first steps in the process were for...the VP [head union building representative]—was to make her more prominent and to have her more vocal publicly, not just in her union-only meetings, but in a faculty meeting. To start her space to actually be a voice, and to do that publicly. And then as often as possible talk about what we were doing, and we were very honest about it. And again publicly at faculty meetings, at department meetings, these types of places, through emails. (District 1 Middle School 2 Principal)

This teacher/head union building representative also commented on her relationship with the principal, suggesting that their it was key to partnership facilitation and gaining participation, almost to a fault, in which if they were not involved in it, teachers may lose motivation to participate. She explained:

I feel like I need help now because it's almost like if my principal and I aren't the initiators and the constant, let's do it let's do it, it's not moving. Now people are very—a lot of people are very enthusiastic and very confident and a lot more creative than I am, in terms of working with—that they get involved in their day to day, so to keep the momentum. (District 1 Middle School 2 Teacher 1)

A principal in a different district also conveyed that her close and trusting relationship with her building union leaders was critical to addressing institutional barriers and history between the union and administration, even it only started with small planning meetings to discuss small concerns. She expressed:

They [school union leaders] started... these little ten minute meetings they would want to have with me, which is where they would just come with concerns... We haven't really had to have many of those lately at all. But our relationship is very trusting. They come to me and share some things that people have said to them. That's important for me. And they know that I'm going to keep it in confidence, and I know they're going to keep it in confidence.

She then responded to a question about whether she saw these union leaders as valuable to partnership:

Huge, huge...I kind of always want everybody to believe that nobody is out to get them...there are still people here that I think feel like they can't speak up because I'm going to—"my team's going to get moved, or my classroom's going to get moved." [Teachers saying this about the principal]. People have the impression sometimes. (District 3 Middle School Principal)

This principal is referencing how she utilizes her union leadership in order to quell certain rumors that may be floating throughout the union ranks, which helps her in her role in facilitating partnership, as teachers will be reluctant to participate if they believe rumors about the principal moving a teacher's classroom. This can also assist with the functioning and focus of the SLT, which both of these union leaders co-lead with the principal.

The above statements help illustrate how principals can utilize the union and its leadership in order to navigate the institutional barriers within the union, and between the

union and administration, to better facilitate partnership and improve participation. My data further suggest that the relationship between the principal and a union representative that is a leader in the school with access to the union network is critical to partnership facilitation, especially as these actors are two of the most visible positions in the school who can hold significant influence over teachers and other administration.

### *Implementing Informal Structures*

In their research on the interaction between formal and informal worker participation and how it is related to performance, Litwin and Eaton (2017) found that formal participation can undermine informal participation when an organization adopts formal structures and already has high levels of informal participation. Although they discuss the limitations of the generalizability of their study, my data may contribute an added complexity to this relationship. For example, some principals used informal structures, such as an open door policy, in order to more effectively facilitate participation and maintain focus in the formal partnership structures. In some cases, a principal's open door policy allowed teachers to provide input informally to identify and solve smaller issues more quickly, leaving the larger school issues to be addressed by the formal collaborative partnership structures. One principal illustrated how this informal and formal interaction occurred:

At the most informal level, it starts with like an open door policy, someone can just come in and go, 'oh I really think this' or something like that—and maybe that spurs or maybe we could deal with this. Another step up—it's not informal but there's leader meetings or teacher grade level meetings, where—just getting together and then the flow of communication is back and forth, and all of a sudden there's a thread and maybe there's something here we have to address. That's what it takes to even make someone bring it up "so what do you think" and so tell me what you think. (District 2 Middle School Principal)

Other principals and teachers also expressed their affinity for open door policies that can quickly address small issues, which also allows for more time and focus on the substantive issues at hand during the formal partnership meetings, rather than wasting efforts on insignificant issues. Thus, these data suggest that the principal can play a key role in encouraging teachers to bring up issues through the open door policy in order to jointly decide how they will be addressed depending on their size and impact—formally through partnership structures, or informally for quicker decision-making. Additionally, in implementing these informal structures, principals can also help themselves navigate the constraint of creating structures and processes, and better facilitate partnership to reach more teachers by utilizing both formal and informal structures. Further, this finding is also a caveat to what Litwin and Eaton (2017) found, and suggests that informal and formal structures can indeed bolster one another if they can each be used to address problems of different kinds and sizes.

### *Guiding Language*

Some partnership research has addressed the formalized language of partnership arrangements, which has been intended to motivate and guide union and management through the system. For example, Rubinstein (2003) found mixed results regarding Cooperative Partnership Agreements (CPA) across the steel industry. This national partnership agreement created setbacks for locally driven partnerships that already had structures in place before the agreement, while it bolstered other partnerships that did not have such existing infrastructure. Additionally, Eaton and colleagues (2004) designated strong enabling language as a factor that can assist in the formation of partnerships. My

findings contribute to this research by suggesting that internal and locally driven language, such as a code of conduct regarding how to make joint-decisions, can also be useful for partnership. More specifically, my data and observations suggest that guiding documents describing certain processes of partnership can assist principals in facing the challenges related to the communication of decisions and the confusion over who has decision-making ability.

Though less significant than the previously discussed methods to address constraints, some principals and teachers referenced the utility of guiding documents or language, such as a mission statement that is referenced at every partnership meeting, or a decision-making continuum to appropriately determine what degree of joint-decision making is to be used regarding certain issues. For example, in one school's SLT, the principal and union co-leader referenced their mission statement every meeting which emphasizes that neither party (union or administration) will let one another fail in this process. Additionally, a decision-continuum document was offered at the partnership trainings, which many schools adopted and adapted for their own schools, districts, SLTs, and DLTs. This was intended to clearly communicate what type of process would be used for the decision-making between the union and administration, and was to be outlined before the process began so all parties were aware. For example, some schools used a 7-point continuum in which a 1 was "your decision", a 7 was "my decision", and a 4 was a collaborative "joint-decision", and the points in between (2, 3, 5, and 6) were "more your decision" or "more my decision", allowing for different degrees of input from each party. In another district, the schools used 3 "buckets" to designate "your decision", "my decision", and "our decision".

However, the adoption of this type of language varied across schools—it may not have always been used in partnership committees, especially regarding some very small or large issues. Some teachers also questioned the decision-making continuum because it was generally principals and other administration who decided where an issue would fall on the continuum to be addressed, and some argued there were few issues that were being solved with a 4 (joint-decision). Nonetheless, my data and observations suggest that in most cases that something like this was used, it was appreciated by both teachers and principals, and helped the facilitation of the joint-decision-making process, and clearer communication regarding who had the ability to make decisions and who would be accountable for them.

### *Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)*

The previous analysis largely focused on structure and process regarding the different constraints of the principal role in partnership and how they can be addressed and potentially overcome. Using insights from this discussion, this section will now focus on the outcome of an effective school level partnership, defined as a system that provides formal and informal structures for teachers and their union to participate and collaborate with principals and school administration in decision-making for different and better problem solving. Though the following analysis focuses on a school level outcome, it also has interesting implications for principals, as they are co-leaders on each SLT, and thus inherently tied to the success or failure of this main formal partnership body at the school level. Indeed, I have designated principals' willingness to adapt as one of the main conditions for an effective school partnership in this following analysis.



As discussed in the methods section, 10 partnership facilitators were asked to rank each school in my sample on a scale of 1 (ineffective school partnership) to 7 (effective school partnership), with a center point of 4 (emerging school partnership). In order to analyze this outcome, I will be employing qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) in order to explore the different conditions that may or may not produce an effective school partnership. QCA (Ragin, 1987; Rihoux & Ragin, 2008) is set-theoretic method that bridges the gap between qualitative and quantitative analyses, and utilizes both the in-depth knowledge of cases and the pinpointing of cross case patterns. It is ideal for small to medium N sizes (e.g.: 5-50), which makes it appropriate for my study (N=14). QCA uses Boolean algebra to approach research cases as different configurations of conditions that may lead to an outcome or not. It is better suited to address issues of complex causality than a typical regression analysis because it is: configurational in that it looks at interconnected structures rather than individual variables in a linear path; equifinal in which there can be a variety of different paths to a final state; and asymmetrical in that one case  $X \rightarrow Y$  does not imply that  $\sim X \rightarrow \sim Y$  in another case. Thus, QCA is especially appropriate to assess causal and sufficient conditions that produce an outcome.

Although there are currently two types of QCA (crisp-set and fuzzy-set), for the purpose of this study I will be using crisp-set QCA, which analyzes conditions dichotomously—membership for a condition is either in or out., However, as a survey with a 7 point scale was used for this outcome, and not all respondents scored each school, the cutoff for membership in “effective school partnership” is at the average, where scores over 4 are “effective” and scores under 4 are “not effective”. I attempted to use other cutoff methods as well, including at the first quartile, median, third quartile,

mode, as well using the top two or three scores (effective) against the rest (ineffective), and the bottom two or three scores (ineffective) against the rest (effective). Yet, all these cutoff methods besides using the average had 4 (emerging) as a frequent score for multiple schools, which violates the rule of crisp-set QCA, in which an outcome is either present or not present. More specifically, according to Table 3 (see Appendix), which presents the descriptive statistics for partnership outcomes by school, cutoffs using the first quartile, median, third quartile, and mode, would all have at least three schools scored at 4. Additionally, there were two schools that had less than four total scores (both schools only had two scores), which also made it difficult to use the top two or three scores, or bottom two or three scores, as a membership cutoff. Thus, the cutoff at the average, in which no schools' score was exactly 4, is utilized.

### *Truth Table*

The truth table is the main method of analysis using QCA. It uses in depth case knowledge to identify outcomes of interest and different causal conditions, while also identifying negative cases where the outcome is not displayed but seems like it should be. Additionally, the truth table requires the identification of all theoretically plausible conditions to produce an outcome, even if they may not be empirically present. Using extant partnership research and my previous analyses, I have discerned 5 main conditions that produce effective school level partnership: central office support, district union level support, working relationship between principal and school union leader, principal willingness to adapt, and school level structure and process quality (e.g.: properly functioning SLT). It must be noted that the number of possible configurations (all theoretically possible paths to the outcome) grows exponentially with the number of the

conditions (i.e.:  $2^k$ , where  $k$ =number of conditions). Thus, with 5 conditions there are 32 possible configurations. The two main measures of QCA are consistency and coverage. Consistency is the percentage of cases in a given configuration that display the outcome, or the number of cases displaying the outcome divided by total number of cases for a given configuration. Coverage is the relevance of any given causal condition or group of conditions, or the percentage of instances of the outcome that exhibit a certain condition or group of conditions. In other words, consistency measures the sufficiency of configurations, while coverage measures necessity of conditions. Ragin (2008) recommends a minimum measure of .75 for configuration to be “probabilisticly” sufficient, while Fiss (2007) suggests a .90 cutoff for a condition to be necessary.

Table 4 (see Appendix) presents the truth table using the cutoff at the average score response for each school. It shows 5 conditions and 32 possible configurations, though only 8 configurations were empirically observed (highlighted in yellow). The conditions displayed in the top row and denoted in each column are central office support, district union level support, working relationship between principal and school union leader, principal willingness to adapt, and structure and process quality. The conditions are represented in the table by either 1 (present) or 0 (not present) in a given configuration. These are followed by two columns representing whether an effective school or ineffective school partnership were present in the configurations—represented by the number of empirically observed instances of either outcome. Additionally, question marks (??) represent a configuration that has no empirically observed instance, which is an example of limited diversity. These are instances in which a configuration is

theoretically possible, but not empirically observed in the data. The final column shows the measure of consistency for the empirically present configurations.

Out of the 14 schools in the analysis, 10 were ranked by facilitators as successful in partnership. Configurations 5, 18, 21, and 25 all produced the outcome of an effective school partnership. Configuration 5 had four instances of an effective school partnership and no instances of an ineffective school partnership, resulting in a consistency of 1. The present conditions in configuration 5 were district union level support, working relationship between principal and school union leader, principal willingness to adapt, and structure and process quality. Central office support was the only condition not present in this configuration. Configuration 18 had only one instance of an effective school partnership and no instances of an ineffective school partnership, resulting in a consistency of 1. The only present conditions were central office support and district union level support. Configuration 21 had two instances of an effective school partnership and no instances of an ineffective school partnership, also resulting in a consistency of 1. All 5 conditions were present for configuration 21. Configuration 25 had had three instances of an effective school partnership and no instances of an ineffective school partnership, similarly resulting in a consistency of 1. The present conditions for this configuration were central office support, working relationship between principal and school union leader, principal willingness to adapt, and structure and process quality. The only condition not present was district union level support.

Interestingly, for each configuration that was empirically observed with the outcome present (effective school partnership) or the outcome not present (ineffective school partnership), there was no discrepancy between cases. The measure of consistency

for each empirical configuration present in the data (rows highlighted in yellow) was either 1 (all cases produced effective partnership) or 0 (all cases did not produce effective partnership). More importantly, all of the configurations producing the outcome of effective school partnership had a consistency measure of 1, which shows that each of the configurations displaying this outcome meets Ragin's criteria (.75) for being "sufficient". This finding is useful in suggesting that there are multiple sufficient ways to produce an effective partnership within a school. According to the QCA data and the consistency measures, the presence of the following groups of different conditions can produce an effective school partnership: all 5 conditions (configuration 21); district union level support, working relationship between principal and school union leader, principal willingness to adapt, and structure and process quality (configuration 5); central office support and district level support (configuration 18); central office support, working relationship between principal and school union leader, principal willingness to adapt, and structure and process quality (configuration 25); and central office support, working relationship between principal and school union leader, principal willingness to adapt, and structure and process quality (configuration 25). More plainly, this analysis demonstrates that any one of these configurations is sufficient to produce an effective school level partnership.

Further, the QCA also reveals that schools in the same districts seemed to group together under configurations. For example, four of the five schools in one district represented all four cases in configuration 5. As stated above, this configuration had all the conditions present except central office support. Yet, as this district had been practicing partnership for close to 5 years, this finding suggests that schools under the

same district may nonetheless become isomorphic over time in their structure and process of partnership, which in this analysis resulted in four schools exhibiting the same configuration. More importantly, as there is no presence of the central office support condition in the configuration, this indicates that schools within a district may experience isomorphism in partnership even without support from the central office, which can still result in effective school partnerships. However, in a different configuration a similar pattern emerged when looking at the condition of district union level support. In configuration 25, three of the five schools in one district represented all three cases. The schools in this district had not been practicing partnership for more than 2 years, as the partnership was generally led by the central office with district committees. Still, in this configuration the only condition not present was district union level support, which suggests that schools within a district can experience isomorphism in partnership even without support from the district level union, and can produce effective school partnerships.

Both of these configurations described above demonstrate that coupled with the structural, relational, and process oriented conditions that are related to the middle managerial role, either district level union support or central office support can be sufficient for an effective school partnership. Yet, configuration 18 has one case with an effective school partnership, with the present conditions of only central office support and district union level support—the only configuration with an effective school partnership that has both of these conditions present, other than configuration 21 which has all five conditions present. This is contradictory to the previous discussion on configurations 5 and 25, which emphasized the importance of school level conditions that

involve the principal. However, the qualitative data provide a clearer illustration of what was taking place in this school, especially because the facilitator survey had only two responses for this school, whereas there were four or more survey responses for all but two schools (this school being one of them). One of the main union leaders in this district was also a teacher and leader of partnership in this specific school. Although she was not a member of the SLT in order to give other teachers the opportunity to participate, she was actively involved and knowledgeable about the partnership in her school, and suggested that there were multiple process, relational, and structural issues interfering with effective school level collaboration, despite district level union and central office support. As this presents a discrepancy between the qualitative and QCA data, the data source with inside knowledge is likely more appropriate than the two facilitator survey respondents who did not work in this school or district and had limited knowledge of the school partnership. With this in mind, an argument could be made that the lack of these three school level conditions—working relationship between the principal and school union leader, principal willingness to adapt, and structure and process quality—involving the principal do not produce an effective partnership in this case, even if the QCA reveals otherwise.

This above analysis supports the argument in current partnership research regarding the necessity of upper level organizational support for an effective partnership (Kochan et al., 2008; Eaton et al., 2004), however, it also provides more nuance in suggesting that union and management support from the top of the organization may not both be absolutely necessary. Rather one or the other can suffice if structural, relational,

and process related conditions involving middle managers at the middle levels of the organization are present.

Upon further examination of the coverage measure, which helps quantify a level of necessity that a condition has for an outcome, it may be that school level conditions are even more salient and necessary than those at the district level for producing effective school partnerships. Table 5 (see Appendix) presents the measurement of coverage for each of the five conditions. Interestingly, the three school level conditions—working relationship between principal and school union leader, principal willingness to adapt, and structure and process quality—all had a coverage measure of .90. Thus, these conditions meet Fiss' .90 cutoff criteria for being necessary for an outcome. In other words, these three school level conditions were present in 90% of the 10 cases that had an effective school partnership. The measures of the two district level conditions—central office support and district union level support—were .60 and .70, respectively, and therefore these conditions do not meet Fiss' .90 cutoff criteria for being necessary for an outcome, even if they are each sufficient for it.

This finding adds an interesting complexity to research purporting that top level leadership is necessary for a successful partnership (Kochan et al., 2008; Eaton et al., 2004; Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001; Heckscher & Schurman, 1997). It suggests that although top level leadership is sufficient for a successful school level partnership, it may not be as necessary as the school level conditions that involve the principal role in facilitating partnership and being boundary spanners in the system. More specifically, and related to the earlier qualitative analysis, this finding indicates that *how* principals navigate obstacles is crucial to an effective school partnership, which includes the



relationship with their school union representatives; recognizing their potential pseudo collaboration, openness to teacher criticism of their style and role, and willingness to change; their emphasis on small victories regarding process improvements; and their utilization of informal structures that support the formal partnership committees. Thus, directly unpacking these lower level attributes involving the principal and the specific structures, relations, and processes, demonstrates that schools may be able to produce effective partnerships with minimal upper district support if these other lower level conditions are met. This supports and builds on partnership research emphasizing the importance of process quality and *how* interactions happen at the lower levels of the organization (Avgar et al., 2016). Yet, this is also not to say that upper level support is not at all important to an effective school partnership.

Indeed, applying the qualitative data to these above QCA findings, the analysis also shows how district level involvement from the union and central office fluctuated over time and across schools within the 4 districts. In some cases of conflict, contention, or stagnation in partnership, either the district level union or central office became more actively involved in school level structures and processes with the principal. Though these interventions may not have always been permanent and generally occurred on an ad hoc basis, this upper level leadership was indeed important, especially when issues arose at the school level, and when principals and teachers needed assistance in partnership structures, relations, or processes. For example, as discussed in the qualitative analysis, one superintendent stepped into a school and its SLT to directly guide the principal in operating the committee, while also requiring all schools to add a third co-leader on it. The same can be said for the start of partnership in these schools and their districts.

Similar to what research has suggested regarding the importance of upper level leadership during the initiation of partnership (Kochan et al., 2008), schools in this sample needed upper level guidance from the district at least to get started in partnership. Yet, as the QCA demonstrated, in some cases schools were encouraged and supported at the start from the central office or from the union, even if both parties had agreed to pursue the system. Even regarding the partnership training, it was largely either the central office or the district union leadership that signed up and invited school members to attend.

That being said, whether it was leadership turnover, strong principal and union representative relations, or general personal interest, some principals and teachers within their schools produced school level partnership committees that surpassed their district level committees in structure, process, and effectiveness. For example, one district in particular had two strong school level partnerships, but lacked central office support due to apprehension, fear of a new system, and eventual turnover. It is further telling that these two schools' partnerships led most others in structures, relations, processes, and projects among the entire partnership consortium. They also served as models for an effective school partnership, despite this lack of central office support. Additionally, shortly after the start of partnership, another district that originally had central office and district union level support, experienced union leadership turnover at the district level. The new leadership was much more apathetic and sometimes resistant to partnership than the previous leadership, which forced the central office to take the partnership lead. Consequently, the central office first led effective district level committees and then encouraged schools to implement SLTs. The schools then set up their own partnership structures and processes, sometimes building off those that already existed within their

schools, and eventually operated without much central office guidance. Therefore, this further suggests that although upper level leadership from the union or central office is important at the beginning of partnership and during times of conflict, contention, or stagnation, lower level conditions may be able to suffice for an effective partnership with little upper level support.

## Conclusion

More broadly, though this analysis is not refuting the importance of upper level leadership in partnership, it does demonstrate a different way to approach partnership in emphasizing the structures, relations, and processes at the middle of the organization. Research has claimed that mid and lower level conditions are important for partnership, but until now they have never been directly examined. Yet, this is only a start, and much more in the middle of partnerships needs to be explored. As this study is conducted using 14 schools within 4 districts, more research is necessary to confirm and build on these findings, and to demonstrate their generalizability. For example, some interesting questions arise from this study, including whether there is a difference in importance between upper level support from the union or management, and whether it is better to have upper level interventions come from the union or management. It would also be useful to directly and quantifiably measure how influential a middle manager is in facilitating partnership, potentially using a network or relational study. Similarly, as this study demonstrates the salience of the relationship between middle managers and building union leaders, measuring the impact of this relationship on the rest of the organization would also be a way to target and assess the middle of partnership organizations. Additionally, quantitative analysis with a larger sample of schools, or of organizations across other industries, is necessary to confirm these findings and assess generalizability, including a more nuanced and multi-item measurement of effective partnership. Nonetheless, although more research is needed to fully understand the inner workings of partnership, why they fail or succeed, and what specific middle actors can do to influence it, this study provides a necessary step in partnership research, and begins to

directly assess the role of middle management and the structures, relations, and processes that accompany it.

This study also contributes to the limited research and theory on the role of middle management in partnership. More specifically, it examines partnership schools in 4 districts to inductively identify the levels from which different obstacles present themselves to constrain the principal role of facilitating partnership and connecting members of the district as a boundary spanner of the system. It also identifies the ways in which principals themselves, or through the help of other actors, can help address these constraints and potentially overcome them. Finally, the analysis reveals the salience of school level conditions involving the principal and the structures, processes, and relations, which can help produce an effective school partnership even more so than upper organizational conditions. Additionally, this analysis opens up an alternatively useful approach to studying partnership from the middle of the organization, focusing on partnership's middle actors and processes.

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## Appendix

Table 1: Constraints to Principal Role in Partnership

Source	Organizational Level		
	<i>District</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Both</i>
<i>Central Office</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of support and/or representation</li> <li>-Lack of involvement from curriculum supervisors</li> <li>-Accountability and power</li> </ul>		
<i>Union</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Contentious bargaining</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Issues between individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leadership turnover</li> <li>-Institutional barriers and history</li> </ul>
<i>Teachers</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lumping “administration” together</li> </ul>
<i>Managerial Style</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Top-down control</li> <li>-Lack of frequent/smooth communication</li> <li>-Pseudo collaborative</li> </ul>	
<i>Structures and Processes</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Committee overload</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Traditional hierarchy of public education</li> <li>-Creating structures and processes</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Addressing the Constraints of the Principal Role in Partnership**

	<b>Organizational Level</b>			<b>Addressing the Constraint</b>
<b>Source</b>	<i>District</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Both</i>	
<b>Central Office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of support and/or representation</li> <li>-Lack of involvement from curriculum supervisors</li> <li>- Accountability and power</li> </ul>			-Central office assistance
<b>Union</b>	-Contentious bargaining	-Issues between individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leadership turnover</li> <li>-Institutional barriers and history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Persistence and finding success in the partnership process</li> <li>-Utilizing school union leadership</li> </ul>
<b>Teachers</b>		-Lack of participation	-Lumping “administration” together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Persistence and finding success in the partnership process</li> <li>-Utilizing school union leadership</li> </ul>
<b>Managerial Style</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Top-down control</li> <li>-Lack of frequent/smooth communication</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Identifying and addressing pseudo collaboration</li> </ul>

		-Pseudo collaborative		-Central office assistance -Guiding language
<i>Structures and Processes</i>		-Committee overload	-Traditional hierarchy of public education -Creating structures and processes	-Implementing informal structures -Central office assistance

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Partnership Outcomes by School**

<b>School</b>	<i>Average</i>	<i>First quartile</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Third quartile</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>District 1 Elementary School 1</i>	4.5	4	4	5.5	4	0.87
<i>District 1 Elementary School 2</i>	4.75	4	4.5	5.75	4	0.83
<i>District 1 Middle School 1</i>	3	2	3	4	3	1.1
<i>District 1 Middle School 2</i>	6.57	6	7	7	7	0.49
<i>District 1 High School</i>	6.57	6	7	7	7	0.49
<i>District 2 Elementary School 1</i>	5.57	4	6	7	6	1.4
<i>District 2 Elementary School 2</i>	5.6	4.5	6	6.5	6	1.02
<i>District 2 Middle School</i>	5.2	3.5	5	6	6	1
<i>District 2 High School</i>	2.43	2	3	3	3	0.73

<i>District Elementary School</i>	<b>3</b>	5.5	NA	5.5	NA	NA	0.5
<i>District 3 Middle School</i>		5	NA	5	NA	NA	1
<i>District 3 High School</i>		5.25	4.25	5.5	6	6	0.83
<i>District Elementary School</i>	<b>4</b>	3.2	2	4	4	4	1
<i>District Intermediate School</i>	<b>4</b>	3.4	2.5	4	4	4	0.8

**Table 4: Truth Table using Average Outcome Membership Cutoff**

<b>Configuration #</b>	<b>Central Office Support</b>	<b>District Union Level Support</b>	<b>Working Relationship Between Principal and School Union Leader</b>	<b>Principal Willingness to Adapt</b>	<b>Structure and Process Quality</b>	<b>Effective School Partnership</b>	<b>Ineffective School Partnership</b>	<b>Consistency</b>
1	0	0	0	0	0	??	??	
2	0	0	0	0	1	??	??	
3	0	0	0	1	1	??	??	
4	0	0	1	1	1	??	??	
5	0	1	1	1	1	4	0	1
6	0	1	0	1	0	??	??	
7	0	1	1	1	0	??	??	
8	0	1	0	1	1	??	??	
9	0	0	1	1	0	??	??	
10	0	0	1	0	1	??	??	
11	0	1	1	0	1	??	??	
12	0	1	0	0	1	??	??	
13	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
14	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
15	0	0	1	0	0	??	??	
16	0	1	0	1	0	??	??	
17	1	0	0	0	0	??	??	
18	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
19	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
20	1	1	1	1	0	??	??	
21	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	1
22	1	1	1	0	1	??	??	
23	1	0	0	1	1	??	??	
24	1	1	0	0	1	??	??	
25	1	0	1	1	1	3	0	1
26	1	1	0	1	1	??	??	
27	1	1	0	1	0	??	??	
28	1	0	1	1	0	??	??	
29	1	0	1	0	1	??	??	
30	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
31	1	0	0	1	0	??	??	
32	1	1	0	1	0	??	??	
<b>Total</b>						<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	

**Table 5: Coverage of Conditions**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Coverage</b>
<i>Central Office Support</i>	.60
<i>District Union Level Support</i>	.70
<i>Working Relationship Between Principal and School Union Leader</i>	.90
<i>Principal Willingness to Adapt</i>	.90
<i>Structure and Process Quality</i>	.90