

Conflict and Cooperation: Micropolitical Forces Impacting Coaches' Access

Abstract

Coaches develop and use strategies to gain access to teachers' classrooms to support teacher learning and instructional improvement. These strategies respond to the specific conditions in which coaches work, including organizational structures and interpersonal factors that can either facilitate or impede access. In this interview study of 28 content-focused coaches in one district, we used a micropolitical lens to explore the forces that influenced coaches' access to teachers' classrooms. Ultimately, we identified nine distinct forces that either supported or constrained coaches' access to classrooms. These forces were bound together in a micropolitical system of interpersonal and structural forces influenced by larger macropolitical forces. Interpersonal forces emanated from three kinds of actors in the school organization: administrators, teachers, and the coaches themselves. Implications for the application of micropolitical theory to future research on the negotiations inherent to coaching and the implications for school districts seeking to establish an effective coaching program are discussed.

Keywords: Coaching, Professional Development, Policy, Micropolitics, Instructional Leadership

Conflict and Cooperation: Micropolitical Forces Impacting Coaches' Access

Coaches are positioned in schools with the goal of supporting teacher learning and instructional improvement (Russell et al., 2020; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). Indeed, there is much optimism about coaches' ability to support teaching and learning given theoretical and empirical support for this professional development structure. Coaches are thought to embody aspects of high-quality professional development, such as closely attending to teachers' immediate problems of practice, having a content focus, and providing active and sustained learning opportunities for individuals and groups of teachers (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017). Furthermore, growing empirical evidence indicates that coaches can have a positive impact on teachers (Author, 2017; Gibbons et al., 2017) and students (Author, 2020a, 2021; Campbell & Malkus, 2011), and it may be that elementary teachers can particularly benefit from content-focused coaching as generalists who are often not domain experts in all of the content that they teach.

However, accomplishing their central goal of supporting teaching and learning requires that coaches have access to teachers' classrooms and professional practice to engage in the work of coaching. In some schools, teachers may have the authority to determine when, how, and for what work they grant coaches access to their classrooms. Coaches, then, must work to gain access as a prerequisite to engaging in the very coaching work that can contribute to teacher learning. Our prior investigations into precisely how coaches worked to gain access revealed a nuanced set of strategies that coaches developed, deployed, and coordinated in deliberate and patterned ways to negotiate this terrain (Authors, 2022a, 2022b). Gaining access was found to be complex political work that coaches must enact but that the field is only beginning to understand.

The current study builds upon this prior work by investigating the micropolitical forces that actively shaped coaches' access to teachers' classrooms.

In our prior studies of 28 content-focused coaches (Authors, 2022a, 2022b), we found that coaches developed and used 41 distinct strategies of six types to gain access to classrooms to accomplish the central goal of their jobs. Coaches used relational and structural strategies to position themselves as trustworthy and knowledgeable resources embedded in the daily work of the school institution. These relational and structural strategies were often used in conjunction with four other types of strategies that aimed to move the coach into classrooms as a welcomed presence: direct offers (e.g., offering coaching), indirect strategies (e.g., being visible and available), cloaked coaching (e.g., avoiding naming joint work as coaching), and pitching in strategies (e.g., coach serves as a classroom helper). These findings were consistent across the entire coach population regardless of the discipline coached (i.e., English Language Arts [ELA], mathematics, or technology), school level (i.e., elementary or secondary), and the level of coach experience (i.e., novice or experienced).

Despite these consistencies, it is critical to note that coaches' access-granting strategies are developed and deployed in response to the specific contexts in which they work and the individuals with whom they work. That is, coaches used a diverse set of strategies precisely because teachers are not identical, institutional circumstances like policy and logistics shift over time, and the goals and roles of school leaders evolve. How these external factors influence coaches' access to teachers' classrooms and practice is the focus of the current study. Other research has touched upon barriers that impede coaches' access or the conditions that support it. Such prior literature has indicated that the following broad categories may serve as barriers or supports to coaches' access: policies and/or initiatives (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Poglinco et

al., 2003), administrators (Author, 2020b; Camburn et al., 2008; Mangin, 2005; Matsumura et al., 2009), teachers (Chval et al., 2010; Ellington et al., 2017; Hartman, 2013; Mangin, 2005), and coaches themselves (Hartman, 2013; Mangin, 2005; Poglinco et al., 2003). However, this empirical work largely identified these factors incidental to other investigations, rather than through a systematic analysis of access, rendering the external factors that shape coach access under-theorized.

We contend that the work coaches do to gain access to classrooms is the essence of *micropolitics*, how individuals in an organization use power to negotiate one another and their contexts to accomplish their goals (Blase, 1991). In this paper, we use micropolitics as a theoretical lens for understanding systems and structures of power that support or impede coaches' access to classrooms for coaching, with implications for district and school leaders aiming to foster effective coaching programs. In the following sections, we describe this theoretical approach, connect micropolitics to the work of coaches, and conceptualize the institutional conditions that may impact coaches' access.

Micropolitics and the Work of Coaches

Schools are inherent political spaces. At a macro-level, schools have institutional goals, structures, and systems of actors, and are subject to both internal and external politics in coordinating action. On a micro-level, within the organization, individual actors work in concert and conflict to accomplish both institutional and personal goals. It is at this level that micropolitics operates. As Blase (1991) conceptualized:

Micropolitics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to

influence and/or protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously or unconsciously motivated, may have political “significance” in a given situation. Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. Moreover, macro- and micropolitical factors frequently interact. (p.11)

From this perspective, actors within schools, such as teachers, coaches, and principals, develop and use strategies to accomplish their goals, influence others, or protect their interests. These strategies are rooted in differing goals, beliefs, or values between individuals or groups. For instance, a principal may have the goal of raising standardized test scores, while a group of teachers may have the goal of learning about and implementing a particular instructional strategy. The principal may develop strategies to influence the teachers to focus attention on efforts to prepare for testing, while teachers may act to protect their interest in devoting time to their chosen pedagogical approach.

Micropolitics in schools is most frequently described and studied by examining how different individuals or groups interact with one another and how they use their power to accomplish their goals (e.g., Blase & Bjork, 2010; Galey-Horn & Woulfin, 2021, Malen & Cochran, 2014). As individuals and groups seek to accomplish their goals, they must contend with other actors in the political landscape of the school organization. Individual actors or groups (e.g., teachers, coaches, principals, district administrators), with differing roles, goals, power, and resources, interact with one another in ways that can support or impede progress toward those goals. In the example above, the principal could act to restrict resources to the teachers that might support their pedagogical work, or the teachers might strategically align their pedagogical efforts with the principal’s goal and recruit support for their work.

However, the field of micropolitics acknowledges that individuals do not just contend with one another when negotiating progress toward their goals; they are subject to structural considerations within the organization and to macropolitical forces acting upon and influencing the organization's internal political domain. Structural and macropolitical forces have to do with the structure of the organization itself (e.g., district or school schedules, curriculum, supervision hierarchies) and the district's external environment (e.g., state policy, population served, community attitudes and needs, testing). The teachers in our previous example seeking to implement a particular pedagogical approach are subject to macropolitical forces, such as the ways schools are evaluated by the state and content standards for instruction, as well as structural forces, including how much planning time they are allocated by school schedules and the professional development support made available by the district.

At any of these levels - the interpersonal, the structural, and the macropolitical - actors may receive or recruit cooperation or face conflict. Actors develop strategies to negotiate the conditions in their organizations, including both cooperative and conflictive processes and structures, as they work toward their goals (Blase, 1991). Cooperation and conflict are defined broadly in micropolitics to include conditions in the organization that either facilitate or impede the pursuit of one's goals (Blase, 1991, 2005). These can include cooperation and conflict with other actors such as a principal or a group of teachers with aligned interests, and cooperative or conflictive conditions generated by structural and macropolitical forces, such as school schedules or state standards.

Cooperative and conflictive forces are two sides of the same coin. Often the presence or absence of a single organizational feature can make accomplishing goals easier or harder (Blase & Bjork, 2010). For instance, Blase and Bjork (2010) reviewed literature which showed that

principals who attempted to exert decision-making control impeded educational reforms, while principals who shared decision-making with teachers facilitated reforms. Here the principal's orientation to authority could be either a cooperative or conflictive force within a district's goal of implementing systemic educational change. Given this relationship, we conceptualize forces as not merely cooperative *or* conflictive, but as aspects of the organization that could potentially facilitate or impede how actors work toward their goals, depending on the specific circumstances they face.

While micropolitics has been frequently applied to examining the negotiations between teachers, principals, and other administrators (e.g., Blase, 1993, 2005; Blase & Bjork, 2010), recent work has found this to be a fruitful theoretical lens for understanding the work of coaches (Authors, 2022a, 2022b; Galey-Horn & Woulfin, 2021). In some schools, coaches are hierarchically positioned laterally to teachers but are charged with influencing the work of teachers by supporting teacher learning and instructional improvement (Russell et al., 2020; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017). They often work closely with principals and other administrators to coordinate their work and are typically considered instructional leaders themselves (Neumerski, 2013; Spillane et al., 2003). While all actors in schools are subject to conditions both within and outside the organization which might facilitate or impede their work, coaches often serve as intermediaries between state and district policy and implementation of that policy in schools (Woulfin, 2018), making structural and macropolitical forces particularly salient for coaches' daily work. Micropolitics, then, provides a theoretical approach for understanding how coaches navigate their position in schools and district hierarchies, their relationships with other actors, and the structural and macropolitical forces they face in accomplishing their goal of supporting teacher learning and instructional improvement.

Conceptualizing the Conditions that Impact Coach Access

The strategies coaches developed for gaining access identified in our prior work were often linked in coach interviews to conditions in the school organization and the politics between actors (Authors, 2022a, 2022b). For instance, coaches frequently cited using the existing school structure of teacher meetings as a venue to cultivate access, while others alluded to negotiating access with hesitant teachers by simply avoiding naming what they were doing as coaching, and thereby skirting or diminishing resistance. Micropolitics suggests that coaches developed these strategies to accomplish their goal of working in classrooms with teachers to support their learning and instructional improvement in the context of the organization's actors, structure, and macropolitical context (Blase, 1991). Each of these types of conditions has the potential to impact coach access.

While coaches have the central goal of supporting teacher learning and instructional improvement (Campbell & Malkus, 2011), and access is a proximal goal to support this effort, the other actors in schools have their own goals. The goals of other actors may align or conflict with the coach's goals, which could, in turn, facilitate or impede coaches' access. Teachers have the central goal of supporting student learning. If they view their own learning with the coach as furthering student learning, this alignment may facilitate coach access. However, if, for instance, a teacher is focused on supporting student learning in reading, this goal may impede a mathematics coach's access as the teacher puts their energy into literacy instruction. Principals have several goals, including supporting overall student learning, fostering a productive work environment, managing the school administratively, and servicing the district's goals, each of which is part of effectively running a school (Neumerski, 2013; Spillane et al., 2003). District administrators likewise have multiple goals, which can range from increasing test scores or

teacher retention to professional development and curriculum initiatives, among others. Just as with teachers, the principal and district administrators might view the coach's work as aligned with their goals, or not. As these actors work to achieve their goals, within their own beliefs, their efforts may intersect or conflict (see Blase & Bjork, 2010) creating conditions that facilitate or inhibit coach access.

Further, coaches seek to gain access to classrooms for coaching in the context of their school and district's organizational structure and the larger macropolitical context. School or district policies that impact instruction, such as curriculum, professional development schedules and resources, and instructional calendars, have the potential to impact coaching (Author, 2020b; Stein, 2022; Woulfin, 2018) and, ultimately, coach access. Similarly the community context (e.g., demographics, parent attitudes) and the macropolitical context (e.g., state level testing policies, content standards) all implicate the work of coaches (Author, 2022c; Malen & Cochran, 2014). Access may be constrained or supported by these conditions as they describe the nature of instructional improvements aimed for (and held accountable to), provide (or limit) the resources for these efforts, and create (or constrain) opportunities to fulfill those goals. Access can be conceived of as relating to how these conditions intersect with the goals of the coach and the goals of other actors.

We hypothesize that interpersonal, structural, and macropolitical forces may either facilitate or constrain coaches' access to classrooms as they strive to support teacher learning and instructional improvement. Precisely which forces impact access is the focus of the current study. In this study, we draw on a micropolitical perspective to qualitatively examine interviews with 28 content-focused coaches from one school district, asking: What cooperative and conflictive forces impact coaches' access to classrooms?

Methods

Context, Participants, and Case Selection

This qualitative interview study took place in a public school district located in a southeastern, metropolitan area of the United States, which we refer to as Southampton. This school district enrolled about 14,000 students across 11 elementary, three middle and three high schools. Given that Southampton placed a high-premium on providing teachers with ongoing learning opportunities, the district invested heavily in content-focused instructional coaches who coached teachers in a single academic discipline (i.e., mathematics, English Language Arts [ELA], technology). At the time of the study, Southampton was focused on promoting a student-centered coaching model (Sweeney, 2010), which has the goal of creating shifts in teachers' practice and learning by focusing on students instead of "fixing" the teacher.

For the current study, we interviewed 28 content-focused coaches in Southampton. These coaches had full-time release from their teaching responsibilities, reported to either their building principal or a district-level administrator, did not evaluate teachers, and had the primary goal of working with teachers on issues related to teacher learning and instructional improvement. The majority of the coaches were stationed at a single school. Southampton invested in the coaches' ongoing professional development. Each disciplinary cohort of coaches met either once or twice a month with a district-level administrator who facilitated their professional learning experiences. As a group, these coaches were experienced classroom teachers (4-30 years of teaching experience) and had taught across a wide-range of grade levels (K-12). Some of the coaches had been coaching since the beginning of Southampton's coaching program, while others were just beginning their coaching careers. Of the 28 coaches, two worked across multiple

school levels, two worked only in high schools, four worked only in middle schools, and 20 worked only in elementary schools. Additional participant information can be found in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1]

Southampton was purposively selected (Yin, 2018) as our school district for three reasons. First, as discussed above, the district had a particularly diverse group of coaches, as they had a wide range of coaching experience, coached across various disciplines, and worked at different school levels. This coaching population provided us with diverse coaching experiences across a large organization, which enabled us to develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the conflictive and cooperative forces coaches faced while striving to gain access. Second, through preliminary inquiries with district-level administrators, it was clear that Southampton had made efforts to institutionalize coaching (Woulfin, 2020) as a professional support for teachers. Coaches were provided with ongoing learning opportunities so they could deepen their understanding about how to most effectively coach teachers, and given structured professional development time at their school sites to work with teachers on issues related to instructional improvement. To us, this signaled that Southampton coaches were largely supported to engage in their work, and this represented a prime site in which to understand our phenomenon of interest. Finally, our prior work exploring the micropolitical strategies these coaches leveraged to gain access (Author, 2022a; Author, 2022b) revealed that coaches needed a diverse suite of strategies to gain entry to teachers' classrooms. We hypothesized that these strategies were responding to cooperative and conflictive forces within the organization. In this study, we further our exploration of access-granting strategies by examining the organizational conditions under which and in response to they were developed.

Data Sources

The second author engaged coaches in semi-structured, one-on-one interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) during the fall of 2019. The interviews lasted between 13 and 51 minutes (mean of 26 minutes). During the interviews, coaches were asked questions about the strategies they leveraged to gain access to teachers' classrooms, their barriers to access, and the conditions within their school and district that enhanced their access. We asked questions such as: "Describe the general level of access that you have to teachers' classrooms to do coaching work", "Describe the strategies you use to gain access to teachers' classrooms", "Describe the challenges you encountered when trying to gain access to teachers' classrooms", and "What makes it easier to gain access to teachers' classrooms?" All interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed for analysis.

Analytic Technique

Interview transcripts were qualitatively coded by both authors in four rounds. In the first round of coding, both authors searched for instances across the full transcripts in which the coaches described external forces that impacted their ability to gain access to teachers' classrooms to support teaching and learning. Consistent with Blase (1991), such forces existed outside of the coaches' locus of control and are conceptually distinct from micropolitical strategies which represent actions that coaches themselves take to gain access. For example, in describing such external forces, Sadie stated, "I find that elementary teachers are very welcoming. 'Open the door! Come on in!'" External forces, such as whether certain sub-populations of teachers were naturally more inclined to welcome a coach into their classrooms, were outside of the coaches' control and represented forces that shaped access.

In the second round of coding, we explored all excerpts that had been tagged with the broad external forces code, and coded them as conflictive or cooperative. Consistent with Blase

and Bjork (2010), conflictive forces impeded coaches' access, while cooperative forces facilitated coaches' access. To illustrate, the example from Sadie was coded as a cooperative force as, according to Sadie, elementary teachers were eager to receive coaches' help, which ultimately enhanced her access in elementary schools. In contrast, Lauren described a salient impediment to her access: "Lots of things get thrown on my plate just because there's nobody else to do them. And I don't mind doing it, but sometimes it interferes with me being in classrooms supporting teachers." According to Lauren, when others, such as school administrators, assigned coaches duties other than coaching, her access was impeded.

In the third round of coding, we inductively coded specific barriers or supportive conditions. When naming these codes, we initially drew upon participants' language, as a form of in vivo coding (Miles et al., 2020), and then modified code names as we collapsed related codes and refined definitions. For instance, the example from Sadie about elementary teachers from above was coded as Eager Teacher Learners, while the example from Lauren about additional duty assignments was coded as Administrator Assigns Coach Other Duties than Coaching. This resulted in the identification of 41 cooperative and 28 conflictive conditions.

In the final round of coding, we drew on our theoretical framing to group these finer codes into larger categories based on the source from which they originated: interpersonal, structural, and macropolitical. Interpersonal forces were those that emanated from actors; within the interpersonal forces, the specific actors from which the force emerged were further coded. For instance, the examples from Lauren and Sadie above both stemmed from actors at their school buildings, namely teachers and administrators. Structural Forces related to conditions within the district organization, including schedules, policies, and curriculum under the control of the school or district. Macropolitical Forces originated from the context in which the district

was situated, including state policies and community attitudes and needs, and were outside the district's locus of control. We created matrices to identify whether or not each coach had mentioned each code identified in the analysis described above, rather than how many times each coach mentioned a specific condition.

Finally, we examined all codes within each of the source categories (e.g., interpersonal-administrator, interpersonal-coach, interpersonal-teacher, structural, macropolitical) to determine what larger themes existed across the cooperative and conflictive conditions. Consistent with micropolitical theory (Blase & Bjork, 2010), cooperative and conflictive forces are often related, as when the presence of one condition supported coaches' access and its absence functioned as a barrier. As such we sought to describe the underlying forces that connected our 69 individual codes. Grouping codes conceptually, we identified nine forces that shaped coaches' access to classrooms for coaching. Fifty-three of our 69 codes were included as part of these forces (see Table 2 in the appendix for how codes were grouped into forces). Sixteen codes were not sufficiently connected to any larger theme or one another and were reported by a small number of coaches (range = 1 - 5); these were excluded from the results. We then used the matrices to produce counts of the number of coaches who reported any coded conditions within each force to determine the prevalence of these forces across the data corpus.

Findings

Coaches identified a total of nine forces within and beyond their organizations that influenced their access to classrooms for coaching. Drawing on micropolitical theory, we conceptualized these forces in three nested spheres: interpersonal forces, structural forces, and macropolitical forces (see Figure 1). Interpersonal forces emanated from three types of actors within the school district: administrators, coaches themselves, and teachers. These actors were

influenced by structural forces within the school district that promoted or inhibited coach access, including structures of time and district policies. Most distally, access was impacted by larger macropolitical forces from outside the school district organization, including state policies. Each force could function to support or hamper coach access depending on the specific conditions coaches encountered. In the sections that follow, we describe these nine interpersonal, structural, and macropolitical forces and how they impacted coaches' access to classrooms for coaching.

[Insert Figure 1]

Interpersonal Forces

Interpersonal forces were those that originated from the three classes of actors involved in coach access: administrators, coaches themselves, and teachers. Interpersonal forces came from the attitudes, attributes, histories, and actions of these actors, which were outside the coach's locus of control but which could ease or impede coaches' access to classrooms for coaching. Of the nine forces we identified, six were interpersonal, with three originating from administrators, one from the coaches themselves, and two from teachers. All 28 coaches reported multiple interpersonal forces shaping their access to classrooms for coaching. In the following sections, we detail these forces by the actors from which they emanated.

Administrators

Coaches identified three interpersonal forces stemming from school- and district-level administrators as shaping their access to teachers' classrooms. First, coaches cited administrators' value for the coach's role as a force. Second, these values further manifested as direct actions by the administrators that either facilitated or constrained coaches' access. Finally, coaches described the ways in which administrators fostered a culture of professional learning in

the school as a force which influenced access. In total, all 28 coaches named one or more of these three administrator forces as a factor in their access to classrooms for coaching.

Administrator Value for the Coach's Role. The value that school and district administrators placed on the coach's role was a central force in shaping the coaches' access to classrooms. Of the 28 coaches interviewed, 20 cited either the presence or absence of administrator value for and an accurate understanding of coaching as influencing access. The coaches in this study viewed their role as supporting teacher learning and the development of teaching practices; coaches described that when the principal, in particular, shared this vision and viewed it as important work, this alignment facilitated access.

The coaches frequently discussed how having supportive administrators at their respective schools as well as the district office enhanced their access to teachers' classrooms. Lauren said, "My principal is amazing," while Carla stated, "Even at the central office, Dr. Jackson is super supportive." At the school-level, coaches felt supported when their principals checked in with them, inquired about their needs, and promoted an open door policy regarding back-and-forth communication with the coach. As Nora shared, "She's just fully supportive. She'll pop in and do the same thing to me that I would do to teachers. 'You doing ok? What can I do for you?'"

Conversely, other coaches discussed administrators who they felt lacked understanding or value for the coach's role as a limitation on access. Coaches perceived that when administrators did not understand the goals of their role as focused on promoting teacher learning and instructional growth or they simply did not value coaching as contributing to these goals, access was hindered. As Joseph put it, "administrators can really set the tone for coaching and really encourage it," but in the absence of such value and encouragement, teachers may be

hesitant to engage with the coach. Relatedly, some coaches saw the administrator's approach to the coach's role as an impediment to access, particularly when they viewed the coach as an administrator, evaluator, or fixer of teachers. Administrators who saw the coach as an informant about teachers or who thought that changes in teachers' classrooms could be dictated or occur quickly undermined the coaches' messages to teachers about what to expect from them and from coaching more broadly. Molly experienced this conflict and felt that the differing messages that teachers received from her and from her administrator "confuse[d] the teachers." She went on to say that the administrators in her school are "still into fixing the teacher sometimes. So, I'll get a comment or question about 'What have you seen in this teacher's classroom?... I don't want to say what I've seen in teachers' rooms because I feel like I'm in an awkward position then," in relation to teacher trust.

The administrators' value for and understanding of the coach's role was a force that shaped coaches' access to classrooms by either making school leadership and professional learning efforts coherent or disjointed and, ultimately, shaping the way that teachers viewed coaching and the coach.

Direct Administrator Actions to Promote and Protect Coaching. The alignment between the coach's and administrator's understanding of and value for coaching fed into a second force, administrators' actions to promote and protect coaching, cited by 21 of the 28 coaches interviewed. Administrators acted on their ideas about the coach's role in ways that either supported or constrained access to classrooms.

The coaches provided specific details about the many forms in which direct administrative action manifested itself at their respective school sites that ultimately strengthened their access to teachers' classrooms. For example, coaches felt supported by their administrators

when coaches were given autonomy over coaching issues, such as scheduling, who to coach, and the focus of coaching. Such autonomy enhanced the coaches' access as it enabled them to be in classrooms and support teachers on issues related to instructional improvement. As Molly put it, "They give me a lot of autonomy to do the things I need to do." Relatedly, some coaches felt that supportive administrators enhanced their access by protecting the coaches' time and not assigning additional duties unrelated to supporting teaching and learning, such as serving as interventionists or substitute teaching. As Claire reported, "What do they [administrators] do that helps me? They do not give me a lot of extra tasks that I have to do that would take me out of classrooms." Coaches also felt that their access to classrooms was supported by administrators when they were provided with material resources, such as material texts, to use in the context of professional development with teachers. Some coaches felt supported when their administrators explicitly issued directives to teachers to engage in coaching work. Administrators may have issued such directives based on standardized test data or their own observations of teachers' instruction, or taking into account certain sub-populations of teachers who may need enhanced support, such as new teachers. As Mia stated, "New teachers know from the administrator already that I'm going to be working with them." At the district-level, coaches felt supported by administrators when they provided ongoing learning opportunities for the coaches as well as materials for them to use with teachers and students at their school sites.

Another key element of this force shaping access were administrators who publicly positioned coaches to teachers as a form of professional support. Oftentimes, this involved the administrator making public statements to teachers at faculty or one-on-one meetings that the coach's role is to support teaching and learning and serve in a non-evaluative capacity. In this vein, Molly stated, "Our principal has laid that out with the teachers, that everybody's room is

open game for the coaches. That it's not a sign of weakness for the coaches to be in your classrooms.”

Alternatively, some administrators took actions that coaches described as inhibiting access. Administrators at times assigned the coach duties other than coaching, such as serving as the testing coordinator. Coaches viewed these additional duties as diluting and confusing their role. Coaches described having duties “thrown on you” (Molly) or “pushed to your plate” which “definitely interferes with me being in classrooms” (Ayanna). Finally, coaches also pointed toward an overall lack of administrator direction as a barrier to access. In these cases, administrators who were seen as “hands-off” (Sydney) or “not partnering with me” (Ayanna) or from whom there was “not really a whole lot of guidance” (Ebony) about the leader’s instructional or professional growth goals made it more difficult for coaches to marshal access as part of larger professional development efforts.

Administrator actions, stemming from their understanding of and value for the coach’s role, influenced the ease of gaining access to teachers’ classrooms for coaching. Administrators could provide or withhold material resources, protections for coaches’ time, verbal support for coaching to teachers, or expectations that teachers work with the coach.

Administrator Fosters a Culture of Professional Learning. The coaches perceived that their access to teachers’ classrooms was enhanced when their administrators fostered a culture of professional learning at their respective schools, which was described by more than one-third of the coaches (10 out of 28). Administrators cultivated a school culture of professional learning by communicating a vision for high-quality instruction. This involved creating norms of an open-door policy and collegiality among teachers, expecting that teachers would make their practice public to support their own learning, and articulating a clear vision for instructional

improvement. Ultimately, such a culture of professional learning and vision for instruction enhanced coaches' access as teachers understood that there would be a continued focus on their ongoing professional development and that coaches were part of this joint effort. Mindy shared, "Coaching is just part of our climate, our atmosphere," while Claire stated, "Teachers know that the culture of the school is that the coaches are in and out of the classrooms. It's just understood that that's the expectation." Furthermore, Dawn said, "Our principal has done a great job of creating an environment where...I will be walking through [classrooms] at any time...teachers—they see me and they'll ask for help." Coaches viewed a culture of professional learning, cultivated by administrators, as coherent with their goals of supporting teacher learning and therefore a force that shaped access.

Coaches

Coaches described one interpersonal force which emanated from coaches themselves: the perception of the coach's competence or authority. It is important to note that this force is distinct from strategies the coach might use to gain access, because, while perceptions can be shaped over time, coaches attributed existing perceptions to factors outside the coach's locus of control (Authors, 2022a, 2022b). Of the 28 coaches interviewed, 19 identified the perception of their competence or authority as shaping access.

Perception of the Coach's Competence or Authority. Coaches described a number of personal attributes that they believed influenced how teachers viewed the coach's competence or authority and how coaches perceived their own competence or authority. Central to these perceptions were the coach's prior experience as a teacher and as a coach. Coaches who had been in their role for a number of years saw that experience as positioning them as trustworthy and competent coaches among teachers. Similarly, coaches' prior educational experiences,

including degrees, credentials, training, and teaching experience, were seen by coaches as conferring instructional authority that in some cases enhanced access. Madison attributed some of her access to her teaching experience, saying, “some of it [my access] is they [teachers] trust me because I have years of experience more than them.” Alternatively, a lack of experience could muddy the perception of the coach’s competence or authority. Coaching demands that the coach have a wide-range of pedagogical content knowledge which they may not have developed as a teacher across all the grades they are tasked with coaching. These factors both limited teachers’ trust for the coaches and coaches’ trust in themselves. As Sydney reported, “I’ve taught first grade, second grade, and third grade. Kindergarten, I’ve figured them out and they don’t scare me...Fourth and fifth scare me because... I’ve never taught it before. So I’m like, ‘I don’t know how I can help you out because I haven’t taught that before’.” Similarly, Claire believed that teachers would not trust her, saying, “That was the thing that I think I was most nervous about because I had been in upper elementary for so long. And I fully anticipated, as they should have, the K, 1, 2 people really questioning, ‘What did I know?’”

Consistent with prior research (Hartman, 2013), where coaches had worked prior to becoming a coach seemed to influence the perception of the coach’s competence and authority, though in sometimes conflicting ways. Having been a teacher in the same school in which they were currently stationed as a coach was perceived by some as supporting access, positioning the coach as known and possibly respected, either socially or professionally. Further, this experience in the school also gave the coach background knowledge on teachers, the history of the school’s professional development efforts, and the relationships among actors. As Tracey, a coach who had been at her school site for 16 years, said, “I think I was already at a huge advantage, because I’d already built those relationships with those teachers.” Eliza, who had also been a teacher at

the same school before becoming a coach, pointed out that, “if I were at a new school, then that’s a whole other learning curve of understanding those people and having them trust me, and just know what my background is as an educator.” For these coaches, the relationships they had already established before becoming coaches were foundational for gaining access. Similarly, some coaches saw being stationed in a new school building as impeding access, because they did not have pre-existing relationships with teachers or the principal they could leverage. However, other coaches who remained in the same school when transitioning from the role of teacher to coach pointed to a lack of trust in their coaching ability, because teachers saw them as a novice coach.

Coaches reported that this complex network of factors fostered or undermined the perception that the coaches were competent in their roles and authorities in the disciplines and grade levels they coached. This perception could then lead teachers to open classroom doors for coaches in whom they felt confident or hold a doubtful coach at arm’s length.

Teachers

Interpersonal forces that impacted coach access to classrooms also emanated from teachers. We identified two such forces: teacher openness to coaching or professional learning and teacher interest in the focus of coaching. These teacher stances toward coaching and the content of coaching could either facilitate or impede access, and taken together, these forces originating with teachers were reported by 26 of the 28 coaches in this study.

Teacher Openness to Coaching or Professional Learning. Coaches described some teachers as more open to coaching or professional learning more broadly, and they viewed this stance as a meaningful force which influenced whether teachers might grant coaches access to their classrooms for coaching. Twenty-six of the 28 coaches reported factors that either

contributed to or limited teachers' openness to coaching or professional learning. Most prominently, particular populations of teachers were viewed by coaches as having a predisposition to be open to engaging with the coach and providing access: new teachers, eager teacher learners, and struggling teachers. New teachers, whether new to the profession, school, or grade level, were seen as open to coaching and supporting access, because, Ebony said, "they're hungry". Similarly, Dawn said: "They want the support and they need the help. And they're open to [me] coming [in their classrooms] anytime and finding me anytime." Struggling teachers were described by coaches as those experiencing challenges in the classroom with which they desired support and, as a result, were welcoming of coaching. Carla said, "They feel like they're struggling, they'll come and ask me [for support]." Eager teacher learners were seen as just as inviting, but rather than struggle as the motive, these teachers were viewed as simply wanting to learn and develop their pedagogical practice through coaching. Coaches described the group of teachers as "excited" (Rashanna), "life-long learners" (Molly), "go-getters" (Janice), and "willing" and "welcoming" (Sadie). Overall, coaches perceived that these teacher populations supported their access with their preexisting positive stance toward participating in coaching.

Alternatively, some teachers were viewed as having dispositions that opposed coaching. Coaches often referred to "strong personalities" (Tameka) and those who are "closed off" (Sharon) or "resist" coaching (Mindy, Molly). Other teachers were hesitant to work with the coach, but coaches perceived this to be the result of poor prior experiences with coaching (rather than with the current coach) or professional development which "stressed them out" (Molly). Coaches also noted that some teachers were "striving for perfection" (Sydney) or where "the mindset is a little bit more fixed" (Ayanna) were more likely to express hostility to coaching or behave defensively when approached about disciplines they felt less confident in teaching, such

as mathematics. These attitudes and insecurities could pervade entire teaching teams, where a norm developed that the teachers on a given team do not engage with the coach, creating an inertia that coaches reported was difficult to change.

Finally, coaches described that access was facilitated when teachers had a clear understanding of the coach's role as supporting teacher learning and instructional improvement from a non-evaluative stance, and access was impeded when they did not. Carla felt her access benefited from this shared understanding, saying, "We [teachers and I] have a clear picture of what my role has been since I started. And I just feel like I'm not a threat to teachers. They understand my purpose and why I'm in there." In contrast, Claire reported that teachers' lack of understanding of the coaching role was her biggest barrier to access: "Misperception about what my job is. They really, some of them really do want me to come in and do some stuff with their kids so they can get their papers graded," rather than engage in professional learning, while other teachers saw her role as an interventionist working with students rather than with teachers. Other coaches struggled with the perception that they were evaluative or reported to administrators about what they had seen in classrooms. Madison described this teacher perspective as, "I'm not sure who you report to. I'm not sure why you want to come in my room." When teachers were unclear about what the coach's role entailed or assumed that it encompassed other duties, access was constrained.

Teacher openness to coaching and professional learning is a force which directly shaped whether - and for what - teachers might grant the coach access to their classrooms and professional practice. Nested within this force are the teacher's attitudes toward their own learning, their willingness to be vulnerable with others to learn, their belief in coaching as a

mechanism for learning, and their institutional understanding that vulnerability with the coach will or will not lead to negative evaluative outcomes.

Teacher Interest in the Focus of Coaching. Coaches discussed how teachers' lack of interest in the focus of coaching had the potential to constrain their access to teachers' classrooms. This force was mentioned by eight out of 28 coaches. For example, coaches reported that some teachers, particularly at the secondary level, had goals related to their subject-matter content (e.g., social studies, mathematics, science) rather than their pedagogy. Coaches perceived this focus on content as limiting the intersection between the teacher's goals and their own goals for instructional improvement and, ultimately, constraining access. Mia described this connection in the following way:

Secondary teachers being content-driven, sometimes they don't see the need for instructional strategy. They don't see a place. It may not be as important to them as their content. Therefore, they may feel that they don't need any help because, 'I know my content.'

Furthermore, coaches repeatedly described teachers who are simply "not interested" in or "reluctant" (Mia) to make instructional changes, in part because they were "burned out" (Dawn) on repeated reforms or district initiatives over many years. That is, these were teachers who were not hesitant about working with the coach per se but were not interested in what they perceived the coach represented. Thus, teachers' orientations towards the focus of coaching, in our sample, seemed to limit coaches' access when the teachers were exclusively focused on content-related goals or they were disinterested in reform or change.

Structural

The coaches described how two structural forces within the school district as an organization shaped their access to teachers' classrooms to support teaching and learning. First, coaches described how the structures of time and workload served to enhance or impede their access to teachers' classrooms. Second, coaches discussed how the presence of district-level policies primarily served to enhance their access to teachers' classrooms. Taken together, structural forces were described by nearly all of the coaches (27 out of 28) as influencing access.

Structures of Time and Workload. Twenty-seven of the 28 coaches interviewed discussed how particular time and workload structures in their school district had the potential to either support their access to teachers' classrooms for coaching work, or served as roadblocks to access.

Coaches overwhelmingly pointed toward having structured professional development time with teachers as supporting their access to classrooms for coaching. In the participating district, schools provided structural support through a variety of protected professional development formats, including grade level collaborative meetings, student support meetings, subject-area team meetings, book study groups, whole school professional development, and district-wide professional development. These structures created opportunities for the coach to work with a variety of teachers, listen to their needs and interests, and be present to use strategies to gain access. Structured professional development time often, in the view of coaches, served as an invitation to individual and small-group coaching. Kristy reported "those monthly meetings with teacher teams are so important because I am part of their team. Since I am part of their team, the door is always open for me to go in."

Coaches also discussed how having structured time to meet with other coaches in their community facilitated their access to teachers' classrooms. Sometimes this took the form of

coaches from different disciplines, such as a mathematics and ELA coach stationed at the same elementary school, having time to check in with one another. Other times, the coaches appreciated having the opportunity to learn with and from their own disciplinary cohort of coaches at district-sponsored professional development or at professional development that connected them with coaches from across the state. For example, Ebony discussed the benefit of having a “coaches’ meeting where I’m able to talk with other coaches throughout the district. That allows me to gain more information and be a better support to my teachers.” Overall, coaches perceived that having time to engage with their various coaching communities enabled them to deepen their specialized knowledge needed for coaching, which supported them to more effectively coach teachers and gain entry to classrooms.

Alternatively, coaches also discussed time and workload structures which constrained their access to teachers’ classrooms. The most pressing time and workload structure which seemed to constrain coaches’ access was the school schedule; coaches described having insufficient time to meet with teachers due to scheduling conflicts. Janice perceived that this issue was exacerbated in elementary schools where generalist teachers needed to participate in professional development for all content areas: “In elementary, the scheduling is very, very tight. As a coach, I have to go in and say, ‘I do realize you have a reading meeting. You have a math meeting. And you’ve gotta get in an hour and a half of reading and language arts [into your teaching each day], and you have to get in this.” Other times, coaches discussed the prevalence of time-related issues in broad terms as negatively impacting their access to teachers’ classrooms. Tameka reported struggling to “have time in the day to get everything done, and to plan, and to get people on coaching cycles, and go in and model,” while Kristy stated, “Time is always a barrier no matter what you do!” In addition, coaches pointed to their own lack of time

to work with teachers and teachers' lack of time to work with coaches as negatively impacting their access to support teaching and learning.

Coaches pointed to other time and workload forces that impeded their access to teachers' classrooms. Some coaches pointed to challenges associated with the large number of teachers they were responsible for coaching, which ultimately diminished their capacity to provide support to teachers in their classrooms as they were spread too thin. Although coaches from all disciplines discussed this challenge, it seemed to be exacerbated for the technology coaches who were shared between multiple schools, in contrast to the mathematics and ELA coaches who were stationed at just one school. Jacob reported: "I struggle because I'm [supporting] 240 to 270 teachers. I'm not gonna see every one of them. I'm not gonna be able to get in there." Other coaches reported struggling to gain access to teachers' classrooms due to teachers' heavy workload. As a result, coaches did not want to impose themselves on teachers and offer their coaching support as they feared this might create more stress for teachers. Sadie shared, "They get overwhelmed with the responsibilities, and so sometimes they might say, 'Absolutely, I want to do that. But, I can't right now.'"

Overall, the force of time and workload structures had the potential to support or hinder coaches' classroom access. When coaches had structured professional development time with teachers or other coaches embedded into the school day and protected by administrators, their access to teachers' classrooms was enhanced. Conversely, when coaches encountered scheduling issues which left coaches and teachers with little time for professional development, or were seeking to support too many teachers or teachers who already had too much on their plates, coaches' access was constrained.

District Policies Promote Coaching. Coaches perceived that particular policies at the district-level supported their access to teachers’ classrooms, a force that was mentioned by nine coaches. For example, some coaches discussed how when the district clearly defined the coach’s role through a focused job description, coaches’ access to support teaching and learning was enhanced because this provided concrete guidance to teachers about what the coach was and was not expected to do. Sharon stated, “Our job description...tells exactly what our role is, and what we’re supposed to be doing in it. It explicitly says that we’re not administrators.” Additionally, other coaches described how the implementation of new district-level policies created the need for coaching. With the advent of new policies, teachers wanted and sought out additional support from their coaches navigating new reading and writing curricula, new formative assessment tools, and new technology tools. Describing this force, Molly stated, “If we’re doing a new initiative of some kind, I think that’s helpful to get in...When OGAP¹ [the Ongoing Assessment Project] was new, it’s easy to get in when you have new things to do with them.” Last, the presence of teacher growth plans, which teachers were required to construct annually as part of their ongoing learning, seemed to enhance coaches’ access as teachers enlisted their coach’s help in successfully meeting the professional targets they set for themselves in their plans.

In sum, certain district-level policies seemed to enhance coaches’ access to teachers’ classrooms by clearly articulating the coach’s role as a lever to support teaching and learning, or creating professional learning needs among teachers for which they sought out coaching.

Macropolitical

One macropolitical force, which stemmed from the context in which the participating school district was situated and was outside the district’s locus of control, influenced the

¹ OGAP was a new formative assessment system that the school district had adopted prior to the start of the study to support the teaching and learning of mathematics.

coaches' access to teachers' classrooms. This force, state-level coaching policies and accountability measures, was named by 17 of the 28 coaches.

State Policies about Coaching and Accountability Measures. Coaches pointed to two types of state-level policies that shaped their access. First, state-level school accountability measures in the form of student testing and associated goals influenced teachers to seek coaching to support increased achievement. The participating school district, like all public schools, was subject to accountability pressures at the state-level which charged public school districts with testing students and reporting the test results publicly disaggregated by demographic sub-group. Some teachers wanted more support from their coaches before this standardized testing took place to prepare their students for the tested content. Other teachers wanted further coaching support after the test results were released to support students who did not meet their projected growth targets. Molly shared:

Afterwards it's 'Oh my goodness! I've got some kids who haven't achieved, or they haven't grown in the way we think they should. What can we do about these?' And then it's talking about where the needs are, and what we can do about that.

Data then provided a motivation for some teachers to seek out their coaches, granting them access. However, these policies could also constrain coaches' access. Mindy described how state-level standardized testing expectations inhibited her access to some classrooms as it created a "whole standardized testing culture" that influenced some teachers to close their classroom doors to coaches and just focus on standardized test preparation.

Second, coaches discussed the potential of state-level policies regarding coaching or instruction to influence their access to teachers' classrooms. Some coaches described how policies at the state level helped to clarify their role as coaches. This primarily impacted the ELA

coaches because at the time of the study, a new state law was implemented to support literacy instruction. As part of the new law, ELA coaches' roles and responsibilities were clearly delineated as supporting teaching and learning instead of serving as an interventionist directly with students. Ebony stated, "The other thing is that the state [policy] has an impact as it relates to literacy coaches. So, the literacy coaches are to spend their time really supporting teachers in the classroom." Other coaches discussed how the implementation of new state-level policies, initiatives, and laws also supported access, including the implementation of new curriculum standards at the state-level and a new literacy law which mandated that all students must be reading on grade-level by the end of third grade. These new policies created new demands on teachers, and in response, teachers sought out further instructional support from their coaches. For example, Eliza shared, "The Literacy Act was recently passed, and with it being passed there's a lot of things that need to be in place if we're going to say, 'Here's some pretty steep consequences if we're not having our kids on reading level.'" However, these policies could work against access for coaches of other disciplines. Sydney, an elementary math coach, described how her access to some classrooms was constrained because the state-wide focus at the time of the study was on literacy, which shifted some teachers' coaching focus away from mathematics.

This macropolitical force, situated beyond the locus of control of coaches, teachers, administrators, and the school district, still shaped the opportunities for individual coaches to gain access to individual teachers' classrooms.

Discussion

The 28 content-focused coaches in this study encountered an array of forces that constrained or supported their access to teachers' classrooms to support instructional improvement and teacher learning. These forces originated from actors in the organization, from

the district and school organizational structures, and from larger macropolitical tides. This study adds to the small body of literature on the micropolitics of coaching (Authors, 2022a, 2022b; Galey-Horn & Woulfin, 2021; Malen & Cochran, 2014) and sheds light on the political work inherent to coaching. The findings further suggest implications for school districts aiming to cultivate coaching programs, as well as future research into the work of coaches.

Micropolitical Landscape of Gaining Access

While others have suggested that a number of factors (e.g., administrators, teachers, policy) outside the coach's control might influence coach access (e.g., Chval et al., 2010; Ellington et al., 2017; Hartman, 2013; Mangin, 2005), the literature has been piecemeal in approaching this topic, often identifying these influences incidental to other important research aims. Through micropolitics, this study offers a theoretical lens for understanding the forces that impact access as a system, including both interpersonal and structural micropolitical forces situated within the broader macropolitical scene. Our results populate this landscape with a nuanced and detailed collection of forces at each level, demonstrating that even in a district with an established coaching program with broad support and resources, coaches must navigate a complex micropolitical terrain to gain access to classrooms to perform their roles.

These findings provide a substantive explanation for precisely why, in earlier work, we found that coaches developed vast repertoires of access-granting micropolitical strategies (Authors, 2022a, 2022b). These strategies may have leveraged existing forces which supported coaches' access to teachers' classrooms or been designed to mitigate or skirt forces that served as barriers to access. For instance, in our prior studies of these same 28 coaches, one strategy cited for gaining access was *clarifying the coach's role*, which could have been developed in response to the interpersonal force of *teacher openness to coaching or professional learning*, particularly

in situations where lack of understanding of the coach's role led teachers to be wary of engaging with the coach. Similarly, coaches frequently cited using the strategy of *leading professional development* (i.e., workshops, professional learning communities) to gain access, which leverages the structural force of *structures of time and workload*. These possibilities suggest there may be much to learn, both theoretically and practically, by examining the forces which may impede or support coaches' access alongside coaches' micropolitical strategies for gaining access.

While how the specific forces found in this study shaped coach access was contextual and, thus, likely vary from district to district, these forces exist within a system of micropolitical pressures common to many school districts. In this particular school district, the force most frequently mentioned by coaches was structures of time and workload (n=27), while the least frequently mentioned force was teacher interest in the focus of coaching (n=8). While these forces may exist across diverse organizational contexts, we do not expect that the distribution of these forces or the particular ways that coaches encountered them would generalize to other districts. Instead, because coaches can be viewed as agents of educational change (Galey-Horn & Woulfin, 2021) which can heighten their political interactions with others (Bjork & Blase, 2010; Blase, 2005), micropolitics illuminates the conditions coaches negotiate as a precursor to coaching. Overall, rather than attempting to draw generalizations about all coaching settings, this study points the field toward a theoretical framework for understanding and analyzing the forces that exist in every school district and how they may be actively shaping both the degree of coach access and the strategies coaches need to gain it.

Implications for School Districts

For school districts seeking to develop or support coaching programs, this study offers several indications of the administrative and structural supports needed to facilitate coaches' access to teachers' classrooms.

The coaches in our study frequently discussed the ways in which school- and district-level administrators could support their access to teachers' classrooms. Coaches' access was enhanced when administrators understood that the coach's role was to support teacher learning and instructional improvement, and publicly communicated this role to teachers. Access was also facilitated when administrators gave coaches autonomy over coaching issues, such as the focus of coaching or who to coach, and protected coaches' time by not assigning them duties unrelated to supporting teaching and learning. Last, administrators supported coaches' access by fostering a school-wide culture of professional learning that squarely positioned the coach as a key player in providing teachers with ongoing and meaningful professional learning opportunities. Thus, administrators must carefully consider the ways in which their orientations and actions can ultimately shape coaches' access and recognize that there is much within their locus of control that they can leverage to support coaches. Given this pivotal role that district- and school-level administrators can play in shaping coaches' access to teachers' classrooms, school districts may consider providing principals with professional development so they can understand how their choices impact coaches' access, and, ultimately, opportunities for teachers to learn.

Regarding structural support, repeatedly in our data, and in multiple ways, coaches cited structures of time and workload as the most significant structural force shaping their access to teachers' classrooms. While time has been consistently shown to be an obstacle to coaching writ large (Author, 2020b; Campbell & Griffin, 2017; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019), coaches attributed this impediment to specific structures that districts and schools could mitigate through careful

consideration and planning. For instance, coaches need adequate opportunities to collaborate with all of the teachers they are intended to serve; school schedules for subject-area instruction and team planning must allow the coach to be available to work with those teachers both during instruction and during planning time. That is, if all elementary teachers teach mathematics at 11am, the coach can only work in the classroom with one teacher per day; schools should consider how such scheduling impacts the potential professional learning of teachers and their coaches' access to classrooms when constructing such schedules. Intentional scheduling also includes support such as providing coaches with protected professional development time that is embedded into the school schedule during which coaches can connect with teachers' professional learning. Embedding the coach into the fabric of existing school structures, or creating new structures to incorporate a coach, can work to further institutionalize coaching as a meaningful lever to support teaching and learning (Woulfin, 2020), which can serve to normalize the coach's presence in classrooms and in teachers' practice.

Furthermore, in the Southampton school district, coaches regularly participated in professional development that was coordinated by district-level administrators. This was frequently cited as a powerful force that enhanced their access to teachers' classrooms as it enabled coaches to share successful strategies for gaining access to teachers' classrooms. School districts should consider how to provide regular opportunities for coaches to gather and learn with and from one another, address problems of practice, and develop strategies for accomplishing their goals.

Implications for Future Research

The findings from this study also have implications for researchers who wish to extend this line of research. First, we found that micropolitics is a fruitful theoretical perspective for

understanding the cooperative and conflictive forces that impact coaches' access to teachers' classrooms, and future work can extend the reach of this approach by exploring the micropolitics of other aspects of the coaching role. This may include the micropolitical strategies and forces involved in negotiating: professional development priorities, coaches' roles and responsibilities, or a shared vision for instructional improvement. This may also include exploring the specific micropolitical strategies coaches leverage in response to cooperative and conflictive forces in any of these settings.

Furthermore, and as previously mentioned, these coaches reported exceptional access to support teaching and learning and were situated in a relatively well-resourced school district which undoubtedly shaped the forces that coaches did and did not encounter. Findings, then, are not intended to be generalized to other contexts; future research should explore the cooperative and conflictive forces that coaches must navigate to gain access to teachers' classrooms in other and varied contexts, such as coaches who face more resistance from teachers or their administrators on a daily basis. Last, we acknowledge that through this analysis, we privileged coaches' voices in an effort to understand their emic perspectives regarding the forces that impacted their access to classrooms. However, future research should seek to incorporate other school actors' perspectives, including the voices of administrators and teachers. By tapping into multiple perspectives, this will further nuance and build upon this study's findings.

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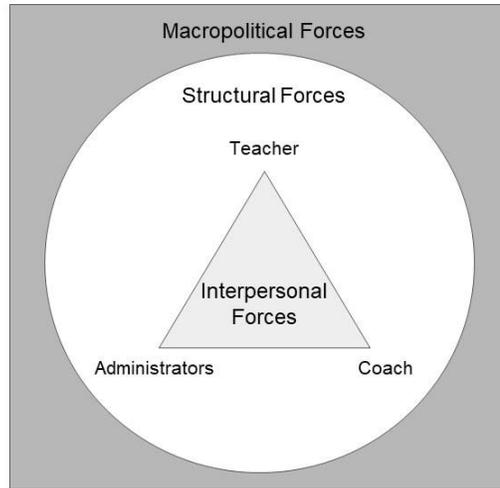
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Table 1*Participant Coaching Role and Experience*

Participant	Academic Discipline	School-level	Years Coached	Years Taught	Grades Taught
Sydney	Mathematics	Elementary	0	15	1-3
Madison	Mathematics	Elementary	5	8	4-5
Kate	Mathematics	Elementary	4	15	3-4
Paige	Mathematics	Elementary	0	23	K-2
Nora	Mathematics	Elementary	2	30	3-8
Ayanna	Mathematics	Elementary	2	4	K-1, 5-6
Julia	Mathematics	Elementary	5	22	1, 3
Claire	Mathematics	Elementary	0	25	5-6
Rashanna	Mathematics	Elementary	0.5	12	K-1
Molly	Mathematics	Elementary	5	26	2, 4-5
Caroline	Mathematics	Elementary	1	18	1, 4-5
Carla	ELA	Elementary	18	6	K-3
Tracey	ELA	Elementary	7	17	K-2
Tameka	ELA	Elementary	1	8	4, 5
Eliza	ELA	Elementary	1	4	2, 4
Ebony	ELA	Elementary	3	15	2, 3
Lauren	ELA	Elementary	1	13	1, 2
Sharon	ELA	Elementary	1	9	4
Mindy	ELA	Middle School	8	19	7-11
Mia	ELA	Middle School	11	12	6-11
Dawn	ELA	Middle School	12	9	7
Jacob	Technology	High School	15	15	9-12
Corinna	Technology	High School	17	7	6-8
Sadie	Technology	Elementary	6	12	4, 5
Kristy	Technology	Elementary	5	8	4
Janice	Technology	Elementary and Middle School	7	12	4
Joseph	Technology	Middle School	13	5	6-8
Monica	Technology	Elementary, Middle and High School	8	10	3-12

Figure 1

Types of Cooperative and Conflictive Forces and their Relationships



Appendix

Table 2

Codes Grouped into Forces by Source

Source	Force	Codes
Interpersonal - Administrator	Administrator Value for Coach's Role	Cooperative Administrator Support - District-level Administrator Support - School-level Administrator Understands Coach's Role Administrator Value for Coaching
		Conflictive Lack of Understanding or Value for Coach's Role Administrator Approach to Coach's Role
		Direct Administrator Actions to Promote and Protect Coaching
		Cooperative Administrator Protects Coach's Time Administrator Provides Material Resources for Coaching Administrator Directives Administrator Gives Coach Autonomy Administrator Positions Coach to Teachers as Support
		Conflictive Administrator Assigns Coach Duties Other Than Coaching Lack of Administrator Direction
	Administrator Fosters a Culture of Professional Learning	Cooperative Administrator Promotes Public Practice Administrator Vision for Instruction School Culture
		Conflictive N/A
Interpersonal - Coach	Perception of Coach's Competence or Authority	Cooperative Coach was a Teacher in Same School Coach was not a teacher in the same school Education Experience Years of Coaching Experience
		Conflictive Coach is New to the School Coach was a Teacher in Same School Coach's Teaching Experience Demand for Wide Range of Pedagogical Content Knowledge
Interpersonal - Teachers	Teacher Openness to Coaching or Professional Learning	Cooperative Eager Teacher Learners New Teachers Struggling Teachers Teachers' Comfort with Vulnerability Teachers Understand the Coach's Role
		Conflictive Lack of Understanding or Value for Coach's Role

		Poor Prior Coaching/PD Experience Teacher Insecurity Teacher Personality Teacher Team Dynamics
	Teacher Interest in the Focus of Coaching	Cooperative <i>N/A</i> Conflictive Teacher Disinterest in Reform or Change Teacher Focus on Content
Structural	Structures of Time and Workload	Cooperative Coach is on Student Support Team Coach Time Coaching Community Structured Professional Development Time Conflictive Coach Time Large Teacher:Coach Ratio School Schedule Teacher Time Teacher Workload Time-Generic
	District Policies Promote Coaching	Cooperative Coach's Role is Clearly Defined New District Policies Create Need for Coaching Presence of Teacher Growth Plans Conflictive <i>N/A</i>
Macropolitical	State Policies about Coaching and Accountability Measures	Cooperative Data Facilitates Need for Coaching New State Policies Create Need for Coaching State Policy Clarifies Coach's Role Conflictive District or State Policy Impedes Coaching