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Street-Level Bureaucracy Revisited: Frontline District Central-Office Administrators as Boundary Spanners in Education Policy Implementation

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The designation of district central-office administrators to operate as boundary spanners among the central office, schools, and community agencies can help with the implementation of challenging policy demands. However, educational research teaches little about central-office boundary spanners in practice. This article addresses that gap with findings from an embedded, comparative case study of boundary spanners in the implementation of collaborative education policy. The study's conceptual framework draws on public management and sociological literature on boundary spanning and neo-institutional theories of decision making. Findings reveal that the boundary spanners in this case initially were particularly well suited to help with implementation in part because they brought non-traditional experiences to the central office. However, over time, many of the resources that aided them initially became liabilities that frustrated their work. This article documents the importance of examining boundary-spanning roles in implementation and suggests how central offices might provide supports to boundary spanners to increase their potential as levers of bureaucratic change.

Keywords: *district central-office administration, leadership, policy implementation, school–community partnerships, street-level bureaucracy*

SCHOOL district central offices currently face various policy demands to reform their relationships with schools and community agencies, and some assign frontline central-office administrators to play essential boundary-spanning roles in implementation. For example, education polices that promote school-community collaboration—called collaborative education policies here and elsewhere—ask school district central offices to help schools collaborate with community-based public, private, and nonprofit organizations; in the process, central offices are to shift from traditional top-down, command-and-control relationships with schools to relationships in which they support schools and their community partners in making

key decisions about how to improve student learning and other outcomes. Researchers generally have found that such policies stall in implementation in part because of district central-office administrators' failure to take on the school and community support roles that the policy designs demand (e.g., Crowson & Boyd, 1993; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990). More recently, some school district central offices have assigned individual central-office staff or a team of staff to work among the central office and schools and their community partners to broker new support relationships and otherwise enable implementation—roles called boundary spanning in other arenas (e.g., Jemison, 1984; Tushman, 1977).

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Public management research in sectors outside education suggests that the designation of central-office administrators as boundary spanners holds promise for helping central offices reshape their relationships with schools and other youth-serving institutions. However, within education, policy research sheds little light on the extent to which that promise is realized in practice.

This article addresses that research gap with an examination of frontline central-office administrators assigned to operate as boundary spanners in the implementation of collaborative education policy. Specifically, this article focuses on the following research questions: (1) Who are the central-office administrators assigned to boundary-spanning roles in collaborative education policy and what demands do they face? (2) To what extent do they meet those demands in practice? And (3) What conditions help or hinder them in meeting those demands?

Data come from a multiyear study of central-office administrators' participation in the implementation of three collaborative education policies. My conceptual framework draws primarily from public management and sociological literature on boundary spanning and on neo-institutional theories of decision making. I show that in my focal district, individuals with experiences generally not found in the central office were newly hired into frontline positions specifically to operate as boundary spanners—to help build new and generally nontraditional partnership relationships between the district central office and school-community sites. Each of the boundary spanners, for the most part, embraced their charge early in their central-office tenure. However, with time, they all appeared to fall back on top-down, command-and-control relationships with schools and community agencies that seemed to threaten implementation. Some adopted those roles reluctantly in the face of nonsupportive central-office colleagues, but most embraced them as the “right” and “legitimate” behavior for a central-office administrator, even though different roles would have been right and legitimate in light of their original charge. Findings suggest that some of the resources that promised to enable their work at the outset, such as their nontraditional experiences and frontline positions, later came to be liabilities that frustrated their adoption of school–community support roles. I conclude with suggestions for how

central offices might better stave off these counter-productive patterns, and I highlight areas for future study of boundary spanners that may help advance education policy research and practice.

Policy and Research Context: Districts, Collaborative Education Policy, and the Promise of Boundary Spanners

Collaborative education policies call for new roles and relationships among schools, community agencies, and school district central offices, as well as other public bureaucracies, to expand learning and other outcomes for school-age children and their families (Crowson & Boyd, 1993; Honig, Kahne, & McLaughlin, 2001; Mawhinney & Smrekar, 1996; Smrekar, 1994; Smylie, Crowson, Chou, & Levin, 1994). The titles of these initiatives (e.g., California's Healthy Start School-linked Services Initiative and New Jersey Family Resource and Youth Service Centers) often highlight collaboration between schools and community agencies as the policies' key change strategy (California Department of Education [CDE], 1999a, 1999b; Honig & Jehl, 2000). However, their policy designs to varying degrees often call for three types of change: (1) schools collaborate with other youth serving agencies; (2) the school–community partnership sites set goals and create, implement, and continuously refine strategies for improving youth outcomes; and (3) school district central offices and other public bureaucracies (e.g., county health and human services agencies) continually develop policies that might support implementation of sites' local, collaborative decisions as those decisions evolve over time.

These policy designs rest on a theory of change shared by some school site-based management, new small autonomous schools, and other so-called bottom-up reform initiatives (Honig, 2004). Namely, professionals and others closest to youth within and beyond schools have information, sometimes called “local knowledge,” that is important to strengthening youth learning and other outcomes. This information relates to youth needs and strengths and the community and school resources that could help improve youths' school performance (Moll, Amanti, & Gonzalez, 2005; Honig et al., 2001; Pittman & Cahill, 1992). Such information could be marshaled to improve youth outcomes if schools and community agencies worked closely together and if school–community

partnerships were empowered to use their local knowledge to make key decisions about their goals and strategies. School district central-office administrators typically lack this information and have limited, if any, jurisdictional authority to mandate goals and strategies for schools' community partners. Because school-community partnership sites will be continually developing, implementing, and refining their goals and strategies, central-office supports for implementation too should change over time. Accordingly, central-office administrators should partner with sites to learn about site decisions and progress and use that information to develop policies that might enable implementation of sites as they evolve over time rather than try to direct site decisions in advance or all at once by "remote control" (Shulman, 1983; see also, Foundation Consortium for School-Linked Services, 2002; Honig, 2003; Lawson, 2006, May).

Much has been written about implementation of these policies at the school and community levels (e.g., Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1995; Cibulka, 1994; Cibulka & Kritek, 1996; Crowson & Boyd, 1993; David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 1992; Smrekar, 1994; Smylie et al., 1994; Wehlage, Smith, & Lipman, 1992). School district central offices, rarely addressed in this research, typically appear in school studies as barriers to implementation in at least two respects: some central-office administrators fail to develop policy frameworks in support of schools' community partnerships; others seek to control site decisions rather than to enable sites to make the key decisions that the policy designs demand (e.g., Cunningham & Mitchell, 1990; Mawhinney & Smrekar, 1996; Smithmier, 1996).

This research and the broader literature on educational administration and public bureaucracies suggest that school district central-office administrators may struggle to adopt the school-community support roles because they face few institutional supports—training, on-the-job rewards, or professional role models—that reinforce those roles. For example, work with community agencies may require district central-office administrators to have a basic knowledge of human services systems beyond education that exceeds the general fare of educational administration preparation programs (e.g., Lawson, 1998). Political and professional incentives for central-office administrators his-

torically have emphasized top-down, command-and-control relationships with schools and not ongoing support for schools' local, collaborative decision making (Malen et al., 1990; Walker, 2002; Wildavsky, 1996); in these relationships, central-office administrators may tend to use information from schools to control, not enable, schools' decisions (Weiss & Gruber, 1984). These incentives may be exacerbated by some high-stakes accountability policies that emphasize school district central-office control over school improvement decisions (Finnigan & O'Day, 2003; Katz, Fine, & Simon, 1997; Mintrop, 2003; O'Day, 2002; Raywid & Schmerler, 2003). Research on public bureaucracies suggests that such institutions, including school district central offices, were originally established as part of Progressive Era reforms to limit the influence of outside interests on professional administrators in the name of equity and efficiency; as a result, such bureaucracies may have evolved with limited guides for administrators regarding how to promote cross-sector collaboration or how to share decision-making authority with their hierarchical subordinates (e.g., schools) (Blau, 1963; Skowronek, 1982).

In the wake of these policy, public management, and research trends, some school district central offices have designated individual central-office administrators to focus specifically on supporting collaborative education policy implementation. These administrators hold various titles, such as school-linked services coordinator, small schools or school site-based management director, and teacher on special assignment, among others. To varying degrees, these individuals are assigned to units on the geographical and often hierarchical boundaries of their school district's central office to help negotiate new relationships between the central office and school-community partnership sites. Through these new relationships, central-office administrators are to inform and support rather than direct and control local school-community improvement plans. Although these boundary-spanning central-office administrators promise to play critical roles in implementation, educational research provides little insight into their experiences. A small number of studies on school principals and other school-based staff points to the importance of understanding boundary spanning by school principals (Goldring, 1990; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Lam, 1997; Louis,

1994). However, decades of research on school district central offices have treated the central office as a monolithic entity and not as a workplace comprising individuals with differentiated roles and responsibilities (Spillane, 1996, 1998). Some district research breaks from this trend by distinguishing central-office administrators by their formal roles or hierarchical position, such as “superintendent” (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988). However, a handful of recent studies reveal that central-office administrators’ functional roles—what they actually do day-to-day—may be obscured by these formal categories and strongly suggest that an examination of central-office administrators by their day-to-day roles in reform rather than by formal categories is a fruitful line of analysis (Bogotch & Brooks, 1994; Burch & Spillane, 2004; for a related point about school leadership, see Louis, 1994).

Conceptual Framework

I address these policy and research gaps by examining how school district central-office administrators operate as boundary spanners in the context of collaborative education policy implementation. I turned to a conceptual framework and research methods that promised to uncover central-office administrators’ *functional* roles, such as boundary spanning, which typically cut across various formal positions and that promise to reveal significant dimensions of central-office administrators’ work. Three research traditions developed mainly outside education provide the conceptual underpinnings for this examination: literature on street-level bureaucracy, management and sociological research on boundary spanning in the public and private sectors, and neo-institutional theories of decision making.

Boundary Spanning in Policy Implementation

Weatherley and Lipsky’s classic examination of street-level bureaucrats in 1970s service organizations provided an initial starting point for this inquiry. This work framed boundary spanners as a key unit of analysis for research and highlighted fundamental opportunities and challenges boundary spanners may face in their day-to-day work (Lipsky, 1971; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977; Weatherly, 1979). Weatherley and Lipsky found that boundary spanners—staff of public bureaucracies who work on the frontlines or “street level” in positions closest to their agencies’

clients—are essential to how policy implementation unfolds. On the frontlines, these staff people face minimal oversight by their hierarchical superiors, which may afford them significant discretion over their decisions and opportunities to invent new approaches to nonroutine problems. However, they also often encounter daily demands that far exceed what they can manage given limited time and significant uncertainty and ambiguity regarding the extent to which particular courses of action may help them realize their goals—a condition March and others call means-ends ambiguity (March, 1994). Under these conditions, Weatherley and Lipsky’s boundary spanners routinized and otherwise simplified procedures to make their work manageable—in many cases absorbing the new demands into long-standing routines of their agencies, but these efforts did not necessarily improve organizational outcomes.

Public management and sociological literature on boundary spanning elaborates more specifically what boundary spanners do, risks they face, and conditions that influence their decision. Across a motley collection of organizations,¹ boundary spanners’ roles primarily involve two particular information management activities consistent with collaborative education policy demands on central-office administrators: (1) search or the ongoing gathering of new information from outside their organizations (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1989; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997; Gladstein & Caldwell, 1985; Jemison, 1984) and (2) use—efforts to incorporate that information into organizational routines to advance performance goals (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Kanter, 1988; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a). In collaborative education policy contexts, search might involve central-office administrators partnering with school-community sites to gather information about site decisions and experiences; use might entail ongoing work within the central office (and other youth-serving systems) to develop policies and procedures that might inform and enable the implementation of sites’ decisions.

Far from a passive or one-time activity, search is sometimes described as “reconnaissance”—a continuous process of identifying conditions and ideas outside the organization that the organization should address to improve performance (Gladstein & Caldwell, 1985; Kanter, 1988; Levitt & March, 1988). Searching activities range

from formal meetings with outside organizations to occasional informal interactions and may include a combination of arrangements that change over time—whatever activities put boundary spanners in regular contact with external needs and demands.

Boundary spanners often do not have the requisite authority within their organizations to use the information they gather to develop organizational policy and other influences on organizational routines. Central-office boundary spanners and other central-office administrators do not have the jurisdictional authority to develop policy within other youth-serving systems. Rather they help other organizational members use the information by translating that information into forms that the other decision makers may consider accessible and useable (Adams, 1976; Tushman, 1977; Tushman & Katz, 1980). Translation fundamentally involves “absorbing uncertainty” from the information—“drawing inferences from perceived facts and passing on only the inferences” that decision makers might recognize as important and on which they may take action (Aldrich & Herker, 1977, p. 219; see also Dollinger, 1984). For example, a central-office administrator in a boundary-spanning role may collect a range of information about root causes of poor school performance, including school resources, neighborhood conditions, student readiness, and teacher quality. Rather than deliver that large volume of complex information, a boundary spanner would translate it into a less complex form, such as a specific recommendation that the district central office provide on-site teacher development. In this way, boundary spanners “select out of the total perceived environment some subset for transmission internally to the organization” (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, p. 47; see also Aldrich & Herker, 1977) and thereby defend their organizations against potentially unproductive information overload and ambiguity (Aldrich & Herker, 1977).

These information management activities are arguably the most prevalent in the literature, but boundary spanners also serve various political purposes that are sometimes supportive of these information management roles. For example, some boundary spanners represent their organization to the outside world and vice versa (Adams, 1976; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Leifer & Huber, 1977). In some cases, boundary spanners are the primary public face of their organizations and conversely

the main opportunity some outside groups have for representing their interests to high-level decision makers within the organization. This literature suggests that central-office administrators who operate as boundary spanners may represent school–community sites’ and central-office administrators’ interest to the other and sit in positions to mediate conflicts or new relationships between the two.

These information and political management roles may be a double-edged sword when helping school district central offices forge supportive partnerships with schools and community agencies. For example, researchers have found that when boundary spanners operate as information managers or political brokers, they increase their contact with organizations outside their home organization, such as schools or community agencies in this case. Boundary spanners’ contact with outside organizations can improve relationships and trust with those organizations and the support they provide to those organizations (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). On the other hand, increased contact can be perceived by other organizations as regulatory rather than supportive, especially when those other organizations are dependent on the focal organization, and actually reinforce such regulatory relationships (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Selznick, 1949).

According to this literature, specific conditions influence the extent to which these information and political management activities may promote the types of relationships with school–community sites that the focal policies demand. First, boundary spanners’ *ability to understand the language* of multiple professional communities is fundamental to their identification of relevant information, their translation of information into forms that different audiences might use, and the extent to which they represent their organization productively to others and vice versa. Boundary spanners who are primarily fluent in external languages tend to search well but to be relatively ineffective at helping their organization use the information they collect; boundary spanners who are fluent in their organization’s language tend to be skilled at use but lack the information to ground use (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a; Tushman & Romanello, 1983).

Second, consistent with Weatherley and Lipsky, contemporary researchers elaborate that boundary spanners’ orientation to their work is shaped

by particular *past and present social cues*. As Leifer and Delbecq revealed, how boundary spanners attend to their work is not a purely technical or rational enterprise but a function of “(a) what they are told to pay attention to (superior’s needs, wants); (b) their own wants, needs, and personalities; (c) some attention to cues based on past experience; (d) how and in what context they expect the information to be utilized; and (e) cues based on whether or not the information is redundant” (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, p. 47). They use these cues to help them interpret what particular forms of information mean, how to translate and use the information, and how to make decisions in the face of competing demands.

Third, boundary spanners’ *position on the organizational margins* may be a help or a hindrance. Such positions may increase their communication and relationships with people outside their organizations, which are essential to gathering information from beyond their organizational boundaries; on the other hand, such marginal positions often limit their communication and relationships with people within their organization and thereby jeopardize their ability to help ensure the information they gather is actually used internally (Brass, 1984).

Boundary spanners’ *ability to manage role conflicts* also shapes their work. In part because boundary spanners invariably have responsibilities related to at least two distinct organizations (e.g., central offices and school–community sites), they often encounter conflicting demands on their time and choice of priorities. These conflicts can lead to a lack of clarity regarding goals and rewards for performance and a limited sense of control over their own work, all of which have been tied to low levels of job satisfaction (Crawford & Nonis, 1996), high levels of job turnover (Crawford & Nonis, 1996), stress (Friedman & Podolny, 1992), and other tension associated with poor performance (Keller & Holland, 1975). When organizational and environmental demands do not conflict, boundary spanners may use their access to information across organizations to obtain better pay, promotion, favorable relationships with coworkers, and other resources that may improve their performance (Keller & Holland, 1975).

Boundary spanners’ *perceived organizational influence* and *the length of their tenure* are inter-related conditions that can help or hinder their work. For example, Shrum found that when

boundary spanners have high status within their organization, they typically make productive use of the information they collect and otherwise complete their work in less time than those with lower status; however, these individuals may also tend to give information/direction more often than they receive it and otherwise take on a command-and-control stance rather than a partnership orientation (Shrum, 1990). The longer the boundary spanners’ tenure in their organizations, the more authority they may have for influencing organizational direction (Blau, 1963). However, because boundary-spanning positions typically fall low in organizational hierarchies, the longer their tenure, the more likely other organizational members may be to assume they have little power (or else they would have been promoted to higher hierarchical levels). Such perceptions by colleagues potentially limit boundary spanners’ effectiveness, particularly when it comes to helping their organization use information (Brass, 1984).

Neo-institutional theories of decision making round-out this conceptual framework by elaborating models of professional practice as key influences on boundary spanners. These influences are particularly powerful when individuals face the types of complexity that Weatherly and Lipsky highlighted—i.e., situations involving high levels of discretion, conflicting and counter-normative demands, and means–ends ambiguity. In brief, these theories suggest that under such circumstances, boundary spanners will look for professional practice models that they associate with legitimacy or success regardless of whether following those models is actually likely to improve such outcomes. March calls this pattern following a logic of appropriateness rather than a logic of consequence (March, 1994). When decision makers follow a logic of appropriateness, they fit a situation to a particular identity. These decision makers will not ask, “What is most efficient in this situation?” and choose that approach. Rather, they will ask, “Who am I in this situation?” and “What behaviors are appropriate to that identity in this particular situation?” and make their choices based on answers to those questions.

When multiple identities seem appropriate, boundary spanners will choose those that “confirm their individual competencies” and that were used recently, stem from direct experienced, and are reinforced by others in their immediate environments (March, 1994, p. 65). Favored identities

are also those that are rewarded by institutions that decision makers value and that confirm decision makers' sense that they are doing their job appropriately and well. If decision makers believe the outcomes of their work fall below their performance targets, they will focus their attention on roles and routines they believe will help them achieve their targets and otherwise avoid choices that increase their risk of not achieving those targets (Levitt & March, 1988).

These bodies of literature framed my analysis by highlighting boundary spanners as the main unit of analysis and focusing my attention on the extent to which boundary spanners perform the information and political management activities noted. Second, these literatures directed data collection to specific conditions that may shape how boundary spanning plays out in practice, such as boundary spanners' ability to understand multiple languages. Third, neo-institutional theories of decision making called my attention to the importance of professional practice models in shaping boundary spanners' work. In addition, I heeded some scholars' critiques of this literature that it overrelies on large-scale surveys conducted at a single point in time without triangulation of other data sources that can provide a fuller picture of boundary spanners' decisions and practices; I followed their advice to pursue "ethnographic" studies that dig deeply into the practice of small numbers of boundary spanners over time (Brass, 1984).

Methods

This conceptual framework grounded my analysis of data from a qualitative, embedded, comparative, and strategic case study of collaborative education policy implementation. The broader study examined city-level policymakers' roles in implementation of these policies in Oakland, CA, between 1990 and 2000 captured through fieldwork conducted between 1998 and 2000. For reports of methods from the full study, please see Honig, 2003, 2004.

The data from the larger study were ripe for this subanalysis about boundary spanners. First, the study focused on the implementation of three² collaborative education policies. The simultaneous implementation of three policies allowed for cross-case comparisons and increased the number of data points for analysis while holding city, county, and state constant. The focal policies were:

- *Healthy Start School-Linked Services Initiative*. This program of the CDE has awarded grants to school–community partnership sites since 1992. Sites are to set goals related to youth development and learning and to design and implement collaborative strategies to achieve those goals. CDE holds district central offices accountable for enabling ongoing site implementation during and after the time-limited state grants have expired by requiring district plans for ongoing site support and by suspending funds for additional sites pending such evidence. This engagement of district central offices is supposed to leverage change in youth-serving systems from the bottom up (California Department of Education, 1999b).

- *Village Centers Initiative*. Through this initiative, a citywide nonprofit organization, in collaboration with the city, school district, and county, funded and supported school and community leaders in developing and implementing school–community partnerships. Initial funding came from a multiyear, multimillion-dollar grant from the DeWitt Wallace Beacons Dissemination initiative to transform schools into locally designed community learning centers. In Oakland's application to the foundation, the district central office committed to support the ongoing development and implementation of site-driven improvement plans.

- *Oakland Child Health and Safety Initiative (OCHSI)*. With multimillion-dollar funding from the Robert Wood Johnson's 10-year Urban Health Initiative (UHI), OCHSI in the 1990s aimed to fuel the transformation of all Oakland middle schools into Village Centers by reconfiguring public city, school district, and county bureaucracies to seed and support these centers. Oakland's UHI plan focused centrally on the transformation of the school district central office and city and county agencies into supporters of Village Center implementation.

I studied implementation of these policies during the 1990s, a decade some consider a period of heightened federal and state support for school–community partnerships (Honig & Jehl, 2000). During the latter part of this period, Oakland was just beginning to become engaged in the high-stakes accountability initiatives that by then had already engulfed some other districts. Such policies, with their top-down, command-

and-control orientations, had they been longer standing in Oakland, would have posed obvious impediments to the site-support relationships featured in the collaborative education policy designs. Accordingly, 1990s Oakland promised to reveal central-office administration under policy conditions theoretically conducive (or at least not obviously inhospitable) to collaborative education policies.

Third, the school district central office designated individual administrators to serve in boundary-spanning roles in implementation. These individuals were assigned to broker new central-office site relationships specifically to support the implementation of sites' locally developed school-community site improvement plans. Given their prominence in implementation, the boundary spanners were among my primary respondents in the main study.

Data Collection

The data reported in this article come from self-reports (interviews and conversations), direct observations, and records (written policies, plans, procedures, official meeting minutes, and newspaper archives) related to the implementation of the three focal policies identified above. Specific sources included 42 interviews with 33 people who participated in implementation, including central-office administrators, school board and city council members, county government representatives, citywide nonprofit organization directors, and school principals and youth-agency directors who oversaw the school-community partnership sites. Eight of these respondents were central-office administrators specifically assigned to operate as boundary spanners. Each interview lasted between 60 and 120 minutes and addressed respondents' conceptions of policy demands, experiences on the job, and explanations for particular events. I probed these issues through 17 conversations—unstructured, inquiry-based discussions with individual respondents systematically documented in field notes.

In addition to interviews, between 1998 and 2000, I directly observed formal meetings (approximately 160 hours) between representatives of the school district central office (usually the boundary spanners), school/community sites, and others specifically convened to support implementation, such as directors of nonprofit youth-serving organizations and public youth-serving

agencies. (For a full report on these meetings, see Honig, 2004.) At these meetings, I wrote almost verbatim transcripts to capture the transfer of information and relationships between the district central office and other meeting participants. For the same reasons, I reviewed record data dating back to the early 1990s from such sources as newspaper archives and city and school district policies, evaluation reports, and meeting minutes.

Data Analysis

Using NUDIST software, I coded my data initially using concepts from the main study's theoretical framework, organizational learning theory, as described in detail in other publications (Honig, 2003, 2004). This framework prompted me to code instances of central-office administrators searching for and using information about school/community decisions to guide central-office policy development. I coded specifically for instances of central-office administrators adopting a role conception and activities that reflected an orientation supportive of sites' local collaborative decision making and those that were more consistent with controlling sites. Findings from the broader study revealed that frontline central-office administrators were assigned to and actually played strategic boundary-spanning roles in these search-and-use processes and in other aspects of implementation. Subsequent to that discovery, I developed the conceptual framework described above to highlight boundary spanners' particular experiences and I recoded my data. New codes added during this phase included "boundary spanner" to help isolate frontline central-office administrators' specific experiences with searching for and using site information. I also coded data for other activities, such as "political representation" and factors the literature suggested might affect boundary spanners' work. The latter included their membership in/ability to understand multiple communities, their social cues, evidence of role conflict, and how their position on the organizational margins may have mediated their work. Coding data by the year of the events described by respondents allowed me to compare boundary spanners' discussions of their charges and roles over time. I also coded instances in which boundary spanners' described or suggested their rationale for particular decisions to help reveal their models of appropriate professional practice.

Findings

Overall, my findings suggest that Oakland's boundary spanners were both well and poorly equipped for the job of helping the school district central-office participate productively in the implementation of the focal education policies. In the initial periods of their central-office tenures, boundary spanners' positions as new, nontraditional, and organizationally marginal central-office employees promised to enable their boundary-spanning roles in ways consistent with policy demands to support sites' local, collaborative decision making. However, as their tenures wore on, their new, nontraditional, and organizationally marginal positions became liabilities that curbed their ability and, in some cases, their sense that they should support such decision making. In the following sections, I address my first research question by describing who these individuals were, their charge, and why some Oakland leaders viewed boundary spanners as essential for enabling implementation. Because the trends reported here were evident throughout the three initiatives with little variation, I report my findings across the three initiatives. Then I discuss how boundary spanners managed their demands, with a focus on the extent to which they aimed and actually worked to enable sites' local collaborative decision making, and the factors that shaped their work.

Nontraditional Employees for Nontraditional Work

Respondents of all stripes in Oakland generally confirmed the above policy discussion that they viewed district central-office administrator's participation in collaborative education policy implementation as demanding nontraditional central-office work in at least two respects. For one, central offices would forge close partnerships between school and other youth-serving agencies. For example, in a comment typical of respondents' views of these demands, one central-office administrator explained that the policies called for the central office to

create a seamless system of support for youth so you don't get, "This is the school system's responsibility and that is public health's." But "How can all of us work together for kids." That's not what [the view] you have always gotten from most people here [in the central office].

Respondents also specified that implementation required a departure from traditional top-down, command-and-control relationships between the central office and school-community sites. For example, when asked to compare the collaborative education policy demands to what he/she considered "traditional central-office work," one central-office administrator reported, "We become servants to the neighborhoods." He/she elaborated that this meant working with whole neighborhoods rather than only schools and to do so in a servant or service capacity rather than with a control orientation. A school board member corroborated this view:

I am trying to resist . . . the notion that there needs to be one model and that the [school] board needs to impose it. I mean, that's why I like the idea of school-by-school assessments and then working between the district and the city and the county to meet the needs at each site.

Two of the first frontline central-office administrators hired into the boundary-spanning posts recalled that when they began their work in the early 1990s there were few role models for their new responsibilities and that they began their work specifically to invent such school-community support roles on the job. For example, as one of them reflected:

I was brought in by the then superintendent to construct a program that dealt with students and families and the life circumstances that prevent students from learning. And [he] . . . wasn't quite sure what it all meant but he just knew that he wanted to . . . and for the school district to play a central role. . . .

Another confirmed, "I'd say we [another frontline central-office administrator and I] were winging it. And that was the plan. There was a tremendous sense that this [central-office participation] was new ground and we had to lay that ground." This sense that they would invent new roles extended to other frontline central-office administrators, even those who were hired several years later. For example, when asked what their formal job description included as their main job responsibilities, the four frontline central-office administrators hired later in the decade generally reported that their job descriptions did not and perhaps could not capture their day-to-day work. In a typical comment, one explained:

Sure, I can show it [my job description] to you. But you know, it's really generally like 'Man-

age this grant' and of course 'Other duties as assigned.' [Laughs] No, seriously, [department director] made it pretty clear that I was hired to figure this out [what implementation involved]. And I was given latitude to do that. That's not on paper.

To manage these demands, during the 1990s, eight individuals were hired into new positions on the frontlines of the central office specifically to work between the central office and school-community sites to support implementation of the three focal policies, in other words, to operate as boundary spanners in implementation. Four were hired in the early 1990s when Healthy Start launched, and four were hired later in the decade when Oakland initiated the other two collaborative policy initiatives. Multiple data sources suggested that regardless of when each individual was hired, his or her selection and the crafting of his or her central-office position reflected similar underlying assumptions about how to organize the central office to manage these policy demands—assumptions that were generally consistent with many of the conditions the boundary-spanners' literature suggested would be conducive to productive boundary spanning.

Importance of outsiders

All the frontline central-office administrators hired specifically to support implementation were central-office and school system outsiders in numerous respects. All were new central-office employees, and half were new to the school district system altogether. These individuals identified themselves as "outsiders," "community-based personalities," "from the community," a "voice from the community," "community organizers," and "educational advocates" who were hired to be the "movers and the shakers" of the central office and to work "out of the box" where they believed "real change happened." Some of them had been school teachers, but they typically reported experience in "alternative" school settings, including a Montessori school and an I Have a Dream Program. They claimed other experiences that they believed were atypical for the school district central office but that were essential to their school-community support roles, including community organizing, public health, directing a youth organization, serving as an educational advocate, and working on "antipoverty initiatives."

Being an outsider toward the latter half of the decade also meant that many of the new frontline central-office administrators belonged to particular racial and ethnic groups, namely, Oakland's Spanish-speaking and Asian communities that were traditionally underrepresented in the central office or the school system. Although members of these communities were hired into these positions earlier in the decade, racial/ethnic representation appeared in my data as an explicit rationale for hiring at the end of the decade. As one frontline central-office administrator reflected on some of the hiring choices:

Well, some people felt . . . the racial thing was a big thing [in our hiring] because there's an entrenched black power structure here [in the central office]. . . . So in other words I think it has a lot to do with opening it up to people that traditionally have not been in the system at least in the recent past. . . . People that the community knows to carry the message that he [the superintendent] wants to change the dynamics between communities and the district.

When asked why the central office hired outsiders, frontline central-office administrators, superintendents, and directors echoed theory's emphasis on the importance of people who could understand the language of school-community sites and whose past and present social cues and professional practice models were likely to reinforce site-support orientations or at least provide alternatives to the cues and models generally available in the central office. In particular, they reported that central-office leaders believed that the training and experience to promote local, collaborative decision making likely would not be found among current central-office staff. As one frontline central-office administrator recalled about his/her hiring in the early 1990s:

The thinking was you can't just have a district person, a certificated person or personnel manager because they generally won't have that other experience . . . experience in working with non-profits in general and an understanding about systems collaborations and working with diverse groups. They felt it better to go on the outside.

Promotion from practice

All the frontline central-office administrators, regardless of when they were hired, reported that they had relatively extensive experiences at

the school–community level with implementing school–community partnerships. Specifically, four of them had been directors or the main coordinators of school–community partnership sites. One had been training parents to be educational advocates, and, in that capacity, he/she had been working with several sites. The three others had been consultants on the development of such sites. These central-office administrators were unanimous in their reports that these past site experiences made them well suited for their new central-office posts. For example, one indicated, “It [my past site work] made all of this [the central-office post] seem like second nature to me.” Another explained:

I was at a meeting where we were pretty hard on the district [central office] . . . and the superintendent leaned over the table and said why don’t you come work for me and do something about it. . . . So I think the thinking was I knew the schools and the community and that’s what the central office needed. To get some of these other voices in.

This trend, what I call promotion from practice, stood out in my analysis as a particular bias in hiring for a position that called for individuals who understood the language of and took social cues from school–community sites but also those of the central office. One central-office administrator indicated that it was rare to find an individual with both site and central-office experience and that site experience *should* be preferred in hiring for the frontline posts, that an ideal candidate should have

A personality that is going to deal with community members. . . . To truly feel for the efforts that they [community members] want to see happen in their communities . . . Being able to understand . . . what is happening within their community. . . . Being able to respect them and honor them no matter what walk of life they come from. And not being afraid of going into those communities at unreasonable hours, you know, during hours that would be fearful for a lot of people in our district. . . . Somebody who would be able to advocate for the [sites] and be able to truly take their passion and their commitment for community building and organizing back to a system that has not in the past embraced it.

Another central-office director corroborated that in hiring new staff for these posts he/she con-

sidered experience with school–community sites a primary asset:

The person would have a good sense of what’s available in the [school] feeder system. At the school site level but also in the surrounding communities. . . . I’ve thought about teachers, possibly. It may be some people from the non-profit community maybe would be good candidates. But I think you have, you’d have to have a lot of experience kind of working with both of these groups. . . .

New dedicated frontline positions

The frontline central-office administrators were hired into new positions in the central office initially dedicated to implementation of the collaborative education policies. These positions went by titles related to the specific collaborative policy for which the individual was responsible, such as Village Centers Director, and assignments that cut across multiple collaborative policies, such as School-Linked Services Coordinator. When asked about the initial scope of their work, all emphasized one or several of the collaborative policies. In the words of one, [I was brought in to work on] “Nothing but Healthy Start.” Such a focus meant that the frontline central-office administrators generally aimed to spend their time mainly on the collaborative policy initiatives and potentially would face limited unproductive role conflicts.

Almost all the new dedicated positions were located on the frontlines of the central office in “street-level” positions where, by their reports, the central office came into frequent contact with principals, teachers, parents, community-service providers, and other community members. All but one of them worked in offices on the geographic margins of the central office—in a building called “Portable 15” across the street from the main central-office building that housed the majority of central-office administrators—and the outlier indicated that he/she would probably move to Portable 15 within the year.

The assignment of implementation to geographically marginal frontline staff, too, appeared as a particular bias in hiring for a job that required close connections both to sites and to the central office. When asked directly why the positions were crafted this way, all six of the eight frontline central-office administrators who were asked this

question explained that supporting sites was difficult work and required dedicated attention. In the words of one, “Just quite frankly the level of complexity . . .” demanded that these responsibilities not be “added on to someone’s plate.” Many of these new hires described their location in Portable 15 as an asset to their new roles. In the words of one:

We are far enough away here [across the street from the main central-office building] that parents and community members will come here. They tell me they won’t go across the street. But we aren’t so far away that we aren’t a part of what’s going on over there.

In summary, the frontline central-office administrators in this case faced many of the conditions theoretically conducive to productive boundary spanning, including their reported ready ability to understand the language of school–community sites and past and present social cues that departed from central-office administration-as-usual. Their positions on the organizational margins were intended to sharpen their focus on the focal policies and suggested they would face minimal role conflicts. Their frontline positions also promised to increase their interactions with school–community sites productively. However, in choosing these individuals and crafting their positions, the central office made several apparently necessary tradeoffs. For one, given the reported scarcity of individuals with experience with both school–community sites and the central office, central-office leaders favored individuals with language and past/present social cues tied to sites. The latter promised to help with their interactions with sites that were essential to search, but their limited central-office experience threatened to hamper their ability to help the central office use information from sites to support implementation. Furthermore, the boundary spanners were located on the geographical and hierarchical margins of the central office, which theoretically enabled search and minimized their role conflicts; however, these locations also potentially limited their positional influence within the central office, which was also important to implementation. How did these conditions and tradeoffs play out in practice?

Boundary Spanners on the Job

As noted, frontline central-office administrators generally reported that they were hired to invent

a line of work related to supporting the school–community sites. Regardless of when they were hired, all the frontline central-office administrators started out on the job by engaging in activities that were consistent with searching for information about school–community partnership sites and using that information to support implementation. The frontline central-office administrators reported that they generally used that information to help start-up sites by negotiating new relationships between schools and local and county community services organizations and otherwise to inform their own individual on-site work with school–community partnerships. However, I found little evidence that early in their individual tenures in the central office they worked to use site information to influence central-office policy per their original charge.

Initial period on the job

To elaborate, the first two frontline central-office administrators hired in the early 1990s reported in retrospective interviews that they spent the majority of their time during their first years on the job on Healthy Start implementation. Completing the application for Healthy Start funding required that school and community applicants conduct an assessment of school/community needs and strengths (search) and that they use that information to set goals and collaborative strategies for reaching those goals; school district central offices were asked to develop a plan for supporting sites during and beyond the 3-year state-grant period (CDE, 1999b). These frontline central-office administrators reported that they, rather than schools or community agencies, generally took the lead in searching for information about school needs and community resources and in using that information to help broker school–community partnerships. They described having extensive conversations with school principals as part of this process. In the words of one: “And we were like, ‘Do you have any community groups [as partners]?’ They were like, ‘No we don’t.’ But we heard about one that works nearby and invited them in and literally put it [the school–community partnership] together.”

Three of the four frontline central-office administrators who were brought on later in the 1990s similarly described their central-office tenures as starting out with their spending the majority of their work time on site helping with various

implementation challenges that arose between schools and community agencies. For example, during real-time interviews, two central-office administrators described a typical week during their first 6 months on the job as involving extensive on-site work. According to one, "I'm rarely here [in the central office]. There's always something out at the schools. It's [my schedule is] always meetings, meetings, meetings with schools, community agencies, parents, as part of this process." A third reported that when he/she first arrived on the job he/she mainly continued his/her prior work overseeing a program at one site and starting conversations at other sites about launching similar programs as part of their local collaborations.

Three frontline central-office administrators brought on in the early 1990s also reported in retrospective interviews that early in their individual tenures they worked between sites and county health and human services agencies to help the latter use site information to support implementation. As confirmed by a series of independent reports, these frontline central-office administrators partnered with a nonprofit organization and county services agencies to identify schools whose students were involved with multiple public services agencies (Oakland School Linked Services Work Group, 1999; Urban Strategies Council, 1992, 1993). The frontline central-office administrators then successfully negotiated with county public services agencies to redirect social work case managers to particular school sites. As one described, "[W]e had social work case managers in all those schools. . . . And that's where we focused our attention. And the social work case management was the first thrust." At the same time, the fourth frontline central-office administrator in this subgroup similarly worked with the county health agency to support the provision of health services at or near school sites.

The frontline central-office administrators, regardless of when they were hired, reported no examples of attempts to spanning boundaries between the rest of the central office and school-community partnership sites as part of their early information-management efforts. For example, when interviewed in 1998 about his/her experience in the central office to date, one central-office administrator indicated that he/she reported directly to an assistant superintendent to provide frequent updates about his/her work. When pressed for examples of instances when he/she

brought information about implementation to the assistant superintendent or others in the central office to help influence central-office support for implementation, the administrator could not recall any examples. The first frontline central-office administrator hired gave a similar report but added that they should have primarily focused their attention at the site level—"to . . . provide the technical assistance, get them [sites] from now that you've got the [state] money what to set up. That's up to us [frontline central-office administrators]."

For the frontline central-office administrators hired early in the 1990s, these information-management roles at the start of their tenure took on distinct though limited political dimensions. Namely, as several of the quotes suggest, some of these frontline central-office administrators used information about school sites to help build local consistencies in favor of school-community sites in particular neighborhood and to represent school sites to outside health and human services agencies. These four also unanimously reported that their work demanded that they represent the interests of school-community partnerships to other central-office administrators and to the school board, but they rarely did so. In the words of one, "I think we have not done a good job of informing them. I would fault [myself and the other three frontline central-office administrators]. . . . We invite them so infrequently to events . . . they don't link to it [school-community sites], because of the infrequency of it." Frontline central-office administrators typically reported that the importance of building political support for sites within the central office was a lesson they learned on the job and that it came as a surprise. For example, one reported that supporting school-community partnerships

. . . is natural to me you know [I thought] of course . . . schools will want these outside programs and services and support to come in and work with them and the rest of the system will get behind that. [I was] A little naive there. . . . I got swatted around pretty quick in the first year and just really [realized] wow this is going to be a lot harder than I thought!

In summary, early in their individual tenures, the frontline central-office administrators took on particular information management and political functions. However, rather than working between the central office and school-community sites,

they primarily worked between schools and community agencies and, for those hired in the early 1990s, between sites and county human services agencies to support implementation.

Frontline central-office administrators' work over time

Interviews and observations suggested that each of the central-office administrators began to increase his/her efforts to span boundaries between school–community sites and the district central office starting with the 1997–1998 school year, regardless of when he/she was hired. For three of the four central-office administrators hired in the early 1990s, this shift occurred approximately 3–5 years into their tenures; the fourth terminated his central-office employment at approximately this same time. For the four more recent hires, these central-office site-spanning efforts fell within 7 months to 2 years of their initial hire.

One of the long-standing administrators explained that by the latter half of the 1990s, linking with the rest of the central office had become essential because the time-limited state grants to some sites were coming to an end and, per the district's agreement with the state, the central office needed to develop and implement a specific plan for ongoing site support:

... if we are looking at trying to take this to scale, we need to have that presence there [throughout the central office] because that is [what is going to bring it to the attention of] executive staff and eventually also to the board to, in lack of a better term, to give it some sanctions. Sanctions in terms of legitimacy. ... It was critical because those of the [first funded sites] are just about ready to be winged off from us [the time-limited state grants for a relatively large group of sites were about to expire]. ... We were looking for the district to figure out okay are you going to come forth with any type of dollars to sustain this effort ... if you [other central-office administrators] are not at the table it makes it kind of hard to do. ... So it's become important to work not only by myself.

Fueling this central-office focus, the state department of education toward the end of the 1990s stepped up its instructions to districts to provide site supports, even though such a goal was part of the original policy design. For example, I directly observed 12 monthly meetings between 1998 and

2000 (approximately 31 hours) of an intermediary organization comprising frontline central-office administrators, as well as nonprofit agency representatives and site directors, convened to support implementation of school–community partnerships. At 10 out of the 12 observed meetings, at least 25% of the meeting discussion (measured in minutes) concerned how to respond to relatively recent state requests that the central office outline its plan for ongoing site support. Frontline central-office administrators' engagement of the central office in implementation during this period also may have been reinforced by the launch of the Oakland Child Health and Safety Initiative, which focused explicitly on reforming the central office, as well as city and county agencies to support Village Center implementation.

Frontline central-office administrators' reports of their work early during this period suggested that spanning boundaries between sites and the central office involved searching for information about sites' decisions and experience and helping other central-office administrators to use that information to support sites' decisions. For example, three of the frontline central-office administrators hired toward the end of the 1990s began to describe their roles in practice as helping executive-level administrators, such as the superintendent, craft central-office policies in support of sites' implementation decisions. According to one:

For the ... initiative, I kind of do high-level strategy for the school district and I almost act as a staff person [to the superintendent]. So I kind of do the nitty-gritty detail work, figuring out how to get lights at ... [a particular] school and then I do kind of high-level strategic stuff for example setting up conditions for what you need to be a lead agency, what a school needs to have in place to be ready. ... [for a school–community partnership grant]? How do we collaborate on long-term funding? How do we provide technical assistance [to sites]?

A long-standing frontline central-office administrator also described his/her roles during this period specifically as moving beyond what he/she could do on his/her own to engage the rest of the central office in implementation:

I'm trying to figure out how to sustain this effort beyond just my office [and] grant support. I'm looking to the integration with curriculum. Because, you know, that is going to do it for us [help us support site implementation]. ... There

should be a menu of central office services that schools can draw down from based on their [collaborative] plans.

One participant in implementation corroborated:

Well . . . [two frontline central-office administrators] and I work with [central office] department heads, business services, and legal and risk management in particular and with the custodial unions and stuff to figure out what things are going to look like [within the central office based on school–community site plans]. So, for example, how do we allocate space [within school buildings] . . . ? How do we incorporate a CBO's [community-based organization's] volunteers on staff into a school? How do we turn over the keys to a school building to a CBO . . . ? And . . . if you look at the decision tree there are a million branches on this decision tree that we're trying to figure out. But we really are trying to figure this out right now so we can hand this to a superintendent, to community organizations that are interested, to the school board to help them make supportive decisions. . . .

Observations further suggested that the seven remaining frontline central-office administrators in general spent time during this period searching for site information and grappling with how to help the rest of the central office use that information to support implementation. For example, in late 1997, a citywide nonprofit organization convened a group I call the Youth Development Taskforce to help with the implementation of one of the policy initiatives. Frontline central-office administrators were the main central-office representatives to the taskforce; they attended meetings five times more often than county agency representatives and almost 100% more often than the city-level representative who attended only twice during the meetings observed. In the 2-year period in which the taskforce operated, I observed almost all of their semimonthly 2-hour meetings. I found that virtually all meetings featured sites reporting on their implementation progress—a form of search—and that the second most frequently discussed issue³ related to how the school district central office could respond to sites' concerns and otherwise expand its supports for sites' decisions. (See Table 1.)

Observations also confirmed the previous quote that frontline central-office administrators occasionally took this information to other central-office administrators for the reported purpose of

influencing central-office policy decisions to help advance site implementation. For example, according to their public reports at these meetings, frontline central-office administrators conferred with the central-office legal department to explore ways to buffer schools from rules related to the screening of adults working on school campuses (to enable participation of community members in the in-school and after-school programs at several sites). Frontline central-office administrators also held several meetings with central-office business managers to discuss changes in staff schedules and in school buildings themselves to accommodate particular programs planned at school–community sites. In 1999–2000, frontline central-office administrators lobbied central-office administrators to devote particular bond funds to support ongoing site implementation plans. In addition, I observed the superintendent in attendance at several meetings of the Youth Development Taskforce and the other intermediary organization. When asked in conversations about the superintendent's attendance, four of the five frontline central-office administrators indicated that one frontline central-office administrator had encouraged him to attend with the hope that he would receive information from sites directly that would prompt him to provide ongoing funding for site implementation.

However, in the 1998–1999 school year, two of the long-standing central-office administrators reported that by that time their job responsibilities had also come to include those beyond their initial school–community site responsibilities. By 1999, the addition of responsibilities to their initial charge became a pattern for all four of the more recent hires. In support of this claim, my review of central-office committee memberships and interview transcripts revealed that during the 1998–1999 and 1999–2000 academic years, these frontline central-office administrators each assumed between four and eight additional formal responsibilities. These responsibilities included working on special projects related to crime prevention, a federal grant for after-school programs, homework centers, bilingual education, truancy, Title I district-wide planning, and reviews of teacher performance.

When asked why they accepted additional responsibilities, all explained that the additional assignments, in political terms, were consistent with collaborative education policy goals and conceptions of boundary spanners as political actors, namely that the additional responsibilities

TABLE 1
Issues Discussed at Youth Development Taskforce Meetings

Meeting dates	Meetings directly observed	Site issues related to central-office support (selected)	Other issues discussed (selected)
December 11, 1998– March 19, 1999	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to work with the central office to increase participation of school principals in site-networking sessions • How the central office is mobilizing around new after-school funding and implications for site support • Organizing a trip for school principals and central-office administrators to observe site operations and central-office support in another state • How the central office can ensure future allocation of bond funds for site support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of the group in site support • Organization of subgroups to assist sites • Creating a definition of a lead agency (community partner) to guide future grant making by the organization • Role of city government in supporting site implementation
April 2, 1999– August 5, 1999	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How sites' local evaluation needs relate to district demands for schools to report data • Whether community agency staff may be exempt from requirements for adults working on school campuses to go through costly background screenings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to manage group meetings so site-support issues are heard and addressed but do not overwhelm the agenda • Backlog of site support issues—status, how they are being tracked, and plans for follow-up • Whether to merge with another policy initiative more closely tied to the superintendent, vice mayor, and his or her professional peers
September 9, 1999– December 15, 1999	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct discussions with superintendent (two meetings) about providing additional central-office funds to sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the initiative will continue beyond the foundation grant period • Development of individual site implementation plans.

promised to increase their visibility within the central office, to strengthen their influence over central-office policies that could affect sites, and to establish relationships with central-office administrators who had such influence. These explanations were also ultimately offered by two frontline central-office administrators whose initial response to the question of additional responsibilities was, “When the superintendent asks . . .” and “I had no choice. [Superintendent] called me into his office. . . .” One of the frontline central-office administrators explained the trend this way:

Some of the things I do in addition to my formal responsibilities [for collaborative policy

implementation] include handling a lot of parent complaints and trying to resolve them and doing some investigations. I also looked at some allegations of teacher misconduct and so did some review of personnel files and things like that. . . . Also bilingual education. I looked at all the compliance agreements regarding the bilingual program and did a lot of interviews with people in the district about the program. Then I presented to him [a central-office director] where we were at in terms of compliance and what the barriers were. In all these [assignments] I’m out there. I’m visible. They [other central-office administrators] see me and I see them and they get to know me and it helps when I need something [for sites].

Another frontline administrator corroborated the political purposes of the additional assignments:

By doing [the taskforce] I learned a lot about how the central office works, how they [assistant superintendents] think. So now when I bring them information [about implementing sites] I know how to package it. I know it has to be short and to the point and link to the main thing that they are thinking about because it's [the school-community sites are] still not the main thing [that they are thinking about].

Despite such reports that these additional demands could help them achieve collaborative education policy goals, on another level, these demands conflicted with those goals. That is, whereas the collaborative education policies demanded that frontline central-office administrators support sites' local and collaborative decision making, the additional responsibilities involved specific programs tied to then-new state and county accountability demands and other initiatives designed to tighten central control over school decisions. For example, oversight of the truancy centers in part meant assessing the extent to which schools were implementing penalties and support for truant students according to district rules. Some of the crime-prevention assignments involved reviewing school safety plans to ensure they were aligned with state requirements related to the Safe and Drug Free Schools program. The frontline central-office administrator quoted previously referred to "compliance" as a primary thrust of these responsibilities.

The boundary spanners' literature suggested that these dual demands to support sites on the one hand and control/monitor them on the other could create crippling conflicts for the frontline central-office administrators regarding day-to-day activities. However, my data did not support this hypothesis. Rather, the conflicts faced by frontline central-office administrators in this case seemed more like those faced by Weatherley and Lipsky's street-level bureaucrats in that they stemmed mainly from an increase in their volume of work to levels beyond what they believed they could reasonably handle. According to one, this compounding of work demands seemed par for the course for the frontline central-office administrators:

It [my other responsibilities] got to the point where we realized wow, now I had so much else

on my plate that we really needed to bring in somebody else. We hired [someone]. . . . The same thing happened. . . . Then we got [another staff person]. . . . If you are capable, and I think [this person] is, it's inevitable that stuff comes up. You're going to get a little bit of [this person's] time and pretty soon it just the quicksand starts sucking you down [away from sites]. And that's just the way it is in a bureaucracy. . . . It's inevitable.

Reports of multiple work demands and time limitations in a public bureaucracy are not particularly remarkable. However, neo-institutional theories of decision making call attention to how individuals choose to allocate their time under such conditions and how they explain their decisions. Such choices can reveal where individuals look for professional guides and how they define what it means to operate appropriately and productively. Interviews and observations suggested that as the frontline central-office administrators began to adopt other central-office responsibilities and interact more frequently with others in the central office, they also came to take on command-and-control orientations toward sites in ways that were inconsistent with collaborative education policy demands to establish supportive partnerships with sites.

On the high end of this pattern, five of the administrators (two longstanding and three hired more recently) reported that they had come to view their roles as site monitors rather than as site supporters and shifted their day-to-day activities to reflect site monitoring. For example, the frontline central-office administrator who the year prior had described his/her role as being a "voice for the community," in 1999 (1 year into his or her tenure) came to frame his/her role in traditional bureaucratic terms related to directing sites' decisions:

Sites are going to have much more discretion but they are going to need information [about what the district requires]. Our role is to provide that information to them. They can make those decisions. But we want them to make good decisions. We also then have a role for quality assurance. Making sure they make the right decisions. Making sure that what is out there is what should be out there.

Another frontline central-office administrator hired in the late 1990s reported in interviews in

1998 that he/she was hired to work “out of the box” but in late 1999 indicated that his/her role involved clarifying traditional chains of command:

I would describe my role mainly as clarifying what’s what. Referring back to the original document [sites applications for funding from one collaborative education policy initiative] that describes what this [site] is going to look like for surely we put it on paper before we stepped out to do this. What was the original plan . . . ? Let’s go back and look and see what it says. . . . So defining even more definitively what those roles and responsibilities are and then making sure everyone agrees what to do and then making sure everyone does it.

Such comments sharply contrast with their earlier characterizations of their roles as neighborhood servants.

When asked to explain the basis for these conceptions of their roles, this subgroup invariably suggested that guides for their decisions had changed to those that favored command-and-control orientations. As one of them lamented in 1999:

Especially as we do this alignment [connecting with others in the central office] we are kind of sliding back into traditional [central office] patterns. It’s like we stopped pushing the bounds of ‘We can add value’ . . . you know, we are not really looking across boundaries to how can we support families and children.

Others in this subgroup were not as directly reflective or regretful about this shift, but their comments nonetheless suggested that their basic orientations to their work had turned inward to long-standing central-office roles and routines that seemed counter to collaborative education policy demands. As one argued at the end of the 1990s, frontline central-office administrators *should* focus their work primarily on carrying out what their central-office superiors required:

Otherwise, you are making decisions and they being executive staff are going to say ‘That’s not what we want to do.’ That’s clearly not what the board’s direction is. [So I ask myself] What are the [school] board’s goals? That’s basically what we are trying to deal with. I try to look at my work in that way.

On the low end of this pattern, two central-office administrators maintained a conception of

their roles as site supporters until the end of my data collection period in 2000. The frontline central-office administrator who had left the central office in the mid-1990s also reported that he/she viewed his/her role as a site support throughout his/her tenure. When asked where they looked to for guidance on what they *should* do on the job (1 to 2 years into their tenure at the end of the 1990s in the case of the relatively new hires and at the end of his/her tenure in the case of the departed central-office administrator), they reported that they focused not on central-office rules but on what local strategies were helping to improve youth and family outcomes. In the words of one, “. . . in every conversation we have, the underlying notion [for me] is how does this benefit young people and their families in low-income neighborhoods in Oakland? And it’s as simple as that. It’s very simple.” Another reported, “Well for me, it was intuitive that I’ve always believed that . . . school’s a part of the community and. . . . I view working in a school as working in the community. And that’s what I hold on to.” The third reported that he/she continued to draw on his/her past experience with a regional safety initiative, which taught him or her the importance of building on “what works on the ground” rather than imposing new programs “from the top-down.”

Although these role conceptions continued to emphasize site support, the two administrators’ actions I was able to observe did not always reflect this conception. For example, in 1999, site directors who attended meetings of the Youth Development Taskforce questioned whether their status as “Village Centers” or “Healthy Start sites” might qualify them from exemptions from requirements that adults working on school campuses must complete background screenings. They argued that such screenings were costly, led to delays in hiring staff, and impeded their ability to establish close and trusting relationships with community members. They suggested that the central office consider covering these costs or allowing less costly and time-consuming alternatives for ensuring student safety. The frontline central-office administrator who attended these meetings volunteered to work with the central-office legal department to consider alternatives. After almost 2 months, the legal department informed the frontline central-office administrator that it would not consider alternatives. At a subsequent Youth Development Taskforce meeting,

the frontline central-office administrator presented the ruling and instructed sites on how they could comply with the rules. In other words, despite his/her reported intention of supporting sites' decisions, he/she found himself/herself in a position of delivering information that reinforced sites' limited discretion.

Also for example, at one meeting of a school-community site governing group (mainly composed of the school principal, parents, and community-based organization directors) that I attended, a frontline central-office administrator presented the district central office's new plans for overseeing schools that post low levels of achievement on the state's standardized test. These plans included the assignment of external organizations approved by the district to coach schools in improving test scores. Before the meeting I asked the administrator informally why he/she would be delivering that presentation. He/she explained that an assistant superintendent did not give him/her a choice and had suggested that he/she was the ideal presenter because of his/her close relationship with the site. During the presentation, a parent asked whether the school could choose an external organization that did not appear on the central-office-approved list—an organization that already participated on their collaborative and that had coached other schools in their whole-school reform efforts. In response, the frontline central-office administrator did not suggest that he/she would investigate if that kind of flexibility might be possible. Rather, he/she responded consistently with a command-and-control orientation: "The organizations have to be on the list. That organization is not on the list. . . . There's nothing I can do about it. I'm here to make sure you know what's up."

In summary, by the end of the 1990s, the frontline central-office administrators were more likely than in the past to indicate and demonstrate that they straddled boundaries between sites and the central office. However, most of the administrators' reports of and all of their observed actions reflected not the intended site-support relationships but longstanding central-office patterns of top-down control over schools. Ironically, those who fell back on these longstanding forms of central-office practice had been originally hired because they promised to infuse the central office with new forms of practice more consistent with site support. What explains this pattern?

Factors That Shaped Boundary Spanners' Activities and Choices

Theory suggested that all the frontline central-office administrators would have been particularly vulnerable to the influence of professional practice models that reflected command-and-control orientations for several reasons. First, even after almost 10 years of collective implementation experience, the frontline central-office administrators, like Weatherley & Lipsky's street-level bureaucrats, faced high levels of discretion, complexity, counter-normative demands, and means-ends ambiguity. The latter may have become a particular liability as federal and state accountability pressures increased during the late 1990s. For example, results of school-community partnerships were slow in coming as evidenced by research in California and nationwide; many researchers concluded that the sheer complexity of school-community partnerships meant it would take 3 to 5 years for sites to begin to put basic pieces of their initial collaborative strategy in place let alone to begin to affect youth learning and other outcomes (e.g., Knapp, 1995; SRI International, 1996a, 1996b). When asked in interviews about such effects and the effects of their own work on school-community partnership sites, frontline central-office administrators generally acknowledged that they lacked evidence on either count. For example, one frontline central-office administrator lamented, "We need something we can take before them [the school board] that says this is what this initiative looks like, this is what we need, and here is our evaluation to show that this is what sites have done. If we had to do that now [go before the board], we would be on very shaky ground." Regarding his/her own work, one commented, "It's tough. I have to know its true [that what I am doing is making a difference.] The [site directors] tell me it is. But some days . . . to be honest, I don't know. I just don't know."

Neo-institutional theories of decision making suggest that under such circumstances, central-office administrators will choose models of professional practice that they associate with legitimacy and success. Several conditions at the end of the 1990s may have made traditional top-down orientations the preferred models for Oakland's frontline central-office administrators. For one, some frontline central-office administrators' competencies may have changed in ways that no

longer favored site decision making. For example, in one revealing exchange at a meeting of the Youth Development Taskforce, a site director expressed extreme frustration with one frontline central-office administrator's limited site knowledge, even though this frontline administrator, according to multiple reports, had been hired in part for his/her extensive site knowledge: "You have never even been to my site. You don't even know our budgets. . . . I don't care what my total budget looks like to you, if I can't make my payroll because I may not receive the check you promised this is all going to hit the fan."

As frontline central-office administrators' day-to-day work shifted to include more traditional central-office responsibilities, it is possible that their most recent, direct, and reinforced identities too may have changed to those that mirrored traditional central-office administration. That is, as their responsibilities within the central office increased, traditional central-office roles and routines may have become those that they used most recently, that stemmed from their direct experience, and that were reinforced by the social context of others and therefore the ones they would have been most likely to choose as guides.

The literature on boundary spanners suggested that boundary spanners' positions on the margins and their short central-office tenures could have helped or hindered their site support work. At the end of the 1990s, these factors became more liabilities than opportunities. As discussed, early in their implementation, frontline central-office administrators saw their positions on the boundaries of the central office as akin to the cutting edge of central-office operations and a source of pride and fuel for their work. By the end of the 1990s, their comments, especially comments of those hired in the early 1990s, were more likely to refer to the boundary positions as marginal to central-office operations and as a curb on their effectiveness. In a typical comment, one indicated:

. . . [We] are still here on the margins of the school district. It is not a central focus of the school district. So its just harder and harder to get their [senior central-office administrators'] attention which is ironic since in some ways we are really in utopia right now because the number of sites has grown from only a few in the early days to almost 1/3 of all schools. But if you went to the higher echelons of the school district and said, 'Can you tell me about [what

we all do]' . . . a lot of the top administrators would look at you with a blank stare.

An assistant superintendent suggested that increasing federal and state demands to improve academic performance may have fueled the negative connotations of such marginalization. When asked to discuss his or her priorities for the district, he or she responded, "Academic excellence for all students. Improved reading districtwide. All students at grade level in mathematics. And community relations. Those are my priorities right now." When asked if the collaborative education policies fell in the fourth category and not among the top three priorities he/she responded:

They are important. Of course they are important. We value our community partners. But for too long we haven't focused on classroom teaching and learning. On strengthening teaching. That has to come first. That's what the API [academic performance index] says. And the [state audit] means we have to tie everything we do to the classroom. The whole [unit staffed by frontline central-office administrators] is outside curriculum and instruction. We may be looking to pull them in but that's not where we are right now at the present time.

Likewise, other respondents' comments suggested that the meaning associated with the frontline positions by decade's end may have come to have a negative connotation. As one community agency director reflected on the frontline central-office administrators in early 2000:

. . . [T]he breadth of experience and the view also narrows as you come down here [to the frontline central-office levels] and I think people who are not as open to the risk-taking kind of thing that a director or deputy supe[rintendent] feels comfortable with. People who are more buried in the bureaucracy.

In other words, the frontline posts that communicated out-of-the-box thinking earlier in the decade for some came to mean "buried in the bureaucracy" by the end of the decade.

Frontline central-office administrators' relatively short tenures in the central office may have further curtailed their enthusiasm for nontraditional roles and relationships with sites. Even the central-office administrators hired early in the 1990s were still relatively new central-office employees, and, as such, they would have faced weak job security in the district civil-service system and strong

incentives to demonstrate their value if for no other reason than to maintain their employment. The data presented suggest that participating in the collaborative education policy initiatives may have been a liability in this regard because such work was not highly valued within the central office or had come to have lesser value over time.

Data related to the three central-office administrators who opposed the dominant trend also confirmed the importance of these factors, particularly means–ends ambiguity, role models, and short central-office tenures, as well as their investments in central-office careers as influences on central-office administrators' conceptions of their roles. Regarding means–ends ambiguity and role models, two of the frontline central-office administrators in this subgroup reported that they did not experience ambiguity regarding their performance and that they believed they were generally performing well. When asked to reflect on the sources of their confidence, these respondents, though interviewed separately, both pointed to visits they had made to other districts that they considered "exemplary." On these trips they met with their central-office counterparts who also were grappling with how to support sites' local, collaborative decision making. These administrators indicated that these trips taught them that Oakland's collaborative policy initiatives were not underperforming relative to those of other districts and that perhaps their own professional struggles as central-office administrators trying to support sites were par for the course. In other words, these frontline central-office administrators may have accessed role models of sorts—other central-office administrators who did not necessarily demonstrate exemplary central-office practice in a similar policy context but who nonetheless conformed that perhaps they were on the right track despite their challenges.

Regarding central-office tenure and investments in central-office careers, these three central-office administrators were significantly less invested in central-office careers than all of the other five and accordingly may not have experienced their short central-office tenures and relative job insecurity as liabilities. As evidence of this, the one central-office administrator who left in the mid-1990s indicated that he/she was never a "lifer," that he or she had joined the central office mainly to help one superintendent advance school-community partnerships, and that he/she was

surprised he/she stayed beyond several years. Another indicated that he/she could take risks on the job specifically because he or she did not fear losing his/her job. In his/her words, "I don't care what he [the superintendent] says. I don't need this job. I can always go back to my [former position outside the central office]."

Despite their apparent ability to sustain role conceptions supportive of site decision-making, these central-office administrators still struggled to operate consistently within those roles. The examples presented demonstrate that at least occasionally these frontline central-office administrators found themselves essentially delivering messages from other central-office administrators to sites that particular site supports would not be forthcoming and outlining how sites could come into compliance with central-office decisions. These examples suggest that other central-office administrators may have significantly curbed the frontline central-office administrators' ability to be responsive to sites. After all, the frontline central-office administrators had limited authority over central-office decisions and were highly dependent on the willingness of other central-office administrators to make use of the site information they collected. The infrequent instances of such internal responsiveness suggest that perhaps it was in short supply.

Summary and Implications

This article draws on findings from a strategic research site to begin to elaborate theory about frontline central-office administrators' as boundary spanners in collaborative education policy implementation. This analysis was prompted in part by the potential of boundary spanners to leverage the significant changes in organizational operations that such policies demanded and the lack of research on boundary spanning in school district central-office contexts. I show that Oakland's frontline central-office administrators were charged with spanning boundaries between the central office and school–community sites to enable site implementation. Their boundary-spanning activities were intended primarily to support the development and implementation of sites' local collaborative plans rather than mainly to direct them from the top-down. Early in their tenures, the frontline central-office administrators in this case worked to enable implementation mainly by positioning themselves on site between

schools and community agencies and, to some extent, between school–community sites and health and human services agencies. In the process, they engaged in some of the information and political management roles anticipated by my conceptual framework. They did not link to the central office beyond their own participation in site implementation reportedly because they perceived that the sites’ needs did not warrant broader central-office participation.

As their central-office tenures and implementation progressed, the frontline central-office administrators increased their efforts to span central-office site boundaries. At the same time, their demands to participate in more traditional central-office programs increased. The frontline central-office administrators framed these demands as opportunities to build political support for their school–community partnership support work within the central office. However, over time, these demands fueled their adoption of command-and-control orientations counter to their site support charge. Some of the conditions that initially helped their participation in implementation, including their marginal central-office positions and relatively recent central-office tenures, over time may have been among the conditions that frustrated their later efforts.

Findings from this study stem from a single albeit strategic research site and a small sample of central-office administrators. Furthermore, this case study is not saturated with “successful” boundary spanning but rather elaborations on the particular challenges central-office administrators may face when attempting to take on such boundary-spanning roles in particular policy contexts. These features of this study limit its power for providing direct lessons for policy. Nonetheless, this analysis highlights several issues policymakers might productively consider in the context of their own work.

First, this study helps to highlight how district central-office administrators can participate in the implementation of collaborative education policies in ways that promise to bolster implementation. In particular, this study moves beyond the general demand that central-office administrators somehow support sites’ local collaborative decisions to reveal the particular information- and political management activities that seem fundamental to these roles. The designation of central-office administrators to operate as boundary spanners

and take on these specific activities may expand the ability of central offices to begin to meet these demands. Although boundary spanners’ success along these dimensions waned over time in this case, it is not insignificant that they were able to sustain supportive orientations toward school–community-level decision making at least for some time period. Given the extent to which such support roles may run counter to central-office administration as usual, frontline central-office administrators’ maintenance of their site-support orientations even over a short period of time speaks to their potential to introduce new roles and routines into a school district central-office bureaucracy.

The waning viability of boundary spanners as levers of change stemmed from limited institutional supports for their new support roles. Although not directly supported empirically here, this case reinforces by negative example a point emphasized by neo-institutional theories of decision making: the provision of such supports, including public statements of the importance of their work, might infuse boundary spanners’ work with enough value to encourage them to stay the course. Such statements might be particularly powerful if they called on the frontline central-office administrators not simply to support sites but to engage in the specific information and political management activities highlighted in theory and elaborated empirically here. Oakland’s central-office administrators were not given these specific charges but rather were expected to invent site support roles on the job. Clearer parameters around what such school support roles entailed might have increased their confidence that they were participating productively in implementation, even if examinations of student learning or other outcomes did not yet bear out that conclusion and if their work did not mirror the work of other central-office administrators.

Such public statements about the importance and more specific nature of their work forthcoming from executive-level district leadership and the school board might be particularly important in light of contemporary federal and state accountability and other policies that in many districts emphasize greater centralized control over schools and a laser-like focus on classroom teaching and learning. Similarly, central offices might also take steps to increase boundary spanners’ sense of job security, which this study suggested too might

have contributed to their turning to command-and-control orientations.

Other potentially productive institutional supports for central-office administrators include particular role models—models that demonstrate what central-office administrators do day-to-day when they collect and use site information to support sites' decisions and models that reveal more specifically what political management entails in this context. Theory suggests that Oakland's frontline central-office administrators faced precisely those conditions, such as means–ends ambiguity, that would have fueled their search for legitimate role models. The models most accessible to them would have been those that demonstrated command-and-control relationships with schools and their community partners. Opportunities for central-office administrators to observe exemplary alternative practice or at least to network with other administrators with similar goals and experiences, as seemed to be the case in Oakland, may help infuse their efforts with the legitimacy necessary for them to maintain their site-support orientations and actions.

Ultimately, however, the efforts of the boundary spanners in this case were curbed by other central-office administrators on whose responsiveness their own success depended and who generally were inclined not to be responsive. This finding amplifies that boundary spanners' realization of their roles is inherently tied to their engagement with other central-office administrators with authority to use the information the boundary spanners collect to develop central-office policies. This case study suggests that the designation of boundary spanners to support implementation largely on their own may be a recipe for their failure. At the same time, engagement with other central-office administrators in this case frustrated rather than fueled boundary spanners' work. This tension raises the following question for central-office leaders to consider in their own practice: How can we better link boundary spanners to authority structures within the central office necessary for them to affect policy change, while not losing the benefits that seem to come from hiring staff into positions with limited ties to such structures?

Even with closer links between boundary spanners and such authority structures, political management functions will likely remain a fundamental part of boundary spanners' work, particularly

the marshalling of relevant coalitions within the central offices to make productive use of site information over time. Such political functions may have become even more essential in contemporary districts where high-stakes accountability policies have introduced a host of policy demands that conflict fundamentally with the theory of change underlying collaborative education policies and that compete for central-office administrators' attention. Policymakers interested in supporting these types of policies might consider how policy can signal to boundary spanners the importance of their building central-office coalitions in support for implementation without dampening their own participation in these policies in the process.

This study also suggests several potentially productive directions for policy analysis, evaluation, and other research. First, this study highlights the importance of understanding boundary-spanning roles in the process of policy implementation. Future studies of boundary spanners might do well to feature in-depth examinations of boundary spanners' decision making over time. The literature on boundary spanning in other sectors, reviewed above, already provides an extensive body of survey-based research findings that highlight self-reported influences on boundary spanning at specific points in time. The next generation of research might extend knowledge of boundary spanners in policy implementation by developing rich, theory-based descriptions of and explanations for how their work unfolds across multiple years. As this study demonstrates, examining boundary spanners' experiences at one point in time or only early or late in their central-office tenures would have led to an incomplete story about their work contexts and decisions about implementation.

The literature that undergirds this study's theoretical framework provides important conceptual anchors for research on boundary spanning in education, including elaborations on boundary spanners' activities and the conditions that may support them. This study suggested that the political management functions touched on in the framework may involve not only representation but also coalition building within the central office in support of their work in broad terms (i.e., school–community partnerships), as well as in specific terms (i.e., around particular policy proposals). The use of this framework with an elaborated discussion of its political dimensions might

provide productive conceptual underpinnings for future research.

However, the case of school–community partnerships in Oakland did not provide opportunities to explore all aspects of the framework. For example, because instances of “use” within the central office were rare, this case did not help elaborate how boundary spanners may help other central-office administrators use site information through various translation strategies as suggested by theory. Exploration of these theoretical ideas with other cases may reveal this dimension of boundary spanners’ work in the context of central-office administration.

Theory and the Oakland case also suggest that boundary spanning and the conditions that influence it may vary depending on the extent to which a school district central office highly values the policies to which the boundary spanners are assigned. Future research might advance knowledge in this area by examining boundary spanning in the context of educational policies considered more or less valuable. For example, the boundary spanners in this case may have been particularly vulnerable to counterproductive pressures in part because the collaborative education policies with which they were charged were marginalized with relative ease because of their reportedly limited empirical ties to classroom teaching and learning. However, other policies (or similar policies in other districts) may be viewed as more central to the day-to-day work of more central-office administrators and therefore less easily avoided than the school–community partnership initiatives I examined. For example, in contemporary Oakland and other districts, district-wide initiatives, such as school site-based decision making and new, small, autonomous school policies, may send stronger signals throughout central offices that central-office administrators of all stripes should shift their practice to enable implementation. Central-office administrators working as boundary spanners in the context of these arguably more mainstream efforts may face different opportunities and challenges in boundary spanning than those revealed here and provide important opportunities for advancing implementation knowledge and practice.

Similarly, future research should probe more deeply into the experiences of central-office boundary spanners in the context of high-stakes accountability initiatives ushered into many districts with the passage of No Child Left Behind in

the early 2000s. Despite some policy promises to provide schools with flexibility in return for results, many high-stakes accountability policies promote or ultimately result in stronger central control over schools in the forms of top-down management of decisions and school reconstitution (Finnigan & O’Day, 2003; Mintrop, 2003). Such contemporary developments may run counter to the focus of collaborative and similar education policies and significantly shape what boundary-spanning central-office administrators are able and willing to do. Comparative studies throughout districts operating under different accountability frameworks might prove particularly generative.

This study suggests by negative example that frontline central-office administrators might have fared better as boundary spanners in environments with stronger institutional supports, including professional role models and job security. Accordingly, this study raises the question: Are boundary spanners more effective under these alternative conditions? Researchers might advance implementation theory and practice by choosing research sites where those conditions are present.

In summary, this study highlights how individuals work between organizations or hierarchical levels of public bureaucracies to enable policy implementation and reveals opportunities and challenges they face in the process. Future policy research and practice might further advance the field by aiming to uncover and understand the centrality of work on these organizational edges.

Notes

¹These organizations have included local government bureaucracies (Bacharach & Aiken, 1977), newspaper publishing companies (Brass, 1984), small businesses (Dollinger, 1984), hospitals (Fennell & Alexander, 1987), universities engaged in labor negotiations (Friedman & Podolny, 1992), food and computer industries (Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997), *Fortune 500* companies in consumer packaged good industries (Lyonski, Singer, & Wilemon, 1988), audit firms (Seabright, Levinthal, & Fichman, 1992), research and development outfits (Katz & Tushman, 1979; Keller & Holland, 1975; Tushman, 1977), and health and welfare organizations (Leifer & Huber, 1977).

²In the original study, I examined four collaborative education policies. However, because the central-office administrators had formal boundary-spanning roles related to three of the four, I focus this subanalysis on the three.

³The group most frequently took up issues related to its own purpose, scope of work, and internal operations.

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