Orchestrating Effective Change: How Youth Organizing Influences Education Policy

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Although research demonstrating the effectiveness of youth organizing for ed-
ucational reform has expanded rapidly in the last two decades, the field remains
substantially undertheorized. This article outlines a theoretical framework, based
on 30 interviews with leading figures in education reform, that illuminates how
a youth organizing group has achieved significant influence in the Philadelphia
School District. The framework identifies three broad dimensions of effective
youth organizing work and highlights 11 sets of paired strategies that have been
useful in building the group's power and efficacy. The framework showcases the
complexity and artistry of sustained, successful youth organizing.

A growing body of evidence shows how students, organized to fight for their
right to a high-quality education, have held adult stakeholders accountable
for providing them with the resources they need to learn (Larson and Hansen
2005; Shah and Mediratta 2008; Warren et al. 2008). Youths have led and
won campaigns to save public vouchers that provide free transportation to
and from school (Moore 2011), to reduce school overcrowding (Mediratta et
al. 2009), to increase access to college preparatory coursework (Ishihara 2007;
Shah 2011), and to design and implement small schools (Suess and Lewis
2007). Youths have also engaged in sophisticated youth participatory action
research projects designed to inform and influence policy makers about the
effects of such policies as zero tolerance (Youth United for Change 2011) and
school closures (Kirshner et al. 2010).

However, the literature on youth organizing for educational reform consists
largely of case studies of specific campaigns and relies heavily on the per-
spectives of the organizers themselves, who have a vested interest in proclaim-
ing their efficacy. The processes by which youth organizers have effected policy

change remain substantially undertheorized. A strong theoretical foundation is necessary to establish youth organizing as a serious field of inquiry and endeavor; moreover, a powerful theoretical framework can raise significant practical implications for youth organizers, their supporters, and policy makers. Educational reformers and scholars of educational policy can likewise benefit from models that illuminate how youth organizers are influencing decision-making processes and emerging as important political players. Without this kind of theoretical framing, we risk underestimating youth organizers and their efforts, both in scholarship and in educational reform practice.

This study seeks to address some of the theoretical needs in the field by exploring how a youth organizing group builds sufficient power to affect the policy landscape. We focus on the Philadelphia Student Union (PSU), a well-known contemporary youth organizing group. Rather than catalogue every strategy PSU has used or every tactical decision it has made over its first 15 years, we look across a range of campaigns to identify those practices that civic leaders believe helped PSU become a group to which educational leaders in Philadelphia are increasingly held accountable.

Literature Review

Youth Organizing Defined

Youth organizing offers an important counternarrative to the prevailing "failing schools" story line. This account, common in both political rhetoric and media coverage, frames low-income students of color as either helpless victims of larger forces or undeserving accomplices in educational failures. In contrast, youth organizing positions marginalized young people as valuable civic actors who are capable of understanding and achieving political and institutional change (Larson and Hansen 2005; Warren et al. 2008). It offers an expanded view of youths' capacity and agency, suggests fresh approaches to political organizing, and highlights the importance of involving youths in educational reform.

Practitioners and researchers typically describe youth organizing as a strategy that builds the collective capacity of youths to challenge and transform

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the institutions in their communities. According to one definition, the goals of youth organizing are threefold: "to alter power relations, create meaningful institutional change, and develop leaders" (Youth Action 1998, 13). Many who study and support youth organizing also stress that it explicitly addresses issues of race and class as it seeks to promote social and economic justice (Delgado and Staples 2008; Listen, Inc. 2000; Rogers et al. 2012). Those involved in youth organizing are generally low-income middle and high school students, between the ages of 12 and 19 (Delgado and Staples 2008).

Both the fields of community organizing and youth development have informed the development of the field of youth organizing, providing a foundational base (Listen, Inc. 2000). Youth development emphasizes the provision of key supports that will help youths build skills and competencies in various developmental domains (Pittman 2000). Because of this grounding in youth development, youth organizing groups attend to the holistic development of the participants. Many youth organizing programs offer academic supports and engage youths in identity work and cultural expression (Rogers et al. 2012). However, because of its roots in community organizing, youth organizing expands beyond typical youth development programming by "explicitly acknowledging the marginal social and political status" of the participants and by providing them with the tools necessary "to challenge systems and institutions on their own" (Listen, Inc. 2000, 9; see also Mediratta et al. 2007).

Youth organizing encompasses a wide variety of programmatic structures and approaches. Youth organizing groups may choose different focal areas, such as education reform, criminal justice, or environmental justice. Organizing groups may subscribe to different models, such as youth-adult collaborative partnership or youth led with adult allies, depending on the roles, responsibilities, and relative power adults assume in the organizing work (Delgado and Staples 2008). Moreover, groups' particular organizing approaches may be more strongly associated with Deweyian, Freirean, or Alinskyite traditions (Schutz 2007; Su 2009). Nonetheless, all youth organizing groups place a premium on civic action and collective youth empowerment, and they are premised on the idea that youths have a right to participate in making decisions that shape their lives (Delgado and Staples 2008).

Effective Strategies of Organizing for School Reform

Over the last two decades, educational reform has become a central focus of many youth organizing groups, as well as many intergenerational and parent organizing efforts (Torres-Fleming et al. 2010). Across the country, these organizers have achieved meaningful educational reforms at school, district, and state levels, and several researchers have generated theoretical models to ex-

plain how these changes occur (see Gold et al. 2002; Mediratta 2004; Shirley 1997; Warren et al. 2011). Reviewing the literature, Renee and McAlister (2011) identify four common strategies used by effective educational organizing groups: working at multiple levels, working through alliances and coalitions, using data and research, and balancing collaboration and pressure. First, Renee and McAlister observe that effective educational organizing groups work at multiple levels, meaning that they address issues at the level of the school and the level of the district simultaneously. The authors note that several organizing groups discussed in the literature engage in issues at state levels as well. All groups, they say, recognize the complexity of the educational system. Second, Renee and McAlister find that educational organizing groups that generate results often work through alliances and coalitions. In other words, they collaborate with a wide range of organizations, institutions, and individuals to pursue shared goals while building the power of the base and the strength of their social capital. The third common tactic Renee and McAlister identify, using data and research, may involve surveying constituencies, meeting with elected officials to understand the nature of a problem or the feasibility of a proposed solution, or collaborating with university-based researchers either to conduct action research or to gain access to current scholarship on educational matters. The fourth strategy Renee and McAlister highlight as prominent in the literature on successful educational organizing efforts, balancing collaboration and pressure, draws attention to the importance of negotiation and constructive dialogue in the organizers' pursuit of their goals. Usually, it is only when these strategies fail that organizers "resort to public, contentious action" (2011, 18). The literature Renee and McAlister synthesized included case studies of youth organizing groups; however, it may be that youth organizers rely on additional strategies that would not be included in the adult or intergenerational organizing groups' repertoires because of the added challenges youths face trying to build power and influence within entrenched, paternalistic political structures.

To date, two studies have generated models specifically designed to explain how youth organizing achieves certain outcomes (Christens and Dolan 2011; Zeldin et al. 2008). Though both models include community impacts, they also address the benefits that accrue to the youths and young-adult participants. The 2008 report by Zeldin et al. suggests that youth-adult partnerships are effective when they establish an organizational culture of partnership, which guides their values, structure, and public actions. Only two of the four strategies Renee and McAlister (2011) highlight are reflected in this model: working in alliances and balancing collaboration and pressure. Rather than using the term "alliances" or "coalitions," Zeldin et al. discuss connecting "individual projects with larger initiatives" (2008, 8). Additionally, rather than using the term "pressure," they write about maintaining a "public role" to promote

"ongoing accountability" (8). They do not discuss working at multiple levels or using data and research. By contrast, Christens and Dolan (2011) include research as a key step in their "cycle of youth organizing" (534). This step is preceded by relationship building and followed by mobilization and public action, which is then followed by reflection and evaluation before the cycle commences anew. Again, the strategies of working through alliances and balancing collaboration and pressure are implied in this second model. Working at multiple levels, however, is not expressly included. Rather, framing youth development and community development as "two sides of the same coin" (542), Christens and Dolan (2011) argue that youth organizing is effective when it adopts a unified, balanced approach to youth leadership development, community development, and social change.

Christens and Dolan (2011) and Zeldin et al. (2008) have developed useful frameworks for youth organizing. Likewise, Renee and McAlister (2011) have created an important theoretical model of educational organizing. The usefulness of these individual models, however, points to a burgeoning need for a comprehensive theoretical model that describes the particularities of *youth organizing for education reform.*

The Role of Context in Community Organizing: Philadelphia

Theorizing about organizing is always complicated by the fact that organizing work directly responds to local issues and constraints. Many researchers argue that organizing approaches and strategies may not be generalizable or transferable across contexts because they are strongly shaped by local community conditions (Mediratta et al. 2009; Warren et al. 2011). Within the larger field of educational policy, scholars agree that context matters to policy design and implementation (Honig 2006; McLaughlin 1991). Therefore, any study of organizing must begin with attention to the context in which the work is situated and highlight those contextual factors that could pose challenges to any theoretical explanation of that work.

The Philadelphia School District (PSD) is like many other large urban districts in that its schools are racially and economically segregated, with disproportionate shares of students who qualify for free and reduced-priced lunch (Frankenberg and Lee 2001); its test scores are lower and dropout rates higher relative to other districts in the state; and its superintendent seat has seen a number of high-profile occupants. As in other urban districts, a number of private and public bodies exert influence on education policy, including newspapers, research organizations, intermediaries, advocacy groups, and foundations.

PSD differs from many other large urban districts in its governance model.

In 2002, the state took control of the district, replacing the School Board, whose members were appointed by the mayor, with a School Reform Commission (SRC). Two of the five members are locally appointed; three are selected by the governor. The SRC hires the school superintendent.

It is against a backdrop of financial difficulties, competing ideologies, and leadership transitions that Philadelphia's two youth organizing groups, Youth United for Change (YUC) and PSU, were founded and matured. YUC began in 1993 and PSU followed 2 years later. Both YUC and PSU now work in school-based chapters and broader coalitions to effect change through a range of school, district, and national policy campaigns.

Research Questions and Purpose

While both PSU and YUC have been credited in various studies with having effected policy change, this extant literature tends to focus on documenting specific campaigns and relies heavily on data provided by the organizers themselves. Little research has sought the exclusive perspective of outside observers, reflecting on the organization over time. This study takes up the question of not whether but how PSU has influenced educational policy decision making in Philadelphia over the course of 15 years, according to leaders within the city's education reform community. Specifically, we ask, What practices, strategies, and tactics do these leaders believe have helped make PSU effective? We then use their answers to build a theoretical model that explains (from the perspective of outsider observers) how a youth organizing group that is widely perceived as effective operates.

Methodology

To understand how PSU has achieved its influence on educational policy within PSD over the last 15 years, we used an exploratory qualitative case study approach, a useful strategy for examining "how" questions and looking closely at phenomena of interest (Yin 2003). Although case studies do not yield results that are generalizable, they do help to identify salient factors and sets of relationships that can lead to the construction of theory. As Yin argues, case studies "are generalizable to theoretical propositions" and can be useful in expanding or generalizing theory (10).

Site Selection and Overview of PSU

Our case study site was selected purposefully because PSU is one of the oldest and most widely recognized of the contemporary youth organizing groups in the nation. As such, it represents an extreme or unique case of youth organizing (Yin 2003). Because it is well established and highly regarded, and because previous research has documented the impact PSU has had on educational policy discussions and decisions (Conner et al. 2012; Dzurinko et al. 2011; Suess and Lewis 2007), PSU serves as an appropriate and useful site in which to explore the means by which a youth organizing group achieves significant influence in education policy.

Founded in 1995 by a group of 12 high school students who were concerned about the quality of the education they and their peers were receiving, PSU has since trained thousands of young people in its leadership development program. Its mission is twofold: "to build the power of young people to demand a high quality education in the Philadelphia public school system . . . [and to] work toward becoming life-long learners and leaders who can bring diverse groups of people together to address the problems that our communities face" (http://home.phillystudentunion.org/About-Us/Mission.html). Since its inception, PSU has consistently focused on education reform, and it has designed and engaged in campaigns related to issues of privatization, school funding, teacher equity, and nonviolence.

Structurally, PSU has always had both a citywide component, which coordinates campaigns at the district level, and school-based chapters, whose members work together to address school-specific issues. Chapter schools have included both magnet schools and neighborhood high schools; however, the majority of PSU members attend neighborhood schools. PSU's membership base has hovered over the years between 100 and 300, with typically 25% representing "core members." Core members are those youths who are consistently active in the organizing work. Most members are high school aged, with a smaller percentage consisting of middle school students. The majority of members are African American.

As the youths who founded PSU grew older, young adults began to play a role in the organization; nonetheless, PSU's organizational model has remained youth led, which means that "youth are in charge and adults play supportive roles as needed and defined by the youth" (Delgado and Staples 2008, 70). Youths are the central decision makers of the organization: they choose the organization's goals and campaign foci, develop the organizing strategies, and facilitate the weekly workshops and support groups. The paid adult staff organizers offer support and scaffolding to the youths while man-

aging certain organizational details, such as maintaining and seeking new funding streams, arranging trips and retreats, and coordinating resources.

Data Sources

To build understanding of how PSU has effectively affected educational discourse and decision making in Philadelphia, we relied on individual, in-depth interviews (Spradley 1979) with individuals working outside the organization, particularly those who were targets of PSU's work. It is important to understand the accomplishments that these nonaffiliated outsiders ascribe to the organizing group, for such ascriptions reveal its political influence. As Alinsky (1946/1987, 126) asserted, "power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have."

Our interviews followed a semistructured protocol, designed to collect respondents' perspectives of PSU in a systematic way, while also allowing for free-form conversations to unfold as the respondents' comments led us to explore unexpected topics (Patton 2002). The protocol began with a series of questions asking respondents to share their background and connection to education policy and then to reflect on the educational policy landscape in Philadelphia: to identify significant players, defining moments, and unique features of the Philadelphia context. Next, respondents were asked to describe what, if any, role they see PSU playing in Philadelphia education policy, any memorable moments they recall that involved PSU, and what they see as some of the group's major achievements. Following their discussion of achievements, they were asked, "What would you credit this success to?" and "What factors do you believe block the organization from achieving greater success?" After discussing "memorable moments," respondents were asked to identify the most and least effective strategies employed by PSU. Respondents were encouraged to provide examples and specific details.

To select respondents, we mapped the Philadelphia educational policy terrain, identifying individuals and institutions that either directly made policy or worked in some well-recognized way to shape policy or public perception through evidence-based research, reporting, advocacy, political pressure, or funding mechanisms. We looked for those organizations or personnel who appeared to have some substantial level of influence, using accounts in local newspapers, our observations at SRC meetings, and conversations with long-standing members of the Philadelphia education community. We then collapsed our list until we had eight distinct institutional categories: community organizing groups, journalism, academe and think tanks, foundations and philanthropic organizations, educational advocacy and intermediary organizations, city- and state-level political offices, the school district, and individual

Interview Respondents' Positions

Number	Position
3	Community organizers
3	Journalists
3	Academics
4	Foundation executives and program officers
4	Education advocacy and intermediary organization professionals
4	City- and state-level policy makers
6	Teachers and principals
10	Current and former high-level district administrators

NOTE.—The total number exceeds 30 because some individuals moved from positions within the district to other positions within the educational field in Philadelphia.

schools within the district. In each category, we sought to obtain a minimum of three respondents. We oversampled district- and school-level personnel because they have arguably the greatest levels of involvement in local educational policy making.

Selection criteria for our respondents also included the following: amount of time they had lived in Philadelphia (we chose respondents who had been in the city for at least 6 years so that they would have some sort of historical perspective; most had spent their lifetimes in the city) and their professed stance toward PSU. We deliberately included skeptics and critics of the organization, as well as some supporters. Most of our respondents adopted a more neutral stance toward the organization. We invited respondents to participate in our study until we had representatives from all of the important constituencies and had reached a point of data saturation.

Ultimately, 30 adult civic leaders intimately involved in education in Philadelphia participated in interviews. Table 1 reveals the range of positions these respondents held and the number of respondents in each institutional category. Two-thirds of the respondents were female, and the majority of the respondents were white (76%), with African American or black respondents constituting 14%, Asian respondents representing 7%, and Latino/a respondents representing 3%. We did not ask participants to share their socioeconomic status or their age; however, we know all respondents to be working professionals between the ages of 32 and 65.

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours, depending on the time each respondent had available. Interviews typically took place in the respondent's office, a private conference room, or a coffee shop; three interviews took place over the telephone.

Analytic Approach

Our analysis was guided by grounded theory conventions (Charmaz 2011; Glaser and Strauss 1967). We engaged in a rigorous and iterative coding process, which included both open and axial coding. We read and reread interview transcripts as we worked to identify patterns and meaning in the data, and we met regularly to share, compare, and refine our interpretations. Through constant comparison across transcripts and our own initial codes, we agreed on a final coding schema, which two researchers separately applied to each of the interview transcripts. Finally, we wrote analytic memoranda (Charmaz 2011) in which we laid out our propositions and identified and dismissed rival propositions (Yin 2003).

As we analyzed our data, we remained mindful of their limitations. Not all of our respondents had the same degree of familiarity with PSU. Some were more acquainted with PSU's school-level initiatives, whereas others had greater familiarity with its citywide campaigns. Approximately half of our respondents found it difficult to distinguish PSU from YUC and therefore spoke about both organizations as though they were one and the same. Some might wonder if we should have weighted our respondents' perspectives, considering some as more valuable or valid than others; however, our intention was not to paint an accurate portrait of what PSU has done. Rather, we were interested in accessing community leaders' perceptions of what it has done and then using these interpretations to construct a representation of the work that reflects multiple understandings. Therefore, every respondent's perspective was considered worthwhile.

To enhance the credibility of our findings, we relied on four strategies. First, we continued interviewing until we reached a point of data saturation. Second, although we paid careful attention to outliers and negative cases, we focused our analysis on broader patterns and themes in the data. Third, we paid specific attention to the question of how the respondents' positionality affected what they were able to see and discuss. Fourth, we engaged in member checking (Cresswell and Miller 2000), sharing our analysis, findings, and propositions with key informants; with nonparticipants who were well acquainted with PSU, having studied or supported the organization for years; and with PSU leaders to determine whether or not they had been credited with strategies that they did not use or tactics that were better attributed to YUC. Those who participated in these member-checking sessions affirmed that our findings "rang true." Nonetheless, what follows should be understood as a social construction.

Results

Elsewhere we have written about how our respondents perceive the influence of PSU on school and district education policy (Conner et al. 2012). We have explained how they credit PSU with having advanced policy discussions and accomplished changes at both the school and district levels over the last 15 years, including helping to block an effort to turn over most of the Philadelphia schools to an education management organization, Edison Schools, Inc., in 2002 and designing and then demanding that the school district implement student success centers, which provide a range of support services to students. We have discussed how the respondents widely view PSU as "potent," "prominent," "significant," "influential," and "effective." Here, we focus on how these civic leaders believe PSU has achieved its influence and what their answers suggest about how an "effective" youth organizing group operates.

Orchestration: Striking the Right Notes to Effect Change

The data show that PSU has achieved the victories with which it is credited by intentionally engaging in specific activities related to relationship building, organizing, and self-presentation. We refer to this overarching tripartite strategy as orchestration (see table 2). The orchestration framework reveals PSU's strength and sophistication, as the group strategically draws on a range of practices, many of which contrast, compete, or conflict with one another, in order to engage, appeal to, and pressure multivariate stakeholders.

We use the term "orchestration" to evoke the principles of musical composition. Music can include a single note struck for effect as well as multiple notes working together. This musical metaphor offers a useful heuristic for four reasons. First, it reminds us that an effective work of art can be achieved by having various combinations of notes in play, including notes that hold a dissonant tension before resolving. Some of these notes may be struck repeatedly and others used more sparingly, but all to an equally powerful effect. Second, the metaphor highlights the importance of multiple performers and multiple lines of harmonic counterpoint, working together to create an effective performance. Third, the image draws attention to the artistry and sophistication of PSU's work. It reflects the creative capacity and the talent and skill that others recognize in these youths as they orchestrate change. Fourth, audience evaluations of musical effectiveness are personal, interpretive acts. The adults who participated in this study variously condemned, commended, or questioned PSU's strategic choices, a trend suggesting that judgments of

TABLE 2

The Orchestration PSU Uses to Influence Educational Policy

DIMENSIONS	DISSONANT PAIRS (1)	(2)	NATURE OF THE DISSONANCE*
Relationship building	Fostering internal relationships	Developing external relations	Compete
	Building coalitions and alliances	Meeting one-on-one to cultivate individual relationships	Compete
Organizing tactics	Using covert strategies	Using overt strategies	Compete
	Sustaining long-term commitments and showing perseverance	Capitalizing on short-term opportunism and demonstrating responsiveness	Conflict
	Identifying problems	Proposing solutions	Compete
	Using conventional organizing tools	Using new organizing tools	Compete
	Advancing a narrow, local focus	Championing a broad public interest	Conflict
Self-presentation	Claiming insider status	Claiming outsider status	Contradict
	Putting forward an authentic and unfiltered youth voice	Showcasing a polished and professional youth voice	Contradict
	Being a youth-led organization	Having adult leadership	Contradict
	Foregrounding youth development	Foregrounding organizing for social change	Compete

* Competing pairs challenge organizational capacity; conflicting pairs challenge organizational coherence, its focus, and priorities; contradicting pairs challenge organizational identity.

"effectiveness" in youth organizing can be as diverse and subjective as artistic tastes.

In table 2, we describe 11 sets of paired strategies, or dissonant pairs, gleaned from our data and grouped under three main headings of relationship building, organizing tactics, and self-presentation. In music, dissonance is an unresolved musical interval that lacks harmony, which is ultimately resolved through musical counterpoint, whereby independent melodies are combined but retain their linear character. We explain how the items in each pair represent different strategic options, which may at times conflict with, compete with, or even contradict each other, thereby creating dissonance, but all of which ultimately resolve to create effective harmonies. Together, these 11 dissonant pairs amount to a powerful body of work.

Relationship Building

Relationship building is considered a core organizing process (Mediratta 2004; Shirley 1997; Warren et al. 2011); our data show that civic leaders perceive it as central to PSU's effectiveness. In this area, PSU navigates the tension between two distinct dissonant pairs: developing relationships internally and externally, and engaging in larger coalitions and one-on-one interactions. The strategies within these pairs compete with one another for time and attention from the organization's members, thereby challenging organizational capacity. We suggest that competing pairs mimic multitonality in dissonant music. Multitonality features two or more musical keys played in rapid succession but never simultaneously. Although the strategies within each pair are not mutually exclusive, the organizers must choose how much time and energy to devote to each, mindful that more time and internal resources devoted to one strategy mean less time and fewer resources available for the other.

Internal and external relationship building.—PSU seeks to develop relationships internally among its participants, to foster strong ties of trust, and to build its base. One teacher described PSU's most effective strategy as "talking to youth face-to-face, having youth invite youth . . . and [work] from their own experience." This relationship building typically occurs in private settings such as youth leadership summits, retreats, and workshops. Several respondents noted that PSU seeks to build friendships among students who attend different schools, including magnet and neighborhood school students, who might not otherwise meet and who, as one foundation executive observed, "bring different social capital to bear." A former superintendent commented on the culture of the organization, saying, "they look to each other for strength and respect one another."

Respondents also recognized that PSU devotes considerable attention to

cultivating relationships with external players, such as district administrators, policy makers, and the media. A journalist commented, "I certainly have a relationship with them. When I see a press release from them or get a phone call, that's something that we pay attention to." Similarly, a lawmaker noted, "They have made an effort to ensure that I, as one public official, was involved in the [reform] process." Several respondents noted that PSU's "alliances" and "associations with adult organizations" have helped the group gain legitimacy, and its ability to "always stay in conversations with people in powerful positions" has helped it maintain its power. Respondents in all categories, with the exception of teachers and principals, noted the importance of external relationships.

Broad alliances and individual relationships.—PSU uses another dissonant pair in its effort to cultivate these external relationships, choosing between conducting one-on-one meetings and building broad-based coalitions. PSU has built up an impressive network comprising government officials, journalists, funders, school district and community leaders, clergy, and advocacy organizations. This network, which also includes well-respected policy and research organizations, forms what one district administrator called a "cross section of people from across the city, from a variety of organizations . . . to get the work done." Developing partnerships with carefully selected organizations and individuals contributes to the credibility of the group and provides resources on which PSU can draw. PSU's Campaign for Nonviolent Schools, arguably one of the largest and broadest coalitions of youth-led organizations in the history of Philadelphia, exemplified, for many respondents, the organization's ability to negotiate relationships with other organizing groups and its networking prowess. Its involvement in the Alliance for Educational Justice (AEJ), a national coalition of youth organizing and intergenerational groups working to change federal education policy, also showcases PSU's investment in building networks of relationships beyond Philadelphia.

In contrast, one foundation executive noted that perhaps even more effective than its ability to build broad coalitions is PSU's ability to "get a lot done quietly" by building "one-on-one relationships" through individual, closed-door meetings. PSU has initiated and maintained dialogue with a variety of stakeholders, many of whom cite these sit-down conversations as a key element of PSU's success. One SRC member noted that PSU students "frequently come and tell us about things [that] . . . I believe will influence how I act." Another SRC member echoed, "Reaching out and talking to me and the other commissioners individually—it's a good way for us to get a student perspective that might otherwise be missed." Through private meetings with superintendents, school reform commissioners, journalists, public officials, and other activists, PSU engages in "the slow, hard work" of policy reform that provides the foundation for effective organizing.

Because many of our respondents themselves had been the targets of PSU's external relationship-building efforts, they were more apt to point to this form of relationship building over internal efforts. Sixty-three percent of the respondents discussed external relationship building as effective, while 33% cited the importance of internal relationship building; however, the fact that internal relationship building came up as a salient theme in the interviews, especially in interviews with other organizers, teachers and principals, and foundation executives, underscores the versatility of the organization. Both coalition work and one-on-one meetings were widely perceived as vital components of youth organizing, cited by 70% and 63% of the respondents, respectively. Furthermore, individuals in all categories noted the importance of both actions, and 30% of the respondents discussed both strategies in their interviews.

The paired strategies in each of the two sets discussed above compete with each other for the organization's time and energy. Nonetheless, PSU appears to know how to resolve the dissonance by devoting enough attention to its internal health, while not shortchanging its external ties, and by initiating partnerships with large coalitions, even as it continues to nurture individual relationships.

Organizing Tactics

Like the dissonant pairs that constitute relationship-building strategies, some of the dissonant pairs that fall under the heading of organizing tactics compete with each other; however, others conflict with one another. Whereas competing pairings strain organizational capacity, conflicting pairings mount a challenge to organizational coherence. They create tension around organizational priorities and focus. Therefore, we compare conflicting pairs to atonality in dissonant music. Atonality hinges on the refusal to commit to a single key; rather, each note struck is played in a new key. Similarly, PSU must manage multiple strategies, some of which appear to conflict with one another. PSU reveals its sophistication as its resolves the dissonance created within five sets of pairings: using covert and overt strategies, capitalizing on long-term commitments and short-term opportunities, identifying problems and proposing solutions, leveraging conventional and new organizing tools, and defining a local focus while advancing a broader public concern.

Overt and covert tactics.—The use of *overt* and *covert* strategies is linked to relationship building, and it parallels what Renee and McAlister (2011) have called striking a balance between collaboration and pressure and what Warren et al. (2011) refer to as a dual strategy that includes demand and engagement. Covert strategies are those less visible efforts for which the group does not get attention. One respondent referred to this type of work as being "behind

the scenes." It involves the collaboration that Renee and McAlister discuss and the engagement that Warren et al. describe as "the quieter and patient efforts of groups to find avenues for engagement and collaboration [that] often occur behind the scenes and beneath the surface" (2011, 240). One high-level district administrator said that this work "is not always out front, not always in the limelight," such as "bringing data to the table and having a conversation about what works and what doesn't work." A foundation executive described PSU's effective, "quiet" work: "just cultivating relationships and you know, managing to get themselves into tables where the students speak and are heard." Another funder echoed, "I think they have had a lot of impact quietly—just slowly educating policy makers." These covert efforts occur through one-on-one meetings, claiming a seat at the decision-making table, and working collaboratively with school leaders and district insiders to formulate policy responses. One-quarter of the respondents noted PSU's use of covert tactics, including respondents from all professional categories, with the exception of fellow organizers and principals and teachers.

Compared to the covert work, PSU's overt work is more public and often involves applying pressure. Several respondents commented on the effectiveness of PSU's public actions, "their rallies and their organizational speak-outs" as well as their media strategies for covering those actions. Although their overt work may appear to contrast with their covert work, in fact, PSU pursues the two in tandem. When asked to describe PSU's influence on educational policy, several respondents noted the group's visibility as a key accomplishment. One educational advocate noted, "They're very good at getting some visibility and drawing the attention of the media to what it is that they do. That's probably where their strength lies." A journalist observed, "They've become much more visible in terms of their kinds of actions. They go to the SRC with a presence. And the SRC can't ignore them either anymore. They're always in their face." Some respondents within the district explained how PSU actions "freak people out" and make administrators think, "Oh my God! They're not going to go away. What do we do? . . . What can we do to make that never happen again?" Another district insider commented, "Their media events have been effective because they get people inside [the district] to feel like they have to do something because they don't want that stuff on page one." Several respondents felt that former Superintendent Ackerman and some principals in the district viewed PSU "as a threat" or as "a foe" and actually "feared" the group because of its "having the potential to create a lot of noise." PSU is comfortable with this boisterous crescendo, using it to draw attention and build discomfort when necessary.

Long-term goals and short-term responses.—Although more than half of the respondents (53%) described PSU's persistence as one of its strengths, many (17%) also pointed to its responsiveness to new developments as an asset. Part

of its effectiveness stems from its ability to maintain long-term commitments even as it seizes short-term opportunities. In addition to competing with one another for the organization's time and energy, these two strategies can conflict with one another, as pursuing one may impede the pursuit of the other. For example, several respondents described PSU's vigilance on particular issues, such as privatization and small schools, as a strength; however, many also saw Ackerman as particularly inhospitable to small-schools proposals. For PSU to continue to "push, push, push" on this policy during her tenure would have been akin to "howling in the wind," according to one respondent. During Ackerman's superintendency, PSU needed to shift its focus to respond to her agenda. It began to push for greater transparency in decision making. Once Ackerman departed and the SRC initiated conversations about school closures and consolidations, PSU was poised to renew its case for smaller, responsive schools. PSU never abandoned its commitment to this policy solution, but the organization understood the need to temporarily table this policy proposal in favor of short-term, more winnable campaigns. During this transition period, new members or outside observers of PSU might have questioned the organization's focus. When the direct links between the short-term goals (transparency) and the long-term goals (small schools) are not clear, conflict can arise between these objectives and the organization must wrestle with its own priorities and commitments; however, PSU largely demonstrates the capacity to reconcile short-term responses with long-term commitments so that the former advance the latter.

Many respondents felt that PSU's "staying power" and "tenacity" were necessary because fundamental social and political change can take many years; one academic explained, "You have to be in it for the long haul." However, as another academic observed, in order "to keep people invested, you have to have wins." PSU balances what she called "longer-range goals" with "short-term wins" and timely responses to new policy proposals or media reports. Several respondents pointed to the flash mob action in the spring of 2010 as particularly well timed. PSU youths gathered in a public park, silently arranged themselves in organized lines, took a pledge of nonviolence, and then identified themselves as artists, innovators, thinkers, leaders, and organizers, countering the image of unruly and dangerous youth mobs that had been promulgated in the mainstream media. One journalist explained, "The nonviolent flash mob was very effective. The timing was good—it was still an issue that was really hot in the news, and they kind of struck at the right time." Such responsiveness helps PSU maintain its visibility and relevance.

Another example of PSU's ability to capitalize on new developments in the district was recounted by an intermediary: "When [Superintendent] Vallas was coming into town, the two student groups did a lot of research about who this new guy was. As part of their research they realized that he likes to

do capital stuff, and there's probably going to be a capital campaign here."
When Vallas announced a capital campaign 5 weeks into his superintendency,
PSU and YUC were well prepared to advocate for the inclusion of two schools
in which they had been involved and for specific design features for the new
school buildings. Their proactive approach ensured that they were helping to
shape the political agenda in the district. By pinpointing short-term oppor-
tunities that facilitate the achievement of its long-term goals, PSU has estab-
lished itself as relevant, visionary, and effective, reconciling the dissonance that
might appear to be created by attempting to protect commitments in the face
of shifting public perceptions and political priorities.

Identifying problems and solutions.—When asked to describe the role they see
PSU playing in Philadelphia and the strategies that have contributed to its
effectiveness, many respondents drew attention to the organization's work
exposing *problems* and issues on the one hand, and proposing and implementing
solutions on the other hand. These strategies can either compete with or com-
plement one another, depending on how they are pursued. Sometimes it is
important to emphasize problems alone; respondents appreciated PSU's ca-
pacity to focus in this way. A former high-level district administrator described
PSU students as "just sort of crying out about problems that nobody ever
seems to pay attention to." Respondents typically cited school-level examples,
highlighting students' accounts of poor teachers, dirty bathrooms, and broken
drinking fountains. As one advocate explained, their testimonies "have caused
heating systems to get fixed, books to be delivered on time." Other respondents,
however, discussed district-level problems that PSU has publicized, such as
zero-tolerance policies that push students out of school and the lack of trans-
parency in district decision making. Several respondents also discussed how
PSU worked to draw attention to unjust resource allocation within the Phil-
adelphia school system and across the state. More than half of the respondents
(53%), including individuals representing every institutional category, discussed
PSU's work exposing problems as effective.

At the same time, one-third of the respondents credit the students with
identifying and advocating for solutions to the problems they identify. Small
schools and student success centers were two examples of solutions cited re-
peatedly within the data. One advocate, for example, asserted, "They have
been one of the voices that has really advanced the notion of smaller, more
responsive schools," and a high-level district insider echoed, "I think they did
impact policy because you, in fact, saw a move towards smaller schools. This
is the district that went from about 42 comprehensive high schools to now
we're in the 60s." Student success centers, which provide college, career, and
mental health counseling as well as other social support services to students,
were piloted in 2009 and expanded to all high-need schools in the district the
following year. One respondent within the district acknowledged, "PSU is

actually the reason why these success centers exist now. . . . It was their idea. They did the research, came up with this sort of design, and said this is something that's needed in public high schools." As another former district administrator noted, "They've really won over a lot of the adults by their sincerity in wanting to solve problems and working with them kind of collaboratively to do that." PSU's voice is both critical and constructive; this blend of harmonic lines explains much of its effectiveness.

Conventional and new tactics.—The strategies described above (overt and covert tactics, short-term responses and longer-term commitments, and working to expose problems and advance solutions) fall under the heading of *conventional organizing*, or what one activist in the city called "straight-out organizing." The "long, hard work of organizing," as another respondent put it, also includes mobilizing, "getting a crowd" and "demonstrating power in numbers" through rallies, protests, and marches as well as "trying to use some leverage with the school district" and applying pressure through media contacts, press conferences, and closed-door negotiations. It involves "planning and goal setting" and being "deliberate" and intentional as well as persistent and steadfast. According to multiple respondents (67%), PSU uses all these strategies, showcasing its strong understanding of traditional organizing and advocacy.

Rather than simply selecting strategies from a traditional repertoire, however, PSU youths continually introduce a fresh, contemporary range of strategies to push for change. They leverage new organizing tactics: new media, hip-hop activism, and innovative artistic demonstrations, such as flash mobs. PSU uses new media tools, such as Facebook, texting, YouTube, and live chat, to recruit new members, to mobilize resources and people for actions, to document and share its work, and to connect with allies in other parts of the county. In 2009, PSU youths wrote and produced a compact disc with five tracks about the push-out phenomenon in Philadelphia schools. One district administrator noted that their advocacy around this issue prompted "internal discussions" around the district's zero-tolerance policy. Many respondents also cited various "street theater" performances, particularly the nonviolent flash mob PSU staged, as "very smart" and "effective," even though they saw it on YouTube rather than in person. A teacher leader explained, "When they do the videotaping and put it out there on the web through social networking media, people are . . . seeing these students firsthand. I think that's a very effective way of getting the message out." Respondents from every professional institutional category identified the group's use of new organizing tactics as valuable. Although old and new organizing tactics may compete with one another, as each requires time to plan and implement, PSU youths have found a way to pursue both.

Local and national agendas.—In its organizing work, PSU reconciles the potential conflict between pursing *narrow, local interests* (e.g., school-specific con-

cerns) and championing *broader public interests* (e.g., promoting educational and social justice nationwide). These two strategies represent conflict: they raise questions not just about how the organization allocates its time and resources, but how it determines its priorities and focus. Can it work on multiple levels simultaneously, or will traversing these levels dilute or drown out their core messages? Do they even have a core message with so many different refrains playing at once?

Just over half of the respondents (57%) noted PSU's ability to champion local as well as broad interests; however, several respondents saw PSU's work as being directed at only one system level or another. School-level respondents, including teachers and principals, were more apt to point to PSU's work at the district level than at the school level. One principal observed, "PSU's purpose is bigger than the school. . . . It seems to target its efforts at the district and district policy, district operating procedures, and state policy." Another principal echoed, "PSU, as far as I know, is not thinking on the local level; it's thinking on the district level and on the state level."

Meanwhile, district insiders and members of the philanthropic community identified PSU's school-specific campaigns. One foundation executive commented, "When they're doing their work in the individual schools, it's very much the kids finding the problem and trying to deal with it. And I like that— I like that a lot." A former high-level district administrator remarked, "A lot of their work also happens at the school level, where they try to make change locally. And you don't hear so much about that. But I think they've been hugely effective." District officials also commended PSU for its work at the state level to help secure more funding for Philadelphia schools.

Many respondents (57%) noted that in addition to addressing educational issues in Philadelphia, PSU follows and participates in national educational reform efforts, such as AEJ. An educational advocate in the city reflected, "I think they're stronger because they are tapped into a greater, larger campaign around the country." A former school reform commissioner noted, "They've also been instrumental in the national agenda around safe schools, engaging students, comprehensive education, community involvement. They've had a real presence." PSU balances potentially competing agendas at the local and national levels, tying these campaigns together by the common choruses of youth voice and commitment to educational quality and equity. These performances further establish the group's reputation and share its message with diverse audiences.

Self-Presentation

Just as it does with relationship building and organizing tactics, PSU again resolves potential dissonance in its self-presentation, in this case by positioning itself as both an insider and an outsider organization; by offering both an authentic, unvarnished and a polished, prepared youth voice; and by negotiating leadership roles for its young adult staff, while maintaining its reputation as a youth-led organization. Rather than compete or conflict with one another, the strategies in these dissonant pairings run the risk of contradicting one another, challenging organizational identity: How can one be both an outsider and an insider simultaneously? How can an organization have both youth leadership and adult leadership? PSU handles these contradictions through a technique similar to polytonality in dissonant music in which multiple keys are played simultaneously. PSU manages multiple identities in its self-presentation. In addition to managing these three contradictory pairings, PSU balances the classic tension in organizing between the sometimes competing, often complementary, goals of individual leadership development and structural social change work.

Insider and outsider status.—Just over one-quarter of the respondents (27%) recognized PSU as an insider organization in that it has a chapter-based structure in schools and insofar as its members are students in the district. As insiders, they have firsthand knowledge to share. As a former SRC member explained, "They sit at the tables with the other advocates and they represent something that is undeniable—the actual recipients of the education in the city. So when they get organized and say, 'Here's how it feels from our point of view,' that is irrepressible." Several respondents praised the effectiveness of students' personal narratives at SRC meetings. One high-level district administrator said, "Who better than a young person to engage in a conversation relative to teacher quality? I mean, they are . . . in our schools every day." A foundation executive explained, "In some ways, the students are the *only* ones who can really give the testimony about school quality." Because district students experience schools in ways that no adult can replicate, they are positioned as ultimate insiders of the system.

Simultaneously, PSU derives much of its power from its outsider status: it is not beholden to the district. Respondents observed that PSU was not "sanctioned by the district" and its members were not considered "operatives of the district," as some other student groups in the city were. As one journalist noted, because they "are a voice from the outside of the district, they're not afraid to be critical of the district." An academic researcher explained that while organizations that receive district funding might feel that "they couldn't say anything critical about the district . . . the student organizing groups were different. They weren't afraid to make these critical suggestions." Several

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respondents (23%) drew attention to the outsider aspect of PSU's identity as they sought to explain the organization's strength. Few of our respondents (7%) saw PSU in both ways, as insiders and outsiders; depending on its target audience, PSU selects different ways to frame itself.

Authentic, raw and professional, polished voice.—In its self-presentation, PSU also manages the contradiction between appearing *authentic* and *trained*. The strategies in this pairing were mentioned by equal numbers of respondents (63%), though only 40% discussed PSU as effectively engaging both. The majority of respondents saw one side of this pairing or the other. Those who appreciated the authenticity of the youth voice specifically pointed to the absence of training in PSU, which would have made them more suspicious of the group. One former district administrator said she appreciated "performances by students [that] are rougher than I would prefer," because the work feels "untouched by adult hands." Another former district insider noted that members' narratives and arguments at meetings appeared "unfiltered" and added that "there's a kind of authenticity to it that's really important." Other district insiders noted that it felt real to them when the youths "struggled" to deliver their remarks to the SRC or "stumbled reading over their prepared statement" because of their nerves. Some respondents within and outside the district, however, felt that such stumbles might indicate that the words were not the students' own, and they questioned the authenticity that others perceived. Nonetheless, more of the skeptics (63%) discussed authentic voice as an effective strategy deployed by PSU than did allies (40%).

In contrast to the theme of authenticity that ran through our data, many respondents (63%) highlighted the training that PSU provides students for public speaking. These respondents described how PSU works to prepare students to testify about the issues they face in their schools. In fact, teachers and principals were the only group not to comment on this aspect of PSU's work and positioning. One advocate who has collaborated with PSU students noted that the "most impressive thing" about the PSU students she encountered was that they "were learning to become public speakers. . . . Some of these kids were really learning how to become well spoken." Many respondents, including all three of the journalists and all three of the academics, described being impressed by how "articulate," "polished," "professional," "well researched," and "disciplined" the members of PSU appear. As one intermediary put it, "You never accuse them of not knowing how to act in meetings." Another former high-level district administrator explained, "If you talk to a young person involved [in PSU], you have to come away impressed with their breadth of knowledge and their understanding of both theory and practice." Clearly, such training involves modeling as well as rehearsal.

A secondary dimension of this dissonant pair of authentic versus trained involves using both *personal anecdotes* and *research* to make a persuasive case.

Several respondents described the narratives students told about their school experiences as particularly "compelling" and "undeniable." One intermediary explained that while "facts tell, emotions sell," and the students' accounts of their personal experiences "get at people's heartstrings and their heads at the same time."

While many respondents appreciated when students speak about their personal experiences in schools, many also felt that PSU derived some of its power from the quality of the research the students conduct around the issues. One academic researcher explained, "When you have students who have done research, who have positioned themselves to be knowledgeable, and who aren't just individuals reading a complaint with their parent, then it's not as ignorable or as dismissable." A former SRC chairperson remarked, "I do think that they spent a good amount of time bringing data, or informed research, or surveys to the conversation; it wasn't a shooting from the hip; it wasn't just anecdotal information. There was, from my vantage point, a significant amount of dedicated research that the organizations [PSU and YUC] brought to the table that was enlightening, that I had not seen or heard from other sources. So I think they added information to the debate." Whether they are learning how to frame and tell their stories in a public forum or whether they are learning how to conduct and present research, the students of PSU are engaged in a process that involves skill building and mentoring by more experienced, astute leaders.

Youth and adult leadership.—To this end, while many respondents (77%) attributed PSU's influence on educational policy to the *power of youth* voice, be it raw or polished, other respondents (63%) praised the "political savvy" of its *adult leadership*. For example, one foundation executive noted, "With good guidance from their leaders, PSU has become very potent. . . . So, how did they get from, in 15 years, being inconsequential or nonexistent to that, is a slow incremental maturation of style and ability. And you'd have to think that it's in the leadership there because of the revolving students." All the respondents recognized PSU as a youth organization; however, some understood while others questioned the extent of the involvement of the adult staff, especially in terms of the youth voice tension described above. One former district insider commented, "If you're really a youth organization, then adults shouldn't be going to meetings on behalf of the organization." Other respondents defended the idea that effective policy change work requires leadership from experienced adults. Clearly, negotiating the roles and responsibilities of adults relative to youths is a particularly challenging part of PSU's orchestration, and the contradiction this dissonance poses is one that some audience members struggle to reconcile for themselves.

Youth development and social change goals.—Therefore, in addition to conducting itself as a youth-led organization with adult leaders, PSU composes with two

distinct, sometimes competing but often complementary, goals in mind: individual *youth leadership development* and systemic *social change*. Depending on its audience, PSU will amplify one or the other of these goals to make itself more appealing. We found that many principals see the PSU chapters in their schools primarily as youth "leadership clubs," implying that this is how the group's presence in the school has been pitched to them. Meanwhile, foundation officers, advocates, and organizers, who have a vested interest in effecting meaningful change in the community, view PSU as a "watchdog" and reform-oriented organization. A high-level district administrator who had worked for two different administrations captured the harmony between the two distinct aspects of this dissonant pairing: "They [PSU and YUC] have been great in terms of building young people's leadership over 15 years, reaching out to young people who have been marginalized and educating them civically. They have also been great around addressing real issues and affecting policy. . . . They are organizations that push the establishment." Although some stakeholders appreciate one of these goals more than the other, PSU legitimizes itself and builds its power through its dual emphasis on youth leadership development and social change work.

Target Audience Trends

Of all the strategies outlined in our orchestration framework, respondents were most likely to recognize PSU's positioning as an organization that seeks to effect social change (cited by 100%) and its use of overt tactics (cited by 90%), arguably the two most visible strategies. The strategies least cited included its positioning as an outsider organization (cited by 23%) and its capitalizing on short-term opportunities (cited by 17%). Nonetheless, for those respondents who mentioned them, these strategies were every bit as important as the more commonly observed practices.

Principals, journalists, and fellow organizers showed the least collective capacity to recognize PSU's ability to create dissonance with its strategic choices; that is, they were less likely to cite strategies that competed with, conflicted with, or contradicted one another. Of the 11 dissonant pairs, only four were discussed by at least one of the journalists, and a different four were noticed by at least one of the organizers. Four dissonant pairs were also noted by at least one principal. By contrast, district insiders and foundation executives showed the greatest awareness of PSU's strategic range, with nine pairings highlighted by each. Many of these dissonant pairs were noticed by more than one foundation executive or district insider as well. For example, three of the four foundation executives mentioned both working through coalitions and holding one-on-one meetings as effective strategies used by PSU, and all four

mentioned that PSU derived strength from being youth led while having savvy adult leaders. This dissonant pair was also noted by half of the respondents (five) who were considered district insiders.

To a certain extent responses appear dependent on the positionality of the respondent: those with detailed understanding of how education functions at multiple levels, such as district insiders and foundation officers, were most likely to demonstrate awareness of the widest range of dissonant pairs. Respondents with more local responsibilities (managing a specific school or organization) or with a broad awareness of social issues, rather than a deep knowledge of education in particular (such as journalists), were less likely to vocalize awareness of how youth organizing for education reform manages various dissonances.

Allies strongly perceived external relationships to be an important component of youth organizing. Skeptics, meanwhile, were more likely to draw attention to internal relationships. Although the skeptics were more likely to comment on the effectiveness of PSU's adult leadership than were the allies, who tended to emphasize the power of youth leadership, the skeptics were also more likely than the allies to discuss the youth development goal of the organization, acknowledging that effective youth development requires adult leadership, a conductor who can help bring the best out of each young artist.

Discussion

Our study shows that PSU has achieved the accomplishments with which it is credited through a sophisticated set of practices, which involves intentionally striking notes that create dissonance with one another within the categories of relationship building, organizing, and self-positioning. Each of these broader categories has been discussed by scholars who study community organizing, and some scholars have touched on one or two of the dissonant pairings we identify as well. For example, relationship building is widely considered a core organizing process (Mediratta 2004; Oakes and Rogers 2006; Schutz and Sandy 2011; Shirley 1997; Warren et al. 2011). Scholars have described how building strategic relationships with external power brokers helps groups to enhance their political clout and their *bridging* social capital, while developing internal relationships strengthens the groups' organizational infrastructure, their *bonding* social capital, and their capacity to mobilize large numbers of people, a key indicator of power. In their review of the literature, Renee and McAlister (2011) identify two aspects of relationship building, "working through alliances and coalitions" (16) and "balancing collaboration and pressure" (18), as two of four effective strategies commonly used by groups that organize for education reform, and our findings are consistent with this con-

clusion. However, we understand "collaboration" as they define it to be both a core dimension of organizers' work and an organizing tactic itself: building external relationships through one-on-one meetings, which do not attract widespread public attention. Of course, these strategies stand in contrast to the development of coalitions and broad-based alliances, which are often used to apply pressure overtly.

Researchers have also touched on some of the dissonant pairs we situate within the category of organizing tactics. For example, our pairing of conventional and novel tactics echoes Oakes and Rogers's (2006) observation that "nearly all [grass roots community organizing groups] rely on unconventional tactics as well as more conventional political actions" (101). Our pairing of local and broad interests resembles Mediratta et al.'s (2007) description of how youth organizing groups work toward the dual objectives of broad structural changes and local, school-specific improvements and Renee and McAlister's contention that effective organizing groups work at multiple systems levels. Warren (2001) describes how Industrial Areas Foundation organizers in San Antonio balanced negotiation with confrontation, paralleling what Renee and McAlister describe as collaboration and pressure and what we refer to as overt and covert tactics. And Kamber (2002) mentions how some organizing groups "not only help analyze the problems and criteria for improvement but also are critical to planning what changes will occur inside the classroom" (14), reflecting our pairing of exposing problems and developing solutions.

In terms of self-presentation, many researchers have discussed the challenges of negotiating roles for adults in youth-led organizations (Delgado and Staples 2008; Kirshner 2008; O'Donoghue and Strobel 2007; Soep 2006; Zeldin et al. 2008), and organizing is widely viewed as an activity that transforms not only individuals through leadership development (Delgado and Staples 2008; Oakes and Rogers 2006; Shah 2011; Shirley 1997) but also institutions and social structures (Mediratta et al. 2009; Schutz and Sandy 2011; Warren et al. 2011). Indeed, our dissonant pairing of youth leadership development and social change reflects Christens and Dolan's (2011) claim that youth organizing is effective when it weaves together youth development, community development, and social change into a unified whole.

While the orchestration framework we outline in this article certainly incorporates findings from extant research, it also builds on this research by pulling together the wide range of approaches that have been central to building the reputation and political clout of a particular youth organizing group, by representing them as an artistic undertaking, and by organizing them as a series of paired strategies that generate dissonance before resolving. Indeed, capturing the extent of the dissonance embedded in the work of PSU is one key contribution of this study. While previous scholars of community orga-

nizing have highlighted the importance of possessing a wide range of responses and tactics and while some have noted tension among a few of these strategies, none has demonstrated how the theme of dissonance cuts across the entire range of techniques. Our framework shows not only the ubiquity of this dissonance but also its nature: the paired strategies alternately compete with, conflict with, or contradict one another but ultimately do not mutually exclude one another. The competing pairs challenge organizational capacity, asking, "How are our limited time and resources best used?" The conflicting pairs challenge organizational coherence, raising questions about vision and values; and the contradictory pairs challenge organizational identity, asking "Who are we?" Part of PSU's effectiveness, we argue, lies in the fact that it can offer multiple and sometimes contravening answers to all of these questions. Although aspects of our framework may be applicable to adult or intergenerational organizing and to organizing in arenas other than education, we believe that the entire framework offers a theoretical explanation that may be unique to youth organizing for educational reform. Adult organizing groups would be unlikely to respond to questions of organizational identity by affirming "We both are youth led and have skilled adult leaders." Youth organizers working on issues of environmental justice and climate change may be hardpressed to position themselves as both insiders and outsiders of the environmental system. More research, however, is needed to test the generalizability of our framework.

In addition to clarifying the dimensions and strategic options of effective youth organizing work, our framework sets three aspects of effective youth organizing for school reform into relief. First, the sheer number of pairs (11) draws attention to the breadth of strategies PSU engages and underscores the complexity of the work. PSU recognizes that different situations require different approaches. Consequently, it has built a wide repertoire of practice, from which it draws regularly and intentionally. Effective youth organizing is not a simple process of mastering one or two techniques. Rather, it requires comfort and facility with a vast array of practices.

Second, because so many of these practices represent alternatives to one another, the frameworks' pairings highlight the sophistication of PSU. A less savvy organization might feel forced to choose one side of the various binaries we elucidate; it is a measure of PSU's creative capacity that it can sustain these dissonances without compromising its core values. Many youth organizations become known for or associated with one central objective or approach. For example, youth development organizations may focus on building internal relationships rather than developing external relationships. One of our respondents observed that in order for the organization she supports to be authentically youth led, it had to forgo structural change work and concentrate instead on youth leadership development. That PSU can strike the

range of notes that it does, across and within dissonant pairings, helps to explain much of its effectiveness.

Third, our framework shows that PSU's strategies, like musical performances, elicit very different audience responses. In order to understand PSU's effect, we must interpret it through the ears and eyes of those in the audience. Although all of our respondents acknowledged PSU's influence, they did not see eye to eye on its practices. While some thought that the organization derived its power from the authenticity of the youth voice, others pointed to the steadiness and smarts of the adult leaders. While some respondents referred to their "street theater" as "not very influential," others deemed it "just brilliant" and "incredibly powerful." While some found their quiet, covert meetings with the superintendent, commissioners, and other policy makers particularly effective, others did not know that they engaged in this kind of work. The fact that our respondents could see the organization and its practices in such different and sometimes contravening ways further affirms the value of having wide strategic reserves. It suggests the possibility that PSU may manage its public image strategically. If certain respondents saw the organization from a limited vantage point, this may be a result of PSU's intentional plan not to mislead but to appear as needed to various stakeholders.

Therefore, while it is important to acknowledge that our respondents have different perspectives, it is also important to observe that their perspectives may differ in fundamental ways from those inside the organization. Particular strategies might have more or different resonance for individual respondents or for our sample of respondents collectively than they have for PSU organizers. Our framework captures the range of interpretations outsider observers offer, not necessarily the intentions that PSU itself would put forward. For example, although leaders from PSU did not disagree with any of the strategies the respondents identified, they did mention that the time and energy they invest in recruiting new members to the organization did not seem to be adequately represented in the 11 pairings. Future research might explore this question of perspective, comparing insider and outsider views on the work to develop a more complete model of effective youth organizing for school reform.

Our effort to develop theory is also limited by our reliance on a single case. Extant research finds that effective organizing is rooted in specific contexts (Warren et al. 2011). Because our study took the long view, examining respondents' perceptions of PSU over a 15-year period, it offers insights that might be generalizable across time but not necessarily across place. Although all of our respondents were able to discuss features they believed distinguished the educational policy environment of Philadelphia from those of other urban centers, none of our respondents discussed PSU's strategies as dependent on or responsive to specific aspects of Philadelphia's context. This lack of a direct

linkage in the data does not mean, however, that context does that matter. Future research must look beyond Philadelphia to determine which dimensions and pairings within our framework hold up in different settings. Such research will add to our understanding about how youth organizing works not only in specific local contexts but also across contexts. Our framework offers a starting point for this research and a vehicle that may help move us from recognition of the mechanics of separate campaigns to an understanding of how youth organizing efforts can intersect and combine to build a new movement for improved education.

In summary, the framework we present advances research on youth organizing by identifying the myriad paired strategies used by effective youth organizers from the perspectives of those targeted by their work. In so doing, it serves as a guide, informing the practice of youth organizers across the country, and it offers a lens through which other groups' efforts can be analyzed and understood. As youth organizers around the country continue to influence educational policy discourse and decision making, they challenge our conceptions of the role youths can play in the policy process. Although most educational policy continues to put forward a narrow view of youths, framing them largely as the beneficiaries or targets of specific legislation, effective youth organizing challenges this perspective. It shines a spotlight on youths as political actors, intelligent analysts, and artists who are capable of creating works of art that may just herald the beginning of a new moment (and possibly a new movement) in education reform—one in which youths have a voice as well as an audience that listens to them.

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