
Dissent From Within

How Educational Insiders Use Protest to Create Policy Change

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This article utilizes social movement theory to analyze policy change created by site-based educators. The author uses a qualitative case study to examine how an organization comprised of teachers and administrators in New York State used protest to protect a waiver, which exempted students in their schools from having to pass statewide graduation exams. The author finds that the educators' ability to mobilize resources and to strategically frame their struggle in a manner that resonated with policymakers allowed the educator activists to capitalize on emerging controversies surrounding the state's assessment system and create policy change. This article provides a framework to understand how marginalized actors within systems of schooling organize to create change. Such a framework is becoming increasingly relevant as educators attempt to create space for local practice in the current top-down policy environment.

Keywords: *educational policy; educational reform; politics of education; social movements; standards reform*

How do marginalized actors within systems of public schooling mobilize to create policy change? How do teachers and administrators from 28 small public schools—representing less than one half of 1 percent of a state's public school student population—successfully gain an exemption from the state assessment policy? To answer these questions, this article uses social movement theory to explore how the Teachers and Administrators of New York (TANY)¹ used protest to maintain a waiver exempting students in their schools from passing state-level exit exams as a condition of graduation.

In May 1995, the outgoing New York state commissioner of education granted the schools that make up TANY a waiver that allowed students to

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demonstrate mastery of the state standards and receive a diploma through its program of performance-based assessment (PBA). In February 1998, a newly appointed commissioner revoked TANY's waiver. At first, the educator activists of TANY worked to maintain their waiver through established policy-making pathways. When these efforts failed, TANY turned to protest. TANY's strategies included demonstrating at the state capital, suing the commissioner, and working to have influential policy makers intervene on behalf of its schools. TANY's protest efforts were successful. In June 2005, the New York Board of Regents—despite considerable opposition from the commissioner of education and the New York State Department of Education (NYSED)—passed a resolution that extended TANY's waiver until 2011.²

The multidisciplinary educational change literature contains several studies that examine how powerful actors with abundant resources such as business groups (see McDaniel & Miskel, 2002; Mickelson, 1999; Shipps, 1997) or teachers unions (see Kerchner, Koppich, & Weeres, 1997; Lieberman, 1997; Murphy, 1990) influence educational policy. This scholarship also provides examples of work that “examine how broad cultural environments serve as social movements and spur educational change” (Davies, 1999, p. 2). Such work examines, for example, how the civil rights movement or the women's movement influenced school policies and curricular decisions (see Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Lugg, 2001; Sleeter, 1996). The school change literature, however, lacks comprehensive studies of how marginalized groups *within* educational institutions mobilize to pursue their shared interests.

This study addresses this gap in the research by examining how a group of school-level actors used protest to gain a policy victory. Social movement theory provides a conceptual frame to help explain the factors that contribute to marginalized educators' ability to create change. Such a framework has growing relevance given the shifting educational context within which site-level actors are increasingly losing power (Malen & Cochran, 2008). Given this loss of power, practitioners may choose to protest to make their voices heard.

In this article, I first explore the relationship between this study and the existing literature on school-level actors' ability to create policy change. Second, I ground my analysis within a conceptual framework drawn from social movement theory. Third, I describe the methodology I used to examine TANY's action. Fourth, I situate TANY's actions within the standards movement and the policy-making context of New York State and document the elements of TANY's activism. Finally, I analyze the factors that contributed to TANY's creation of policy change and discuss the application of this analysis to future research examining marginalized insiders' ability to gain policy victories.

Practitioners' Power

Systems of public education consist of diverse constituencies and belief systems. As a result of such differences, educational institutions are often sites of competition over ideas and resources (Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Not all actors who hold formal positions within systems of education have equal access to relevant decision-making channels. The literature on school change has long demonstrated the hierarchical nature of the policy-making environment and highlights the relative lack of power of school-level practitioners (see Honig, 2006; Malen, 2006; Wildavsky, 1979). Despite the emphasis on the lack of institutional power, however, this research represents site-based educators as the implementers of reforms, wielding power at the individual classroom or school level (Binder, 2002; Honig, 2006; Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006; McLaughlin, 1987; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Spillane & Burch, 2006; Tyack & Cuban 1995).

Early scholarship in educational policy often portrayed school-based educators as problematic in the policy-making process because they could undermine policy implementation from within classrooms and schools. Given this perspective, policy scholarship was concerned with "closing the gap between policymakers' intentions and implementers' actions and reinforcing top-down command-and-control relationships between policy makers and implementers" (Honig, 2006, p. 7). More recent research asserts that "successful" reform efforts involve practitioners in all aspects of the process (Fullan, 1993; Honig, 2006). These scholars contend that including teachers and site-based administrators in change efforts reduces the likelihood that practitioners will resist implementation. Both approaches recognize the power of educators to influence change at the classroom and school level.

The educational change literature largely conceptualizes school-based educators' power embedded in the loose coupling that has existed between classroom practice and school reform. Loose coupling describes the disconnect between policy makers' intentions, on one hand, and classroom work, on the other (see Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Spillane & Burch, 2006; Weick, 1976). Within this framework, practitioners' power rests in their ability to "close classroom or school doors" on reforms they believe are not in the best interest of their students (Binder, 2002; Honig, 2006; Hubbard et al., 2006; McLaughlin, 1987; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Spillane & Burch, 2006; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In their study of failed reform in San Diego, for example, Hubbard et al. (2006) wrote, "Street-level bureaucrats can, and often do, modify, circumvent, or even resist and subvert official organizational goals" (p. 9). By documenting site-based educators "resisting" or "subverting"

reforms at the individual classroom and school level, Hubbard and colleagues demonstrated that school-based educators, as street-level bureaucrats, have some form of institutional power. Hubbard et al.'s study is representative of a significant body of literature on school change, which documents how loose coupling allows teachers and administrators to undermine change at the classroom or school level (Binder, 2002; Hubbard et al., 2006; McLaughlin, 1987; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Spillane & Burch, 2006; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Literature on educational change lacks examples of educators' actions in the absence of classroom- and/or school-based power and descriptions of practitioners engaged in efforts for change beyond the walls of their schools.

The standards movement marks an increased role of state and federal policy makers in K-12 classrooms and, in many cases, the end of loose coupling (Grossman, 2005; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Spillane & Burch, 2006). By defining curricular material; providing instructional guidance; and holding students, teachers, administrators, and schools accountable to test results, the standards movement no longer allows educators to resist reform efforts within the confines of their schools and classrooms (e.g., by closing their doors) (Cohen & Spillane, 1992; Grossman, 2005; Hill, 2001; Kirp & Driver, 1995; Malen & Cochran, 2008; Meyer & Rowan, 2006; Spillane & Burch, 2006). As Malen and Cochran (2008) explain, "School level actors may not be in a position to evade, remake, or rebuff directives from afar as readily as they have in the past" (p. 152). Loose coupling provided educational practitioners with a significant form of bottom-up power. The reduction of this power creates a context in which school-level actors increasingly lose autonomy and need to develop new ways to "evade, remake, or rebuff" reforms (Malen & Cochran, 2008). My research provides evidence of a new mode of educator resistance. The teachers and school-level administrators of TANY were strategic and conscious political actors, insiders who advanced their collective interests outside the walls of their schools and classrooms. Because scholarship on educational change lacks a framework to examine the mobilization of marginalized actors, I turn to the literature on social movements to understand the strategies TANY used to pursue change and the factors that contributed to its ability to gain a policy victory.

Conceptual Framework

Social movement theory, a rich theoretical perspective drawn from sociology and political science, provides a particularly relevant framework for examining how educational insiders utilized protest to change New York

State public education. Social movements are theoretically and conceptually viewed as ongoing, organized forms of collective action that use protest to achieve social, political, or institutional change. Social movements are ongoing in that they are not one-time occurrences and organized in that they are strategic and calculated efforts at change (Burstein, Einwohner, & Hollander 1995; Giugni, 1998; Katzenstein, 1999; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Piven & Cloward, 1979).

The literature in sociology and political science as well as public perception often cast social movements as actions engaged in by “outsiders” attempting to change the dominant policies, practices, and/or beliefs of “insiders,” actors holding official positions within institutions and/or organizations. These movements consist of large-scale public events such as strikes, riots, demonstrations, marches, or sit-ins. However, scholars have begun to reconceptualize both the actors involved in change efforts and the actions thought of as protest. In doing so, their work uses the tools of analysis originally developed by studying traditional social movements to examine protest *within* mainstream institutions³ (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008; Binder, 2002; Eisenstein, 1996; Epstein, 1996; Katzenstein, 1999; Moore, 1999; Reinelt, 1995; Spalter-Roth & Schreiber, 1995; Strang & Jung, 2005).

An Expanded Conception of Social Movements

Recent scholarship moves away from a dichotomous classification of insiders and outsiders, or members and challengers, conventionally addressed in social movement theory, and begins to document the disruptive action of actors who hold formal positions within the institutions they attempt to change.⁴ For instance, Katzenstein (1999) documented the protest activity of feminists who hold official positions inside the U.S. military and the Catholic Church. Her study of military personnel and “sisters” committed to changing their respective institutions provides a vivid demonstration of collective actors working to change institutions and the policies that govern them from the inside.

In addition to reconceptualizing who is an activist, current research rethinks the actions that constitute protest. Extending the seminal work of Piven and Cloward (1979), Katzenstein (1999) maintained that disruption remains the defining feature of protest. Piven and Cloward asserted that disruption occurs when “*people cease to conform to accustomed institutional roles; they withhold their accustomed cooperation, and by doing so, cause institutional disruptions*” (p. 24). Indeed, for some inside activists, demonstrations, boycotts, and sit-ins may be the most forceful and disruptive choice of action. However, as Katzenstein pointed out, “There may be

a wider pool of actions and words that convey exactly this refusal to ‘conform to accustomed institutional roles’” and thus are considered disruptive (p. 8). Such action may include activists’ efforts to gain the support of influential third parties and to persuade these powerful actors (organizations) to intervene on behalf of the movement. Social movement actors also may work to discredit superiors and/or institutional policies outside of established policy-making pathways. Like groups traditionally thought of as the key members of social movements, inside activists must use protest when they are marginalized and therefore lack access to official institutional forms of power or critical decision-making areas.

Marginalization can occur in a variety of ways. It may be the result of insiders’ social location (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, religious belief, or sexual orientation) (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008; Datnow, 1998; Gilkes, 1998; Katzenstein, 1999). Alternatively, exclusion (marginalization) can result from the official position actors hold within the institution (Katzenstein, 1999; Malen, 2006). Although marginalized insiders have some degree of institutional power, they may lack access to decisions that have a major impact on the scope of their work. School-based educators, for example, have the power to establish school-level policy (e.g., set student and teacher class schedules), but, as in this case, they do not have the authority to determine the state’s assessment and graduation policies—policies that have a significant effect on school and classroom operations. I use the term *structural marginalization* to describe the position held by insiders excluded from decision-making processes regarding policies that have a significant bearing on their day-to-day work within their institutions.

Inside activists’ positions as members of both a social movement organization and the institution they are attempting to change affect the strategies they employ. Because insiders are committed to changing the institution from within, they more frequently engage in activity that conforms to the norms of the institution (Eisenstein, 1996; Epstein, 1996; Katzenstein, 1999; Reinelt, 1995). Similarly, inside activists’ entrée into institutional networks allows them to align their strategies with formal practices and procedures and make demands in “official institutional language,” which increases activists’ ability to use protest to generate change (Binder, 2002; Eisenstein, 1996; Epstein, 1996; Katzenstein, 1999).

Factors That Contribute to Inside Activists’ Success

Research on social movements demonstrates that the ability of a social movement organization (SMO) to create change depends on three broad

sets of factors. First, like any other type of political group, SMOs require resources to survive over time (Jenkins & Perrow, 1977; McAdam, 1999; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Meyer, 2005; Oberschall, 1973). Resources can be anything from material assets—income or funding—to nonmaterial resources such as access to decision-making or professional networks (Jenkins & Perrow, 1977; Moore, 1999; Oberschall, 1973).

Protest groups obtain resources from a combination of internal and external sources (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). Internal resources include individual members' social and human capital as well as their access to professional networks and formal institutional knowledge (Moore, 1999). External resources can take a variety of forms; however, monetary resources have received a majority of the analytic attention (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). Such a focus seems justified, as Edwards and McCarthy (2004) noted: "No matter how many other resources a movement mobilizes it will incur costs and someone has to pay the bills" (p. 128). Foundations are among the most common contributors of material resources to SMOs. Scholars point to a protest group's organizational capacity⁵ and legitimacy as key factors in their mobilization of resources (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004; McCarthy & Wolfson, 1996; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). In describing how foundations fund SMOs, Edwards and McCarthy wrote, "The process SMOs must go through to obtain and maintain grant funding limits access to those that have already achieved a certain threshold of organizational formality and legitimacy" (p. 131). Whereas an SMO's legitimacy contributes to its gaining external resources, the award of such assets also increases a group's legitimacy (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004; McCarthy & Wolfson, 1996; McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

Second, while an SMO requires ongoing resources to maintain its activity, movement success also depends on changes in the political or institutional environment that create new opportunities for activists (Binder, 2002; Eisinger, 1973; McAdam, 1999; McAdam et al., 2001; Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1978). Changes in the political climate can improve chances for successful protest by reducing the power differential between challenging groups and their opponents. Such changes may include conflict among elites or realignments in electoral or institutional alliances that result in increased political advantage of a single protest group or a significant undermining of the stability of the entire political system (Binder, 2002; McAdam, 1999; Tarrow, 1998). Binder (2002), for example, explored how changes in the political environment influenced the relative success of creationist and Afrocentric curricular movements across educational contexts. In particular, Binder examined the conditions that "caused some school

districts [or state departments of education] to be vulnerable to challenge” (p. 18). Binder concluded that in both types of challenges (Afrocentric and creationist), “Political cracks and cleavages frequently occurred among school system members, and . . . [w]hen challengers could figure out how to capitalize on these rifts, they did, indeed, render the systems more vulnerable to their demands” (p. 230). Binder’s findings highlight that whereas inside activists need shifts in the opportunity structure to create change, these activists must capitalize on such opportunities.

Third, movement scholarship demonstrates that activists can take advantage of emerging opportunities by strategically framing their demands. Frames are “schemata of interpretation” that allow individuals to transform otherwise meaningless aspects of experience into something that has meaning (Goffman, 1974). Within the domain of social movement theory, frame analysis examines how political actors strategically alter meanings in ways that resonate within a society and its institutions (Benford & Snow, 2000; Binder, 2002; Davies, 1999; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). Researchers look at how social movement actors construct frames to “assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 198). In an examination of how challenging groups strategically construct their arguments to align with dominant cultural themes, Davies (1999) contended that “frame analysis can show how relatively weak but creative local actors seize opportunities and shape such reforms for their purpose” (p. 18).

Frame analysis identifies two types of frames utilized by protest groups when attempting to pursue change: diagnostic and prognostic. Diagnostic frames shape how issues are perceived (Cress & Snow, 2000) by identifying problems and assigning blame for current situations (Amenta & Caren, 2004; Coburn, Bae, & Turner, 2008; Cress & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1998). Diagnostic framing focuses attention on a particular aspect of an issue and locates the “targets or the sources of the outcome sought” (Cress & Snow, 2000, p. 1071). Prognostic frames offer specific solutions and goals and provide tactics for achieving these objectives (Amenta & Caren, 2004; Coburn et al., 2008; Cress & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1998). Prognostic and diagnostic framing are often closely related, because prognostic framing frequently “rests implicitly on problem definition and attribution that is part of diagnostic framing” (Coburn et al., 2008, p. 367).

In sum, social movement theory provides the conceptual tools to analyze TANY’s use of protest to create policy change. The educator activists took

advantage of their inside status to mobilize resources and framed their actions in ways that allowed them to capitalize on emerging political and institutional opportunity in the state. In the following section, I present the research design that I used to examine the strategies used by the educator activists and the factors that contributed to their ability to maintain their waiver from the state's assessment policy.

Method

Research Design

This study examined the following two questions: What conditions facilitate the emergence and development of protest organizations comprised of insiders? What strategies and tactics do insider organizations use to pursue policy change?⁶ To answer these questions, I collected a range of data from TANY and its members as well as from the targets of the educator activists' actions. These targets included state legislators and their educational policy aides, members of the Board of Regents, employees of the NYSED and the New York City Department of Education, leaders of local teachers unions and community organizations, and parents. I collected data from September 2002 to July 2005. My methods of data collection included in-depth, open-ended, semistructured interviews; observation; and archival analysis.

I conducted 50 interviews, ranging from 30 minutes to 4 hours. I carried out all but 2 of the interviews in person and digitally recorded all but 1 of the interviews (see Table 1 for a summary of interview respondents). Qualitative interviews provided an opportunity to explore the shared meaning activists developed regarding their struggle for change. Interviews, for instance, allowed me to interrogate what participants saw TANY doing, or the connections they felt between their jobs and their participation in TANY. Additionally, interviews with policy makers, union leaders, parents, and community organizations revealed how these actors interpreted the actions of TANY.

I utilized participants' knowledge to identify other relevant actors to interview—a snowball sample. For TANY, I selected participants who attended meetings and/or other events. I also included actors who had a long history with the organization and those who were recent members. In all, I interviewed 21 former or current members of TANY: 12 principals, 7 teachers, and 2 assistant principals.

Table 1
Summary of Interview Respondents

Affiliation	Number
Teachers and Administrators of New York (TANY)	21
Parents	6
Members of affiliated organizations	9
New York State Board of Ed.	3
New York City Dept. of Ed.	3
Board of Regents	3
State-level elected officials	4
Community organizations	4
Teachers union	3
Total	56

Note: The total is greater than 50 because respondents can have multiple affiliations.

My sample of targets included six parents and nine members of affiliated organizations (a seventh parent declined to be interviewed). I interviewed three members of the New York City Department of Education and three members of NYSED. I also interviewed four members of the State Senate and Assembly, and their staffers, who were members of their respective branch's Education Committee.⁷ Additional respondents included two high-ranking members of the New York City teachers union and one member of the Rochester union. Five policy makers declined to be interviewed (one member of each the State Senate, State Assembly, Board of Regents, New York City Department of Education, and Rochester City School District).

From October 2002 to April 2005, I attended meetings, protest events, and public forums. I attended approximately 26 TANY meetings and 43 meetings across all affiliated organizations. The average meeting lasted 2 hours. At meetings and events, I took detailed field notes, recorded dialogue, noted demographic information and interaction patterns among participants, and attempted to capture the tone and emotions of participants. Attending TANY's meetings allowed me to observe how the educator activists formulated strategies and developed a shared understanding of their goals and actions. At protest events, public forums, and private meetings between the activists and their targets, I witnessed how TANY presented its case to the actors it was trying to persuade.

Finally, I examined archival data from or pertaining to TANY and its targets. I analyzed approximately 220 documents, including newspaper articles, testimony from public hearings on the state's assessment policy, legal affidavits and briefs (materials submitted in legal proceeding regarding

TANY's waiver), personal communications (including e-mails and letters), memoranda from city and state departments of education, internal documents from TANY, and press releases from TANY and affiliated organizations. Archival data from policy makers allowed me to explore how these actors perceived TANY's activism and, more generally, understood the state's assessment policy. Because TANY's actions began before I started my research, archival data provided critical information about the case that occurred prior to the beginning of my fieldwork.

These multiple forms of data collection and sources of evidence yielded several measures of the same phenomenon (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). This triangulation allowed me to gain a more complete understanding of how educator activists use protest to create policy change.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Interviews and field notes were transcribed verbatim and entered into the NVivo software program. I also input relevant documents such as e-mails and archived meetings minutes into the software program. I examined material that I did not have electronically in hard copy form and created an electronic proxy document of all relevant information. Once all of the formal interviews were completed, I constructed a narrative timeline of events. The timeline provided structure for my analysis and allowed me to chart the "critical incidents" necessary to understand the elements of my case and to examine how data pertained to my research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 115). For example, as I began to map controversy surrounding a particular statewide exam, I started to see how the debate affected policy makers' perception of the entire state assessment policy and created an opening for TANY to make its case (see the Creation of Political Opportunity section below).

Early in the project, social movement theory provided a broad set of categories that guided my analysis and aided in organizing the case (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). I began my formal data analysis by separating each research question into subquestions and developing tentative categories. Based on the literature on inside activism, I started with three general categories: Strategy, Emergence and Development, and Targets Discussing TANY. I "coded" my data (interviews, field notes, and archival sources) by reading transcripts and marking sections that "fit" into these different categories (I allowed data to occupy multiple categories). Whereas theoretical propositions aided me in the creation of my initial categories, the nuances of the case developed from the data. As patterns and themes began to emerge, I created

new categories, moving from general to more specific (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The final analysis consists of 42 subcategories. This inductive process of data analysis allowed me to gain a more complete understanding of the strategies TANY employed and the factors that contributed to the educator activists' ability to maintain its waiver.

Situating TANY's Marginalization

Social movements occur within and in response to specific social, political, and institutional contexts. In this section, I situate TANY's activism within the standards movement and the educational policy-making context of New York State. I also describe the formation of TANY, provide demographic information about its schools, and explain the decision-making processes of the organization.

The Context

The release of *A Nation at Risk* (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) marked the beginning of the formal standards movement in American schooling. In the ensuing two decades, reforms based on content standards and assessments have increasingly become the policies used to improve the United States's educational system. Another enduring feature of the standards movement is the greater role of the federal government in K-12 education. The trend toward a reliance on standardized assessment and a larger federal role in education culminated in the 2001 passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Whereas the standards movement continues to dominate the educational policy landscape, it has not been without resistance (Hursh, 2003; Lindsay, 2000; Riede, 2001).

Opposition includes lawsuits challenging provisions of NCLB brought by the state of Connecticut and ongoing litigation initiated by a coalition of school districts in Michigan, Texas, and Vermont filled jointly with the National Education Association. Students boycotted statewide exams in Chicago and in multiple cities in California, New York, and Massachusetts. Parent led antitesting organizations formed in a number of states including Wisconsin, New York, and Florida. Additionally, in states such as Florida, New York, Massachusetts, and Texas, a number of individual educators and organizations including educators, parents, students, and community members have resisted the implementation of their state's assessment policies. Like organizations that have emerged to resist "high-stakes" assessment

policy, TANY opposes the use of standardized exams to determine individual student graduation and/or promotion. What makes TANY unique is that the organization consists exclusively of site-based educators that engaged in ongoing, collective action resulting in policy change. Moreover, the teachers and administrators of TANY were able to preserve their system of PBA in a state with a long-established system of standardized assessment. New York has been on the forefront of the standards movement with its statewide assessment program (the Regents exam system) in place since the late 1800s.

The Decision

In May 1995, Thomas Sobol, the outgoing New York state commissioner of education, granted the schools of TANY a waiver exempting their students from participating in the statewide exam program. At this time, TANY consisted of a loose network of schools meeting to work on curricular and pedagogical issues. The waiver allowed students in TANY schools to demonstrate mastery of the state standards and receive a diploma through a series of performance-based assessments such as a research paper, mathematical analysis, science experiment, or literary analysis instead of by passing exit exams.

In summer 1996, Richard Mills replaced Sobol as the commissioner of education. Mills quickly began putting into place a new state assessment program. Phased in over an 8-year period, the plan called for all students, beginning with the graduating class of 2005, to pass five rigorous exit exams to receive a high school diploma.⁸ The plan also withdrew TANY's waiver, putting the schools on a schedule to begin taking the exams at the same time as all public school students in the state (Mills, 1995). The removal of the waiver catalyzed the formalization of TANY as a protest organization. PBA was central to TANY schools. Teachers and administrators worked collaboratively and across disciplines to integrate assessment into the day-to-day work of students. Because of this, TANY contended that the implementation of the exam policy would undermine the work of its schools. From May 1998 through March 2001, TANY attempted to maintain its waiver through formal NYSED channels. These efforts were unsuccessful, and believing that they had no other options to preserve the waiver, the educators of TANY turned to protest. From May 2001, until July 2005, TANY used a variety of tactics, some successful, others not, in attempts to maintain its waiver.

The Organization

TANY consists of 25 high schools in New York City and 1 each in Rochester, Ithaca, and Bedford. TANY schools vary in size from 125 to more than 1,000 students. The percentage of non-White students attending individual TANY schools in New York City ranges from 54.0% to 98.3%, and the percentage of students that receive free or reduced-price lunch ranges from 23.1 to 92.6.⁹ The aggregate student demographics of TANY schools closely match that of the other schools in their respective districts. (In New York City, the TANY schools have slightly a higher proportion of students receiving free and reduced lunch. The schools in Rochester and Ithaca have a lower percentage of students of color and students receiving free and reduced lunch.)¹⁰

Soon after TANY's formation, a teacher/administrator emerged as the primary leader and decision maker of the organization. This leader had a core group of other members with whom she or he regularly consulted. TANY discussed and finalized all decisions about its strategies and tactics at monthly meetings held in New York City.¹¹ The non-New York City schools did not regularly attend these meetings, although the schools in Rochester and Ithaca were in regular communication. In the 4 years following TANY's formation (before the organization turned to protest), meetings focused primarily on both the ongoing development of schools' systems of PBA and the group's work to maintain the waiver through formal NYSED channels. As many as 80 educators (both teachers and administrators) representing 25 different schools often attended these meetings. Once the educators turned to protest, meetings shifted to an almost exclusive focus on political advocacy. These later meetings usually involved approximately 20 educators representing 15 different schools.

Describing TANY's Mobilization

From May 2001 until June 2005, TANY engaged in numerous activities to maintain its waiver. TANY's key protest strategies included demonstration, litigation, and mobilization of elite allies.

Demonstration and Litigation

On May 7, 2001, TANY engaged in its first act of protest, organizing a demonstration on the steps of the NYSED. At the event, 1,500 students,

parents, and teachers marched against the use of “high-stakes exams.” Newspapers in Albany and New York City (the *New York Times* and *New York Daily News*) as well as the Associated Press covered the story. Media coverage provided TANY with a public forum to make its case. Activists’ ability to “induce the media to give free attention” has long been acknowledged in the movement literature as a tactic of protest groups (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1229).

Most of the demonstrators were parents and students. As “outside” actors, parents did not have to worry about being fired from their jobs as a result of their actions and could be (and were) outspoken in their opposition to the commissioner. Since policy makers often view educators who press for change as advocating for their own professional interests (Tyack & Cuban, 1995), parents and student participation lent credibility to TANY’s efforts.¹²

Two months after the demonstration, on August 19, 2001, TANY filed a lawsuit against Commissioner Mills. The goal of the litigation was to have the court overturn the commissioner’s decision to revoke TANY’s waiver. Members knew that a lawsuit would further isolate them from the commissioner and the NYSED but chose this action because they believed it was the best approach to maintain their waiver. As a TANY teacher explained, “We knew they wouldn’t be happy. . . . We only sued them after there was a final decision by the commissioner to revoke, to have the waiver lapse” (interview, July 1, 2004). TANY lost the lawsuit and a subsequent appeal. The unsuccessful litigation was a major setback for TANY; many members viewed it as the end of the struggle. A teacher commented, “At the moment the lawsuit was lost, it became clear that the schools were going to have to give Regents [exams]” (interview, September 9, 2004). However, TANY continued its fight beyond the court defeat.

Mobilization of Elites

Following its defeat in the courts, TANY moved to persuade specific members of the legislature and Board of Regents to intervene and extend their waiver. In New York, the state legislature has the constitutional responsibility to maintain and support the public school system.¹³ The legislature empowers the New York Board of Regents to establish education policy within the state. In turn, the Board of Regents selects the Commissioner of Education, who heads the NYSED and serves as the president of the University of the State of New York. The commissioner has general supervisory capacity over all of the schools (public, private, and for-profit) within the state. Whereas the Board of Regents and the state legislature

have the license to overrule his or her decisions, they rarely intervene. Because the Board of Regents and the legislature do not regularly override the commissioner's decisions, TANY's actions were a strategic attempt to circumvent the normal process of educational policy making in the state.

TANY's plan to gain the support of members of the state legislature consisted of a petition drive and a "legislative education day." In the spring of 2004, TANY began planning a trip to Albany to meet with individual members of the State Senate and Assembly's Education Committees. In addition to meeting with lawmakers, TANY hoped to make the presentation of the petitions a dramatic climax to their day. The message the activists presented to the lawmakers had two parts: (a) The state's assessment policy is harmful to students, especially students of color; and (b) TANY has a proven method of education for all students; therefore, the legislature must take action to extend its waiver. A following section contains an analysis of how TANY strategically framed both its organization and its efforts to save its waiver.

Despite devoting significant amounts of meeting time to discussing possible strategies for increasing the number of signatures, the petition drive never gained traction; however, on May 18, 2004, TANY carried out its legislative education day. On that day, approximately 50 parents, students, teachers, and administrators traveled to Albany to meet with legislators on the Education Committees and/or their aides. In all, members of TANY and its supporters met with 42 of the 48 legislators or their aides on the Education Committees.

In the fall of 2004, TANY moved from targeting legislators to attempting to have the Board of Regents overturn Commissioner Mills's decision. TANY shifted its focus to this set of policy makers because, in September 2004, the Board of Regents began an examination of the state's assessment policy. This review included an examination of the requirement that students pass all five Regents exams as a condition of graduation. Attempting to capitalize on the Board's plan to modify the state's assessment policy, TANY engaged in a strategy to "offer its own input on what an effective assessment system looks like" (field notes, September 23, 2004). In the event of a vote by the Board of Regents on a policy pertaining to TANY schools, the organization hoped to persuade regents of the value of its system of PBA as well as what it perceived to be the harms of the current Regents exam policy. At a meeting where TANY members discussed their strategy to gain the support of individual regents, a TANY leader urged, "We only need 8 [votes]" (there are 15 members of the Board of Regents and policies are passed with a simple majority) (field notes, November 18, 2004).

In an attempt to gain these 8 votes, from September 2004 to the June 2005, TANY arranged for its members as well as parents, academics, community members, union representatives, and businesspeople to meet with individual regents. A TANY leader explained this tactic: “We are targeting particular regents with materials and people that we think are particularly relevant to them” (field notes, November 18, 2004). In all, TANY met with 12 of the 15 regents. TANY compiled data that included dropout rates and student scores on Regents exams relevant to the geographic area that the regent represented. During the meetings, TANY and its supporters highlighted the “problems” with the state’s assessment policy and TANY schools’ proven success as justification for the regents to intervene, and they requested that the regents extend TANY’s waiver. Soon after TANY’s final meeting with individual regents, the entire Board passed a resolution extending its waiver. TANY had successfully circumvented Commissioner Mills’s authority and maintained its waiver. In the following section, I use a framework informed by social movement theory to analyze TANY’s ability to use protest to create this policy change.

Explaining TANY’s Political Victory¹⁴

As described earlier, research on social movements demonstrates that the ability of protest groups to create change depends on three factors: the activists’ capacity to mobilize resources, the creation of political/institutional opportunities, and activists’ ability to frame their case in a manner that resonates with policy makers. TANY successfully accessed resources and capitalized on policy makers’ shifting perspectives regarding the state’s assessment policy by framing its argument in terms of educational equity.

Mobilization of Necessary Resources

Social movement theorists point out that SMOs, like other political groups, need ongoing resources to maintain their activity (Meyer, 2005; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). TANY succeeded in drawing on its association with educational networks (both locally and nationally) to gain needed material (e.g., money), and nonmaterial resources (e.g., technical assistance and links to policy makers). The educator activists’ status as insiders provided them with access to needed resources; however, it was TANY’s capacity to transform its professional networks into usable resources that ultimately led to its success. In this section, I demonstrate how TANY’s

legitimacy—its status as an organization of quality schools and teachers—contributed to its ability to convert access into resources.

TANY received its main source of funding in the summer of 2000, when the organization received a 5-year grant from the Gates Foundation. Several TANY schools served as “model” schools for organizations interested in creating or funding the creation of small schools (including the Gates Foundation). Additionally, as longtime members of the progressive education community, leaders of TANY often attended meetings convened by prominent academics. At one of these informal meetings, a TANY leader began talking about “school reform” with a representative of the Gates Foundation. The TANY member claimed that her intention, at the time, was not to “talk about money” (interview, October 6, 2004). However, on the day after the meeting, representatives from the Gates Foundation toured TANY schools, and the leaders of TANY and the foundation began discussing the size and scope of a grant to support the continued development of PBA in TANY schools.

With Gates Foundation money, TANY hired a coordinator and a director of research. The coordinator took care of the day-to-day administration of the organization; this work was invaluable because TANY members had demanding full-time positions within schools. The director of research conducted analysis that supported both TANY’s political agenda and the development of its system of PBA. For example, the director compiled data regarding the graduation, attendance, dropout, and “college-bound” rates at TANY schools that the educators used in appealing to policy makers for support.

In addition to the financial assistance of the Gates Foundation, TANY gained the support of prominent academics, national professional educational networks (such as the Coalition of Essential Schools), and the teachers’ unions in Rochester and New York City. These actors and organizations supported TANY at NYSED panels and public hearings and offered technical support for TANY’s development of their system of PBA. This support provided credibility to TANY’s activism. In describing her support for TANY, a high-ranking official in the New York City Board of Education commented, “They aren’t just 28 small schools. They’re the Coalition for Essential Schools. They’re rooted in a whole wing of education reform. [TANY] has connections in academia, in foundation world, in politics and just a wide range of connections” (interview, July 27, 2004).

Union backing increased TANY’s political standing by broadening its base of support and providing political leverage. In describing how he advocated for TANY, a union leader in Rochester stated, “I have spoken at Regents hearings in support of their positions and I have attempted to represent this point of view at State Union Board of Directors meetings and at

conventions and conferences” (interview, July 7, 2004). In another example, a union leader in New York City talked about the extensive support her union gave TANY:

We’ve advocated privately. We’ve advocated publicly. We’ve advocated in front of the regents. We’ve advocated in front of the state legislature. They sold me because one day they invited me to be a participant in reviewing one of the student’s portfolios and hearing a student argue and present her report. (Interview, September 22, 2004)

This comment demonstrates the extent of the union’s support and suggests that, among other things, the quality of TANY schools led to union backing.

The combination of TANY’s access to professional networks and its reputation as an organization composed of “good schools” allowed the educators to mobilize the resources necessary to support their activism. As structurally marginalized insiders, however, TANY’s success in maintaining its waiver also depended on changes in the policy-making environment that weakened support for Commissioner Mills and the statewide assessment policy.

Creation of Political Opportunity

From June 2002 to August 2003, a series of problems and controversies with particular exams and the NYSED’s lack of an effective response contributed to the destabilization of the statewide assessment program and resulted in policy makers’ increased opposition and ambivalence toward the policy. In this section, I describe how this dissension among policy makers represented the “cracks and cleavages” that scholars of social movements describe as necessary for the successful development of a protest organization (Binder, 2002).

Vulnerability in the assessment policy. The first difficulties with the state’s assessment policy occurred in June 2002 on the Regents physics exam. Immediately following the administration of the exam, educators, parents, and students publicly complained about the difficulty of the exam (see memorandum, New York State Council of School Superintendents, July 21, 2002). The objections prompted an investigation by the NYSED, which revealed that the percentage of students who failed the exam statewide tripled from the previous year. In July 2002, in response to the higher failure rates

and complaints, Commissioner Mills announced he would allow students to retake the exam in August. Opponents argued that by the time Mills made the announcement, many students and teachers had made summer plans and would not be able to take the retest. Instead, educators statewide pushed for the exams to be rescored. Contending that the test and scoring method were fair, and attributing the higher failure rate to a switch in focus of the material covered, representatives from the NYSED refused to rescore the exams (Medina, 2002). In response to this decision, school superintendents statewide included form letters in students' college applications urging admissions officers to disregard the low scores on the physics exams.

A similar reaction followed the June 2003 administration of the physics Regents exam. Again, high failure rates prompted a large public outcry. Again, the commissioner and NYSED claimed that although the exam was difficult, it was "fair" (Gormley, 2003b). However, in October 2003, over the objection of Commissioner Mills, the Board of Regents agreed to lower the passing score for the 2002 and 2003 physics exams. This action by the regents signaled the commissioner's weakened position, given that the Board rarely overturns a commissioner's decision. One member of the Board of Regents explained how the outcomes on the physics exams in 2002 and 2003 resulted in a disagreement with the commissioner:

I begged him to rescale the 2002 physics. We didn't force him to do that until the 2003 debacle. There's a reluctance to admit we're wrong. Not on my part, I find that easy to do; I'm wrong so often. The commissioner of the department finds it difficult. (Interview, July 15, 2004)

Another regent explained,

When we gave the physics exam, there was a huge uproar, the mistakes that were discovered, the questions weren't good, etc., and the Board [of Regents] said that it doesn't count. He [the commissioner] resisted it but we forced that one. (Interview, September 14, 2004)

Both of these comments point to the regents' frustration with the commissioner's reluctance to take action and to a changing political/institutional environment in which the regents intervened and overturned the commissioner's decisions. Such a changing policy-making landscape contributed to creating the opening that TANY would need to make its claims.

Although they do not need to pass the physics exam to graduate, students must pass the Math A Regents exam to receive a high school diploma

in New York State. After the June 2003 administration of the Math A exam, administrators statewide began to complain about the difficulty of the exam. Preliminary data indicated that 63% of the students who took the exam failed. Members of both the state legislature and Board of Regents urged Mills to allow seniors who needed to pass the exam to graduate to do so regardless of their score (Dillon, 2003). Amid ongoing complaints by educators, parents, and students about the high failure rates on the exam, on June 24, Commissioner Mills set aside the results of the Math A exam for juniors and seniors. His action meant that individual school principals would make decisions regarding whether particular students met the math standards and could receive a high school diploma. Following the controversy on the Math A exam, Saul Cohen, a member of the Board of Regents, stated, "The Math A problems have opened up the whole issue of how standards are set. I finally see movement to be more flexible. Before, everything was very rigid" (Arenson, 2003, p. 2). Cohen's comments indicate that problems on the Math A exam raised considerable doubts among policy makers, not only concerning the commissioner's credibility, but also about the viability of the entire testing policy. As the next section illustrates, these comments were indicative of growing concern among policy makers regarding the state's assessment program.

Erosion of confidence in the assessment policy. Prompted by public objections over the Math A and physics exams, the Senate and Assembly's Education Committees held five statewide hearings on the Regents assessment policy in September and October of 2003. Commissioner Mills testified at four hearings, and members and supporters of TANY testified at all five.

At the hearings, queries to Mills by both members of the Senate and Assembly reveal how mistakes¹⁵ on the Math A and physics exams contributed to the legislators' apprehensions about the state's testing policy. The lawmakers questioned the commissioner about existing safeguards to prevent other mistakes from happening and pressed the commissioner to explain his certainty regarding the soundness of the other exams. At the first hearing, a senator asked Commissioner Mills how he planned to make sure that the problems on the Math A exam did not occur on the other exams required for graduation:

In light of what occurred with Math A, what will you be recommending that will assure, unless that's too strong a word, that we will not get the same kind of experiences we had with Math A with any of the other five required exams? (Testimony at Senate Hearings, Stephen Saland, September 23, 2003)

Statements made by a member of the assembly at a later hearing further indicate the extent to which problems with the Math A exam and the later findings of an investigation of the exam resulted in misgivings about the entire state testing policy. In comments directed at Mills, the assembly member remarked that he found the conclusions of the panel to be “unsettling, very unsettling” (testimony at Joint Hearings, Steven Sanders, October 22, 2003). The lawmaker expressed particular concern that the panel found that the exam was “not well-aligned with the curriculum” and that Commissioner Mills only asked the panel to examine the Math A exam and not the other exams (testimony at Joint Hearings, Steven Sanders, October 22, 2003). Following the hearings, both the Senate and Assembly drafted legislation that called for the modification of Regents exam policy.¹⁶

As this section demonstrates, by the fall of 2003, considerable discord existed in the state regarding Commissioner Mills’s leadership and the practicality of the state’s assessment program. This destabilized the political/institutional climate and provided TANY with a favorable environment within which it could make its claims. Such a policy-making landscape was not enough to generate change, however. The members of TANY still needed to capitalize on these opportunities.

Framing the Fight

Problems and controversies on individual Regents exams contributed to dissension among policy makers and created an opportunity for TANY to mobilize. However, it was TANY’s skill at strategically framing its position in a manner that resonated with policy makers that allowed the educator activists to take advantage of political/institutional opportunities, create new opportunities, and generate policy change. The members of TANY portrayed their struggle to save their waiver as a battle about equal education for all students. By employing an “equity frame,” TANY linked the objectives of its movement to a dominant societal theme and a central idea in American education (see Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Doing so legitimized TANY’s goals and actions and maximized the support it received from policy makers. In the following sections, I present the elements of TANY’s equity frame and describe how TANY’s framing contributed to policy makers’ support.

Construction of an equity frame. TANY used two primary tactics to advance its equity frame. First, it attempted to discredit the entire Regents exam system by pointing to the damaging consequences the policy had for

African American and Latino students (diagnostic framing). Second, TANY pointed to data that demonstrated its own schools' record of success (high graduation, attendance, and college-going rates and lower dropout rates) educating racially and ethnically diverse student bodies. This demonstration of success served as the rationale for policy makers to intervene and extend TANY's waiver (prognostic framing). TANY utilized both aspects of its equity frame in all public and private appeals for support, including written material (e.g., letters to policy makers and press releases) and oral presentations to policy makers, testimony at public hearings, or presentations to the press.

In an attempt to undermine the Regents exam program, TANY linked the state's assessment policy to the high dropout and low graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students in the state.¹⁷ More generally, the educator activists emphasized the unequal educational opportunities afforded to students of color because of the state's testing policy. The leadership of TANY urged members and parents to use the language of equity when appealing to policy makers for support. For instance, on a bus trip to Albany to garner the backing of members of the state legislature, TANY leaders urged parent participants to remind the lawmakers that "yesterday was the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board*. High stakes tests break the promise of *Brown*. . . . High stakes exams are the new segregation; they deny access to opportunity" (field notes, May 18, 2004). TANY leaders also used the equity frame when making public statements. At a media event held prior to a legislative hearing on the effects of the assessment policy, a TANY leader commented, "We have the most extreme, draconian high-stakes testing in the country . . . this approach is not improving the quality of education . . . it's really had a devastating effect on students, especially minorities" (Gormley, 2003a, p. 1). These examples illustrate how TANY actively worked to frame its case as a battle about equity.

At the same time that TANY used the equity framework to demonstrate the failure of the Regents assessment policy, it claimed that its own system of education provided beneficial educational opportunities to students of color in the state. TANY called attention to the significant number of students of color in its schools and compiled data pointing to the success of its students as measured by the schools' high graduation, attendance, and college-going rates and low dropout rates. In this way, TANY framed the unequal impact of the Regents exams policy as the problem it could remedy and provided policy makers with a solution—extend TANY's waiver. At a TANY meeting in preparation for upcoming conferences with individual members of the Board of Regents, a TANY leader told members and

parents, “We need to emphasize that the efficacy and authenticity of our PBA’s make them a very powerful form of assessment.” Soon after, she insisted, “Assessment systems should do no harm, yet the current state system, *unlike ours*, is doing tremendous harm, driving thousands of students out of school, and turning them into dropouts; in many cases destroying young people’s futures” (field notes, September 23, 2004). To augment its message, TANY presented policy makers with dropout, graduation, and student test score data from non-TANY schools as well as graduation and dropout data it compiled for its schools. TANY claimed that these data demonstrated the success of their schools as compared with other public schools.

The success of TANY’s framing. The educator activists used their framing activity to influence how policy makers “understood” TANY’s effort to maintain its waiver and, more generally, the larger statewide debate on the Regents exam policy.¹⁸ TANY succeeded in shaping how policy makers identified the problem (i.e., the state’s assessment policy led to high dropout rates) and viewed the extension of the waiver as a viable solution. When discussing their support of TANY, policy makers often referred to the state’s decreasing graduation and increasing dropout rates and TANY’s ability to educate students at risk of dropping out. A member of the Board of Regents stated, “I realized that [TANY] schools had great graduation records, great college acceptance records, stay in college records . . . now what have we gotten from our present policy? We have the lowest high school graduation rate in the country” (interview, July 15, 2004). In another example, when describing what he learned from the Assembly’s hearing on the effects of the Regents exam policy, a member of the Assembly’s Education Committee explained,

The hearings I held were very instructive because I came to the realization that there are hundreds of students around the state—maybe even thousands—that for these students if [TANY] schools did not exist would dropout. I have no doubt of that. I had students testify at these hearings. (Interview, November 15, 2004)

These statements, both by top-ranking policy makers, provide evidence of TANY’s success in framing how policy makers viewed the activists’ struggle.

Because TANY succeeded in casting the extension of its waiver as a viable remedy to the unequal educational opportunities provided to students of color in the state, the educator activists transformed policy makers’

understanding of the problem into concrete support. The most prominent manifestation of support was the Board of Regents' extension of TANY's waiver through 2011. TANY also received significant assistance from the state legislature leading up to the regents' actions. The legislature introduced two bills that directly addressed the extension of TANY's waiver. Bills in both the Senate and Assembly made provisions to extend TANY's waiver through at least 2008. The Senate bill (New York State Senate bill S3138-A) passed unanimously, but the Assembly's bill (New York State Assembly bill A11726) did not get out of the Education Committee (for reasons unrelated specifically to TANY and outside the scope of this article).

In another show of support, on July 6, 2004, Assemblyman Sanders, the chairperson of the State Assembly's Education Committee, sent Commissioner Mills a letter urging him to extend TANY's waiver for an additional year while the Board of Regents considered "possible modifications" in the state's graduation policy. In the letter, Sanders described his recent conversations with several regents regarding his concerns about the termination of TANY's waiver and the practicality of the entire state assessment policy. Sanders closed the letter by writing, "This course of action [the extension of TANY's waiver] will, I believe, maintain the appropriate relationship and roles of the Regents, the Commissioner and the State Legislature" (letter written by Steven Sanders, July 6, 2004).

In sum, the educator activists of TANY framed their case in a way that increased the support they received from policy makers. This strategic framing allowed TANY to capitalize on the political and institutional opportunities created by the growing dissatisfaction with the state's assessment policy and Commissioner Mills's actions in response to concerns on particular exams. The combination of TANY's mobilization of resources and its ability to take advantage of increased political/institutional opportunities contributed to the educator activists' ability to maintain their waiver.

Conclusion

Marginalized insiders have choices. They can choose to do nothing—live with the status quo. They can choose to *exit* the institution. Or they can choose what Albert Hirschman (1970) called *voice*—which he described as various types of "actions and protests." Hirschman wrote that voice was a "messy" concept that ranged "from faint grumblings to violent protests" (p. 16). In the more than 35 years since Hirschman outlined these choices in his classic book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, few empirical studies have

examined how members exercise voice to change their institution from within. The current educational policy climate makes an understanding of this phenomenon especially relevant, given that educators increasingly lack opportunities to enter into discussions regarding policies that have a major impact on the scope of their work.

A social movement perspective provides a rich framework for understanding the multiple factors that allow marginalized actors—like the educators of TANY—to use voice to achieve policy change. Three primary factors contributed to the success of TANY. First, TANY used its association with professional networks to mobilize resources. Second, controversy surrounding individual exams created uncertainty among policy makers about the viability of the state’s assessment policy and undermined the commissioner’s authority. TANY took advantage of this uncertainty in presenting its claims. Third, TANY’s ability to frame its struggle as a battle about equity, and its success in portraying itself as an organization of quality schools, allowed the educator activists to use its resources to capitalize on the emerging political opportunity.

A major thrust of standards-based reforms is to eliminate practitioners’ ability to resist and reshape policies from within individual classrooms and schools (Malen & Cochran, 2008). In many cases, these reforms successfully limit educators’ school- or classroom-based power (some would argue this is a positive outcome, whereas others would not). A consequence of this “tight coupling” is that school-based practitioners report a loss of autonomy and feelings of powerlessness (Dorgan, 2004; Finkelstein et al., 2000; Malen & Cochran, 2008; Pedulla et al., 2003). Future research needs to examine the response of school-level actors who feel marginalized by this loss of power. Will losing the ability to “close their doors” on reforms they believe hurt their students force these practitioners to exit—leave public education? Will these educators remain “loyal” and live with the status quo? Or will marginalized insiders attempt to find new modes of resistance? TANY’s mobilization provides an example of how educators may respond to this loss of power. The members of TANY fought back, exercising collective voice to achieve a policy victory. In doing so, these educator activists provide a model of how educators who believe that the current educational context removes their voice from the policy-making process can mobilize for change. Without *both* the power to interpret reforms at the school level and access to formal policy-making pathways, the members of TANY moved outside the walls of their schools and classrooms to find alternative methods to pursue their interests. TANY’s successful creation of policy change demonstrates that school-level educators increase their

likelihood of creating change by mobilizing allies and resources, analyzing the policy-making landscape to look for potential openings to make their case, and aligning their grievances and demands in a manner that resonates with policy makers and potential supporters. This article establishes a foundation to examine how marginalized actors within systems of schooling (regardless of the cause of their loss of power) organize to pursue their collective interests and provides scholars of educational reform with new tools to understand the processes of school change.

Notes

1. I use pseudonyms for Teachers and Administrators of New York (TANY) as well as all interview respondents. Where I interviewed a person and utilized data that is part of the public record, I used a pseudonym when reporting data from the interview and the person's real name when reporting data from the public source.

2. The resolution allowed ninth-grade students entering TANY schools in 2005 to only pass the English Regents exam as a condition of graduation. Additionally, ninth-grade students entering TANY schools in 2006 and 2007 would only be required to pass the English Regents and one other Regents exam to receive a diploma, and students entering the ninth grade in 2008 would need to pass the English exam and two other Regents exams to receive a diploma.

3. Public education in New York State is the institution examined in this study. Institutions are social structures that endure over time and provide stability and meaning to social behavior (Scott, 2001).

4. Formal members are actors that are financially and organizationally accountable to their institution. They are financially accountable in that they receive regular monetary compensation from an organization embedded within the institution and organizationally accountable in that they answer to superiors or other members of the institution.

5. Organizational capacity includes activities such as a protest group's ability to hire staff, write grants, and communicate with members.

6. An additional question of this research was, under what conditions do insider organizations seek the support of groups that do not hold official positions within the institution?

7. I selected elected officials based on their connection to education. I interviewed three members of the Board of Regents who represented the geographical areas of the organizations I studied and/or served on the committee that establishes policy for elementary and secondary education.

8. Provisions were made for students with disabilities.

9. These numbers are based on the 19 New York City TANY schools for which data was available. Percentages are calculated using data from the New York State Department of Education's annual State Report Cards for the 2003-2004 school year.

10. The numbers are calculated using data from the New York State Department of Education's annual State Report Cards for the 2003-2004 school year.

11. Because of this collaborative structure, when reporting my findings, I attribute the actions and/or beliefs of TANY to its members.

12. Collaboration with parents was an important part of TANY's efforts; full examination of this process is outside the scope of this article.

13. New York has a bicameral legislature; both the Senate and the Assembly have standing committees on education.

14. In this article, I present three of the factors that accounted for TANY's success. Also contributing to TANY's successful mobilization was its ability to collaborate with parents.

15. Mistakes include problems with the alignment of the exams to the curriculum and inconsistencies on the norming of the exams.

16. Bills in both houses included provisions for the use of students' grades and attendance, in addition to scores on Regents exams, when making decisions regarding students' graduation.

17. At this time, academic reports by Greene and Winters (2005) and Miao and Haney (2004) highlighted the increasing dropout and/or falling graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students in New York State.

18. Whereas I cannot claim that TANY's framing activity "caused" policy makers to hold certain beliefs or use particular language, my data reveal a consistent pattern in how policy makers talked about TANY and its goals.

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