

11-2021

“This was 1976 reinvented”: The role of framing in the development of a South African youth movement

Ben Kirshner

Tafadzwa Tivaringe

Jesica S. Fernández

Santa Clara University, jsfernandez@scu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/ethnic>



Part of the [Ethnic Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kirshner, B., Tivaringe, T., & Fernández, J. S. (2020). “This Was 1976 Reinvented:” The role of framing in the development of a South African youth movement. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(8), 3033-3053. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22405>

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Kirshner, B., Tivaringe, T., & Fernández, J. S. (2020). “This Was 1976 Reinvented:” The role of framing in the development of a South African youth movement. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(8), 3033-3053 which has been published in final form at <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22405>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance With Wiley Terms and Conditions for self-archiving.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Arts & Sciences at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ethnic Studies by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact rscroggin@scu.edu.

“This Was 1976 Reinvented”:

Building a Youth Movement in South Africa for Educational Justice

Ben Kirshner¹, Tafadzwa Tivaringe¹, Jesica Siham Fernández²

¹ University of Colorado Boulder

² Santa Clara University

Corresponding author: ben.kirshner@colorado.edu

Abstract

The literature on contemporary youth organizing has documented psychological benefits associated with participation and some evidence of local political impact. But how do local organizing campaigns transform into regional or national movements? This is a practical question facing youth organizers and one that calls for attention from researchers. In this article we draw on more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork with South Africa's Equal Education (EE) to analyze collective action frames that enabled EE youth to assert legitimacy and construct shared aims across locales. Our findings focus on how youth constructed *historical continuity frames* that lent them legitimacy as upholders of the South African freedom struggle and *flexible problem frames* that linked young people's local struggles, such as inadequate sanitation or broken windows at their schools, to a national policy agenda. We discuss connections to other youth movements and implications for the interdisciplinary youth organizing field.

Keywords: Social movements, youth movements, youth organizing, collective action frames

“This Was 1976 Reinvented”:

Building a Youth Movement in South Africa for Educational Justice

Community-based youth organizing groups in the United States have gained recognition for their work to develop young leaders who organize campaigns to promote social justice in their schools and communities. Research about youth organizing lends itself to interdisciplinary approaches that conceptualize change at multiple levels, including youth development, relationships, and broader institutional and societal change (Christens & Speer, 2015; Author). Although there tends to be agreement that youth organizing is compelling precisely because it strives for both individual and community-level change, the balance of the empirical research has focused on individual outcomes, such as civic efficacy, empowerment, educational attainment, or civic engagement (author; Larson & Hansen, 2005; Shah, 2011). Comparatively less attention has been placed on new strategies or theories that expand local campaigns to regional or national movements (Christens & Speers, 2015; Warren & Kupscznk, 2016). This is also an emerging priority for national networks of organizing groups, such as the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO):

While...organizers have had great success, many are articulating limits to current organizing models in achieving their long-term vision of equity and justice for their communities. These limits are related to the need for power to compel decision makers to make real transformative changes. Many youth organizing groups are already beginning to consider new power building strategies including increasing scale, building new alliances, experimenting with new models, and increasing voter participation of young people of color. Achieving just and equitable communities requires the construction of real civic power. Now is a critical moment to support growing youth movements to

develop strategies to do just that. (2017, para. 1.)

Consistent with FCYO's message, in recent years we have seen youth organizers explore ways to strengthen their membership bases and shift towards more of a movement lens. We use Warren and Supzicka's (2015) definition of movements as "collective action on the part of oppressed or marginalized people, on the basis of shared identity, to build power to win changes in government policy and public attitudes that advance the cause of social justice" (p. 42). Movements link people across disparate locales, shift the ideological terrain through public narrative, and change power relations (Earl et al., 2017; Hinson & Healey, 2007; Warren, 2014). In this article we offer a case study of South Africa's Equal Education, which is a movement for equality and quality in education for young Black South Africans.¹ We explore how EE members developed and asserted collective action frames that connected them to the anti-apartheid struggle and united young people from distinct locales and regions.

Youth Organizing: Limitations and New Directions

Research on youth organizing, which emerged in the late 1990s, draws on frameworks and questions from a variety of disciplines.² Community psychologists, for example, study organizing because of its focus on empowerment and second-order change, which includes the transformation of settings and institutions according to the needs and demands of communities (Christens & Speer, 2015; Fernández & Langhout, 2018; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Scholars in the positive youth development and learning sciences fields grew interested because of evidence that organizing provides a supportive developmental context or learning environment for youth, particularly for youth contending with dispossession and structural racism (Author, 2015; Shah, 2011). Youth organizing has gained traction with education policy scholars too, who have

written about the impact of organizing on policies such as school discipline and community schools (Rogers, Mediratta, & Shah, 2012; Warren, 2014).

There is much to applaud in the growth of interdisciplinary scholarship about youth organizing, which is often carried out in partnership with community organizations. As the field grows, however, it is useful to reflect on where more work is needed. We see three limitations in contemporary youth organizing scholarship, which motivate our focus in this article.

First, when scholars and funders treat organizing primarily as an opportunity for youth development and learning, it can become overly psychologized and out of touch with its transformative, social change origins (Kwon, 2013; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2014). Youth organizing is not just a developmental exercise; it is powerful precisely because groups adopt a systems lens that interweaves personal, relational, and community change (Christens, 2010; Author, 2012).

Second, the literature on youth organizing and activism suffers from a myopia common to fields that are dominated by research carried out in the United States. Although the literature centers the experiences of youth experiencing structural racism, homophobia, and xenophobia, there are still qualities about US-based organizing that limits its generalizability to other contexts and therefore our collective imagination about what it can accomplish. This parochialism can be addressed through studies of youth mobilizations in a variety of parts of the world, including Chile, Brazil, Egypt, and South Africa. Studies from these contexts, for example, have yielded more expansive definitions of the age of “youth,” shown deeper connections between organized labor and university student unions, and revealed how youth make explicit connections to revolutionary movements of the past (Brockman, 2016; Fals-Borda, 1987; Salinas & Fraser, 2012; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2012; Tarlau, 2014).

A third limitation, which is more nuanced, stems from ambiguity in the literature about the relationship between *organizing* and *movements*. Early scholarship describing youth organizing in California in the 1990s described it synonymously with movement-building (James & McGillicuddy, 2001). In their 2017 article, Earl et al. describe youth organizing groups *as* social movement organizations. Similarly, Anyon (2005) discussed examples of youth organizing groups as evidence of a nascent movement for education justice.

Although the growth of youth organizing groups may represent seeds of a movement (Warren, 2014), we see value in distinguishing between organizing and movements. The most self-evident distinction is one of scale. Youth organizing typically focuses on building young people's political power to influence local policymakers or education agencies, such as city councils or school boards (Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006). Although community organizing groups may be part of a larger network that shares an organizing model, such as IAF or Faith in Action, the focus is typically still on local goals (Wood, 2007). A second and closely related feature of organizing is its emphasis on the long-term work of relationship-building with and leadership development of voluntary members (Medellin, et al., in preparation). Third, in some sectors of community organizing (and less commonly in youth organizing), there has been resistance to discussing ideology because of its potential to polarize or divide constituents (Hinson & Healey, 2007; Warren & Supcznsk, 2016).

Movements, on the other hand, are distinguished by their national or international scale. This geographic distinction between organizing and movements is important because, particularly in the contemporary political economy, the roots of problems that show up locally often have diffuse national and even global origins (Orr, 2007). Youth whose schools were shut down in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington DC, for example, may take action against local

school boards, but such policy choices were developed and shaped by federal policies under the Obama administration (Author). From this perspective, the more ambitious social change aims of organizing will be frustrated if it stays local and cannot challenge some of the more diffuse origins of problems (Warren, 2014).

In addition to geographic scale, movements also are distinct in the ways that they contest public narratives. Through framing problems and solutions, movements bind actors together and have the potential to change the ideological terrain upon which policy decisions are made (Hill Collins, 2000; Warren & Supczsnk, 2016). How youth activists conceptualize issues, including moral narratives about rights and justice, and attributions about causes and solutions, creates new contexts for people to make demands on government (Benford & Snow, 2000). The Chilean student movement, for example, although spurred by immediate concerns about the costs of education, articulated a broad critique of neoliberal privatization. Their defense of public goods enabled them to build alliances with those opposing privatization of Chile's land and water (Salinas & Fraser, 2012). Movements also contest dominant worldviews by offering new identity categories that lend dignity, meaning, and power to participants and change public discourses about identity groups (Hunt, Benford, & Snow, 1994). Consider the Dreamers movement for immigrant rights in the United States: one of its defining features was a focus on building identity narratives that challenged the silence and stigma of being undocumented (Seif, 2011; Terriquez, 2015).

In summary, although organizing and movements are interdependent and overlapping, they are not the same phenomena. We find it useful to distinguish them in order to examine how groups that start with local organizing might grow into movements that connect people by a shared narrative across geographic differences to build power (Warren & Supczsnk, 2016). It is

especially valuable to study such processes in places where distinct histories and practices of movement-building broaden the field's understanding of what is possible. Drawing on ethnographic research over two years, we explore aspects of movement-building with Equal Education in South Africa.

A Brief History of Youth Activism in South Africa

Research and commentary about youth activism in South Africa has a history of contentious debate. On one hand, youth are often lauded for their pivotal role in the fight against apartheid, especially between 1976 and the early 1990s when they boycotted school classes, staged numerous protests, and fought street battles against armed security forces of the apartheid state (Everatt, 2001; Seekings, 1996). On the other, some accounts question or criticize tactics used by youth in fighting apartheid as “brutal” and rendering some areas “ungovernable” (described in Seekings, 1996, p. 104). Correspondingly, the public imagination about youth leading up to the early 1990s was characterized by two competing discourses: the “young lion” and the “lost generation” (Everatt, 2001; Posel, 2013; Seekings, 1996). Affectionate in orientation, the “young lion” perspective was mostly advanced by anti-apartheid activists and it depicted youth as courageous, legitimate and honorable freedom fighters (Posel, 2013; Seekings, 1996). The “lost generation” perspective, however, framed youth as militant hooligans abusing the name of the struggle for selfish ends and thus posing a moral problem to social and political life (Everatt, 2001; Seekings, 1996).

In the mid 1990s, with the transition of power from the apartheid state to the ANC-led government, discourses about activism and youth shifted. Political parties and churches - key institutions that played a big role in the early transitional phase - failed to construct platforms for youth participation. As Everatt (2001) notes “youth were politically demobilized, but offered no

alternate channels of expression or action” (p. 303). Mattes’s (2012) survey research reported that “Born Frees,” the generation born after the end of apartheid, were less committed to democracy than earlier generational cohorts. This Born Free generation was depicted in public discourse as democratically inclined or materialistic (see e.g., Mattes, 2012; Posel, 2013).

Between 2014 and 2019 there was a resurgence of youth activism in South Africa, signaled by inter-related movements such as Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall that sought to decolonize the university curriculum and ensure universities were accessible to all (Bosch, 2017; Naidoo, 2016). By the end of 2017, campus protests had morphed into a national movement that ended with government conceding to student demands by adopting a fee-free policy for higher education. We situate our study within this history of youth activism that has been central to political struggles in South Africa and has seen cycles of decline and resurgence since 1994.

Methodology

This article is based on data collected as part of a larger study of youth activism and organizing in four countries (names withheld for review). From 2012 through 2015, the research team conducted ethnographic research about youth organizing practices and learning trajectories in seven cities: Belfast, Cape Town, Chicago, Denver, Dublin, New Orleans, and San Francisco. For this article we focus exclusively on data from South Africa.

Equal Education: A Brief Background

Equal Education (EE) was founded in 2008 in Cape Town by a group of students, educators and an experienced HIV/AIDS (and anti-apartheid) activist (Brockman, 2016; Smalley, 2014). (Although we name EE in this article, we use pseudonyms for individual members). Through activities such as social audits, grassroots organizing, and media broadcasting, EE describes itself as a “movement of learners, parents, teachers and community

members working for quality and equality in South African education, through analysis and activism” (Equal Education, n.d.). EE began by documenting conditions of infrastructural plunder and lack of resources in the township schools of Khayelitsha. As many historical accounts of apartheid have shown, townships were systematically deprived of decent schools, health infrastructure, and social services, because they were designated urban spaces for people of color (Seekings, & Nattrass, 2008). Years after the formal end of the segregationist system, townships remain under-resourced in relation to affluent communities, and delivery of basic governmental services to such areas remains sporadic (Saloojee et al, 2007; Smith, 2004).

The fundamental node of EE’s organizing took place at the local level, typically connected to secondary (high) school enrollment. EE ran after-school clubs, called “*youth groups*,” which drew students from one to three schools. Within a given township, there were several youth groups. During the school term, youth groups met weekly and were facilitated by roughly four post-high school youth known as *community leaders*. These community leaders were typically former high school members who guided younger peers.

To bring together different *youth groups*, EE conducted tri-monthly *mass meetings* for youth from the same province. These mass meetings provided a platform for youth to meet, share experiences, and collectively set the upcoming provincial agenda. They were also opportunities for EE staff to notify equalizers about updates on national campaign work revolving around the *Minimum Norms and Standards* (MNS) campaign, which launched in 2011 and pressured the national government to adopt binding legislation to ensure a fair distribution of quality education across South Africa.

Since its formation in the Western Cape, EE expanded to a self-described movement that included members from across the country. Congruent with the EE’s democratic ideals, in 2012

its form of governance shifted a non-profit organization with an appointed board to an elected national council made up of representatives across the different members of the movement, including *equalizers*. This council also adopted a constitution that spelled out rights and responsibilities of members. At the end of our data collection in 2015, EE was based in five different provinces and boasted a membership of several thousand high school learners, called *equalizers*, supported by provincial offices that ranged in size.

Data Collection

Fieldnotes, interviews, and organizational artifacts constitute our data sources. Most of these data were collected between 2013 and 2015 in the Western Cape by two ethnographers who lived in South Africa and were familiar with the local history and sociocultural context of the area.³ Ethnographers built relationships with program staff and youth members, which fostered trust that enabled them to gain entry and observe organizational routines, practices and actions (Creswell & Clark, 2011). We adopted a purposive sampling strategy that was based on proximity to where ethnographers lived (in the Western Cape) and those youth groups to which we had the greatest access. Also, because community leaders often met at EE headquarters in Khayelitsha and they had more control over their time than high school students, the majority of our sample of 32 semi-structured interviews is made up of them. Some interviews were completed in Xhosa by [second author], others were completed in English by [first author] or [name]. In general, the interviews sought to understand organizational processes and the experiences and meaning-making of EE's youth members. We asked questions such as, "how did you get involved in EE? How did this campaign topic get selected? What kinds of things have you learned since you became involved?" We also interviewed several key staff people, including the Secretary General and leaders of the youth development department.

Field notes augmented and triangulated interview data by describing activities, talk, and interaction in multiple settings (Creswell, 2009), including youth group meetings, mass meetings, public demonstrations, and community leader classes. Field notes, which totaled more than 71 hours of observations, were written in accordance with Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (1995) guidelines, which include low-inference narrative description, jotting, memos, and observational notes. In most situations notes were written by hand and then typed up later. Ethnographers spent additional time hanging out around the EE space, getting to know members, attending special events, and gathering artifacts. Artifacts include photographs, press releases, news articles, and reports produced by EE. Although our primary fieldwork took place in the Western Cape, we drew on materials discussing EE's work in other provinces, and interviews with EE staff discussed work in those places as well.

Data Analysis

Phase 1: Comparative case analysis. Comparative case analysis took place while data collection was underway through monthly meetings with ethnographers to discuss emergent findings and develop our codebook. The codebook, developed over two years, categorized qualitative data in terms of youth outcomes (e.g., political agency or emotional awareness) and organizational practices (e.g., political education classes or public protests) (see also Authors). A team of graduate student researchers worked in pairs to ensure shared code definitions and decision-rules, and met routinely to resolve differences in code application, consistent with interpretive ethnographic data analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Textual data were assigned codes using Dedoose software; each excerpted was coded by at least two people. As an outcome of Phase 1, the research team identified two aspects of organizing in EE that stood out as unique relative to the other cases in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the United States: 1)

frequent references to and invocations of historical context, specifically the history of the anti-apartheid struggle, and 2) efforts to organize a national movement made up of chapters from multiple regions, in contrast to locally-bound organizing we observed in other countries.

Phase 2: Focused analysis of movement-building using the three faces of power. The three authors of this article launched a deeper investigation of the qualities of EE's organizing in response to the call for papers for this special issue. This analytic process started by exploring, in an inductive manner, questions related to historical and national scales that had emerged in our first phase of analysis. How did youth members talk about history? In what ways did they make history relevant to their efforts at movement building? What was the connection between the local work of youth groups and the national Minimum Norms and Standards campaign? We met biweekly to reflect, debrief and discuss patterns and disconfirming evidence related to historical consciousness and movement-building. Between meetings each of us reviewed data to identify excerpts pertinent to a specific sub-question. We then discussed each nominated excerpt to see if we agreed on its relevance and, more importantly, together identify what it meant or how it was related to the core research question. During this time we broadened our textual data to also include visual examples through posters, photographs and recordings of songs. Although these artifacts posed some challenges because they had not been coded in our database, through intersubjective checks for interpretation we identified thematic connections to the textual data. We pursued this cyclical process of discussion, independent analysis, and collective reflection in tandem with consideration of different theoretical lenses that would help us develop a coherent line of analysis. In a first version of this paper, we applied Lukes's (1974) three faces of power to data analysis and claims. After critical reflection, we concluded that this framework was misaligned to our data and claims, primarily because it pointed us to the *outcomes* of movement

building, and evidence of power to influence policies nationally, whereas our data spoke more to *processes* of movement building, specifically how EE membership developed a unified movement among members.

Phase 3: Collective action frames. Our re-assessment of historical narratives and campaign narratives led us to adopt a more focused analysis of how *collective action frames* contributed to EE's movement-building (Benford & Snow, 2000). Framing gained ascendancy in the social movement literature in the 1990s, when scholars drawing on symbolic interactionism made persuasive arguments about the role of meaning-making as a key element of social movements (Hunt et al., 1994; Tarlau, 2014). Frames condense reality into a shared schema that diagnoses the root causes of an issue and offers a collective way forward for movement actors. As Benford and Snow (2000) summarize: "collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization" (p. 614). Although framing has become a dominant paradigm in social movement literature there are few studies that examine the construction and negotiation of framing in youth movements (for an exception see Salinas & Fraser, 2012).

With this more targeted lens, we returned to our initial claims to ask: *What collective action frames and organizational practices enabled EE youth to develop a shared movement identity and aims across locales?* This called for a re-analysis of our initial claims and an audit of data excerpts to see what we had left out in our first draft. Following a similar process of data analysis involving independent analysis and group discussion, we developed revised claims. Although these were closely linked to our earlier claims about the importance of historical meaning-making, we broadened the focus to analyze frames that linked geographic scales (Juwon

& Shea, 2015). We became more explicit how specific kinds of frames enabled young people to assert legitimacy, find inspiration and meaning, and bridge locales.

Collective Action Frames as Resources for Movement-Building

We identified two types of collective action frames that contributed to EE's movement building efforts: *historical continuity frames* and *flexible problem frames*. With historical continuity frames, members asserted meaning, purpose, and legitimacy in the present through connections to freedom struggles of the past. Flexible problem frames served a slightly different function, which was to enable EE chapters to identify and work to solve locally-resonant education challenges, while still being united under a national agenda that bridged locales. Consistent with an ecological approach (Trickett, 2009; Visser, 2007), we begin our analysis of each type of frame by describing relevant challenges in the sociopolitical context, then move to claims about organizational framing practices and meaning-making by individual members.

Historical Continuity Frames

References to and narratives about South African history, especially the anti-apartheid movement, were ubiquitous in our data. These references varied from EE workshops for youth leaders about the anti-apartheid movement, to art that evoked movement imagery, to stories told by individual youth about the activism of 1976. Such connections were not just textual or linguistic: collective singing of struggle songs and disciplined civil disobedience embodied traditions of the anti-apartheid movement. We argue that these expressions of continuity with the past, whether through organizational practices or in the stories told by individual members, comprised a broad collective action frame that was integral to movement building, which we call a "historical continuity frame." This frame asserted legitimacy and purpose for youth activists in a way that countered generational challenges to movement-building, which we describe next.

Generational challenges to movement-building. EE's core constituency was part of the "born-free generation" of South African youth between the ages of 13 and 20 who, unlike those who were born or came of age under apartheid, did not grow up under the explicit, institutionalized *de jure* forms of racialization, discrimination and disenfranchisement that held prior to Mandela's election. The term marks not just a generational divide, but creates a symbolic boundary between the earlier generations and the post-1994 generations, such that the moral authority of being part of the struggle was less available to the born-frees. This challenge was amplified by narratives in public discourse, popular culture, media and academic research about the "born-free generation" as materialistic, apathetic, or unappreciative of democracy (Everatt, 2001; Mattes, 2012; Posel, 2013).

A related legitimacy challenge for South African youth pertained to the stature of the governing African National Congress (ANC), much of whose leadership had moral authority, sometimes referred to as "struggle credentials," because of their role in the anti-apartheid movement. Many EE members, including parents, were also members or supporters of the ANC. And yet the work of EE shed light on failures of the ANC to deliver on the promise of the anti-apartheid movement, by showing the persistence of apartheid era inequities in education infrastructure and calling for changes at the national level.

These generational issues showed up in our data when people in positions of power challenged the legitimacy of EE. Former equalizers, for example, described how their school principals responded to their activism by challenging their right to organize and, in some cases, asserted that they were being manipulated by outside adults. Sometimes this assertion was laminated with an explicit racial frame, such as what happened when EE filed a grievance with the court over delays in school repairs and organized simultaneous marches by thousands of

young people and parents in Pretoria and Cape Town (Nkosi, 2013; Sapa, 2013). Two days later, the national Minister of Education released a statement saying, “to suddenly see a group of white adults organizing black African children with half-truths can only be opportunistic, patronizing and simply dishonest (press release, Ministry of Education, 2013)⁴.

In this sociopolitical climate where contestations of power involved competing claims to legitimacy and moral authority, EE as an organization—and individual members—articulated counternarratives about the born free generation that asserted historical continuity with the struggle. EE members and leaders recruited and remixed historical narrative frames that linked the revolutionary struggles of the apartheid years to the present moment.

Organizational framing practices.

Artistic products and artifacts. The use of art to reframe the born-free generation was exemplified in EE’s slogan: “Every Generation Has its Struggle.” The slogan was affixed to posters and publications that were disseminated via social media and at campaign events. Posters included an illustration of raised fists, familiar from revolutionary iconography, grasping a ruler, a pen, and a calculator (see Figure 1). The word “struggle” referenced the anti-apartheid years, but remixed it for today’s struggle: education. This artful combination of images and words showed that the activism of the born-free generation carried on the legacy of the anti-apartheid movement but for today’s generation. Other EE educational infographics, such as one that displayed differential percentages of school funding based on racial classifications during the apartheid years, pointed to the historical roots of contemporary inequality. Other imagery placed a greater accent on the legitimacy of youth as fighters for education rights, such as hoodies worn by equalizers that said, “Our Education, Our Future,” or the video production program that EE ran called Amazwi Wethu (“Our Voices” in Xhosa).

Insert Figure 1 here

Struggle songs. A key feature of EE's movement-building work was the practice of singing struggle songs at meetings and public gatherings. Our field notes document the power of song at multiple events that were often well attended by youth and adults alike. In fact, some gathering included small groupings of 10 to 15 youth to hundreds of youth at public events. These struggle songs highlighted youth's power and voice, and anchored their contemporary struggles for education in a long history of resistance and movement-building. The following field note demonstrates the use of struggle songs in the context of a protest:

The young people sung songs with passion in their voices. The students mainly sung in Xhosa; the lyrics came from the struggle songs from the anti-apartheid and anti-colonial movement. In one of the struggle songs, they replaced words that demanded the use of violence to win the revolution, with "education." (Fieldnote)

Expressions of collective action through song and other forms of performance were similarly observed one year later, as evidenced in this field note from a mass meeting:

'Amandla!', one of the prospective community leaders shouts. The other youths respond in loud voices saying, 'awethu!', while raising and clenching their right fists (Loosely translated, 'amandla' means power and 'awethu' means [power] is ours). [...] Both the call for 'amandla' and the response of 'awethu' are slogans accompanied by raising and subsequently shaking one's right hand whilst clenching the fist. The symbolism of this action goes at the root of the fight against the apartheid regime. Thus, the mood in the room, although full of jubilation and excitement, takes a serious note that is synonymous with political gatherings. (Fieldnote)

Singing brought forth feelings of hope, struggle, and power, which shaped the climate and sociopolitical context of events and meetings. These emotions were rooted in an understanding of certain shared histories of disenfranchisement that caused pain and violence, and which continue to maintain forms of injustice. Hence the expression “amandla” and “awethu,” pays tribute to the past, whilst affirming and giving hope for a present and future where power is taken and claimed. Another song, recorded by 15 EE high school members for a CD called Likhaya Lam (“our home is equal education” in Xhosa), includes the refrain “Our education is very poor and painful” and then concludes with a lone male voice crying, “For what was the struggle, for what?!?”

In building their movement, EE youth leveraged cultural assets and resources, like song and shared histories, to raise consciousness and support for their cause. Karabo, an EE organizer, made this point clear in an interview that asked about the purpose of songs, singing and performance in the context of organizing.

Yeah, I must say. The songs that we sing, trust me, a song at Equal Education, if you’re in a mass meeting, will always bring everyone together... We believe that the songs that we’re saying—back then, when the people were fighting for education, like, when they’re fighting for freedom and everything. We take those songs and we use them to actually unite ourselves and bring about the spirit that everyone here is fighting for something.

Everyone here is fighting for a certain cause, but in a very beautiful way.

Through singing, EE members took a collective practice tied to the anti-apartheid movement, and remixed the lyrics to apply to contemporary issues. Singing connected the present to a past, and youth to older generations. Our field notes describe several meetings attended by parents and

other community adults along with youth; during these intergenerational singing struggle songs was a common practice.

Organizing to bring about systemic change comes with many challenges and forms of physical, emotional and mental taxation to organizers. Yet singing provided young organizers within EE an opportunity to express themselves. Most of all, it enabled them to anchor their struggles in a long legacy of movement building, activism and resistance to oppression. EE utilized singing as a resource to support young organizers, build solidarity or connection across generations, and frame contemporary issues within a historical and sociopolitical context.

Political education. We observed many opportunities for community leaders and equalizers to engage in rigorous study of the anti-apartheid movement and global movements. These opportunities for political education supported youth's critical understanding of the past in order to look with fresh eyes at the present. The following excerpt from a political education class describes an activity where members reviewed the history of anti-apartheid activism then turned close analysis of a primary source:

The instructor began the day in a quiz-style competition about various historical facts. Questions included: What does F.E.D.S.A.W. stand for? What year did the Defiance Campaign start? What year was the Sharpeville Massacre? What were two policies challenged by the Defiance Campaign? What was new about the Defiance campaign? There were "marked" differences in tactics – what were the differences? The instructor concluded the review, which was just the opening activity, by saying, "The goal is to deepen our understanding of the history. Too often we just hear that before 1993 ANC was great, they were heroes. But today's factions have roots in 1969." (Fieldnote)

The instructor then transitioned into a close reading of two primary sources: Nelson Mandela's written explanation of the founding of the military faction of ANC and Chris Hani's 1969 memorandum exposing corruption in the ANC leadership. The youth arranged themselves in a circle and took turns reading the Hani memo aloud. We share quotations from just one excerpt, not to describe the discussion in full detail, but to illustrate how they were making meaning of the text, by asking questions about vocabulary, sharing comments, and connecting the example to their own situation.

Community Leader (CL) 1: This "posh" (*referenced in the text*), is it the type of car?

CL2: What is meant by "harboring right wing designs"?

CL3: I think I now get Chris Hani's concern. He is not against the cause of the ANC, but he wanted people to be aware. At first, I thought he wanted money.

Later [...]

CL4: He (Hani) criticizes, but is he part of ANC or is he from the outside? How is he complaining about the leadership?

CL5: "He was a CL," he said with a smile.

This last line, "he was a CL," is a statement made to underscore that Chris Hani was a community leader, which, in our interpretation, was akin to saying, *he was one of us*, and, *we are like him*. This example shows how political education went beyond merely learning historical facts; it meant reflecting, connecting and engaging with historical figures, troubling their positionalities, and reclaiming or reframing the issues at the heart of their movement.

This emphasis on historical study and discussion in EE, we think, contributed to an organizational context where young people constructed their own connections to the past and landed on specific milestones that resonated for them. For example, narratives about the Soweto

youth uprising of 1976, show up throughout our interviews with equalizers and community leaders about their activism. Here is one facilitator discussing how it would feel if the Minimum Norms and Standards campaign were to succeed:

It'd make me feel good, because I've learned a lot about history. I've learned a lot in history how people did, what they did to resist these apartheid laws...or how the youth came about in 1976 to do a change. It will feel good, knowing that I was part of the history of making the norms and standards to be passed. I played a role in that history.

In this response, the facilitator recognized his role in playing a part of that history, and building a legacy for the next generation of youth.

Two equalizers, Sizwe and Sbu, brought up 1976 when describing a school walkout they had led that involved an encounter with armed police:

Sizwe: We were ready to die at that particular moment.

Sbu: This was 1976 reinvented.

Another interviewee, Yonela, when asked how she would respond if the Minister did not honor their demands for MNS, said:

If she don't deliver the minimum norms and standards by the late 29th of November 2016 I must try to engage with more youth to have more voice and be like 1976 youth who ignored everything but made sure that their voice was going to be heard and that one day they are going to be remembered because of what they did.

These examples show how young people in EE drew connections to anti-apartheid struggles, especially youth activists in the 1976 Soweto uprising. They voiced and revoiced the historical continuity frame, which positioned them as upholding and advancing the unfinished work of earlier generations. Moreover, as suggested in the excerpts from the Chris Hani

discussion and school walkout, youth were remixing these ideas in ways that gave them a sense of purpose and shared identity. These were not mere slogans but active processes of meaning-making that linked historical study, collective practices, and personal meaning-making. Through these practices, they also disrupted hegemonic narratives that might otherwise delegitimize their struggles, or their claims to a more just and equitable education.

Constructing Frames that Bridge Local to National

As noted in the literature review, scholars have documented a central challenge of community organizing and movement building, which is that problems experienced in everyday life can lose their power and urgency when abstracted to a national agenda, and yet the root causes of or solutions to many local problems are not found at the local level (Orr, 2007). In addition to this basic challenge, here we report specific sociohistorical factors in South Africa that influence movement-building efforts.

Spatial challenges to movement building. Although an overwhelming majority of EE members self-identified as Black, this racial identity encompasses various ethnic groups. While there has been significant efforts to unify various ethnic groups along a shared national vision in the post-apartheid era, the country is still plagued by ethnic-tensions owing, but not limited to, the legacy of apartheid in South Africa and its divide and rule tactics (Comaroff, 1995; Nyamnjoh, 2010; Wolpe, 2006). Such tactics deepened existing ethnolinguistic differences by creating semi-autonomous provincial system that gave each ethnic group autonomy for separate development (Mamdani, 1996). These ethnolinguistic cleavages often pop up in everyday social and political life posing challenges to nation-wide movement building efforts (Nyamnjoh, 2016).

In addition, the gains of the democratic transition ushered in by the Mandela-led ANC have been uneven across geographies and demographic indicators such as race, gender and class

(Nattrass & Seekings, 2001; Seekings & Nattrass, 2008). Despite efforts by successive post-apartheid governments, areas that were heavily affected by underdevelopment during apartheid, such as rural areas and townships, still lag behind metropolitan and suburban areas in terms of development and basic infrastructure.

This history of state-enforced ethnolinguistic separation and, more recently, uneven lines of development, present challenges to EE's organizing efforts that aimed to develop movements nation-wide. For instance, although students in townships and rural areas both experienced school infrastructure challenges, the severity was different, ranging from broken windows or lack of computers in township schools to egregious cases of pit latrines or crumbling buildings in rural areas. We observed more than one interaction where students from township schools expressed shock at the challenges faced by their rural counterparts during EE-initiated gatherings and positioned their own situation as privileged next to those in the Eastern Cape.

This contrast that township students drew with rural areas was emblematic of the ways that spatial apartheid influenced the political consciousness of township youth. In both field notes and interviews we documented that EE youths from township schools reflected that they never knew that their school had infrastructural challenges until they went on a rare trip to see the *Model C* (suburban) schools. In this way, spatial boundaries function to limit how people living with them see and then challenge unequal systems. Here is Themba, a young equalizer making sense of these spatial boundaries and their impact on his consciousness:

I knew that I had challenges because at my younger age, the school I was going to at my primary school... was one of the best schools you could find in Khayelitsha that time... and we had some visitors that made me interested to want me to know more. But it's like I had boundaries around me at my primary because there was a room that was always

locked and they had some few booksand I think in grade seven I only realized that it was supposed to be a library and they called it a library but it's not a library because it is not fully stocked and it does not have some good books. It is just the books that are being put there and there is no librarian. So I thought that oh ok...this is one of my boundaries that made me want to be like this. (Interview, 2015).

This young student was saying that if he had stayed within the confines of his school then he would not have realized the infrastructural challenges at his primary school. Indeed, it was his experience at more highly resourced secondary school that enabled him to make sense of the injustice experienced by students at his former school. A similar example can be observed in the experiences of Thando, a community leader who described her process of recognizing that the schools she attended were unacceptable. She joined EE in 2009, and she said EE “opened her mind” to understand issues of inequality because she was a student who “went to school and came back [home] without realizing any inequality.” (Fieldnote).

These varied examples, including ethnolinguistic diversity, varied extents of school infrastructure deprivation, and the bounded geographies of young people’s lives, share a common theme related to the legacy of spatial apartheid in South Africa. They provide context for the kinds of frames that EE developed that unify people across diverse locales.

Organizational framing practices: Flexible problem frames. EE articulated flexible problem frames that allowed for a dynamic connection between local meaning-making, such as interrogation of school-specific problems, and a national prognostic frame that linked disparate locales in a shared agenda. These frames were flexible in that they allowed for the kinds of relational organizing that invites youth to identify issues that affect them directly, consistent with

community organizing, while also weaving these local issues into a broader narrative that united youth across geographic distance and spatial separation.

Local problem frames. At the youth group level, we observed how much of the work focused on understanding and naming infrastructure issues that youth experienced in their everyday lives. Young people came together to discuss their everyday experiences in their neighborhoods and schools and identify areas where they wanted to change or improvement. Part of this process involved questioning and looking critically at what might have become normalized about their school experience. EE utilized many strategies for fostering awareness of inequities in education. In addition to the field trips to Model C schools described above, another was for young people to engage in a “social audit,” similar to participatory action research. In Tembisa, for example, a youth group counted the number of broken toilets in their schools, which led to news articles and pressure on the ministry to fix the toilets. Sizwe, an equalizer in Cape Town, described his experience with a different social audit, focused on broken windows in schools. He said how, initially, he went for “the songs, the singing...there’s food and there’s...free hot dogs. I was like, wow. There was girls around.” But he described a pivot:

Eventually I got the message. This is Equal Education. These guys fighting for education in schools. I was also involved in the Learning First campaign...the broken windows. So they gave us a task to go and photograph everything we see in school that we think is an inequality to us, like anything that you see in your school that you think shouldn’t be there. We...took pictures of the bathrooms and things like broken windows...It is 500 broken windows in the school, so...that’s where the first campaign—that’s when we started to campaign for the broken windows. That’s how I got involved....

Issues such as broken toilets or broken windows in some schools, or the distance it took to travel to school in more rural areas, represented local issues that EE members named and made visible to each other and broader community audiences.

Unifying frames. EE wove together a range of locally relevant problems with a national agenda for Minimum Norms and Standards. To foster the building of such frames, EE performed a great deal of logistical and strategic work to forge a collective identity among disparate youth from places as different as Cape Town townships, rural Eastern Cape, rural KZN, Gauteng and Limpopo. From province-level gatherings such as mass meetings and lecture series to national-level variants such as Teach-Ins and youth camps, the movement institutionalized spaces for contact and deliberation for youth from a diverse range of environments. At these gatherings EE members brought data about challenges and campaigns at their respective schools and shared those experiences with fellow members from across the country.

Consider this example from fieldnotes, which describe (author's) first visit to a mass meeting, held at a community center where multiple youth groups shared poster displays about problems they had investigated in their schools. The excerpt shows how documentation of school-specific problems were accompanied by unifying practices and messages:

We entered the large gym with two basketball courts surrounded by bleachers and covered by a high roof...We stood looking over the scene – lots of young people were standing around in clusters by uniform – some of them clapping or chanting in tune with each other. I estimated that by the end there were roughly 250-300 people at the event...When I arrived at the gym floor the students had split into two big groups. Each group was being led in a chant and dance by youth leaders...On the perimeter of the gym were displays from each school group about a problem at their schools: some had blown

up photos depicting broken doors, broken ceilings, holes in fences, decrepit toilets. Many had pictures of trees with leaves representing symptoms of problems, the trunk representing the issue, and roots as causes. (*Observer comment: I did not see a consistent interpretation or framing of causes across groups, which suggests to me that the process was fairly close to student experiences and meaning-makings*).

This mass meeting included several elements that illustrate the flexible framing practices in EE. On one hand, the notes document a focus on local problems, generated by students, related to their experiences in schools. The variety of root causes in the posters suggest that they were created separately by each youth group and not bound by a singular ideological frame. On the other hand, the meeting also reveals activities that linked young people across locales, through physical movement and singing, which offered an embodied way to experience a collective identity as activists. Also, surrounding the gym were posters that unifying frames, such as “MINIMUM NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE NOW!” and “EQUAL EDUCATION FOR A FREE AND EQUAL SOUTH AFRICA.” These posters conveyed that although the specifics varied (broken windows in one school, no library in another), they were united by a shared set of policy goals.

This flexible problem framing was also illustrated in the way that one of the senior staff, Siyamthanda, described the Minimum Norms and Standards (MNS) campaign at an implementation workshop in 2015:

We mapped the issues that learners were facing in schools. From Thabiso group of equalizers, we found out issues that learners faced in and out of school. Campaigns such as the late coming and broken windows campaign were the predecessors of the Norms and Standards campaign because they were responses to the issues that were emerging

from our mapping exercise.....As you know the education system in South Africa is very unequal and your experience of it is largely shaped by where you attend school.

From her statement, it is clear that although the MNS was national in breadth, it was also local in the way in which local youth made sense of the specifics of the campaign. In instances where sanitation was important, the local students described their vision of MNS in terms of the sanitation challenges they were facing. Similarly, youth confronted with a lack of electricity at their school would express their MNS vision in terms of school electrification. In this sense MNS offered a flexible frame that resonated with multiple constituencies across varying locales.

The process of building a movement that connected nodes of youth equalizers from across provinces was not straightforward or conflict-free. During a leadership meeting where student representatives from various schools talked about the focus of their local school campaigns connected to MNS, we observed debates about campaign objectives, such as the merits of schools giving out condoms and whether to organize against corporal punishment. The disagreement became heated enough that one of the senior EE staff stepped in to try to mediate the situation. She reminded the group, “Whilst every opinion is valid, it is important to remember what our fight is about.” Her reframing is an example of the active work by EE leaders and staff to forge a shared frame for their work. Tensions also emerged related to political tactics during the MNS campaign. At one point a debate emerged about how to respond to delays by the Minister in implementing MNS. EE had to decide whether to grant the Minister an extension or take her to court and EE membership disagreed about the best way forward. Although most rank and file equalizers voted to go to court, EE’s elected National Council, which included equalizers, decided to grant a one-month extension. Although an unpopular decision with many

members, it did not fracture the movement, and this may be in part because of EE's democratically-elected governance structure.

In summary, EE adopted a flexible approach to framing that was expansive enough to encompass local work anchored in youths' everyday lives, while also connected to a broader agenda. This broader agenda, organized under the national Minimum Norms and Standards campaign, linked youth chapters across different provinces and cities.

Discussion

EE grew from a local effort to document inequalities in school infrastructure to a national movement made up of thousands of members united by the Minimum Norms and Standards campaign. We argue that the development and shared construction of collective action frames was a key element of this movement-building. Through *historical continuity frames* EE members found meaning and purpose as upholders of the past struggle and asserted legitimacy for their activism about contemporary issues. We observed these frames in a variety of activities and media, including political art, struggle songs, and political education. In tandem with these historical narratives, *flexible problem frames* offered a way to link localized issues, which were identified and documented by young people, with a national policy agenda.

One limitation of our study is our field notes and interviews were specific to EE activities in the Western Cape, primarily Khayelitsha. It would be particularly valuable to hear from youth in rural areas, such as the Eastern Cape, in order to gain a fuller portrait of people's meaning-making in relation to the movement. Relatedly, although EE's growth as a movement included intergenerational coalitions with parents, teachers, and lawyers, this analysis focused on the experiences and meaning-making of youth. Another caveat we offer regarding implications for

movement-building is the unique history and demography of South Africa, which calls for care when drawing implications for other nations and sociopolitical contexts.

Despite these caveats, we see contributions from this study for theories of framing and scholarship on youth organizing. With regard to framing, despite an emphasis on agency and the social construction of meaning in early theorizing, the framing literature has been criticized for treating framing as instrumental and strategic, more like a top-down activity than one constructed at the grassroots level. Tarlau (2014), for example, writes:

In the framing perspective, activist leaders assign meaning to movement activities in order to mobilize participation. Therefore, framing makes the majority of movement actors the *objects* of the frame... Theories of framing do not offer a language for analyzing how individuals and communities develop the consciousness and capacity they need to act collectively. (377)

Although framing can be presented as a calculated or top-down activity, our data suggest a more organic process in which EE members developed action frames based on shared histories and collective practices. We documented a variety of learning processes by which young people constructed their understanding of the past and made it relevant to the present. Learning happened in settings that were explicitly designed as workshops, such as reading circles and lectures, but also through intent participation in movement practices (Rogoff et al., 2002), such as singing struggle songs along with parents and elders or marching on city streets. Documenting this interplay between organizational practices and individual agency in the development of action frames is especially important in youth movements, because such movements lose their credibility if young people do not resonate with or actively construct those frames.

With regard to scholarship on youth organizing, this study showed how collective action frames may offer a useful way to map how local organizing efforts grow into social movements. Accounts of youth organizing campaigns in the US often focus on influencing local policies. Such efforts to influence policymaking are necessary for social change, but are only one piece of a broader effort to build power. Organizing groups led by youth of color, after all, contend with multiple constraints on their political power, related to the intersection of age, structural racism, neoliberal ideologies, and economic marginalization. These complex “circuits of dispossession” (Fine & Ruglis, 2008) call for collective action frames that can unit people across cities and borders to address causes of structural violence, whether at the level of national policy, multinational corporations, or international trade agreements. As Hinson & Healey (2007) write:

Without a larger framework that moves people from specific interests towards a critical analysis of social and power relations, most people who get involved in a single-issue campaign will lose interest after the specific campaign is done. They are less likely to see and feel the connections between their own issues and the struggles of others in their communities and in the larger world. (p. 3)

This comment resonates with findings our study, in that youth found meaning and connection with ideological frames related to fairness in the distribution of resources and the meaning of the apartheid struggle.

Collective action frames also enable young people to counter threats to their legitimacy as political actors. One type of threat, possibly unique to the South African context, was the way in which the generation of Born-Frees were discursively excluded from the moral authority of holding struggle credentials. EE youth and organizational staff addressed this discursive challenge by asserting continuity with youth activists of the anti-apartheid era; they positioned

themselves as historical actors who were carrying on a noble and unfinished struggle.

A second threat to the legitimacy of youth activists is to attribute their actions to the machinations of adults pulling the strings behind the scenes (Conner, 2015). This threat poses a complex challenge for youth movements because it risks goading youth into accepting a false binary (between youth and adults) or framing their work in solely age-based terms. Sukarieh and Tannock (2014), based on their analysis of youth protests and movements around the world, argue that contemporary youth formations are often marginalized, or marginalize themselves, when they substitute an age-based lens for a structural one. Limiting the movement to a generational one can undermine ties to other constituencies, such as organized labor or environmentalists, and weaken movement infrastructure, such as when experienced activists are regularly “aging out.” We highlight these various complexities because they are unique to youth movements and deserve attention from social movement scholars.

In conclusion, this study identified some of the key dimensions by which young people in South Africa transformed their local struggles to a movement linking youth around a shared vision for equitable and high quality education. This is an urgent moment for youth organizing groups to strengthen movement-building strategies, given the injustices and precarity facing masses of young people globally. We owe it to them to be ambitious in our theorizing and clear in drawing lessons that can be useful in the development of social justice youth movements.

References

- Anyon, J. (2005). *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a new social movement*. New York: Routledge.
- Benford, R., & Snow, D. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611-639.
- Bosch, T. (2017). Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: The case of #RhodesMustFall. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(2), 221-232.
- Bowker, G., & Star, S. L. (2000). *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Brockman, B. (2016). Every generation has its struggle: A brief history of Equal Education (2008-2015). In A. Heffernan & N. Nieftagodien (Eds.), *Students must rise: Youth struggle in South Africa before and beyond Soweto '76* (pp. 168-179). New York, South Africa: NYU Press.
- Christens, B. D. (2010). Public relationship building in grassroots community organizing: Relational intervention for individual and systems change. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 38(7), 886-900.
- Christens, B. D., & Speer, P. W. (2015). Community organizing: Practice, research, and policy implications. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 9(1), 193--222.
- Conner, J. O. (2016). Pawns or power players: The grounds on which adults dismiss or defend youth organizers in the USA. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(3), 403–420.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications

- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage publications.
- Earl, J., Maher, T. V., & Elliott, T. (2017). Youth, activism, and social movements. *Sociology Compass*, 11(4), e12465. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12465>
- Emerson, R.L., Fretz, R.I., & Shaw, L.L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Engler, M., & Engler, P. (2016). *This is an uprising: How nonviolent revolt is shaping the twenty-first century*. New York: Nation Books.
- Equal Education. (2013). School Infrastructure: Overview & History. <https://equaleducation.org.za/campaigns/school-infrastructure/>
- Equal Education (n. d.). About Equal Education. <https://equaleducation.org.za/>
- Everatt, D. (2001). From urban warrior to market segment? Youth in South Africa 1990-2000. *Youth, Citizenship and Empowerment*, 293-329.
- Fals-Borda, O. (1987). The application of participatory action-research in Latin America. *International Sociology*, 2(4), 329–347. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026858098700200401>
- Fine, M., & Ruglis, J. (2008). Circuits of dispossession: The racialized and classed realignment of the public sphere for youth in the U.S. *Transforming Anthropology*, 17(1), 20–33.
- Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing (2017). *Pipelines to power*. Retrieved from <https://fco.org/programs/pipelines-to-power>
- Gamber-Thompson, L., & Zimmerman, A. (2016). DREAMing citizenship: Undocumented youth, coming out, and pathways to participation. In H. Jenkins (Ed.), *By any media necessary: The new youth activism*. New York: NYU Press.

- Ginwright, S., Noguera, P. & Cammarota, J. (Eds.) (2006), *Beyond resistance: Youth activism and community change*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Hinson, S., & Healey, R. (2007). *Theories of power for activists*. Berkeley, CA: Grassroots Policy Project.
- Hunt, S. A., Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (1994). Identity fields: Framing processes and the social construction of movement identities. In H. J. E. Laraña, & J.R. Gusfield (Ed.), *New social movements: From ideology to identity* (pp. 185-207). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- James, T., & McGillicuddy, K. (2001). Building youth movements for community change. *The Nonprofit Quarterly*, 8(4), 1-3.
- Jurow, A. S., & Shea, M. (2015). Learning in equity-oriented scale-making projects. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 24(2), 286-307.
- Kwon, S. A. (2013). *Uncivil youth: Race, activism, and affirmative governmentality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Larson, R., & Hansen, D. (2005). The development of strategic thinking: Learning to impact human systems in a youth activism program. *Human Development*, 48(6), 327–349.
- LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999). *Analyzing and interpreting ethnographic data*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Lukes, S. (1974). *Power: A radical view*. London: Macmillan Press

- Mamdani, M. (1995). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Mattes, R. (2012). The 'Born Frees': The prospects for generational change in post-apartheid South Africa. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 47(1), 133-153.
- Medellin, P. J., Speer, P. W., Christens, B. D., & Gupta, J. (in preparation). *Transformation to leadership: Learning about self, the community, the organization, and the system*.
- Naidoo, L. (2016). Contemporary student politics in South Africa: The rise of the black-led student movements of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015. In A. Heffernan & N. Nieftagodien (Eds.), *Students Must Rise: Youth struggle in South Africa before and beyond Soweto '76* (pp. 180-190). New York: NYU Press.
- Nattrass, N., & Seekings, J. (2001). Democracy and distribution in highly unequal economies: the case of South Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39(3), 471-498.
- Nkosi, B. (2013). "Motshekga won't retract 'racist' attack on Equal Education." *Mail & Guardian*. <https://mg.co.za/article/2013-06-19-motshekga-wont-retract-racist-attack-on-equal-education>
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2016). *#RhodesMustFall: Nibbling at resilient colonialism in South Africa*. Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2010). Racism, ethnicity and the media in Africa: Reflections inspired by studies of xenophobia in Cameroon and South Africa. *Africa Spectrum*, 45(1), 57-93.
- Posel, D. (2013). The ANC youth league and the politicization of race. *Thesis Eleven*, 115(1), 58-76.

- Rogers, J., Mediratta, K., & Shah, S. (2012). Building power, learning democracy: Youth organizing as a site of civic development. *Review of Research in Education*, 36(1), 43-66.
- Rogoff, B., Paradise, R., Arauz, R. M., Correa-Chavez, M., & Angelillo, C. (2003). Firsthand learning through intent participation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, 175–203.
- Shah, S. (2011). *Building transformative youth leadership: Data on the impacts of youth organizing*. New York: Occasional Paper Series on Youth Organizing, 11.
- Salinas, D. & Fraser, P. (2012). Educational policy and contentious politics: The 2011 Chilean student movement. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 3(1), 17-47.
- Saloojee, G., Phohole, M., Saloojee, H., & IJsselmuiden, C. (2007). Unmet health, welfare and educational needs of disabled children in an impoverished South African peri-urban township. *Child Care, Health and Development*, 33(3), 230-235.
- Sapa. (2013). Equal Education march to demand norms and standards. *Mail & Guardian*.
<https://mg.co.za/article/2013-06-17-equal-education-march-to-demand-norms-and-standards>
- Seekings, J. (1996). The 'Lost Generation': South Africa's 'Youth Problem' in the early-1990s. *Transformation*, (29), 103-125
- Seekings, J., & Nattrass, N. (2008). *Class, race, and inequality in South Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Seif, H. (2011). “Unapologetic and unafraid”: Immigrant youth come out from the shadows. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2011(134), 59–75.
- Smalley, E. (2014). *Fighting for equality in education: student activism in post-apartheid South Africa*. NY: Case Consortium Columbia and the Global Association of MDP Programs.

- Smith, L. (2004). The murky waters of the second wave of neoliberalism: corporatization as a service delivery model in Cape Town. *Geoforum*, 35(3), 375-393.
- Sukarieh, M., & Tannock, S. (2014). *Youth rising? The politics of youth in the global economy*. New York: Routledge.
- Tarlau, R. (2014). From a language to a theory of resistance: Critical pedagogy, the limits of “framing,” and social change. *Educational Theory*, 64(4), 369-392.
- Terriquez, V. (2015). Intersectional mobilization, social movement spillover, and Queer youth leadership in the immigrant rights movement. *Social Problems*, 62(3), 343–362.
- Trickett, E. J. (2009). Multilevel community-based culturally situated interventions and community impact: An ecological perspective. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 43(3-4), 257-266.
- Visser, M. (2007). The social ecological model as a theoretical framework in community psychology. *Community Psychology: Analysis, Context and Action*, 102-116.
- Warren, M. (2014). Transforming public education: The need for an educational justice movement. *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 26(1).
- Warren, M., & Supszcnk, L. A. (2016). The emergence of a youth justice movement in the United States. J. Conner and S. Rosen (Eds.) *Contemporary youth activism: Advancing social justice in the United States* (pp. 39-58). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Watts, R., & Flanagan, C. (2007). Pushing the envelope on civic engagement: A developmental and liberation psychology perspective. *The Journal of Community Psychology*, 35, 779-792.

Wood, R. L. 2007. Higher power: Strategic capacity for state and national organizing. In M. Orr (Eds), *Transforming the city: Community organizing and the challenge of political change* (pp. 162-192). Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press.

DRAFT

Endnotes

¹ Racial terminology in South Africa has a complicated history (Bowker & Star, 2000). The vast majority of EE were youth came from schools that designated them as “Black/African” consistent with South African census categories. At the same time, in social justice movement circles, including Equal Education, “Black” includes a range of Non-White peoples, including those who identify as Coloured and Indian.

² Although US-based youth organizing had its roots in civil rights activism and movements of the 1960s, it emerged as a distinct phenomenon supported by non-profit organizations and differentiated from adult-led community organizing in the 1990s (Author; Kwon, 2013). Some of the first references to “youth organizing” as a distinct practice were in the early 2000s (e.g., James & McGillicuddy, 2001). The emergence of youth organizing as a field can also be traced to the founding of the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing in 2000.

³ We thank NAME for his contributions as a researcher. NAME, second author, was the primary ethnographer for these data. NAME, first author, completed a subset of interviews and field notes during a 5 month stay in the Western Cape in 2013.

⁴ This narrative about EE as carrying out the agenda of white people is complex to untangle. In our view, the allegation reflected an effort to undermine the moral authority of EE but did not reflect accurately the multiracial origins of EE or its evolution in governance structure and ongoing shifts in leadership between 2008 and 2015. This growth has contributed to the development of relational modes of organizing, the assumption of senior staff roles by equalizers and community leaders, and a leadership council elected by members.