

Pathways of Education Reform ‘From Below’: Theorizing Social Movements as Grassroots Agents of Educational Change

Kai Heidemann

A long-running line of inquiry in the field of educational studies seeks to understand how formalized systems of education undergo processes of change and transformation. Much of this scholarship has focused on state-based processes of educational governance and policy-making (*e.g.* Arnove and Torres 2007; Ball 1994; Carnoy and Rhoten 2002; Barrenechea, Beech and Rivas 2022; Dale 2005; Ginsburg 1991; Hanson 2001; Mayer, Ramirez and Soysal 1992; Spring 2009). Often situated within the domain of educational policy studies,¹ such work typically aims to foster global comparative understandings of how structural changes in national educational systems are variously stifled or stimulated through processes of diffusion, innovation, coercion and conflict. While some scholars look critically at how educational changes are driven by relations of power and domination (*e.g.* Spring 2009), others focus more on the functional mechanisms through which institutional changes develop (*e.g.* Mayer, Ramirez and Soysal 1992). In either case, the primary agents of education reform are usually identified as networks of elites, experts and authorities working through channels of formal policy-making across the local, national and transnational levels of governance. Education reform

¹ For a concise summary of the field of educational policy studies, see: Delaney, J. (2017) *Education Policy: Bridging the divide between theory and practice* [2nd edition]. Edmonton: Brush Education Inc.

is thus often either implicitly or explicitly construed as a “top-down” affair characterized by “supply-side logics” whereby influential sets of political insiders first develop the plans for (re)structuring schools and then work to garner support from less influential stakeholders on the peripheries of policy-making (Brint 2006: 253). One of the most prolific areas of inquiry in this domain, for instance, has traced out the global diffusion of elite-driven educational reform agendas rooted in the ‘neoliberal’ logics of decentralization, marketization and privatization (Stromquist and Monkman 2014).

Although many fruitful and invaluable insights have been generated by global comparative research on institutional processes of educational change, the ‘top-down’ and ‘supply-side’ orientation of this policy-centric literature has traditionally neglected the ways in which grassroots actors and social movements can act as influential drivers of educational politics and reforms ‘from below’. Consequently, the innovative and highly localized forms of subjectivity, agency and collective action that emerge from within civil society and give shape to community-driven movements for education reform are rarely a focus of research and theorization in policy studies.

Fortunately, in recent years increased attention has been awarded to issues of community engagement by looking at the ways in which grassroots actors engage with the politics of educational change ‘from below’ (e.g. Anyon 2009; Binder 2002; Horsford and Vasquez Heilig 2014; Oakes and Lipton 2002; Shirley 1997; Su 2009; Tarlau 2015; Warren and Mapp 2011). This small but growing body of work has shed important light on questions of how, when and why local-level actors participate in organized and enduring forms of collective action so as to critique existing educational practices and challenge prevailing policy regimes. Among the key insights generated by this diverse stream of research, for instance, is how “emancipatory” or “equity-focused” (Oakes and Lipton 2002) education reform initiatives can develop at the grassroots in order to empower historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities, such as ethnic/racial minorities, indigenous peoples,

or the urban and rural poor. While many of the scholars working in this terrain invoke or refer to the term ‘social movement’, there is limited engagement with the concepts and theories of social movement scholarship (*cf.* Binder 2002; Heidemann 2014; Tarlau 2015). Conversely, within the field of social movement studies, there is scarce attention to the question of how social movement actors seek to influence educational systems and policies (*e.g.* Andrews 2002; Meyer and Boutcher 2007). Rather, most of the work in this domain looks at how universities can act as staging sites for broader-level social protest campaigns, as evidenced by student movements in Chile in 2011 (Guzman-Concha 2012), China in 1989 (Zhao 1998) and the global student protest wave of 1968 (Horn 2017). In addition, while numerous social movement scholars address the theme of education, they tend to focus on the forms of non-formalized learning and knowledge production that transpire outside of educational institutions and which take shape from within activist groups, social movement organizations and protest camps (*e.g.* Choudry 2015; Isaac et al; 2019).

By highlighting the forms of agency through which grassroots actors work to bring the politics of educational change to life ‘from below’, the tool-kit of social movement theory can help to illuminate the ways in which ‘everyday’ citizens experience, evaluate and ultimately engage with larger-scale regimes of educational governance and policy-making. Moreover, a social movement perspective is especially beneficial in underlining the ways in which particular collectivities of grassroots actors work to define issues of educational equality and opportunity on their own terms as well as how these locally rooted understandings of educational justice intersect with national and transnational policy trends in more or less contentious ways. Without such insights ‘from below’ our understandings of the variety of societal forces that shape processes of educational change remain partial and potentially misleading.

Overview

In what follows, I merge the field of education reform and educational policy studies with ‘neo-institutionalist’ strands of social movement theory (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Fligstein

and McAdam 2012; Meyer 2004; Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008) in order to explore how grassroots actors approach educational systems as both a *target* of claim making, and a *field* of direct action.² Drawing on a range of some representative case studies that are broadly linked to issues of 'social justice',³ I look at some of the principal pathways of collective action through which grassroots education reform initiatives as well as some of the corresponding dilemmas and problematics associated with these pathways. Ultimately, I argue that social movement actors have the capacity to trigger important processes of educational change 'from below', and that their actions merit more serious and systematic consideration by educational scholars. The overall aim of my discussion is not to provide a fully fledged empirical analysis, but rather to suggest a heuristic that stimulates future avenues for comparative scholarship.

1. Looking at education as a terrain of social movement action

What is a social movement? Empirically, of course, there is no single unitary type or form of social movement. However, from a sociological perspective, the term generally refers to relatively organized and enduring networks of contentious collective action that emanate from the grassroots of civil society, and which seek to challenge established relations of power in order to variously realize and/or resist broader-level processes of change. On the one hand, social movements can have a 'progressive' orientation geared toward changing certain aspects of the institutionalized social order, such as by fighting against structural racism and sexism. On

² As a quick caveat, I would like to note that my focus in this article is on education linked to primary and secondary schooling, and thus excludes the settings of higher education and adult education.

³ For the purposes of this discussion, I define 'social justice' as those sets of ideas and actions that are intended to transcend inequitable social arrangements and institutions, and that seek to develop strategies for the empowerment of historically marginalized and exploited populations. This includes a broad spectrum of initiatives variously linked to struggles against racial, gendered, sexual, socioeconomic and ecological forms of oppression (Inspired by Hytten and Bettez 2011).

the other hand, however, social movements can also adopt relatively 'protective' positions by working to prevent the degradation or destruction of certain aspects of the established social order, such as by working to secure the public's access to universal public education or unemployment benefits. While the efforts of social movements often target established governmental policies and state-based agencies, their actions tend to be aimed at a broader transformation of hegemonic relations and ideologies in society.

Many of the fundamental perspectives at play in the field of social movement studies are applications of broader traditions in sociological theory, such as neo-Durkheimian theories of order, neo-Marxian theories of conflict and neo-Weberian theories of action as well as symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, and pragmatism (Snow, Soule and Kriesi 2004). In this article, I focus on 'neo-institutionalism', or what is also more narrowly referred to as 'political process theory' (Meyer 2004). This strand of theorizing emphasizes the embeddedness of social movement actors and their actions within a broader multi-scalar landscape of institutional systems and fields of action, such as those linked to states and markets as well as many other spheres of social life, such as religion, gender, mass media and education (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008). Within this literature, 'institutions' are generally understood as historically enduring structures of social interaction that guide large-scale processes of social reproduction within distinctive spheres of life. Institutions are typically viewed in sociology as very stable and resilient structures. However, they are also understood as ever-shifting and unfinished social projects, infused with a variety of underlying tensions and contradictions (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). This relative instability creates possible openings and opportunities for social movements to re-shape institutions.

Moreover, different institutional domains are generally recognized as being interdependent, overlapping and nested within one another, rather than fully bounded or closed systems of action. While the prevailing logics and relations of power at play in

different institutional domains can operate rather symbiotically and in tandem with one another, they can also exist at cross-purposes and come into conflict with one another, as illustrated by the historical tension between religion and education in the European nation-state system, for example (see, Willaime 2007). Such inter-institutional dynamics have important consequences for social movements because they can allow activists and reformers to channel the influence of one institutional field toward another.

The basic premise at work in neo-institutionalism is that the agency of social movement actors- their capacity to act upon the world and potentially shape it- is profoundly shaped by a larger macro-structural landscape of institutionalized power relations. As surmised by Elisabeth Clemens (1998:109): "Human agency is limited... The potential of collective action to produce significant social change, therefore, is shaped in large part by the character of what may be changed". The institutional contours of a given society at a given point in time thus establish a certain reality for social movement actors which exhibits certain power dynamics that make some forms of action more imaginable, interesting and impactful than others. The forms of power at play within particular institutional fields of action, such as educational systems, have both positive (enabling) and negative (constraining) consequence for the grassroots practices and efforts of social movement actors. While power dynamics can at times be effectively channeled and wielded by social movement actors in impactful ways that allow them to make important gains, they can also restrain the agency of social movements by acting as a source of deterrence, frustration, obstruction or repression. As Meyer (2004:125) writes: "exogenous factors enhance or inhibit a social movement's prospects for (a) mobilizing, (b) advancing particular claims rather than others, (c) cultivating some alliances rather than others, (d) employing particular political strategies and tactics rather than others, and (e) affecting mainstream institutional politics and policy."

From a contemporary sociological perspective, institutional power dynamics are not fully deterministic of people's actions and agency.

Rather, power creates a certain degree of 'path-dependency' for social movement actors as they experience, evaluate and engage with the rules, resources, logics and limits of prevailing institutional orders in society. A goal underlying neo-institutional theorizing is thus to understand the particular kinds of pathways that specific sets of grassroots actors deploy in the process of navigating particular institutional fields in purposeful and more or less strategic ways. Certainly, this kind of project can take on a macro-structuralist approach that primarily seeks to map out the specific contours of the institutional landscape within which a given set of social movement actors is situated. Jennifer Earl's (2003) comparative work on repression, for instance, has provided important insights into the various forms of institutional containment and control that undermine the capacities of social protest movements, that range from seemingly mundane tax laws to the regularized use of police violence. However, in order to avoid the trap of structural determinism, scholars must inevitably address questions of agency by taking up a more actor-centered and practice-based approach that focuses on how social movements confront and interact with institutional orders 'from below'.

2. Accounting for institutional power dynamics in education

The institutional setting of formalized education represents a highly significant but relatively under-theorized realm of social movement agency and activity. Much of the neo-institutionalist scholarship in social movement studies tends to fall in the domain of 'political process' theory (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). This work tends to be macroscopic, operates through a so-called 'polity' model and focuses heavily on the embeddedness of social movements within the global nation-state system. The prevailing view of power in this domain is state-centric with research focusing on the contentious interactions between social movements and governmental policies, agencies and authorities (*e.g.* Smith and Wiest 2012; Tarrow 1998). Of considerable importance are the role of electoral cycles, the significance of party-based cleavages, the machinations of state-based repression and levels of democratization. Within this terrain, some social movement

scholars have certainly addressed educational institutions as an extension of state power and thus a context of movement-based claim-making and protest. In his study of the civil-rights and school-desegregation conflicts in Mississippi during 1969-71, for example, Andrews (2002) shows how White resistance to the Black struggle for educational equality and justice led to the creation of new political structures that enabled the continuity of segregation through establishment of private schools for racist Whites. In another example, Binder (2002) showed how a highly decentralized structure of educational governance and policy-making in the United States creates empowering opportunities for both conservative and progressive actors to shape educational curriculum on a very local, rather than national, level. However, in comparison to work on elections and political parties, there has been relatively little effort in the field to craft a unified research agenda that explicitly draws on the tool-kit of social movement theory in order to undertake global comparative studies of how social movement actors work to impact educational systems (*cf.* Heidemann 2015; Isaac et al 2019; Meyer and Boutcher 2007; Niescz, Korora and Walkuski 2018; Tarlau 2015). This relative absence is unfortunate given that educational systems are such an influential nexus of social conflict and power struggles in so many parts of the world.

Education, socialization and power

Educational systems are a site of recurring socio-political conflicts because they have a strong link to large-scale processes of collective socialization and enculturation within democratic as well as authoritarian nation-states (Brint 2006). As institutionalized sites of collective identity-formation, meaning-making and knowledge-building, educational systems are highly politicized spaces saturated by an array of competing interests (Apple 2004). Who decides the content of educational curriculum, who controls the certification of schoolteachers, and who determines the levels of funding of schools, for example, are all heated issues that generate a consistent clash of perspectives in countries around the world. Moreover, as prominent terrains of state-based governance and policy-making, educational systems represent a highly coveted

and heavily guarded field of action for societal elites and power-brokers. Indeed, there is considerable power that goes into, and derives from, the capacity to shape educational policies, programs and practices from the local to national and transnational levels. Efforts to reform educational systems and policies by social movements are thus always struggles about institutional power.

In general, educational systems play a rather 'conservative' role in society (Brint 2006). This is to say that, as institutionalized sites of social reproduction, schools and universities tend to enshrine forms of inquiry and knowledge-building that promote the stability of established social orders (Spring 2001). This 'conservative' aspect is palpable from a long-term historical perspective, because educational systems are notoriously resilient to systemic change, and adverse to the introduction of disruptive challenges and reforms 'from below' (Mayer, Ramirez and Soysal 1992). Most educational systems are deeply embedded within the architectures of state-based governance and thus tend to be heavily 'guarded' by a multitude of bureaucratic mechanisms and elite-driven gate-keeping devices that work to preserve institutional homeostasis (Skrentny 2006). These structural traits make educational systems an especially difficult terrain of influence for social movements that emanate from the grassroots of society and seek change on behalf of marginalized and historically disenfranchised peoples.

Despite structural complexities and challenges, however, educational systems are a highly strategic field of action for social movements (Morrow and Torres 2007). Indeed, the reproductive 'function' of education in society is precisely what makes it such a valuable target and terrain of social movement activity. Educational programs and policies are frequently diagnosed by social movement actors as complicit in the reproduction of injustices and inequalities. This is evidenced, for instance, in the ways that systems of higher education have been periodically targeted by successive generations of feminists. By highlighting the overt exclusion and marginalization of women from specific academic positions (professors, chairs, deans, etc.) and specific academic programs (economics, science, engineering, etc.), for example, first, second and third wave feminists have effectively

exposed how systems of higher education play a central role in sustaining institutionalized relations of patriarchal power, masculine privilege and androcentrism (Bannerji et al 1991). However, social movement actors rarely enter into the institutional terrain of educational action in order to merely articulate grievances and expose injustices. Rather, they seek to trigger substantive changes and policy reforms. Hence, when contemporary feminists criticize the marginalization of women within 'STEM' university programs, for instance, their aim is not merely to condemn the absence of women. Rather, the aim is to re-purpose the university and transform the institutional terrain of STEM education into a space capable of yielding broader forms of feminist consciousness and empowerment in society (Morley and Walsh 1996).

The dynamics of (de)centralization

As noted earlier, neo-institutionalist theories propose that the ability of social movement actors to impact education generally rests upon their capacity to penetrate institutional boundaries and attain a strategic presence within the arena of educational governance and decision-making. These movement-based dynamics of institutional penetration and presence are heavily dependent on the extent to which the prevailing structures of educational governance and authority work to variously enable or restrain the agency of grassroots actors. In other words, movement-based efforts to reform educational systems are shaped by a predominant 'structure of opportunity' (Meyer 2004).

One key feature of opportunity structures in educational systems is the degree of institutional centralization through which process of educational governance and decision-making occur (Bray 2007; Heidemann and Clothey 2019; McGinn and Walsh 1999). In other words, is the capacity to shape educational policy super concentrated in the hands of just a few or a single agent or agency, or is it spread out among multiple stakeholders? In general, educational systems that demonstrate higher levels of centralization tend to be less 'open' to the influence of social movements because they have a tendency to provide fewer

potential points of access and influence for grassroots actors positioned on the outside of the formal arenas of policy-making. Conversely, while decentralized educational systems can potentially offer more points of access to grassroots reform initiatives, the impact of movement-based reform campaigns can be more easily contained within specific territories. It is vital to keep in mind, of course, that the institutional dynamics of centralization are not a zero-sum situation that exist within one of two dichotomous categories: centralized or not centralized. Rather, centralization operates along a gradation or spectrum of 'openness'.

The relative 'openness' of educational systems varies both within and across national contexts (Bray 2007). For example, a given educational system can demonstrate considerable 'openness' in some areas of pedagogy and instruction, such as by giving teachers a lot of autonomy and independence when it comes to enacting classroom instruction, while simultaneously remaining decisively 'closed' in other domains of instruction, such as by requiring teachers to use standardized curricula and exams. This is relevant because different domains of an educational system can be more or less 'open' to the grassroots challenges of social movement actors. Moreover, from a cross-national perspective, degrees of institutional 'openness' are always relative to the particular geopolitical territory under investigation.

The structure of opportunity at work within the Spanish educational system for example, varies considerably within the different autonomous communities of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia (Bonal et al 2005). These sub-national variations make the Spanish system appear very 'open' when compared to the notoriously centralized or 'Jacobin' context of national education next-door in France, where local and sub-national levels of educational authority are historically quite weak (van Zanten and Robert 2000). These institutional variations have had considerable consequences, for instance, on the historical efforts of grassroots actors seeking to promote minority language policies in education, such as the Basque regions of France and Spain (see, Heidemann 2014). However, casting a wider glance, the

Spanish system appears somewhat less centralized when contrasted with the highly decentralized federal system in place within the United States of America where there are over 13,500 relatively autonomous school districts operating under the legal jurisdictions of 50 different states. Such variation in the U.S. context has enormous consequence for community actors seeking to promote non-English languages, such as Spanish (see, Crawford 2000). Grassroots proponents of bilingual education in the largely Democratic state of California are thus very likely to face different conditions than their counterparts in Republican states such as Kentucky or Missouri where "English Only" policies prevail in public education. Moreover, within different states, minority language activists will likely face a variety of different opportunities and obstacles linked to the prevailing power dynamic at play within individual school districts. Hence, in California, linguistic rights activists working in areas with very large Latino populations such as the Oakland Unified School District, face very different opportunities than their counterparts a few hours away in the predominantly White and politically conservative setting of Shasta County. Furthermore, the relatively high levels of centralization at play in the French context actually look rather 'open' when compared to the structure of educational governance in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian nations such as China and Iran, where educational governance is tightly controlled by state-based agents. In these settings, processes of language planning and policy-making in education are generally not open to community influences and people's grassroots efforts to promote minority languages, such as Uyghur or Armenian face monumental challenges.⁴

In sum, in order to analyze how social movement actors seek to impact in educational systems, it is necessary to understand how they engage with the institutional contours of the 'opportunity structure' that characterizes the particular educational system(s)

⁴ For a good overview discussion of language policy issues worldwide, see: May, S. (2012) *Language and minority rights: Ethnicity, nationalism and the politics of language*. New York: Routledge.

within which social movement actors are working, such as the dynamic of (de)centralization.

3. Pathways of movement-based action in education

Despite the institutional factors that make education such a challenging terrain of policy reform for social movement actors, it is important to scrutinize the ways in which social movements try to shape educational systems. In what follows, I thus suggest a basic analytical heuristic that is based on four distinctive pathways of movement-based action in education: *infra-institutional*, *inter-institutional*, *extra-institutional* and *para-institutional*. These terms build directly on the aforementioned insights of neo-institutionalist theories in social movement theory (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008). The use of Latin prefixes (*infra*, *inter*, *extra* and *para*) in my discussion is not intended to be rigidly literal. Rather, it acts as a simple heuristic that highlights the positionality of different grassroots education reform initiatives vis-a-vis to the education system, *i.e.* ‘working from within institutions’, ‘working inwards from the outside of institutions’, ‘working largely from the outside of institutions’ and ‘building new parallel institutions’. As a way to explain and illustrate each pathway below, I draw on some representative cases linked to issues of social justice.

Infra-Institutional Pathways: Working from the inside

‘Infra-institutional’ pathways of action develop when social movement activities emerge from within the existing institutional boundaries of established educational systems. Such processes occur when ‘inside’ actors, such as teachers or students, purposefully bring social movement agendas to life in their particular spheres of activity within the educational system, most notably via the settings of instruction and learning. The persons who make such pathways possible can be seen as ‘brokers’ capable of mediating a strategic interaction between the ‘external’ realm of social movement agendas (environmentalism, anti-racism, feminism, etc) on the one hand, and the ‘internal’ realm of educational systems on the other (schools, classrooms, lectures, etc). Brokers are able to use their internal position within specific schools or universities to both ‘import’ and ‘activate’ a given set of

social movement agendas into the educational system, such as by making issues of environmental justice or anti-racism an explicit theme of inquiry and knowledge-building. Such brokerage can occur in a wide variety of ways, such as through processes of *infusion*, *diffusion* and *staging*.

Through concerted effort and action, brokers can work to systematically infuse educational settings and programs with movement-based discourses and symbols, thus transforming sites of education into vehicles of social movement activity. Infusion can happen in a relatively informal and small-scale manner when individual students and teachers purposefully work to incorporate social movement frames and messages into particular didactic activities. This is illustrated, for instance, in the educational resources developed for students and teachers by the Zinn Education Project (ZEP) in the United States.⁵ Inspired by the work of radical social historian Howard Zinn, ZEP is an educational collective that works to incorporate movement-based issues of social justice into the curriculum of history and civics courses in U.S. schools and universities by providing a freely available on-line catalog of hundreds of pedagogical materials. These materials can be used in a variety of ways, such as by students to do classroom projects, or by teachers for building lesson plans. As resources, these materials are intended to challenge the colonialist, nationalist, racist, sexist and elite-oriented narratives of history that are traditionally valorized in U.S. public schools (Loewen 1995). These counter-hegemonic resources are often original historical documents that have been curated by members of ZEP. They work by giving evidence to the influential but often ignored role played by diverse kinds of social movements in the shaping of U.S. culture, politics and society. Moreover, many of the materials in the catalog also include pedagogical resources that have been directly authored by social movement groups and leaders from the past and present. By infusing the classroom with these alternative resources, brokers can thus transform their classrooms into a

⁵ For details about the Zinn Education Project, see: <https://www.zinnedproject.org/about>.

platform for the diffusion of movement-based knowledge, messages and memories. Brokers activate such infusive actions when they utilize an existing educational setting as a bridge that purposefully links social movements to educational systems, thus transforming schools into sites that are capable of bringing social movement agendas to life.

Processes of infusion and diffusion can also occur when students and/or educational practitioners work to create associations and orchestrate events from within schools. Such actions transform educational settings into a 'stage' that is capable of promoting wider social movement agendas. This can be evidenced, for instance, in the wide variety of environmentalist actions that emerged in high schools and universities across Europe and other parts of the world during 2018-19.⁶ Eventually unfolding under the moniker of 'Fridays for Future', these educational actions were sparked off by media coverage of the infamous school strike of 15-year old Greta Thurnberg who was protesting political inaction on climate change in Sweden. Her 'school-strike-for-climate-action' was then quickly replicated and re-enacted in a variety of ways by a multitude of students and teachers in other European nations, such as France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Fueled by the strategic use of digital communication technology and social media, this wave of youth-led protest was complemented by the creation of hundreds of student-run environmentalist clubs and associations from within schools and universities around the world. In this context, students and allied teachers acted as brokers of infra-institutional action who were successful in transforming local educational settings into highly visible and influential 'stages' of action linked up to a broader global movement for climate justice. The founding of many new environmentalist clubs/associations within high schools and universities effectively bolstered the transnational density of social movement networks and communities. Similar kinds of inter-institutional pathways of action on environmental issues were also carried out by students in previous years, as evidenced by the launching of many different

⁶ For an up to date account of these global actions, see: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>.

types of student-led 'greening' campaigns that successfully pressured school and university officials to adopt more robust recycling and waste reduction programs.⁷

Inter-Institutional Pathways: Working inwards from along the edges 'Inter-institutional' pathways of action emerge along the institutional boundaries of established educational system with the ultimate aim of gaining access. This is perhaps the most common pathway of action adopted by social movement actors as it usually entails a strategic targeting of the educational system by actors who lack significant presence within the system. This relative lack of presence is often linked to the stigmatized status or identity of movement actors in society as well as the extent to which their claims are perceived by educational authorities as overly 'radical' or 'threatening' to the institutional homeostasis of the educational system. Inter-institutional pathways are typically launched from within social movement-based organizations that already exist at the grassroots of society and then work to actively 'penetrate' the institutional boundaries of the educational system in order to gain a foothold and wield their influence within the system. The social dynamics of such institutional penetration can unfold in a variety of ways, but there are two basic routes: *direct* and *indirect*.

On the one hand, direct routes of penetration occur when social movement actors work to actively confront and engage with a given set of authorities on specific educational issues. The aim here is to maintain constant interaction with educational decision-makers and authorities by deploying a repertoire of actions that will varyingly convince or coerce these authorities into accepting movement-based reform agendas within the educational system. On the other hand, indirect routes of penetration are somewhat different in that they require social movement actors to take a roundabout path to influencing educational authorities, such as by using the legal system to challenge established education policies,

⁷ See, for example, Gough, A. (2005). Sustainable schools: Renovating educational processes. *Applied Environmental Education and Communication*, 4(4), 339-351.

or by using the combined pressures of mass public protest and media coverage to force authorities into a dialogue. While these are separate trajectories of inter-institutional action, they are often intertwined.

Inter-institutional pathways of educational action are nicely illustrated by the historic battle for educational equality and racial desegregation that was led by the Black Civil Rights Movement and its allies in the United States during the 1940-60s.⁸ In this context, the structural reality of a deeply entrenched and vociferously guarded legacy of institutionalized racism in American society placed Black Civil Rights activists at a severe disadvantage when it came to penetrating let alone influencing the educational system through 'normal' channels of reform. In order to penetrate the boundaries of a heavily guarded and overtly racist educational system, disruption was needed. Accordingly, direct and indirect routes of action were taken by activists. Indirect routes of inter-institutional educational activism were especially influential during early stages of the Civil Rights Movement as evidenced by a multiplicity of long legal campaigns organized by social movement actors and leaders during the 1940-50s. Key players in this regard were progressive Black lawyers such as Thurgood Marshall, Julian Bond and others who worked with established civil rights organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Although punctuated by many defeats, these actors were able to use their instrumental knowledge of the judicial-legal system as well as their social position as educated lawyers in order to craft serious legal challenges aimed at dismantling the racist logics of public education. Ultimately, these legal efforts paid off in 1954 when the landmark ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court declared racial segregation in education to be harmful and unconstitutional. The Black struggle for educational equality and justice was far from over after this legal victory, however. As a decentralized federal system, the institutional structure of U.S. public schools allowed

⁸ My discussion here is predominantly based on Patterson, J. (2001) *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

educational authorities in northern as well as southern parts of the nation to largely ignore the court's ruling and thus maintain racially segregated schools. In brief, federal authority on educational matters was limited because local and sub-national authorities were historically positioned as the primary power-brokers. Nonetheless, the relative success of indirect educational actions in the legal realm paved the path for influential forms of direct educational action to be mobilized by civil rights activists after 1954, such as through occupations, sit-ins, and marches. These direct actions effectively turned the educational system into a primary battleground in the broader Black struggle for racial justice and equality in American society. Direct action forced educational authorities in school districts across the country to take up a publicly visible position that was either in compliance or in violation of a newly mandated federal law, thus effectively linking other sets of political actors and allies up to the field of Black struggle in education.

In short, indirect pathways of inter-institutional action via the legal system paved the path for direct forms of contentious action to be wielded because it gave their claims considerable political and legal weight. Effective use of disruptive direct actions eventually allowed social movement actors to gain increased support from broader sectors of society, such as the Democratic Party, progressive Whites and many mainstream news media outlets. When coupled with effective organizing and strategizing by Black activists and their allies, this broad-based public pressure allowed the social movement to more fully penetrate the institutional boundaries of the educational system and attain increased influence. Although problems of institutionalized racism and segregation persist in the U.S. today, the battles fought by the Black Civil Rights Movement during the 1940-60s created important opportunities for future generations of racial justice activists and campaigns to mobilize empowering forms of infra-institutional action from within the educational system.

The main characteristic of this pathway is that reform initiatives originate from within established social movement organizations

with the primary aim of targeting and penetrating educational institutions. It is distinguishable from infra-institutional pathways largely because the agents of reform are structurally positioned as 'outsiders' with little to no legitimate direct leverage on processes of educational governance and decision-making. They must thus use the tools of mobilization and disruption to attempt to attain influence. Celina Su's work (2009) on student activism and organizing in New York City offers further insight into this type of pathway. Through ethnographic investigation, she explores how parents and students from minority and working class neighborhoods worked to improve the quality of education in city schools by linking up with grassroots social movement organizations.

Extra-Institutional Pathways: Working on the outside

'Extra-institutional' pathways of action are comprised of movement-based practices that emerge from outside of an existing educational system, and which operate largely on the outside of the schools, but nonetheless exert some degree of indirect influence upon the educational system. This pathway is perhaps best illustrated through the development of various kinds of 'after-school' programs and activities that work directly with students and educators in order to directly engage members of the educational community with social movement agendas, such as combating issues of racism and poverty. Extra-institutional pathways often lead to the creation of organizational entities that have varying degrees of proximity to existing schools, and which may or may not become formally recognized and supported by established educational authorities.

On the one hand, extra-institutional pathways of action can lead to the creation of initiatives that operate as a direct extension of an established school/university and may even rely on direct forms of material support from this institution. These kinds of pathways can often operate in a close relation to existing educational programs, particularly when they are not perceived as too 'radical' or threatening by established educational authorities. This type of initiative can be seen in the kinds of after-school programs developed by social movement activists in urban areas that are

focused on combatting problems of poverty, substance abuse, criminality and gang violence. The actors behind initiatives in places such as New York City or Rio de Janeiro are often community organizers who work to create after-school programs that are designed to 'keep kids safe and off the streets' by providing them with supplemental academic lessons, sports, games or other 'positive' social activities.⁹ While such programs seek to provide a form of 'sanctuary' for youths, they also often entail activities that educate minority and disenfranchised youths about issues of structural inequality and which encourage young people to take on a more active role in addressing the problems afflicting in their communities, such as through community gardening programs or collaborative documentary film projects.¹⁰ Because issues of structural inequality may often not be effectively addressed by local schools, the value of such after-school programs is significant. The work of Ginwright and Cammarota (2007), for instance, has shown how some urban youth programs can lead to the creation of solidaristic bonds among groups of adolescents and young adults in ways that stimulate more enduring forms of "critical civic praxis", which then lead to further "engagement with ideas, social networks, and experiences that build individual and collective capacity to struggle for social justice" (2017:693).

Another example of extra-institutional pathways can be seen in various types of evening or weekend workshops that are organized by activists in order to help teachers and educational practitioners to find ways to align their pedagogical activities with social movement agendas, such as LGBTQ+ rights, feminism and anti-

⁹ For examples, see: Bartlett, L. (2007). The comparative ethnography of educational projects: youth and adult literacy programmes in Brazil. *Compare*, 37(2), 151-166; Noam, G. G., Biancarosa, G., & Dechausay, N. (2002). *Afterschool education: Approaches to an emerging field*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

¹⁰ For an overview discussion, see: Akiva, T., Carey, R. Brown Cross, A, Delale-O'Connor and Brown (2017) Reasons youth engage in activism programs: Social justice or sanctuary? *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 53:20-30.

racism. This is nicely illustrated, for instance, by the wide range of workshops, training activities and resources developed by activists and community organizers linked to the Center for Racial Justice in Education in New York City. As noted in a description of one of their actions: "In this flagship training, educators strengthen their analysis of how racism manifests in schools and classrooms, enhance their understanding of how racism affects children, practice utilizing tools to address race and racism with students, and gain strategies to support a school-wide culture of respect, equity, and inclusivity."¹¹ Hence, while the work of this organization is based outside of local schools and takes place when school is out of session, by working with students and teachers it nonetheless seeks to have an impact on what happens within schools.

On the other hand, under some conditions, extra-institutional pathways can lead to the development of initiatives that operate at a strategic distance from existing schools/universities, and lack the overt aim to directly influence educational activities within schools. This can be illustrated, for example, in after-school programs developed by women's rights groups in regions of sub-Saharan Africa where there are strict taboos on issues of teaching about female sexuality or reproductive rights in the educational system. In these settings, activist groups often work to build empowering forms of extra-curricular education that address issues of sexual health and sexualized violence for adolescent girls and young women.¹² By providing information and knowledge on 'taboo' issues of sexuality from a feminist perspective, these extra-institutional educational programs help young students to cultivate

¹¹ See, <https://centerracialjustice.org/trainings/>.

¹² See, for instance: James, S., Reddy, P., Ruiter, R. A., McCauley, A., & Borne, B. V. D. (2006). The impact of an HIV and AIDS life skills program on secondary school students in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *AIDS Education & Prevention*, 18(4), 281-294; Kalembo, F. W., Zgambo, M., & Yukai, D. (2013). Effective adolescent sexual and reproductive health education programs in sub-Saharan Africa. *Californian Journal of Health Promotion*, 11(2), 32-42; Kirby, D. B., Laris, B. A., & Roller, L. A. (2007). Sex and HIV education programs: Their impact on sexual behaviors of young people throughout the world. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40(3), 206-217.

an awareness of, as well as a relationship to various kinds of social movement activities and agendas that they might not otherwise be aware of, thus promoting the expansion of movement-based identities and networks.

Para-Institutional Pathways: Building alternatives

'Para-institutional' pathways refer to movement-based practices that emerge on the outside of pre-existing educational systems, and which seek to develop alternative educational programs that operate in a parallel but yet distinctively critical relationship to 'mainstream' sites of education. This is to say that para-institutional pathways lead to the creation of comprehensive educational programs that are grounded in an overt critique of the relative 'failings' and 'inadequacies' of established educational programs and policies. Para-institutional pathways are perhaps best illustrated by organized and enduring forms of collective action that lead to the development of alternative 'community-based' schools (Clothey and Heidemann 2019). These kinds of schools often develop and carry out their educational activities in ways that purposefully align with broader-level social movement agendas, such as social justice and environmental sustainability. Community-based schools typically operate in ways that seek to position local citizens and community members as both the architects and benefactors of educational programs. In this light, community-based schools are deeply rooted within, responsive to, and oriented toward the political, economic, cultural and historical realities of the social environment within which a given school is located.

Para-institutional pathways of action tend to emerge where and when grassroots actors have deemed infra- or inter-institutional pathways to be either impossible or ineffective due to the powers wielded by established educational authorities in denying them access. Para-institutional pathways of action are most likely to surface in educational systems that display some degree of decentralization because in order for alternative 'parallel' schools to formally operate they usually require some form of legal certification by educational authorities. In other words,

decentralized educational systems tend to afford better opportunities for para-institutional pathways of action. Indeed, the increasing forms of decentralization exhibited in educational systems around the world over the past several decades have correlated directly with a global increase in community-based schools (Clothey and Heidemann 2019). Para-institutional pathways of action can frequently utilize the institutional realm of private education as a strategic niche to build alternative schools. However, this is not always or even most frequently the case.

A good example of para-institutional pathways of educational action can be seen in the cooperative schooling movement that emerged in Argentina during the early 2000s (Heidemann 2019). At the turn of the 21st century, a large-scale meltdown of the Argentine economy and corresponding breakdown of the political system reached a threshold when people of many diverse walks of life merged with established social movements and labor unions in a wave of protest so as to voice their grievances and demand solutions. As these protests played out from the grassroots of Argentine society, they quickly spilled over into the educational sector and fostered demands for education reform rooted in the logics of para-institutional activism. Underlying these grassroots actions was a commitment to promote stronger and more systematic forms of community control and participation in local schools. At the center of these actions, were convictions about the importance of building alternative schools based upon principles of 'solidarity', 'cooperativism', 'self-determination' and 'democratization'. Echoing many of the claims and narratives of progressive social movements in Argentina during the 2000s, these transformative principles sought to use schools as weapons in a combat against endemic problems of social inequality, precarity and exclusion. In short, people sought to transform schools into vehicles of progressive change and empowerment.

As many educational services and resources in Argentina began to collapse as a consequence of the economic crisis during the early 2000s, a small but influential network of educators, parents and social movement activists across various rural and urban parts of the country worked to transform a debilitating moment of crisis

into an empowering opportunity for grassroots education reform. Often working in tandem with social movement organizations and civic associations based within poor and working class neighborhoods, these networks of actors engaged in the hard work of transforming dozens of local schools into alternative sites of community-based education. The unique network of community-based schools that would eventually emerge from these concerted grassroots efforts would ultimately gain formal recognition as a new type of school by the Argentine Ministry of National Education in 2006, known as *escuelas de gestion social y escuelas cooperativas*. In the span of just a few short years, the educational landscape in Argentina was transformed by the determined efforts of engaged citizens working in conjunction with broader-level social movements in order to democratize the educational system 'from below'.

Despite the contextual nuances of the Argentine case discussed here, para-institutional pathways of reform linked to community-based schooling initiatives have been documented by scholars in many other parts of the world, including Brazil (Tarlau 2015), El Salvador (Edwards 2019), Hungary (Timmer 2019), Spain (Delgado 2014), the United States (Rofes and Stulberg 2004), and Zambia (Bamattre 2019). Although each setting displays distinctive relations to broader sets of social movements and specific educational visions, they all tell a story that clearly exemplifies a situation of grassroots actors working collectively to build alternative educational institution that exists in a decisively critical but parallel institutional relationship to 'mainstream' schools, *i.e.* a para-institutional pathway.

Problematics of social movement-driven reforms

When social movement actors do manage to 'break through' the institutional boundaries of educational systems, and gain a presence within the arena of educational governance, then they face a wide variety challenges and obstacles in the pursuit of movement-based reform agendas. Before concluding, I thus briefly address two such problematics- *stalling* and *cooptation*- in the

hopes that these themes can be explored further in future scholarship.

One common problem faced by social movement-led reform initiatives is that of 'stalling'. This refers to forms of bureaucratic obstruction that are purposefully deployed by educational authorities in order to keep the presence of social movement agendas 'frozen' in a context of political 'limbo' for extended periods of time. While antagonistic educational authorities may rhetorically acknowledge the validity of a movement-based reform initiative and assure grassroots reformers that the issue is 'under discussion', they can easily invoke techniques of stalling in order to persistently delay the implementation of any substantive changes. The bureaucratic complexity and myriad layers of governance that often characterize many state-based educational systems can make stalling a very easy and appealing tactic of obstruction for educational gate-keepers who perceive particular types of movement-based reform agendas as 'threatening' or 'radical'.

Another common obstacle faced by social movement actors in educational settings is 'cooptation'. This basically refers to a situation whereby educational authorities are willing to acknowledge the validity of movement-based claims and agree to carry out relevant reforms, but in the act of implementation key aspects of the reform agenda are effectively neutralized or 'watered down' so as to minimize any majorly disruptive or transformative impact on the educational system.

Conclusion

In this article, I have merged the study of social movements with educational policy studies in order to theorize social movement actors as agents of educational change and reform. Drawing on neo-institutionalist strands of social movement theory, I offered an analytical heuristic for mapping out four distinctive pathways through which social movement actors seek to impact educational systems 'from below': infra-institutional, inter-institutional, extra-institutional and para-institutional. In each section, I referred to some representative cases in order to illustrate key characteristics

of different pathways. My primary aim in discussing these pathways was to help promote a more cohesive global and comparative research agenda that considers social movement-actors as significant agents of educational reform and change. A neo-institutionalist focus on 'pathways' is useful for analyzing movement-based processes of educational action because it can allow scholars to understand how social movement actors navigate and engage with the institutional contours of educational systems in strategic ways. Only when we understand the practices through which social movement actors try to penetrate the 'thick' institutional boundaries of educational systems in order attain a strategic presence and influence, can we then move on to theorize the actual impacts and outcomes of these actions.

Finally, it should be stressed that the four pathways presented in my discussion should be treated neither as an exhaustive list of possibilities, nor as being mutually exclusive from one another. With more research and exploration, future scholarship is quite likely to show the existence of other kinds of pathways. Moreover, it is not hard to imagine how the four different pathways of education reform presented in my discussion can easily overlap and reinforce one another when different sets of social movement actors collectively target an educational system, albeit from different positions in society. Indeed, it would be fruitful for forthcoming scholarship to examine the intersectionality of diverse pathways and the potentially empowering effects yielded by these intersections for social movements.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the editors and anonymous reviewers at Confero for providing useful constructive feedback on the original draft of this article.

References

- Andrews, K. T. (2002). Movement-counter-movement dynamics and the emergence of new institutions: The case of “white flight” schools in Mississippi. *Social Forces*, 80(3), 911-936.
- Anyon, J. (2009). Progressive social movements and educational equity. *Educational Policy*, 23(1), 194-215.
- Apple, M. (2004 [1979]) *Ideology and Curriculum*. 3rd Edition. London: Routledge.
- Armstrong, E. and Bernstein, M. (2008). Culture, power, and institutions: A multi-institutional politics approach to social movements. *Sociological Theory*, 26(1), 74-99.
- Arnone, R. and Torres, C.A. [eds.] *Comparative Education. The Dialectic of the Global and the Local*, Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Ball, S. (1994). *Education Reform*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Bamattre, R. (2019) “Between state and society: Community schools in Zambia” in Clothey, R. and Heidemann, K. [eds] *Another Way: Decentralization, Democratization and the Global Politics of Community-Based Schooling*. (Rotterdam: Brill-Sense).
- Bannerji, H., Carty, L., Dehli, K., Heald, S., and McKenna, K.. (1991) *Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site of Feminist Struggles*. (Boston: South End Press).
- Barrenechea, I., Beech, J. and Rivas, A. (2022). How can education system improve? A systematic literature review. *Journal of Educational Change*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-022-09453-7>
- Binder, A. (2002) *Contentious Curricula: Afrocentrism and Creationism in American Public Schools*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bonal, X., Rambla, F. X., Calderón, E., & Pros, N. (2005). *La descentralización educativa en España: Una mirada comparativa a los sistemas escolares de las comunidades autónomas*. Barcelona: Fundació Carles Pi i Sunyer.
- Bosi, L., Giugni, M. & Uba, K. (2016) *The Consequences of Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Bray, M. (2007) "Control of education: Issues and tensions in centralization and decentralization" in Arnove, R. and Torres, C.A. [eds.] *Comparative Education: The dialectic of the global and the local*, Third Edition. New York: Rowan and Littlefield.
- Brint, S. (2006) *Schools and Societies*. 2nd Edition. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Cahnmann, M., & Varghese, M. M. (2005). Critical advocacy and bilingual education in the United States. *Linguistics and Education*, 16(1), 59-73.
- Carnoy, M., and Rhoten, D. (2002). What does globalization mean for educational change? A comparative approach. *Comparative Education Review*, 46(1), 1-9.
- Choudry, A. (2015) *Learning Activism: The intellectual life of contemporary social movements*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Clothey, R. and Heidemann, K. [Eds.] (2019) *Another Way: Decentralization, Democratization and the Global Politics of Community-Based Schooling*. (Rotterdam: Brill-Sense).
- Crawford, J. (2000) *At war with diversity: US language policy in an age of anxiety*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Dale, R. (2005). Globalisation, Knowledge Economy and Comparative Education. *Comparative education*, 41(2), 117-149.
- Delgado, A. (2014) Co-operatives and education in the Basque Country: The ikastolas in the final years of Franco's dictatorship. *History of Education*, 43(5), 676-90.
- Earl, J. (2000). Tanks, tear gas and taxes: Toward a theory of movement repression. *Sociological Theory*, 21(1) 44-68.
- Edwards, B. (2019) "Accountability through community-based management? Implications from the local-level implementation in El Salvador of a globally popular model" in Clothey, R. and Heidemann, K. [eds] *Another Way: Decentralization, Democratization and the Global Politics of Community-Based Schooling*. Rotterdam: Brill-Sense.
- Fligstein, N. and McAdam, D. (2012) *A theory of fields*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Ginsburg, M. B. (1991). *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context: Economy, ideology, and the state*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Giugni, M. (1998). Was it worth the effort? The outcomes and consequences of social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 371-393.
- Guzman-Concha, C. (2012) The Students' Rebellion in Chile: Occupy Protest or Classic Social Movement? *Social Movement Studies*, 11(3-4):408-415.
- Hanson, M. (2001). Institutional Theory and Educational Change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 37(5), 637-661.
- Heidemann, K. (2014). In the Name of Language: School-based language revitalization, strategic solidarities, and state power in the French Basque Country. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 13(1), 53-69.
- Heidemann, K. and Clothey, R. (2019) "Community-based schooling and the intersectional politics of centralization and decentralization" in Clothey, R. and Heidemann, K. [eds] *Another way: Decentralization, Democratization and the global politics of community-based schooling*. Rotterdam: Brill.
- Horn, G. R. (2017). "1968: a social movement sui generis" in Berger, S. and Nehring, H. [eds], *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective* (pp. 515-541). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Horsford, S., and Vasquez Heilig, J. (2014). Community-based education reform in urban contexts: Implications for leadership, policy, and accountability. *Urban Education*, 49(8), 867-870.
- Hytten, K., & Bettez, S. C. (2011). Understanding education for social justice. *Educational foundations*, 25, 7-24.
- Isaac, L. Jacobs, A., Kucinkas, J. and McGrath (2019) Social movements schools: Sites for conscious transformation, training and prefigurative social development. *Social Movement Studies*, 2:160-182.
- Loewen, J. (1995) *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything American History Textbooks Get Wrong*. (New York: The New Press).
- McGinn N., and Walsh, T. (1999) *Decentralization of education: Why, when and how?* Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Meyer, J., Ramirez, F., and Soysal, Y. (1992). World expansion of mass education, 1870-1980. *Sociology of Education*, 1:128-149.

- Meyer, D. (2004). Protest and Political Opportunities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30:125-145.
- Meyer, D., and Boutcher, S. (2007). Signals and Spillover: Brown v. Board of Education and other social movements. *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(1):81-93.
- Morley, L., and Walsh, V. (Eds.). (1996). *Breaking Boundaries: Women in higher education*. (New York: Taylor & Francis).
- Morrow, R. and Torres, C.A. (2007) "The State, Social Movements and Education Reform" in Arnove, R. and Torres, C.A. [Eds.] *Comparative Education: The Dialectic of the Global and the Local*. (New York: Rowan and Littlefield).
- Niesz, T., Korora, A. M., Walkuski, C. B., & Foot, R. E. (2018). Social movements and educational research: Toward a united field of scholarship. *Teachers College Record*, 120(3), 1-41.
- Oakes, J., and Lipton, M. (2002). Struggling for educational equity in diverse communities: School reform as social movement. *Journal of Educational Change*, 3(3), 383-406.
- Powell, W. and DiMaggio. (1991). *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rofes, E. and Stulberg, L. (2004) *The emancipatory promise of charter schools: Toward a progressive politics of school choice*, Albany: SUNY Press.
- Schneiberg, M., and Lounsbury, M. (2008). "Social movements and institutional analysis". In Greenwood, R., Oliver, C., Sahlin, K. and Suddaby, R. [Eds.], *The Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, pp. 648- 670. (Thousand Oaks: Sage).
- Shirley, D. (1997) *Community organizing for urban school reform*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Skrentny, J. (2006). Policy-Elite Perceptions and Social Movement Success: Understanding variations in group inclusion in affirmative action. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(6), 1762-1815.
- Smith, J. and Wiest, D. (2012) *Social movements in the world system. The politics of crisis and transformation*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Snow, D., Soule, S. and Kriesi, H [eds] (2004). *The Blackwell companion to social movements*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Spring, J. (2009) *Globalization of Education: An Introduction*. New York:Routledge.

- Stromquist, N. P., and Monkman, K. (Eds.). (2014). *Globalization and Education: Integration and contestation across cultures*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Su, C. (2009) *Streetwise for booksmarts: Grassroots organizing and education reform in the Bronx*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Tarlau, R. (2015). Not-so-public contention: Movement strategies, regimes, and the transformation of public institutions in Brazil. *Mobilization*, 20(1), 101-121.
- Tarrow, S. (1998) *Power in movement. Social movements and contentious politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Timmer, A. (2019) "Decentralization, centralization and minority education in Hungary" in Clothey, R. and Heidemann, K. [eds] *Another Way: Decentralization, Democratization and the Global Politics of Community-Based Schooling*. Rotterdam: Brill-Sense.
- Van Zanten, A., and Robert, A. (2000). " Plus ca Change..."? Changes and Continuities in Education Policy in France. *Journal of Education Policy*, 15(1), 1-4.
- Warren, M. and Mapp, K. (2011) *A match on dry grass: Community organizing as a catalyst for school reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Willaime, J. P. (2007). "Different models for religion and education in Europe", pp.57-66 in Jackson, R. Miedema, S., Weisse, W., and Willaime, J.P. [eds] *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*. Berlin: Waxman.
- Zhao, D. (1998). Ecologies of social movements: Student mobilization during the 1989 prodemocracy movement in Beijing. *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(6), 1493-1529.

Kai Heidemann is an assistant professor of sociology at Maastricht University, the Netherlands, where he works at University College Maastricht. His work is located at the intersection of social movement studies and the political sociology of education.

The terms and conditions of use are related to Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 