© Academy of Management Journal
2022, Vol. 65, No. 6, 1775–1803.
https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2019.0769

ADVANCING REFORM: EMBEDDED ACTIVISM TO DEVELOP CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

TODD SCHIFELING
Temple University

SARA SODERSTROM
University of Michigan

Activists increasingly seek to influence organizations that also espouse support for social movement goals, encouraging the use of collaborative tactics. While there has been growing research on insider activists who import social movement resources, little is known about how internal activism might operate through a coordinated and collaborative approach with external social movement organizations, which we refer to as embedded activism. Likewise, collaborative activists encounter organizations with a wide range of prior reform experience, and the resulting "opportunity structure" for collaboration is not well understood. We investigate how a network of embedded activists can operate to advance reform efforts across diverse organizations. Our analysis combines surveys, interviews, and archival records from the Environmental Defense Fund's Climate Corps program, which embeds graduate students in partner organizations to advance climate change reforms. Embedded activists accomplish this work by matching external resources with the organizational context in order to generate a fertile mixture of support and ambiguity and create new solutions. External resources are especially important for organizations that are at the extremes of prior issue development.

Social movement scholarship has evolved from studying protests against state actors to the use of contentious tactics to challenge recalcitrant private sector organizations (Baron & Diermeier, 2007; Soule, 2009). At the same time, there is a growing trend for corporations to espouse support for goals such as sustainability, social responsibility, and equal rights (Dauvergne & Lister, 2013; Dobbin, 2009; McDonnell, 2016; McDonnell, King, & Soule, 2015). This convergence between the stated goals of progressive social movements and corporations creates new opportunities for collaboration. Much of this work has taken the form of cross-sector initiatives that focus on externally oriented changes, like certifications and statements of principles (de Bakker, Rasche, & Ponte, 2019; Gray & Purdy, 2018) that involve the effort of social movement organizations (SMOs), which are "organizations that identify their goals with the preferences of a social movement" (McCarthy & Zald, 1977: 1218). SMOs also have many collaborative initiatives to drive internal reforms, but not enough is known about how these initiatives operate, as "the collaborative repertoire of modern SMOs continues to be grossly undertheorized within the study of social movements in markets" (McDonnell, Odziemkowska, & Pontikes, 2021: 3).

Research on internal change processes, such as internal activism, intrapreneurship, and issue selling, has illuminated how employees bring their social movement affiliations with them into organizations (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; Georgallis, 2017; Weber & Waeger, 2017). These external identities often inspire the concerns of internal activists who operate as "tempered radicals" (Bansal, 2003; Meyerson & Scully, 1995), and they also gain legitimacy by importing

We thank the AMJ reviewers for their constructive and thought-provoking comments, and especially Senior Editor Jennifer Howard-Grenville for her guidance throughout the review process. We are also grateful for the invaluable feedback from participants of the GRONEN Reading Group, seminars at the Erb Institute, Center for Positive Organizations, Ross Strategy, as well as AOM, ARCS, and GRONEN conferences. We thank Panikos Georgallis, Ravi Kudesia, Elisa Alt, Sue Ashford, Kate Odziemkowska, Maddy Ong, Brent McKnight, and Katrin Heucher for their feedback and guidance. This work was enabled by Environmental Defense Fund Climate Corps leaders, fellows, and hosts, and especially Ellen Shenette. Rob Luzynski, Christina Donovan, and Chantelle Barretto provided excellent research assistance. This research was financially supported by the Graham Institute and the Erb Institute at the University of Michigan and EDF.

outside frames and status into their organizations (Gehman, Treviño, & Garud, 2013; Heinze & Weber, 2016; Kellogg, 2011). More recently, scholars have found that social movements infuse internal activists with critical resources needed to contest organizations' practices, including exemplars, templates for action, implementation practices, and emotional support (Buchter, 2020; DeJordy, Scully, Ventresca, & Creed, 2020). This work challenges the common depiction of internal activists as operating independently from SMOs, motivating our research into how activists linked to collaborative SMOs push internal reforms across diverse partner organizations.

Whereas prior research has focused on internal or external activism (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016), collaborative activism that spans these boundaries operates through a form of activism that we theorize as embedded. Spanning across SMO and partner organizations enables embedded activists to develop trust, information sharing, and problem-solving (Buchter, 2020; DeJordy et al., 2020; Uzzi, 1996). Embedded activists are well positioned to match external resources with internal change opportunities at partner organizations. We focus on an important way that embedded activists can advance reforms by introducing new solutions, a component of issue selling (Dutton, 1988). The creation of solutions is important because reform efforts are more successful when there are actionable choices available (Alt & Craig, 2016; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001), and seeding an organization with more solutions will tend to increase actions (Bansal, 2003; Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). Solutions also represent strategic resources that activists can use to push for greater action on an issue (Buchter, 2020).

In addition, organizations vary considerably in their prior engagement with activist issues and in their openness to activist influence (Briscoe, Chin, & Hambrick, 2014; Crilly, Zollo, & Hansen, 2012; Darnall, Henriques, & Sadorsky, 2010; McDonnell et al., 2015; Sandhu & Kulik, 2018). Drawing on proactivity and related research, we theorize how these factors shape a core tension for embedded activists between organizational support, which provides resources to act, and issue ambiguity, which provides opportunities to act. Activists are constrained by the organization's prior issue development (Andersson & Bateman, 2000; Bansal, 2003; Howard-Grenville, 2007; Wickert & de Bakker, 2018), and they also struggle to amass resources needed to formulate effective change proposals, which are scarce for issues that are still emerging in an organization (Heinze & Weber, 2016; Howard-Grenville, 2007). Consequently, organizational support, in terms of positive issue understandings, should act like a fertilizer that boosts the growth of change initiatives (Morrison, 2011). On the other hand, support can also reduce ambiguity, which deprives activists of the latitude to develop new issue understandings (Gioia, Nag, & Corley, 2012; Sillince, Jarzabkowski, & Shaw, 2012; Sonenshein, 2016). As an organization engages positively with an issue, it can shift from a condition of fertile ambiguity (e.g., what should we do about this issue?) to one of constraining routine (e.g., this is how we do this work) (Risi & Wickert, 2017; Sandhu & Kulik, 2018). The more organizational support for an issue, the more elaborate the organizational frameworks around the issue and the less space there may be for activists to develop the issue. Organizational scale also affects this balance as larger organizations tend to have more formalized policies for dealing with an issue but also a greater range of issue understandings across the organization, while smaller organizations may have less resources and expertise on newer issues but also stronger consensus and vision (Crilly et al., 2012; Sandhu & Kulik, 2018; Weber & Waeger, 2017).

Because of this, we would expect embedded activism to operate differently across varying "opportunity structures," which refer to aspects of the organization's structure and culture that enable activist influence (cf. Kellogg, 2011; King, 2008; Schurman, 2004). As the prevailing theory of opportunity structures is based on contentious tactics, we develop a novel framework for collaborative opportunities based on the tension between support and ambiguity. We also contend that the external environment is an under-appreciated but crucial element for navigating this tension. In developing these arguments, we build on the idea that there is a "complex interplay between external environment and internal organization" in order to explore how embedded activists draw on movement resources to propel changes in particular organizational contexts (Crilly et al., 2012: 1431; cf. Weber & Waeger, 2017). Advancing the growing evidence on the rich interchange between social movements and organizations, we investigate how embedded activism can encourage reforms in organizations that have well-established programs in an issue area as well as in organizations that are new to the issue.

We develop this research through studying a prominent program by a collaborative SMO to promote reforms within organizations, the Environmental Defense Fund's (EDF) Climate Corps. Through this program, EDF has constructed a network to advance climate change reforms across business, nonprofit, government, and education sectors, totaling over 764

projects at 394 organizations from 2008 to 2016 (Delaney, 2017). For each project, EDF sends a graduate student fellow to work on energy projects at the host organization and provides extensive support, including technical guidance, tactical insights, and motivation. We conceptualize the fellows as embedded activists who span the boundaries between EDF and its partner organizations. Although all the host organizations have enlisted in the program, they also bring considerable variance in prior issue development. We take advantage of the diversity of organizations involved to study how embedded activists integrate external resources from EDF to create new solutions for their host organizations, revealing how external practices and internal organizational contexts combine to generate outcomes (cf. Crilly et al., 2012; Kellogg, 2009; Weber & Waeger, 2017).

To analyze this combination of factors, we develop a fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) of the creation of new solutions, and we integrate qualitative data to better understand the resulting configurations. fsQCA is suited to studying how combinations of conditions (e.g., organizational contexts and external resources) produce an outcome (Fiss, 2011; Greckhamer, Furnari, Fiss, & Aguilera, 2018; Ragin, 2008). It also enables us to study equifinality and causal asymmetry, where different configurations explain the outcome and its inverse. The results illuminate how Climate Corps fellows navigate their roles as embedded activists across diverse organizational contexts and leverage external resources in different ways to create new solutions.

The findings contribute to multiple literatures. We develop research on social movements and organizations by investigating how embedded activism, a coordinated and collaborative form of activism, can work to promote internal reforms at diverse organizations. This direction transcends existing frameworks that divide activists between insiders and outsiders (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016) and integrates research on issue selling and proactivity to better understand how external social movements use collaboration to influence internal change dynamics. We also complement prior research on contentious tactics by theorizing the opportunity structure for collaborative activism. In doing so, we highlight a key tension in organizational support for internal change initiatives, showing how support both enables and constrains these initiatives. Further, we uncover the contributions of external ties to managing this tension, which have been little considered in relevant research like issue selling (Lauche, 2019). In illuminating a common problem of change agents—balancing resources to act (from support) with opportunities to act (from ambiguity)—we contribute to a growing debate about the role of ambiguity in proactivity research more broadly (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Griffin & Grote, 2020; Lim, Tai, Bamberger, & Morrison, 2020). Our analyses also extend recent efforts to better situate proactivity dynamics in organizational contexts (Bindl & Parker, 2017; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018; Li & Tangirala, 2020). In addition, we provide insights into the dynamics that can help organizations make progress on the urgent issue of climate change (Ansari, Gray, & Wijen, 2011; Nyberg & Wright, 2020).

EMBEDDED ACTIVISM: SOCIAL MOVEMENT ENGAGEMENT TO ADVANCE INTERNAL REFORM EFFORTS

Organizational scholars study how social movements influence organizations through both external challengers and internal organizational members (Georgallis, 2017; Weber & Waeger, 2017). In reviewing this literature, Briscoe and Gupta (2016) argued that because of their different positions, outsider activists are able to more aggressively challenge targets, while insider activists have greater knowledge of the organizational polity and how to drive change but are constrained by their dependence on the organization. Reflecting these conditions, insider activists "mostly focus on their persuasion and educational efforts," which include framing, internal lobbying, issue selling, and building internal coalitions (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016: 691; cf. DeCelles, Sonenshein, & King, 2020; Soderstrom & Weber, 2020).

While studies of internal activism have typically focused on how these change processes play out within organizations, keeping external movements in the background, there is also growing evidence of interaction and coordination with external SMOs. External activists can passively influence this work by creating frames and identities that internal activists later import (Bansal, 2003; Heinze & Weber, 2016; Kellogg, 2011). Recent research on human rights activism has documented the active effort by external activists to motivate internal activists and infuse them with strategic resources to advance reforms (Buchter, 2020; DeJordy et al., 2020). DeJordy and colleagues (2020) have summarized the rich back-and-forth interactions they observed as follows:

> Employees and social movement organizers may operate at once both inside and outside organizations. As insiders, employees experiment with tactics that they may borrow from, or may pass on to, activists in other organizations . . . activism shapes the change

> effort between and through organizations, not just in and around them. (5)

Likewise, Buchter (2020) showed how external SMOs provided specific implementation practices for LGBTQ reforms that were critical to internal activists' tactics: internal activists used negative reactions to these implementation practices (either refusals to implement or bigoted responses) to challenge organizational claims of supporting equality. These findings point to the need for further research on how SMOs influence internal activist processes. In particular, we seek to understand how embedded activism, which entails collaborative SMOs crossing movement–partner boundaries to influence internal reforms, works across diverse organizations.

Understanding such collaborative activism requires rethinking "opportunity structures," a central concept in the literature on social movements and organizations. Previous research on corporate opportunity structures for activism has presumed contentious tactics and found that activism is more successful for targets that are more subject to shaming because of their prominence and reliance on consumer-facing brands (Bartley & Child, 2014; King, 2008; McDonnell & King, 2013). However, different factors are likely to matter with collaborative tactics because the mechanisms of influence differ. Whereas contentious activists threaten losses to targets, such as reputational damage and operational disruption, collaborative activists offer rewards to their partners, such as reputational enhancement and operational gains (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007). For embedded activism and other collaborative approaches, we argue that the opportunity structure concerns the partner organization's prior history of engagement with an issue and its accumulation of issue-specific resources, which shape the terrain for activists to use persuasion to expand reforms.

We integrate research on organizational proactivity and issue selling to theorize how embedded activism operates across varying organizational contexts. The proactivity literature studies processes where organizational members are "taking control to make things happen rather than watching things happen. It involves aspiring and striving to bring about change in the environment and/or oneself to achieve a different future" (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010: 828). These processes include issue selling, which refers to "individuals' behaviors that are directed toward affecting others' attention to and understanding of issues" (Dutton & Ashford, 1993: 398). Issue selling matches a collaborative approach to influence organizations through persuasion rather than disruption (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016). Persuasive tactics like issue selling are meaning-making practices that are deeply contextualized within organizations (Alt & Craig, 2016; Howard-Grenville, 2007; Sonenshein, 2016; Wickert & de Bakker, 2018). Existing organizational schemas determine how actions are understood and evaluated: attempts at issue selling must "enact the schemas of recipients so they attend to and act on new issues" (Howard-Grenville, 2007: 572). This context structures the opportunities for collaborative approaches to activism, particularly in terms of the partner organization's balance of support and ambiguity.

A key challenge for issue selling work is the development of positive issue understandings within an organization. Issue selling requires expertise in an issue to make an effective case for the issue meriting attention and action (Dutton et al., 2001; Howard-Grenville, 2007; Sonenshein, DeCelles, & Dutton, 2014; Wickert & de Bakker, 2018). It is not enough to be passionate about the topic; fitting the issue with the organizational context involves mastering the details about how desired reforms relate to the organization's practices and priorities (Bansal, 2003). The development of solutions is especially important: "many social issue selling initiatives fail because of the lack of a viable solution (Bansal, 2003; Howard-Grenville, 2007), showing the importance of theorizing on how solutions may be crafted to effectively promote selling success" (Alt & Craig, 2016: 795). However, the bottom-up nature of issue selling implies that this knowledge is often not available within the organization and must be somehow created or sourced. Howard-Grenville (2007: 574) summarized the challenge that can exist even in an organization with top-level issue endorsement: "The dilemma for issue sellers is how to advance [their] issues in an organizational context in which the dominant meanings and norms may blind others to the issues, their consequences, and the value in addressing them." These disconnects may lead to perceptions of an unsupportive organizational context, which discourages issue selling (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Morrison, 2011).

However, organizational support in the form of positive issue understandings can also hinder issue selling because it reduces ambiguity about how to develop an issue, which restricts creativity. We adopt Weick's (1995; as cited in Lingo & O'Mahony, 2010: 52) definition of ambiguity as "'an on-going stream that supports several different meanings at the same time,' when 'multiple . . . explanations are plausible.'" When organizations develop commitments, frameworks, and other positive issue understandings, they also define the issue and the appropriate schemas for

dealing with it, reducing ambiguity. In contrast, when an organization has little prior experience with an issue, there are many different plausible directions for issue development (Deken, Berends, Gemser, & Lauche, 2018; Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2018). In these contexts, embedded activists are less constrained by organizational expectations, consistent with Grant and Ashford's analysis of ambiguity as "a weak situation rather than a strong situation. In weak situations, individuals feel less pressure from the environment to think, feel, and act in a prescribed manner" (Grant & Ashford, 2008: 15). This lack of constraint can empower activists, as Sonenshein (2016: 356) theorized with the related concept of equivocality: "under conditions of high equivocality, social change agents have a higher level of interpretive discretion to construct the meaning of an issue in strategic and/or variable ways that best support their pursuit of change" (cf. Gioia et al., 2012; Sonenshein, 2014). Likewise, an emerging trend in the broader literature on proactivity has suggested that as a source of uncertainty, ambiguity is valuable because it stimulates curiosity, exploration, and innovation (Griffin & Grote, 2020).

While issue selling initiatives struggle in the absence of prior issue development, such development can also have the unintended consequences of limiting their creativity. For example, pushing reforms to reduce a company's scope 3 carbon emissions, which stem from distant causes like the actions of end users, will only be intelligible to managers that are already well versed on the climate issue. Alternatively, organizations that have built up these understandings may restrict innovative approaches, such as when they direct actions to conform to established protocols. Consequently, there is a tension between support, which creates resources to act, and ambiguity, which provides opportunities to act. In addition, organizational scale affects this tension by influencing the flexibility and distribution of existing issue understandings. For example, larger organizations are likely to have more formalized routines and policies, entrenching not only understandings (Sandhu & Kulik, 2018) but also a greater variety of understandings across a more dispersed workforce (Crilly et al., 2012; Weber & Waeger, 2017), while smaller organizations may have fewer resources and expertise around newer issues but also stronger consensus and vision.

In seeking to advance reforms, embedded activists can draw on external movement resources in different ways to manage these opportunity structures. External collaborators are a vital source of new ideas and perspectives in many other contexts (Deken, Berends, Gemser, & Lauche, 2018; Lauche, 2019; Strike & Rerup, 2016), but how do embedded activists use movement resources to catalyze existing issue understandings within varying organizational contexts? How do these resources combine with the balance of support and ambiguity? In exploring these questions, we aim to generate a theory of embedded activism that considers how organizational and environmental contingencies combine to advance reform (Crilly et al., 2012; Weber & Waeger, 2017).

EMPIRICAL CONTEXT

In order to investigate embedded activism as a coordinated and collaborative form of activism, we study EDF's Climate Corps. EDF is one of the most prominent collaborative SMOs in the United States, with a focus on environmental issues. Through the Climate Corps program, EDF sends graduate student fellows inside partner organizations to help translate the unwieldy and often politicized issue of climate change into actionable responses. EDF acts as a broker as it recruits host organizations and negotiates the initial scope of fellowship work with them, and then, through the fellow, facilitates the transfer of information and expertise from external experts and EDF staff. The program director summarizes its operations: "trained environmental change agents are embedded inside organizations, working from the inside out to identify solutions and build the business case for investment in energy efficiency" (Delaney, 2017: 131). From 2008 to 2016, nearly 400 organizations enlisted over 750 EDF Climate Corps fellows in 10-week projects to design customized solutions to challenges involving energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy strategy. Through this work, "EDF sees a future where fellows continue to evolve, grow, and expand their project work . . . accelerating the pace of change in the energy sector" (Delaney, 2017: 143).

The structure of this program allows unique insights into how embedded activism operates across diverse organizational contexts. Although all host organizations already have some interest in energy reforms, there is considerable variance in prior issue development. Hosts range from multinational corporations with aggressive climate goals and sustainability departments to single unit establishments launching their first initiatives. These comments from an EDF manager capture this variance in prior issue development:

> For example, one of my hosts is very, you know, sustainability is not part of their business. They know that they need to do something with it and they need to report, they have goals that they need to report.

> But otherwise, I don't think there's a ton of buy-in. So, I definitely do think that makes it more difficult for the fellow trying to gather information and just explain what the heck they're doing there because people are like "Wait, what? Why are you collecting energy data? Why are you trying to come up with this model for tracking this?" It's just not something that is in the culture as opposed to a company that's been doing sustainability for years and has publicly stated goals and has 10 people on their energy team.

Consistent with the goals of Climate Corps to expand reform ambitions and our focus on the proactivity of fellows as embedded activists, we aim to understand the creation of new solutions within each project that go beyond the original project plans. The proactive development of solutions is central to the type of issue selling tactics that Climate Corps uses to propel change in partner organizations (Dutton et al., 2001; Howard-Grenville, 2007). EDF managers consistently remarked on how high-achieving fellows uncovered hidden problems and new opportunities. One EDF manager noted that by being proactive, fellows are "discovering something that was overlooked by [hosts] in the first place and bring even more value that way." Reflecting their support for reforms, host supervisors also viewed fellow proactivity as "going beyond" rather than "mission drift." Fellows internalized the pursuit of new solutions for the hosts, as reflected in their goals for their fellowship: "move the company forward on a culture shift . . . to a view that integrates sustainability in business strategy," "to convince [my host] to expand its energy efficiency and sustainability initiatives," and to "help create tangible change by helping implement concrete energy-saving projects, as well as pushing for organizational changes that open the door for future progress."

Organizations are more likely to implement reforms when actionable solutions are available (Alt & Craig, 2016; Bansal, 2003; Dutton, 1988). In a host survey conducted 15 months after the 2016 fellowships completed, EDF found that 93% of the respondents (n = 68 hosts, 31 hosts did not respond) said they used or implemented some or all of the recommendations made by their fellow. In open-ended responses, multiple hosts articulated how the fellows' work helped to advance their climate efforts. One noted, "It truly drove operational changes in a majority of the organization's properties." Another reflected, "The 2016 Fellow's work and final report were very well received within the organization and instrumental in the concepts being considered on a large scale." Non-implementation is commonly due to lack of capital, organizational discord, or departure of the "project champion" (Delaney, 2017: 137).

Solutions also become strategic resources that activists can use to push for greater reforms (Buchter, 2020). By seeding organizations with new solutions, EDF fellows enrich the organizational context with new ideas, enhancing the potential for reform and the scope for future action. As a specific example, one EDF manager reported:

> Our first year working with [a company], we hired a fellow to do basic energy efficiency, just start looking at what investments they could make in lighting, what investments they could make primarily in cooling. The fellow did that and did a really great analysis, but what he really identified is that nothing was systematized . . . So his recommendation was ok, here are some quick and easy things that you could fix, but really the bigger, more attractable problem was how do you get a handle on management, how do you start to build this as an internal unit, as an approach to doing this effectively. And, ultimately, how do you save a company money by doing those. He wasn't tasked with doing that, he just saw it as an opportunity, and since then we've had fellows that have taken that and run with it at [the company] and they're looking more at a portfolio approach to investing in energy management.

Next, we explain our methods for investigating how fellows match movement resources with organizational contexts to develop new solutions.

METHODS

Data

We studied the 2016 cohort of Climate Corps, which encompassed 126 fellows at 99 host organizations. Reflecting the growth and diversity of the program, hosts represented a diverse array of sectors, with 66 companies, 20 government agencies, and the rest nonprofits and higher education organizations. Our data consisted of surveys, interviews, and observations, as well as archival data from EDF, including the initial project proposals from host organizations and the final reports from fellows. These data enabled us to compare how the project evolved in response to the fellow's interactions with the organization and the Climate Corps network. As we explain below, we derived our measure of solution creation from this comparison.

To gather data on movement resources and fellows' experiences, we conducted a survey of the 126 fellows in the 2016 Climate Corps program in three waves at the beginning, middle, and end of their

fellowship. These surveys captured ongoing processes over the course of the projects, minimizing the bias that emerges in reflective interviews. Each survey consisted of 20 close-ended questions, repeated across panels, that asked about resource use and evaluation of the experience. There were also open-ended questions that asked for more details about experiences, tactics, and outcomes (see the Supplemental Materials for survey questions). In order to maximize our sample, we included all 94 fellows (75%) who completed at least one survey. We ensured that there were no significant differences in the variables used in our analysis due to response rate: *t*-tests comparing respondents and non-respondents were null and *F*-tests from ANOVA models comparing each response level were also null.[1] Missing data reduced our sample to 86 fellows. Of the 86 cases, 22 worked at organizations that hosted multiple fellows in 2016, which could possibly have altered the relevant project dynamics. However, a *t*-test indicated no significant difference between these groups in solution creation (*p*-value of 0.68). There were three pairs of fellows who worked on related projects at their host organizations. Conservatively, we dropped these six cases to remove any influence from overlapping projects, leaving a final sample of 80 fellows. Our findings were nearly identical when including all 86 fellows, and the two largest groups of paths were also evident in a subset analysis of the 64 solo fellows (see Table 3 in the Supplemental Materials).

To gain a more textured understanding of the program's dynamics, we also conducted 55 interviews across program participants: 31 Climate Corps fellows from the 2016 cohort (19 shortly after the completion of their fellowship in August–October 2016 and 12 in February 2020[2]), as well as 12 alumni of the program (May–June 2016), 9 EDF engagement managers who worked as liaisons between the fellows and the host organizations (May–June 2016), and 3 host supervisors (2017). The interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 45 minutes (see the interview guide in the Supplemental Materials). During the interviews, we asked about individual motivations, interests, tactics, and roles in engaging with climate change initiatives. We were particularly interested in how fellows utilized EDF resources, as well as the roadblocks and successes they experienced. We recorded and transcribed the interviews for analysis in NVivo. Table 1 provides an overview of the data sources.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis

We analyzed our data with fsQCA to investigate how organizational contexts and movement resources combined to generate new solutions, using the fellow as the unit of analysis. This method excels at analyzing causal processes that include combinations of conditions (conjunctural causation) and that can develop through multiple distinct paths (equifinality) (Fiss, 2011; Ragin, 2008). These types of processes were likely to characterize embedded activism, where a variety of internal and external factors jointly affect outcomes and different approaches can be effective. While conjunctural causation and equifinality are difficult for regression analysis to handle, fsQCA is well equipped for them.[3]

The fsQCA method requires that variables are measured as fuzzy sets that range from zero to one, where zero means a case is completely out of the set, one means it is completely in, and 0.5 is the crossover point where there is maximum uncertainty about set membership. For most variables, we used the standard direct calibration method, which uses a logistic function to fit the data between thresholds for completely out, completely in, and crucially, the crossover point (Ragin, 2008; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). To select the thresholds, we generally relied on contextual knowledge due to the novel way we operationalized theoretical concepts to fit our empirical context. After calibration, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) then involves an analysis of set relations to identify conditions that are sufficient or necessary for an outcome.

[1] There was a marginal *F*-test ($p < 0.096$) for external search (see measures section), which reflected a moderately greater search for fellows with fewer than three survey responses.

[2] The interviews in 2020 were completed by a research assistant who was kept unaware of the theorizing and QCA analysis to minimize the risk of bias.

[3] In regression analysis, conjunctural causation requires complex interaction modeling and can increase multicollinearity. In contrast, QCA addresses conjunctural causation by analyzing combinations of causal conditions rather than individual variables. Also, equifinality hinders regression analysis because if the outcome occurs when a predictor is low, there is a weaker relationship between the predictor and the outcome (assuming a positive relationship). However, with QCA this situation is instead evidence that there are other pathways that lead to the outcome, supporting the discovery of multiple distinct causal paths. (Contradictory evidence in QCA would be when the predictor is high but the outcome is low).

TABLE 1
Overview of Data Sources

Data	Quantity	Analytical Purpose
Archival Data		
Project proposal	118 (1/fellow)	Analyze initial project scope established for the fellow, whether or not there were new initiatives, and how open-ended the plan was.
Final project reports	118 (1/fellow)	Analyze solution creation in publicly available end-of-fellowship commitments by fellow and host.
Historical Climate Corps engagements	620	Establish program newcomers.
Surveys		
Fellow responses (three survey waves)	94 (completed at least one survey)	Close-ended questions establish movement resource use: intensity of external search and external focus of advice seeking. Open-ended questions coded for use of movement resources by fellows.
Interviews		
Fellows	31	Analyze resource use within projects.
EDF engagement managers	9	Background and context; inform QCA calibration.
Host supervisors	3	Background and context; inform QCA calibration.
Alumni	12	Background and context.

Our primary analysis sought to identify combinations of conditions that were sufficient to generate new solutions. Following the set-theoretic logic of QCA, these combinations cause the outcome in the sense that if the combinations occur, then the outcome will also occur. To identify these sufficiency relationships, we used the QCA module in R with the following steps (Dusa, 2017). First, we constructed a truth table to organize the data into rows for each possible combination of the explanatory conditions (see Table 1 in the Supplemental Materials). We used the standard consistency threshold of 0.8 to identify positive rows, which are combinations that are subsets of the outcome (Greckhamer et al., 2018; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Following established practices, we included rows with only one case and excluded rows with true contradictions, which were cases that belonged to the row but were not members of the outcome (Greckhamer et al., 2018; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Second, we followed the "enhanced standard analysis" procedures for treating logical remainders, which were possible combinations that lacked observations, and using Boolean algebra to generate a logical reduction of the included rows (Dusa, 2017; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Accordingly, we excluded rows with theoretical and logical contradictions, such as rows that were consistent with the outcome and its converse. We then compared the "parsimonious" solution, which accepts all remainders that contribute to simplifying the solution term, to the "intermediate" solution, which includes the subset of simplifying remainders that are also consistent with theoretical expectations. Third, following established guidelines, we included all paths from the solution term with a consistency above 0.8 and a proportional reduction in inconsistency above 0.7 (Greckhamer et al., 2018).

Following QCA best practices (Greckhamer et al., 2018; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012), we also conducted additional analyses. As part of a full QCA, we first checked for the existence of any necessary conditions (i.e., if solution creation is present, then this condition must also be present), but there were none. We also verified the robustness of the set relations with a higher consistency threshold (0.85) for including truth table rows in the minimization step. QCA also supports asymmetric causality, and we report analyses of the inverse of the outcome (i.e., low solution creation).

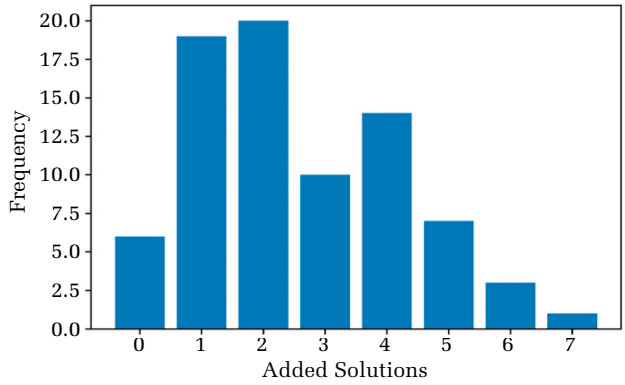
Measures

Outcome: High solution creation. We operationalized the creation of new solutions as additions to the project scope from the initial proposal, which the host organization designed, to the final project summary, which the fellow authored and the host approved for public dissemination. Because these summaries were shared publicly, hosts were cautious about what was included as the summaries could be perceived as commitments for future efforts. Through additions of new solutions, fellows encouraged their host organizations to become more ambitious in their climate change

reforms. For example, one project summary reported: "Pushing beyond the project's initial scope, [the fellow] designed an innovative framework for Employee Crowd Financing for Public Buildings energy efficiency projects." We coded both the initial plan and the final report to identify discrete reforms, such as lighting upgrades or renewable energy plans, and then extracted the ones that were added (i.e., were not part of the original proposal).[4] High solution creation represented the proactive work of fellows to advance climate change reforms at their host organizations. Since we cannot know the entire scope of organizational knowledge ex ante, these ideas were new in the limited sense that they were not part of the original project plan.

We coded the project data based on a modified version of the U.S. Department of Energy's Assessment Recommendation Code. This framework was created to track specific recommendations made in an energy audit program and has been used in prior research on organizational change (Dowell & Muthulingam, 2017). Two research assistants coded the project data. They initially jointly coded projects from a previous year of the Climate Corps program. Then, once they established consistent coding, they moved to coding the 2016 projects. They independently coded 20 projects at a time, with five projects that overlapped. The overlapping projects were used to ensure coding consistency over time. The research assistants flagged any questions and met with the authors weekly to resolve any open questions. The authors reviewed the coding to ensure alignment. Using this coding procedure, we found the average fellow created 2.6 new solutions that the organization could implement to address climate change beyond those specified in the project proposal. The median outcome was two new solutions, while 8% did not break any new ground and 5% added five or more new solutions (see Figure 1). The prevalence of new solutions also indicated the normativeness and centrality of solution creation to Climate Corps.[5]

FIGURE 1
Added Solutions



We calibrated the set of projects with high solution creation using the thresholds of zero for completely out, four for completely in, and 1.5 for the crossover point. We chose the crossover threshold to reflect the difference between tagging on a single new solution versus making more extensive contributions. Making multiple additions suggests a more consistent and developed ability to drive solution creation. Although the outer thresholds have less influence on QCA results, it is important to explain the logic behind these decisions as well. For the upper anchor, the difference between four versus three additional solutions reflected a qualitative step up in terms of making numerous versus multiple additions. The lower anchor of zero additions was self-explanatory. Some examples help to better explain these choices. In a case that was fully out, the fellow stuck to the plan to assist with carbon reporting and did not create any new solutions. In a case that was close to fully in, the fellow expanded on an initial plan to improve employee engagement and track progress toward sustainability goals with several new solutions around lighting, HVAC systems,

[4] We also included proposal specificity as a key condition in our analysis in part to incorporate its influence on solution creation.

[5] While our focus on the development of new ideas reflected our theoretical interest in fellow proactivity, there was also an average of 2.9 ideas in the project plan, 1.1 of them were completed, and 1.8 dropped. These numbers further indicated the importance of fellows' ability to proactively adapt beyond the initial plan, a point that EDF staff members confirmed in interviews. We also verified that the numbers of ideas planned, proposed, and completed did not determine the number of ideas added. Chi-squared tests between ideas added and the other items were all null. There was a marginal Chi-squared score for ideas added and dropped ($p < 0.1$), but this disappears after removing a single outlier that added seven ideas and dropped five. Note that by defining set membership with substantive thresholds rather than with variation around a mean, QCA mutes the influence of outliers. Likewise, the percentages of ideas completed and dropped were unrelated to ideas added, based on null *F*-tests from ANOVA regressions.

facility layouts, and solar installations. In a case that was more in than out, the fellow expanded on a plan to conduct analyses of the company's carbon footprint and climate risks from suppliers by developing an implementation strategy for supplier engagement and training materials for suppliers.

Contributing conditions: Organizational context. We included four conditions to analyze the balance of organizational support and ambiguity concerning how the fellow should develop the project: new initiative, program newcomer, open-ended project, and small organizational scale. These conditions connect to theorizing in the proactivity literature: "Ambiguity may be present in a variety of weak situations, including unclear job and role prescriptions, vague task instructions, or unspecified interpersonal expectations, routines, and standard operating procedures" (Grant & Ashford, 2008: 15). If the organization has less experience with the energy issue and with the Climate Corps program, as well as vague plans for the fellow, then there is more ambiguity about the definition of the climate issue and how to proceed. In addition, organizational scale can both decrease ambiguity through greater formalization and increase it through greater diversity and fragmentation of issue understandings.

First, we examined whether the project was a *new initiative* for the host organization, meaning that the project did not build on prior resources specific to energy issues. This organizational history sets the context for embedded activism. Prior issue engagement can provide resources and schemas for further actions (Bansal, 2003; Howard-Grenville, 2007) while also limiting the space for creative action to develop an organization's issue understanding (Sonenshein, 2014, 2016). As an example of the latter point, one EDF manager commented on the opportunities of working with organizations that were new to the climate issue:

> It's a profound project when they say, "we think we're ready to set a goal, we see our peers setting goals, we know it's probably important, we don't know how to do it, let's hire a Climate Corps fellow to help us start to scope that out." Those are some of my favorite projects because the fellow has this opportunity to really change the course for a company.

Likewise, another engagement manager identified how prior issue development can limit a fellow's scope of action:

> [An experienced organization] has already decided on a lot of things. One of my fellows was working with a city and she said, "They have this carbon reduction goal but I don't think that should be their goal. I think that they should change their goal." And she actually suggested that they revise their goal. But she was like, "should I do that? They've already set this goal and should I be telling them they should change it?" So that's a challenge that can come up too that [the fellow] thinks there's something [the organization] should be doing differently but [it] might be a little set in its ways.

We measured the extent to which the project was a novel initiative for the host organization by coding the project plans and reports for binary mentions of climate change commitments (e.g., this project will help/helped us meet our energy goal), prior work (e.g., the fellow will continue/continued to develop our climate initiative), and other resources (e.g., the fellow will work/worked with our sustainability team and energy database). Including information from both the proposal and report increased the recall and relevance of organizational resources. Also, the nature of these resources ensured that they predated the fellows' efforts (i.e., even the most effective projects did not lead to new climate goals and staff within the 10-week time period of the fellowship). We established an inventory of organizational resources and used this to develop a coding dictionary (see Table 2 in the Supplemental Materials). Two research assistants followed a similar coding approach as for solution creation. We met and reviewed progress weekly to ensure coding consistency and accuracy. We created an additive index of these codes and multiplied by negative one to reverse the scale, which ranged from zero to negative six when each component was present in both the plan and the report.

We then calibrated the index into a fuzzy set using the direct method and thresholds of -1 for completely in, -5 for completely out, and -2.5 for the crossover point. We chose -2.5 to demarcate cases with lesser variety and consistency in organizational preparation. To achieve a score greater than -2.5, at most, there was only a single consistent component or two inconsistent components. Below the threshold, at least all three components were inconsistently present (in one document only) or one component was consistently present (in both documents), plus there was an additional inconsistent component. At the upper threshold of -1, the case contained at most one inconsistent component. At the lower threshold of -5, all three components were present and at least two were consistent.

Second, we included the degree to which the organization was a *program newcomer*. An organizational history of involvement in the Climate Corps

TABLE 2
Fuzzy Set Membership Calibrations

Condition	Definition	Fully Out (0)	Crossover Point	Fully In (1)	*M*	*SD*
Dependent Variable						
High solution creation	Additions to the project scope from the initial proposal to the final project summary.	0	1.5	4	2.6	1.6
Organizational Context						
New initiative	Absence in project documents of organizational resources specific to energy issues. Measurement is the inverse of the sum of binary mentions across the proposal and report of commitments (e.g., this project will help us meet our energy goal), prior work (e.g., the fellow will continue to develop our climate initiative), and other resources (e.g., the fellow will work with our sustainability team and energy database).	−5	−2.5	−1	−3.5	1.3
Program newcomer	Inverse of the number of previous engagements between the host and the Climate Corps program.	−5	−1	0	−1.7	2.3
Open-ended projects	Absence of detailed plans in project proposal, as indicated by the inverse of the average level in the hierarchical coding scheme, which goes from level 1 (least specific; e.g., building energy use) to level 4 (most specific; e.g., occupancy lighting sensors).	−4	−2.9	−1	−2.9	0.8
Small org. scale	Small organizational scale in terms of size (number of employees) and scope (geographical spread of operations).	> 10,000 employees, international operations	1,000 employees, broader metropolitan area	< 250 employees, one city	n/a	n/a
Use of Movement Resources						
External search	Engagement with external EDF resources, measured as use of each of seven categories of Climate Corps resources in the last month (other fellows, engagement manager, resource library, consultants, webinars, LinkedIn group, and mentors).	5	10.1	20	13.1	10.3
External focus	Ratio of advice seeking from the Climate Corps network to advice seeking from within the host organization.	0.5	0.99	1.25	0.8	0.3

program would likely provide support for the fellow while restricting ambiguity about expectations for the fellow's work. From a support perspective, repeated engagements seed an organization with schemas and resources, such as analytic tools, data sets, and engaged supporters, that may enable fellows to push the organization even further (Howard-Grenville, 2007; Wickert & de Bakker, 2018). An EDF manager reported an example of this dynamic. After the first fellow at one company recommended developing an energy management system in 2014:

> The 2015 fellow took that, and ran with it, started drafting an RFP, was working with local vendors, scoped the system out, and now here in 2016 they've implemented the recommended system. Now their fellow in 2016 is starting to use that data to make

> decisions around where to go next, and that's largely tied to that first project in 2014.

However, such prior activity also potentially restricts what fellows should do and how the climate issue should be addressed, as the prior fellow's tool can become a fixed schema that limits further creative action (Sonenshein, 2014).[6]

After reverse coding the number of prior fellows at an organization, we calibrated the set of *program newcomers* using the direct method and thresholds of 0 previous engagements for completely in, −5 for completely out, and −0.99 for the crossover point. The crossover threshold captured the transition from some program experience to none. We chose a higher number of engagements (reverse-coded) for the lower boundary to distinguish the organizations with extensive Climate Corps experience from the organizations with intermediate experience.

In addition to *new initiative* and *program newcomer*, which reflected organizational history, *open-ended project* captured the level of specificity in the initial project plans. While detailed plans could indicate greater organizational support, they could also stifle fellow creativity. In contrast, fellows might benefit from the greater latitude available in more open-ended projects (Deken et al., 2018; Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2018; Sonenshein, 2014). If managers have only a general sense of how an issue should be addressed, then embedded activists will be more empowered to create new solutions.

We developed this measure from the level of detail in the initial project proposal. To capture this info, we utilized the hierarchical design of the coding framework that we applied to code the distinct energy reform ideas. This framework had four nested levels of specificity. For example, the code for installing occupancy lighting sensors was at the most detailed level (level 4) and was beneath three nested levels: building energy use (level 1), lighting (level 2), and lighting controls (level 3). After reverse coding, we calibrated the set of *open-ended projects* using the direct method and thresholds of average specificity in the project proposal of −1 for completely in, −4 for completely out, and −2.9 for the crossover point. The crossover threshold distinguished projects about general problem areas from those that indicated types of solutions (e.g., lighting versus lighting controls). At the upper threshold of −1, projects were maximally general (e.g., building energy use), while at the lower threshold, they were maximally specific (e.g., occupancy lighting sensors).[7]

Our last contextual condition captured organizational scale. Organizational scale can both inhibit and enhance ambiguity. Larger organizations should have more elaborated procedures and frameworks that reduce ambiguity and the opportunities for proactivity (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Morrison, 2011: 386; Sandhu & Kulik, 2018). However, larger organizations can also include more diverse perspectives as well as communication barriers, which increase ambiguity (Baumann-Pauly, Wickert, Spence, & Scherer, 2013; Sonenshein, 2016; Weber & Waeger, 2017). Organizational scale can also alter the contributions of movement resources. For example, one EDF manager suggested that large organizations heightened the value of an internal focus and reduced the contribution of external expertise:

> A lot of the companies they are in are big. And so they need to be able to gather a lot of information from a lot of different people quickly. That can be really challenging to navigate an organizational structure that you don't know anything about—that you've just been thrown in. I think people who are really good at figuring out who they need to talk to and what information they need as quickly as possible is really, really valuable. Having those interpersonal skills sometimes can be a lot more valuable than having more content knowledge.[8]

[6] Even if fellows worked in different parts of an organization, there will be stronger expectations for the later fellow to the extent that communication occurs across the divisions, which was likely unless participation by multiple parts of an organization in Climate Corps was a coincidence. In addition, later fellows received guidance from prior fellows through EDF channels about how to act in the organization.

[7] An example of a plan that was close to fully out: "The fellow will assist in three main focus areas. The first is compiling and accessing project data for the 179D Tax Credit Program. Secondly, the fellow will evaluate energy savings potential associated with installation of a Wireless Energy Management System. Finally, the fellow will look at renewables, specifically the installation of a solar wall on mid-rise buildings." An example that was more in than out: "The energy program could use assistance with formalizing a process for identifying the best energy conservation projects, implementation of the energy projects, and documenting the savings. The energy program also needs assistance with energy data management such as the current benchmarking efforts, energy monitoring, and future dashboards."

[8] The temporary status of the organizational members in our sample heightened the challenges from the organizational scale of communication and navigating protocols.

We constructed the set of *small organizational scale* by combining information on the host organizations' size and scope that we collected from organizational websites. While we would prefer to directly measure formality and centralization, size and scope were our best available proxies. Integrating size and scope suggested more than three distinctions, and so we used Ragin's (2008) indirect calibration method to recognize finer gradations. Our five thresholds distinguished completely out (5,000 or more employees and national operations), mostly out (same size and metropolitan operations), more out than in (500 or more employees and national operations), more in than out (same size and metropolitan operations), and mostly in (fewer than 500 employees and local operations) from completely in.

Contributing conditions: Movement resources. In addition to these measures of the organizational context, we included two conditions to analyze the use of movement resources: external search and external focus. We utilized our survey data about exploration and advice-seeking behaviors to construct two distinct sets around engagement with the EDF network. We averaged the data for fellows with multiple surveys and verified that there were no significant differences between groups with different response rates (all F-tests > 0.096). These data enabled us to characterize the extent to which fellows activated their external connections through EDF.

Our first measure captured the intensity of external search for resources. Fellows reported how often they used each of seven categories of EDF resources in the last month (other fellows, engagement manager, resource library, consultants, webinars, LinkedIn group, and mentors). We calibrated the set of high *external search* with the direct method and thresholds of 20 for completely in, 5 for completely out, and 10.1 for the crossover point. We chose this crossover point because it corresponded to about 2.5 connections with EDF a week, indicating external search activity on more workdays than not. At the upper threshold, fellows sought external resources nearly every workday, while at the lower threshold, it was closer to once a week. For example, in a case that was close to fully in, the fellow reported:

> I used [the EDF network] a lot: the LinkedIn group, I posted I don't know how many questions on there, maybe 20 of them. So, it was really great because people were pretty willing to respond, and even if they didn't know the answer then they would direct you to what resources they knew could be helpful to you.

While a fellow in a case that was close to fully out commented that she used EDF to "network after work, mostly," and instead "worked with different staff within the organization to meet my goals."

Second, we calculated the ratio of advice seeking from the Climate Corps network to advice seeking from within the host organization, based on separate questions from the survey. From these data, we calibrated the set of *external focus* with the direct method and thresholds of 1.25 for completely in, 0.5 for completely out, and 0.99 for the crossover point. We chose the crossover threshold so that fellows in this set were at least as likely to seek advice from their external connection as from their host organization, even though their direct supervisor was in the host organization.[9] At the upper threshold, external advice was used substantially more, while at the lower threshold, internal advice predominated. The spacing between these thresholds was uneven because we would expect fellows to seek advice from their supervisor and other organizational members. Comparing the two conditions, *external search* captured whether a fellow intensively sought to incorporate movement resources, while *external focus* indicated whether the fellow was aligned toward external versus internal guidance.

Although more conditions were possible for measuring organizational contexts and external resources, these six were the most meaningful for investigating embedded activism, and QCA requires parsimony because there are 2^n possible combinations with n conditions. Table 2 provides summary information for each condition.

Qualitative Interview and Survey Analysis

In order to better understand why particular combinations of conditions produced high solution creation, we triangulated QCA results with the qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey questions. It is important to note that the data sets for each analysis were distinct—the interviews and open-ended survey responses were not used to determine any of the conditions analyzed in QCA. This triangulation of different data sources and analyses strengthened confidence in our groupings of distinct pathways (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995) and provided a lens into the underlying mechanisms that connected the conditions in each pathway.

[9] While both the supervisor and the fellow affected the extent of internal advice seeking, we only observed the fellow-side of the relationship. From our interviews, it was typical for supervisors to have little time to engage with fellows as this was not the supervisors' primary job.

Our approach to coding the interviews and qualitative survey responses was analytic abduction (Peirce, 1955): we iterated between reviews of pre-existing theoretical constructs and multiple readings of interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses (Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003). This analytic procedure included analyst triangulation: we used multiple analysts, including two research assistants who were blinded to the QCA analysis, to minimize biases (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2015). Our analysis consisted of the following stages.

First, we used NVivo to code the interviews and survey responses for instances of resource use. Importantly, this coding was completed by the two research assistants following a similar coding strategy as for solution creation. However, in order to minimize bias, the weekly progress meetings to ensure coding consistency and accuracy occurred only with the second author who was blinded to the QCA analysis outcomes. Second, after the coding was complete, we grouped the fellows by each pathway that emerged in the QCA analysis and reviewed all examples of resource use to check alignment with the pathways from QCA. Third, we constructed narrative examples of the fellows' experiences from the interview and survey qualitative data, focusing on conditions that were important in each QCA pathway and interdependencies among the conditions (Heinze & Weber, 2016). Through evaluating not just the conditions in isolation but a narrative at the individual level, we integrated the qualitative data to illustrate the QCA pathways and investigate underlying mechanisms. We compared approaches to using movement resources across the QCA pathways, looking for similarities and differences in the underlying mechanisms. This allowed us to develop a more nuanced understanding of how fellows utilized external resources differently across varying levels of contextual ambiguity. Finally, in a follow-up interview with a key informant at EDF, we also were able to confirm that our research design and findings were consistent with EDF's objectives and understandings of the Climate Corps program.

RESULTS

The six columns in Table 3 each document a pathway to high solution creation. The table provides evidence of equifinality in that multiple distinct combinations of conditions are sufficient to generate the outcome. Note that filled circles indicate the presence of a condition and circles with an "X" indicate its absence, while blank spaces indicate that the condition is irrelevant to the configuration because some cases include it and some do not. Large circles are core conditions from the parsimonious solution, while small circles are peripheral conditions from

TABLE 3
Configurations of Causal Conditions Leading to High Solution Creation

	Low Ambiguity: Catalyzing Established Issue Understandings			Moderate Ambiguity: Navigating Organizational Fit		High Ambiguity: Building Legitimacy
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Organizational Context[a]						
New initiative		⊗		⊗	⊗	
Program newcomer			⊗	●	⊗	●
Open-ended project	⊗			⊗	●	●
Small org. scale	●	⊗	●	⊗	●	⊗
Movement Resources						
External search	●	●	⊗			●
External focus		●	●	⊗	⊗	⊗
Raw coverage	0.242	0.210	0.129	0.316	0.151	0.359
Unique coverage	0.060	0.037	0.031	0.026	0.033	0.064
Consistency	0.861	0.860	0.878	0.848	0.914	0.841
Number of cases	12	5	5	7	3	8
Overall solution consistency			0.828			
Overall solution coverage			0.65			

Notes: Following Fiss (2011), black circles indicate the presence of a condition, and circles with an "X" indicate its absence. Large circles indicate core conditions; small ones, peripheral conditions. Blank spaces indicate conditions that are irrelevant to the configuration. Overall scores are for the parsimonious solution.

[a] The first three organizational context conditions (new initiative, program newcomer, and open-ended project) all reflect high ambiguity when present and low ambiguity when absent. Small organizational scale, however, has a mixed relationship to ambiguity.

the intermediate solution, which makes restrictions based on theoretical expectations (Fiss, 2011). We used the expectations that preparation, prior fellows, and external search would contribute to solution creation, and we note when we are discussing peripheral conditions that rely on these expectations. Consistency and coverage statistics are at the bottom of the table. Consistency reports the strength of the configuration's subset relationship with solution creation, which is akin to a measure of statistical significance of a sufficiency relationship between the configuration and the outcome. Providing data on effect sizes, raw coverage summarizes the percentage of case evidence that fits a configuration, while unique coverage refers to case evidence that only fits with that configuration. Overall, the solution shows strong consistency (0.828) and coverage (0.65). Out of 80 cases, 49 of them are in positive rows in the truth table (see Table 1 in the Supplemental Materials), and 34 of these are in the solution.

In order to interpret a QCA table, it is helpful to identify a key condition or small number of conditions and then examine the configurations around those conditions. Reflecting our interest in how fellows combine movement resources with different levels of contextual ambiguity, we organize our analysis by the level of ambiguity in each pathway, focusing on the three conditions that clearly denote greater ambiguity (new initiative, program newcomer, and open-ended project): low where there are only conditions that reduce ambiguity, moderate where there is a mix of conditions increasing and decreasing ambiguity, and high where there are only augmenting conditions. Consistent with our view of organizational scale as having the potential to both restrict and augment ambiguity, there are also variants of the low and moderate ambiguity groups where small organizational is present or absent.

By grouping similar pathways in terms of contextual ambiguity, we identify three different ways that fellows match movement resources with organizational contexts to generate high solution creation. In pathways with moderate ambiguity, these resources are either absent or irrelevant. In contrast, all the pathways with either low or high ambiguity include at least one type of movement resource. To understand this pattern, we examine each group of pathways in detail and then present an analysis of how fellows' use of movement resources differs in contexts of low versus high ambiguity. We also enrich our analysis of each group with qualitative data from the survey responses and interviews (interviews from around half the cases in each group of pathways: 10 in low ambiguity, six in moderate, and three in high).[10]

Low Ambiguity: Catalyzing Established Issue Understandings

The largest grouping contains three pathways that feature organizational conditions that reduce ambiguity. Each potential source of organizational support that decreases ambiguity is present in one path: strongly-defined project plans (Path 1), extensive preparation (Path 2), and prior fellows (Path 3). Organizational scale is also part of each pathway in varying states, reflecting its cross-cutting influence on ambiguity: the organizations in Paths 1 and 3 are small, while those in Path 4 are large.

Each pathway in this group also includes some movement resources. Confronted with well-developed issues through either preparation, program experience, or detailed plans, successful solution creation here entails leveraging external connections to catalyze established frameworks and introduce new perspectives into the organization. A supervisor at a host organization from this group identified this dynamic as a motivation for participating in Climate Corps:

> We bring [the fellows] in on projects that have been longstanding with the company. It's really helpful for us to get a new perspective on some of these projects because you can fall into that hole of doing things just because it's the way they've always been done. Sometimes getting a fresh perspective is really motivating to look at a project in a new light.

In Path 1, fellows utilize external search to manage an absence of project openness. This path is especially remarkable as detailed oversight should preclude creative acts like solution creation (Sonenshein, 2014). Henry was an exemplar of Path 1.[11] His initial project plan was very specific:

> The Climate Corps fellow will focus on two discrete tasks. First, they will help the [host] apply for the subsequent round of [type of] funding. Second, using [a specific] team's behavioral findings, the fellow will assist with energy planning and setting key milestones so that the agency can continue energy efforts until energy personnel are funded.

[10] Interview coverage for the individual paths: Path 1 (8/12), Path 2 (1/5), Path 3 (1/5), Path 4 (5/7), Path 5 (1/3), and Path 6 (3/8). Open-ended, qualitative survey coverage for the individual paths: Path 1 (11/12), Path 2 (3/5), Path 3 (5/5), Path 4 (7/7), Path 5 (3/3), and Path 6 (5/8).

[11] All names of fellows are pseudonyms.

Despite this detailed guidance, Henry added four solutions to the project, including a strategic framework for prioritizing buildings' energy saving opportunities and a model that applied the strategic framework to the host's data. He mobilized external resources in multiple ways, including tapping into expertise from the field and social support to help overcome obstacles. These distinct uses of movement resources are each reflected in the interview quotes below regarding expertise and tools and social support:

> I looked into [the EDF] database and found out the top 10 most relevant fellows who did something similar to me. So, I reached out to them and set up an interview, and I asked them about their project . . . to figure out what kind of challenges I should expect, and how did they overcome them. That was probably one of the most useful things that I did.

> There were a lot of fellows. We were hanging out a lot together, so we were talking about our projects all the time, like this is what I did, these are the challenges I have . . . And I got a lot of support.[12]

Faced with a very specific project plan, Henry imported new tools and approaches to create new solutions. The external connection enabled him to find new directions for an already elaborated issue. For example, one of his key expansions was the development of a spreadsheet tool, which integrated data the host had already collected, to analyze all the buildings they oversaw and prioritize focus:

> When I analyzed all of that data on a city level, especially because such an understanding didn't exist before, when I presented that to my supervisor, my supervisor was totally on board, so she was seeing the progress . . . I presented to other people and they were very excited to see that such a tool exists, and I was telling them very politely that you're focusing on something wrong, like focusing on the small agencies: their budget is $200,000 per year and we have an institution that they use a million dollars of electricity per month. I was like, forget those small ones, we have to focus on these big ones.

The tool was effective in part because Henry integrated what he had learned from an external search with the data the host had in place, bringing in a new perspective to the host that helped them advance their organizational energy goals. Fellows in this path noted that the small scale enabled them to understand the organization, as Henry commented, "I set up individual meetings with everyone." However, an external search was important in part due to limited internal resources, as reflected in the following: "I am working for a very small [organization] and trying to develop their energy efficiency program when they are strapped for resources."

In Path 2, fellows balance the extensive issue infrastructure implied by a large, well-prepared organization with both an extensive external search and an external focus on advice-seeking behaviors. Fellows again draw on the external connection to catalyze established initiatives. For example, Clara worked on identifying key climate risk mitigation opportunities in the supply chain and added three solutions, including sustainability training videos and webinars for suppliers, as well as a resource sheet to support their sustainability evaluations. She mobilized the EDF network to build out this program:

> I needed some help understanding how other companies treat supplier engagement efforts, especially around ratifying and enforcing compliance with supplier code of conducts. I reached out first to my engagement manager, who was able to connect me with former fellows that had worked on supply chain projects. One of those fellows further connected me with someone in their company who works on the supplier code of conduct, and I was able to get an informational interview.

This use of movement resources helped Clara design custom supplier tools for improving their corporate social responsibility scores, which led to tangible progress toward fulfilling the company's established initiatives:

> The last week I was there, we found out that three of the suppliers reassessing had scored the necessary points in the CSR survey to help [the host organization] meet their target. These increased scores were accomplished by one-on-one conversations, resource finding, and a webinar co-hosted with the survey company.

In the third configuration in this group, Path 3, a history of previous fellows reduces ambiguity. Interestingly, this path features an external focus with an absence of external search. Fellows in this path consistently noted that they reached out to EDF engagement managers and previous fellows for advice, for example: "My EDF supervisor provided

[12] This fellow met with other fellows in the same geographic area who were working with different hosts. Many fellows mentioned remote connections with each other, so co-location was not necessary for this support. Across the sample, there are null differences in the use of movement resources by city or region.

ideas on how to follow up projects" (Brittany), and "[It helped] talking to other fellows who are at similar organizations or working on similar projects" (Michael). Michael's reflection highlighted how the small organizational scale was related to this external advice seeking:

> Currently at the host organization, there are limited resources available to help me complete my projects. There are essentially two people who work on sustainability at the organization, and both are very busy. I have essentially been relying upon previous fellows and EDF resources in order to complete my fellowship.

However, none of the fellows in this pathway mentioned tapping into other potential EDF resources, such as webinars, consultants, LinkedIn, or the online library, and thus were not in the high external search set. This mixed pattern reflects a connection between prior fellows and external advice seeking: consulting with prior fellows provides high value assistance, diminishing the need to engage in extensive additional external search.

The process of leveraging their external connections to catalyze established issues is illustrated through the experience of Carlos, who worked at a city's transportation agency and was tasked with assessing energy use for lighting. He added six solutions, including a plan for alternative financing options for energy-efficiency projects, an employee engagement survey to gauge knowledge of sustainability projects, and a toolkit to highlight the organization's sustainability progress. This work built on prior efforts by fellows, who collected and aggregated energy data, and also included quick-impact, low-investment reforms like LED lighting and occupancy sensors. Carlos reported:

> The biggest success I experienced with my fellowship was a project that reviewed energy-efficiency and water conservation measures at the agency's proposed regional transportation center. [And] my greatest source of support for my work was my engagement manager as well as prior EDF fellows at my host organization. My engagement manager was able to listen to my ideas and connect me to other resources. For me, being able to talk to her on a regular basis was very helpful.

Moderate Ambiguity: Navigating Organizational Fit

The next largest group contains two paths that combine some conditions that restrict ambiguity with others that enhance it. There are also again variants with either small or large organizational scale. In Path 4, fellows engage with large, well-prepared organizations suggesting issue elaboration but that are also program newcomers, indicating less established expectations for the fellow's role. Strongly defined project plans is also a peripheral condition. Path 5 features small organizations that have extensive preparation and prior engagements with Climate Corps—two factors that provide an elaborated issue environment—but also open-ended project plans. Interestingly, in both of these paths, fellows emphasize internal advice seeking over leveraging their external connections. In this mixed environment of internal support and ambiguities, fellows succeed through cultivating allies and ownership for sustainability issues within the organization. Ambiguities about their role or issue make it crucial for them to attend to how their initiatives fit with the organizational values and priorities.

The following example illustrates Path 4, where the fellow relied on internal advice to navigate the moderate ambiguity in the organizational context and create solutions. Melanie was a fellow for a manufacturing company. Her objective was to shape and execute a renewable energy strategy. Over the course of her fellowship, she added five new solutions to her project, including auditing utility data, conducting a resource use risk analysis, and surveying employees. While the host had a dedicated group focused on sustainability, the lack of experience with the new role of a Climate Corps fellow created ambiguity about expectations and responsibilities. Melanie reflected on this ambiguity as a source of tension:

> It's a very hierarchical structure, and there's certain unwritten rules about what you do and don't do. I didn't feel very prepared for that and that's one of the suggestions I gave to my supervisor: how do you function in this multinational corporate environment, particularly as a [fellow] who doesn't have any power.

Melanie often experienced the large organizational scale as another challenge. Fellows in this path noted difficulties in figuring out who the key stakeholders were, how to connect with them, and where to locate critical information, or if it existed at all. As Melanie noted:

> There are over 100 manufacturing facilities and 26,000 employees, so it's quite a big operation . . . I need to collaborate with many different segments of the business, and it can be difficult to get the information that was needed about the company.

This combination of support and ambiguity elevated the importance of navigating the internal context. Throughout her fellowship, Melanie looked internally for advice, noting that she reached out to someone at the host organization for advice at least once a day. The advice helped in both developing content for recommendations and navigating the organization. With respect to content for her work, she connected with plant managers internationally to understand how different strategies may work across the host's footprint. She also reached out frequently to the legal team and human resources "because a lot of the sustainability questions deal with employees, attraction, retention, and program issues like training opportunities, education." With respect to navigating the organization, she also used internal advice to manage some more difficult relationships: "I also was having issues with my supervisor, so I talked with someone who had worked with them before on the best way to handle it."

An internal focus also helped fellows to navigate organizational history around an issue. For example, as Melanie learned about the company's significant history and experience around sustainability from her supervisor, she began to revise her approach to the project and frame her work as aligned with organizational values:

> It's a culture where many people would not think climate change is a thing, especially not caused by people, so that whole underlying issue. But stewardship was something that was important to see, at least for the operations executives. So, if we talk in terms of stewardship, taking care of what you have, being efficient, not wasting, doing the right thing, that was a lot more effective. And I talked not very directly about climate change in that way just because of the culture of business.

Overall, she focused on networking within the host organization to get data and information that helped her shape different approaches to addressing challenges and expanding her work.

Path 5 was similar to Path 4 because of the moderate ambiguity experienced by fellows. Even though the hosts in this configuration had significant preparation and engagement with Climate Corps, the project proposals themselves were ambiguous. One fellow commented that he "described these challenges [with the focus of his project proposal] to my engagement manager and Climate Corps alumni" who all said "this is not uncommon." Facing challenges with defining projects in the context of prior initiatives, the fellows in this pathway also emphasized internal advice—"continuous interaction with my supervisor" and "turning to my colleagues [at the host]"—to help shape their projects and decide which solutions to prioritize and add to their project scope. One of the fellows directly noted how a former fellow, now employed full-time at the host, provided support: "One of the three people I reported to was a former EDF Climate Corps fellow, and throughout the fellowship was a great resource for both work plan guidance, as well as strategy advice." The role of small organizational scale is reflected in the fellows' comments that they knew where within the organization to go for data or advice. One appreciated that he is "understanding the role of different verticals and getting data from various departments."

In many ways, the moderate ambiguity context of these two pathways represents the typical conditions in issue selling research. Issue selling efforts encounter a mix of supports from allies, aligned projects, executive endorsements, etc., as well as ambiguous terrain from newly developed roles, limited prior issue development, and integration (e.g., Bansal, 2003; Howard-Grenville, 2007; Wickert & de Bakker, 2018). In this context, prior research has suggested that successful issue selling will focus on tactics of navigating the organizational polity, implicitly assuming that the "moves that matter" play out within the organization (Dutton et al., 2001). Our data enable us to situate this dynamic as particular to organizational contexts with moderate ambiguity.

High Ambiguity: Building Legitimacy

The last path stands alone as a possible third group with extensive ambiguity. Path 6 includes large-scale organizations that were program newcomers and, as a peripheral condition, had open-ended projects. Although "large-scale" may imply greater guidance, organizational scale can also make internal communication and understanding more fragmented (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013). Where the low ambiguity group features unmitigated conditions that increase issue elaboration, Path 6 occupies the opposite end of the spectrum, with contextual conditions that all enhance ambiguity. Remarkably, the configuration in this group also includes the same direction of resource use as the low ambiguity group. In Path 6, fellows engage in an extensive external search. At the same time, the absence of an external focus is a peripheral condition in this path.

Confronted with little support and direction, external search again becomes a key input to solution creation. However, rather than serving to catalyze an already elaborated issue, here the practice

provides missing guidance and expertise. The fellow, Steven, illustrates this dynamic. Steven worked at a national health care provider that tasked him with developing a sustainability strategy. He expanded the project with six new solutions including lighting upgrades, a service procedure redesign for energy efficiency, and employee engagement programs. There were no prior fellows and high project ambiguity in the initial proposal. Steven recognized the extensive ambiguity of the fellowship, as he reflected below:

> I think going into the fellowship, we really didn't know what my role was going to be . . . I had the description from EDF and what the [host] had provided, but besides that you can go to the [host's] website and you can't even find the word sustainability. It was really kind of ambiguous walking into the situation . . . I knew a little bit of what to expect but really not the full spectrum. And so we knew that I was going to start at least with a macro approach and help them organize really what they had done, the progress they had made, and then start identifying areas of opportunity . . . I think there was a lot of skepticism with me coming into the [organization] in the first place simply because they just hadn't had anyone with such a specific background in sustainability or energy coming into the organization.

Within this path, fellows often experienced the large organizational scale as a source of greater ambiguity. Similar to Path 4, fellows here referred to the difficulty of figuring out how to navigate larger organizations and understand who key stakeholders were. Steven noted this:

> The biggest challenge was navigating an organization of this scale in such a short period of time. There were so many stakeholders for every project I wanted to implement, and it required numerous meetings to obtain approval from all groups to proceed with projects.

Steven mobilized a number of external resources to help navigate the ambiguity and move forward in addressing the sustainability challenges. He exhibited similar approaches to external search as others in the pathway, using EDF materials to learn about different tools and experts that could be utilized and connecting to others for social support. The following quotes provide examples of each:

> The webinars were really helpful. I really didn't know too much about the lighting as a service opportunity, and through the webinar I was able to connect with a lighting vendor who really helped me explain the concept to the [host] to see if it were something they would be interested in pursuing.

> I really enjoyed reading some of the past sample reports, final reports, that [EDF] provided. That type of information really helped me see how other fellows had framed their findings and their thoughts.

> The network was also really helpful just from sort of a "I'm out here on an island. How are things going over in your neck of the woods? Are you experiencing similar pushbacks, trials, and tribulations that I'm experiencing, and how did you push forward?"

Steven used these external resources to support solution creation throughout his fellowship. Movement resources helped him set expectations for himself. For example, he noted that the exemplars of previous work that EDF made available helped him decide what areas to focus on, what areas may have more opportunity than he realized, and where he might have done as much as he could: "I could utilize [this information] to say okay, I feel like maybe I'm tapped out in one area, what's another thing for me to look at."

Importantly, he also used the external knowledge and experts to build legitimacy for his recommendations within the host organization. The following quote shows one example of this type of external resource use:

> At the beginning of my fellowship, the organization was skeptical of [LED lighting's] price and sophistication. As such, I reached out to several lighting vendors and had them bring representatives from lighting manufacturers to present and demo their LED lighting products. My host organization is currently piloting the technology in several fixtures throughout campus.

This mode of external resource use—to legitimize new ideas within the organization—is distinct to conditions of high ambiguity, as we did not observe it in conditions of low ambiguity. After bringing in external resources to show the host the feasibility of recommendations, Steven then focused internally—navigating the funding and approval processes within his host. He shared one example below:

> I set up a call [with a high-status industry peer from another geography] and had my manager, the unit head, and his assistant sit on that call. We had an hour and half discussion about lighting retrofits and operating room strategies and programs that he had implemented and how he had achieved success. And once we had that call, I saw something change in my manager and he really got excited about it. It was after that that he really became supportive and we started talking about okay where are some realistic opportunities that you want to tackle given the funding we have available and the process for getting projects pushed through [the host organization].

Comparing the Use of Movement Resources Across Low and High Ambiguity Groups

All the Climate Corps fellows had access to the same portfolio of potential external resources—other fellows, EDF analysis tools, experts, webinars, EDF engagement managers, and the broader EDF network. Yet, fellows drew on those resources differently. Moreover, how fellows put resources into use to contribute to solution creation varied across contextual conditions. Table 4 summarizes the different strategies for utilizing movement resources in organizational contexts with low versus high ambiguity, with representative examples.

Nuanced approaches to resource use emerged through comparisons across the two pathway groups. Fellows in both low and high ambiguity contexts used the external EDF network for social support, leveraging movement resources to find approaches past roadblocks and to receive feedback on new strategies. Notably, this pattern is distinct from fellows under

TABLE 4
Overview of Strategies for Utilizing Movement Resources Across Organizational Contexts with Low/High Ambiguity

Resource Type	Low Ambiguity: Catalyzing Established Issue Understandings	High Ambiguity: Building Legitimacy
Social support	*Overcome obstacles* Part of it was just talking through the challenges of, you know, sometimes you run into a dead end. And it was really helpful to be able to talk to other people who were going through something similar and find out that, okay yeah, if you follow this path much further, you might not get anything out of it, and so maybe you switch it up and change direction and look somewhere else. – Jeff	*Overcome obstacles* Other fellows who worked on similar projects and I exchanged industry insights and updates often. We learned from each other's host organizations. – Long
Expertise and tools	*Highlight new opportunities* Climate Corps provided a lot of contacts . . . We talked to lighting retrofit companies who had a lot of experience with retrofitting street lights and street lamps because that's a really big opportunity for energy savings for the city. It brought us a few different cities who had gotten different grants and funding that had implemented programs that [the city] was striving. It was helpful to have some of that basic knowledge and understanding so we could translate that into how [the city] might utilize some of their strategies. – Kaitlyn	*Highlight new opportunities* I used [the EDF financial tool] as a starting point and over the course I modified it as per need . . . that was the first time I was doing that thorough financial modeling at the same time as the calculation on how much energy they might be saving and in respect to how much it cost. – Vivek ***Provide needed knowledge and skills*** The [sponsor] was I would say decently knowledgeable about the technology, but not down to the engineering and the technical side of it. How does that [technology] actually work in the building? They were not aware of it, and what are the limitations of using that kind of technology . . . It's those kinds of technical details that they were relying on us to tell them. – Vivek
Exemplars	***Reinvigorate existing programs*** One thing that I drew on a lot was looking at other sustainability plans and particularly other sustainable building guidelines that had previously been developed in the [same] sector . . . there are a lot of organizations that had already developed this kind of document and published it on their website. And so I spent a lot of time just reviewing, basically doing a literature review of what else was out there, and looking particularly at peer [organizations to my host]. That was a major resource that I drew on for the green buildings guidelines . . . I went around figuring out what sort of work I could leave behind that would be useful to a number of different stakeholders [to my host]. – Jacob	***Show feasibility of ideas*** Interviewed industry subject matter experts to design and launch an RFP for an energy study. Used RFP responses to show alternate primary power sources, including environmentally friendly alternatives, that improve reliability. – Cathy

Notes: Distinct resource uses indicated in bold.

conditions of moderate ambiguity, who were more likely to discuss the EDF network in ways that were disconnected from their fellowships, most often as a job search resource rather than as a resource for their project work.

Moreover, fellows used the same type of external resources differently based on the context. Fellows in contexts of low or high ambiguity integrated knowledge and tools from external networks in order to highlight new opportunities, translating what was available externally for their host organizations. For fellows in low ambiguity contexts, this resource move was sufficient to help catalyze new actions. With significant experience around climate, energy, and sustainability, these organizations already had the necessary skills internally to move forward. On the other hand, for fellows in high ambiguity contexts, the hosts had a limited history of engagement and gaps in internal skills for addressing the issue. Fellows needed to also develop external resources to fill this skills gap, enabling their organizations to engage more.

Another difference emerged as fellows were adapting exemplars from other organizations to their hosts. In low ambiguity contexts, fellows mobilized exemplars to reinvigorate existing programs as they used templates or comparison cases to amplify programs already in place and catalyze more robust action. In high ambiguity contexts, however, fellows used exemplars to show the feasibility of new climate or energy ideas, selecting comparisons that would help them legitimate their proposed solutions and build support for ideas that had not been considered previously. These comparisons provide evidence that it is not simply whether fellows emphasize movement resources, or which potential resources are incorporated, but *how* fellows enact resources in alignment with contextual ambiguity that leads to solution creation.

Low Solution Creation: Exploring the Inverse Outcome

A strength of QCA is that it supports investigation of asymmetric causality between an outcome and its inverse. However, using the standard QCA procedures, there are no consistent pathways for the inverse of our main outcome, low solution creation. As Fiss (2011: 410) commented on a parallel null QCA finding: "there are many ways to be nonperforming here, but no consistent pattern." We then reanalyzed the data with "the minimum recommended threshold" (Fiss, 2011: 403) of 0.75 consistency, which produced three consistent paths that include nine cases out of 17 in positive rows in the truth table. Table 5 reports the results, and we add depth to our interpretation with data from short answer survey responses from each case, as well as one interview in Path B. Although we have lower confidence in these findings, they provide suggestive evidence.

TABLE 5
Configurations of Causal Conditions Leading to Low Solution Creation (Inverse Outcome)[a]

	A	B	C
Organizational Context[b]			
New initiative		●	●
Program newcomer	⊗	⊗	●
Open-ended project	⊗	⊗	●
Small org. scale	⊗	⊗	●
Movement Resources			
External search	⊗	⊗	⊗
External focus		⊗	⊗
Raw coverage	0.316	0.231	0.152
Unique coverage	0.080	0.013	0.051
Consistency	0.784	0.781	0.789
Number of cases	7	2	1
Overall solution consistency	0.753		
Overall solution coverage	0.383		

[a] Following Fiss (2011), black circles indicate the presence of a condition and circles with an "X" indicate its absence. Blank spaces indicate conditions that are irrelevant to the configuration. Overall scores are for the parsimonious solution.

[b] The first three organizational context conditions (new initiative, program newcomer, and open-ended project) all reflect high ambiguity when present and low ambiguity when absent. Small organizational scale, however, has a mixed relationship to ambiguity.

The three paths include each of our ambiguity groupings: low in Path A with experienced hosts and strongly defined project plans, moderate in Path B with these two conditions but also new initiatives, and high in Path C with new initiatives, program newcomers (peripheral condition), and open-ended projects. Organizational scale is also a part of each solution, with large organizations in Paths A and B (peripheral condition in B) and small organizations in Path C. The most striking result is that all three paths include the absence of external resources, elevating the importance of these conditions for the outcomes of embedded activism. As Shreya from Path A noted, "The (host) team and their experience is the greatest resource for me." Another fellow in this pathway, Ashley, commented on her lack of connection to the EDF network, "It doesn't feel like a very connected network. I met people for a week and now they are scattered all over the place. I don't feel connected to them."[13]

[13] The different levels of engagement with the EDF network largely reflect individual differences, as all fellows

Paths A and C combine these resource conditions with contexts that decrease and increase ambiguity, respectively. These paths mirror our main results where the presence of external resources generated high solution creation. Interestingly, Path B features moderate ambiguity, suggesting that large organizations (as a peripheral condition) with prior fellows but new initiatives limit solution creation, regardless of movement resources. This may be in part because of challenges for the fellow in navigating organizations in this situation, as evident in Lisa's experience. She reflected:

> I've felt frustrated and discouraged because my project is strategy oriented and I've felt that my direct report as well as my peers are not—they are instead highly focused on products. It has felt like a mismatch at times and I often feel that I am speaking a different language and coming to energy management from an opposite approach of those that I am working alongside and learning from.

While the significance of these results is borderline, they reinforce the importance of movement resources.

DISCUSSION

To integrate our empirical findings at a more abstract level, we present a model in Figure 2 of how the opportunity structure for collaborative activism combines with embedded activist resource strategies to advance reforms in organizations. When the opportunity structure of an organization has low ambiguity, embedded activists face a situation of significant prior issue development and understanding. Through importing external resources, these activists are able to catalyze established efforts with the introduction of new potential solutions. As ambiguity increases to a moderate level, embedded activists turn internally, selling the issue further within the organization and expanding the potential solutions considered. When ambiguity is high, embedded activists combine external search for knowledge and exemplars with an internal focus on legitimizing the efforts to prompt consideration of additional solutions within the organization. By matching opportunity structure with resource strategies, embedded activists can succeed in advancing social movement goals across diverse organizations.

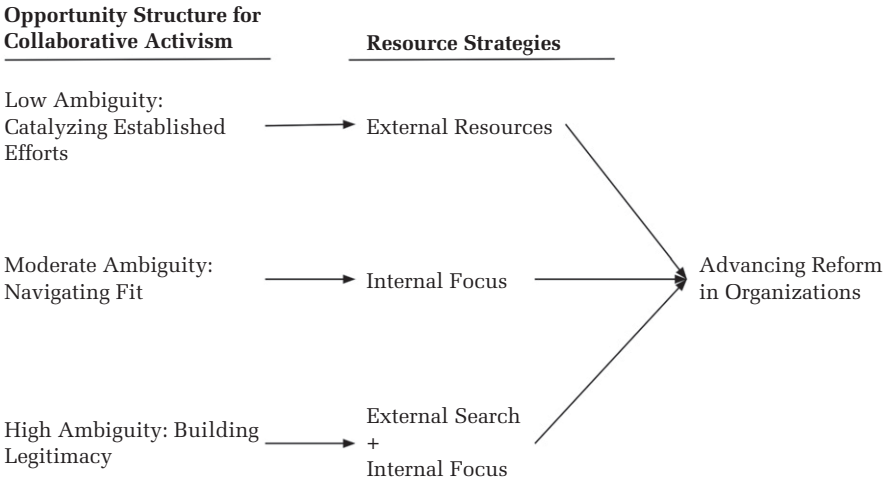
Social Movements and Organizations

While the focus of research on social movements and organizations has been on contentious tactics, corporations increasingly espouse progressive goals, and SMOs have shifted toward collaboration (Odziemkowska, 2020). In a comprehensive study of interactions between large environmental SMOs and Fortune 500 firms from 2007 to 2012, there were about twice as many collaborative interactions as contentious ones (McDonnell et al., 2021). Further, research that has considered SMO–firm collaboration has tended to focus on external-facing efforts, such as certifications and other forms of multisectoral partnerships (de Bakker et al., 2019; Gray & Purdy, 2018). Our analysis of EDF's Climate Corps program sheds light on how SMOs use collaboration to drive internal change at partner organizations. This study also advances an emerging trend in studies of insider activism to highlight the rich connections between insiders and external social movements (Buchter, 2020; DeJordy et al., 2020). Insider activists are not always self-organizing with passive movement influence, but they may also be directly and actively connected to external SMOs.

Our investigation into how collaborative SMOs coordinate change efforts inside of partner organizations leads to several theoretical innovations. First, we introduce the concept of embedded activism to characterize activists that are neither insiders or outsiders but cross movement–partner boundaries (cf. DeJordy et al., 2020). This role provides a mix of the complementary strengths and weaknesses of insider and outsider activists (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016) as embedded activists combine substantial knowledge of organizational opportunity structures with access to a wider range of movement resources. We integrate research on issue selling and proactivity more broadly to characterize how embedded activism works (Dutton et al., 2001; Grant & Ashford, 2008). This literature has provided insight into persuasion-based tactics in varying organizational contexts. In particular, we highlight a key tension between organizational support, which provides activists with resources to act, and issue ambiguity, which provides opportunities to act. Embedded activists are able to draw on movement resources to manage this tension. We find that successful activists match these external resources to their organizational contexts in order to build a fertile mixture of support and ambiguity.

attended the same training together and were encouraged to engage with smaller networks by region and project type. There are null differences in the two movement resources by gender and race (*t*-tests, race coded as White vs. other), as well as by school, host organization, industry, city, and region (correlation *p*–values, using counts for current year and all previous years).

FIGURE 2
Combining Opportunity Structures with Resource Strategies to Advance Reform



Second, we develop a revised theory of opportunity structures to fit with the collaborative tactics we observe. The prevailing theory is based on contentious tactics and holds that opportunities for activist influence are greater for firms that are more vulnerable to disruption due to factors like prominence and reliance on consumer reputation (Bartley & Child, 2014; King, 2008). As collaborative activism relies on persuasion rather than disruption (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007), we integrate issue selling research to theorize the organization's existing issue understandings as the key factor shaping activist opportunities. In order to persuade partner organizations, activists must engage with their current frameworks for interpreting and managing an issue (Howard-Grenville, 2007). Our research demonstrates how the organization's history of engagement with the issue, accumulation of issue-specific resources, and organizational scale all affect the development and distribution of these understandings and ultimately the terrain for collaborative activism. Organizations with extensive prior issue development offer many resources for activists to engage with but little space to deviate from established routines and issue understandings; alternatively, organizations that are new to an issue present activists with a clean slate but without a foundation of established issue understandings and legitimacy. Consistent with the criticisms of political opportunity structure theory for being overly structural (Goodwin & Jasper, 2004), this theory of collaborative opportunity structures suggests a landscape that activists must interpret and navigate rather than a direct and linear influence on activist outcomes.

Proactivity and Issue Selling

Our research also contributes to the literature on proactivity (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker & Bindl, 2017), especially concerning the role of ambiguity and the related construct of uncertainty. Grant and Ashford (2008) theorized that ambiguity and uncertainty motivate proactive behavior in order to obtain greater clarity. However, if uncertainty also stimulates image concerns, as when employees are embarrassed to not understand a work task, then proactivity may decline (Lim et al., 2020). More recently, Griffin and Grote (2020) attacked the idea that individuals and organizations seek to eliminate uncertainty. They argued that uncertainty is also desirable because it nurtures curiosity and innovation. Our findings support Griffin and Grote's positive interpretation and also suggest a way to reconcile inconsistent results: proactivity benefits from a balance of support and ambiguity, which together provide resources and opportunities for creative action. While an argument for balance may seem trivial, it complicates prevailing understandings of a linear relationship between organizational support and proactivity (Ashford et al., 1998; Morrison, 2011). The more an organization supports an issue, the more routinized its frameworks for understanding the issue and the less ambiguity and opportunities for creative action (cf. Risi & Wickert, 2017; Sandhu & Kulik, 2018).

We further advance the literature on issue selling by investigating the influences of organizational support and external resources. Scholars have long recommended that organizations should do more to bolster issue selling (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 2001), but how this actually works in practice remains unknown. Our unique data in terms of a network of organizations working to accelerate an issue's development, as well as the variety of organizations involved, enable us to shed light on this topic. Although prior research has strongly suggested that issue selling should thrive in organizations with greater support (Ashford et al., 1998; Bansal, 2003; Dutton et al., 2001), our findings point to a more nuanced tension between support and ambiguity (Gioia et al., 2012; Sonenshein, 2014, 2016), which external resources can help manage. Similar to previous work on issue selling (Bansal, 2003; Howard-Grenville, 2007), in organizational contexts with moderate ambiguity, we see that internal moves matter. However, in more extreme cases of ambiguity—low or high—crossing organizational boundaries to integrate external resources becomes important. In conditions featuring low ambiguity, the main challenge is how to work with the previously built-up issue understandings in the organization. External resources help move the issue from "it's already set" to "here are new possibilities." In conditions featuring high ambiguity, excessive uncertainty threatens to prevent issue development. In this context, external resources help to "unfreeze" and narrow the cognitive load by tightening the issue space and building legitimacy and capacity for change. As a result, issue selling initiatives are able to move from "there's so much to do, where do I even start" to action. Although previously little studied, the use of external resources is likely important because issue selling, as an upward influence process, implies that organizations lack issue expertise and other assets (Howard-Grenville, 2007), which external supporters may be well positioned to provide. Overall, we suggest that the repertoire of successful moves varies with the organizational context, rather than being "one size fits all."

Practical Implications for Climate Change

In addition, this work adds to the growing body of research around corporate sustainability and climate change. We provide practical implications for organizational leaders working to address climate change. Previous research on social issue selling, like climate change, has highlighted the importance of external identities for motivating employees to promote change (Bansal, 2003; Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Ong & Ashford, 2016). We bring attention to the importance of these external ties not just for motivation but also for knowledge, tools, and expertise that can be used to catalyze change in specific organizational contexts.

For practitioners, this highlights the importance of collaboration with SMOs, professional associations, and alumni networks to empower change agents within organizations to act on climate change. These connections should provide the social support of peers facing similar challenges, as well as opportunities to learn approaches for overcoming these difficulties. They should also convey specific advice, mentoring, and technical support that fit the organizational context in which the climate change advocate is situated. Given that the grand challenge of climate change requires significant expertise and interdisciplinary knowledge and is continuously evolving, the spread of these skill-based external resources may be critical for amplifying efforts. Our research suggests that leaders within organizations should develop connections externally to make these potential resources available for internal issue champions, particularly when their organizations are either new to the issue or entrenched in an established approach. It also suggests that external issue advocates that connect with climate change activists inside of organizations should strategically develop programs for providing these diverse types of resources.

Limitations and Future Directions

The EDF Climate Corps program is a prominent example of how SMOs can use collaborative tactics to advance internal reforms in partner organizations through embedded activism. While collaboration takes many forms, our findings should generalize to initiatives that cross movement–partner boundaries and seek internal changes, as opposed to external-facing projects. Although Climate Corps is remarkable in its scale and sophistication, we believe that it is not unusual for SMOs and nongovernmental organizations more broadly to seek to empower change agents in partner organizations (e.g., Human Rights Campaign, Aspen Institute, LeanIn.org, World Business Alliance for Global Health, Green Chemistry conferences, Integrative Medicine associations, and other professional association and union training programs; cf. DeJordy et al., 2020; Heinze & Weber, 2016; Howard-Grenville, Nelson, Earle, Haack, & Young, 2017; Mayer, Ong, Sonenshein, & Ashford, 2019). There

should also be considerable demand among internal activists for external support (Buchter, 2020; DeJordy et al., 2020), which is in line with findings on external information seeking in issue selling initiatives (Andersson & Bateman, 2000). At the same time, organizations will likely be reticent to admit activists, constraining the development of embedded activism. The boundary work that enables this form of activism merits greater study. For example, it may help to use intermediary parties that can act as brokers, as in Climate Corp's recruitment of graduate students (cf. Kaplan, Milde, & Cowan, 2016; Kellogg, 2014).

As an initial study of how embedded activism operates, we took an exploratory approach in this paper. Future studies could apply other methods to provide further evidence for or against the framework we developed. For example, field experiments could randomize the use of external resources. Our expectations are that external resources would be more effective in driving solution creation when there is high or low ambiguity about how to act on the issue and that external resources would have less of an effect when there is a moderate level of ambiguity. Although QCA is consistent with our expectations about equifinality and configurational causality, it also puts tight limits on the number of conditions that can be considered. There are likely additional features of the organizational context, such as goal alignment, openness to change, and progressive values (e.g., belief in anthropogenic climate change) that would affect the dynamics. Such analyses could help clarify the role of organizational scale, which is consistently influential across paths but in different ways.

More broadly, there are many unanswered questions about how collaborative activism works, which are growing in importance as SMOs increasingly adopt such tactics (McDonnell et al., 2021; Odziemkowska, 2020). We offer one model for how such activism works across varying partner organizations, generating a revised theory of opportunity structures for collaborative influence. Future research should chart the wider variety of collaborative tactics and investigate further how heterogeneity in partner organizations influences the success of these tactics.

This study also points to opportunities for issue selling research. Variation in the impact of how issue selling moves across organizations is an open area in this literature as well. Our findings on the contribution of external resources also indicate that more research should examine the permeability of organizational boundaries and how cross-boundary processes affect issue selling (Lauche, 2019). We also identify a nuanced role of organizational support in terms of positive issue understandings, which suggests that further research is needed to understand how organizations can best empower issue selling. In addition, following our recognition of issue selling practices in Climate Corps, future work could explore under what conditions temporary organizational members, like embedded activists in our case or even consultants and other professionals, take on roles similar to issue sellers.

More broadly, issue selling research could consider the varying stages and dimensions of reform. Our focus on the creation of new solutions matches our theoretical interest in the fellows' proactivity, as well as data availability, but it would also be valuable to investigate the links between reform ideas and implementation (cf. Buchter, 2020). As a comparison, social movement scholars have found that activists pressuring states have a greater influence on agenda setting than on legislative passage (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010). In addition, this research opens up questions about how to compare reforms: while we focus on scope, the depth of reforms in terms of resources committed and impacts realized should also be considered. Likewise, social movement scholars caution that success can reflect modest ambitions and that consequences continue to unfold in unintended and indirect ways (Tilly, 1999). The "finality" of issue selling is itself at best ambiguous as issue sellers continue to push further reforms in an ongoing process. Greater attention to such nuances in conceptualizing and measuring outcomes would advance the issue selling literature.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this research illuminates how collaborative social movement organizations can propel changes inside of partner organizations by embedding activists who work to catalyze internal reforms. We highlight the joint importance of organizational contexts and external resources for shaping organizational change efforts (Weber & Waeger, 2017). The picture that emerges is one of cultivated and resourceful agency spanning movement–partner boundaries, rather than isolated campaigners constrained by a lack of organizational support or contentious outsiders. Our empirical context is particularly relevant for this topic. Mitigating climate change requires organizations to effectively incorporate diffuse external concerns into significant reforms. Supporting and empowering embedded activists to champion the cause within

organizations appears promising and deserves greater support and study.

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Todd Schifeling (todd.schifeling@temple.edu) is an assistant professor of management at Temple University, Fox School of Business. He received his PhD in sociology from the University of Michigan, where he was also a postdoctoral fellow at the Erb Institute. His research examines organizational responses to social movements and cultural change.

Sara Soderstrom (capasb@umich.edu) is an associate professor in organizational studies and program in the environment at the University of Michigan. Her research advances understanding of how micro-level interpersonal interactions influence macro-level outcomes and how macro-level forces shape the meaning people create around emergent sustainability issues. She received her PhD from Northwestern University.