

THE NONPROFIT-PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: HOW IMMIGRANT NONPROFIT COALITIONS MANAGE COOPERATION AND CONFRONTATION WITH THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This empirical qualitative study—of four nonprofit interorganizational coalitions promoting immigrant rights in the U.S—contributes to both the interorganizational network management and government-nonprofit relations literatures. It does so by focusing on how interorganizational nonprofit advocacy coalitions engage in their interorganizational domain with powerful state actors to further their mission of promoting immigrant rights. We find that they effectively promote their mission and affect state actors by successfully managing the inherent paradoxical tension of cooperation/confrontation. The coalitions are found to build their power, which in turn together with two leadership activities—strategizing and mobilizing—is found to be used by the immigration nonprofit coalitions to both cooperate and confront with powerful state actors. By using this paradoxical tension inherent to advocacy coalitions as its focus, this research further develops the limited literatures on interorganizational network management and nonprofit-government relations management, and provides reflexive practitioners with some guiding concepts.

INTRODUCTION

The re-shaping of the social structure termed “mixed economy” (Austin and Hasenfeld, 1985), “quasi-markets” (Le Grand, 1991), “the shadow state” (Wolch, 1990), “government through the third party” (Salamon, 1981), “the contracting state” (Smith and Lipsky, 1993), or “the relational state” (Mendoza, 1991) imply the fundamental idea of today’s interrelated world (Agranoff McGuire 2001), where problems are “wicked” (Rittel and Webber 1973) and ill-defined and require complex solutions (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Thoret 1976).

This fact has displaced the traditional top-down and intra-organizational public management towards relational and inter-organizational management in fragmented power settings (Bryson and Crosby 1992). However, despite the rising rhetoric popularity of relational leadership and management, it is still an empirically

understudied field (Ebers 1997; Ebers and Jarrillo 1997; Isett and Provan 2006; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994).

This research wants to contribute to the cross-sector inter-organizational management literature, and in particular to the nonprofit-public relations management literature. It does so by exploring the nature of nonprofit-public relations in the US immigration policy field. In particular, the study looks at immigration nonprofit coalitions trying to influence state actors. While, the focus is on the nonprofit side of the nonprofit-public management dyad, it may prove to be extremely helpful to public managers and scholars since public sector organizations are usually far less capable of responding to strategic moves (Moore 2006).

This paper is structured as follows, we first review the literature on public-nonprofit relations. Then the methods used and cases studied are introduced. The findings and thereafter the discussion follow, and we end with the conclusions.

NONPROFIT-PUBLIC RELATIONS

Scholars have for some time studied nonprofit-government relations. Young (2000) identifies at the inter-sector level a triad of alternating and mixed types of relations between the public and nonprofit sectors, namely supplementary, complementary, and adversarial. At the inter-organizational level, Najam (2000) identifies four types of nonprofit-government relations according to the similitude between their respective goals and strategies. These are cooperation, cooptation, complementary, and confrontation. Similarly, Hardy and Phillips (1998) identify collaboration, compliance, contention, and contestation as possible inter-agency engagement types.

Scholars of social movements distinguish between three different types of engagement with the state: autonomous and confrontational, cooperative, and dualistic (Dodge 2006; Monpetit, Scala, and Fortier 2004). The dualistic approach combines both the direct action (e.g. protest) with the cooperative deliberation. Similarly, “consensus-based” environmentalist movements balance cooperation and confrontation with their opponents (Pellow 1999), departing from Alinsky’s (1989) purely confrontational activism. Additionally, Yukl and Tracey’s (1992) interpersonal influence tactics include “pressure” and “consultation” tactics.

While the above are essential insights, the studies focus on the type of engagement mode between nonprofit and state: None have focused on how nonprofits,

and in particular nonprofit coalitions, manage their engagement with the state. Thus, this study aims at answering the research question *how do successful advocacy nonprofit coalitions engage with the public sector?*

METHODS

The complex, dynamic, under-researched nature of interorganizational cross-sector interaction, together with our research question call for a deep, rich, in-depth qualitative study as the most appropriate research methodology (Ariño and de la Torre 1998; Borzel 1998; Marshall and Rossman 1995; Lewis 2000).

Data collection and analysis

To answer the research question we did a comparative interview study (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) using four cases. The cases were four formalized interorganizational coalitions which supported immigrant rights. We use multiple cases to explore how this happens, a strategy of particular relevance to understand complex managerial processes (Agranoff and Radin 1991).

To collect data, we carried out 22 interviews with 31 interviewees (5 coalition directors¹, 12 coordinating unit management staff, and 13 managers of organizational members were interviewed in 7 group, 11 individual, and 3 telephone interviews), observed over a dozen major events in the various sites, and consulted hundreds of documents related to the cases. We interviewed the coalition directors of all four coalitions, representatives from the four coalitions' coordinating units, and staff from member organizations. The rationale behind this theoretically-driven sampling for the interviews was to focus on the coalition director but complement and check for the data they provided by triangulating with the perspectives of the staff of the coordinating unit and selected organizational members. Table I describes the characteristics of the interviewees and interviews by organization.

<<Table I >>

Types of events observed included rallies, strategic meetings, and annual assemblies, and examples of documents studied included strategy documents, statutes, minutes, and agenda of assemblies and meetings.

¹ West Coalition was undergoing a manager transition during our field visit, so we interviewed both the outgoing and incoming directors. Moreover, the incoming manager was interviewed twice, in a group interview and in an individual one.

The data analysis was structured as follows. Interviews were transcribed and coded. Using an inductive strategy, we searched for new “invivo” and “open” codes (Strauss and Corbin 1998). As analysis progressed, some codes were modified, other added, and yet others eliminated—Table II contains the final evolved scheme used. Using matrices, cases were first analyzed independently of each other and later comparatively with each other (Miles and Huberman 1994).

<<Table II Table II>>

Sampling frame for case selection

Guided by a theory-driven and replication sampling strategy (Charmaz 2000; Miles and Huberman 1998; Yin, 1994), we used the following criteria to select the four cases. First, all coalitions were associated to an award recipient of a leadership program that recognized successful social change organizations.² Second, all coalitions were inter-organizational action networks (Agranoff 2003) or coalitions composed of independent organizational members working together to tackle common issues. Third, all coalitions dealt with immigration issues, a criterion included to enhance comparability among the cases by focusing on a single policy area. This impacts the external validity of our research. It makes analytic generalization (Firestone 1993) within the policy sector more robust but also more constrained to coalitions dealing with immigration issues.

Throughout this study we understand coalition effectiveness as the coalition’s degree of accomplishment of its mission. We used the coalition as the unit of analysis and effectiveness as the selection criterion.³ This is not a study identifying success in coalitions nor documenting successful coalitions. Rather, it aims to identify practices of engagement with the public sector of nonprofit coalitions that have already been labeled successful. In this sense, then, all four cases are “exceptional” (Miles and Huberman 1995; Stake 1994) since successful coalitions are not commonplace (Huxham 2003). These “exceptional” cases were used to produce initial theory, drawing on an inductive logic, and developing cross-case comparisons along dimensions other than success (e.g. membership size, budget, constituency base, regional outreach).

² All coalitions were the primary organization for which the awardees were recognized by <author reference> program.

³ King, Keohane, Verba (1994) advocate for a post-positivist qualitative methodology where the dependent variable is not constant in order to allow for causal inferences. Although we do not necessarily assume that all coalitions are equally successful, we do not compare coalitions according to their success.

The cases

To maintain confidentiality, we use pseudonyms to refer to the coalitions. East Coalition and Midwest Coalition are located in large urban centers in the East coast and the Midwest, respectively. National Coalition has members through out the United States with the coordinating unit operating in the West coast. Finally, West Coalition works in a predominantly rural state in the West coast. The work of these coalitions supports members of the immigrant communities in their respective geographical areas. Table III summarizes their main characteristics and their missions.

<< Table III >>

Major accomplishments of these coalitions

That these coalitions have been formed within the dispersed and isolated immigration environments and have been functioning for over a decade is an achievement in itself.⁴ Yet these coalitions have major accomplishments beyond this. For example, MidWest Coalition organized a petition campaign, with more than 19,000 signatures, for the INS reform, which resulted in the creation of an Independent Monitoring Board of 44 organizations that acts as a watchdog group and pushes immigration reform. So far, the board has sent approximately 800 documented cases to INS and to members of Congress.

Likewise, East Coalition enrolled over 60,000 members of immigrant families in an immigrant voter education and mobilization campaign for the 2000 elections, which resulted in the registration of more than 200,000 new citizens. East Coalition advocacy campaigns have won millions of city and state dollars in recent years to expand legal services and English classes for New York's immigrants.

West Coalition has been central in defeating several anti-immigrant ballot measures since its inception. Relevant ballots defeated include attempts to negate social services to immigrants in 1996 and again in 1998, attempts by the Oregon legislature to pass an English Only Bill 1999, attempts to further harsh time-limit on receipt of food stamps by under- and unemployed adults in 2000, and attempt to end bilingual education in Oregon 2001.

⁴ There existed no immigration coalition in New York prior to 1987. Chicago's environment was comparable prior to MidWest Coalition's existence. Similarly, in Oregon no immigration coalition existed prior to West Coalition, nor was there any unifying body for day-labor centers across states or the whole country.

Lastly, in 2000, National Coalition struck down an anti-solicitation ordinance in Los Angeles County. It has since made four additional legal challenges to similar ordinances around the country, helped in the creation of seven day-worker centers, worked with the University of California, Los Angeles, to develop a first-of-its-kind National Coalition survey of day laborers (Valenzuela, Theodore, Meléndez, and Gonzalez 2006).

These organizations have spearheaded the progressive pro-immigration side in the famous 2006 debate on immigration reform taking place in the U.S. Congress. The impressive turnout in rallies promoted in part by these coalitions is revealing. In Los Angeles' March 25th rally, up to 500.000 participants were counted, and the Los Angeles Times (2006) quoted representatives from National Coalition's members, in its coverage (Gorman, Keller, and Suarez 2006)—the same turnout was registered on the May 2nd mobilizations. Moreover, in June 2006 only, National Coalition has had two New York Times editorials dedicated to it (Downes 2006; Greenhouse 2006). Midwest Coalition-led rallies brought together 100.000 and 400.000 marchers on March 11th and May 1st, respectively, in Chicago. One of its members was cited in the Chicago Tribune on May 2nd (Chicago Tribune 2006). The West Coalition-led rally of April 9th in Salem drew 20.000 people, while East Coalition's executive director was quoted in The New York Times (Swarns 2006) as she addressed tens of thousands during the April 10th rally. These coalitions are, thus, powerful, effective action networks, able to support and mobilize their members vis a vis an external target, to accomplish their mission effectively.

COOPERATION AND CONFRONTATION: THE ENGAGEMENT PARADOX

The hardest thing about being an advocacy organization is that you're no good to anybody if you're someone's friend all the time. But you're also no good if you're the enemy all the time. You're just as irrelevant if you're in someone's pocket, as you are if you're on the outside constantly screaming and attacking them.

Former director of East Coalition.

As the outgoing director of East Coalition said in her farewell speech, government is such an important player for these coalitions' purposes that they can't afford not to play with it. These coalitions combine both confrontation and cooperation with state actors in forwarding immigrant rights. Whether it's a senator or a mayor, the

USCIS state branch or the education board, all coalitions use both cooperation and confrontation, albeit always deferring to the former whenever possible. West Coalition's former coordinator puts it this way:

It's not always about bashing. In fact, what we try to do is build incrementally...And if they, after that meeting, they continue to do that, we'll do other actions. Low-level actions that are building notoriety, press conferences, media work, getting the information out there to the community that this guy is not supporting it [18:25].

In one of the West Coalition acts observed, in Eugene, Oregon, they had invited the mayor, and while the different speakers engaged in dialogue in a full Town Hall meeting regarding a Senate bill, West Coalition did not shy away from its position critiquing federal level policies and the thus-far meager local-level support. Similarly, National Coalition invited governmental representatives of the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to their Annual Assembly and, while engaging in open dialogue with them, posed their position with respect to some controversial governmental actions. In general, National Coalition combines dialogue and meetings with legal litigation, marches, and boycotts. Its coordinator states:

Before making a decision to demonstrate or to file a legal challenge against a municipality, we will always try to talk, but there's only so much you can talk...So we honestly give that process a chance, but if it doesn't work, we take it to the streets [30:27].

He explains the power of cooperation vis-à-vis confrontation in humanizing the perception of the day-laborers and balancing the playing field: "When you bring the cops, when they talk to the workers directly, the relationship changes—the only interaction that there is between cops and workers is when they come and harass them ... they see each other face to face. And that is power" [30:23].⁵

In Chicago, MidWest Coalition also combines engagement strategies, dialoguing with senators and legislators, with direct opposition to them. Both poles of the paradox, cooperation and confrontation, reinforce each other and make the overall strategy more effective, as its director says: "Right, well we've been successful because we're not afraid to be confrontational. You have to be confrontational if you have to, but probably it's not our first choice" [14-46].

⁵ This observation, moreover, agrees with Foldy, Goldman, and Ospina (2004) who observed social change organizations provoking cognitive shifts in external actors with respect to how they were perceived by these external actors.

East Coalition, similarly, while working with several departments of the New York City Mayor's Office, such as Health or Housing, rallied at City Hall and wrote confrontational editorial letters. East Coalition's staff admitted working well with government since they not only were ready to give them credit, but also because they were a thorn in their thigh. These coalitions' combination of cooperation and confrontation resembles Axelrod's tit-for-tat, where cooperation is the first move but if defected, coalitions respond with confrontation.

Perhaps more important is the fact that these are often enacted at different times or at different levels and points of interaction. The previous quotations have pointed how both cooperation and confrontation are applied in different moments: starting with cooperation and then moving towards confrontation if necessary. East Coalition also combines different levels, as exemplified in the following statement by an East Coalition program officer:

We have like certain [governmental] staff that we are very cordial with and we talk with them and we have conversations with... Some of [them] don't have enough resources or enough support or the Mayor [is] not giving enough funding ... So in our own relations with them, sure, we're cordial and polite and, and we are more collaborative but at the same time, sometimes bash their agency or their principal, their commissioner or chancellor or whoever to get the Mayor or someone on City Council to give more resources to help them out. And I think it's kind of we're very frank. Like we'll tell a unit director, you know, 'tell us what you want, and just know that when we're bashing the agency publicly it's not about the working you're doing. You're doing good work.' [But] we want to have a public persona versus a private persona. ... You know, so there's different tones when you're talking to [9-62].

The East Coalition staff member's observations illustrates a difference between East Coalition and the other three coalitions. Only East Coalition confronts and cooperates with the same target—New York City municipality—at the same time. MidWest Coalition cooperates with Congress and confronts the state USCIS office; National Coalition cooperates with local police in one municipality and confronts the local police of another municipality; West Coalition confronts one senator and cooperates with another. MidWest Coalition, West Coalition, and National Coalition all confront and cooperate with different actors, or with the same but at different moments in time. East Coalition both confronts and cooperates with New York City Mayor's Office at the same time, but with different units within it. This may be so because of East Coalition's size and its proximity to City Hall given its regional focus on New

York City. West Coalition and National Coalition may not have such an intense interaction with any one group, and MidWest Coalition may lack the size and capacity. East Coalition, due to its size and proximity, does apply its paradoxical engagement poles of cooperation and confrontation at the same time with the same body—albeit at different units within it: e.g., cooperating with an officer in the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) but confronting its Commissioner, or vice versa.

MANAGING THE CONFRONTATION/COOPERATION PARADOX

To manage the cooperation/confrontation paradox, two activities seem extremely relevant. First, strategizing is fundamental to know when and how to apply one pole of the paradox or the other. Second, mobilizing is important since it builds up the coalitions' power bases from the outside, which in turn are used to further mobilize, to strategize, or to directly engage with the external actor.

Strategizing

Thinking strategically, emphasizing future implications of present decisions (Bryson 1995), and developing and exploring strategic alternatives (Bryson 1995; Mintzberg, Ahlstand, and Lampel 1998), is done by the coordinating unit of all coalitions. We call this leadership activity “strategizing,” since during the analysis it came up as an “in-vivo code.” Strategizing emerged as a new construct during the analysis of the data, and in particular with respect to the cooperation/confrontation paradox. Strategizing involves both making the decision regarding the engagement, as well as developing the engagement's plan of action.

Strategizing is of utmost importance, as was visible after the recent spring 2006 U.S.-wide demonstrations—greatly promoted and supported by the coalitions studied here—aimed at affecting the congressional debate on immigration. Underscoring the complexity of and the need for strategizing, it is yet unclear whether the at-first-sight successful massive demonstrations in favor of immigrants have had a positive impact or have generated counter-productive sentiments in the eyes of the general public (Archibold 2006).

Deciding the engagement mode

Deciding whether to cooperate and confront is a difficult choice, and is part of strategizing. As an East Coalition program officer puts it: “That's hard. It's an

assessment that we need to do in terms of picking our battles. There's a lot of battles, but we just have to really be strategic and smart about which one we're going to choose to actually really be out there" [9-63]. MidWest Coalition's director also describes this type of choice: "Probably after several efforts that we have been unsuccessful getting you to hear our side, then we go to the stand where we have to be confrontational. Or that sometimes we say it's not worth destroying the bridge there" [14-47].

Similarly, at West Coalition, the current coordinator admits having picked up from the former coordinator a strategizing momentum: "I think one thing I've learned from [the former coordinator] a lot is learning to pick your fights" [21:45]. As she points out, being strategic is very important when resources are extremely limited and these coalitions are overwhelmed by the magnitude and number of social issues that need to be tackled: "But West Coalition has stayed focused on certain issues, because that's how we can have the most impact...being strategic about who we work with and [what] issues we take on" [21:18]. National Coalition similarly finds itself having to decide what actions to carry out first. They usually prioritize anti-solicitation bills, local bills that prohibit day-workers to look for jobs, which affect workers the most.

At National Coalition, the development coordinator describes: "the leader encourages a lot to come up with strategies. ... thinking strategically and critically about issues and figuring out what will have the biggest impact in the work that we're doing" [16-28]. This quote points out the importance of strategizing in achieving these coalitions' missions. The contradictions between cooperation and confrontation are of little importance, because what these coalitions have very clearly defined is their mission and purpose, which is what guides their choice of engagement. Being collaborative or confrontational with the state actors is simply a strategic choice, not a value-laden issue. The only non-negotiable is the mission for these coalitions; reinforcing this point, the East Coalition director replied to me when asked if East Coalition is a collaborative or confrontational coalition that that was a "silly question." The cooperation/confrontation occurs as the coalitions try to be as effective as possible in fulfilling their missions.

As is true for other leadership activities, strategizing is not untouched by tension. Different tactical approaches favored by the members may result in tensions or divisions regarding "how aggressive you want to be to a certain individual or body...What's the best way to sort of get about a certain bill maybe, but, you know, tactics are huge and its tough to really get [members] on the same page" [9-40], says an

East Coalition program officer. The coalition seems to overcome tactical differences among members by focusing on issues, which eventually is a strong unifying phenomenon. A program officer at East Coalition comments:

So even though everybody might have different ideas on how to attack the issue, we all understand that language access is needed...we might differ on the "how" and that's where we have discussions and so on, but what we try to do as the coalition is to help identify...the things that we're not willing to move on [35-19].

The above quote suggests that conflict among coalition members is kept cognitive, rather than affective. The internal disagreements are focused on options (cognitive) rather than on personal (affective) issues (Amason 1996). While cognitive conflict in teams has been found to aid performance, affective conflict undermines performance.

National Coalition also revealed the same tension among members, the tension regarding how to engage with external actors generated between the more activist members and those less activist that receive governmental funding and demand a less confrontational stance.

In strategizing how to engage, a major issue is how to engage without further legitimizing or strengthening the opposing side. West Coalition's coordinator puts it very descriptively: "And making sure that you're not engaging in a way that further legitimizes [the system]. It's such a hard thing. Sometimes you can't always tell what's going on" [21-48]. National Coalition's coordinator also agrees with the difficulty in choosing among the engagement modes: "There is a sort of a tension between...standing up for workers' rights when workers are being attacked directly and...thinking that's only going to cause more waves" [30-29]. At MidWest Coalition, a program officer also exemplifies such tension among members.

Planning engagement

Besides the decision-making component of strategizing, all coalitions also placed a great emphasis on analysis, planning, and strategizing in general. Timing the engagement's implementation is a crucial component of strategizing: "We don't win unless we have a real clear plan. And it takes months, sometimes years to do it" [9-14], said a program officer at East Coalition. In fact, during a strategy meeting preparing for a local pro-immigrant public event, West Coalition members decided to send out a press release as late as possible to avoid counter-action by opponents.

MidWest Coalition also closely plans its actions. I attended a preparatory meeting to counteract a rally by the anti-immigration Minuteman Project,⁶ where the implementation strategy of the counter-action was developed in such a manner to have a maximum impact: “to push the...Republican congressman inside the suburbs [towards the choice of] either you’re with the Minuteman, who arranged this, or you are with us because you support diversity and you’re compassionate and that you are for immigration reform” [14-12]. In MidWest Coalition planning and analyzing plays an important role as its director points out: “we’re ...pragmatic about the situation like this. So I think on analysis, this is very important in our work, reflection and analysis, so we do a lot of that so that we can see, okay, that didn’t work, but this time, and so we change it again” [14-55].

We also attended a strategy session at National Coalition, where they had invited different allies such as American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights (LCCR). In this meeting they discussed, among other issues, legal strategies to counteract municipal ordinances that were being passed to prohibit work solicitation in public spaces and that were hurting day-laborers. Strategies were analyzed and future effects of such strategies debated.

Strategizing as we are referring to it is about the coalition influencing its domain, and primarily a state actor. From our data, this is a very important leadership activity for managing the external paradox of combining confrontation and cooperation. Coalitions determine by strategizing if they are to confront and/or cooperate and how they are going to do this. Strategizing may be even of more relevance to immigration nonprofit coalitions trying to influence state actors since public sector organizations are usually far less capable of strategizing than private sector ones. Therefore, strategizing nonprofits have an advantage over public organizations, who are usually not as capable of responding to strategic moves (Moore 2006).

Power and strategizing

Power is also relevant in strategizing. Gray (1989), in fact, points out the importance of the power to strategize in collaborations.⁷ In this sense, we found that

⁶ The MinuteMan Project is an anti-immigration group of civilians that have organized to patrol, armed, the U.S.-Mexico border.

⁷ Moreover, strategizing as I have defined it resembles strongly Pfeffer’s (1992) intra-organizational management through power: set goals, diagnose dependence, diagnose opposition and favor, identify own power base, set strategies for exercising power, and choose a course of action.

four power bases—legitimacy, access, knowledge, and financial resources—are used in strategizing.

Legitimacy affects strategizing. The coalition's legitimacy in the face of its members allows for the coalition's advocacy expertise to be accepted by the members. Given that the coalitions are the advocacy tool of the member organizations, it is the coalitions that have the advocacy expertise, not the member organizations. Hence, when the coordinating unit of the coalition facilitates a working group and proposes an engagement mode, internal legitimacy is necessary for the coalition's recommendation to be taken seriously regarding what strategy to adopt. An East Coalition staff member explains this: "I think most of the groups that we work with trust us in trying to balance doing the appropriate level of hostility at times when you need to, and then giving the appropriate amount of credit when they [the state actors] deserve it" [10-35]. National Coalition's coordinator supports this by explaining how the coalition's credibility allows them to suggest strategies:

We do have the credibility with our member organizations, where I can go ahead and call them and tell them, 'Look, guys. Come on. There's no way you're going to get worker centers in the City of New York without creating alliances' [17:46].

Similarly, West Coalition also often suggests the engagement strategy to members.

The above quote also points towards the knowledge and skill base of the coalition. This is also of fundamental importance when strategizing. There is a clear lack of such skills in the immigration sector. West Coalition's former coordinator explains:

It's all going to come down to negotiation and how you're going to be in the best posture to come out with a victory for your community. And sometimes you need to organize campaigns around that, around positioning. So we have a shortage of not only being able to negotiate but also a shortage of people strategizing [18:40].

National Coalition's director also highlights the importance of knowledge and skills when being "clever on how to move in terms of changing hearts and minds" [17-53].

A MidWest Coalition program manager shows how important knowledge is to strategy by pointing at the need of having diverse perceptions of the same situation: "the different points of view on the situation are resources for our strategy" [23-18]. East Coalition's director also considered knowledge as essential for strategizing.

Access as a power base also is of relevance when strategizing since, for example, it helps the coalition acquire knowledge, skills, and information. A East Coalition program officer underscored their supporters in City Hall and their allies in the media as factors for a recent success with a municipal bill: “we won because we were effective ...we were really smart...really being strategic who are our key players on the City Council, being out there mobilizing, knowing, you know, making this be an issue in every paper” [9-13]. The National Coalition’s strategy meeting we attended—mentioned previously—included allies external to the movement, who greatly enriched the strategizing at National Coalition.

This power base, access, not only allows for better strategizing but may also limit it, since some actions may jeopardize relations with key actors: “we do try to have some political sensibility about it. We don’t want to totally burn ourselves, because the result of that could be even worse as far as building long-term power” [21:56], recognizes West Coalition’s coordinator. Similarly, East Coalition’s director explains: “you don’t want to antagonize them [government] so completely that they cut off communications with you” [10-37].

In addition, and understandably, financial resources are also important to strategize. Financial resources are essential in an unequal battlefield such as that of the immigration field. The financial resources base, then, strengthens both leadership activities necessary to sustain the engagement paradox: strategizing and mobilizing. National Coalition’s development coordinator illustrates this point:

Well, I think National Coalition is currently in a really good position. One, we were able to have a full time staff member dedicated to development and fundraising, and so I’m able to devote a lot of my time to that whole process and really thinking deeply about strategies and alternatives for future funding, which isn’t necessarily something that National Coalition — that the National Coalition coordinator was able to do on his own. And that’s been helpful. [16-49]

Generally, in managing the paradox of cooperation and confrontation, strategizing is fundamental since it determines which engagement mode to effectively apply and how to combine cooperation and confrontation. Strategizing is aided by power bases such as legitimacy, knowledge, access, and financial resources. The other leadership activity important when engaging is mobilizing.

Mobilizing

Mobilizing—behaviors used to develop commitment and support for the coalition’s processes from external stakeholders—is about increasing the coalitions’ power bases that, often, are used to ultimately confront a target (Gray 1989).

National Coalition’s coordinator explains this need for power:

Sometimes it’s about balancing or creating a balance of power...when you have...the cops, and elected officials against the day laborers ...what we do is we bring the other members of the civil rights community to balance that power [17:49].

All coalitions emphasized the need to draw in other actors, who bring in their power bases on the coalition’s behalf and balance out the playing field, or domain—as exemplified in the above quote. East Coalition’s director explicates why to mobilize different actors within the administration:

We talk to several people in the administration; somebody from the Mayor’s Office, somebody from the agency, council contacts, who might have someone over there, because they all have different systems, if you end up with an incompetent commissioner or something, that should not be the reason you can’t get any of your work done [10-41].

In addition to mobilizing allies, these coalitions also mobilize the media and constituents. The mobilization of media and people are a mark of the coalition’s strength. Put bluntly by an East Coalition program officer: “[The] first thing that city council member wants to see is...did it get press coverage. If it did not get press coverage, it didn’t happen” [35-29].

All four coalitions are extremely focused on using the media and are very skillful indeed—the spring 2006 rallies regarding the immigration debate in Congress and their media impact serve as a recent example. In fact, a nationwide strategizing meeting—which we observed—held by West Coalition and another coalition, the Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR), to discuss how to support the Senate bill, concluded with participants discussing the media strategy to be used⁸.

Going out conquering the “hearts and minds of people,” in the New York Times’ words (Downes 2006), is ultimately important for these coalitions. In particular, for

⁸ Moreover, and as an indicator of these organizations’ strategic ingenuity and access to information, they correctly predicted (several months in advance) that the 2006 State of the Union address by the President would focus on immigration.

National Coalition given that day-laborers are the subgroup among immigrants who are the “most hated,” as a recent New York Times editorial (Greenhouse 2006) points out.⁹

In addition to mobilizing other actors and the media in support of their goals, coalitions mobilize the member organizations’ constituents. Using constituents and people in favor of its causes, MidWest Coalition managed to “force” a meeting with a congressional representative by having over 2000 people send him postcards. West Coalition also uses constituents in its work. The most prominent example was the 2005 sixty-mile week-long march which mobilized over 3000 people. Along this same line of reasoning, East Coalition director grossly determines the power of one of the coalition’s working groups according to, among other things, its ability to leverage constituents: “politics and the policy piece with the real ability to leverage constituent involvement, I think those things together define, more than anything, what we mean by the capacity of that [working] group” [10-26].

Mobilization, power, and strategizing

Power bases and both leadership activities, mobilization and strategizing, have a circular relationship. Power, are needed to mobilize, and mobilization is, in part, about generating power, which in turn is needed to strategize. Strategizing and mobilizing also feed back directly into each other. West Coalition’s coordinator underscores the strategic component of mobilizing:

When you’re doing coalition work, very especially working with a vulnerable community like the immigrant community, it’s important to identify who your strategic allies are and to not allow yourself to be wedged against them. Even in the face of some pretty intense things [21:20].

A program officer at East Coalition exemplifies the importance of strategizing with mobilizing constituents and other people for their marches:

So each rally or press conference we do is to help us move our policy or our goal forward and we’re very smart and not just having a rally just to have a rally. Because they’re very time-consuming, takes a lot of planning, takes a lot of phone calls, it takes a lot of time to do. So we make sure that those rallies don’t occur unless they help move our policy forward [35-28].

⁹ Moreover, the projected image of the coalition positively feeds back into its identity, given the interrelation between identity and various forms of organizational image (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley 2000).

Mobilizing is about building power. East Coalition director stated: “just running programs will not build political power in your community...we think more about how do we put together enough of a critical mass” [10-27 & 10-56]. MidWest Coalition’s director also emphasized this.

Mobilizing builds power by providing the coalition with knowledge from the allies mobilized. West Coalition’s alliance with the GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bi-, and Tran-sexual) movement is an example of how West Coalition learned strategies and tactics from mobilizing allies. A West Coalition founder says: “they gave us a beautiful strategy. They helped us strategizing our plan that had an electoral component, a grass roots component, a media component, a poll room component, an electoral strategy. When using that strategy we were able to defeat those [anti-immigrant] measures twice” [18:8]. Similarly, National Coalition mobilized external organizations to help develop their overall strategy as mentioned previously, and a program officer at East Coalition pointed out how this coalition sometimes mobilizes other “groups [that] may be like totally legal-savvy... understanding...the policy” [9-29]. A MidWest Coalition organizer highlighted how mobilizing allies, constituents, and media increased the knowledge base: “we have more awareness in many levels” [14-27].

Apart from building the knowledge base, mobilizing yields also another power base necessary for engagement: external legitimacy. Involving constituents, having them talk directly to the target audiences, increases the coalitions’ external legitimacy. West Coalition and National Coalition highlighted how important it was to involve many constituents for legitimacy purposes, and at East Coalition a staff member told me: “mobilization isn’t the only indication of how strong you are, but it’s one” [10-25].

Mobilizing not only builds power to better engage in the domain and hence increase its effectiveness, but also draws on power. The coalitions draw on connections and relationships, or what we have called access, to mobilize. A MidWest Coalition organizer illustrates this: “it’s a dance; many of [our] agencies are in politicians’ advisory boards, in State boards...so we have capacity to mobilize” [23-35]. An important power base for mobilizing allies is access through the relations given by the coalitions’ position in the domain.

National Coalition and West Coalition also draw on their access to different actors to mobilize support in favor of their causes. National Coalition currently uses its access to the Los Angeles municipality—something unthinkable a few years ago—while West Coalition, as already mentioned, draws on the GLBT community in Oregon.

A East Coalition program officer also told us how they used their access to the media to mobilize support: “And I think we do a really good job on cultivating those key reporters, too. We really cultivate them” [9-76].

Mobilizing is a key leadership activity of these coalitions’ coordinating units, which are engaged in a domain which is not supportive of their aims. Mobilization, intrinsically linked with strategizing, is aimed at generating support for the coalition from constituents, allies, and the media. Mobilizing both builds external legitimacy, knowledge, and access, and draws particularly on access. Mobilizing, then directly manages the cooperation/confrontation paradox by providing power bases for implementing either, or, for indirectly managing the paradox, by aiding strategizing. In addition, power also directly contributes to manage the cooperation/confrontation paradox.

DISCUSSION

Figure I below summarizes our findings regarding how the engagement paradox is managed, and offers an answer to our research question: *how do successful advocacy nonprofit coalitions engage with the public sector?* Power together with strategizing and mobilizing manage the paradox of engagement. As we explained, the paradox of engagement is sustained because it contributes to the coalitions’ effectiveness. The cooperation/confrontation occurs as the coalitions try to be as effective as possible in fulfilling their missions. Being true to their mission is the guiding value; being consistent in the engagement mode used with the state actors is not.

Although all coalitions apply both poles of the paradox similarly, a noticeable difference emerges. In the case of MidWest Coalition, West Coalition, and National Coalition, the two poles of the paradoxical tension are applied at different moments in time. In the case of East Coalition, the poles are applied simultaneously but with different sub-units of the same actor, the municipal government. Such difference may be due to its narrow geographical focus, New York City, and its large size, which has allowed it to access many different levels and units of the New York City Mayor’s Office. MidWest Coalition, despite being narrowly focused on Chicago, does not seem to have such an access—both due to its fewer human resources and the fewer contacts provided by its smaller membership.

<<Figure I>>

The engagement paradox

As Bouchikhi (1998) states, management research is not about negating paradoxical tensions, but asking questions about how tensions are managed. The confrontation and cooperation paradox has to do with paradoxes of engaging, which resonate with the extensive literature that identifies tensions regarding the engagement of units as they interact with their environment, the most typical one being the tension between conflict and cooperation (de Rond and Bouchikhi 2004).

Research on teams has found the simultaneous use of conflict and compromise (Murnighan and Conlon 1991) and cooperative conflict (Tjosvold, Poon, and Yu 2005). Scholars have found that interorganizational relationships often involve the paradox of competition and cooperation (Clarke-Hill, Li, and Davies 2003; de Rond and Bouchikhi 2004), or equal exchange and unequal exchanges (Zeitz 1980). Using an organizational ecology perspective, Barnett and Carroll (1987) find both mutualism and competition among telephone companies, however, at different levels. There is competition between companies at the organizational level, but mutualism takes place at a population level, where different communities of companies may strengthen each other under certain circumstances.

However, conceptualizing the relations as a paradox has not been used in nonprofit-public sector relations, unlike in the business sector, where scholars have identified competition and cooperation simultaneously, calling it cooptation (Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1996), and the tension between competition and cooperation within alliances themselves (Zeng and Chen 2003).

In fact, the simultaneous existence of both confrontation and cooperation supports Scott's (1992) statement that the non-confrontational notion of collaboration based on a cultural model, which believes that oppositional and confrontational behavior is an anathema to collaboration is erroneous. Confrontation, or the possibility of it, works as a regulator of cooperation (Luhmann 1995). The "shadow of confrontation" may well be necessary for cooperation.

In addition to cooperation always implying confrontation, at least hypothetically, the nonprofit-government relationship inherently includes this tension (Frumkin 2000). Page (1999), in discussing the insider/outsider distinction—an insider is a nonprofit that has frequent contacts with government and is able to influence policy—concludes that if the distinction is valid at all, it is not binary. Groups use both strategies and, more importantly, the governmental counterparts understand this duality. As Frumkin (2003),

paraphrasing Fukuyama, puts it, resolving the tension between nonprofit and the public sector would mark “the end of history” in nonprofit-public relations. (However, it is worth pointing out that while Frumkin is referring to sector relations, Page and us are referring to interorganizational relations.)

In addition, from what we have found, with the engagement paradox, cooperation and confrontation occur at different times or at different levels. The engagement paradox is diachronic or vertical in Ford and Backoff’s (1988) terms. Cooperation and confrontation either occur at different points in time or at different levels—i.e. cooperation with a public servant and confrontation with a commissioner. The paradox is perceived only by the outside observer, i.e. the analyst, because his or her thought structures automatically collapse these spatial levels and/or points in time. Collapsing time intervals or levels then generates the inconsistency (Ford and Backoff 1988), or mixed messages (Lewis 2000), of cooperation and confrontation.

The business literature observes a similar practice. Bengtson and Kock (2000), for example, suggest that in coopetition between companies, competition and cooperation, although interrelated, occur between different business units with different activities: e.g., confrontation with activities close to customers, and cooperation with activities far from the customer.

Managing the engagement paradox

Moreover, this paradoxical engagement resonates with new trends in leadership research. Interorganizational contexts, such as the immigration policy domain, require different type of leadership and management than traditional intra-organizational contexts, due to the boundary-crossing nature of collaborations (sector, organizational, and valorative boundaries), the lack of formal authority and hierarchy, and the blurriness of strategies (Chrislip and Larsson 1994). In non-hierarchy settings, neither authority nor programmed routines (March and Simon 1958) are applicable due to fragmented power (Bryson and Crosby 1992) and outcome’s uncertainty due to the interaction of multiple autonomous actors (Huxham 2003). These contexts imply adaptive challenges (Heifetz and Linsky 2002) and it is not surprising that they may be fraught with paradoxes.

Some research has been directed towards the management of paradox, dialectics, tensions, and dilemmas. One way of dealing with paradox is, simply, by favoring one pole over the other (Surnamurthy and Lewis 2003; Johnson 1992). Another is to reach a

balance between poles (Huxham and Beech 2003; Mizrahi and Rosenthal 2001). Another way to manage paradox is by alternating poles (Van den Ven and Poole 1988; Poole and Van den Ven 1989), furthering one pole with one subgroup and the other pole with another subgroup. Similarly, poles may be applied at alternate times according to a given situation as in the literature on situational leadership does (Heifetz and Sinder 1991a, 1991b; Hersey and Blanchard 1982) or Crosby and Bryson (2005) do for leadership in cross-sector collaborations specifying different types of leadership according to the stage of the policy cycle.

March and Weil (2005), on their part, call for the appreciation of leadership, where its inherent tensions are made apparent and accepted. Managing paradox entails exploring, not suppressing tensions, and involves a shift from planning and control to coping. Coping with paradox creates an edge of chaos, not settling for a bland halfway point between poles (Eisenhardt 2000). Likewise, March and Weil (2005) state that the potential for ambiguities is underestimated while rational action overvalued¹⁰. Coping with paradox, though, often requires reframing (Quinn and Cameron 1988), since specific mindsets and dispositions, in addition to competencies and skills, are necessary. Kaplan and Kaiser (2003) also call for versatile leadership, an approach that requires comprising opposite approaches (e.g., forceful with enabling leadership, or strategic and operational leadership), and which may be reached only by what F. Scott Fitzgerald termed “first-rate intelligence,” which allows you to function while holding two opposites.

We find that two leadership activities are necessary to manage the engagement paradox: strategizing and mobilizing.

Deciding and implementing the engagement strategy

Strategizing and internal coalition decision-making overlap (Miller, Hickson, Wilson 1996) because deciding whether to cooperate and confront is part of strategizing. While business may to a certain extent determine whether to “bridge” with its environment or “buffer” itself from it (van den Bosch and van Riel 1998; Vernis 2000), these nonprofit coalitions, due to their mission obligating them to influence governmental bodies, may only decide *how* to engage with them not *if* to engage with them.

¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, James March was one of the authors of the garbage can decision-making model (Cohen, March, and Olsen 1972).

Deciding between radical or incrementalist change (Price and Newson 2003) is for all coalitions an underlying dilemma in strategizing. Lorenzoni and Baden-Fuller (1995), from the business literature, highlight strategizing as a critical activity of the strategic center in business networks.¹¹ Besides these authors, the literature on strategizing in coalitions is quite silent. Agranoff (2003) has pointed out planning as a main management task in public networks, and Huxham and Vangen (2000), indirectly, point at this activity in their work on leadership, which they understand is precisely about setting and implementing the collaborative agenda. Koppenjan and Klijn (2004) have also highlighted in their later work the importance of strategic learning in networks.¹²

Strategizing is obviously also closely related to the extensive negotiation and bargaining literature. However, strategizing as we are using it in this study comprises two different levels while the negotiation literature tends to focus only on one. Strategizing here is about the coalition's internal decision-making regarding the external engagement of the coalition with an external public actor. Strategizing, hence, includes both the coalition level decision-making as the domain level engagement.¹³

Building power in the domain

According to Trist (1983), an organizational population becomes field-related when it engages with a set of problems which constitutes a domain of common concern. Constituting a domain in this sense is the immigration policy field, or at least the relational field between immigrant nonprofit coalitions, fellow nonprofits, and the different governmental organizations and political bodies it interacts with and tries to influence (Carreras and Farre 2005). All parties in the domain deal with a common set of problems, immigration-related issues, although the different actors come from and with different perspectives. The domain is uncentered (Trist 1983) since no constant referent organization exists, although the relevance of state actors in such policy domains is very high (Longo 2006).

¹¹ Interestingly they use the same term as my in-vivo code: "strategyzing."

¹² From the business literature, Hakansson and Ford (2002) and Gadde, Huemer, and Hakansson (2003) also refer to strategizing in business networks, but they are dealing with single firms influencing the network. Using also the organization as the unit of analysis, Grandori and Soda (1995) and Klijn and Teisman (1997) note that different parties try to strategically manipulate the transactions in the network.

¹³ We are aware that the negotiation literature in itself comprises many streams and subfields. Crump and Zartman (2003) highlight the following: coalition theory, decision theory, game theory, leadership theory, organizational theory, and small-group theory.

It is known that social change organizations focus on building power in their domain and how a fundamental assumption in their work is that social inequalities arise due to power imbalances—which must be counter-balanced (Ospina and Foldy 2005). Building on Emerson’s idea of interdependence, interorganizational management scholars see resource dependence theory as one of their core perspectives (Rethemeyer and Hatmaker 2006): if two organizations are dependent on a more powerful third one, the two weaker ones may join to counterbalance the stronger organization (Emerson 1962). Resources, or power bases (French and Raven 1959), include legitimacy, knowledge and financial capital, among others.

Mobilizing is about building power. Gray (1989) has pointed this out and it is exemplified by our data. In the immigration policy sector, to which this study’s cases pertain, pro-immigration rights organizations that aim at advocating are clearly dependent on state actors—since immigrants are highly impacted by legislation and its execution. Hence, these organizations unite into coalitions to build enough power to fulfill their mission (furthering immigrant rights), which unavoidably obligates them to try to influence powerful state actors.

Mobilizing member organizations’ constituents to partake in activities with the general public or specific targets resembles Foldy, Goldman, and Ospina’s (2004) concept of cognitive shifts regarding the way in which the group is conceived by others. Indeed, scholars studying social movements agree that successful advocacy requires getting an issue onto the media (Gamson 1975; Jacobs and Glass 2002).

Dhanaraj and Parkhe (2006), referring to the business sector, show how hub firms in loosely coupled networks arise to mobilize (Parkhe, Wasserman, and Ralston 2006) and McGuire (2002) hypothesizes that public network managers with low level of support from stakeholders will allocate a great share of their time to mobilizing.

CONCLUSION

This work attempts to narrate in detail how successful nonprofit coalitions interact with the public sector by combining cooperation and confrontation. These coalitions cooperated with and confronted state actors to be as effective as possible in fulfilling their missions. Being true to their mission is the guiding value, being consistent in the engagement strategy used with the government is not. However, the interviewees’ did experience a tension with respect to which engagement mode (either cooperation or confrontation) to adopt. All coalition managers and coordinating unit

members felt this tension between affecting the system (and legitimizing it) and not legitimizing the system (and not affecting it).

Furthermore, we have identified two leadership activities that manage the coalitions' cooperation/confrontation paradoxical tension with public sector actors. Mobilizing was previously highlighted by network and collaboration management scholars, while strategizing is a new constructs that emerged during the data analysis. Strategizing involves both making decisions regarding the engagement, as well as developing the plan of action. Strategizing is aided by power bases such as legitimacy, knowledge, financial resources, and access, and has a circular relationship with mobilizing. Power bases also directly contribute to sustaining the paradox of engagement. Legitimacy enhances engagement modes, since a threat of confrontation or an offer of cooperation is of no use if it is not credible. Similarly, all coalitions explicitly work on increasing their knowledge base, particularly in documenting cases, experiences, successes, and abuses. This strengthens their engagement mode by providing evidence and arguments.

We believe that this detailed account of the how immigration nonprofit coalitions manage their interaction with public sector actors takes a step further our scholarly knowledge of public/nonprofit management. Moreover, we believe that it may prove useful to both nonprofit reflective practitioners (Weick 1969). While the implications for nonprofit managers are understandable, there are also implications for public reflective practitioners. As Moore (2006) states, public managers are not as capable to react to strategic moves as the private sector. While the tension will remain as part of the nonprofit-public relations landscape, in an ever more entangled world, public managers may do well to understand how the other side functions and eventually how to respond to it.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure I. Managing the engagement paradox (source: own)

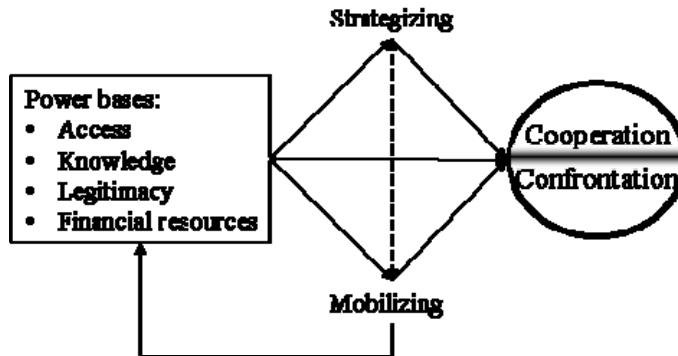


Table I. Interview summary								
Coalition	Interviewees				Interviews			
	Director	Staff	Member	Total	Group	Indiv.	Teleph.	Total
Midwest Coalition	1	6	2	9	2	4	0	6
West Coalition	414	1	6	10	3	2	1	6
National Coalition	1	1	4	6	1	2	2	5
East Coalition	1	4	1	6	1	4	0	5
Total	5	12	13	30	7	12	3	22

¹⁴ West Coalition was undergoing a manager transition during our field visit, so we interviewed both the outgoing and incoming managers. Moreover, the incoming manager was interviewed twice, in a group interview and in an individual one.

Table II. Final codes	
Activities	
MngtA-Activation	Recruiting members
MngtA-Facilitation	Managing interaction between members
MngtA-Framing	The network's structure, process, and collective meaning-making
MngtA-Mobilizing	Gathering support outside the network
MngtA-Nurturing	Nurturing the network
MngtA-Strategizing*	Making strategy, including goals, objectives, and tactics
Dimensions	
MngtD-Membership	Member characteristics, including individuals' characteristics
MngtD-Objectives/Issues	Objectives, strategies, and tactics
MngtD-St-CoordUnit	The network's coordinating unit
MngtD-St-Open*	Openness of network's structure and process
MngtD-Structure	Rules, processes, structure, including different tiers and working groups.
MngtD-Trust	Trust
Power	
PwrBaseK	Knowledge, skills, and access to information
PwrBaseL	Legitimacy and reputation
PwrBaseR	Resources in general, including access and position
PwrCapacity*	Building capacity for members
PwrDecision-making	Decision-making, both internally and externally, and including agenda-setting and non-decision-making
PwrOver	Power over someone or something
PwrTo	Power to
Tensions	
T-ConfCoop	Confrontation and/or cooperation
T-Diversity	Diversity, including division
T-OtherTensions*	Other tensions and interaction between the unity/diversity and confrontation/cooperation
T-Unity	Unity, including homogeneity

Table III. Basic characteristics of cases			
Coalition	Budget	Members	Mission
East Coalition	2005: \$2.167.560	164	To provide a forum for the immigrant community to discuss urgent issues and provide a vehicle for collective action in addressing these issues.
West Coalition	2006: \$195.000	16	To promote immigrant rights and well-being, and to counter the growing anti-immigrant agenda in Oregon.
Midwest Coalition	2006 \$1.690.218	20	To improve the quality of life for immigrants and refugees and to ensure dignity and respect by organizing and uniting communities through education, leadership development, and direct services, and by promoting the voice of community in public policy.
National Coalition	2004 \$290.000	30	To strengthen and expand the work of local day laborer organizing groups, in order to become more effective and strategic in building leadership, advancing low-wage worker and immigrant rights, and developing successful models for organizing immigrant contingent/temporary workers.