Collaboration and Culture: Organizational Culture and the Dynamics of Collaborative Policy Networks

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This paper presents a theory of the role of culture in collaborative policy networks. It builds on the literature that analyzes the factors related to the formation, maintenance, and dissolution of collaborative arrangements by demonstrating the importance of hitherto undertheorized cultural factors. Cultural theory indicates that actors with different cultural viewpoints have distinct and predictable biases in terms of their expectations of collaboration and their preferences concerning how collaborative policy networks are structured. These biases, in turn, shape how collaborative partners are chosen and how collaborative relationships are maintained over time. The theory is illustrated with a case study of the rise and dissolution of a coalition within a housing policy network in Los Angeles. The case illustrates that cultural differences can impede collaboration even when organizations share similar policy goals.

KEY WORDS: interorganizational collaboration, policy networks, social networks, culture, cultural theory, housing policy

Introduction

In recent decades, collaborative policy networks have become an increasingly important means of service provision and governance (Agranoff & McGuire, 1998; DeLeon & Varda, 2009; O'Toole, 1997; Robinson, 2006). Such networks are constituted by relationships among public agencies, advocacy groups, nonprofits, and for-profit firms that are active within a particular policy area and at times share information and resources and engage in joint projects to achieve shared goals (DeLeon & Varda, 2009; Rethemeyer & Hatmaker, 2008). Collaborative policy networks are particularly likely to arise in situations in which problems are characterized as "wicked," there are multiple stakeholders, and organizations acting alone cannot adequately achieve their goals (DeLeon & Varda, 2009; O'Toole, 1997).[1] Given their increasing importance to governance outcomes, researchers have sought to understand the ways in which collaborative policy networks are formed, evolve, and dissolve.

This work remains quite diverse. Much of it builds on traditions in organizational theory such as resource dependency theory, transaction cost economics, collective action, and rational choice models, and focuses on the factors that promote

or inhibit collaboration, such as task complexity, the availability of resources, and goal diversity among collaborating organizations (Huxham, 2005; Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010). Others draw inspiration from the theoretical and methodological tools developed in social network analysis (Adam & Kriesi, 2007; DeLeon & Varda, 2009; Perri, Peck, & Freeman, 2006), and consider how network structures influence resource exchange and governance outcomes.

This paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of network dynamics through the application of cultural theory (CT) (Douglas, 1982; Wildavsky, 1987). This approach builds upon work that has examined the significance of common norms and policy beliefs to network-level differences (e.g., Henry, 2011; Henry, Lubell, & McCoy, 2011; Perri et al., 2006; Weible, 2005; Weible & Sabatier, 2005). In particular, we consider the manner in which the interaction between differing cultures may drive the formation and dissolution of collaborative networks. This interaction is central to network dynamics because culture and collaboration are bound together in a system of reciprocal relationships. Culture arises from the social systems in which individuals work and live. At the same time, common norms and meanings are central to the functioning and evolution of collaborative policy networks (Huxham, 2000; Ostrom, 1990). Thus, the interorganizational dynamics that arise with the shift away from hierarchical and market-based forms of organization toward more networked forms are shaped by the cultural tensions and affinities that emerge as actors adjust to new patterns of interaction.

This paper understands culture as a guide for action, based on cultural categories originally suggested by Douglas (1982) and further developed by Douglas and Wildavsky (1982). CT has been applied to a range of issues in policymaking, institutional design, and institutional dynamics (Swedlow, 2011; Wildavsky, 2006a); however, it is less prominent in work on collaboration and policy networks. To illustrate the cultural dimension of interorganizational dynamics within policy networks, this paper focuses on the affordable housing field, a policy arena that has become the purview of local governments that increasingly rely on collaboration with civic, service provision, and for-profit organizations (Silverman, 2008). In particular, the focus is on affordable housing in Los Angeles, where these trends have begun to generate a recognizable, though still inchoate, collaborative policy network.

The analysis employs a multimethod approach integrating a social network survey of 145 organizations with a two-year ethnographic study of a coalition within the network. This innovative methodological approach facilitates the reliable and valid identification of the cultural biases that influence actors' behavior and the dynamics of network evolution, thereby providing a more robust examination of the value of cultural analysis (Verweij, Luan, & Nowacki, 2011). Specifically, the analysis focuses on a fissure among members of the coalition within the Los Angeles housing network. The analysis argues that this fissure was not caused by exogenous changes, such as the shifting of resources or the closing of collaborative windows, but was due to internal dynamics driven by conflicting cultural perspectives.

The analysis proceeds as follows. We begin by introducing CT and identifying the main cultural frames theorized within CT. We then develop a theory of how these cultural views influence interorganizational collaborative dynamics and compare it

to existing theories of collaborative dynamics. We then turn to our empirical example.

Cultural Theory

Culture as an analytic concept has had an uneven history in policy-related research on organizations, in no small part because it lacks a common conceptual grounding. As Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) state: "*Organizational culture* is probably the most overused and loosely used term in contemporary management discourse." In the face of this conceptual muddle, Douglas's work on cultural analysis, which was championed in the field of political science by Aaron Wildavsky, has brought a much-needed conceptual clarity to the subject (Douglas, 1982; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Swedlow, 2011; Wildavsky, 1987, 2006b). The central concept animating this approach is that culture is embedded within group-level human interaction (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003; Wildavsky, 1987). The institutions that individuals create and within which they are embedded create constraints and opportunities that generate and reproduce particular norms, attitudes, and behaviors that we identify with the term culture (Douglas, 1982).

The goal, then, of cultural analysis is to identify consistent relationships between social structures and the ideas, preferences, and behaviors that are both manifestations of and supports for those structures. Importantly, this view of culture does not entail an overly socialized perspective of behavior in which organizational action is dictated by structurally related cultural strictures (Granovetter, 1982). Rather than a binding constraint on interests and rationality, culture is constitutive of organizational action inasmuch as it shapes actors' interests and alternative courses of action (Swedlow, 2011). As such, culture is intricately related to the institutionalization of organizations that creates a specific logic to their purpose and legitimates them to their members and their environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

CT builds specific theories based on a small number of core propositions that include:

1. Culture is derived from the set of social relations within which individuals are embedded. These social relations are differentiated along two axes: group and grid. Group is the extent to which individuals define themselves as members of a particular group and act accordingly. Grid is a measure of social regulation or prescription encompassing the institutional classifications that differentiate individuals and regulate their interactions. When grid is high, social roles tend to be ascribed to individuals, whereas when grid is low, social roles are achieved through individual action (Douglas, 1982; Wildavsky, 1987).

2. There are a limited number of viable cultures based on group and grid constructs. CT focuses on four cultures defined by high and low values on each of the two dimensions of social relations. Hierarchists have high levels of group and grid. Individualists have low levels of group and grid. Egalitarians have high levels of group but low levels of grid, and fatalists have low levels of group and high levels of grid.[2]

3. Each way of organizing supports and is supported by a cultural bias that influences beliefs about human nature, the environment, and appropriate modes of action (Swedlow, 2011; Thompson, Ellis, & Wildavsky, 1990).

4. Cultures do change. Change may arise by cultural surprises wherein experience calls into question the validity of cultural biases or may arise through shifts in organizational or social relations.

5. Politics and policymaking involve the interaction of multiple cultures (Thompson et al., 1990). Multiple cultures typically exist within any particular social order and each culture is dependent on the others to overcome the limitations of its cultural biases.

6. The dynamic of politics and policy can be understood as the interactions between competing cultures and the evolution of organizational and social structures.

This conceptualization of culture is distinct from other commonly used analytic typologies. Culture, as defined here, is not a form of national character (Hofstede, 1980), institutional environment (Williamson, 2000), or a general set of norms that support cooperative behavior (Coleman, 1990; Kreps, 1996). Those notions emphasize a view of culture as an overarching and uniform set of norms and expectations that act upon all actors. CT, in contrast, emphasizes the multiplicity of cultural norms that arise from differing social relationships. The "socialized individual" is the main unit of analysis (Thompson et al., 1990). Nevertheless, the recognition that individuals' cultures are developed by the organizations and institutions in which the individual is embedded has facilitated multiple levels of analysis including the individual, family, social groups, institutions, and nations (Swedlow, 2011; Verweij et al., 2011). Each level of analysis can be composed of a mix of distinct cultures. Even individuals, who moved between differing organizational settings, may find their cultural biases may vary depending on context (Verweij et al., 2011). The analytic strength of CT lies in its ability to identify parsimoniously distinct cultures and to analyze political and policy dynamics as the interplay between cultures rather than effects of a single overarching culture.

The core propositions of CT have supported extensive theory building and empirical testing of specific models, though not all dimensions of CT have received equal attention (Verweij et al., 2011). Most work has focused on identifying the particular cultural biases of the four main modes of life. Survey and experimental techniques have been employed to relate those biases to political and policy preferences (Chai, Dorj, Hampton, & Liu, 2011; Gastil, Braman, Kahan, & Slovic, 2011; Jenkins-Smith & Smith, 1994; Kahan, Braman, Gastil, Slovic, & Mertz, 2007; Ripberger, Jenkins-Smith, & Herron, 2011; Wildavsky & Dake, 1990). Other work has employed historical analysis and case studies to explore the interrelationship between culture, social structures, and changes in policy (Ellis, 1998; Hendriks, 1999; Lockhart, 2001; Swedlow, 1994; Wildavsky, 1986; Wildavsky, Schleicher, & Swedlow, 1998). In contrast, little theoretical and empirical work has explored the relationship between the social structures in which individuals are embedded and their associated cultural biases.

Table 1. Cultural Types: Major Characteristics and Collaborative Preferences

		Group	
		Low	**High**
Grid	**High**	**Fatalists**	**Hierarchists**
		Risk: Pervasive	**Risk:** External risks and deviance
		Policy: Limited capacity for action	**Policy:** Experts and authority
		Value: Acceptance	**Value:** Order
		Collaborative Preferences	**Collaborative Preferences**
		Management: Unlikely collaborators due to lack of autonomy	**Management:** Centralized management
		Expectations: May be drawn in by other groups seeking adherents	**Expectations:** Succeed when well-structured but fail if excessive disorder
	Low	**Individualists**	**Egalitarians**
		Risk: Restraints to trade	**Risk:** External concentrations of power or market inequalities
		Policy: Market-based approaches	**Policy:** Community empowerment
		Value: Liberty	**Value:** Equality
		Collaborative Preferences	**Collaborative Preferences**
		Management: Negotiated with little hierarchy	**Management:** Consensual management with few status differences
		Expectations: Succeed with competition of ideas but fail with stultifying procedures	**Expectations:** Succeed with cohesive community but fail with excessive authority or inequitable treatment

Risk: main source of risk.
Policy: preferred policy lever.
Value: key political value.
Management: preferred management style.
Expectations: expectations on how collaborative form will lead to success or failure.

This paper seeks to contribute to the work examining the dynamics of culture and policy, utilizing a novel mixed-methods analytic approach, which can address some weaknesses of case study and historical approaches (Verweij et al., 2011). To do so, the theory of collaborative dynamics builds on the theory of cultural biases. Within the CT literature, there is broad agreement on the basic outlines of the four main cultural types and their biases concerning their sensitivity toward certain risks and social problems, preferred mode of policy intervention, and political values (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Gastil et al., 2011; Swedlow, 2002; Thompson et al., 1990). The literature focuses on four main ways of life as illustrated in Table 1.

Hierarchists

Hierarchists are theorized to be embedded in social settings with strong, binding prescriptions and group identities. The beliefs that support this way of life include support for role differentiation, procedures, and expertise. They have a strong commitment to the welfare of the group over the needs of the individual. These perspectives make hierarchists sensitive to external risks that threaten the group or threats of deviance from individuals' prescribed roles in the group. In

contrast, they are more willing to take on social risks that can be managed through expertise and organizational controls. For addressing social problems, they prefer reliance on standard operating procedures, expertise, and authority. In sum, it is theorized that hierarchists will emphasize order over other political values.

The military and government bureaucracies that operate in a rule-bound manner are prototypical examples of social settings that engender hierarchical cultures.

Individualists

Individualists inhabit social environments with low levels of group identification and few prescriptions. It is theorized that they support this way of life with a libertarian belief in the capability of individuals to order their own affairs through bargaining and trading based on their own interests. Compared with hierarchists, they are less likely to focus on external threats; rather their cultural biases focus them more on risks that arise from restraints on trade. Consequently, individualists should prefer to address social problems through market-based mechanisms managed by the invisible hand of competition, in contrast to the analysis and rule setting preferred by hierarchists. For them, liberty is the paramount political value. An investment bank that is only a loose confederation of individual bankers, each bargaining hard on their own trades, is a classic example of an environment conducive to individualism.

Egalitarians

Egalitarians live in a social setting with few binding prescriptions but a strong sense of group. They support this way of life with a bias toward equality rather than differentiation. They tend to emphasize their social solidarity to maintain order because of their rejection of role differentiation. Based on this strong sense of solidarity and equality, they will tend to focus on risks that arise from concentrations of power that may oppress others or from the inequalities that arise from unfettered markets. Consequently, egalitarians should prefer to address problems through communal means and they are more supportive of controls on the market than are individualists. With their rejection of status differentials, egalitarians value equality over liberty and order. Certain religious sects and environmental groups have been found to exhibit these egalitarian traits (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Wildavsky & Dake, 1990).

Fatalists

Fatalists inhabit an environment in which they are controlled by prescriptions but are excluded from group memberships. It is theorized that this combination of external controls in the absence of group support leads to a feeling of a lack of control. Fatalists perceive risks as pervasive, but sense that they have limited power to address them. Thus, their response to social problems entails acceptance rather than action. Given this low capacity for action, fatalists are unlikely to seek out

collaborative ties, and this culture will not be a part of the analysis here. Social settings that should give rise to fatalistic cultures include prisons and areas under the influence of criminal gangs.

Empirical Validation of Cultural Biases

Empirical tests of this cultural typology and their theorized biases have been shown to have a high degree of discriminant and predictive validity even when controlling for ideology and other factors that determine political beliefs and behaviors. In this work, an individual's culture is measured employing a battery of survey questions that probe their degree of grid and group (Gastil et al., 2011; Jenkins-Smith & Smith, 1994; Ripberger et al., 2011; Wildavsky & Dake, 1990). While researchers recognize the challenges of ascertaining cultural attributes through survey questions, these measures of group and grid, nevertheless, have consistent predictive powers (Gastil, Braman, Kahan, & Slovic, 2005; Verweij et al., 2011).

In an experimental setting, Chai et al. (2011) have shown that in accordance to theory, group and grid influence individuals' willingness to make voluntary contributions toward a public good. Actors with high levels of group were more likely to contribute to a collective good even when these contributions were individually costly. Also, actors with high levels of grid were more likely to sanction others when they withheld contributions to the collective good. These results suggest that hierarchists' sense of group belonging and acceptance of behavioral norms advantage them in the production of public goods, while individualists are hampered due to their inattention to collective benefits or social sanctions.

Policy preferences also align with theoretical expectations. Hierarchists are more likely to be sensitive to external threats and support policies based on expertise and state power. They have higher levels of concern about terrorism and support military actions and wiretapping to thwart it (Gastil et al., 2011; Ripberger et al., 2011; Wildavsky & Dake, 1990). In alignment with their trust in expertise and organizational controls, they are the most likely to accept social risks, supporting nuclear power generation, and have low levels of concern about environmental degradation (Gastil et al., 2005; Kahan et al., 2007; Wildavsky & Dake, 1990). Given their concerns about deviation, it is not surprising that hierarchists are most likely to oppose abortion rights and gay marriage (Gastil et al., 2005; Kahan et al., 2007).

Egalitarians are much more wary of concentrations of authority leading them to oppose war, nuclear power generation, wiretapping, and the maintenance of strong nuclear deterrence. They support strong environmental regulations that counter the unintended consequences of unfettered competition and support the fragile balance of their communal way of life. Also, given their low levels of prescription, they support both abortion rights and gay marriage.

Individualists provide a third mix of policy preferences. They agree with hierarchists on the need for a nuclear deterrence to avert self-interested aggressions by national actors, and they are also averse to environmental regulations because they are perceived as a restraint on trade. In contrast, they are less likely to support wars because they disrupt markets and they agree with egalitarians in their oppo-

sition to wiretapping as an unnecessary form of social control. Individualists with neither a strong sense of group or prescription are the strongest supporters of abortion rights and gay marriage.

Toward a CT of the Dynamics of Collaborative Policy Networks

By linking social structure to preferences and biases, CT provides a natural platform for theorizing about collaborative dynamics. Existing literature has emphasized the challenges of balancing the need for unity and diversity with managing the conflicting goals and contributions of members that bring different resources, power, and work styles to collaborations (Huxham, 2000; Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010; Jung, Mazmanian, & Tang, 2009). Herranz (2008), in particular, has provided insight into the multiple methods of addressing these tensions. He theorizes that the sector-based preferences of the lead organization lead to different management styles wherein nonprofits prefer a community orientation, private firms prefer an entrepreneurial orientation, and government agencies prefer a bureaucratic orientation. CT builds on this insight by linking management styles to existing organizational cultures and, more importantly, by explicating how collaboration, which entails new sets of social relations, challenges existing cultural biases.

Within collaborative relationships, cultural difference can create tension but can also offer complementary strengths and hence collaborative advantage (Huxham, 2005; Thompson et al., 1990). In an alliance between individualists and hierarchists, for example, one would expect individualists to benefit from the introduction of hierarchal order required to enforce trades, while the hierarchists benefit from the innovation provided by individualists. Egalitarians can benefit from collaborating with other organizations to help them effect change based on their critique of the status quo, change that can be difficult to achieve due to the consensual decision making and suspicion of expertise inherent in the egalitarian way of life. Individualists profit from collaborating with egalitarians or hierarchists to the extent that cultures with greater emphasis on group can provide support for collective action. Hierarchists can profit by the critique of egalitarians, which can prevent systems of authority from becoming stagnant and unresponsive (Thompson et al., 1990).

At the same time, tensions may arise to the extent that distinct cultural biases create differing expectations concerning collaborative structures and management styles (see Table 1). Individualists, with their penchant for bargaining and trading, would be expected to approach collaboration like other market-based transactions, calculating the costs and benefits of various relationships and building trust based on reputations built on mutual affiliations. They expect their collaborators to act as self-interested egoists where relationships can be supported by incentives and explicit trades rather than by more ambiguous norms. Individualists' tendency to withhold contributions to public goods, however, may inhibit them from joining collaboratives that generate primarily collective benefits (Chai et al., 2011). Given their low level of group and grid, individualists should tend to prefer to negotiate the terms of collaborative arrangements while avoiding arrangements that are imposed in a rule-bound or normative fashion. They are less likely to understand and appre-

ciate the constraints that higher levels of group and grid can impose on other organizations. For them, collaborations should succeed when they promote competition between ideas and approaches, but are at risk of failure when burdened by stultifying procedures and unruly decision-making procedures.

Egalitarians and hierarchists, in contrast, are expected to approach collaborations motivated primarily by a stronger sense of group and motivation to address problems through the collective. Hierarchists, due to their high level of grid, are more likely to be interested in more structured collaboratives with strong leaders and clearly defined roles (Arsenault, 1998; Provan, Fish, & Sydow, 2007). Instead of a reliance on the bargaining of individualists, hierarchists should prefer decisions to be developed by experts, preferably those within their organizations. Thus, they would expect collaborations to succeed when they are guided by orderly procedures and expert opinion, but to fail if they entail excessive competition and disorder.

Egalitarians with low levels of grid should gravitate toward more organic and voluntary collaboratives. They are expected to prefer tightly knit collaborations organized through consensual decision making among coequal members rather than the strong leadership model preferred by hierarchists. To maintain group cohesion in the absence of role stratification, egalitarians rely on a high level of internal goal congruity and a particularly strong sense of boundaries between themselves and an outside world full of threats. They expect the success or failure of collaborations to hinge on the degree to which they provide a cohesive community that shields its members from destructive market forces or centers of authority. Fatalists lack the autonomy to form collaborations freely, but they may be drawn into them. For example, egalitarians may seek out fatalistic and detached homeless to draw them into a call for homeless rights (Ellis, 1998).

These cultural styles are expected to influence group dynamics as unexamined biases and expectations are confronted with the realities of collaborative work. Hierarchists may find their reliance on order challenged by the continual bargaining preferred by individualists or with the leveling of group status differentials and opposition to expertise preferred by egalitarians. Egalitarians may need to operate outside their close communal bounds in order to collaborate with individualists or accept the controls and status differentials demanded by hierarchists. Individualists may find themselves constrained by centralized authority or by norms imposed by egalitarians' sense of community. The complexion of dynamics arising from such cultural difference can be myriad; the important point is that there are no equilibria in which all groups are able to continue to operate on familiar cultural grounds.

As these tensions become manifest, there can be several types of cultural responses. The first is acceptance, at least for a time. If collaborative arrangements generate advantage, actors may be able to endure and justify cultural tensions for the sake of collective goals. It is possible, however, that tensions will reach a point at which members will no longer endure differences and instead will retreat to more familiar relational grounds by exiting collaboration or seeking more culturally comfortable partners. For example, hierarchical actors may withdraw from cross-cultural collaboratives when they find that individualists refuse to play by the rules or egalitarian partners refuse to respect their expertise. Individualists may withdraw

when they find that their actions are unduly constrained by the rules of hierarchists or the consensual decision making of egalitarians. Egalitarians may retreat if inequalities or status differentials become sufficiently acute as to compromise the core beliefs that maintain their collective.

An alternative secondary response is cultural change. When experience offers up evidence contrary to expectations, cultural biases adapt (Thompson et al., 1990). Collaborating across cultures has the potential to surprise organizational members when a collaboration fails despite being organized in alignment with cultural biases or succeeds despite being organized contrary to those biases. Success within a highly structured and centrally managed collaborative, for example, has the potential to force individualists or egalitarians to reassess their rejection of the prescription inherent in hierarchies. Conversely, if such collaboration failed due to inadequate innovation and excessive reliance on experts, then hierarchists might be induced to reevaluate their biases.

Contributions to the Theory of Collaboration

This cultural perspective on the dynamics of collaborative policy networks contrasts and complements existing theories of the emergence, change, and dissolution of collaborative networks. Rational actor models of collaboration focus on the goal-seeking behavior of actors and the costs and benefits of collaborative arrangements for achieving those goals. Collaborative networks are a method for furthering organizations' service-related, political, or other goals (Huxham, 2005; Sowa, 2009), and they constitute effective and efficient responses to a host of situational predicates, including the wicked nature of problems, fractured governmental authority, dispersed resources, and rapidly changing environments (Agranoff & McGuire, 1998; O'Toole, 1997; Williamson, 2000). CT elaborates by highlighting that these collaborations also bring together multiple rationalities that entail differing definitions of problems and appropriate solutions (Swedlow, 2011). In CT, social structure and political goals are tightly intertwined. Thus, collaborative networks should not simply be viewed as instrumental means to achieve fixed ends but rather as particular sets of relationships that are manifestations and support for particular cultural biases.

Theories of homophily argue that actors are more likely to collaborate with similar others because homophilous partners are more likely to cooperate due to common goals, political ideologies, work habits, and policy beliefs (Henry et al., 2011; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995; Lazer, Rubineau, Chetkovich, Katz, & Neblo, 2010; Lee, Lee, & Feiock, 2012; McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Zafonte & Sabatier, 2004). CT deepens the rationale for homophily in suggesting that culturally similar actors share biases that facilitate coordinated action.

CT also points to cultural contingencies in the theory of how policy network structures arise. Research on endogenous network effects has found, for example, that the formation of ties is connected to preferential attachment where actors are more likely to seek out partnerships with others that already have many ties, tran-

sitivity, wherein organizations concerned about the trustworthiness of new partners prefer to collaborate with organizations with which their collaborators have established relationships, and with spanning structural holes in the network that can provide actors with informational advantages (Berardo & Scholz, 2010; Burt, 2000; Burt, Gabbay, Holt, & Moran, 1994; Feiock, Lee, Park, & Lee, 2010; Lee et al., 2012; Lubell, Scholz, Berardo, & Robins, 2012). CT would suggest that the choice to cluster or span may, to some extent, be related to sense of group. Individualistic actors might be expected to create spanning networks because they do not seek strong group ties, while hierarchical and egalitarian networks would more likely cluster through processes of preferential attachment or transitivity.

Empirical Case: The Los Angeles Affordable Housing Field

This analysis explores the manner in which culture impacts the rise and decline of collaborative policy networks through a case study of a housing policy network in Los Angeles with a particular focus on one coalition within the network. While the reliance on a single case precludes robust tests of specific hypotheses, it does permit closer examination of the cultural bases of specific network dynamics.

During the housing boom of the early 2000s, Los Angeles experienced a deepening crisis in the availability of affordable housing. In 2008, 35 percent of working households were spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing, the second-highest rate in the nation and over 50 percent higher than the average for major metropolitan areas (Gottlieb, Freer, Vallianatos, & Dreier, 2006; Wardrip, 2009). In response, housing groups and other civic associations within the collaborative policy network formed a coalition, which will be called the Housing Justice (HJ) coalition, to lobby for a set of major reforms, including an expanded affordable housing trust fund, zoning and other changes to promote housing supply, and regulations to preserve existing affordable units.[3] At its peak, this diverse HJ coalition included over 100 organizations that endorsed its policy platform and attended various rallies and events. This analysis focuses on a subset of 18 organizations within the HJ coalition that attended steering committee meetings and was observed by the ethnographer. At the end of 2008, tension emerged among coalition members and a faction broke away in an acrimonious meeting and formed a competing coalition. This discussion considers the role that cultural factors played in the fissuring of this coalition.

Data and Methods

The data were collected as part of a larger project that integrates social network analysis and ethnographic techniques to examine how the relational dynamics of civic organizations lead to formation of identifiable organizational fields. The field research combined a social network survey of organizations within the broad collaborative policy network, along with an ethnographic study of central organizations in the HJ coalition. The survey sampling frame was defined broadly to explore the boundaries and dynamics of the housing policy network, and it included all

groups active in housing-related issues in central Los Angeles, even if they were not primarily identified as housing groups. For example, a nonprofit aiding victims of domestic violence would be included if it actively sought housing options for its clients. The frame was constructed through lists of participants in housing campaigns, consultation with well-positioned informants, and the GuideStar database of nonprofit organizations. After duplicate and defunct organizations were deleted, the frame included 252 organizations.

Social Network Data. The sociometric survey instrument was developed following previous studies that collected whole network data employing an open name generator (Baldassarri & Diani, 2007; Berardo & Scholz, 2010; Laumann, Marsden, & Galaskiewicz, 1977). The exact wording of the prompt was "[o]ver the last year, which organizations, if any, would you say that your organization has collaborated with most intensely? Collaboration might mean sharing information, sharing resources, working on joint projects, having members in common, or something else." Respondents were prompted to name additional "private, nonprofit, or governmental organizations" until a maximum of seven was reached. Respondents also provided information on their organizations' characteristics and areas of interests. Ninety-one percent of the organizations indicated that they worked on housing issues, though only slightly more than 50 percent indicated that housing was the most important issue on which they worked.

In the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009, the project team completed telephone or Web-based surveys with 145 organizations for a response rate of 58 percent.[4] Seven organizations not included in the original frame were nominated by at least two respondents and were included in the network, while 30 isolates were removed. This resulted in a final network composed of 229 organizations, including 178 nonprofits (77.7 percent), 24 private firms (10.5 percent), and 27 government organizations, agencies, or offices (11.8 percent).

The broad housing network is displayed in Figure 1. Five different types of organizations are differentiated by color, including public-sector organizations, private for-profits, and three types of nonprofits: advocacy groups, social service providers, and business oriented nonprofits such as business improvement districts. The organizations are grouped into sets of "latent communities," or dense subnetworks, within the larger network (Newman, 2012, p. 25). These latent communities will play a role in the analysis of collaborative dynamics because the character of these communities offers important clues on the forces guiding network formation (Baldassarri & Diani, 2007; Granovetter, 1973; Newman, 2012; Porter, Onnela, & Mucha, 2009). This set of communities was derived employing the Girvan and Newman (2002) partitioning algorithm that seeks to maximize the density of ties within subgroups and minimizes the density between subgroups.[5]

Ethnographic Field Work. The ethnography complements the structural, social network data by identifying actors' cultures and the interaction between those cultural biases. CT associated with the various groups is mapped to an observed theoretical concept called "group style" (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003).[6] The group
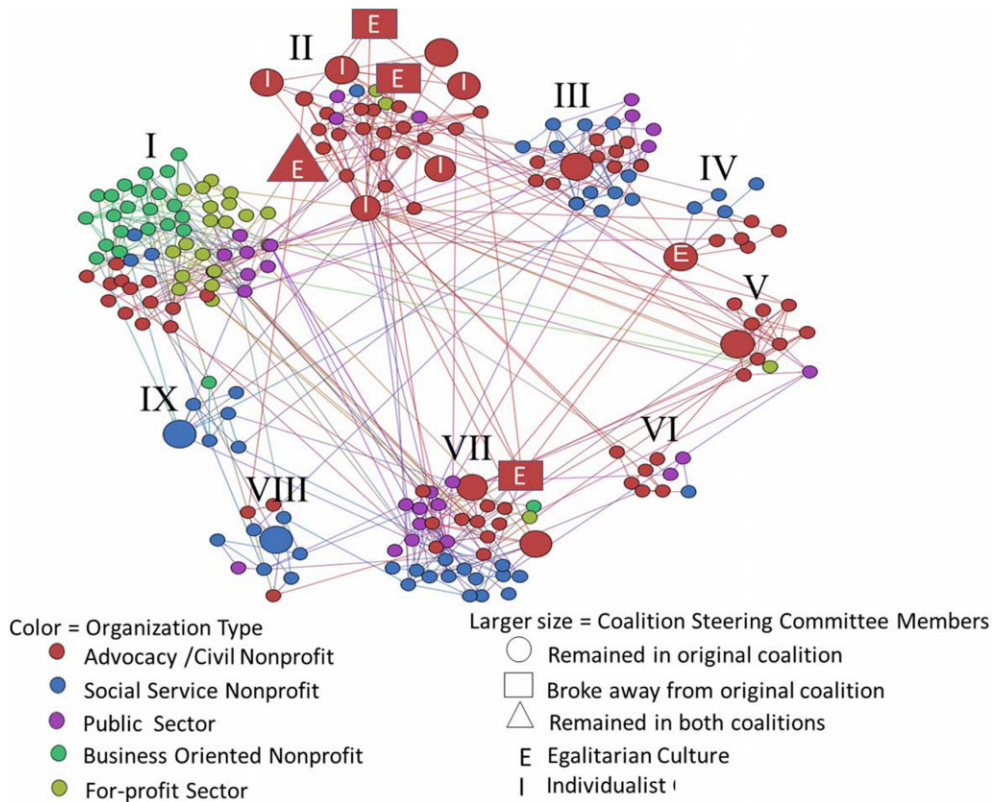
Figure 1. Girvan–Newman Partitioning of the Los Angeles Affordable Housing Policy Network.

style framework enabled the ethnographer to ground field observations in existing ethnographic studies of civic groups. Group style, like culture, arises from ongoing patterns of interaction with others and constitutes group members' shared assumptions about what constitutes good or adequate participation. There are a finite number of styles that can operate within any institutional setting. Nevertheless, group styles are enacted by local collectives. Thus, there can be multiple, clashing styles operating in a broad institutional setting such as a collaborative policy network. These styles have been identified as a social mechanism that can trigger group outcomes independently of a group's ideology on paper or the characteristics of individual members (Gross, 2009; Lichterman, 2005), and clashes between styles can be highly consequential for group members as we show here. Consequently, the ethnographic field work began with the group style concept, and through secondary analysis, we associated observed group styles with particular cultural orientations.

While the group style maps closely onto CT concepts, it must be noted the organizational situation is the main unit of analysis for group style. Styles are enacted by a group together within a particular situation observed by the ethnographer.

Consequently, the cultural analysis will focus on the cultures manifested in group-level interactions within observed coalitional activities and cannot discern possible individual level differences in cultures or how those cultures may be carried outside of that setting.

The HJ coalition was studied across different settings between September 2007 and September 2009. The ethnographer observed 10 monthly steering committee meetings and also conducted participant-observation research at five public HJ-sponsored rally events, five housing advocacy meetings run by other groups in which HJ actors participated, three municipal-sponsored "town hall" meetings, five city council meetings, and spent the equivalent of one workweek as participant–observer among staff-people in the main office of the organization managing the HJ coalition. A total of 18 organizations were observed in these settings, though only 10 of the organizations participated sufficiently to enable the ethnographer to analyze their styles. The researcher took field jottings during meetings and events where extensive writing was not feasible then expanded them into complete field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Writing and analyzing field notes fit into a multistep, iterative process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process involves positing tentative field hypotheses informed by previous research, in this case "group style" (Lichterman, 2002; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Initial hypotheses and tentative codings were then refined or, if necessary, rejected based on new field observations until hypothesized claims come to fit the data closely. This long-established process, called the constant-comparative method, is the standard for qualitative social research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As it varies markedly from the statistically driven method of testing static hypotheses once with a large sample, we describe its main steps further. We show how this process, in conjunction with a secondary analysis, enabled the researcher to identify group interactions as adhering to either an egalitarian or an individualistic culture.

Group style can be investigated empirically by examining two dimensions of action in common (Eliasoph & Lichterman, 2003, pp. 784–87).[7] One dimension is a group's shared, imagined *map* of reference points in the wider world—other groups, individuals, social categories—in relation to which participants draw the group's boundaries. Different collectivities map themselves differently, even inside the world of civic or political coalitions. Another dimension is *group bonds*, the definition of mutual obligation that members share. In some groups, members expect each other to be efficient at carrying out tasks; in others, members expect each other to share personal feelings; and in others, to highlight tight solidarity, not individuality. Different group styles construct shared maps and bonds differently.

Direct, ethnographic observation is the most reliable route to identifying the kind of map and kind of bonds a group sustains because participants often take these informal, everyday baselines of togetherness for granted and cannot necessarily articulate them (Blee, 2012). Decades of research show that ethnographers should pay special attention to "moments of meaning" (Emerson et al., 1995) during which assumptions about group life itself—the maps and bonds of style in this case— become particularly clear. Those moments include pitched conflicts (Becker, 1999)

and the induction of new members (Lichterman, 1996) during which taken-for-granted assumptions may become suddenly clear. A tentative hypothesis about the existence of a group style can be assessed when the ethnographer is attuned to interactional "mistakes" that show after the fact that a style was violated (Sanders, 1999). Participants' miscues, quick conversational shifts, nervous jokes, and avoidances are useful signals (Goffman, 1961, 1986 [1974], pp. 308–77).

Because there is a relatively small number of styles of coordinating action in citizen groups (Lichterman, 2012), identifying group style is assisted by previous research literature. An extensive review of ethnographic research on U.S. public associations has made it possible to identify simple indicators for several styles that all are widespread in the U.S. civic arena (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2013). Here we present those indicators for the map and bonds of two different styles found in the housing coalition.

Participants who enact the "community of interest" style share a map that highlights conflict between them and others on their map, and they aspire to collaborate widely in the public arena with anyone interested in their issue. They expect short-term bonds unifying the collectivity in loyalty to a particular campaign for its duration, even as member organizations pursue other interests on their own time. When enacting this style, participants concern themselves with winning a campaign against competitors on an issue, even if they have to bracket some of their own political orientations or their work on other issues. Again, arguments among participants often provide the researcher telling "moments of meaning" (Emerson et al., 1995) that reveal assumptions about group life and implicit group norms that participants share whether or not they can articulate them as individuals. Speaking on behalf of the community of interest, one coalition leader took umbrage at a homeless advocate who said the coalition should at least position itself "to the left of the Democratic Party." Affirming her own progressive credentials, the leader said that though she personally thought housing was a social justice issue, using justice language for coalition slogans would scare away a potentially broader constituency unused to hearing about injustice. A shared understanding of the group culture mattered more than her personal political preferences for shaping coalition strategy.

During another argument, a long-time coalition member defended the community of interest style against the same homeless advocate who said the coalition needed to highlight the plight of homeless people more. The long-time member pointed out that his own constituency of working- and lower-middle-class tenants turned out for rallies on the issue of homelessness and that he now expected the homeless advocate to respond in kind and to support a broad coalition. At a later meeting, the homeless advocate said she understood the coalition needed to play a strategic political game, but she also wanted it to "act more like a social movement." She could participate in the community of interest style, in other words, even though she herself consistently *preferred* a different group culture. What that advocate preferred was the other group culture we observed, the "community of identity," the group culture observed by the researcher at meetings of the advocate's own organization.

Participants who enact the "community of identity" style also imagine themselves on a wider map of conflict but aspire to preserve their distinctiveness in public with especially firm boundaries and do *not* aspire to collaborate widely. Their preferred bonds establish long-term commitment among fellow "members of the community" and not just the short-term bonds of a campaign; they fight for "a people" or a social category over a long haul, not just to win one campaign on one issue. Again, arguments offer telling moments of meaning: A coalition dissenter who wanted the coalition styled in this way said at another contentious meeting, to the agreement of a few other dissenters, "We need to be . . . not so focused . . . on politically palatable ways of framing the issue." What the coalition's action should be *about*, in other words, was standing up for oppressed people over a long haul, not pragmatic winning on a more narrowly defined, shared interest, even though this speaker was the leader of a low-income tenant's rights organization that did mount and sometimes won its own kind of campaigns. As one member of one of the dissenting organizations said, "we are fighting a one hundred year war (against property developers)!" Such a comment implies hoped-for bonds of commitment that last indefinitely, not just until a campaign wins.

Though the coalition ran predominantly on the group culture of a community of interest, the above examples show that some members preferred a different group culture. These advocates went along with the community of interest sometimes even when they did not prefer it. Shared understandings, in short, are not necessarily preferred understandings. One of the benefits of ethnographic work is that it discovers shared understandings that operate in groups even if some individuals devalue those understandings.

Ongoing hypothesis testing and refining in the first several months of the study revealed consistent patterns of interaction that followed one of these styles or the other. Arguments quite often were really arguments over style. There were five organizations that enacted the "community of interest" style and are marked with an I in Figure 1. Five other organizations enacted the "community of identity" style, indicated by an E in Figure 1.

A secondary analysis translated this close coding of organizational style into the culture concepts used by CT. Based on field notes, all of the organizations in this coalition were characterized by low levels of hierarchy and prescription, which was evident in interactions within the steering committee. The committee avoided strict assignments of roles. It was open to helpful collaborations of varying duration and intensity with a variety of actors: governmental agents, banks, and labor or religious groups with whom coalition members might share relatively few interests other than affordable housing and whose interests might conflict with those of coalition organizations. It was open to input from new members as long as the information could be strategically useful. Decisions about whether and when to pressure city officials, for instance, emerged from discussion rather than as dictates from a leader. Long-time coalition members considered dissent from some members over strategy as troubling and as cause for discussion rather than simply out of bounds or impertinent. Similarly, consensual decision-making styles were observed in all of the observed organizational settings.

The "community of identity" group style was then classified as a version of CT's egalitarian culture due to its strong sense of collective identity. These five organizations expected members to exhibit a sense of commitment to the communities they represented and protected. They were more wary of collaboration with governmental agents because they perceived them to favor property owners over low-income tenant communities and were even wary of affordable housing developers because they managed or owned property.

The "community of interest" was classified as a version of CT's individualist culture with its looser bonds; and its openness to wide, network-style collaboration. These organizations emphasized strategic action that advanced their common goal rather than building strong bonds to any particular community or other organization. They were willing to collaborate with a variety of actors on the basis of shared interests even if the collaborations were only short term.

The Rise and Fall of the Affordable Housing Policy Network

The analysis of the role of culture in the rise and fall of the affordable housing coalition studied in the ethnography begins by placing the coalition within the larger context of the housing collaborative policy network. While the lack of longitudinal network data precludes rigorous testing of the factors shaping the collaborative housing network, the observed network is consistent with theories on collaborative policy networks. DeLeon and Varda (2009) proposed a number of "structural signatures" that should be observed in these networks to facilitate the discursive exchange, information sharing, and collaboration that the networks seek to support. These include a diversity of actors, a horizontal power structure, and embeddedness. The observed network does exhibit these features with a number of important caveats.

The overall housing network is quite diverse with the main component connecting government agencies, for-profit firms, and differing nonprofits. Nevertheless, homophily is evident in the shape of the subgroups within the network as seen in Table 2 that describes the subgroups in Figure 1. For example, the largest subgroup, Group I, consists of a business–government axis composed primarily of members from government, business firms, and business-oriented nonprofits like chambers of commerce. Another subgroup, Group II, collects the main housing activists. This suggests that while collaborative policy networks benefit when they connect a broad array of actors, close collaborations, such as those measured in these data, are still more likely to occur between similar organizations.

The housing network does exhibit a relatively horizontal structure. Despite being a sparse network (density = 0.01), it achieves a level of cohesion through a polycentric structure in which a relatively small number of central players unite segments of the network, with looser bridging ties connecting these disparate subgroups (Baldassarri & Diani, 2007). Eight organizations constitute important hubs, and within this group are actors from the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. Unlike many more formalized policy networks, this network does not exhibit a core/periphery structure with a single core of densely connected organizations

Table 2. Composition of Girvan–Newman Partitions (Community Subgroups) by Organization Type and Issue Importance

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X–XVII	Total
Organization type											
Business oriented nonprofit	21 (32%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	0	23
Social service nonprofit	4 (6%)	1 (3%)	12 (44%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	1 (11%)	14 (36%)	7 (64%)	6 (86%)	6	55
Advocacy/civic nonprofit	14 (21%)	28 (82%)	11 (41%)	6 (60%)	9 (82%)	6 (67%)	14 (36%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)	9	100
For-profit	20 (30%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0	24
Public sector	7 (11%)	3 (9%)	4 (15%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	2 (22%)	9 (23%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	0	27
Total	66 (100%)	34 (100%)	27 (100%)	10 (100%)	11 (100%)	9 (100%)	39 (100%)	11 (100%)	7 (100%)	15	229
Housing most important issue											
Percent	25%	57%	77%	50%	40%	20%	39%	80%	75%	86%	

The null hypothesis that organizations are evenly distributed between subgroups is rejected at the 5 percent level of significance.

Partitions were made using Girvan–Newman partitioning; partitions 10–17 are lumped together in the table.

The "most important issue" is only known for survey respondents ($n = 145$ organizations). Approximately 48% of survey respondents stated that housing was the most important issue to their organization.

surrounded by peripheral organizations that are more loosely connected to the core but not to one another (Ernstson, Sörlin, & Elmqvist, 2008).[8]

There are also indications that actors within this collaborative policy network are concerned with embeddedness. This entails forming denser networks that facilitate monitoring and support collective action (Berardo & Scholz, 2010; DeLeon & Varda, 2009; Feiock et al., 2010; Feiock & Scholz, 2010). This tendency can be measured by the degree of network-level transitivity, the degree to which actors form collaborations with others with whom their collaborators already have a relationship. The observed level of transitivity in the housing network is significantly higher than expected by chance, indicating the use of transitive relationships to promote embeddedness.[9]

Similar forces also appear to have shaped the HJ coalition that arose within the larger network. The importance of preexisting ties for shaping new collaborations is evident in that half of the members who attended steering group meetings come from Group II, in which the organizer of the coalition resides. Also, there is a high degree of homophily in that the steering committee is entirely composed of advocacy and social service nonprofits.

One important feature of the steering committee was its inclusiveness. It incorporated organizations from seven different subgroups in the broader housing network. Moreover, the more than 100 groups within the coalition were even more diverse and included religious organizations, developers, unions, and many other social service organizations whose primary mission did not directly touch upon housing issues. From a rational actor perspective, this is likely due to the coalition's interest in building a diverse set of supporters to increase its political clout.

Nevertheless, it is also consistent with the individualistic culture of the lead organization. The coalition's diversity created challenges that often arise as differing organizations search for a common ground to guide collaborative action (Huxham, 2000; Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010). The lead organization addressed these challenges through a series of strategic deal-making actions characteristic of the individualistic culture. Without being fettered by strong group boundaries or the need to act within a narrowly defined role, the lead organization was able to craft a platform that included elements on funding for affordable housing, reforms to zoning laws to promote mixed-income housing, and protections for existing affordable housing that could attract a diverse following. It narrowly focused on the affordable housing crisis to avoid related issues, such as homelessness or mental health services, for which there was less consensus. The policy platform also included elements that were attractive to all parties and avoided controversial elements. The call for a trust fund attracted affordable housing advocacy groups and tenant's rights groups, as well as nonprofit housing developers. The point to provide incentives for middle-income housing construction might attract for-profit as well as nonprofit developers and unions, and the point to preserve SRO housing appealed to organizations concerned with the very poorest residents. In contrast, it specifically avoided other issues, such as the conversion of SRO housing to other types of affordable units, because they were viewed as distractions from the commonly supported policy platform. The expectations of the endorsers also had the aura of an arm's length political bargain.

They were expected to support the platform and the coalition's political tactics for enacting the plan, but endorsers were at the same time free to pursue related goals, and many held their own rallies and political meetings related to housing matters.

Cultural factors in collaborative dynamics are even more evident in the splintering of the coalition, which occurred amid a great deal of acrimony in the summer and fall of 2008. Surprisingly, these divisions surfaced at a meeting held to reenergize the unity of the coalition and to strategize for the final push toward the enactment of its platform. Three coalition members, two of which had been active in the steering committee, loudly denounced the coalition for failing to keep member organizations sufficiently informed of ongoing deliberations over how to phrase demands to the city. According to these opponents, the coalition was not participatory enough and not transparent enough to member organizations. They accused the coalition of abandoning the poorest stakeholders in the coalition and of being excessively accommodating to the city. Subsequently, these groups led a splinter faction to form a competing coalition. In Figure 1, three splinter organizations that completely broke off their connections with the original coalition are depicted as squares, while a fourth organization, which joined the splinter coalition but also continued to collaborate with the original coalition, is depicted as a triangle. The original coalition suffered diminished capacity, having lost some visible partners. The empirical puzzle posed by this rift is why these organizations that had been collaborating successfully suddenly felt compelled to exit the coalition and, more importantly, to denounce a coalition in which they had been active for an extended period of time.

The fault lines of this fissure and the rhetoric surrounding the dispute point to the cultural roots of the coalition's demise in that the fissure occurred along cultural lines. All of the breakaway organizations share an egalitarian culture, and only a single egalitarian organization was wholly left in the original coalition. All of the individualistic organizations stay within the original coalition.

The rhetorical conflicts that preceded and marked the fissure reinforce how the rift was driven by the clash between the organizational logics derived from distinct cultures. In discussions prior to the fissure over the political strategy for the coalition, the steering committee discussed a range of frames by which they could communicate the affordable housing problem, including a human-rights and community preservation frame and a consumer-oriented frame concerned with providing choice and market access to middle-class families. The leaders of the individualistic organizations treated the frames strategically. As individualists, with a bias toward bargaining versus rule-bound behavior, they found each frame equally valid but wished to employ the consumer frame, believing it best positioned to bargain with the city and to attract new potential supporters. Furthermore, the individualists, consistent with their rejection of prescription, asked coalition members to speak only in terms of the consumer frame at coalition events, although they were free to employ any of the frames in their individual advocacy work.

The individualists, hampered by their blindness to the importance of group to egalitarian organizations, failed to appreciate the deeper consequences of what they considered a purely strategic decision. The egalitarian organizations viewed dismissing the rhetoric of rights or preserving poor people's communities as a

fundamental threat to the bonds that formed their organizational identities. It devalued their solidarity with the poor and undermined the purity of their community.

This rift was not a simple argument over tactics or priorities. The new coalition formed by the egalitarian organizations developed a set of policy goals that over-lapped significantly with the original coalition's policy platform. The new coalition continued to recognize the importance of combining initiatives targeted to benefit the very poor with others that would primarily benefit the middle class. Rather, the tensions over the framing of the affordable housing problem arose from the core identities of these organizations. Egalitarian organizations wish to maintain a strong group identity maintained by a sense of solidarity and harmony with group members. Yet the rhetorical direction of the main coalition threatened this self-identity and the norms by which these organizations maintained themselves, and exposed the egalitarians to the threats posed by hierarchical and individualist ways of life.

The cultural explanation of the fissure is given further credence by the fact that other standard explanations for the termination of collaborative relationships fail to provide a persuasive account for this case. Viewed from the perspective of standard rational actor models, the fissuring of this coalition is no great surprise. Collective action is typically threatened by the incentives of individual members to defect and free ride on the efforts of others (Berardo & Scholz, 2010; Feiock et al., 2010; Feiock & Scholz, 2010; Scholz, Berardo, & Kile, 2008). Nevertheless, these incentives fail to explain the vitriol of the breakup. Given the similar policy goals of the original and breakaway coalitions, all of these organizations stood to benefit from enactment of housing reforms. Thus, by hampering the prospects for success, the breakaway organizations worked against their own narrowly construed instrumental interests when they denounced the campaign.

Cultural tensions, nevertheless, can explicate the seemingly irrational vitriol observed (Swedlow, 2002, 2011). While cross-cultural collaboration requires organizations to compromise core beliefs and preferences in their relationship with others, defections from collaborations not only free organizations from those tensions but also provide an opportunity for them to reaffirm their cultural biases. In this context, forceful rejection of the compromise can be culturally rational by reaffirming a group's chosen way of life.

Resource-based explanations expect the demise of a coalition to be linked to changes in resource availability or the inability of leadership to balance the compet-ing policy goals of collaborators (Bazzoli et al., 2003; Takahashi & Smutney, 2002). Neither of those precursors, however, is evident. There was no major reduction in resources available prior to the time of the fissure and there was little evidence of fundamental policy differences between the advocacy coalition and the breakaway group.

Network structure, another candidate explanation for this fissure, also fails to provide a compelling case. The strong version of this argument is that network fissures in times of conflict tend to occur along clear boundaries separating sub-groups (Hart & Van Vugt, 2006; White, Boorman, & Breiger, 1976; Zachary, 1977). In

Figure 1, the three square nodes and one triangle that represent the four members of the splinter coalition do not constitute a distinct preexisting subgroup. The members are spread between three of the main subgroups identified, and the majority of the splinter members come from the same subgroup where the majority of the remaining groups reside.

Discussion

CT, as illustrated in this case, illuminates how the ends pursued by organizations are not separate from the means chosen to attain those ends. The groups that were found to enact individualistic and egalitarian cultures in the coalition were brought together by a common set of policy goals, goals that did not change during the study period. Nevertheless, the organizations were driven apart by divergent perspectives on the appropriate coalitional partners and appropriate modes of action, perspectives that align well with the expectations of CT and resonate with other sociological work focusing on the intersection of networks and culture (Burt, Jannotta, & Mahoney, 1998; Erickson, 1996; Vaisey & Lizardo, 2010).

This insight brings a fresh perspective to existing theories of interorganizational collaboration and the dynamics of policy networks. It highlights the manner in which actors' cultural biases or deep core beliefs play an important role in collaborative decisions that cannot be easily explained by reference to instrumental rationality based objectively on observed situational conditions. This insight is shared with the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) in which shared policy core beliefs have been shown to facilitate tie formation (Henry, 2011; Henry et al., 2011). While policy core beliefs and cultural biases toward organizational structure and action are most likely correlated, they are distinct characteristics as is seen in the organizations in the HJ coalition. Moreover, by tying culture to organizational forms, CT moves beyond the ACF by providing an analytic framework for understanding the dynamics of interorganizational interaction between similar and dissimilar actors.

CT also provides greater nuance to the widespread recognition that organizations form collaborative policy networks as they seek collaborative advantages derived from common goals and complementary capacities (Huxham, 2005; Sowa, 2009). CT highlights the importance of the compatibility of cultural biases and expectations on the structure of social relations and forms of action. Both perspectives recognize that complementary capacities are likely to arise from distinct cultural perspectives. Nevertheless, CT highlights that such collaborative advantage will come packaged with cultural tensions that may make it more difficult to leverage potential advantages, as was the case here.

Rational choice and resource dependence models of collaborative networks suggest that there are feasible (though not easy) management responses to address tensions that arise due to goal divergences and have sought to identify the combination of network relationships, management structures, and leadership that can overcome these challenges (Huxham, 2000, 2005; Ospina & Saz-Carranza, 2010). CT, in contrast, leads to a more dynamic perspective on collaboration. It highlights that cross-cultural collaboration inherently involves tensions due to conflicting

world views and the hybrid organizational nature of collaboration. These tensions lead to a perpetual dynamic involving efforts to align modes of interaction with cultural biases that drive continued change in collaborative structures (Swedlow, 2011). Thus, CT suggests that most efforts to manage the interorganizational tensions inherent in collaborative policy networks will be ephemeral, counseling against practitioner hopes and expectations that collaborative arrangements will operate smoothly with little need for adjustment. At the same time, it provides tools for those practitioners to understand and anticipate the forces driving change.

Conclusion

With the rise of the prevalence and importance of collaborative policy networks, scholars have an important task in furthering our understanding of how these interorganizational collaborations arise, what opportunities they present, what factors promote successful outcomes, and what challenges they must overcome. This paper presents CT as an important, though underutilized, theoretical lens for such analysis. Cultural theory builds on a simple but powerful insight: The social relationships within which individuals are embedded generate predictable cultural biases, perspectives on how the world does and should operate, and their preferences for how to live in that world, and these biases, in turn, tend to support and sustain their extant set of social relationships.

This perspective is a promising avenue for the study of interorganizational dynamics. Given that collaborative policy networks constitute a hybrid organizational form mixing elements of market-based, hierarchical, and communal relationships, theorizing requires a framework for understanding the dynamics that arise when individuals and groups begin to operate within new sets of social relationships, a framework explicitly provided by CT. CT complements the rational choice and resource dependence models that have dominated this field by connecting actors' preferences and beliefs to the social structures in which they are embedded, thereby providing a theoretical basis for the preferences that drive those models (Chai, 1997; Chai et al., 2011). It also expands on other culture-based analyses of cooperative behavior, in identifying and theorizing about multiple forms of stable cultures, each of which can facilitate cooperative behavior.

The Los Angeles case provides an intriguing example of the role of culture in collaboration. Nevertheless, this work must be viewed as preliminary and suggestive rather than a definitive test due to limitations in the data. The use of ethnographic techniques has important advantages in terms of the validity of cultural classifications, but it does severely restrict sample size. Also, while network data provide key insights concerning the collaborative context within which interorganizational dynamics operate, cross-sectional data do not allow for a detailed analysis of network evolution. The cultural dynamics, moreover, are observed in a particular context involving voluntary collaboration within a policy network that did not include any hierarchical organizations. These features limit the generalizability of the results. It is possible that cultural differences are less likely to drive fissures in

service-related collaboratives that are supported by contractual agreements or sharing of monetary resources or are managed by a central network coordinator (Provan et al., 2007).

The social network methods applied here, nevertheless, provide an avenue for rigorously testing distinct dimensions of CT and issues of collaborative policy networks more generally. Our theory of culture and collaborative dynamics could be tested more rigorously with data that combine social network ties, preferably measured longitudinally, with batteries of questions that capture cultural attributes (Gross & Rayner, 1985; Jenkins-Smith & Smith, 1994; Kahan et al., 2007). For example, researchers could test whether the cultural characteristics of actors are associated with particular forms of network management. In addition, such network data would facilitate the testing of understudied theories concerning how cultural biases arise from the nature of individuals' social relationships. By constructing network-based measures of the degree to which actors are embedded in hierarchical, dense, or bridging networks, researchers could test the degree to which these social structures lead individuals to adopt hierarchical, egalitarian, or individualistic cultural biases.

Finally, CT can potentially contribute to the voluminous work that has sought to identify the structural attributes of higher-performing networks (O'Toole, 1997; Provan & Milward, 1995, 2001; Provan et al., 2007). CT proposes that culture constitutes an important missing variable that may mediate between structure and performance. For example, structural holes have been identified as a network structure that confers advantages for actors who bridge structural holes (Burt, 2000; Burt et al., 1994). However, the brokerage activity that leads organizations and individuals to bridge structural holes is most likely culturally contingent (Burt et al., 1998). Individualistic cultures that have weaker constraints due to either group membership or group-based prescriptions have greater freedom to form such bridging ties and may also be connected to higher levels of performance. If this is the case, the benefits of network structure may be culturally dependent, and omitting information about culture from models of collaboration may lead to incorrect inferences (Burt et al., 1994; Fowler, Heaney, Nickerson, Padgett, & Sinclair, 2011; Xiao & Tsui, 2007).

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Notes

1. These networks share characteristics with the policy subsystems and coalitions analyzed within the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier & Weible, 2007), but the focus of analysis here is on interorganizational relationships rather than overall policy outcomes.

2. There is some debate over the degree of cultural variety engendered by the group and grid dimensions (Boyle & Coughlin, 1994; Wildavsky, 1987), but there is consensus that there is a limited number of constellations of social relations that are socially viable (Wildavsky, 1987).

3. Because participants in the ethnographic research were ensured confidentiality, neither the specific name of the coalition under study nor the individual groups within the coalition can be revealed.

4. The response rate is comparable to similar work on organizational collaboration (Feiock et al., 2010; Feiock & Scholz, 2010; Henry et al., 2011; Scholz et al., 2008). While there is evidence that some measures of network structure are robust against missing data (Costenbader & Valente, 2003), the lack of complete data may bias some measures of network structure. Also, the reliance on a name generator may bias results by limiting actors' outdegree. The use of rosters to collect network data has been found to elicit more relationships from respondents. Nevertheless, that form of data collection was not appropriate for this project because the researchers employed a realist approach, wherein they sought to uncover actors' perceptions of the boundaries of their collaborative network rather than define the network ex ante (Laumann, Marsden, & Prensky, 1989). The name generator could bias the degree of observed homophily if respondents are more likely to recall similar organizations in their early responses. We checked this possibility by examining the responses that provided six or seven alters and comparing their first four nominations to their last two or three. A chi-square test found no statistically significant differences in levels of homophily between early and later nominations.

5. Several partitions were produced, each allowing a larger number of subgroups. The modularity index (Q), a measure of the goodness of fit of the partition, increased rapidly as the number of subgroups allowed increased and plateaued at $Q = 0.527$ with 17 subgroups. This 17-group partition is displayed and includes subgroups varying in size between a single organization and 66 organizations. Eight of the groups that have three or fewer members are omitted from Figure 1 but do not play an important role in the analysis. More technically, modularity is the fraction of the network ties that fall within defined groups minus the expected such fraction of network ties that would fall within the group if ties were distributed randomly.

6. Unlike political science, modern cultural sociology has not followed Douglas's cultural framework.

7. For brevity's sake, we follow other research (Lichterman, 2012) in finding that two of the original three dimensions in Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003) effectively distinguish different styles in U.S. public life.

8. The UCINET procedure that correlates the observed network to an ideal core–periphery network found a maximum correlation of only 0.124.

9. Observed network-level transitivity is 0.081. In 1,000 random networks generated preserving the degree distribution of the observed network, not one had transitivity higher than 0.03.

Acknowledgments

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