

BUILDING POWER BEYOND THE LOCAL SCALE: AN EXAMINATION OF
INTERORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION AMONG FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY
ORGANIZING GROUPS

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to illuminate the relative impact of geographic dispersion on the ability of faith-based community organizing (FBCO) groups to form effective federations at the city and regional levels. Scholarship on FBCO in the United States has been consistent in its finding that this practice is one of the most effective ways to revitalize democratic life in previously marginalized urban social milieu. However, as Castells (1984) theorized, and much of the case literature on FBCO has confirmed, the ability to work at political (and thus by default geographic) scales that supersede the neighborhood or city has been at best uneven. At their base, FBCO groups derive power at local political and geographic scales from their ability to tap into/strengthen existing congregational social networks to form highly cohesive interest groups of sufficient size to influence (or make a credible threat to influence) the outcome of local elections. Historically, this has been the most successful arena for FBCO groups; the literature on FBCO abounds with illustrations of successful campaigns to improve conditions at the neighborhood, city, and regional levels (Wood, 2002; Orr, 2007; Warren, 2001; Speer & Hughey, 1995). Increasingly, locally constituted organizing groups recognize that in order to challenge the broad economic and political currents which give rise to their marginalization, they must engage in effective action at higher scales of political engagement (Orr, 2007; Herrod, 2001; Miller, 2000). As these political scales of engagement are expanded, FBCO groups manage to build power by forming interorganizational collaborations among themselves, and also with other groups such

as labor unions across ever increasing geographic distance. However, significant questions remain regarding the viability of this process in affecting change at these higher scales of political engagement (Drier, 2007; Wood, 2007; Castells, 1984). Empirical work regarding this process of building power beyond the local level, sometimes referred to as 'scaling up', or 'jumping scale' is relatively underdeveloped in the current literature. Furthermore, the challenges posed by the increased geographic dispersion of modern urban and periurban areas has received only scant attention within the community organizing literature. As FBCO groups adjust their strategies and the focal points of their actions in order to appropriately engage the relevant political scale where they are seeking to affect change, they must cope with varying degrees of dispersion across geo-physical space. Empirical work to highlight the role that geographic dispersion plays in the ability of FBCO groups to operate at a variety of scales is so far missing from the literature.

Given the importance of solidarity between groups in exercising power, this study takes as its main unit of analysis the collaborations between FBCO groups. This thesis seeks to illuminate the process of forming interorganizational relations by using an actor-based stochastic network analytic modeling procedure. Specifically, I propose employ SIENA to model the likelihood of observing relations between two given congregations while taking into account the amount of travel distance between them, the relative alignment of their denominational, and racial/ethnic membership, their relative levels of activity, as well as two often-used relational dynamic effects (to be discussed in the methods section). In other words, this study seeks to understand the relative importance of geographic distance in shaping the ability of FBCO groups to form larger coalitions and thus to 'scale up'.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

An understanding of some of the basic tenants of the practice of community organizing provides a useful starting point for understanding why this strategy has proven difficult to 'scale up.' Orr (2007) provides a general definition of the process: "community organizing refers to the process that engages people, organizations, and communities toward the goal of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of life, and social justice," (p. 2). Much in line with Orr's definition, Speer and Hughey (1995) describe the practice of community development as relying on a joint focus on individual and group level empowerment. These authors describe three principles of community organizing used by the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) – one of the largest community organizing groups in the US (Wood, 2007). The first of these principles is that empowerment can only be realized through organization, which is to say that the process of building and exerting social power requires the formation of organizations in which individuals work together to pursue commonly held goals. The second of these principles is that "social power is built on the strength of interpersonal relationship," (p. 733). Indeed it is the formation of strong social bonds between individuals which allows FBCO groups to survive the multiple challenges to their solidarity and allows them to act as a coordinated social unit. The third principle outlined by Speer and Hughey (1995) is that individual empowerment in order to be meaningful needs to include regular instances of both action and reflection upon actions taken. Within this model, there are strong interdependencies both between

and among individuals, organizations, and communities such that the process of building power building power at any of these levels requires careful attention to each of them.

The site upon which these levels are focused is usually a working-class religious congregation. Warren (2001) describes some of the unique advantages of engaging in community organizing work within the context of religious institutions. First among these is the notion that by beginning one's efforts within congregations, a social context in which a level of fellowship and mutual trust already exist, FBCO efforts are afforded a modicum of stability necessary "to take the long-term approach to community revitalization, to sustain efforts in the face of difficulties and setbacks," (p. 31). Wood (2002) gives a detailed account of one PICO organizing group's campaign and each of the strategies that they pursue in enacting the above principles. Most central among these strategies is the 'one to one' meeting where either a professional organizer or a committee member of an already existing FBCO group engages in conversation with an individual congregant, member of another organization, or acquaintance. From the perspective of the organizer/committee member, the purpose of this conversation is to begin to understand the moral and political issues that are important to the other person. These conversations serve the dual purpose of building an understanding of the issues that could motivate a potential newcomer to participate as well as beginning to build the social bonds necessary for the group to act on their grievances. The importance of these face-to-face meetings is difficult to overstate. The fact that FBCO groups are made up primarily of working class persons means that other more resource-intensive forms of affecting change are largely unavailable to them and thus their ability to form relationships of trust and mutual commitment are central to their ability to push decision makers to act on their behalf. The 'one to one' meeting is the primary way these social bonds are formed.

Wood (2002) also highlights the importance of the 'credential', which he describes as a "ritualized assertion of the organization's identity, purpose, and strength [which] occurs at the start of virtually every meeting..." (p. 37). Wood includes several examples of the 'credential' used by the congregations that he studied, all of which are primarily descriptions of the size and reach of the organization. Wood rightly notes that claims of this nature should be taken with a grain of salt, and yet the consistent focus on the size of each organization seems to imply that much of the power of these groups consists of the ability to act as a unit to sway the results of elections to which the targets of their efforts are subject.

Operating at this level has made successful FBCO organizers especially cognizant of the scalar nature of their work for reasons that Wood (2007) makes clear. He states the case succinctly for the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO):

"PICO's decision to launch supralocal work resulted from a simple political calculation: although its federations often can wield real influence over local decisions, PICO found such influence increasingly inadequate to meeting the challenges facing its constituents in "working families." In the context of municipal dependence on monetary flows controlled at the state and federal levels... local decision making kicks in only after more substantial decisions are made; the decisions that these organizations previously could influence only within vast constraints imposed by those higher-level decisions," (p. 165).

FBCO groups, being intimately tied to the twin processes of individual empowerment and the building of solidarity through face-to-face interactions would appear to be quite at odds with the hierarchical structure of most groups that mount successful national-level campaigns. This makes them especially capable of acting at the local level but creates significant challenges when seeking to build coalitions that operate larger scales of engagement. As FBCO groups seek engagement with higher political scales, they must also cope with the fact that these occur at much larger

geographic scales as well. It would appear that the methods and foci of FBCO groups constituted within a small scale of political and geographic engagement would be ill suited to the state and national levels of engagement because of the strong focus on concurrent individual and organizational empowerment, and because of the primacy of the face to face meeting in the process of building solidarity.

Despite the recent interest in issues of political and geographic scale within the community organizing and social movement literatures, there has been virtually no empirical work published to date which examines the impact of geographic distance on building interorganizational collaborations. A better understanding of the factors that impact the successful forging of relations between organizations would help leaders within the FBCO community to better understand the challenges that they face as the attempt to operate at every wider political scales. The ability to submit records of such collaborations to statistical modeling techniques would allow community organizers to rule out potentially insignificant factors and focus on the specific situations in which geographic distance poses a serious threat to the ability of FBCO groups to scale up.

Hypotheses

The main hypothesis which drives this project is that, after controlling for organizational factors such as denomination, activity level, and racial/ethnic makeup, geographic distance is a significant and negative factor affecting the likelihood of collaboration between FBCO groups. Furthermore, it is expected that for the negative impact of distance on the likelihood of two organizations collaborating will be stronger for more intensive types of relations, such as those required to carry out a long-term coordinated action campaign.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND ANALYSIS APPROACH

In order to evaluate this hypothesis, participation data from two distinct FBCO federations within the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) are used. One of the coalitions under study is located in the Midwestern United States and consists of 16 member organizations and is located within a single municipality. Spatially, distances between groups span a range of .6 and 39.6 miles, with a mean distance of 10.5 miles (s.d.= 8.4 miles). A second coalition included in this study is located in the Western United States, and is made up of 13 member organizations drawn from several suburban communities as well as smaller towns located on the periphery of a larger metropolitan area. As might be expected, these groups are more widely dispersed with a range of .5 to 52.6 miles, and a mean of 19.9 miles (s.d. = 14.1).

FBCO groups within each of these sites work on a multitude of issues over the four years of data which are considered here. Issues which are local and specific to each congregation represent a considerable portion of their overall efforts. In the Western site, examples of work carried out at the group level include an effort to redevelop an abandoned shopping center, efforts to combat the exploitative practices of a mobile home park owner, and efforts to create stronger connections between public school staff and non-native families. The list of issues engaged by single congregations in the Midwestern setting is quite similar. The FBCO groups in each of these sites also spend a considerable amount of their time working to build bridges of relation between congregations of various racial/ethnic or denomination background, and thus build the

federation at the city-wide level. Issues taken up at the city-wide level include efforts to establish standards of community policing, the promotion of interracial understanding, and the improvement of public transport systems.

Organizational collaboration, the key focus of this study, is measured by way of records of participation of individual persons at organizing meetings held by individual congregations. These meetings vary from small planning committee meetings to large, public actions. At each of these organizing activities, staff persons have attendees sign an attendance form, indicating the attendee's name, contact information, and organizational affiliation (if any). Four years of attendance data are used in the current study and were gathered from the sign-in sheets of 1,454 meetings between these two organizing settings (656 from the Western setting and 798 from the Midwestern setting). Data from the sign-in sheets were entered into a database that tracked individual participants over time. As the focus of this analysis is the on the dynamics of tie formation between coalition organizations, these essentially three-mode network data (persons within congregations attending meetings) have been transformed into an affiliation network of ties between organizations. The use of this three-mode data gleaned from records of meeting attendance presents several formidable challenges, as well as a few distinct advantages when compared to data collected from traditional survey methods, or even common social network data collection methods. Primarily, one must contend with the fact that this data indicates simply which people traveled to attend a given meeting, with some idea of why they assembled together. One does not know who spent time talking to whom, who were the leaders or most influential persons in the meeting, who received or gave advice to whom, etc. However, this data source is quite rich in that it comprises a record of actual collaboration between congregations rather than a post-hoc recall of events or inventory of impressions of relations. As such, this

data set presents a unique opportunity to study the actually occurring rudiment of collaboration in the community organizing context: co-presence.

The basic unit of collaboration between two organizations is defined as each instance where at least one member of an organization has attended an event with at least one other member of another organization. This yields two sets of time-stacked NxN matrices (one for each setting) reflecting the number of instances each year that representatives from any two organizations were co-present at the same meeting. This method was chosen over others which are more sensitive to the specific numbers of persons present from each organization so as to control for the fact that some congregations had much larger active memberships than others. Data were tabulated on an annual basis, yielding four complete waves to be used in the longitudinal modeling process. For each wave, a digraph containing all organizations from the Midwestern and Western settings was created, with 'structural zeros' (see Snijders, et al. , 2010) set in place of ties between organizations not in the same setting.

The use of SIENA for longitudinal modeling requires that relations between entities be expressed in a dichotomous fashion; thus some decisions have to be made regarding the appropriate threshold at which to define a meaningful collaboration between organizations. Two thresholds of collaboration will be used to reflect critical dimensions of the organizing process. In the formation of larger FBCO federations, individual groups must first work to establish relationships amongst themselves so that they may develop the trust necessary for sustained collaboration undertaken in effecting change (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Robinson & Hanna, 1994). A phrase often used among empirical social network analysts is that "without meeting, there is no mating." In this context, scholars have observed that without face-to-face contact, there is little to no basis by which trust between FBCO organizations may be forged. Once such relations of

trust are established, groups can begin to work as a cohesive unit. The process of engaging political structures and opportunities at the supra-local level requires a greater number of interactions than that of the trust-building phase of relating. Groups must work together in order to set strategy, conduct research, and carry out public events (Speer, Hughey, Gensheimer & Adams-Leavitt, 1995). Furthermore, telephone interviews with professional organizers familiar with this work revealed that members of various groups will infrequently make symbolic appearances at the events of another group in order to show their support, even when no other meaningful collaboration exists. Thus it was decided that any threshold ought to be considerably larger than one, so as to weed out these symbolic appearances as much as possible. In order to reflect the two general types of interorganizational relation described above it was decided that the threshold for trust building relations would be set at five co-attendances per year; the threshold for politically-engaged relations at ten co-attendances per year.

The independent variable in this study is geographic distance. Distances reported here were calculated using a route-mapping procedure within the ArcGIS program (version 9.2), which calculates the shortest distance between two points via the existing physical infrastructure of freeways and surface roads. Previous work (i.e., Mok, Wellman & Basu, 2007; Butts & Acton, 2008) has relied on the use of geodesic distance between points, without taking into account the fact that this distance is only a proxy for the distance traveled using existing physical infrastructure. For points distributed across several communities (or states, or nations for that matter) this distinction seems to make little difference. This was found to be true of the distances between organizations in the Western community where one observes a Spearman correlation of $r = .99$, $p < .001$ ($n=13$) between distances calculated by these two methods. However, for points distributed within a single community or municipality, such as in the Midwestern setting,

the two measures of distance have no significant correlation: $r = .023$, $p = .34$ ($n=16$), with the straight-line method consistently indicating much shorter distances than the route-mapping method. Additionally, the route-mapping method provides estimates of travel time according to posted speed limits. This seemed a worthwhile option to explore; substantively speaking, a ten-mile trip between exits on a freeway would have a much lower 'cost' (time, concentration, gasoline, etc.) associated with it than a ten mile trip through a city using surface roads. With this in mind, I have decided to estimate longitudinal models using distance as calculated by both the straight-line and route-mapping methods, as well as minutes traveled. For each of the three methods described here, a matrix of distances between all organizations in a given city were created within ArcGIS, then stored and used within SIENA as constant dyadic covariates.

Figure 1 depicts the changing relationship between the dependent variable, level of collaboration, and the key independent variable, geographic distance, across the four years considered in this analysis. These scatterplots clearly show two patterns; the first of these is that as distance increases, the level of collaboration observed in any year tends to decrease. This provides strong preliminary support for hypotheses given above. The second notable pattern in Figure 1 is that collaboration increases considerably across the four years. Increases are greatest for those congregations which are not separated by large distances, though some increase is noted for those groups which are far apart as well. These increases in collaboration also provide some confirmation that the interorganizational relations observed in these data proceed along the theoretical lines described in the community organizing literature. More specifically, the increase in interorganizational collaboration over time signals the successful strengthening of relations between geographically disparate groups; this is the primary means of building power at the supra-local scale.

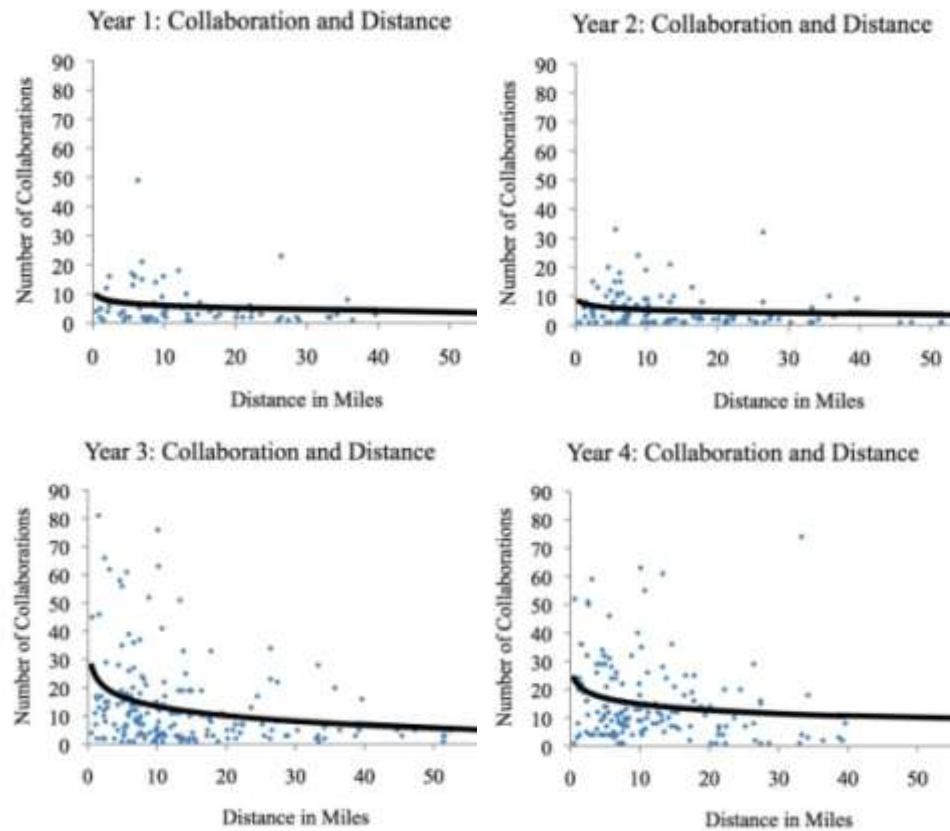


Figure 1. Scatterplots of Collaboration by Distance

In the course of the development of this paper, one anonymous reviewer questioned this notion and suggested that an increase in the geographic centrality of meeting locations may be responsible for these increases in collaboration. In order to investigate this possibility, a meeting centrality index was developed. Essentially, this requires the adaptation of Sabidussi's (1966) index of actor closeness. As Wasserman and Faust (1994) point out, this index is simply the inverse of the sum of distances between a given actor and all others in a network. By multiplying the closeness index for each organization by the proportion of yearly meetings hosted by that organization (P),

one arrives at a measure of each organization's contribution to the centrality of all meetings conducted in a given year. Summing this contribution for all organizations yields an index of yearly meeting centrality (MCN) at the network level.

$$MC_N = \sum \left(\frac{P}{\sum_{j=1}^g d(n_i, n_j)} \right)$$

An analysis of the yearly average meeting centrality was conducted, the results of which are featured in Figure 2. This analysis reveals that the average meeting centrality remains relatively flat and even decreases over time, while yearly average dyadic collaboration increases by over 400% over the same period. Thus the contention that increases in collaboration over time can be explained by shifting meeting locations can be dispensed with, and the notion that these data indeed reflect the process of coalition formation is further strengthened.

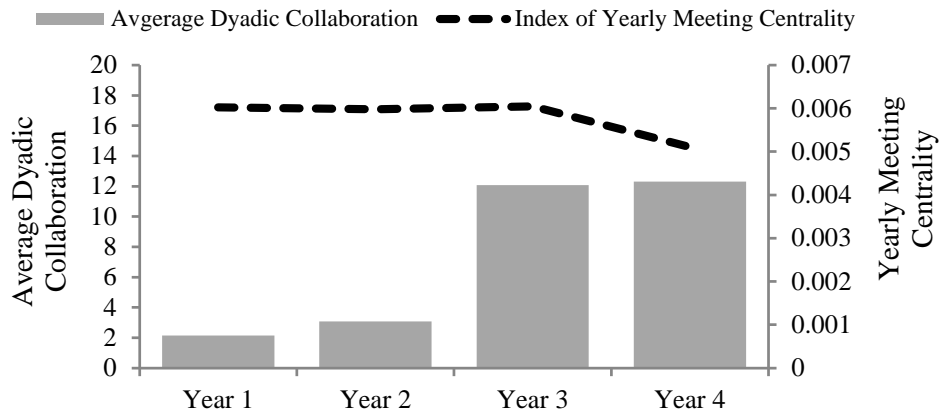


Figure 2. Patterns of Collaboration and Average Meeting Centrality

Several control variables are also included in this model. Racial/ethnic homophily as reported by organizing staff was tested through the creation of a constant dyadic covariate and included as control variable in the longitudinal modeling process. A dichotomous indicator of homophily in the denominational orientation of each congregational dyad was also included. In addition to these, another variable was included in the modeling process to account for the activity level of individual organizations. This was operationalized as the count of meetings that each organization hosted within a single year. Table 1 describes the distribution of each of these covariates.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Groups (N=29)	
Unique organizational dyads (N=198)	
Denomination	
Catholic	72.4%
Protestant	24.1%
Other	3.5%
Percent Homophilous	55.1%
Race/Ethnicity	
African-American	17.2%
Latino	27.6%
White	55.2%
Percent Homophilous	34.3%
Average yearly meetings hosted	7.10 (11.10)
Average road distance between congregations (miles)	14.18 (11.87)

In order to test the hypothesis regarding the negative effect of distance on collaboration between organizations, a series of six models are estimated according to the six conditions outlined above (two methods for determining the existence of a tie evaluated using each of three methods for measuring distance). As the purpose of this analysis centers on the effects of distance, only the recommended minimum structural effects of degree and transitivity were included as control variables (Snijders, van de Bunt & Steglich, 2010), leaving more subtle structural effects to be tested in future work.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The results of the SIENA analysis are presented in Table 2. This study's findings were consistent with previous research regarding the negative influence of distance on forming collaborative ties. This study goes further than previous work, finding that distance strongly shapes who will tend to collaborate even after controlling for race, denomination, contact with organizers, and activity level within each organization. The pattern of findings differed in both the level of collaboration measured and in the measurement method of distance used.

Intensity of collaboration

With regard to the role of distance in coalition formation, two general patterns emerge. Slightly lower intensity collaborations are dominated by homophily with regard to both race and religion, while more intense collaborations are determined primarily by length of travel time. This suggests that common findings about tie formation driven by homophily are shared in these findings, but only up to a point. These analyses reveal that sustained, moderately-intensive collaborations are not significantly influenced by racial and denominational similarities. This finding lends strong support to the oft-cited maxim within the literature and practice of FBC organizing regarding the unique ability of this approach to link people and organizations across both racial and religious lines (Warren, 2001; Wood, 2002; Orr, 2007). Regardless of the intensity of collaboration examined the primary structural effect of interest, transitive triads, was found to be a significant factor in tie formation.

Table 2. Longitudinal Model Testing Tie Formation

		Degree of Collaboration						
		5 or more Collaborations/Year			10 or more Collaborations/Year			
		β	S.E.	t-score		β	S.E.	t-score
Straight line miles	Rate period 1	0.635	0.053	11.981*	Rate period 1	0.489	0.038	13.040*
	Rate period 2	0.904	0.070	12.914*	Rate period 2	0.336	0.013	26.047*
	Rate period 3	1.160	0.324	3.580*	Rate period 3	0.774	0.063	12.208*
	Degree	-3.372	0.424	-7.953*	Degree	-3.859	0.505	-7.643*
	Transitive Triad	0.647	0.139	4.655*	Transitive Triad	2.054	0.663	3.100*
	Denomination	0.523	0.312	1.676	Denomination	-0.130	0.574	-0.226
	Race	1.166	0.300	3.887*	Race	0.634	0.575	1.102
	Straight Miles	-0.023	0.016	-1.438	Straight Miles	-0.038	0.032	-1.203
	Meetings	0.092	0.031	2.968*	Meetings	0.066	0.044	1.514
Driving miles	Rate period 1	0.647	0.055	11.684*	Rate period 1	0.513	0.042	12.273*
	Rate period 2	0.892	0.064	14.052*	Rate period 2	0.337	0.013	26.124*
	Rate period 3	1.135	0.287	3.960*	Rate period 3	0.803	0.072	11.107*
	Degree	-3.367	0.310	-10.856*	Degree	-3.843	0.554	-6.939*
	Transitive Triad	0.659	0.107	6.133*	Transitive Triad	2.156	0.630	3.423*
	Denomination	0.508	0.255	1.989*	Denomination	-0.060	0.549	-0.109
	Race	1.172	0.324	3.613*	Race	0.602	0.521	1.156
	Driving Miles	-0.028	0.013	-2.106*	Driving Miles	-0.082	0.025	-3.241*
	Meetings	0.097	0.030	3.174*	Meetings	0.074	0.044	1.682
Driving Minutes	Rate period 1	0.644	0.054	11.909*	Rate period 1	0.514	0.041	12.572*
	Rate period 2	0.897	0.067	13.331*	Rate period 2	0.338	0.013	25.216*
	Rate period 3	1.116	0.290	3.843*	Rate period 3	0.830	0.077	10.763*
	Degree	-3.251	0.335	-9.697*	Degree	-3.695	0.513	-7.209*
	Transitive Triad	0.647	0.106	6.133*	Transitive Triad	2.105	0.534	3.944*
	Denomination	0.568	0.271	2.098*	Denomination	0.078	0.518	0.150
	Race	1.195	0.273	4.385*	Race	0.622	0.537	1.159
	Driving Minutes	-0.025	0.010	-2.589*	Driving Minutes	-0.066	0.018	-3.670*
	Meetings	0.095	0.027	3.575*	Meetings	0.077	0.040	1.918

This finding confirms the tendency first described by Simmel (1950) for two entities with ties to a common third will tend over time to form ties between themselves. It is worth noting the magnitude of this tendency varies greatly according to the strength of relation in question. Among lower intensity collaborations, transitivity played a statistically significant but very small role when compared to denominational homophily, racial/ethnic homophily and geographic distance. At a higher level of collaboration (10 or more collaborations per year) transitivity became much more important – positively impacting the likelihood of tie formation for organizational dyads up to 26 miles apart.

It may be that as transitive triads work to moderate conflict (Krackhardt & Kilduff, 2002; Krackhardt, 1999) they may also benefit the sustainability of community organizing groups – a key to their capacity to exercise power and successfully affect change in communities. This perspective is supported in Table 3 where the number of dissolved ties over time is much smaller at the upper collaborative threshold – where transitive triads are significant.

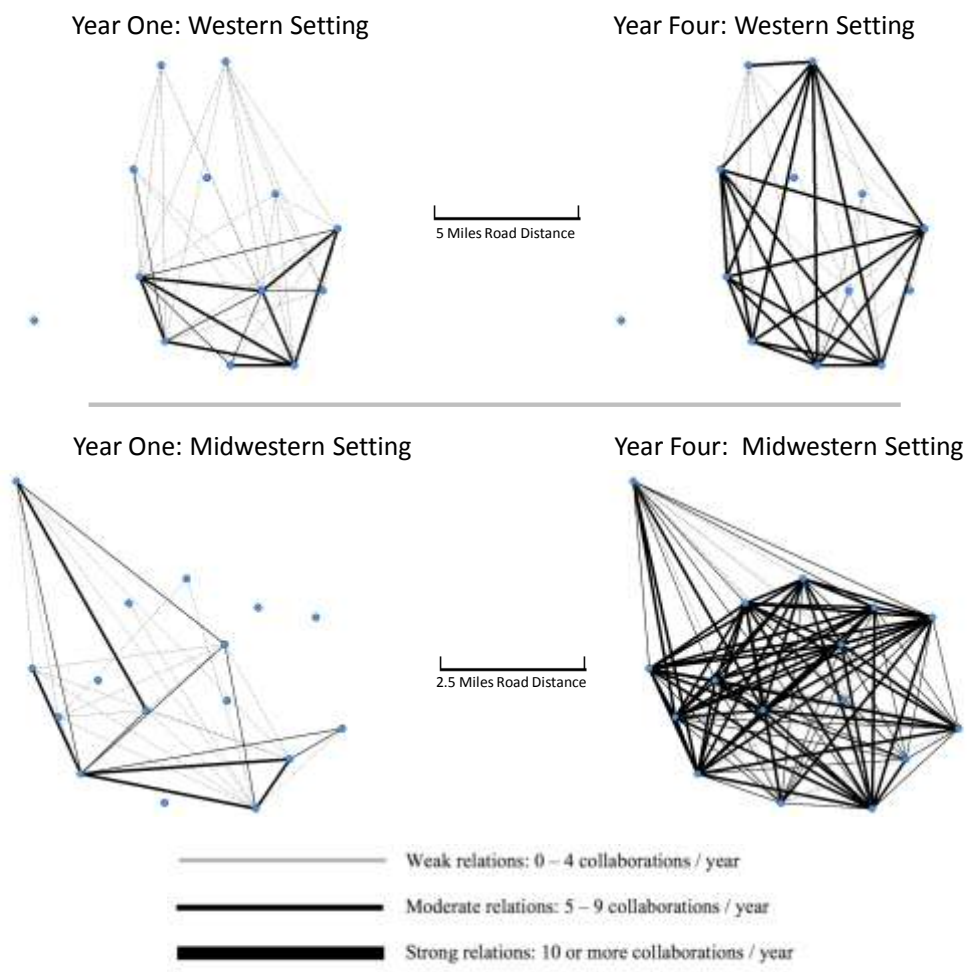
Table 3. Longitudinal Network Change

	No Tie 0→0	New Tie 0→1	Dissolved Tie 1→0	Maintained Tie 1→1	Jaccard Index
Five or more collaborations per year					
Period One	354	26	10	16	.308
Period Two	284	80	4	38	.311
Period Three	258	30	24	94	.635
Ten or more collaborations per year					
Period One	381	12	5	8	.320
Period Two	366	20	1	19	.475
Period Three	310	57	7	32	.333

Measurement of distance

Geographic distance was a significant factor when measured by driving miles and driving minutes – at both intensities of collaboration. Importantly, geographic distance was not significant when measured as straight-line miles. As noted earlier, the straight-line method of measurement may be appropriate, but only at large scales. Within a city, straight lines may well obscure the experience of distance, which must be traversed for traffic patterns, time of day, speed limits and the like, just as Entwisle and colleagues (1997) found road quality factors impacting health behavior decisions in rural areas. The denser, Midwestern site had a non-significant correlation between driving miles and straight-line miles and, as can be seen in Figure 3, the scale of the Midwestern site is much smaller than the Western site, suggesting a caution about use of the straight-line method in such a setting.

Not surprisingly, the negative influence of distance on tie formation increases as the threshold for collaboration is increased. The results from SIENA tell us that for every additional minute of road miles between congregations, there is a 2.76% decrease in the likelihood of tie formation at the 5 or more collaborations per year level while the likelihood of observing collaborations of intensity 10 or higher per year is decreased by 7.87% for every additional mile.



*Layout created using an iterative metric multi-dimensional scaling method reflecting miles road distance between nodes

Figure 3: Network structure and tie strength: Year 1 vs. Year 4

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study has applied longitudinal network analysis methods and geographic analysis to understanding coalition development processes in community organizing. This is an important methodological advance as it illuminates important spatial and network processes, as well as surfacing new questions for study. One important finding is that when examined over time, the negative association of distance appears to weaken. This is an important finding because on the one hand our findings suggest a need for more attention to the negative impact of physical distance on coalition formation, but it also suggests that there may be effective strategies to combat these impacts – although such strategies are limited. Nevertheless, this finding of more collaboration over time is consistent with the PICO Network model of organizing, as well as social capital theory. Future research should work to better understand the role of distance in collaboration and the degree to which relational approaches to organizing can moderate the negative influence of distance in forming and sustaining remote ties.

Limitations

There are limitations to the current study that should be considered in future research. Two of the most significant limitations encountered in this analysis stem from the process of using the SIENA modeling environment in order to assess the relative contribution of each of the above discussed variables. In order to use SIENA, it was necessary to dichotomize these data, as this program does not have the capability to make use of valued relations. This forced the use of cut off levels to define relations,

which results in a considerable loss of sensitivity in the data. The future development of longitudinal network models to include valued data will be in many ways quite beneficial for analyses of the sort conducted here. In any case further refinement of the two conceptual categories of interorganizational relation will be necessary in future work on this topic.

Another limitation which future iterations of this work will seek to address was the inability to formally model a time-based interaction effect. When looking at cross-sectional measures of participation within each of these coalitions, one can see that while distance has a uniform effect on collaboration, the magnitude of this effect diminishes over time. Attempts to include an interaction term that would account for this lessening of the effect of distance resulted in problems with model convergence. In fact, the anticipation of a significant change in the effect of distance over time was the main reason for developing the meeting centrality index. This index will prove useful in future work, but admittedly does little to clarify the SIENA model estimated in these analyses. Future work on this data set will include information from other PICO organizing sites around the country; it is hoped that the increased sample size will give the necessary degrees of freedom to estimate a model with time-based interaction effect.

On a related note, Figure 2 does reflect a large jump in overall levels of dyadic collaboration in these two sites – a finding which was somewhat surprising. The network pictures in Figure 3 portray this pattern and suggest that initial contacts between organizations lead to a high number of very intensive ties in year four. The PICO model of community organizing is built on the notion that the building of trust between individuals and organization creates the basis for future collaboration and solidarity. It may be reasonable to expect that the lower levels of participation noted in the first two years of data are due to the necessity of building stronger relationships within each

congregation, thus enabling the later dramatic increase in collaboration between organizations noted in years three and four. In any case, the pattern reflected in Figure 2 does seem to warrant further investigation. Future work on these data will require an elaboration of the causes of the large jump between years two and three.

Finally, a general limitation of this work is that it is not complimented by proper ethnographic methods in the respective sites. Several telephone and email exchanges were set up with PICO organizers in each of the chosen sites. While these exchanges were quite informative conversations with participants and local leaders in each of the sites would be the most informative way to interpret the quantitative results which I report here. Future work in this area will require a strong synthesis between quantitative and qualitative methods, if it is to be useful to the people working in FBCO groups.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, this paper does present several modest advances. First, the use of various means of measuring geographic distance between places is helpful for future studies of this nature. Based on my search of the social scientific literature, nothing has been written to compare these methods of measuring distance. Being aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the built environment approach vs. geodesic distance approach will be useful to others interested in this topic. Secondly, the meeting centrality index will be a helpful tool in controlling for the aggregate centrality of meeting location in analyses of this type. As with the comparison of distance measures, the meeting centrality index was something that was required as a control against a competing explanation. This index did not heretofore exist, and supposing that it withstands future scholarly scrutiny may serve as a useful tool in future analyses of this type.

Finally, it is hoped that this analysis will inform FBCO planners as they consider the realities involved in certain kinds of 'scale jumping' actions. While the effect of distance on trust-building relations does not seem to be very strong, both denominational and racial/ethnic homophily appear to be significant shapers of interorganizational ties. The limitations that this places on building trust between all members of a coalition would appear to be somewhat humbling, especially considering the explicitly multi-racial nature of the FBCO work. However, for those organizations that manage to get past this apparent hurdle, the more intense relations necessary for political engagement do not appear to be affected by homophily. Further, significance and magnitude of the transitive triad effect suggest that once formed, interorganizational ties of this sort are indeed quite robust. Distance, one simple but important element of the geography that shapes opportunity structures for these groups, appears to be a strongly negative predictor of tie formation. Reliance on face-to-face methods of relationship formation in the process of FBCO federation building at supra-local levels would appear to be one of the main reasons why FBCO groups have so far been unable to reliably replicate their lower scale victories at the state, interstate, and national levels. New methods that are compatible with but distinct from the traditional face-to-face work of organizing would appear to be necessary in order to make this jump in scale.

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