

# The Shifting Power of Labor-Community Coalitions: Identifying Common Elements of Powerful Coalitions in Australia and the USA

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents and explores a theoretical framework of common features across labor-community coalitions. While researchers in both the U.S. and Australia have written about labor-community coalitions, most of this work has focused on profiling “best practices” rather than building a framework for understanding coalition such work in general. This paper argues that all coalitions are defined by four common elements: the nature of common concern, the structure of organizational relationships, organizational capacity and commitment, and the scale of coalition activity. It then uses these elements to identify four different ideal types of coalitions, varying from ad hoc coalitions, to simple coalitions, to mutual interest coalitions to deep coalitions. The paper illustrates the usefulness of this framework by using it to examine sample coalition experiences in the U.S. and Australia. The Australian case displays variation in coalition type within a single ongoing campaign around public education. By contrast, eight sample U.S. living wage efforts demonstrate variation in coalition type among different campaigns.

A key issue for contemporary political activism is how labor unions and community organizations can work together effectively in coalition. Coalitions are a strategy increasingly used by unions and community organizations to enhance their power and campaign success. While there is a significant body of literature on coalitions, it often describes ‘best coalition practice’ rather than identifying the core analytical elements that shape coalition effectiveness. This paper seeks to contribute to an analytical framework of coalitions, making suggestions about how real existing coalition practice can be improved by identifying generalizable features of powerful coalitions. We present a framework of coalitions that identifies four key elements of effective coalition practice, and then apply this framework to two case studies of different coalitions –the Public Education Campaign in Australia and Living Wage coalitions in the

United States. Our aim is to demonstrate that there are several key similar elements to coalition operation and success. The case studies have been selected to highlight how coalitions can powerfully engage union members both on issues of wages and work conditions (such as in the US case study) as well as on broader social concerns (such as in the Australian case study), exploring how the issue base of coalitions can vary and still produce powerful bases for union coalition practice.

### **Labor-Community Coalitions: an introduction**

In the early 1990s there was a renewal of interest in the possibilities of labor-community coalitions (Brecher and Costello 1990a; Banks 1992). The need to rebuild union power and union density included a concern for working in coalition with community organisations. In the USA, the formation of the Jobs with Justice network, the Union Cities program at the AFL-CIO, living wages campaigns and the Justice for Janitors campaigns revived interest in how coalitions could create union power (Banks 1990; Ness and Eimer 2001; Reynolds and Kern 2002; Reynolds 2004). Today, the idea that unions should working with community organisations is a prominent element of union renewal strategies.

Yet, too often in both union practice and academic literature labor-community coalitions are seen as a homogenous panacea for union power or campaign success. Coalitions are seen as a tactic, one element of a comprehensive campaign. While coalitions are not the only strategy for building union power or renewal, this paper argues that the form, agenda and power that unions can gain from coalitions is highly variable, and must be categorized and measured. Indeed, the form and capacity of coalitions vary significantly, from fleeting ad hoc solidarity support to long-term sustainable relationships (Tattersall 2005). Yet the current literature on

labor-community coalitions has tended to document best practice as a guide for effective coalition action. Descriptive best practice case studies have usefully given credence to the important role that coalitions can play as part of union strategies, yet, they tend to not identify the factors that created success (Byrd and Rhee 2004; Frank and Wong 2004; Luce and Nelson 2004). This paper seeks to identify some common repeatable elements of successful coalitions, rather than merely documenting an example of a coalition for others to copy. In doing so, it aims to identify elements of coalitions occur across all coalition practice, rather than simply in so-called 'best practice'.

#### **Four Factors of Coalition Practice**

We identify four elements that vary coalition effectiveness, including the form of common concern and purpose at the heart of a coalition, the structure of a coalition, the degree of organizational buy-in, and the context of the coalition's activity. We then pull together these factors to present a map of varying coalition forms, ranging from simple ad-hoc coalitions to more complex and powerful deep coalitions.

##### *Common Concern*

At the heart of labor-community coalitions is a bond of common concern between different organizations; yet the degree of mutuality of common interest in coalitions varies considerably. Common concern refers both to the alignment of organizational interests that define the purpose of the coalition, and the social frame that the coalition uses to communicate its strategy to the broader public (Tattersall forthcoming b).

At one extreme, unions and community organizations frequently come together on an ad hoc basis where the issue at the heart of the campaign is one-side's agenda (Tattersall 2005). These are the most common forms of engagement, and include requests for speakers at rallies or participation in an information picket. The interest connection to these ad hoc coalitions is often uneven; focused on the party requesting support. A lack of interest in coalition activity minimizes the desire for supportive organisations to participate in these ad hoc coalitions. Phrases such as 'rent a collar' are commonly used by the religious community and capture a resentment that comes from being asked to speak at ad hoc events without being involved more deeply in campaign strategy, or having their interests reflected in campaign demands (interview, community organisation, Chicago, 2005).

When the common interest between union and community organizations is shared, the commitment to acting in coalition is strengthened (Brecher and Costello 1990b). When an organisation's own interests are also in interest of the coalition, participation increases as coalition strategies directly contribute to organizational goals. Consequently, coalitions increase their level of inter-organizational participation when they operate with concerns that are in the mutual self-interest of participants (Childs 1990; Altemose and McCarty 2001; Frege, Heery et al. 2004; Tattersall 2005; Tattersall 2006a). In addition, the more direct and tangible their organizational interest, the deeper their likely engagement. Thus a union may give financial support or speak at a rally on an issue such as peace, which ignites its altruistic concerns for justice or general concern for corporate globalization. By contrast, a union organizing health care workers is more likely to directly engage and activate its members in a campaign to increase funding for the health care sector because the outcomes of the campaign will directly affect union members (Tattersall 2006a). The degree of organizational commitment to an issue

increases the ability of a coalition to activate its members and its relationships, increasing the strength of the coalition overall.

Aside from organizational interest, common concern also refers to the social frame that a coalition uses to communicate its message. Thus common interest can be effective not only when it operates in the mutual self-interest of participating organisations, but when it is framed as a social vision for working people as a whole (Snow and Benford 1992; Reynolds 2004; Lakoff 2005). This broader community frame not only engages organization members, but assists the campaign to become a direct concern of the general public. Direct organizational interest does not disappear so much as it becomes embedded in a larger social agenda. For instance, a campaign for better pay for health care workers extends into a campaign about better hospitals – where conditions such as staff-patient ratios, quality and price of medicine and quality of treatment are also connected to pay. The campaign becomes a holistic campaign for health care in which workers concerns are embedded.

The strategic intentions of a coalition are a critical measure of sustainability; whether a coalition has been formed for a short term tactical event or a long term power building structure. The distinction between an ad hoc immediate concern and a social vision for working people points to this, where coalitions formed around a larger definition of concern can lead to ongoing cooperation around multiple campaigns. For example, cooperation between local ACORN chapters and central labor councils has been in evident in many living wage campaigns. The immediate interest uniting the two organizations is the goal of passing a living wage law. Whether the two continue to cooperate after a campaign is over depends on the interest in and availability of other issues around which to cooperate. Yet in a much smaller number of cases (such as in San Jose or Little Rock) ACORN and a central labor council have united around a

broader mutual goal of building power as organizations. The two organizations may cooperate on specific campaigns, however both during and between campaigns a relationship continues in which the partners work to build each other's capacity. In San Jose, for example, this ongoing cooperation has taken the form of a joint door-knocking organizing team that recruits new ACORN members as well as pro-labor voters and possible organizing contacts.

### *The Structure of the Coalition*

Coalitions are also defined by the structure of their organizational relationships. At one extreme labor unions and community organizations can interrelate without establishing a formal decision making structure; the relationships can be based on requests rather than joint meetings (Tattersall 2005). In these cases campaign strategy and decision making remains the property of the initiating organizations, limiting broad organizational engagement (Frege, Heery et al. 2004).

Beyond ad hoc engagement, a variety of structural forms can exist, ranging from simple coalitions to deep coalitions. A key variable in coalition structure is the extent to which the participating organizations are able to share influence over campaign tactics and strategy. When a coalition is dominated by a single partner, or when it is organized quickly in reaction to an event, decision making is more likely to be hasty and share less ownership between the organizations (Tufts 1998). Indeed, when informal planning outside the coalition dominates the strategic direction of the campaign, the coalition is reduced to a formal space for reporting on decisions rather than making them. When organizations are not given control over campaign strategy they are likely to have less commitment to taking action.

Coalitions are more likely to be long term and have broad organizational support if campaign strategy is brokered among the organizations and coalition decision making is shared

(Banks 1992; Tufts 1998). Organizational interconnection is enhanced if there are open spaces for decision making and if there are informal ties that help bridge across cultural differences between the organizations (Rose 2000; Obach 2004). An effective coalition structure builds organizational trust and accountability. This might mean that the coalition builds a closed structure, where organizations are hand picked as partners, rather than having organizations join as ‘come one come all’ (Tattersall 2006a; Tattersall 2006b) For example the Chicago Living Wage Coalition supporting the big box living wage ordinance was widely endorsed, but to participate in the steering committee organisations were hand picked depending on their ability to make a concrete commitment to the coalition’s capacity. Organizations may be chosen because of common cultures, common organizing methods or a common commitment to objectives.

In addition, coalitions might build sustainable structures where the logistics of joint work can be undertaken by an independent coalition office with staff rather than draining the time and being influenced by resource rich organizational partners (Nissen 2000; Tattersall 2005). For example, since its founding in 1988 as a multi-issue, multi-constituency coalition of roughly 30 groups, the Minnesota Alliance for Progressive Action has sponsored a series of key public policy campaigns and is maintained by a permanent coalition office and staff (Petersen 2004).

Finally, a coalition may be more sustainable and able to accommodate conflict and cultural differences between organisations if there are bridge builders involved in coalition practice. Bridge builders are individuals with social movement and union experience, who can translate cultural differences and support formal strategic planning and informal relationship building (Rose 2000; Obach 2004)

### *Organizational Capacity and Commitment*

A key component of both structure and common interest is the need to enhance union and community organization commitment to campaigning. Organizational buy-in and the extent to which participant organizations mobilize for coalition objectives provides another measure of coalition effectiveness.

The spectrum of organizational buy-in is well-understood in the language of coalition practice. At one extreme, organizers often talk about ‘paper coalitions’ or ‘astroturf coalitions’ where organizations sign on to a letterhead or press release, but the relationships do not go deep. A deeper form of engagement is colloquially described as ‘grass tops coalitions’ where organizational engagement is focused in organization staff, but not members. The seniority of the participants in coalition meetings is often a mark of organizational buy in, the more senior the decision makers, the greater the authority invested in the coalition and the faster the decision making process (Nissen 2004; Tattersall 2006a). An even deeper form of engagement is ‘grassroots’ coalition organizing, where leaders and members are directly engaged in public roles at coalition events, decision making and planning. This operates at its deepest level when organizational members are engaged in coalition broker organisations, locally based coalition organisations which enable union and community organisation members to control campaign planning and strategy (Tattersall forthcoming e). A good example is the Ontario Health Coalition, which has a central provincial coalition and thirty-five local health coalitions which together coordinate health campaigns (Tattersall 2006b).

However, in most coalition practice there is often weak organizational buy-in because coalitions tend to limit in-depth participation and decision making to staff and leadership rather than members (Clawson 2003). Coalition campaigns often relegate union and community

organization members to the role of ‘rent-a-crowd’ rather than providing them with space for meaningful participation. This may be mitigated when community organizations or unions closely tie internal decision making processes and buy-in to coalition practice, or where centralized state or city-based coalitions create local broker organisations.

Coalitions that achieve successful organizational buy-in require significant union buy-in. As Nissen notes, out of all coalition partners, unions usually have the largest number of resources at their disposal; they usually have the largest number of members and the largest base of independent funds (Nissen 2003; Nissen 2004). Signs of deepening union commitment include sending senior staff and officials as decision makers to coalition meetings, freeing up funds to allocate to the campaign, activating external union political and organizational relationships to enfranchise the coalition’s agenda and being willing to activate member involvement in coalition events.

#### *The Scale and Opportunities of Coalition activity*

Coalitions can also be distinguished by the scale or scales at which they operate. Scale is a term used by labor geographers to understand how power is constituted by place and space (Massey 1984; Herod 1997; Fagan 2000). Power is conditioned by the scale at which it operates, for instance industries, corporations and politics operates at multiple scales and can be influenced at different scales. Industries and firms that rely on local consumer populations, or locally scaled production – such as cleaning, mining, human service work and the public sector – may be ‘fixed’ to certain places of consumer demand or producer services (Herod 1997; Walsh 2000; Ellem 2003). In contrast to the perceived mobility of capital, capital fixes and political representation provide spaces of influence for coalitions and social movements. Where capital or political

representatives are tied to places, through industry or political representation, organizing coalition and union support in those places enhances the power of unions and the capacity for social change (Tattersall forthcoming e).

At a basic form, coalitions can operate at any scale – the local to the global. Yet, when working to influence government or employers, it may increase the power of a coalition to operate at multiple scales. Locally scaled coalitions can increase influence over ‘fixed’ industries or political leaders, such as the broker organisations in Ontario that are based around regional hospitals and in swing ridings (congressional districts) (Tattersall 2006b). Multi-scaled coalitions, that can act locally, nationally and globally, can also allow coalitions to exercise influence against powerful international firms while also building local public support for coalition outcomes (Banks and Russo 1999; Juravich and Bronfenbrenner 2003; Tattersall forthcoming a). For instance, the SEIU’s Driving up Standards campaign seeks to build international union and coalition support for union demands in the UK as well as support from parents to lobby US school boards (Tattersall forthcoming a).

Moreover, as Wills notes, coalition effectiveness is enhanced when the relationships it brings together are proximate and participatory, and therefore local (Martin, Sunley et al. 1993; Wills 2002). Locally based coalitions are able to harness community ties, because it is at the local level where people work, live and can directly participate in decisions and action. Coalitions that seek to mobilize and coordinate organizations or individuals with a history of acting together, or in a common place are more likely to sustain longer term activity (Jonas 1998).

The pioneering corporate accountability campaign in Minnesota illustrates the utility of multiple scales. On the surface, the Minnesota Alliance for Progressive Action organized a state-

level campaign to pass increasingly effective legislation reforming how businesses received tax breaks and other public financial support. Although the state sets the legal framework for such subsidies the actual decision to grant aid occurs at the local level. Thus, the campaign proved effective because it not simply changed the state rules, but also supported local coalitions in several parts of the state that organized to ensure that stronger standards become actual reality at the local level. Without effective local scale, the state reforms could have become dust-filled abstract rules in the legal code.

Additionally, coalitions are able to enhance their influence if their social movement activity is integrated with available political opportunities. Social movement theorists argue that where social movements are more able to have political success, then they are more able to be sustained (Tarrow 1994). Thus, where there are election cycles, divisions between the ruling political parties or legislative timetables that can be exploited by coalitions, coalitions are more likely to successfully achieve political outcomes (Tarrow 1994; Reynolds 2004; Tattersall forthcoming e).

#### **Four Types of Coalitions**

The above discussion points to four forces that influence coalition types. Common concern, the structure of the relationship, organizational commitment and the scale and opportunity of the coalition relationship are key elements that vary to produce different types of coalitions. Indeed, we suggest that they simultaneously define all coalitions as well as operating as the key forces that produce coalition variation over time. Thus coalitions shift in their internal resources and external capacity to the extent that issues are held in single or mutual interest, that

structure is tight and trustworthy or fleeting, that organizational commitment is superficial or significant and if coalitions can operate at multiple scales and can harness political opportunities.

Thus, not only do the above elements work to describe key aspects of coalitions broadly, but they can also be combined to produce a four part typology of labor-community coalition practice (see figure 1). This is a categorization of different ideal types of coalition forms.

**Figure 1: A framework of labor-community coalitions**

	<b>Ad hoc Coalition</b>	<b>Support Coalition</b>	<b>Mutual Coalition</b>	<b>Deep Coalition</b>
<b>Common concern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific group’s agenda/issue/event</li> <li>• Can be initiated by union or community organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific group’s agenda/issue/event</li> <li>• Dominated by initiating organisation (union or community organization)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues are in the mutual self-interest participating organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual self-interest issues, and</li> <li>• Public messages of coalition are framed as social vision for working people</li> </ul>
<b>Structure of Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Episodic engagement</li> <li>• Hasty, reactive engagement</li> <li>• Based on ad hoc requests from one organisation, such as requests to community organisations to support union organizing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term coalition</li> <li>• Some formal shared decision making</li> <li>• Between organizations with different or similar political practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coalition includes org leaders</li> <li>• Joint decision making structure</li> <li>• Planning and strategizing</li> <li>• Standards for organizational participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broker organisations</li> <li>• Long term strategic plan to build power</li> <li>• Relational commitment between organisations</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instrumental engagement</li> <li>• Campaign distant from members</li> <li>Paper Coalition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign decision making dominated by union and community organisation staff rather than members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some participation of union members as spokespeople</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Union actively engaging rank and file</li> <li>• Significant buy-in, financial resources</li> </ul>
<b>Scale and Political Opportunities</b>	Focus on a single layer ----- Build capacity at many levels ----- Responding to political opportunities -----			

This ideal type categorization tries to provide broad categories for examining existing practice. In doing so, it contributes to the scholarship on coalitions by providing a framework beyond ‘best practice’ and seeks to provide a set of coalition forms that correspond to the types of coalition practice that are familiar to unions and community organisations. Also, by identifying key measures that improve coalition practice – such as mutual self-interest, positive

social frames, shared organizational planning or coalition broker organisations – the framework seeks to provide a guide for indicating ways for sustaining long term coalition practice.

However, our purpose in identifying four coalition types is not to argue that one is “worse” and another “better” in some abstract sense. If local governmental leaders suddenly announce their intentions to privatize some government service, for example, a rapid ad hoc coalition pulled together by the local public employee union may be the best way to address the immediate situation. This type of coalition, however, is different from a political alliance that seeks to recruit candidates, mobilize voters, and shift the terms of political debate around local fiscal strains so that privatization becomes something that is not among the viable policy solutions considered by local government.

In building coalitions, union and community organisation leaders must weigh such factors as immediate need, available partners, and short- and long-term goals. Our typology is intended to help highlight the trade offs between different types of coalitions and their implications for developing progressive power. The four coalition types clearly differ in their ability to alter existing power relationships. Ad hoc coalitions are the least transformative while deep coalitions offer the greatest promise of wholesale change. For example, in the U.S., unions may have to mobilize community support during a contract campaign in order to help save worker health benefits. Community groups lend their support as a general act of solidarity to uphold community standards. In addition to perhaps saving the health benefits, such a campaign may help establish or strengthen relationships among the different participants. However, a coalition to push for state laws mandating employer-provided health care or a single-payer health system represents a far different collection of organizational interest, participation, and process. If this type of longer coalition was to be successful, it would be likely to not only revolutionize

health care access, but would probably involve a significant shift in the balance of power and agenda within in a state legislature.

In terms of on the ground practice our typology suggests two key implications. In terms of day-to-day practice, organizers need to be able to utilize a range of coalition forms so that their coalition practices best match their needs and goals. However, in thinking about long-term progressive change, building a movement capable of shifting the corporate neo-liberal agendas in our communities, states, and nations requires that deep coalition building becomes part of the mix of strategies realized over time.

To illustrate the usefulness of the typology for examining coalition practice, the rest of this paper applies our framework to two sets of case studies: a long-term public education campaign from Sydney Australia and selections of different living wage coalitions in the United States. Our purpose here is not an international comparison of international coalition practice, which can be sourced elsewhere (Tattersall 2006b). Rather, the purpose is to identify a series of case studies, in Australia and the USA that illustrate the usefulness of the coalition framework for generating meaningful research questions. The Australian example also demonstrates how union coalitions beyond wages and conditions can engage the direct interests of union members and support union power. The Australian context provides a useful variation for US unions, as its stronger history of labor laws and its history of interconnection between unions and social movements has produced coalition experience on a wide range of social questions that provides lessons for coalition practice in a US context.

For each case we use our framework to help explain how variations in coalition form contributed to variations in effectiveness. Here effectiveness is understood to refer to both achieving political outcomes and also building a strong, participatory, broad union-community

movement. The different case studies are also presented to highlight two different ways our coalitions' framework can be used. The Australian case study uses our typology to examine coalition variation within a single campaign over time. By contrast the living wage case study illustrates how the coalition framework can be used to compare variations between different types of coalitions.

### **The NSW Public Education Coalitions<sup>1</sup>**

Between 2001 and 2003, the NSW Teachers Federation coordinated an alliance of parents, principals and teachers to change public education policy in Australia. However, these public education campaigns varied significantly, between a powerful independent public education inquiry, to a weaker union dominated federal election campaign. This section overviews the changes in this coalition arguing that the degree of organizational interconnection and the depth of organizational participation were key determinants of coalition effectiveness and agenda-setting political power.

The NSW Teachers Federation (NSWTF) had pre-existing structural and ideological features, and a history of community relationships that supported a shift towards coalition campaigning in 2001 (Author interview, O'Halloran NSWTF President, Dec 2004). The NSWTF is the second largest union in NSW with over 93% of full-time school teachers registered as members (NSWTF 2005). It is a highly democratic union with significant rank and file participation facilitated through bi-monthly 300 person Council meetings and vibrant regional teachers associations. For its 50 000+ teachers there are over 2,200 school stewards, and 2,200 women's contacts (NSWTF 2006). The union has a broad identity, with the professional status of teachers encouraging union campaigns on the conditions of learning in

addition to wages (O'Brien 1987). The service-based nature of teaching directly connects teachers to a community of interests, including parents, school principals and the local neighborhoods around schools. Additionally, the NSWTF has a long history of ad hoc relationships with parents groups (including the Parents & Citizens Federation (P&C)) (O'Brien 1987). The union has a progressive ideological tradition, in the 1960s and 70s having a close connection with social movements such as the anti-Vietnam, feminism and Aboriginal Rights movements (Norrington 1998).

During the late 1990s there was increasing pressure upon the education system that eventually created the impetus for coalition activity in 2001. There were major budget cuts from the Federal Government, an increase Government support for private education and a series of school restructures from the State Government (Vinson 2002). These structural shifts created pressure inside the NSWTF for an internal restructure (Author interview, anonymous organizer, March 2005). The union had a bitter salaries dispute in 1999 that propelled a 'new formula for organizing and campaigning' (Author interview Gavrielatos, Vice-President, 2005).<sup>1</sup> The union established a Public Education Fund, collecting \$17 per member per year to campaign solely for the defense of public education. In its first year, this fund raised a \$1 millions (O'Halloran 2001). The union also experimented with localized campaigning, establishing Public Education Lobbies in local electorates (equivalent of US congressional districts) across NSW. These local groups were local coalitions of parents, principals and teachers, campaigning to build local awareness and lobby elected representatives.

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<sup>1</sup> The aggression of the salaries dispute was unprecedented. It included the major tabloid newspaper – the *Daily Telegraph* – running a front page photo of the President of the NSWTF, Sue Simpson, dressed as a cartoon character with a dunce cap on her head, with the slogan – 'it the cap fits.' This lead article appeared the day after the union took a one day strike against the Government's pay officer.

### *A Support Coalition and the Federal Election*

The opportunity of the Federal Election in 2001 launched the public education campaign, run by a support coalition dominated by the NSWTF. In early 2001 a series of coalition meetings planned events around the Federal Election. Parents and teachers invited school principal associations to join them in planning both localized and national events to raise awareness about the need for public education funding.

The coalition work focused on several key events, staged mainly at a national scale to achieve national media. Events escalated towards the Election Day in October 2001. Each of the events was initiated by the NSWTF, and as the year progressed there was increasing involvement of the partner organizations. Events included a public education day in March. The final event was a Public Education Convention on September 8 2001. This event was coordinated through regular, formal meetings between the P&C, FOSCO, PPA, SPA and PSPF. Each of the groups was given a speaker on the stage and was encouraged to bring members to the event.

Supplementing this on a local scale, were events by the public education lobbies in local electoral districts. Major forums were held with three events of over 500 participants organized in south western Sydney, an area of socio-economic disadvantage (interview, NSWTF organizer, 2005). Local parents, principals and teachers lobbied elected representatives (Richard 2001). Local representatives were considered especially powerful advocates, as one parent representative described 'the local politician couldn't duck and weave and pretend it was someone else's business, they had to argue the impact of the policy at that local level (interview, P&C representative, 2005).

Using the above coalition framework, the 2001 coalition between parents, principals and teachers can be described as a support coalition. While some decision making was shared, the ownership over the events was in the hands of the NSWTF. Planning and strategy was union dominated, with the coalition focused on tactics, discussing who would speak at the rallies and how participants would be mobilized.

The support coalition was an important network, but it was only moderately successful in achieving effective mobilizations and political influence. Indeed coalition partners reflected on the campaign period very differently. A key Principal representative described the turnout for the Convention as ‘disappointing -- the superdome holds about 30,000 and really it was pretty empty’ (interview 21, anonymous principal representative, 2005). In contrast, a NSWTF organizer described the Convention as ‘groundbreaking (interview 27, NSWTF organizer, 2005). Assessments on the event were consistent with the degree of ownership; the principals and parents had less investment in the Convention than the NSWTF. For the NSWTF this event harnessed the resources of the public education fund and public education lobbies (Long 2001). For the NSWTF, the event was successful despite the smaller attendance because it satisfied these broader campaign objectives.

The event highlights the strengths and limitations of support coalitions. Support coalitions allow for a formal interconnection of organizations to enable the execution of events. Yet they are also limited; the focus on events (tactics) not strategy constrains organizational ownership, and here created union dominance. Common interest was focused on the event rather than organizational interests in public education, mitigating the sustainability of the coalition relationships.

### *A Deep Coalition and the Vinson Inquiry*

The NSWTF and the P & C forged a stronger mutual-support coalition around an Inquiry into Public Education in NSW (the Vinson Inquiry). This coalition was narrower – focused on the State Government and run by only two organizations. Its purpose was to hold an eight month inquiry to develop an agenda for the future of public education in NSW.

The Vinson Inquiry began as a tactical reaction to Government policy, and turned into a strategic opportunity for policy creation. The idea came from the NSWTF who, frustrated with State Government policy changes without consultation, decided to fund a wide-ranging independent inquiry to create an independent policy agenda (Author interview, O'Halloran, 2004).

The Inquiry was coordinated through a coalition between the NSWTF and the P&C. The NSWTF recognized that without a community partnership, the inquiry would look like a union-front rather than an independent political agenda. As one senior union official described:

We determined from the outset that we should do the review with the cooperation of the P&C and that was as much as for political reasons as it was based on our belief that they are partners and stakeholders in the provision of education. The political reasons being if you have the NSWTF and the P&C both commissioning this, it would make it that little bit harder for our political opponents to dismiss it (Author interview, Gravrielatos, 2005)

This coalition between parents and teachers had a close, mutual common interest. Teachers have a deep self-interest in the state of public education; the quality of funding and conditions in schools affects their daily working lives. Similarly, parents have a deep self-interest in the quality of public education for it directly affects their children. Furthermore, neither of these organizations could undertake this inquiry on their own. The P&C could not

afford to run an inquiry into the quality of public education, and the NSWTF needed a community partner to legitimize the Inquiry.

Structurally, the Inquiry was organized at two scales. Firstly, key senior representatives were appointed by the Teachers and Parents to coordinate the day-to-day activities. Then, the two organizations established a separate, formal organization to undertake the Inquiry. An independent Head for the Inquiry – Tony Vinson – was hired, who then hired a team of administrative staff. This secretariat for the Inquiry was housed in its own office space, and was given discretion over its own budget. Vinson was a senior Professor in Education from the University of Sydney, who had previously managed a public inquiry into Corrective Services. Vinson served the coalition while also reaching out with an agenda that addressed the needs of public education more broadly. As Vinson described it ‘the moment I started to look as though I was aligned to this group or that group it would undermine the whole thing’ (Author interview, Vinson, 2005). He acted with the partners, but also beyond the partners.

In effect, the Vinson Inquiry was a statewide campaign around public education. The Inquiry’s audience was focused on teachers and parents, but stretched to the general public at large. For instance, the launch of the Inquiry was through what O’Halloran described as a ‘community sky channel’, and the terms of reference and submissions were advertised in all daily newspapers (interview, O’Halloran, NSWTF President 2004). The Inquiry toured the state and became a focus for mobilizing union members, teachers and the general public to have their say about the problems in the education system and how they would resolve them. It was a multi-pronged community event. Throughout the six-month period of hearings, the Inquiry generated broad media coverage, school visits and community hearings. Indeed, one senior

union officer believed ‘there was hardly a day (during the Inquiry) that there wasn’t a story about public education’ (Author interview, Gavrielatos, NSWTF, 2005).

The repetition of local coalition events across the state allowed the coalition to simultaneously operate at the scale of the state and the local scale. At a city and regional level, teachers and parents were directly connected to the inquiry through oral hearings and submissions. It was local union organizers, local Teachers Association and P&C representatives that determined where hearings would be held and made them happen (Author interview, union organizer 3, 2005). Public Education Lobbies were sometimes used as decision-making forums, other times P&C representatives were invited to Teacher Association meetings (Author observation, Teachers Association meeting, April 2005). The capacity to mobilize union and P&C members to locally coordinate events connected the Inquiry to the local community. Furthermore, the actual focus of activity – public hearings – drew in a deeper level of participation amongst union members and the P&C members. As one union organizer noted ‘it allowed people with passionate but discrete concerns to air their opinion in the context of the broader issue of public education’, it ‘touched the middle teachers that doesn’t get involved in the union’ (Author interview, NSWTF organizer 4, 2005; O’Halloran, 2004). The logistics of hosting hearings created a space for local decision making, and the process of the hearings themselves engaged local people on education issues that directly affected them.

Using the coalition framework, the Vinson Inquiry was a deep coalition between the P&C and NSWTF. The narrowness of the coalition facilitated a strong bond of trust, and the combination of mutual self-interest and the inability to undertake this task alone bound the organizations in common interest. The participation of senior organizational leaders combined with the formation of a separate coalition office allowed the coalition to entwine the concerns of

each organization while also reaching to the general public at large. The combination of locally based action and decision making across an entire State allowed the coalition to operate at multiple scales, deeply engaging union and community organization members while creating significant media awareness.

The Vinson Inquiry was the pinnacle of the public education campaign. As one union official exclaimed ‘the results of this campaign in terms of the legitimacy, the validation, the authentication, the ... call it what you like, all of our campaign objectives articulated through this independent inquiry’ (Author interview, Gavrielatos, 2005). Similarly an official from the P&C noted, ‘it provided us with so much information that we could really set an agenda off’ (Author interview, anonymous P&C official, 2005). The Vinson Inquiry produced a blueprint of reform for public education. It was an agenda for a new public education system created through deep coalition work.

#### *The ‘Mutual’ Public Education Alliance and the NSW State Election*

To translate the findings of the Vinson Inquiry into a policy program, the NSWTF and P&C expanded their coalition to school principals, creating the Public Education Alliance. This coalition coordinated lobbied in the lead up to the 2003 State Election to achieve a raft of public education reform, including reducing class sizes and resources for professional development. This coalition had less decentralized activity than the Vinson Inquiry, with the larger number of partners concentrating power and decision making at the scale of the state. It is best described as a mutual self-interest coalition.

The Public Education Alliance formally met from July 2002 until the State Election in March 2003 creating an open space for negotiating and decision making to determine the goals

and activity of the election campaign. Conflict and personal disagreements were put aside in order to create a 'united front' (Author interview, PPA Scott, 2005). Meetings occurred on an ad hoc basis in at the NSWTF office with the senior officers of all the participant organizations.

To run the election campaign, the Alliance identified Six United Demands that narrowed the recommendations of the Vinson Inquiry into a political action plan (interview, O'Halloran: NSWTF, 2004). A draft set of demands was proposed by the NSWTF, then circulated to the Alliance giving some control to the union, but still ensuring that other partners had the power to disagree and amend, as one describes:

We always had the power to veto ... we wouldn't put our name to anything that we did not approve of as an organization. So while the union would have lead the way and put the issue up front if there was anything that we did not like ... things that were being said or any emphasis that we didn't want we would say no (Author interview, anonymous parent, February 2 2005).

The process of negotiating the final demands allowed individual organizations to have their organization's specific self-interest represented in the public education campaign. The NSWTF's interests were clear in two of the demands – class sizes and a demand about attracting quality teachers to the profession. The Principals' key interest was represented in the demand for professional development. The Parents goals were apparent in the demand over class sizes and improved school maintenance. As one Principal noted 'we were all encompassed by those recommendations' (Author interview, anonymous principal representative, 2005). The negotiated balance of the specific demands allowed the broad concept of public education to translate to the specific concerns of each constituent organization, binding their organizations to the campaign through their own self-interest.

The local activities of the public education lobbies were again engaged in this campaign, but the local activity was less of a focus. There was some lobbying of elected representatives and schools displayed signs saying ‘public education is the issue.’ Yet, there had been a shift in focus from the local to the State Government decision makers, particularly the Premier, the Treasurer and the Opposition leader. The campaign’s main events were centrally staged forums – such as one at Sydney Town Hall – rather than locally staged events. The campaign continued to mobilize large numbers of rank and file unionists and parents, but there was significantly less local control than during the Vinson Inquiry.

Instead, the political victories from the Public Education Alliance came through strategic lobbying and of key State-based decision makers. The media campaign of the Vinson Inquiry created such momentum around class sizes that in November 2002, five months before the election campaign, the Opposition leader gave public support to this central United Demand. The campaign in effect split the ruling political parties, creating a political opportunity for the conservative opposition to appear as pro-public education by supporting the Alliance. As O’Halloran noted ‘I think the (Opposition leader) wanted to capture ground’ (interview, O’Halloran: NSWTF, 2004).

From November to March the Alliance’s campaign focused on the Government. The Public Education Alliance met with the Premier on January 22nd 2003, an incredible achievement as the NSWTF had not had a meeting with the Premier for years. On February 16<sup>th</sup> the Alliance hosted the Public Education Forum, and invited the Education Minister, Opposition Leader and minor parties to address an audience of thousands of teachers, parents and principals.

This centralized mutual self-interest coalition created major political success – the greatest shifts in public education policy in a generation, with the Government announcing

support for the class sizes demands on March 9<sup>th</sup>, and then a week later announcing support for professional development funding (Author interview, NSWTF Official 4, 2005). The weakness of this mutual coalition was that it provided a smaller role for union and community organization members to directly participate in activity or decision making. While the rank and file were involved, they were active more as participants than as organizers; the meaningful activity was controlled by the State leaders of the Public Education Alliance. As Clawson notes, it demonstrates one of the weaknesses of coalition work that coalitions can struggle to meaningfully engage union members (Clawson 2003). The shift from a deep coalition to a mutual coalition highlights this gap.

#### *Variations in the Public Education Coalition*

The shifting nature of the coalitions behind the NSW public education campaign highlights how variations in coalition common interest, structure, commitment and scale vary coalition power. The earlier support coalitions gave way to a narrower, but stronger deep coalition that later evolved into a broader but less movement based mutual coalition. This discussion highlights that different coalitions are a question of strategic appropriateness as well as agenda setting power. A mutual coalition capable of focusing campaign resources on a few State politicians was a very effective way to gain a policy outcome during the State election. But it also highlighted a weakness: a coalition's capacity to develop a union-community movement relies on its ability to engage union and community organization members in meaningful campaign activity.

The experience of various coalition types around public education does point to the potential for coalition work amongst many types of unions – such as health care, public sector,

child care unions – not only given the experience of international practice, but also in light of public sector social movement unionism which flourished in the US in the 1970s and 1980s (Johnston 1994).

### **Coalitions in Living Wage Campaigns**

Having passed over 120 municipal policies by 2005, the U.S. living wage movement offers a particularly rich laboratory for exploring the dynamics at work in our four coalition types by comparing across cases. Below we compare eight representative living wage campaigns around two questions: 1) what forces help explain why different campaigns displayed different coalition types; and 2) how did the type of coalition influence the long-term outcome of the campaign. Our goal is to illustrate the usefulness of our coalition typology. Obviously given space limitations, we cannot engage in the kind of detailed examination as our Australian case.

The below chart divides the campaigns based on our four coalition categories.<sup>2</sup> For each category we have chosen paired examples in order to examine contexts whose size is significantly different from the other pair member. Smaller communities tend to have fewer groups in the overall coalition, have a lower level of mobilization in terms of raw numbers, operate with less staffing resources, and include more opportunities for individuals to be involved as individuals, rather than as representatives of organizations.<sup>3</sup>

	<b>Ad Hoc</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Mutual</b>	<b>Deep</b>
Larger Urban Area	Toledo 2000 332,000	Detroit 1998-2005 1 million	Chicago 1995-1998 2.7 million	Los Angeles 1995-1997 3.4 million
Smaller Urban Area	Lansing, MI 2003 128,000	Kalamazoo, MI 81,000	Ann Arbor, MI 1998-2001 110,000	Ithaca, NY 30,000

Numbers give approximate years of the campaign and the population of the city.

## *Campaign Overviews*

Ad hoc living wage coalitions in both Toledo and Lansing grew out of initiatives from a single individual. In Toledo Peter Gerkin, a city council member who came out of the UAW, started the campaign by initiating an ordinance. A support group of labor and community organizations and individuals then formed around the proposal. In Lansing, Glen Freeman, a United-Way labor liaison, organized support among elected officials and key labor and community players to get the Ingham County government to pass a living wage policy.

The support coalitions around Detroit's ballot campaign was organized by the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO that then drew in labor and other groups to first pass the initiative and then defend it from efforts the regional Chamber of Commerce to gut the legislation. Kalamazoo's campaign was organized by a core group of community activists linked to the Green Party and a Western Michigan State Professor who had been elected to city council. Getting nowhere with the city council, the group fought a legal battle to place the measure on the ballot only to see it voted down by a modest margin.

The mutual-interest coalitions arose out of tighter networks. In Chicago, SEIU 880 and the local ACORN chapter built a strong steering committee of a dozen labor and community groups who made concrete financial and people turnout commitments as a condition for serving on the committee. A two-year effort against an opposition that included Mayor Daley saw the Board of Alderman vote a proposed ordinance down. A year later, however, the Board passed a weaker ordinance following efforts by the campaign to organize accountability sessions in different city wards and a pending vote by the Alderpersons to raise their own salaries. A diverse set of a dozen key volunteers in the Ann Arbor area organized four years of campaigning

that resulted in living wage ordinances in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County and a road commission policy.

Deep living wage coalitions were integrated into broader political power projects. The Los Angeles living wage campaign marked one point in a broader long-term series of projects to build labor-community power and influence over the area's economic development policies. The effort was spearheaded by the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy in the context of the increasingly political power of the LA County Federation of Labor.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, organizers in Ithaca, New York decided from the beginning to build a coalition that “works for a living wage for all people in Tompkins County.”<sup>5</sup> Passing living wage policies at the city and county levels has been only one part of continuing efforts to raise wages, including community support school paraprofessionals bargaining, gathering 5,200 signatures demanding higher wage at the local Wal Mart, organizing for a recent state increase in the minimum wage, and the establishment of a Workers' Rights Center and Immigrant Rights Center.

### *Forces Influencing Coalition Types*

Comparing the eight cases illustrates the interaction between objective and subjective forces shaping the four factors that define our four coalition types. Three elements are clearly at work.

First is opportunity structure, which underscores the importance of scale and political opportunity. To be viable, living wage coalitions have to have some chance of success. All eight campaigns enjoyed a context of Democratic legislative majorities at the local level. In Toledo and Lansing local office holders were sufficiently connected to labor political action that ad hoc support was sufficient to deliver a majority vote. In Lansing ongoing efforts at the state

level to outlaw local living wage ordinances also had made such ordinances a public-debated cause that divided Democrats from Republicans. By contrast, the Chicago campaign had to muster sufficient force to overcome the influence of the Daley machine, while in Los Angeles supporters had to override a Mayoral veto. In Detroit, using the living wage as part of organized labor's coordinated electoral campaign allowed for a small petition gathering effort to nevertheless distribute 300,000 flyers by Election Day. Catching onto the campaign late, the regional Chamber of Commerce decided not to oppose the ballot measure in a city that is seventy percent African-American. Yet, post-election efforts by the Chamber to weaken the law prompted coalitional efforts to build support for the new law.

The above overview suggests that campaigns which face opposition that presents a challenge, yet one that is not insurmountable, will favor the development of stronger forms of coalitions. However, this factor does not explain our other three cases. Of the four Michigan campaigns the Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor) effort took place in the most favorable opportunity structure -- a progressive college town and pro-labor working class communities. By contrast, Kalamazoo faced the determined opposition of the mayor and a council majority. Yet, the Washtenaw mutual interest coalition was more developed than the support coalition in Kalamazoo. Similarly, as another college town with a tradition of progressive activism – and even a past democratic socialist mayor – Ithaca present politically favorable terrain that did not require the strongest long-term commitment.

Secondly, the living wage coalitions underline the importance of bridge builders for shaping the perceptions of common interest, structure, and organizational commitment. Individuals with union and social movement experience were critical in forming many of the living wage coalitions. The Washtenaw campaign formed as a common interest coalition

because it enjoyed strong bridge builders. The initiators of the campaign were able to bring together half a dozen key figures that combined links to organized labor with connections to the other elements needed by the coalition: faith-based groups, politicians, students, and non-profit organizations. The Kalamazoo effort did not have the same distribution of bridge builders and so never secured extensive buy-in by either religious or labor groups. In terms of later, it suffered from a two-county central labor body that was not based in the city and did not play a leadership role in the campaign. Bridge builders can also take institutional forms. The Chicago coalition's "common interest" character was aided by the organic partnership between a community organization (ACORN) and a key union (SEIU Local 880 -- historically organized by ACORN). In Los Angeles, LAANE was founded by union leaders to provide a bridge building connection between labor and the community. In particular LAANE provided the staff and other resources to help build Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice as a key partner for the living wage campaign and other economic development and union support work. In Ithaca, two three-quarter time staff people have provided the glue supporting the area's deep coalition. Although one staff was a recent transplant, the other is a long-time activist with connections across the community.

Finally, the broader common concern and the particular strategic intention of the coalition relationships were a key variable behind the coalition forms present. Our cases reveal a clear difference between campaigns defined by the goal of passing a piece of legislation and those framed by a larger purpose. Our ad hoc and support coalitions all formed with the goal of enacting an ordinance. In both Kalamazoo and Detroit immediate or eventual opposition helped move the efforts from ad hoc to support coalitions. Its success in Detroit led the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO to integrate living wage activism into its electoral endorsement process and ongoing political work – thus extending the goal into an ongoing effort.

All of our mutual and deep coalitions came together with broader purposes in mind. In Washtenaw County key organizers saw the campaign as a possible way of developing a more long-term labor-community coalition. To this end organizers planned from the beginning to pass legislation at multiple levels of government. Chicago activists assumed the likelihood of losing a vote by the Alderpersons. They embarked upon the campaign as way of fostering a progressive challenge to the city's machine politics. Passing a living wage in Los Angeles was only one step in the ongoing efforts led by LAANE and the LA County Federation of Labor to build a progressive voice in regional economic development decisions and to create conditions supportive of workers' right to organize. Similarly, the Ithaca efforts focused more on aiding specific groups of workers than on passing city and county living wage policies. Indeed, the Tompkins County Living Wage Coalition's first campaign focused on raising the starting wages of school paraprofessional workers from \$6.70 to \$9.50 an hour. The Coalition's exposure of the illegal wage and overtime practices at a local pizzeria and direct support provided to the restaurant's exploited immigrant workers proved as noteworthy, if not more so, than passage of a living wage policy. One of its current efforts seeks a living wage among the city's 350 hotel workers. Its Workers' Center has provided direct aid to over 525 workers since its establishment in May of 2003.

### *How Coalition Types Shape Campaign Outcomes*

The outcomes of campaigns can be explored at two levels: the enforcement of the new laws and the campaign's ability to inspire ongoing activism. Outcomes at both levels were heavily influenced by the coalition type.

As Stephanie Luce (2004) shows in her excellent study of living wage enforcement, the actual implementation of living wage ordinances is extremely uneven. Essentially the best guarantee of full enforcement is an ongoing coalition that fights for implementation. In our cases such efforts have only fully grown out of deep coalitions. In Los Angeles living wage enforcement tied directly into worker organizing at the LA airport and elsewhere. It also fit in as one part of LAANE's broader mission to monitor and intervene in the public economic development projects.

By contrast, Stephanie Luce reports that in Toledo city administrative officials took no action to implement the ordinance and did not even know the required living wage amount!<sup>6</sup> The Ingham County and Detroit laws and all the ordinances in Washtenaw County have the municipality sending notice to employers with formal enforcement relying upon complaints by or on behalf of workers. Since the Detroit campaign became a longer-term metropolitan effort groups and individuals involved in the campaign had opportunities to conduct small scale, sporadic outreach to workers and worksites. This activity did generate formal worker complaints. With the campaign having to mobilize to defend the law, the City Council also allocated money to hire two full time enforcement officials (positions which the mayor did not fill) and eventually hired the local Guild Law Center to conduct a formal review of enforcement. Similarly, as a multi-ordinance effort the Washtenaw campaign remained active long enough to support actions by Ann Arbor city government to enforce the living wage within the city's parking structures and recycling facility – the two largest groups of low-wage workers covered by the law. Although core partners in the Chicago campaign remained active with each other, the hostility of the city administration to the law has made enforcement difficult. At the same time

the core partners chose to focus their cooperation around new wage campaigns related to low-wage workers.

Do key coalition partners remain together after the campaign is over? The extent to which a living wage campaign contributes to ongoing collective activism appears to vary directly along the line of our four coalition types. Intention plays a major role. Since ad-hoc coalitions focus on passing an ordinance there is no expectation of ongoing cooperation after a law is enacted. By contrast, deep coalitions form around longer-term plans in which the living wage campaign is simply one part. Indeed, continued cooperation among core partners in both Los Angeles and Ithaca was institutionalized through the growth of the LA Alliance for a New Economy and the founding of the Ithaca Workers Center.

Ithaca's deep coalition contrasts with Washtenaw County's common interest effort. In the former, core partners came together in an effort to address the needs of low-wage workers. Thus, from the outset the campaign was defined in broader terms than simply passing a living wage law and indeed the ordinance was only one part of the coalition's activities. In Washtenaw County many activists shared a common desire to establish an ongoing labor-community coalition. However, the coalition never defined a broader set of activities beyond pushing for living wage ordinances, nor did it establish any institutional mechanism upon which to ground ongoing cooperation. Thus, once the major municipalities in the county had passed ordinances the coalition faded -- never having advanced beyond a laundry list of ideas of what to do next.

The deep coalition outcomes found in Los Angeles contrast with the support coalition experience in Detroit. As late as October 2005 the Metropolitan AFL-CIO was still helping pass living wage ordinances -- in this case in Macomb County. Yet the support character of the original effort carried through from 1998. No official ongoing coalition exists and support for

living wage laws has not formally translated, outside the ranks of labor, into cooperation around other issues. By contrast, with over twenty staff LAANE has provided a base for generating continued work around the public economic development process. Indeed, recent LA coalition efforts around community benefits agreements have served as a model for similar campaigns elsewhere in the country. Living wage activism helped produce this ongoing work precisely because the original campaign was consciously designed to do so.

In Chicago the mutual support nature of the coalition favored cooperation that is more informal than in Los Angeles, but which has proven nevertheless ongoing. The voting down of the original ordinance fed into local New Party chapter accountability work and candidate campaigns that enjoyed the support of key living wage partners. Similarly, SIEU Local 880 and ACORN continued their partnership into a campaign for state action to fund wage increases for homecare, home childcare and an attempt to translate the living wage ordinance concept to regulate retail ‘big box’ worker wages. Unlike in Washtenaw County these core partners were able to successfully translate concerns for low-wage workers into clear and viable related efforts.

#### *Variations in coalitions for living wages*

In analyzing these eight living wage campaigns our purpose is not to argue that coalition organizers should automatically pursue deeper or more common interest coalitions as a form of “best practice”. Different coalition forms apply depending upon the situation within which organizers find themselves and the intentions and resource commitments of available partners. In illustrating our coalition framework using these eight campaigns we hope to help make activists and scholars aware of the tradeoffs that must be made and how such choices shape possible long-term outcomes. For researchers, we hope that our framework provides a way of

distinguishing between different forms of coalitions in a way that can generate interesting and meaningful questions – ones that help develop sophisticated approaches to building effective labor-community coalitions.

### **Shifting Coalitions**

This article has sought to move away from empirically driven discussion of coalitions to suggest some key consistent elements that define all coalitions and variations in the coalition form. The paper has identified four key elements of coalitions – common concern, structure, organizational commitment and scale/opportunities – and argued that variations in these elements can explain differences in the types of coalitions that unions engage in.

The case studies, while set in different national contexts, were explored not to highlight how external context affects coalition practice but rather to explore two different ways in which our coalition frameworks can be useful: first, how coalitions internally vary over time, and second how coalitions vary between each other. In contrast to much union scholarship on coalitions, this paper argues that coalitions are a variable union strategy rather than a simple union tactic. The needs of unions and community allies can create coalitions with variable purposes, capable of achieving short-term victories or long-term shifts in organizational power.

Coalitions will continue to be an important strategy for unions and community organizations, as no single organization has the capacity to achieve the sort of social change required for working families on its own. This paper has sought to supplement existing scholarship and coalition practice by identifying the key drivers of coalitions and categorizing coalition forms, to improve our understanding of how coalitions work and assist the development of better coalition practice.

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<sup>1</sup> For the NSW Public Education campaign the information was gathered from in-depth research undertaken between December 2004 and May 2005. Amanda Tattersal undertook 41 in-depth interviews of Teachers Federation officials and organizers, representatives from the parents groups and school principal associations. She also interviewed several political representatives including the Ministers for Education and representatives in the Department of Education. Her discussion also refers to newspaper articles, union journals, internal documents and campaign materials.

<sup>2</sup> Information for the Michigan and Ohio cases comes from David Reynolds' participation in those campaigns complimented by targeted follow-up interviews. The interview and document research on Chicago and Los Angeles has been published in several forms including Reynolds 2002, 2003 and 2004. The Ithaca experience was documented through interview with Workers' Rights Center staff person Pete Meyers during February 2006 as well as David Reynolds personal connections to the area.

<sup>3</sup> Obviously Toledo is not at the scale of Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles. However, the ad hoc nature of the campaign does offer a case comparable to Lansing that nevertheless has a feel of a relatively larger city. Toledo also offered some documentation of post-enactment outcome by having been part of a study by the Brennan Center of local officials concerning their ordinance's impact and enforcement.

<sup>4</sup> LAANE was formed in the early 1990s with initiative from the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE). LAANE has grown to staff of twenty-five. See Reynolds 2002. On the LA County Federations power building strategies see Frank and Wong.

<sup>5</sup> Language is from the coalition's mission statement.

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<sup>6</sup> Luce p. 78.