

**LABOR-ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION BUILDING IN THE PITTSBURGH  
AREA**

by

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# **LABOR-ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION BUILDING IN THE PITTSBURGH AREA**

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This thesis examines labor-environmental coalition building in the Pittsburgh area from the spring of 2014 to the summer of 2015. The study uses in-depth interviews with leaders and active rank-and-file members involved with three different types of organizations: labor unions, environmental groups, and social movement coalition groups. It also employs participant observation of two social movement coalition groups to examine activists' relationships with labor-environmental coalition building and how labor-environmental coalitions are built in the context of the extractive industries in the Pittsburgh area. Pittsburgh is an important case study for labor-environmental coalition building because conflict in the area is centered on the extractive industries, notably coal mining and fracking. I find that (1) labor-environmental coalition builders focus on either a political opportunity or class-based strategy to build labor-environmental coalitions; (2) building coalition participation by rank-and-file members is not a high priority of leaders; (3) a significant number of labor activists later become involved in environmental organizations.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In October of 1948, a zinc plant in Donora, Pennsylvania, a mill town 20 miles south of the Pittsburgh, began emitting an unusual amount of smoke, filling the town with smog (Ivory 2007). The smog became so dense that a local high school football game was called off because the players were unable to see the ball (Ivory 2007). In a period of just four days, the smog from the plant killed 20 residents and made 14,000 others ill (Hamill 2008). The aftermath of the incident marked the beginning of environmental concerns for the United Steelworkers, who represented the workers at the Donora plant. The union advocated for environmental health and safety regulations and worked alongside the Sierra Club and Natural Resources Defense Fund to establish the Clean Air Act of 1963 (Ackerman & Hassler 1981). The collaboration between the USW and the two environmental organizations became an official partnership in 2006, when they joined the Sierra Club to create the BlueGreen Alliance. The Donora smog incident of 1948 was one of the first instances in the Pittsburgh region of a labor union publically recognizing and acting to solve the environmental problems created by a company that employed its workers.

While the Clean Air Act of 1963 was the product of cooperation between the USW and the environmental movement, it created even larger divides between environmentalists and workers in the energy industry. In the decades after the Clean Air Act, there were few instances of cooperation in the United States between labor unions and environmental organizations. In fact, particularly in the extractive industries, the relationship between the environmentalists and

union workers became quite hostile. One of best known cases of the conflict between the two movements was the campaign to save the northern spotted owl in California and the Pacific Northwest in the early 1990s (Mayer 2008). Environmental activists argued that large swaths of old growth Redwood forests should be free of timber extraction, in order to protect the habitat of the spotted owl (Mayer 2008; Obach 2004; Foster 1993). Gordon (2004:2) explains how strained the relationship became: "Radical environmentalists removed survey stakes, sabotaged bulldozers, and spiked trees -- ruining chainsaws and occasionally injuring workers. Loggers and mill workers responded with verbal and physical attacks." In addition to the tensions with the timber industry, the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards caused disputes between environmentalists and automotive worker -- the United Auto Workers lobbied for less strict emissions standards on domestic cars, which tended to be larger and have worse fuel economy than their foreign counterparts -- and resistance to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) has further strained the relationship between oil workers and environmentalists (Mayer 2008; Obach 2004). During this period of time and because of these well publicized conflicts, environmental regulations became associated with the loss of blue collar, union jobs.

The 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) protest in Seattle was a brief moment when, on the national level, the animosity between the movements seemed to have dissipated. Media coverage of the event often featured the phrase, "Turtles and Teamsters, Together at Last," with many commentators declaring that moment as the beginning of a broader solidarity movement between labor and environmental activists. The protests in Seattle were extremely effective at disrupting the WTO meetings while connecting larger networks of activists in the labor and environmental communities (Rose 2003). Further protests were held by event coalitions against

WTO meetings, the G20, the International Monetary Fund, and World Bank. These protests, along with coordinated actions like the World Social Forum and, most recently, Occupy Wall Street, offered the opportunity for more coordination between labor unions and environmental organizations.

My study places activists in the Pittsburgh area within this national context of labor-environmental coalition building. I conducted interviews and participant observations from the spring of 2014 to the summer of 2015 in and around Pittsburgh to better understand how activists get involved and interested in labor-environmental issues, how different labor-environmental issues are framed within the coalition building communities, and how activists strategize to build stronger ties between environmental organizations and labor unions. Moreover, my study provides a better understanding of how union leaders, environmental leaders, and *bridge builders* treat the discourse around the most contentious of industrial practices (Rose 2000). This thesis provides insight on how activists are navigating labor-environmental issues in Pittsburgh 65 years after the Donora incident in an era after many mills and factories left the area, coal mining has declined, and fracking has seen a large boom.

This paper contains three primary sections. First, my literature review highlights previous scholarship on labor-environmental coalitions and event coalitions, and introduces concepts that are helpful for understanding labor-environmental coalition building in Pittsburgh, like social movement “spillout” (Tarrow and Hadden 2007) and social movement interaction. Second, I present my findings from my interviews and participant observations of labor-environmental coalition building in the area and explore how relationships between environmentalists and union members are navigated. Finally, I analyze my findings and conclude that labor-environmental coalition is largely divided by two different strategies, rank-and-file member participation in



labor-environmental coalition building is not a high priority, and that there is spill out from labor unions to environmental organizations.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 LABOR-ENVIRONMENTAL COALITIONS

Margaret Levi and Gillian Murphy define coalitions as “collaborative, means-oriented arrangements that permit distinct organizational entities to pool resources in order to effect change” (Levi 2006:654; Tarrow 2011:192). In *Power in Movement*, Tarrow remarks that coalitions, among other factors, provide movement organizations with the capability to scale into a larger resistance movement:

Primary associations and face-to-face contacts provided solidarity for social movements among people who knew and trusted one another. But it took the experience of reading the same journals, associating in the same groups, and forming coalitions across class and geographic lines to build the formal connective structures that allowed movements to be diffused to new publics, and the scale of contention to mount from the neighborhood and the locality to the region and the nation. (2011:69)

Tarrow's explanation illustrates that coalitions are an opportunity for individuals with similar ideological groundings to meet, exchange ideas, share resources, and work in solidarity on campaigns.

In *Strategic Alliances: Coalition Building and Social Movements*, Nella Van Dyke and Holly McCammon explain that "global capital's ability to move production to other parts of the

globe, the emergence of flexible production, and the use of temporary subcontracting have reduced labor's power and created an increasingly disorganized and spatially diffuse working class" (2010:xiii). Furthermore, they explain that this has caused many labor unions to reassess their strategies and consider coalition building the best option to remedy their rapid loss of power. There have been concerted international efforts from the left to work cooperatively to unite SMOs from a variety of different social movements to counteract the effects of globalization, as well as efforts on the national level (Smith and Bandy 2005; Estabrook 2007; Van Dyke 2010). A large part of this strategy involves pooling resources to give the organizations more power to reach their goals. Staggenborg's (1986) research on the pro-choice movement has shown that organizations are more likely to join coalitions when it enables them to save resources or in order to respond to a threat or opportunity that was previously insurmountable without the pooled resources of the coalition. By and large, movements are more effective when they work in coalitions (Mayer 2008; Clawson 2003). However, it is much more common to see coalitions formed between two SMOs within the same movement, rather the SMOs from different movements -- like the labor-environmental coalitions that this paper explores. (Mayer 2008; Van Dyke 2010).

The largest studies of labor-environmental coalition building that have been conducted include Estabrook's (2007) study of a labor-environmental coalition surrounding the petrochemical plants in Louisiana, the Louisiana Labor-Neighbor Project; Mayer's (2008) three case studies on labor-environmental coalitions fighting against toxics; Rose's (2000) examination of coalition forging between environmental, labor, and peace movements; and Obach's (2004) survey of labor-environmental coalitions throughout the United States.

In *Labor and the Environmental Movement: The Quest for Common Ground*, Obach conducts interviews with 70 leaders from environmental organizations and labor unions and posits that the largest impediments to cooperation between environmental organizations and labor unions are the differences in economic goals of the organizations, ideological differences within each group, and the lack of interpersonal interaction between leaders from each group (Obach 2004).

The economic and political aspect of the relationship is undoubtedly the most crippling obstacle to building cooperation between the two groups. Obach explains that many scholars suggest that the economic well-being of the working class is threatened by environmental regulations imposed by a primarily middle-class environmental movement (2004). Thus, union members are rightfully alienated by goals of environmental groups-- which often threaten jobs in the workers' industry. Others argue those in the labor movement should naturally be attracted to the ideology of the environmental movement since the majority of the costs of environmental degradation disproportionately affect working class individuals (Obach 2004). Kleidman and Rochon (1997) suggest that the selection of specific goals within coalition involves finding the "least-common denominator" between the two movements.

Other quantitative studies suggest that environmental regulation, the paramount issue of contention between environmental groups and labor unions, causes nominal job loss in some sectors and often registers a net gain of jobs in the national economy. Economist Eban Goodstein (1999) has estimated that environmental regulation in the US can account for roughly 3,000 jobs lost per year, or less than one tenth of one percent of annual job loss. Additionally, gains in regulatory jobs compensate for those lost to regulation. Moreover, Goodstein estimates that roughly 2 million Americans are employed in positions that are related to environmental

regulation. He is careful to point out that while environmental regulation creates a net increase, it can have extremely detrimental effects on communities with an economic dependence on practices that are prohibited by regulation (Coglianese et al. 2013; Goodstein 1999). Divisive economic situations are not likely to be solved by coalitions, but strong coalitions provide a space for an open dialogue for individuals from each group to work toward a common understanding. Understanding how activists are framing job loss and regulation in the Pittsburgh area is a key element of my study.

Fred Rose attempts to explain both the practicality and difficulty of forming labor-environmental coalitions by examining the respective relationships between labor unions, environmental organizations, and corporations. All three of these entities share common interests in certain respects. The project of building labor-environmental coalitions is largely the project of convincing those two actors that their interests are more aligned with one another than they are with the industry. Rose breaks down the three relationships and explains that unions sometimes side with corporations because "corporations advocate for growth and against environmental restrictions to increase profits. Workers, on the other hand, favor growth to create jobs, improve wages, or provide job security. These interests converge when workers believe that profits will translate into jobs and compensation" (Rose 2003:54). Additionally, Rose argues that sometimes, though far less often, the interests of corporations align with those of environmentalists, particularly around the growth of technology to solve environmental problems. Environmental organizations obviously benefit from more sustainable technology and corporations stand to profit from selling these products. After all, it is not uncommon for certain corporations to advocate for government subsidies for environmentally friendly technology. Finally, Rose argues that labor unions and environmental organizations are able to unite because

they have "a common enemy in corporations that are undermining both labor and environmental standards" (2003:55). For Rose, the ultimate structural challenge for labor-environmental coalitions is corporations' larger pools of resources. He adds, "corporations control jobs, large quantities of funds that can be used to operate organizations, and the access to politicians that large campaign donations can buy" (Rose 2003:58).

## 2.2 CLASS, RACE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Class and race differences are an important part of the labor-environmental coalition building narrative. Fred Rose breaks down the relationship between class and work as follows:

Unions like the Teamsters are working class in that they perform manual labor with repetitive tasks and they have little control over their work, which is closely supervised by management. Environmentalists in the mainstream organizations, by contrast, are largely middle class. Most of their members are professionals, like teachers, lawyers, or doctors and their children. They do work that involves expertise and intellectual tasks, and they have more control than the working class over the pace and organization of their own work. (2003:58)

For Rose, an important part of this class distinction is the workers' relationship with their work and the degree to which they control the organization of their workplace. Both Obach and Rose risk exaggerating the class characteristics of environmentalists and union members and fail to acknowledge that labor-environmental coalitions can often take different forms in which the respective organizations can have a more diverse set of class backgrounds -- this is particularly the case in respect to the anti-toxins movement during the 1980s and 1990s (Szasz 1994; Mayer 2008). However, recognizing racial and class differences between union members and environmental activists is important, and became a common theme throughout my interviews of activists in Pittsburgh.

Class differences can pose a host of potential problems, including difficulties in developing appropriate tactics for a labor-environmental social movement coalition. As Sidney Tarrow stated, "the repertoire is at once a structural and a cultural concept, involving not only what people do when they engage in conflict with others but what they know how to do and what

others expect them to do" (2011:30). The tactics of a social movement are informed by the cultural backgrounds of its constituents. This means that, along with the problem of overcoming any economic divides, the coalition has to carefully consider the style of action they take in regard to the cultural divides that may exist in the two allying organizations.

Bourdieu's concept of *doxa* enables an even deeper understanding of the challenges of organizing within coalition groups composed of people from different backgrounds working together. He describes doxa as "practical schemes -- implicit, tacit, very hard to make explicit" (Benson and Neveu 2005:37). There are societal presuppositions and there are also presuppositions that take place within a specific habitus. In this sense, doxa limits the field of topics that can be debated. The doxa possessed by environmental activists may prevent them from fully understanding the rationale of labor unions. Moreover, in order to form a strong coalition, some axiomatic ideas must be challenged in order to develop the most effective strategy.

In their study of coalition building between environmental justice and peace groups, Beamish and Luebbers (2009:669) found that differing cultural backgrounds presented challenges in the initial stages of building the coalition because activists from the groups had "differing cultural expectations concerning how the individual ought to relate to the group and how the group ought relate to the outside."

Moreover, the types of strategies used by labor-environmental coalitions are informed by their respective repertoires of contention. The term *repertoire of contention* was coined by sociologist Charles Tilly, who stated, "the word repertoire helps describe what happens by identifying a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice" (Tilly 2011:20). A repertoire of contention can include strikes,



demonstrations, political rallies, occupations, and other tactics. It is the means through which contentious groups, like social movements, engage in collective action, build solidarity, publicize their cause, and impose costs upon those that they oppose. A repertoire of contention is formed in a manner that takes more than just structural and tactical aspects into consideration. As Sidney Tarrow (2011:30) noted, “The repertoire is at once a structural and a cultural concept, involving not only what people do when they engage in conflict with others but what they know how to do and what others expect them to do” . Tarrow illustrates that when groups develop their repertoire of contention, they look to the cultural legacy of their group. It is culturally acceptable and well-known acts that gain traction as a means to voice opposition. Along with the ideological differences about the political issues themselves, differences in praxis can provide additional obstacles for cooperation within a coalition.

In *Blue-Green Coalitions: Fighting for Safe Workplaces and Healthy Communities*, Mayer (2008) emphasizes the importance of workplace health and safety as a building block of the labor movement in the United States and environmental movement being centrally concerned with environmental degradation threatening the health and safety of individuals. While these issues are often considered secondary to concerns like wages for unions, they still provide an important commonality and rallying point for the two movements (Mayer 2008). According to Mayer (2008), framing is one of the biggest obstacles that organizations face in their efforts to unite environmentalists and union members over health issues. Ultimately, the way an organization frames an issue has an important impact on its goals and strategies. Thus, labor-environmental coalition organizations provide an important space for activists to develop frames that enable them to work in solidarity on campaigns. Moreover, the three coalitions in Mayer's

(2008) study were able to most effectively cooperate when they had a political opportunity shift and framed the issue successfully.

Workplace health and safety are also a key element of Estabrook's (2007) study of a labor-environmental coalition surrounding the petrochemical plants in Louisiana, the Louisiana Labor-Neighbor Project. Estabrook explains that there is a long history in the United States of understanding the effects of a workplace on the health of the worker and the community at large:

In both urban industrial and rural contexts there was a history of attempts to link workplace and community environments, as during the Progressive Era when activists regarded health as socially defined, thereby linking workplace and community environments; working-class interests were central to the public health movement. (2007:4)

The links may have been made historically, but within contemporary labor union activism, it has required a reframing of workplace health issues to foster stronger labor-environmental coalitions. Estabrook (2007) argues that the longevity of labor-environmental coalitions is dependent on their ability to build a base of leadership that appeals to a broad set of class and cultural values and is willing to challenge governmental and industrial representatives. Additionally, his work also touches on the importance of building ties between the community and unions. This involves making labor-community coalitions that focus on a broad set of concerns that affect the community, including environmentalism. As we will cover later, this is an important and emerging pattern in the Pittsburgh activist landscape.

The ability to build strong labor-environmental coalitions hinges firmly on the ability to connect race, class, and space into the framing and analysis of issues affecting local communities. Rose explains that middle-class environmentalists played a role in "reproducing the oppression of low-income communities and communities of color" (Rose 2000:27). He also

argues that that wealthy communities' ability to resist the placement of toxic facilities nearby leads to these facilities being placed in poor, urban communities. He describes these communities where the waste facilities end up as "less able to resist and more in need of economic compensation." He adds that poor urban communities have to deal with the negative consequences of industries abandoning environmentally hazardous materials without ensuring proper cleanup (Rose 2000:27).

Clearly, Rose presents a perspective on labor-environmental coalitions that is uniquely concerned with spatial elements of the relationship. Rose's narrative illustrates that many environmental groups have perpetuated forms of environmental racism. Early environmental regulations were primarily to preserve wildness areas for recreation, which were often spaces that were primarily accessible by upper class individuals. Additionally, wilderness preservation was beneficial to business owners in the tourism industry. Meanwhile, "communities fought the open sewers, polluted air, garbage, and home and factory waste that plagued urban life" (Rose 2000:103-104).

These struggles against the environmental degradation and contamination of urban spaces continued through the 20th century. In *EcoPopulism: Toxic Waste and the Movement for Environmental Justice*, Andrew Szasz describes what he terms "radical environmental populism," which was the resistance to toxics, informed by a larger, radical structural critique, that many urban communities championed in the 1980s (1994:6). Like Rose, he explains that "industrial facilities that produce toxics tend to be located in or near communities of the working poor and of people of color... waste disposal facilities were, likewise, to be found in the poorest, demographically most heavily black or Latino communities" (Szasz 1994:75). Indeed, research has shown that poor environmental continues in low-income areas is a major factor in health

inequalities (Brulle and Pellow 2006). He also adds that many policy makers began using the strategies of placing toxic facilities in "communities that are least capable of politically resisting or most amenable to accepting some form of financial compensation in exchange for accepting the facility" (Szasz 1994:75). However, this was not simply accepted within these communities and organizing against toxic waste in communities of color was the fastest-growing segment of the anti-toxics movement in the 1990s. Black churches, historically black colleges, and community centers all became hubs for organizing around toxic waste.

As concern for racial and class oppression became larger within the environmental movement the term "environmental justice" came into popular use. With this new emphasis on race and class, issues of work and labor became a larger concern of environmental organizations. Szasz points out that in "October 1991, the First National People-of-Color Environmental Leadership Summit explicitly redefined the environment to include 'the totality of life conditions in our communities —air and water, safe jobs for all at decent wages, housing" (Szasz 1994:152). Not only did this analysis lead to a greater movement emphasis on environmental racism, but it also provided the groundwork to build connections between labor unions and environment organizations. Beyond the anti-toxins movement, class, race, and space still play a large role in the way activists frame issues and choose campaigns.

### 2.3 EVENT AND CAMPAIGN-BASED COALITIONS

Two of the most popular styles of labor-environmental coalition building are event coalition building and campaign-based coalition building. Levi and Murphy (2006) describe actions where social movement organizations organize together around a specific protest event as "event coalitions". The 1999 WTO protests in Seattle are the most popular example of labor-environmental cooperation for an event coalition. In *Power in Movement*, Sidney Tarrow laments the temporality of WTO protests, stating, "the 'Battle of Seattle' was mounted by a heterodox coalition of trade unionists, environmentalists, and anarcho-syndicalist radicals that disappeared soon afterward" (2011:255). He adds that this is a common theme among coalitions, stating, "many coalitions are temporary and loosely coupled, and dissolve soon afterward" (Tarrow 2011:255). While the WTO protests fit into the broader global justice movement, it is clear that the coalitions formed to plan the protest were event coalitions that were only working to cooperate for a limited period of time. Research on activism in the Pacific Northwest after the mobilization illustrates that the cooperation between organizations dissipated rather quickly; Jennifer Hadden (2005:367) explains, "The Seattle WTO protests were... mounted with fairly shallow organizational cooperation and left very little behind when the teargas cleared." An organizer of the protest stated that after the WTO, "everyone went back to their own business" (Hadden 2005:366).

In the same year as the WTO protests, Cecil Roberts, the United Mine Workers of America president, proclaimed that he was "tired of trying to compromise with environmentalists," while protesting a U.S. District Judge's decision to halt a permit for a mountaintop removal mine that employed 400 UMWA workers (Ward 1999). The local struggle between the UMWA and groups like the Sierra Club and Center for Coalfield Justice (CCJ), a

nonprofit organization that works with coalfield residents to improve policy and oversight over fossil fuel extraction, remain relatively unaffected by the last decade's large mobilizations featuring environmental organizations and labor unions. When Senator John McCain spoke against the use of mountaintop removal in 2008, Roberts responded by calling McCain's position "a direct threat to tens of thousands of West Virginia families," and he continued to show no indication of a belief that some forms of coal extraction can be harmful to the environment (Roberts 2008). The conflict between environmental organizations and the UMWA is just one of many cases that illustrate that the project of building strong localized coalitions between environmental organizations and labor unions is far from achieving its stated goals.

Perhaps the most vital aspect of event coalitions is that they let activists work out new frames and provide a connection between activist networks in different movements. Event coalitions can be a catalyst to overcome communication issues due to a lack of personal ties, which is often cited as an obstacle in building labor-environmental coalitions (Obach 2004). Effectively, this can help activists surmount the divides created by class and race differences that make them less likely to know one another personally. Recently, there has been a push to create more formalized, lasting coalitions of labor unions and environmental organizations, like the BlueGreen Alliance, instead of cooperating for a single event or set of events. My study examines how these organizations affect the activist landscape in Pittsburgh.

## 2.4 UNDERSTANDING ACTIVISTS: BRIDGE BUILDING AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT SPILLOVER/SPILLOUT

If we use a lens that is more focused on the activists, rather than the broader movement structures, to study coalitions, we can sketch a more precise picture of coalition building. Some scholars have pointed out that one of the larger obstacles to coalition building is that leaders from different social movements often lack interpersonal ties (Obach 2004). In *How Long? How Long?: African American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights*, Belinda Robnett (1999) developed the concept of *bridge leaders*, individuals that bridge gaps between the movement and the community. In Robnett's case study, black women acted as bridge leaders for the civil rights movements and broadcasted the message of the movement into communities to garner more support. Robnett explains, "activities of bridge leaders in the civil rights movement were the stepping stones necessary for potential constituents... to cross formidable barriers between their personal lives and the political life of civil rights movement organizations" (1999:20). Robnett illustrates the vital role of individuals who can communicate to audiences outside of the adherents of social movement organizations.

Rose (2000) takes Robnett's concept of bridge leaders and adapts it to a context of cooperating and outreach between social movements. Rose uses the term *bridge builder* to describe an individual with a background that enables him or her to work as a liaison between two different movements. Rose describes bridge builders as people who are "capable of translating between different classes and movements," and "comfortable and competent to act within diverse social groups" (Rose 2000:167). In elaborating on the role of bridge builders in developing a coalition between two movements, he explains that they typically provide the initial contacts and plan the first meeting, translate the issues of the other movement to member within

their own organizations, facilitate communication between coalition partners, and work to define the common goals of the organizations and then present those goals within the public forum -- including framing it to activist communities and the media (Rose 2000). Rose's concept helps us to understand how coalitions are forming, particularly within leadership circles.

Another concept that is important for understanding Pittsburgh activists' role in labor-environmental coalition building is *social movement spillover*. David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier coined the term to describe the process of "ideas, tactics, style, participants, and organizations" of one movement spreading and affecting another movement (Meyer and Whittier 1994:277). In their study, they explore how the women's movement spilled over into the peace movement of the 1980s. Meyer and Whittier identify specific influences that the women's movement had on the peace movement. Most predominately, the peace movement adopted feminist frames on issues of nuclear disarmament. This included emphasizing women's roles as peaceful mothers and framing nuclear proliferation as a product of masculine competitiveness. Activists from the women's movement also had tactical influences on the peace movement. For instance, women peace activists weaved a "web of life" around the Pentagon in an attempt to shut it down, meshing direct action with "spiritual rituals they claimed drew on the strength of goddesses and other sources of women's power" (Meyer and Whittier 1994:288). In contrast to the New Left in the 1960s, the peace movement of the 1980s featured many women leaders -- several of whom were former leaders of abortion and reproductive rights organizations. And finally, as Epstein (1991) points out in *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution*, the peace movement utilized decentralized, consensus-based decision-making processes and nonhierarchical leadership structures, which were key features of many, but not all, of the women's organizations that were active in the 1970s.



The theory behind the transmission of movement features is helpful for understanding the relationship between labor unions and environmental organizations. Meyer and Whittier cite the coalition as a channel through which the ideas, framing, personnel, and tactics of the women's movement were transmitted to the peace movement (1994). Clearly, this is not unique to the relationship of the women's movement to the peace movement, and coalition groups provide opportunities universally for activists and movement influence to spill over into a different social movement. Moreover, informal connections between activists, like membership in a broader movement community, are other ways that one social movement can influence another (Meyer and Whittier 1994). An aspect of this is not only activist networks, but also the development of activist spaces, where individuals from different social movements can communicate -- this might be an event coalition or a more permanent fixture like a radical community center or bookstore. Additionally, members of a social movement group can claim membership in multiple organizations over a period of time.

Another prominent example of movement spillover occurred when women from the civil rights movement became involved with the women's liberation movement. In her study of the genesis of the women's liberation movement, Sara Evans finds that many of the women involved in the civil rights movement were empowered by the liberatory ideology of movement, but were excluded from the process of participation in leadership roles. Evans explained: "the women's liberation movement was initiated by women in the civil rights movement and new left who dared to test the old assumptions and myths about female nature against their own experience and discovered that something was drastically wrong" (1979:212). Ultimately, this led to civil rights activists participating in the women's liberation movement and challenging the oppressive movement practices and division of labor that was previously in place. McAdam points out that

this paralleled the women's rights movement of the 1830s, which featured leaders that were involved in the antislavery movement. He explains that, much like the women's liberation activists of the 1960s, first wave feminists were "empowered by abolitionist ideals, yet treated as second class citizens within the movement" (McAdam 2013:2).

Jennifer Hadden and Sidney Tarrow further complicated the idea of social movement spillover by introducing the concept of "social movement spillover" (2007). They argue that the term spillover implies that the movements are have so many activists that they are overflowing into other movements, whereas spillover conveys "the hollowing-out of a social movement when its activists shift their activities to a cognate, but differently structured, movement" (Hadden and Tarrow 2007:360). In *Building Movement Bridges: The Coalition of Labor Union Women*, Silke Roth conceptualizes the ideas of coalitions and spillover through a slightly different framework. Roth first establishes that social movements are not separate from one another in that members sometimes belong to more than one organization at once -- much like the case of environmentalists and labor union members. Additionally, Roth, like Meyer and Whittier (1994), opens a discussion on organizations that take on the specific task of building coalition relationships:

Some members who are involved in various movements feel the need to form what I call *bridging organizations*, organizations that seek to make connections between different movements. This is especially important when the relationship between two movements (like the women's movement and the labor movement) is of vital importance to its constituency (working women) but strained. Bridging organizations seek to overcome the constraints and conflicts of the past in order to improve the relationship between those movements and thus enable broad coalitions (Roth 2003:2).

Bridging organizations, or social movement coalition groups, are extremely important in the current labor-environmental coalition building landscape. The unique component that the bridging organizations provide is their ability to sustain efforts to build cooperation over a long period of time and over a myriad of issues, rather than a single campaign or issue.

Roth also develops the concept of social movement interaction to analyze the transmission of ideas and personnel between social movements. Social movement interaction has similarities to social movement spillover -- specifically in that it proposes similar mechanisms of transmission: coalitions, shared activist communities, and shared personnel (Roth 2003).

However, "social movement interaction differs from social movement spillover in that it address the exchange between social movements in both directions, rather than only one movement affecting the other" (Roth 2003:3). Additionally, social movement interaction also takes into account activist biography to map the emergence of political consciousness and collective action, recruitment processes, activist networks, and participation in the movement (Roth 2003). Social movement interaction is apparent between the labor movement and the environmental movement. The environmental movement has influenced the labor movement to place a greater emphasis on workplace toxins and the labor movement has also undoubtedly affected the way the environmental movement frames their issues, particularly the adoption of "environmental justice" frames (Mayer 2008; Rose 2000; Szasz 1994).

The concept of miscibility is another useful tool for understanding the relationship between different social movements. Bogdan Vasi (2005:140) describes miscible movements as "social movements with compatible ideologies, or beliefs systems that can 'dissolve' in each other, and activist communities and SMOs that overlap to a considerable degree." Political opportunities can increase the miscibility of movements by motivating several movements to

mobilize around the same issue. Nuclear accidents like Three Mile Island increased the miscibility between the peace movement, environmental movement, and anti-nuclear movement, as all three movements were ideologically aligned in their opposition to the use of nuclear technology (Vasi 2005). Movement miscibility contrasts with movement spillover and spillover, because miscibility involves activists from different movements combining their efforts into one larger movement, as opposed to individuals leaving a movement to join a different movement.

During the course of my study, I aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What strategies are activists using to foster cooperation between labor unions and environmental organizations?
- How does the relationship between leadership and rank-and-file members of organizations affect coalition building?
- How do the activists' backgrounds shape the coalition building process?
- How are leaders framing their strategies to rank-and-file membership?
- What are the main obstacles and shortcomings of social movement coalition groups and event coalitions?

### 3.0 METHODS

This study is based on a series of in-depth interviews and participant observations conducted in the Pittsburgh area from the spring of 2014 to the summer of 2015. I utilized the snowball sampling technique to conduct ten interviews with leaders and active rank-and-file members involved with three different types of organizations: labor unions, environmental groups, and social movement coalition groups. Five of the interviewees were currently primarily involved with the labor movement and five were currently primarily involved with environmental activism. Of the ten interviewed, five were involved in social movement coalition groups that in some way tried to strengthen the relationship between environmentalists and union members. As their backgrounds illustrate, most of the respondents have been involved heavily in both movements at different points in their lives. While members of the aforementioned three types of organizations are of greatest interest for my study, many of them were difficult to categorize as they were still involved with multiple organizations and participate in multiple social movements -- even organizations that are at odds -- and these activists, which Robnett (1997) terms "bridge leaders" and Rose (2000) calls "bridge builders," provide some of the more interesting analysis of cooperation between the organizations.

Within the category of social movement coalition group there are three subsets that seem to be notable distinctions for my project: union funded coalition groups that are based on a broad set of interests and meant to build stronger labor-community relationships, broad based

event coalitions, and coalition groups that work specifically to address conflicts and build on opportunities for cooperation between labor unions and environmental groups. I conducted a participant observation, attending nine meetings, of a labor-community based coalition group and two meetings of an event coalition. I also observed three protests that these coalition groups planned.

I have removed identifying details about the interview respondents and their group membership, so they could speak freely about their experiences, both good and bad, within the labor and environmental movements. All names of individuals and organizations within my findings are pseudonyms. Though identifying membership to particular organizations would provide greater historical context for the comments of the respondents, it was impossible to conceal the identity of many activists without omitting the names of their organizations. Despite this, I feel that the comments provide a great deal of insight into how labor-environmental coalition building is taking in Pittsburgh area.

### **3.1 LOCATION**

Pittsburgh is an important case study for labor environmental coalition building because conflict in the area is centered on the extractive industries, like coal mining and shale gas drilling (known as fracking). The extractive industries are particularly important because many environmentalists see the extractive industries as antithetical to their very cause. Unlike many factories and mills, which can strive to develop more environmentally friendly production processes, most environmental organizations take the position that the extraction of coal, drilling for natural gas through fracking, and operating coal-burning power plants must be ended permanently, as these enterprises cause climate change by emitting carbon. This creates a volatile set of circumstances that is unlike many other areas in the country.

## **4.0 FINDINGS**

### **4.1 STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING LABOR-ENVIRONMENTAL COALITIONS**

During my interviews, I asked activists what strategies they used to build labor-environmental coalitions and which strategies they felt were most effective for building better relationships between the two movements. The two most popular strategies that activists used and advocated for were (1) identifying the most easily attainable political opportunities and then working with leaders from the movements to find a compromise or (2) working to build broader class-based movements. Those in the first category generally felt it was best to go after any low-hanging fruit, areas that were clearly beneficial for both groups and then work toward more challenging issues as a relationship of trust is built. Those adhering to the second approach thought that a class-based movement could address structural inequalities and help push for large industrial retraining programs for displaced workers. These individuals also often discuss the challenge of shifting fossil fuel industry workers into the clean energy sector. Individuals from the environmental movement and labor movement shared their experiences and opinions on coalition building:

I always look at environmental issues to try to identify areas where there might be a chance for cooperation. Trying to build relationships between leaders in both



organizations. And my role is to try to mitigate the impact of any disagreement between them.

-- Chris, who has a background in the environmental movement, but works as an intermediary in labor-environmental coalition group

[The organization we partnered with] was doing community benefits agreements for development projects that were publically funded. The theory being that... the idea being that we can build a coalition in the community that can bargain with the development.... things like local hiring and other things that would benefit the community... We had in the original ask, that the new buildings be LEED certified.

-- Louie, who primarily works with the environmental organization, but also has a background working with labor-environmental community coalitions

We just hold a collective discussion or a roundtable... We just try to have a lot of discussion and just try to understand what the needs of the organization. It takes a lot of discussion though. We give them a venue to sit down and talk it out. Otherwise, they don't have that space. It's hard because these are really serious issues. Jobs can be affected in different ways. There is some tension that goes on, but, we try to push through it and look at the specifics, the specific areas where we can work together. We're always trying to figure out how we can maybe implement the technologies of tomorrow, the green ones, while still using what we have to maintain jobs in these industries.

We want to push toward efficiency in power plants, and it's challenging, it's one of our hardest issues. We want to change the system but it moves slowly. We want workers to get comfortable with new technologies. We provided unions and environmentalists with a table to talk it out. The unions decide what is best... for their specific organization, but we are more concerned with making the space and hosting the groups. Our organization will take the initiative to draft some

policy platforms, and that sort of thing, but ultimately it's all about having negotiations and talks.

-- Chris

I recognize that there are some issues that we just can't come to consensus on... like coal fire power plants.

-- Fred, a union member

We sat down with leaders from unions and drafted up some pillars that we can work on, as we work together. We had the most success... lobbying for greener building codes and working to keep toxins out of the workplace

-- Craig, a former union worker who now works with an environmental organization

Some activists that advocated for negotiating between the two movements felt that reframing the issues was key.

We have to fix the sewers... We have to spend 3 million dollars on ALCOSAN water treatment. A lot of cities go the green direction because you get a lot more for your money. You get higher property values, more jobs, cleaner environment. People don't mind to pay a little more on their ALCOSAN bill when they're getting more out their money. They can see where their money is going. They can get a really great park in their neighborhood. If you ask your neighbor to describe the green infrastructure, they'll say oh hey it's a park or a tree.

-- Louie

Those that favored the class-based analysis of the situation tended to see negotiation as a secondary concern to movement building:

There needs to be social justice unionism in order to overcome the problems we face today. It identifies that the struggles of working people do not just take place in their workplace... It's about recognizing that it's a multi-pronged approach and that it's going to take a lot of people realizing that there is one group that is fucking them... It's all about building a movement based off wider class consciousness.

-- Doug, a union member and environmental activist

Trades are too often overlooked. You know, I recently worked on a project where we got guys from the trade unions together, carpenters, pile drivers, plumbers... and I mean these guys know their stuff... and we got them together and we went out and had a competition to see who could build these hexagonal buildings in the least amount of time... the buildings were actually used to educate kids on ecology at a local park.

-- Robert, a union member

Robert added that there are creative ways to link the labor unions and the environmental movements. He also stated that there is far too little being done to help get the trade unions involved in the environmental cause and that environmental regulations and green infrastructure mean a great deal of new jobs for trades workers. While Robert advocated for finding new ways to link the movements, he also felt that class consciousness was an important part of bridging the gap. The activists that were primarily involved with the labor union tended to be more likely to advocate for the idea of building class based movements.

Though all of the individuals I interviewed were sympathetic to both the environmental movement and labor movement, many were open and unapologetic about siding with their primary movement over the other.

(When asked if his position as a union member ever conflicted with his feelings on environmental activism) Nah... I think that there are some industries and some jobs that shouldn't exist, but I also think that every worker deserves to be part of a union. And that union should be democratically run. So, for instance gas workers, their union would not want to eliminate hydraulic fracturing. If we're gonna have democratically run unions we're gonna have people that have self interests that are inconsistent with what is the right environmental position.

-- Jeremy, a union worker and labor-community coalition member

He then explained that while with his union, he has worked with community groups to try to make workplaces safer for the community and the workers on site.

There is no doubt that we want some of these plants shutdown-- we're clear on that. They are bad for the environment. But there needs to be an effort to give people the resources to find a job in a different field. It isn't the environmental movement's responsibility to suggest what that is. There is a lot of great farmland around that could employ more workers... but that won't be the case for long.

-- Craig

Craig acknowledged that his organization advocated for regulations that would cause a loss in jobs. Unlike individuals that tried to use larger class-based frames and often point to large government investments in clean energy, he said that it was not his responsibility to decide how the workers find new work. Additionally, he noted that environmental degradation can cause a loss in jobs by implying that fracking was threatening the agricultural industry in the region.

Some interviewees discussed how the companies utilized their positions to put a wedge between environmentalists and union workers.

Inside a union, there's a long standing thing, you can't attack anybody's work... So the companies realize it, they'll get together and say, 'okay, one of these mountaintop removal mines can be union' and then all the sudden they have the unions on their side. That's their shield, historically, that's how they'll do it. I think the union joining into that is complicity, it's betrayal, it's just terrible.

-- Robert

The relationship between leadership and rank-and-file members is important in negotiating deals between organizations and planning new campaigns. While many organizations worked to get leaders to occupy the same spaces and gain interpersonal connections, there were few actions planned with the intention of getting rank-and-file members into the same space. A primary role of leaders working on labor-environmental cooperation, according to activists, was framing their cooperative campaigns in ways that both of their rank-and-file members could support. Some of the organizations used non-hierarchical organizing and did not have any formal leaders, but the representatives that these organizations sent to coalition groups inevitably had to engage in the same sort of activity as those with formal leaders. This was particularly clear in the event coalition I observed. Members of non-hierarchical groups sent representatives to the meetings and these individuals were responsible for deciding on frames, themes, and tactics the coalition would employ. This is obviously a matter of practicality, as it would be difficult to gather the entire organization to discuss the strategies of the coalition, but it illustrates that certain core principles of groups, like decentralized decision-making, sometimes have to be sacrificed in order to enter a coalition project. While some of these non-hierarchical organization representatives reported their decisions to their members, the fast moving nature of event coalitions does not typically provide the time to gain consensus from the members of all the organizations involved in the coalition.

Chris explained that during leadership meetings, the leaders of different organizations had to work on the framing of issues before discussing them with their membership:

There are some issues that have very wide consensus. But there are others that need to be discussed by leadership before the all the members get involved... Often, the membership of the organizations is more likely to meet making phone calls for a political campaign.

Craig echoed this sentiment, saying that a lot of rank-and-file members get a chance to meet each other when they volunteer on electoral campaigns. Fred explained that coalition protests were another venue where rank-and-file members could meet and make connections. However, during my observations of event coalition protests, I found that activists tended to stay with their primary organization and all the organizations within the event coalition marched in separate cohorts, identifying themselves with signs and t-shirts featuring their group's logo. The leaders, both formal and informal, socialized with one another at protests and meetings.

## 4.2 ACTIVISTS ON SOCIAL MOVEMENT COALITION GROUPS

(On starting a labor-community coalition group) A lot of the folks who started [the Pittsburgh Alliance] had been involved with Occupy were like, 'what are we gonna do now? what are we gonna do next?' And that's really where we got our momentum from.

-- Lisa, a union activist and member of the Pittsburgh Alliance

During my study of a labor-community coalition group, the Pittsburgh Alliance, there was an intense moment of conflict when deciding whether to adopt a statement in support of an anti-fracking organization's campaign. When the measure was introduced, Mike, a union organizer, stated that the union had not taken a position on the issue of fracking, and, thus it was inappropriate for the coalition to take a position. Another member objected, "I don't think it matters what they say. This is seriously something that is urgent. We can't just push it off." At this point, Mike became upset, exclaiming, "We are the union! We are the union! We have to be aligned with that position for the workers' sake." Another man replied,

Well, do you really think that fracking is going to generate a lot of jobs for your union? The materials that they'd use is probably already manufactured. And this is a very specific campaign were backing, you don't have to be anti-fracking to back it (2/19/14).

An older union member added, "Well I think this organization is actually a body that can steer the union in the right direction on this issue. We have the ability to do that. We can be that entity that pushes them toward the environmentalist opinion, since they haven't come out one way or another yet." This sentiment is very much in line with Tarrow's idea that coalitions are useful for "old social movement organizations have become set in their ways, and new ones are still in the process of formation" (2011:191-192). Mike again tried to delay voting on the matter

until the following meeting; however, the group put the proposal to a vote and all the other members supported it (it should be noted that the meeting had sparse attendance and some other leaders opposed to the proposal were absent). The interactions at this meeting showcased the problems that occur in organizations that have formal ties with unions, but seek to serve the interests of the community. Acquiring resources from unions for coalition groups makes the group less malleable and creates tension between rank-and-file members and leadership. The leadership is understandably concerned with maintaining their ties to the union, but in the act of defending the union's interest, they bring to the surface that the group ultimately has to align its actions with the policies of the union. Moreover, rank-and-file members were forced to rethink the purpose of the coalition and their participation in it.

The exchange also highlighted a very common argument against labor groups supporting environmental campaigns when Mike implied that the industry, which is several steps removed from union labor, provided union members with jobs. A few weeks later, when I interviewed Jeremy, another union member and Pittsburgh Alliance member, he echoed these opinions, stating:

We can bridge these gaps, but we've got to be smart and nuanced about it, we have to know where people are coming from," he continued, "There is all this interesting, real, serious work that can happen. But it needs to come from a relationship of trust. If you're just stomping around saying this, that, and the other thing, you're not going to be able to get that work done.

My conversation with Jeremy highlights the importance of the space and the resources that are being used for coalition building, as the threat of withholding resources can alter the propositions and progress that can be made within a coalition group.

When I later interviewed Doug, a union member and environmentalist in the group, he lamented the group's reluctance to take up environmental issues: "We used to have class-based



unionism. You worked in the interest of the class rather than the industry." He added that with class-based unionism, there were opportunities to build a larger movement that supports workers and the environment. He explained that, in his view, there has to be a campaign to create work programs for unemployed workers in environmentally detrimental industries. He stated, "Find me a coal miner that wouldn't be happy to come up from a mine, where it's 50 degrees, and work in a factory making solar panels. The only ones that wouldn't want that are just being stubborn."

At a later meeting, when a locked out energy worker asked Pittsburgh Alliance members to attend a protest with their union, Doug asked, "We aren't going to show up and see a bunch of signs that say, 'environmentalists kill jobs' or 'stop the war on coal that sort of things are we? Because that's not really our thing.'" The worker confirmed that there would not be any signs of the sort and that they were upset with the company owners, not environmental regulations.

My observations of an event coalition involved a coalition that formed to hold a series of protests around a variety of issues, including ones that concerned labor rights, environmental concerns, human rights, education reform, and a few other causes. The planning meetings were primarily concerned with logistical matters and ensuring that no events overlapped. A group of activists from different organizations volunteered to form a committee that focused on developing frames of the series of protests. At another meeting, the committee reported back with a theme that involved "growing the movement" within the city. This was viewed as fairly uncontroversial by all of the members of the different movement organizations and no one objected to the usage of the frame. Activists at event coalition meetings always seemed aware of their temporary nature and for this reason, they never tried to get into the philosophical debates about the meaning of the group -- which was a more common occurrence for individuals in a more long term social movement coalition group.

Cooperation in the event coalition was primarily based on how the activists can best help one another at actions. One meeting was concluded by each activist at the table naming a way that their organization needed assistance in upcoming actions, then individuals volunteered material support for these efforts (helping with sign-making, street theater, and advertisement). However, these conversations stopped at discussions of protest plans and did not include conversations about how the organizations could assist one another in capacities beyond the series of protests. However, there were break out sessions to discuss what activists wanted to do with the coalition after the protests were over, and many said that they would like to build a larger movement with the organizations; but these hopes never came to fruition. Ultimately, the event coalition enabled a wide group of activists to occupy the same space and aid one another in collective action. Importantly, it gave leaders within the environmental movement and labor movement an opportunity to work collectively on a project and get to know one another better on an interpersonal level. Research the Pittsburgh G-20 protests confirms that movement coalitions built on friendship and trust are most likely to be successful and the connections can be useful for future event coalitions (Staggenborg 2015). The interpersonal ties in event coalitions like the one I observed are vital because they create a space for environmental and labor coalition leaders to build relationships of trust. When political opportunities emerge, members of the event coalitions are able to leverage these relationships and proven tactics to work cooperatively and quickly.

### 4.3 CLASS, RACE, AND SPACE IN COALITION BUILDING

During my interview with Chris, an African-American activist who works with a labor-environmental movement coalition group, he explained that he got interested in the relationship after working on urban gardens. He said he came from a union family and felt that organized labor was important and wanted to work on bridging the gap. When asked if there were distinct racial and class differences that made coalition building difficult, he replied:

Yeah, that's definitely the case... Some of these people probably wouldn't come into contact if we didn't have these meetings. We can all sit down and talk about where they're coming from... but they're definitely coming from different backgrounds.

Craig, an older white man who works with an environmental organization, explained that he used to work for a union and that he believes unions are extremely important and tries to make sure he works with them. When I asked about race and class in his organization, Craig explained that he was embarrassed by the lack of racial diversity:

It's no secret that our organization is very white. I'm trying my best to change that... We are organizing more events in communities of color... A few weeks ago, I actually organized a workshop on white privilege for our members. We need to be serious about educating our membership and trying to reach out to new places.

Craig primarily works in poor, white areas, so he did not mention race as an issue in his relationships with labor unions, but he did mention that he felt there was a disconnect between the environmental organizations in communities of color and those in white communities in Pittsburgh. He was much more concerned with these intra-movement disconnect than any with labor unions.

When I asked Fred about racial and class divides between the movements, he explained:

The leadership it's a little less noticeable. But the leaders come from a different class culture and they see these issues differently. Maybe the union guys see environmentalism as soft. My brother's a union guy too... he's always giving me shit for driving a foreign car, but they make them here in union shops... it's just so much better for the environment. I've saved so much on gas this year.

In other words, Fred feels that the leaders are likely in the same income bracket, but they grew up in different class environments and possess different doxa. Some of these unspoken presuppositions, like environmentalism being "soft," are obstacles in bridging the gaps between leadership groups. As we touched on in our discussion of environmental justice, activists recognized the spatial element to labor-environmental politics.

A lot of union folks support our campaign [to address the runoff in Pittsburgh with green infrastructure] because they are living in the working class neighborhoods that are most affected by these problems.

-- Louie

Hunting and fishing and spending time out in the woods has made me get more interested in conservation... The other day I saw a bird that you'll be lucky to even once in your life... The nature around here is just really something else, there's nothing like it, and we really have to keep it that way.

-- Phillip, a union worker involved several conservation organizations outside of the city

Quality of life issues and ways in which the workplace influences life outside are the primary concerns for these spatial analyses of the situation.

## 5.0 ANALYSIS

During my study of labor and environmental activists in the Pittsburgh area, I found:

(1) Labor-environmental coalition builders focused on either a political opportunity or class-based strategy to build labor-environmental coalitions. Leaders within the environmental movement were more likely to propose the strategy of getting leaders from both movements to "an open discussion around the same table" and find common ground on political opportunities.

(2) Building coalition participation of rank-and-file members is not a high priority of leaders. The interpersonal networks that are built are primarily a secondary effect of participation in electoral campaigns.

(3) There is a significant amount of spill out from labor unions to environmental organizations. These prior connections to the labor movement are useful relationships of trust.

I found that the two primary strategies implemented by labor-environmental activists were identifying attainable political opportunities and then working with leaders from the movements to find a compromise and working to build broader class-based movements. The first strategy was more based on reformist ideology, wherein activists slowly find points of compromise between labor unions and environmental organizations and then mount coalition campaigns around those issues. The second, more radical, approach is trying to develop broader class-based movements that attempt to build class-consciousness and advocate for large systemic changes to labor-environmental policies and the energy sector.

Chris was chiefly concerned with finding political opportunities and then bringing leadership together to discuss these opportunities and build strategies. He explained that his coalition group often would draft up a possible compromise, present it to both labor and environmental organizations, and then host an open dialogue to try to find a compromise. According to Chris, this strategy was particularly effective for working with both groups to sponsor local and state-wide legislation that promoted environmentally friendly and pro-labor practices. For instance, Chris worked with a labor union and environmental group to raise the minimum wage and eliminate the use of toxins on new city construction projects. Additionally, many of the activists that I interviewed had been involved in leadership meetings to discuss possible points of cooperation. Most of them framed leadership coalition groups as looking for issues where they could cooperate and then acting on the places they identified. However, this strategy was not used to talk about conflicts that already exist and work through them.

It is obvious that there are very serious limitations to this strategy. First, while it promotes cooperation and helps the organizations from both movements to leverage their political power collectively, it leaves a large number of issues unsolvable, particularly issues around the extractive industries and the use of fossil fuels. This is where larger class-based strategies were typically employed. Many of the union workers I interviewed talked about wanting to pursue a broader class-based movement that advocated for a government funded transition from fossil fuels to clean energy and featured a large worker retraining program. Notably, none of the union workers I talked to worked in the extractive industries, in part because the majority of the extractive workers in the Pittsburgh area were nonunion and in part because I sought out individuals that are interested labor-environmental coalition building rather than participation from extractive industry workers. The labor-community coalition group

provided a space where individuals could address disagreements and obstacles in the labor-environmental community. Though the union leaders within the labor-community coalition group occasionally pushed back, the majority of the members held a class-based analysis of labor-environmental coalition building and expressed it during the meetings. The majority of the activists expressed concerns about climate change, and thus, wanted to support efforts that combated the use of fossil fuels.

Second, I found that many labor-environmental coalition building activities primarily deal with creating space for leaders from the different organizations to interact and are largely unconcerned with linking up rank-and-file membership. Since leaders of the movements are often the most active in movement activity, the meetings to plan event coalitions are also a space where many movement leaders interact and build leadership networks. Once the protests are planned by the event coalitions, the leaders stated that the protest becomes a space for rank-and-file activists from both organizations to make connections and become familiar with one another. However, in my observation of the event coalition and coalition group protests, members of different social movement organizations tended to stay with individuals from their own organizations. While it might, for instance, make members of a labor union involved aware that environmentalists also support the same cause, it does not provide an opportunity for members from different organizations to develop relationships. This is likely different when different tactics are used -- like an occupation or an action that involves arrests -- but it is typically not the case for rallies and street demonstrations.

Many of the leaders cited work on electoral campaigns as an important space for rank-and-file activists to network -- this is the case because environmental organizations and labor unions typically both support the Democratic Party. This seems like a more likely venue for

people to have time and space to converse about politics and for rank-and-file union members and environmentalists to develop interpersonal relationships. It is worth noting, however, that this is not necessarily the intention of leaders or the result of any social movement planning, but rather a happenstance due to the fact that both movements tend to have members that support the Democratic party. Building relationships between rank-and-file members of each group seems particularly important for building broad support for labor-environmental coalition activity.

In Pittsburgh, framing environmental concerns in a community context has certainly been one of the most popular ways of getting labor involved in environmental struggles. Using this frame, coalitions have been able to mount sustained campaigns within the city -- like the efforts to build a green runoff infrastructure and efforts to eliminate exposure to toxins from construction work in the city. However, it is harder to utilize this strategy when approaching larger global environmental issues, like climate change, where the effects may not be experienced on a local level immediately. Event coalitions and transnational networks have worked on addressing such issues, but the challenge of truly connecting global environmental threats to localized environmental struggles, like those taking place in Pittsburgh, will require a great deal of work and resources from activists.

Finally, labor-environmental activism in Pittsburgh is heavily affected by activist spillover and spillover. Many of the bridge building activists spill out of roles like union organizing or union membership into roles within environmental organizations. In Pittsburgh, this has happened for a few reasons: first, the deindustrialization of the city has dramatically reduced the union density of the city and many former union members find themselves working in non-unionized industries. Many of these individuals were introduced to left politics within the labor movement and continue their activism through the environmental movement, which is



easier to access for individuals in non-unionized fields -- this was the case for two of my respondents; second, some activists worked as union organizers or union members for their whole working lives, but then find it hard to be active in labor as a retiree. Many of these individuals have also spilled out of the labor movement -- two other respondents fell into this category (Hadden and Tarrow 2007). Additionally, a few of these respondents explained that many former union organizers grow tired and "got too old for" the demanding hours of union organizing and are inclined to take positions at environmental organizations, where they can become more involved in local politics, have more flexible schedules, and less travel. Despite spillout of their roles in unions, these activists maintain their connections within the labor community. Moreover, they keep their understanding of labor frames and utilize them in environmental activism, which facilitates social movement interaction (Roth 2003).

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

By interviewing individuals who lead coalition groups, leaders and former leaders from unions that are involved in coalition groups, and leaders and former leaders of environmental groups that cooperate with unions, I've developed a greater understanding of the role of social movement coalition groups and activists in labor-environmental coalitions. Moreover, by focusing on activists' roles in coalition building between environment organizations and labor unions in Pittsburgh, my research provides researchers and activists with a better understanding of how labor-environmental coalition building strategies are constructed.

In Pittsburgh, framing environmental concerns in a community context has certainly been one of the most popular ways of getting labor involved in environmental struggles. Using this frame, coalitions have been able to mount sustained campaigns within the city -- like the efforts to build a green runoff infrastructure and efforts to eliminate exposure to toxins from construction work in the city. However, it is a bigger challenge to address global environmental issues. Event coalitions and transnational networks have worked on addressing such issues, but the challenge of truly connecting global environmental threats to localized environmental struggles, like those taking place in Pittsburgh, will require a great deal of work and resources from activists. Going forward, research on labor-environmental coalitions should focus on how activists connect their daily experiences and struggles to global systemic issues.

Additionally, future research should consider the role of labor-environmental activism in rural spaces and small towns. Rural spaces and small towns seem particularly important to the debate as they are often most heavily affected by energy and environmental policies. Also, future research should consider self-excluding groups -- those unions and environmental groups that decide not to build coalitions, despite having political opportunities to do so. Understanding why these groups chose to avoid coalitions will provide us with an even greater understanding of the obstacles that labor-environmental activists face. It would also be helpful to interview rank-and-file workers in the extractive industry to better understanding how they view the relationship between environmental regulations and their work.

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