# Prisms of the People
## Power and Organizing in 21st Century America



RESULTS National Webinar
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# PRISMS OF THE PEOPLE

POWER & ORGANIZING
IN TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY-AMERICA

| Type of resource | % of Issues where the side with greater control of the resource won |
|---|---|
| High-level government allies | |
| Covered officials lobbying | |
| Mid-level government allies | |
| Business financial resources | |
| Lobbying expenditures | |
| Association financial resources | |
| Membership | |
| Campaign contributions | |

## THE CHALLENGE

| Type of resource | % of Issues where the side with greater control of the resource won |
|---|---|
| High-level government allies | 78*** |
| Covered officials lobbying | 63*** |
| Mid-level government allies | 60*** |
| Business financial resources | |
| Lobbying expenditures | |
| Association financial resources | |
| Membership | |
| Campaign contributions | |

| Type of resource | % of Issues where the side with greater control of the resource won |
|---|---|
| High-level government allies | 78*** |
| Covered officials lobbying | 63*** |
| Mid-level government allies | 60*** |
| Business financial resources | 53 |
| Lobbying expenditures | 52 |
| Association financial resources | 50 |
| Membership | 50 |
| Campaign contributions | 50 |

Baumgartner et al. 2009, p. 208

# The null expectation is the status quo

How do organizations build and exercise **political power**, given the **improbability** of their work?

**MULTI-YEAR, MULTI-METHOD**

Comparative case study of outlier cases where power was built

**CASE SELECTION METHOD**

Identify cases with a win in the "low resource, high power" box

|  | **Low power** | **High power** |
|---|---|---|
| **Low resources** | Many organizations |  |
| **High resources** |  |  |

## CASE SELECTION METHOD

"Most-different" case selection strategy varying other factors known to affect organizational power (Gerring 2007)

| | Political Landscape | Pop. Growth | GDP & Job Growth | Civic Orgs/1k | ▲ Union Member Rates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Arizona** | ● | ● | ● | ● | ◐ |
| **Minnesota** | ● | ◐ | ◐ | ◐ | ◐ |
| **Ohio** | ● | ● | ● | ◐ | ◐ |
| **Virginia** | ● | ◐ | ◐ | ◐ | ◐ |

| | Rank (out of 50 states) |
|---|---|
| ● | Top 5 |
| ◐ | 6–15 |
| ◐ | 16–25 |
| ◐ | 26–35 |
| ◐ | 36–45 |
| ● | Bottom 5 |

# Pause for questions
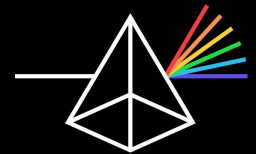
# Did a **power shift** occur?
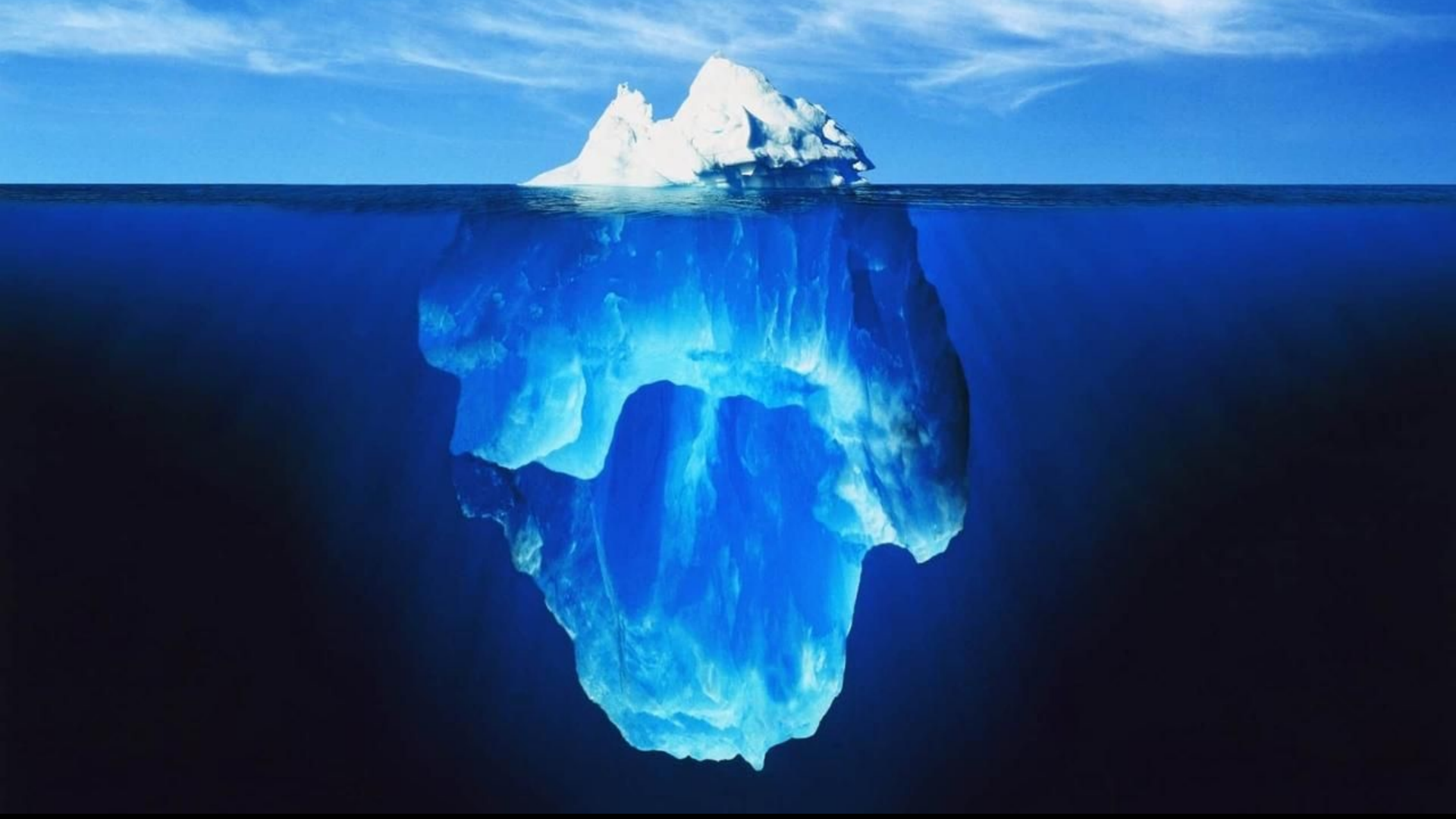
# Even as the state legislature grew more conservative...
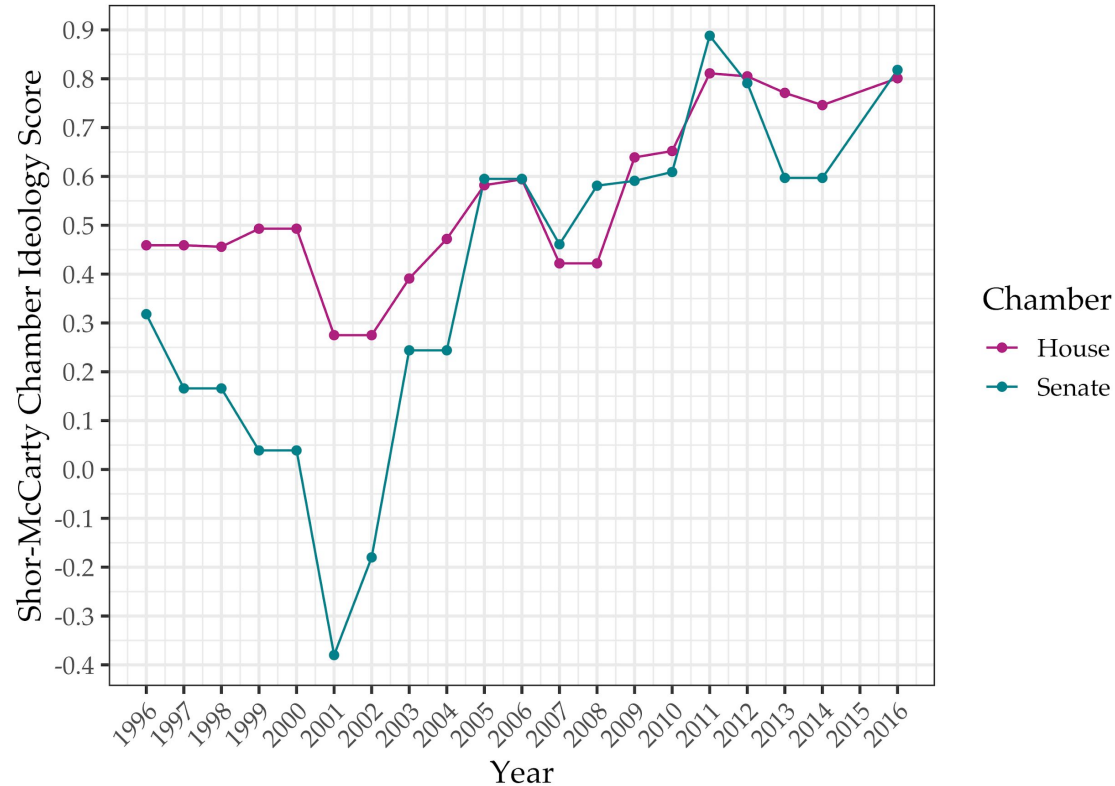
# ...the anti-immigrant policy agenda attenuated.
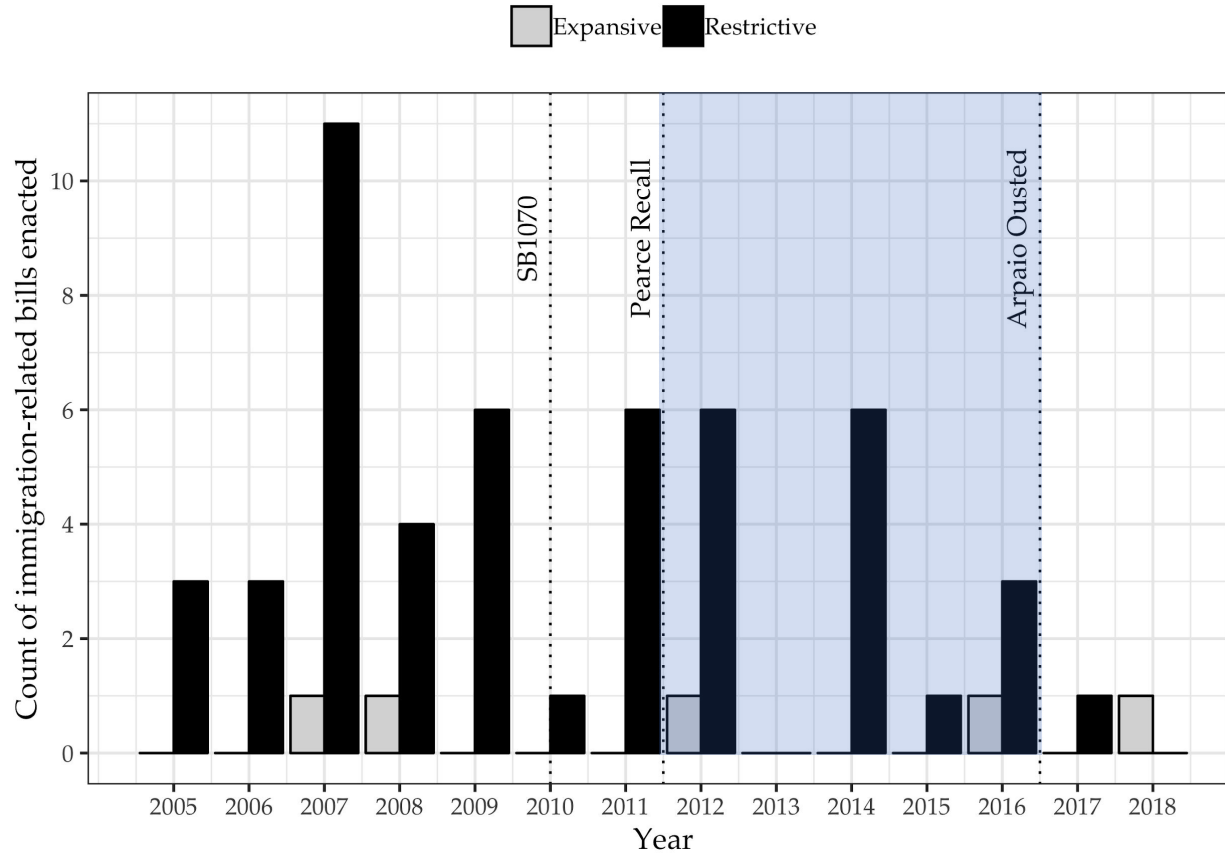
# The Ohio Case



**2001**
A Cincinnati police officer shoots and kills Timothy Thomas, an unarmed black man, in the city's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood

**2002-2010**
A business-led commission backs a privately funded campaign to attempt to address one of the root causes of the persistent and racialized poverty in Cincinnati: a lack of early childhood education for Black and brown families

**2010-2013**
A well-resourced mobilization campaign gathers more than 5,000 signatures in a petition drive in support of preschool. It fails to build enough power to shift political will and policy on the issue.

**2014-2016**
Using an alternative power-building approach (organizing a multiracial constituency base), a universal preschool ballot measure passes in a Trump election by a historic margin

# Strategizing together

## 2013



CPS
United Way
Policy
Business
AMOS
CPP

## 2016



CPS
United Way
Policy
Business
AMOS
CPP

AMOS Project | Cincinnati Preschool Promise
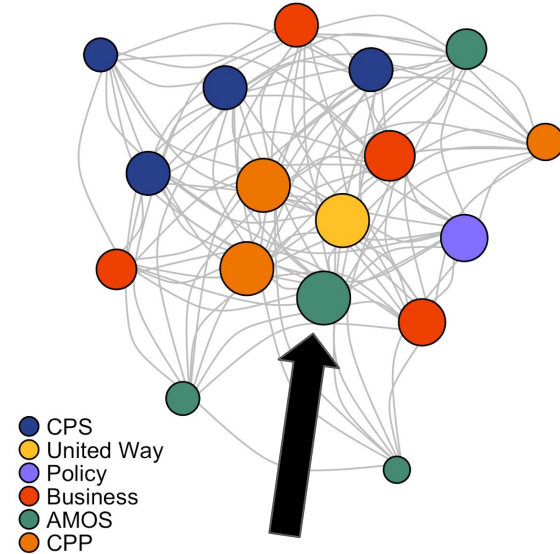
# Negotiating conflict

## 2013



- CPS
- United Way
- Policy
- Business
- AMOS
- CPP

## 2016



- CPS
- United Way
- Policy
- Business
- AMOS
- CPP
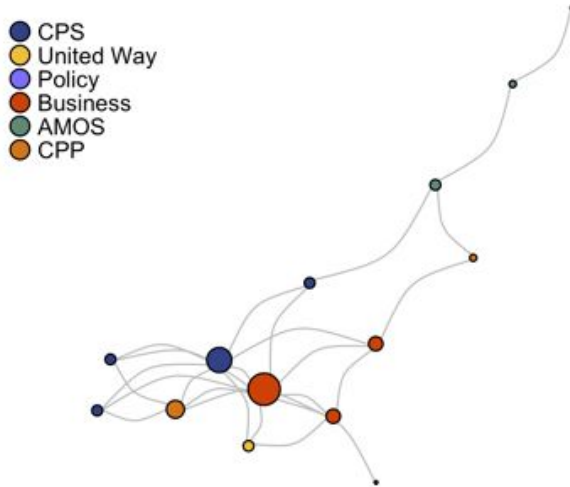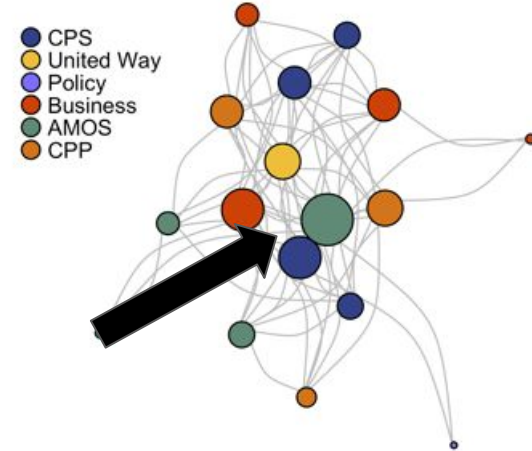
# Pause for questions
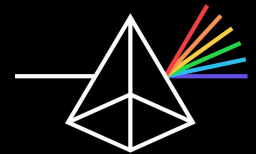
# THE PRISM

1. **MAXIMIZE STRATEGIC CHOICE SET**

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   Investment in resources that gave them the most flexibility to respond to uncertain environments.

   Shifts the focus from "what do they have?" to "what strategic choices are enabled by the resources they have?"

# THE PRISM
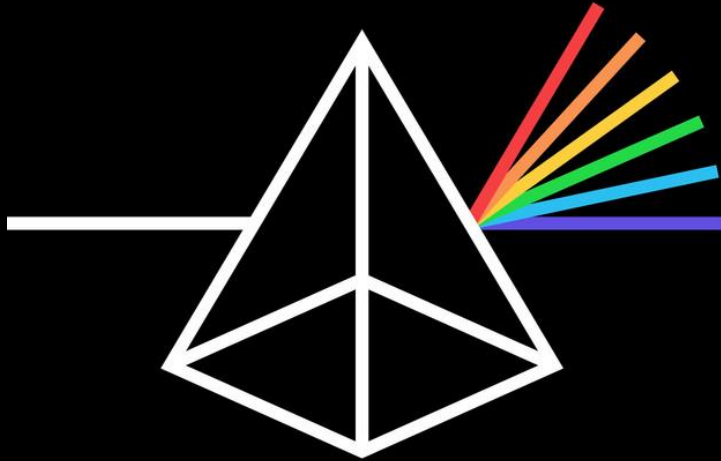
1. MAXIMIZE STRATEGIC CHOICE SET

2. INDEPENDENT, COMMITTED, FLEXIBLE CONSTITUENCY BASE

# THE PRISM

1. **MAXIMIZE STRATEGIC CHOICE SET**

2. **INDEPENDENT, COMMITTED, FLEXIBLE CONSTITUENCY BASE**
   What resources give them most flexibility?

   Constituencies with three characteristics: _independent_ (not beholden to someone else's assessment of their value in any given moment); _committed_ (loyal to the organization); _flexible_ (willing to shift as political circumstances shift)

After he gave an impassioned speech about raising Cincinnati's income tax to fund universal preschool, a business leader asked Troy: "Aren't you afraid you are going to make people angry?"



- CPS
- United Way
- Policy
- Business
- AMOS
- CPP
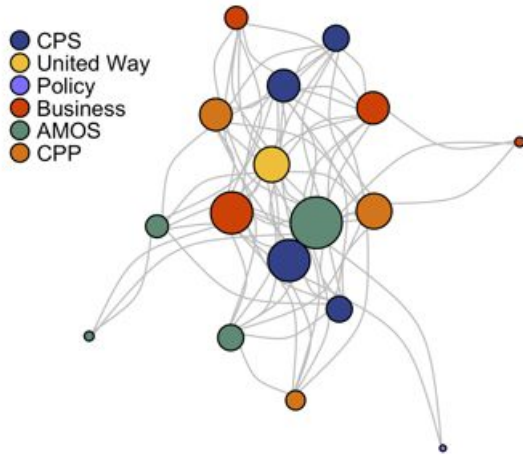
I quickly said, 'No.' I later realized why I could answer so quickly: because of where my power comes from. Most people in the room from [the Chamber of Commerce group] Leadership Cincinnati have power that is vested and determined by their proximity to wealth and power via corporate leadership. They have to make certain tradeoffs with their source of power, which means that they have to be careful what they say and how they say it, lest someone get upset with them and upset their career and livelihood.

With organizing, our power does not come from networking or proximity and access to people of wealth and influence. It comes from a base, to whom we are accountable.

--Troy Jackson's weekly reflection from February 7, 2016
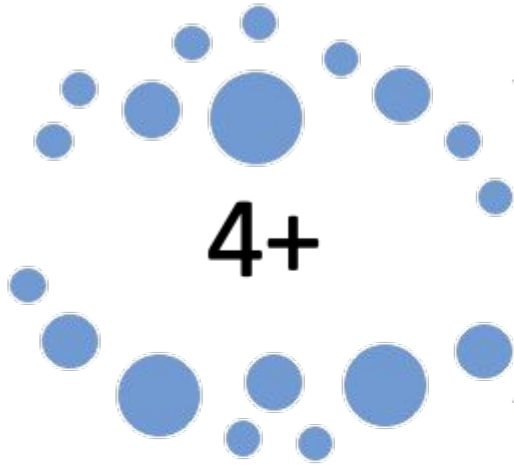
Number of candidates FIMN
faith delegates initially supported

Percent who chose to stand with
FIMN after circumstances changed

Time 1: September 2019
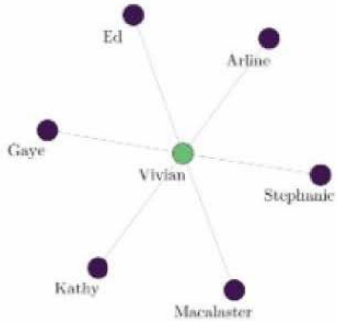
Time 2: October 2019
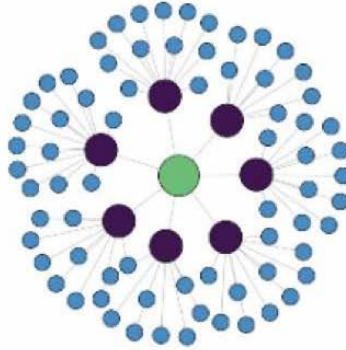
Time 3: November 2019
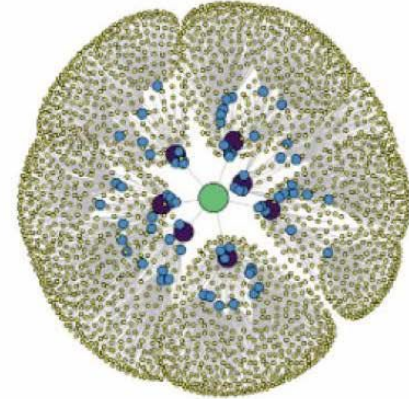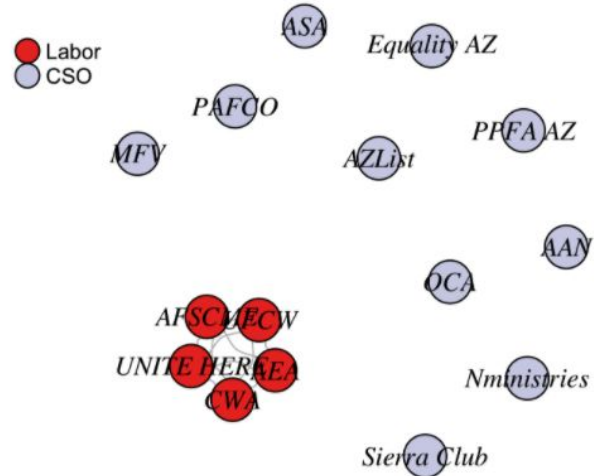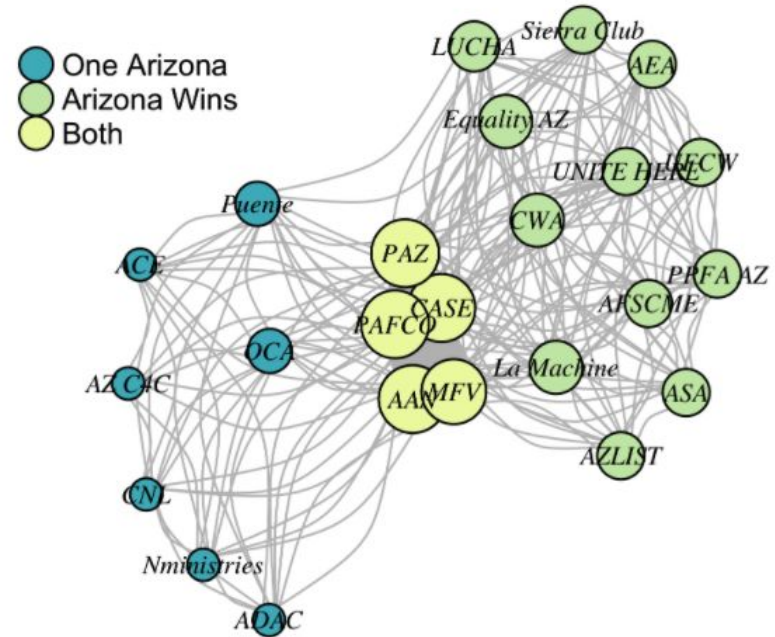
# THE PRISM



1. **MAXIMIZE STRATEGIC CHOICE SET**

2. **INDEPENDENT, COMMITTED, FLEXIBLE CONSTITUENCY BASE**

3. **DESIGN CHOICES THAT BUILD THAT KIND OF CONSTITUENCY**
   What choices enable the feedback effects that expand an organization's strategic position over time?

# THE PRISM

1. **MAXIMIZE STRATEGIC CHOICE SET**

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3. **DESIGN CHOICES THAT BUILD THAT KIND OF CONSTITUENCY**
What choices enable the feedback effects that expand an organization's strategic position over time?

   - Leaders accountable to members,
   - Constantly expanding latticework of relationships,
   - Bridging ties,
   - Distributed leadership.

# Organizational design choices have downstream implications for building a base and wielding power
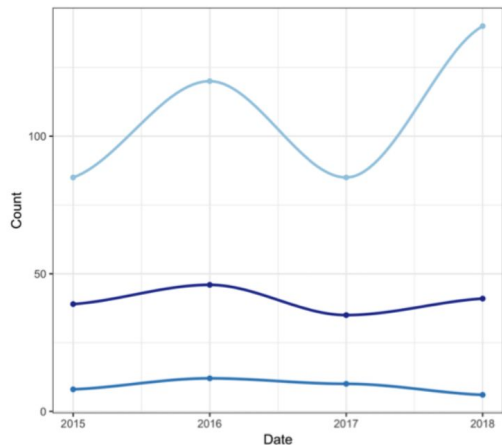
**ELECTORAL MACHINE**

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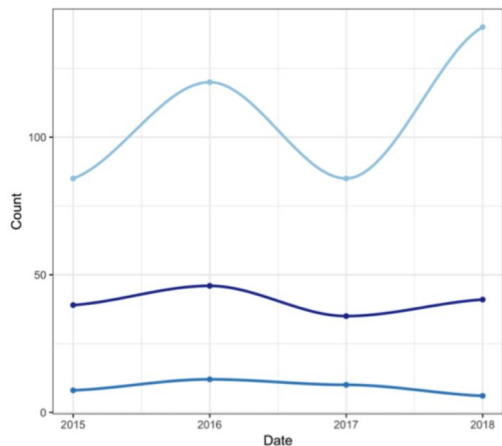
**ELECTORAL MACHINE**
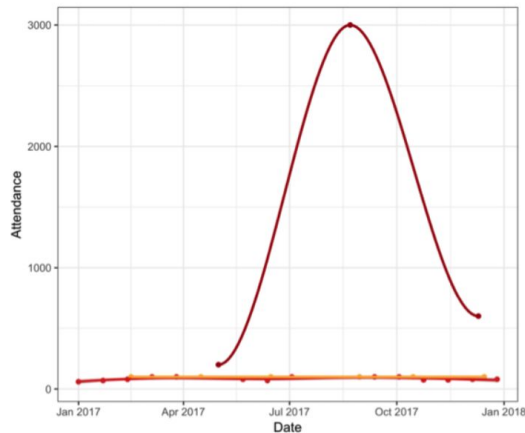


**MASS ACTION**

# Organizational design choices have downstream implications for building a base and wielding power

**ELECTORAL MACHINE**
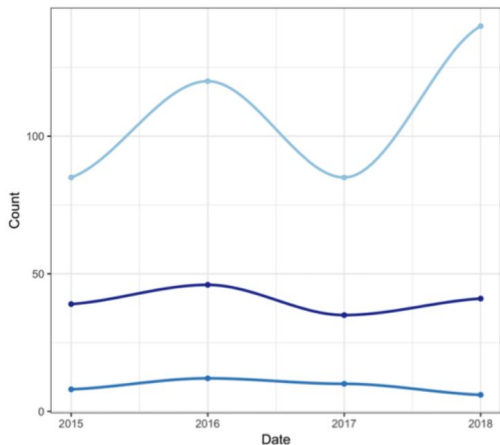


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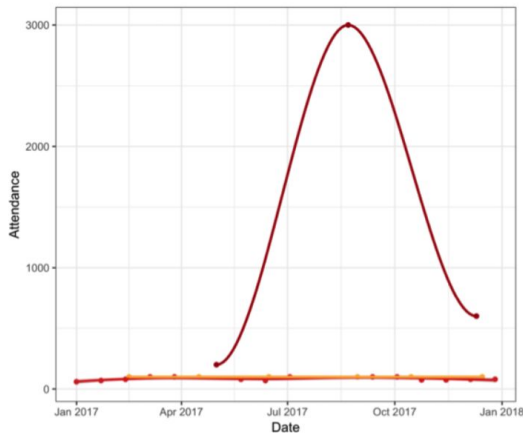


**STRUCTURED GROWTH**
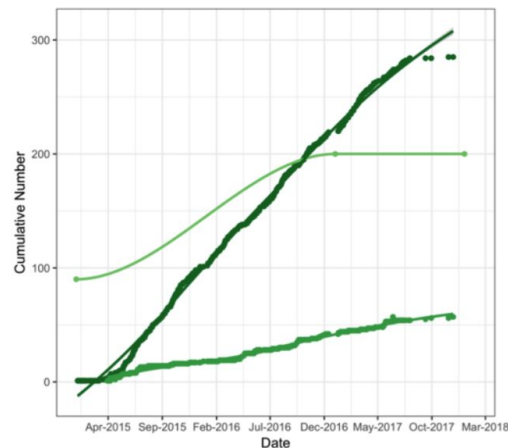
## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

How do organizations build and exercise political power, given the improbability of their work?

**ORGANIZATIONS THAT WERE ABLE TO SHIFT POWER SHARED SEVERAL KEY CHARACTERISTICS:**

- **Independent**
  - not beholden to someone else's assessment of their value in any given moment
- **Committed**
  - loyal to the organization and to each other;
- **Flexible**
  - willing to shift as political circumstances changed;
- **Distributed strategists**
  - populated by a relationally connected network of member-strategists

Building constituency internally and exercising power externally operate in mutually reinforcing ways.

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# APPENDIX

# THE CASES

| | Organization(s) | Campaign(s) and arena | Target(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Arizona** | LUCHA; OneAZ; Poder in Action | Municipal and house district elections; statewide minimum wage ballot initiative (Proposition 206) | Joe Arpaio, Russell Pearce, moderate state legislators, and state (Democratic Party) and national (philanthropic) networks |
| **Minnesota** | ISAIAH/Faith in Minnesota | 2018 primary and election (includes MN gubernatorial race and selected legislative and city- level races) | Candidates for office, especially Democratic gubernatorial candidates Erin Murphy and Tim Walz |
| **Ohio** | The AMOS Project (Ohio Organizing Collaborative) | Municipal levy (Issue 44) to fund universal preschool and K– 12 education | Business and philanthropic community in Cincinnati seeking to pass the levy |
| **Virginia** | New Virginia Majority | State- level rights restoration for the formerly incarcerated | Governors Bob McDonnell and Terry McAuliffe; Democratic statehouse delegates |

# ORGANIZATIONAL ECOSYSTEM EVOLUTION IN ARIZONA
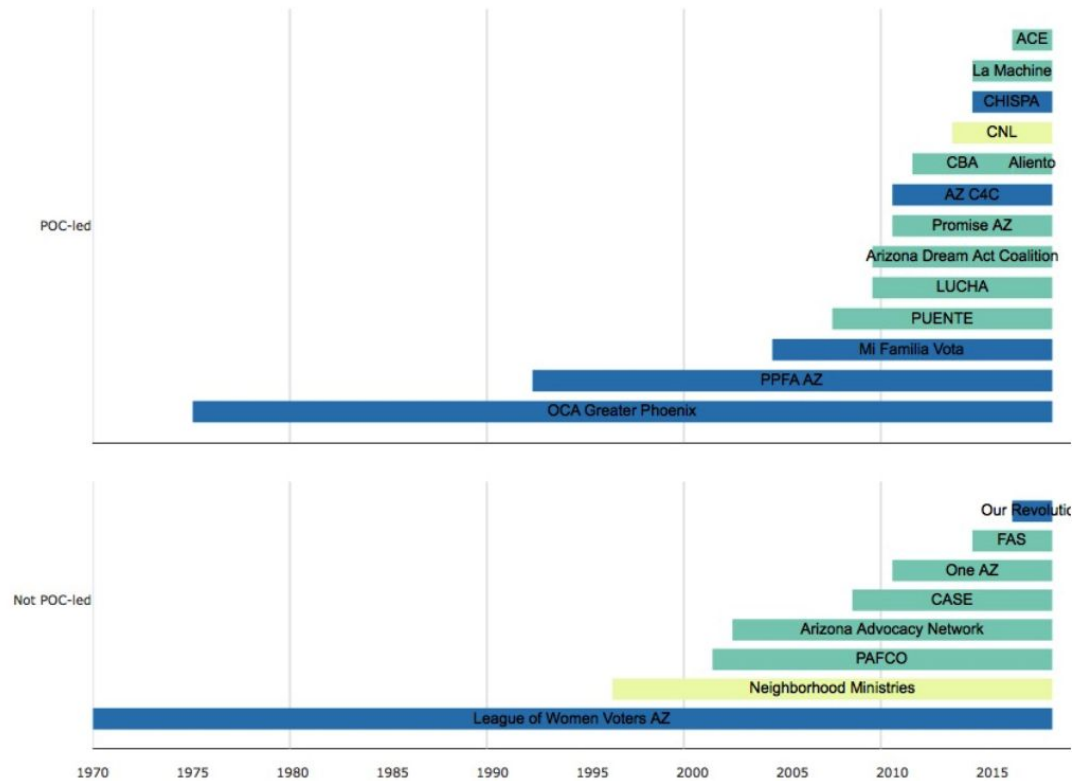
**ORGANIZATIONAL ECOSYSTEM EVOLUTION IN ARIZONA**

"I feel like that's frankly where we're going towards as a movement right now is dismantling a lot of the so-called 'infrastructure' that's become so process-oriented and weak in favor of **alignment coalitions** that are **forming capacity through the work together**."

*-Joy Cushman*
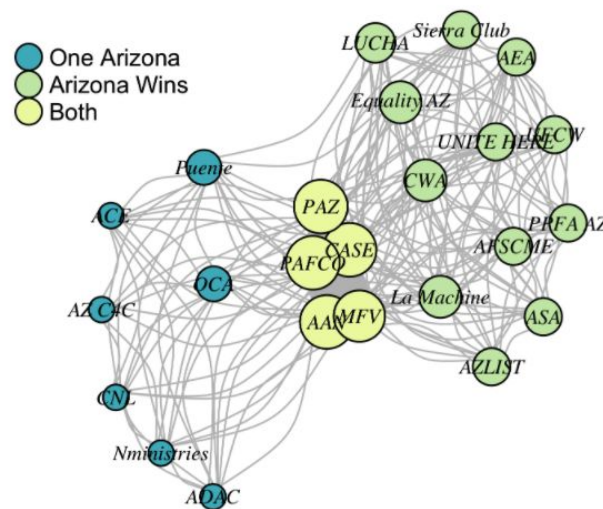
# Experienced any form of opposition

## RECAP OF THE ARGUMENT

|  | Dominant models of collective action | Logic and practice of 'prisms of people power' |
|---|---|---|
| **Power** | | |
| Central challenge | Minimizing the free-rider problem and activating likely supporters | Generating constituent loyalty, flexibility, and resilience |
| **Strategic logic** | | |
| Focus of power building | | |
| Allocation of resources | | |

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| **Strategic logic** | | |
| Focus of power building | Accrue resources needed to generate proximity to decision makers | Develop an independent source of power that does not depend on access to elites |
| Allocation of resources | Investment in tools to generate action | Investment in the downstream consequences of constituency engagement that feed back to shape the strategic position of the organization over time |

# RECAP OF THE ARGUMENT

|  | Dominant models of collective action | Logic and practice of 'prisms of people power' |
|---|---|---|
| **Strategic logic continued** | | |
| Nature of strategy | Unitary | Flexible and pragmatic |
| Style of learning | Individualistic and operational | Collective and strategic |
| **Constituency characteristics** | | |
| Nature of relationships | | |
| Nature of engagement | | |
| Nature of commitments | | |
| Nature of identities | | |

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| Nature of identities | Fixed, bonding | Changing, bridging |

# With which organizations do you strategize?
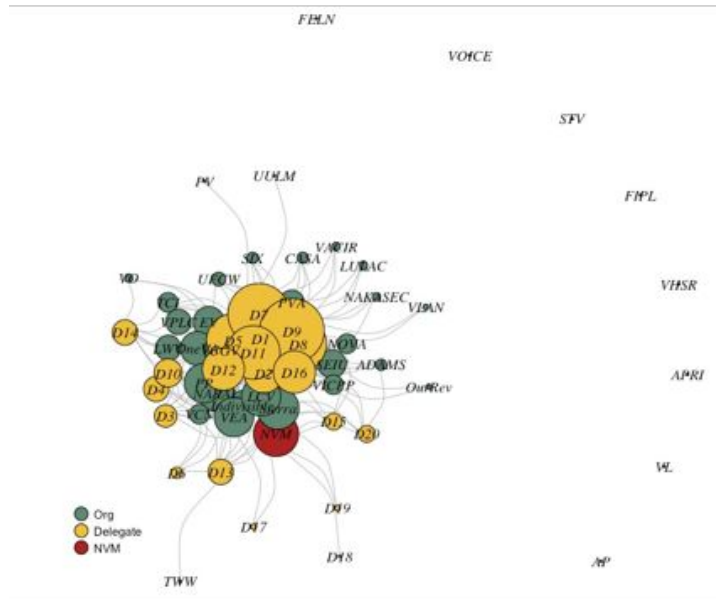


| | Eigenvector Value |
|---|---|
| Sierra | 0.830 |
| PP | 0.822 |
| VEA | 0.798 |
| LCV | 0.795 |
| NVM | 0.758 |
| NARAL | 0.748 |
| OneVA | 0.727 |
| EV | 0.700 |
| VCGV | 0.674 |
| PVA | 0.643 |
| SEIU | 0.629 |
| Indivisible | 0.616 |
| VPLC | 0.556 |
| LWV | 0.541 |
| VICPP | 0.458 |
| NOVA | 0.454 |
| TCI | 0.441 |
| VCN | 0.438 |
| UFCW | 0.347 |
| CASA | 0.305 |
| SIX | 0.303 |
| ADAMS | 0.253 |
| LULAC | 0.232 |
| VACIR | 0.232 |
| NAKASEC | 0.221 |
| VO | 0.185 |
| VLAN | 0.154 |
| OurRev | 0.134 |
| UULM | 0.078 |
| PV | 0.078 |
| TWW | 0.039 |
| AP | 0.000 |
| APRI | 0.000 |
| FELN | 0.000 |
| VHSR | 0.000 |
| VOICE | 0.000 |
| VL | 0.000 |
| FIPL | 0.000 |
| STV | 0.000 |

# Shifting the narrative



ISAIAH/Faith in Minnesota