[Book Prospectus]

Bridging Social Divides:
A Promising Approach to Increase Social Cohesion in a Polarized Society

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Summary
U.S. society is fragmenting across multiple social dimensions, splintering into various groups, with people becoming more isolated and alienated. Our fractured society and the erosion of a shared identity make it difficult for communities to work together to advance the collective good. Solutions are needed to help communities span these social fissures, strengthen our social fabric, and address shared concerns. While individual-level efforts to form relationships across social differences are valuable, they are insufficient. Such efforts will never reach the scale necessary to achieve society-level change. In *Bridging Social Divides*, we present a scalable approach that works through coalitions of community organizations to bring together diverse communities, strengthen ties between those communities, and work together to advance equity and promote individual and social flourishing.

Introduction: The Fragmenting of American Society

A critical problem facing U.S. society is the increasing degree of fragmentation occurring across multiple social dimensions—between ethnoracial groups, socio-economic levels, gender and sexual identities, religious traditions, the religious-secular divide, political affiliations, geographic regions, and rural, urban, and suburban settings. Fragmentation is even occurring *within* particular identity categories as these once relatively homogenous categories have become victims of the hyper-differentiation dynamics of fragmentation. Indeed, part of our contemporary challenge lies in the fact that fragmentation has taken on a life of its own—driven by cultural assumptions, vast economic inequalities, and algorithm-driven homogenizing of social networks.

Fragmentation escalates when different parts of the national community isolate themselves from one another—to such a degree that the very term "national community" seems to lack any real meaning—resulting in a dearth of interaction among different subparts. Those subparts become alienated from one another, undermining even any real *desire* for such interaction and understanding. Members of a pluralistic society, even when polarized, can retain some semblance of a collective identity and engage in debates with the hopes of seeking a reasonable resolution. However, when divisions dissolve into fragmentation—isolation and alienation—debate ceases and each part seeks an existence independent of the other parts. These fallouts from fragmentation undermine efforts to pursue the collective good because each fragment is concerned primarily with its own well-being and often holds a zero-sum view of viable solutions.

In the absence of some reasonable measure of bridging across difference, American society risks devolving into a dehumanized and dehumanizing struggle for power. Significant segments of our society have already descended to this state—willing to demonize opponents, spread false information, and use violence to impose their will and vision upon society. Down such a road lies democratic decay. The U.S. has walked that road before, most prominently in the decades following Reconstruction, when White society reasserted its supremacy following a period of Black empowerment sponsored by the federal government. If we do not find ways to bridge our social divides, future generations may look back on the 2020s as the time we rolled back the significant albeit imperfect advances of the Civil Rights era. Likewise, they may see the 2020s as the time we squandered our last best chance to peacefully redress egregious social injustices and curtail the worst excesses of inequality.

In light of our current social reality and bleak prognosis, the need to bridge social divides has never seemed more urgent and has become a topic of everyday conversations. At present, most proposed solutions focus on bridging between individuals. Although meaningful and sometimes fruitful, efforts to bridge social divides at the individual level are insufficient. Even when such individual-level bridging efforts are successful, they never reach a scale necessary to achieve society-level change.

Consequently, in *Bridging Social Divides* we propose that social fragmentation can be addressed most effectively at the organizational level. In particular, we argue that efforts to mend our social fabric can best occur via coalitions of community organizations. Such coalitions provide unique contexts that can: 1) bring together diverse populations at scale, 2) facilitate bonding through bridging cultural activities, and 3) provide space to understand and appreciate the diverse circumstances and needs of various social groups. Bridging social divides at the organizational level via coalitions provides a critical component for stitching our society back together, cultivating shared understanding, and collectively addressing the challenges we face.

We reject the pollyannish solution captured in the nostalgic sense of "can't we all just get along." Such views ignore the deep differences and entrenched inequities that drive wedges between communities. Bridging social divides does not require adopting another groups' identity or views. Rather, it requires engaging differences with the goal of understanding and seeking points of connection, commonality, and shared concern.

Our approach recognizes many people's inclination to associate with people who are socially similar to themselves, which can undermine efforts to become more diverse. This inclination can be deeply problematic, particularly in settings where substantial power is exerted or cultivated; such settings must be challenged to become ever more representative. However, it takes time for people to change their relational networks, and in the interim we need ways to build diverse representation in a society in which many organizations tend to be relatively homogenous.

Our approach also does not need to wait until every organization becomes diverse and representative of their wider community. Although representativeness is a desired goal for organizations, bridging coalitions enable bridging work to begin prior to individual organizations becoming diverse; even in settings where people are inclined to associate with people who are socially similar to themselves. Thus, that work can build to scale *now*. Our approach focuses on coalitions of organizations where each individual organization may be homogenous, but as a collective they are diverse. Such settings can both diversify the roots of social power *and* gradually change people's preferences in favor of greater diversity.

Focusing on bridging social divides at the organizational level via coalitions provides sufficient flexibility to allow people to continue to rely on rooted community institutions in which they find meaning and support—what Robert Bellah (1984) called "communities of memory and hope." For example, if a person finds sustenance in a religious congregation made up of people with a shared ethnoracial identity or in a local labor union made up of people in a similar socio-economic position or a member of any association comprised of people with a shared background, they can continue to find meaning in those organizations while 'bridging out' from those settings with their organization to coalitions of organizations whose members span social divides.

Bridging at the organizational level enables people to engage diversity as a community, allowing them to gain an appreciation and appetite for emergent diversity, while retaining ties to communities that are familiar and provide comfort. Focusing on community organizations also locates the effort to bridge social divides in the local organizational settings in which people spend much of their lives. That local organizational focus can help sustain a sense of efficacy and impact that can drive long-term cumulative success in bridging our social divides at scale and addressing social needs at higher levels of government.

Drawing on multiple empirical studies of civil society organizations, we argue that coalitions of community organizations provide a unique context for bridging social divides at sufficient scale. They also provide an environment conducive for participants to participate in bridging cultural activities—a key mechanism for helping groups bond across social divides. Finally, coalitions of community organizations provide a vehicle for identifying and addressing shared social concerns. Most experts recognize that communities need *some* shared identity and vision for the collective good to address common problems.[1]

Bridging social divides is needed to foster engagement and open up dialogue across lines of difference, but not necessarily to bring about agreement or even to "get along." Rather, the goal lies in generating healthy deliberation, reconciling differences, and identifying commonalities and shared concerns that will enable American society to restore the tapestry of a national identity and confront the looming challenges it faces. Although polarized verbal conflict often feels nasty and unproductive, a healthy democratic polity can effectively channel discursive conflict into productive policy debate. Within ongoing dialogue, sharply conflicting views representing contrasting positions can co-exist and even move society forward. Such sustained societal debate through which society is constantly reconstituted—if not by achieving consensus, then by engaging in conflictual dialogue around issues of shared concern—can be a generative feature of healthy democracies and lead to a flourishing pluralistic future.

Thus, bridging social divides matters greatly, not because it will lead Americans to agree with one another on the issues that currently divide us. Rather, bridging work matters precisely so that they can disagree—at times sharply—in ways that contribute toward real deliberation and societal priority-setting, by arguing healthily with people with backgrounds, experiences, and views distinct from their own. It enables divergent groups to coexist and advance the politics of a common life.

[1] Luke Bretherton terms this capacity "politics of a common life" as distinct from an older language of "common good" that presumed people could ultimately forge something like a consensus regarding the broad contours of a common good. The politics of a common life means people and organizations working together to identify and address some of their shared challenges, but it does not require consensus. See Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Organization of the Book

The core of *Bridging Social Divides* is organized around answering three practical questions, each in response to an underlying diagnosis. These questions correspond to Part I: Bridging, Part II: Bonding, and Part III: Brokering.

Part I: Bridging

How can American society bridge social divides at scale?

Underlying Diagnosis:
When Americans lament the fragmentation of American society, a common response involves individual-level efforts to bridge differences by forging relationships with people on the other side of social divides. Yet such individual-level work across deep divides requires arduous intentionality that is difficult to sustain. Moreover, given people's limited relational capacity, it is unlikely that these individual-level efforts can occur at a large enough scale to sufficiently bridge the gaping chasms of American society. Although admirable, such one-to-one work by itself is not sufficiently scalable to make a societal difference. We argue that bridging at the organizational level, specifically among coalitions of community organizations, offers far greater promise to generate the magnitude of cross-identity connections needed to strengthen our social fabric, collectively address the challenges facing our society, and promote individual and social flourishing.

We recognize, however, that our confidence in an organizational approach presumes that community organizations (e.g., religious congregations, business associations, and neighborhood groups) can generate this kind of bridging. In Tocqueville's view, community organizations (i.e. voluntary associations) are the best and most likely sites for cultivating bridging ties. They facilitate Americans' "habit of combining" and can stitch together otherwise disparate segments of society. Many scholars have built on Tocqueville's assertions, arguing that community organizations can knit together diverse communities by gathering individuals who differ along salient demographic lines to pursue common interests (Baggetta 2016, Fung 2003, Putnam 2000, Warren 2001). However, empirical studies often fail to bear out these Tocquevillean hopes. Such studies indicate that most community organizations are demographically homogenous (Baggetta 2016; Eliasoph 1998; Firat and Glanville 2017; Kaufman 2002; Kendall 2008; Lichterman 2005; Long 2003; McPherson and Rotolo 1995; McPherson and Smith-Lovin 1987; Popielarz 1999; Weare et al. 2009).[2] Even organizations that, in the past, connected members across class lines (but not ethnoracial, gender, religion, and language) have declined and are being replaced by class-homogenous groups (Skocpol 2003). Furthermore, among people who live in diverse communities and have the greatest opportunity to form bridging relationships, rather than doing so, they are often more inclined to "hunker down" and avoid civic engagements that might force them into interactions with demographically different others (Putnam 2007).[3] While we recognize—indeed hope—that this dynamic changes over time, we need models *now* for overcoming the severe constraints on our democratic life.

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[2] While some associations are internally diverse (Coffe and Geys 2007; Paxton 2002; 2007; Stolle and Rochon 1998), the vast majority tend to be homogeneous (Ostrower 2007).

[3] Robert D. Putnam's work represents the most sophisticated and widely read in this line; see his *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) and "*E. Pluribus Unum:* Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century," 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture in *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30:2 (2007), pp. 137-66; as well as Robert D. Putnam, Lewis Feldstein, and Donald J. Cohen. *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

Although we share Tocqueville's view of community organizations' capacity to knit society together, we recognize that homophily, hyper-partisan mobilization, and algorithm-driven echo chambers strain this capacity. Yet, one exception to this dynamic stands out. As we show in Chapter 4, one type of organizational form is most likely to emulate the Tocquevillian ideal: coalitions (i.e. organizations whose membership is comprised of organizations). Compared to organizations that only have individual members, coalitions comprise significantly greater demographic diversity. In effect, coalitions of organizations stitch together diversity even when each member organization on its own lacks much diversity. Such coalitions comprise "the diversity layer of civil society" (Baggetta and Fulton 2019). Thus, in addition to pursuing individual-level bridging work, we emphasize bridging social divides by forming or joining coalitions of community organizations (i.e. bridging coalitions). Such bridging can occur "at scale" in two senses: 1) broadly and frequently enough to matter on a society-wide scale and 2) on a timescale rapid enough to matter *now* when American society needs to reverse fragmentation and promote equity.

Chapter 1: The Diversity Layer – Coalitions of Community Organizations

Civil society theorists argue that community organizations (e.g., religious congregations, business associations, and neighborhood groups) can knit together diverse societies by bringing together individuals who differ along salient demographic lines. However, studies of community organizations typically show their members to be demographically homogeneous (Kendall 2008; Lichterman 2005; McPherson and Smith-Lovin 1987; Popielarz 1999). An exception to this pattern is found among coalitions of community organizations (Baggetta and Fulton 2019; Fulton 2021). Such coalitions—"the diversity layer of civil society"—tend to have a more demographically diverse composition than organizations comprised of individual members.

In this chapter, we demonstrate this tendency by analyzing data that contains information on the gender and ethnoracial identity of board members and staff from more than 15,000 community organizations. Our analysis finds that the boards and staff of coalitions are more ethnoracially diverse than the boards and staff of organizations comprised of individual members. This finding suggests that coalitions of community organizations function as the "diversity layer" of civil society and provide an ideal context for bridging, bonding, and brokering to occur. In the process, they also provide a context in which people's preference for diversity over homophily can grow and their capacity for bridging differences can increase.

Chapter 2: Bridging Demographic Differences

While Chapter 1 provides large-scale empirical evidence supporting the diversity layer theory, Chapter 2 provides an example of this phenomenon by describing a field of bridging coalitions. To illustrate how community coalitions provide an ideal context for bringing together a diverse base of people, we analyze data from a national study of community coalitions. The analysis shows that that the average level of ethnoracial, gender, class, and religious diversity among these coalitions exceeds the average level of diversity of other types of community organizations and community-based institutions such as religious congregations and public schools.

Chapter 3: Bridging Organizational Differences

We show how coalitions also facilitate bridging organizational differences by providing four examples of coalitions bringing together organizations located on different sides of social divides.

First, we present religious-secular alliances—collaborations between politically-engaged religious and secular organizations. We describe how these organizations address their differences by embracing them as complementary strengths.

Next, we discuss inter-religious bridging by presenting research on white evangelicals participating in multifaith collaborations in Los Angeles, Portland, Boston, and Atlanta. We show how these organizations navigate religious differences by adopting a secularist mode of public religion.

As a third example, we describe how Muslim organizations bridge ethnoracial and religious differences by collaborating with non-Muslim organizations and focusing on issues of common concern.

Finally, we present community-labor coalitions—efforts that unite grassroots community organizations and hierarchical labor unions—to show how the coalitions navigate their members' distinct organizational cultures and balance the ground game of grassroots organizing with the air game of policy advocacy and electoral organizing.

We then broaden the chapter's analysis by describing examples of bridging coalitions that include other community organizations and institutions such as public schools, businesses, police departments, and public health facilities.

Part II: Bonding
How can people strengthen social ties that span social divides?

Underlying Diagnosis:
Although many organizations are becoming more diverse, they continue to face the challenges associated with bonding across social divides. In this section, we present strategies organizations can use to strengthen bridging ties and form a shared identity while preserving and celebrating members' distinct social identities.

Forming and strengthening relationships that bridge demographic differences can be challenging. However, research on organizational culture identifies a set of practices organizations can implement to facilitate social bonding across lines of difference. These practices include: 1) cultivating a "representative group style" that enables participants from divergent backgrounds to feel at home within the organization; 2) having members participate in "bridging cultural activities" that function as an organizational glue holding members together as they navigate social differences;[4] and 3) encouraging participants to *engage* their social differences, rather than minimize or avoid them.[5]

Chapter 4: Representative Group Styles

Research on efforts by organizations to involve a diverse base of participants emphasizes the importance of having leaders who are representative of the people the organization seeks to involve. However, having representative leaders can be insufficient to promote diverse member involvement. We extend that research by showing how an organization's group style—its customs and practices

[4] Braunstein, Ruth, Brad R Fulton, and Richard L Wood. "The Role of Bridging Cultural Practices in Racially and Socioeconomically Diverse Civic Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 2014 79:705-25.
[5] Fulton, Brad R. "Engaging Differences: How Socially Diverse Organizations Can Mobilize Their Resources More Effectively." *Social Forces* 2021 99:1518-46; and Gawerc, Michelle I. "Coalition-Building and the Forging of Solidarity across Difference and Inequality." *Sociology Compass* 2021.

that shape everyday interactions—influences constituent involvement. For illustrative purposes, we examine ally immigrant rights organizations to assess the relationship between their group styles and their ability to involve immigrants. Ethnographic data reveal that divergent levels of immigrant involvement in two organizations can be explained by differences in the organizations' group styles—specifically, differences in their religious, class-based, and linguistic practices. Original survey data from a national sample of ally organizations demonstrate the generalizability of our ethnographic findings. Overall, our analysis shows how having an immigrant-friendly group style can promote immigrant involvement, indicating that an organization's group style is associated with its social composition. Having representative leaders from immigrant groups, though positively associated with immigrant involvement, is on its own insufficient for sustaining immigrant involvement; group style can moderate the effect of having representative leaders. More generally, this research suggests that organizations seeking to recruit and retain a diverse social base could benefit from cultivating a representative group style.[6]

Chapter 5: Bridging Cultural Activities

Certain types of activities can facilitate bonding across lines of difference. Members of a diverse organization are likely to bond when they participate in bridging cultural activities (Bernstein 2005; Braunstein, Fulton, and Wood 2014; McNeill 1995). Such activities (e.g., playing games, sharing meals, praying or worshipping, dancing, and singing songs) exist in all cultures, but take on different, culturally specific forms. When members of a diverse organization participate in these types of activities, sharing these varied forms of familiar activities can simultaneously highlight members' commonalities and affirm their differences (Gawerc 2012). As a result, participating in bridging cultural activities can help forge a shared group identity while preserving and promoting social differences (Yukich, Fulton, and Wood 2020). For illustrative purposes, we examine the field of faith-based community organizing coalitions to show how bridging cultural activities serve as a key mechanism through which ethnoracially and socioeconomically diverse organizations navigate challenges generated by internal differences. Specifically, we analyze data from extended ethnographic fieldwork within a faith-based community organizing coalition to describe how it uses particular prayer practices to bridge differences within group settings marked by ethnoracial and socioeconomic diversity. We also analyze survey data from a national study of faith-based community organizing coalitions to show that a coalition's prayer practices are associated with its objective level of racial and socioeconomic diversity and its subjective perception of challenges arising from such diversity. This multi-method analysis supports the argument that diverse organizations can use bridging cultural activities to navigate challenges arising from social differences and to function as an organizational glue holding members together.

Chapter 6: Engaging Differences

Socially diverse organizations vary in the extent to which their members engage their social differences (Chatman et al. 1998). Some organizations have norms that discourage members from focusing on their social differences, while other organizations actively encourage such engagement (Foldy and Buckley 2014; Kurtz 2002). The content of interaction among organizational members can indicate the degree to which they engage their differences (Marsden and Campbell 1984). Research suggests that a diverse organization can increase the likelihood that its members will bond by ensuring that its members regularly discuss their social differences (Amabile 1996; DeDreu and West 2001; Ely

[6] For brevity, in this book proposal we draw on sociological terminology to summarize the chapters. In the book itself, we will moderate our use of that terminology and 'tie it down' with concrete examples throughout.

and Thomas 2001; Simons et al. 1999). Specifically, scholars claim that cross-talk (i.e., discussions between socially dissimilar people) that focuses on the dimension(s) of dissimilarity can play a significant role in helping members of a diverse organization bond (Huckfeldt et al. 2004; Koch-Gonzalez et al. 2009; Weare et al. 2009). By talking explicitly about their social differences, members can deepen their understanding of one another, learn about issues from different perspectives, and be exposed to alternative approaches to addressing those issues (DiBenigno and Kellogg 2014; Foldy and Buckley 2014; Nemeth 1986; Ospina and Foldy 2010). Furthermore, such discussions can cultivate an openness among members to engage novel ideas others propose and to consider implementing unfamiliar or previously undervalued strategies (Koch-Gonzalez et al. 2009; Sue 2015).

In this chapter, we will draw on quantitative and qualitative data to provide examples of organizational participants discussing their differences and demonstrate the impact of such interactions.

Part III: Brokering
How can bridging coalitions broker solutions to address inequity?

Underlying Diagnosis:
Diversity is not an end in itself. Nor are social bridging and social bonding. Diverse and cohesive coalitions are means to a greater good. Thus, although community coalitions provide a unique context for achieving greater diversity and they can strengthen ties among participants by drawing on cultural practices, they can serve an even greater purpose. Bridging coalitions provide not only a model for mending our social fabric, but a vehicle for addressing inequity. They can serve as brokers that bring together disparate communities, cultivate a shared identity, identify issues of common concern, and develop a mutually agreeable plan to collectively address those concerns—then help drive society to implement such plans.

In this section, we examine the field of faith-based community organizing to provide examples of bridging coalitions brokering solutions to redress injustice and reduce inequality. These coalitions of community organizations that span social divides are consolidating power to identify and address inequities related to issues including voting rights, living wages, immigrants, and mass incarceration.

Chapter 7: Empowering Critical Standpoints to Advance Equality

In this chapter, we discuss the concept of critical standpoints and the value of organizations empowering leaders from marginalized groups. We draw on research on institutional work and cultural work, the outsider-within concept, and insights from critical theory to explain how such leaders can use their position and "critical standpoint" to help guide their organization toward advancing equality—both within the organization and in the public sphere. We illustrate the impact of this approach by showing how leaders of color within predominantly white organizations help their organizations address racial inequality. To do so, we analyze data from a national study of community coalitions and ethnographic fieldwork within one predominantly white coalition. The analysis shows how such leaders, when empowered, help their organization address race internally by 1) providing alternatives to white-dominated perspectives, 2) developing tools to educate white members about racial inequality, and 3) identifying and addressing barriers to becoming a more racially diverse organization. The analysis also shows how leaders of color help their organization address race externally by 1) sharing personal narratives about living in a white-dominated society and 2) brokering collaborations with organizations led by people of color. Empowering critical standpoints has implications for any organization seeking to promote social equality: Organizational

leaders from marginalized groups can help their organizations address social inequality, if those leaders possess a critical standpoint and sufficient organizational authority.

Chapter 8: Cultivating a Shared Identity around Shared Concerns

Brokering favorable outcomes requires disparate groups coming together and cultivating a shared identity around shared concerns. Community organizing groups and labor unions, despite sharing a common goal to improve the conditions of working class Americans, have historically struggled to work together. The struggle arises partly because of differences in strategies and tactics. Community organizing groups focus on developing leaders, mobilizing citizens, and building local-level campaigns, whereas unions focus on collective bargaining and higher-level political advocacy (Tattersall 2013; Lesniewski and Doussard 2017). However, even more significant is unions' past discrimination against communities of color (Jayaraman and Ness 2005; Milkman 2006; Tait 2016). In the past decade, however, coalitions of community organizations and labor unions have begun to form and play important political roles in many US cities and states (Milkman and Ott 2014; Reich, Jacobs, and Dietz 2014; Luce 2015).[7] These community-labor coalitions have won notable policy victories, such as a $15 minimum wage in California, Illinois, and Massachusetts, paid sick days legislation in New Jersey, and a state law mandating predictable work schedules in New York (Doussard and Lesniewski 2017). These victories confound commonly held views about the improbability of activists winning state employment policy reforms (Doussard and Lesniewski 2017). More surprising than these unexpected outcomes, however, is the existence of the community-labor coalitions that underlie them. Despite their strained relations and apparently conflicting priorities, research indicates that some community-labor coalitions have forged successful partnerships by building a shared identity around shared concerns (Milkman 2006; Cordero-Guzmán, Izvănariu, and Narro 2013; Tattersall 2013).

Chapter 9: Leveraging Complementary Strengths

Bridging coalitions demonstrate ways to form strategic alliances in which the member organizations share expertise and complementary organizing practices to increase their capacity and efficacy. Such alliances are effective because the organizations tend to lack sufficient resources and power to achieve their goals independently. In these circumstances, organizations may seek to buttress their shortcomings by collaborating with other organizations that have complementary strengths. We illustrate this dynamic by analyzing bridging coalitions whose members view their differences as complementary strengths that can improve their overall efficacy and increase their collective impact. Specifically, we examine alliances formed between religious and secular organizations and assess the impact of such alliances on political efficacy. Religious organizations may seek such alliances because they lack understanding of the specific logic and practices of the secular political field and seek to gain such insight from secular organizations. Meanwhile, secular organizations may seek such alliances because they see the value of religious sources of cultural legitimacy, but lack the capacity to successfully engage and mobilize religious entities.

Chapter 10: Promoting Targeted-Universal Policies

Democracies in pluralistic societies risk devolving into identity politics hamstrung by a zero-sum mindset. As such, American society struggles to combine universalist democratic ideals with its

[7] Throughout this article, we use the term "community organizations" as shorthand for grassroots community organizations engaged in community organizing.

increasingly multicultural reality. In this chapter, we focus on how bridging coalitions can negotiate the universalist-multiculturalist tension by brokering targeted universalist policies (powell 2008; powell 2012). Targeted universalism involves promoting policies and programs that benefit everyone and are especially beneficial to historically disadvantaged groups. When done well, the targeted-universalist approach involves communities in the challenges and complex demands of shaping public policy in pluralistic society with a legacy of structural inequality. We provide examples of bridging coalitions brokering targeted-universal policy solutions to negotiate the tension between universalist and multiculturalist democratic commitments.

Chapter 11: Brokering Policy Solutions at Higher Levels of Government

Bridging coalitions can leverage their diversity to amplify marginalized voices, identify shared concerns, and consolidate power to broker policy solutions at higher levels of government. Historically, it has been rare for community coalitions to address issues beyond the city level. Over the past decade, however, many coalitions have adopted more sophisticated approaches to political engagement. Although most community coalitions tend to restrict their organizing area to a city, many have begun engaging with issues and meeting with political officials beyond the city level. The coalitions' successful power projection at the state level has led some coalitions to form broader strategic partnerships to address issues at the national level. The success of bridging coalitions' higher-level organizing efforts can be attributed to their ability to bring together a broad and diverse base of participants, align them to a shared concern, and advocate for targeted-universal policy solutions.

Conclusion

We conclude by summarizing the three mechanisms—bridging, bonding, and brokering—underlying an organizational approach to strengthen society and promote equity. We locate our argument within a shared commitment to a pluralistic democratic future in which Americans collectively address the challenges facing our society and promote individual and social flourishing. We have previously termed that shared project 'ethical democracy.'[8] Among other commitments, ethical democracy strives to forge and nurture the cultural and institutional underpinnings of an emerging multiracial democracy in America. This commitment does not involve a return to some imagined past in which democracy was better than it is today; rather, it requires commitment to constructing a multiracial future that embodies humanitarian cosmopolitan and social pluralism while simultaneously allowing local cultures to flourish and the overarching collective identity and social fabric to strengthened. Thus, we focus on bridging social divides not for the sake of niceness or civility or some idealized democracy of the past, but rather for the sake of that shared project, one in which all Americans can thrive.

[8] On ethical democracy, see our argument in *A Shared Future: Faith-Based Organizing for Racial Equity and Ethical Democracy* (University of Chicago Press, 2015) and Wes Markofski's *Good News for Common Goods: Multicultural Evangelicalism and Ethical Democracy in America* (Oxford, 2023). Related writing sharing many of our commitments and emphasizing the roots of democracy in grassroots associations comes under the rubric of 'consociational democracy' in Luke Bretherton's *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life.* Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics, edited by Ken Wald, David Leege, and Richard L. Wood (Cambridge University Press, 2015). In addition to a commitment to a multiracial future, ethical democracy involves deliberative, representative, and consociational elements beyond our argument here.

Appendix
Bridging and Bonding: Disentangling the Two Mechanisms

Many studies treat bridging and bonding as inversely related, asserting that diverse organizations have high bridging and low bonding, while homogenous organizations have low bridging and high bonding. This practice unnecessarily constrains our understanding of the complex dynamics of diverse organizations and their performance. We disentangle these concepts by specifying bridging and bonding as distinct mechanisms and measuring them independently—bridging based on the demographic diversity of an organization and bonding based on the interactions between its members. This approach enables us to assess the independent effects of demographic diversity and social cohesion on organizational outcomes. Throughout the book, we argue that greater clarity regarding the distinction between social bridging and bonding and their respective benefits can substantially benefit both scholarly analysis and real-world organizational practices.

Authors' Bios

Brad R. Fulton is an associate professor in the O'Neill School at Indiana University. His research draws on organizational theory and network analysis to examine the causes and consequences of diversity within organizations. Fulton's research has received 18 national awards from academic associations spanning six disciplines, including his co-authored book *A Shared Future* (UChicago Press 2015), which received the 2016 Outstanding Book Award from ARNOVA. His research has also been covered by media outlets including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *NPR*. Fulton directs the Faith & Prejudice Institute, serves as a fellow with the Aspen Institute, and is an editorial board member for the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Sociology of Religion*, and *Social Service Review*. Fulton also has produced three podcasts: *Diversity and Inequality*, *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, and *Statistics for the Social Sciences*. His episodes have been played over 100,000 times by people from 147 different countries. Relative to similar podcasts, Fulton's are among the highest rated and most reviewed.

Richard L. Wood is Professor of Sociology at the University of New Mexico. His scholarly expertise focuses on the cultural and institutional bases of democratic life. He is co-author with Fulton on several award-winning articles and *A Shared Future: Faith-Based Organizing for Racial Equity and Ethical Democracy*. He is the author of *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America* (UChicago Press), named best book of 2002 in the sociology of religion by the American Sociological Association. He draws on his scholarly expertise in serving on the national Board of Directors of Faith in Action, the largest community organizing network in the U.S., and formerly as a *pro bono* advisor to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the anti-poverty arm of the U.S. Catholic bishops. He is series co-editor of *Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics* at Cambridge University Press.

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