Imagined Audiences and Activist Orientations of Migrant Advocacy Organizations

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This study, part of a larger investigation of a network of migrant advocacy organizations in South Texas, explores advocates' rhetorical strategies and how such strategies are informed by activists' (imagined) audiences. Data gathering consisted of semi-structured interviews of 17 advocates representing 8 organizations, supplemented by approximately 40 hours of participant observation over a 2-year period. Findings suggest four categories of aims: educating and persuading the general public, engaging non-supporters through dialogue, supporting and organizing migrants as activists, and building cooperative relationships with the authorities. Each of these audiences is engaged differentially, with attention to cultural values, strategic interests, and power dynamics. Activists' strategies and imagined audiences are informed by rhetors' social identities as well as their organizations' goals. Conclusions suggest implications for coalition work and recommend the concepts of *differential activism* and *agonistic dialogue*, given the diversity of organizations and their constituencies.

Keywords: migrant advocacy, social movement, audiences, coalition, agonistic dialogue, differential activism

Arguably the most contested political issue of recent years has been immigration. Before the coronavirus pandemic, the prevalence of international migration was at an all-time high (Migration Policy Institute, 2018), and the plight of migrants around the world and their treatment by host nations dominated headlines around the world. In the United States, historically considered a "nation of immigrants," the presidential election of Donald Trump led to the striking of this phrase from the statement of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (Jordan, 2018), a sharp decrease in the admission of refugees (Migration Policy Institute, 2017), a tightening of restrictions on voluntary immigration, and draconian treatment of asylum seekers along the southern border.

Immigrants, refugees, asylees, and their advocates, in response, intensified their efforts to resist these policies and enlist public support. In South Texas, they are represented by churches, ethnic community organizations, legal aid organizations, refugee-resettlement agencies, city government actors, and coalitions incorporating multiple organizations.

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I spent approximately two years studying these partnerships to learn about the dynamics of coalitions, the various organizational and individual actors' affinities, and advocates' rhetorical strategies. One of the things I realized was that their strategies were consciously or unconsciously informed by assumptions they made about who their audiences were and that these assumptions informed how they crafted their rhetoric. To the extent that they differed from one organization to another, this constituted a potential source of conflict for interorganizational collaboration. The goal of this article, therefore, is to explore how advocates understood their audiences and oriented their rhetoric accordingly. This has not only theoretical value for social movement scholarship but also practical importance for immigration activist coalitions.

Findings indicated four main objectives of social movement actors, including educating the general public, engaging non-supporters, supporting and organizing migrants as activists, and building cooperative relationships with the authorities. These reflected the broader goals of the organizations, the professional roles of the rhetors, and their (intersectional) social identities. Organizations and coalition partnerships were most successful when they employed differential activism (Sandoval, 1991, 2000) and agonistic dialogue (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012; Mouffe, 2000, 2005).

Review of Literature

Aims of Activist Rhetoric

As Yazdiha (2020) has asserted, "strategic action is a cultural process of meaning-making" (p. 477). Contemporary social movements, in particular, have largely addressed relatively symbolic concerns of culture and identity, with aims such as "changes in human or collective consciousness or changes in the symbolic interpretation of the environment" (DeLuca, 1999, p. 34). New social movements, moreover, concern themselves with multiple and contextual flows of power as well as multiple audiences beyond just the state (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008). Activism, accordingly, can focus not only on the political system but also on "cultural strategies aimed at changing value systems" (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 170). Della Porta and Diani (2006) noted that the transformation of political structures, of course, is unlikely to occur without changes in public consciousness.

In terms of recruitment and organization, Klandermans (1984) observed that movement actors seek support for their positions through "consensus mobilization" and, on a deeper level, seek movement participation through "action mobilization." To achieve mobilization, according to Snow and Benford (1988), activists engage in three types of interpretive framing with the aim of aligning movements' orientations with those of individuals. The first is diagnostic framing (problem identification), the second is prognostic (proposing solutions), and the third is motivational (calls to action). As Hestres (2015) observed, diagnostic framing generally serves to mobilize consensus, whereas action mobilization is more likely achieved through motivational framing.

In a study of the environmental movement, Nelson and King (2020) observed that social movement organizations' strategies represent meaning-making projects that constitute links between specific tactics and their broader goals. Nelson and King (2020) identified three types of strategies: "mobilizing communities, institutional change, and personal transformation" (p. 316), and cataloged nine categories of tactics (including

"awareness raising" and "non-disruptive protest"). They found that while organizations with certain overarching goals were more likely to prioritize certain tactics, these patterns often obscured the fact that

> (1) a tactic or action gets its meaning only from its relationship to the variety of other tactics and actions used by an organization, and (2) the same tactic has a different purpose depending on the goal orientation of the organization using it. (Nelson & King, 2020, p. 328)

Nelson and King (2020) cited the example of "buycotts": Organizations striving to promote personal transformation encouraged consumers to support environmentally friendly businesses in the interest of educating those consumers, whereas those seeking institutional change engaged in the same tactic but to put pressure on businesses.

Social Movement Actors and Audiences

Quantitative research has identified several variables that influence the likelihood of movements recruiting supporters to action. According to Gundelach and Toubøl's (2019) study of participation in a refugee solidarity movement, such variables include biographical and structural availability; embeddedness in, and socialization by, activist networks; value predispositions (e.g., humanism, compassion, and a sense of responsibility for refugees, as opposed to nationalism); and emotional reactions to current events (including compassion, anger, and "moral shock"; Jasper & Poulsen, 1995).

As Polletta and Jasper (2001) have pointed out, activists' interests, commitments, and strategies are often rooted in affective identity concerns, and collective movement identities are experienced as imagined communities. Activists and their audiences, according to Polletta and Jasper (2001), are bound by a "cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution" (p. 285).

Identity concerns—and therefore strategic action—according to Yazdiha (2020), are inevitably "informed by actors' intersectional social locations" (p. 478). In a study of Muslim American immigrants and their interactions with the police, for example, Yazdiha (2020) found that their strategies tended to vary according to their levels of status and privilege because they perceived "different sets of opportunities and constraints, rules and norms, and likely outcomes in a strategic field of action" (p. 479). Terriquez (2018), too, established intersectionality to be a diagnostic, motivational, and prognostic frame for movement mobilization by helping activists make sense of identities, inspire action, and guide inclusive organizing.

In terms of audiences, scholars of both communication and sociology have noted dilemmas faced by activists regarding "the multiple exigencies or competing publics to whom discourse is addressed" (Foust, Pason, & Rogness, 2017, p. 4). Della Porta and Diani (2006) pointed out that more powerful actors tend to have direct access to legislators, whereas those with less power are more likely to focus on policy makers' constituents and use more confrontational forms of activism. Moreover, Della Porta and Diani (2006), Foust et al. (2017), and Hestres (2015) described trade-offs between mobilizing core supporters, on the one hand, and enlisting and maintaining allies, on the other. Confrontational protest, for example, serves an important "ego function" (Gregg, 1971) by which members of marginalized groups can gain acknowledgment, but may be off-putting to those who are less deeply invested. In their research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and

transgender (LGBT) movements, Ghaziani, Taylor, and Stone (2016) observe that much scholarship focuses on "oscillations of the movement's collective identity between emphasizing similarities to the heterosexual mainstream and celebrating differences" (p. 165). Ghaziani and colleagues (2016) conclude, though, that sameness and difference are not oppositional, static, or discrete choices.

Cole and Luna (2010) have framed commonalities and differences *within* movements as a dialectical tension. In her study of a multiracial women's movement, Luna (2016) analyzes how movement actors negotiate this tension in terms of their intersectional identities. She describes a "same difference" logic in which differences are largely downplayed in favor of overriding shared concerns, akin to Spivak's (1990) "strategic essentialism." This logic, Luna (2016) notes, is helpful as a shortcut for movement building but risks reinscribing some of the very power dynamics the movement aims to overcome. For the long-term, instead, she advocates a "difference-in-sameness" approach that "facilitates precisely the kind of continual questioning that seeks to avoid such reproduction of inequality" (Luna, 2016, p. 785).

What has received less scholarly attention than movement identity per se, according to Blee and McDowell (2012), is how social movement actors construct their audiences. When communication is mediated, in particular, rhetors must make assumptions about who their audiences are and how they respond to messages (Litt, 2012). Litt (2012) argues that "the variability of an imagined audience and its alignment with the actual audience is based on an interaction of macro-level factors (e.g., social roles, norms, and technological infrastructure) and micro-level factors (e.g., motivation, attitude, social skills, and Internet skills" (p. 334). Litt (2012) observes, for example, that some social media environments provide important audience cues and that high self-monitors tend to be well attuned to them.

Taking a performative approach to the study of a peace movement and an animal rights movement, Blee and McDowell (2012) argued that "audiences are discursive constructions, created by social actors through social interaction" (para. 9). Effective movement actors, they observed, constructed audiences, constituted them with meaning and value, and assessed their potential to be influenced and to be influential. They noted, for example, that actors might strive to elicit sympathy from some audiences and anger from others, and certain audiences were primarily intended as conduits to still others. The authors also marked the tension between a focus on sympathetic and engaged activists as audiences and the inclusion of the general public and concluded by observing the mutually constitutive relationships between social movements and their audiences. On the one hand, social movements constitute their audiences by targeting certain groups such as the general public, law enforcement, or potential allies. In some cases, these groups are broad and vague, while in others they are clear and specific, and certain assumed characteristics are ascribed to them. On the other hand, social movements are constituted by their audiences, which shape movement strategies and orientations, and—in the case of allies—may join movements as activists themselves.

Coalition Building

Collaboration in social movements is essential not only for the efficient use of information and material resources but also for the crucial functions of message coordination, mobilization, and movement building. For coalitions among diverse organizations, though, differences in identities, values, priorities,

practices, institutional constraints, audiences, and constituencies complicate their rhetorical challenges (DeTurk, 2021a).

Some activists are intentional about tailoring their methods and messages to different audiences and contexts. This approach is characteristic of *differential activism*, which is rooted in the Chicana feminist notion of differential consciousness (Sandoval, 1991, 2000). Sandoval (1991) articulated "differential consciousness" as a conditional form of subjectivity through which people who are oppressed can shift from one subject position to another according to the political demands of the situation. It involves flexibility in perspective, communication style, and language use, and is associated with the "mestiza consciousness" described by Anzaldúa (1990) as an element of border-dwelling. Hernández (2022) discusses this in terms of code switching. Differential activism, for Chicana feminists, is essential to social change activism, especially for those navigating oppressive power structures and those striving to work in coalitions (Lugones, 2003).

A second concept that can fruitfully address tensions within social movements is *agonistic dialogue*. First articulated by Mouffe (2000, 2005), agonistic dialogue recognizes that coalitions are strategic rather than consensual and are subject to conflicts of interest, power imbalances, and hegemonic relationships. Actors, therefore, should strive to address political conflict, both within coalitions and among adversaries, through agonistic engagement, which acknowledges both the underlying conflicts of interest and the essential humanity of all actors.

Ganesh and Zoller (2012) have applied agonistic dialogue (contrasting it with consensus and co-optation) to social movements and advocated for its essential role in activism. They identified three continua along which agonistic dialogue is played out in social movements: collaboration-confrontation, internal-external, and synchronic-diachronic. The first continuum refers to the mutual relationships of dialogue with both collaboration and confrontation. The second acknowledges that dialogue, collaboration, and confrontation occur not only among adversaries but also within social movements. The third is explained as follows:

> At one level, dialogue and conflict can be seen as diachronic, that is, interactionally and pragmatically intertwined. This involves continuing to see dialogue as a form of openness, rather than common ground. At another level, the synchronic effects of contestation itself can be understood as dialogic, in that the very act of challenging dominant systems of power and meaning through argumentative, confrontational, or irrational tactics opens up alternative spaces. In both diachronic and synchronic stances, the emphasis is on different forms and understandings of openness. (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 78)

Agonistic dialogue, in sum, is an approach to activism that takes political contingencies into account. First, it recognizes that collaboration and confrontation both have their appropriate places. Second, it acknowledges backstage (internal) as well as public (external) loci of conflict and negotiation and stresses that conflict within coalitions does not preclude dialogue but elevates its importance. Third, it reminds us that public protests and closed-door meetings with officials are both part of a larger dialogue, and each creates openings for the other. Both also draw on, and contribute to, various types of power held by the different actors. Recognition of the various modes and dimensions of dialogue, as well as its agonistic nature, is essential to the effective functioning of coalitions.

Research Questions

The goals of this study were to understand the rhetorical strategies of migrant activist organizations, how they were informed by the organizational and social locations of the rhetors, what successes and challenges they experienced, and the implications for coalition work. The current article takes up the question of the role of (imagined) audiences of those advocating on behalf of immigrants, refugees, and asylees, building on theoretical insights gleaned mostly from activism in other realms. Greater awareness of the relationships among rhetors' identities and organizational contexts, how they imagine their audiences, and the strategies they employ can help advocates to be more effective and to build successful coalitions across differences. Interrogation of these dynamics can also lead to a greater theoretical understanding of social movements. The specific research questions are as follows:

RQ1:   To what audiences do migrant advocacy organizations in South Texas orient their rhetoric?

RQ2:   What are their rhetorical strategies, and how are they informed by their intended audiences?

Research Methods

Data collection was achieved primarily through formal, semi-structured interviews as described by Kvale (1996), supplemented by participant observation. The latter was inspired by critical-rhetorical ethnography, which is

> designed to give rhetoricians an insider perspective on the lived advocacy of individuals and organizations that struggle to persuade in public for changes in policy, social life, or other issues that affect them. The method is not mere observation of advocacy but rather an embodiment and enactment of advocacy through direct participation. (Hess, 2011, p. 128)

I was associated as a volunteer and/or advocate with a number of organizations assisting and/or advocating for migrants and became involved with several others (primarily through snowball sampling) for the purpose of conducting research. In all, they included a nonprofit legal service organization, a church-based official refugee-resettlement agency, a volunteer organization for services to refugees, an interfaith organization to serve and advocate for migrants with indeterminate legal status, an ethnic community organization, a student organization, a city government agency, and a political advocacy coalition. Two of these were established as formal coalitions and included representation by some of the others. (My focus on "coalition" is based largely on these two organizations but also more broadly on the cooperative efforts between and among organizations and individual actors.) While they were not exhaustive of organizations serving migrants in the metropolitan area, they did include the ones that were largest, most established, most active, and most connected. Others I selected with the aim of having as diverse a sample as possible.

I participated in meetings, training sessions, and volunteer sessions held by these groups, for a total of just more than 40 hours of participant observation over a two-year period. This included working with other volunteers to furnish apartments for new refugee arrivals, accompanying asylees to court appointments, participating in training sessions for allies who would greet migrants at the bus station, and

attending a workshop to teach migrants and their allies how to frame stories for the media. I attended multiple open coalition meetings where information about migrants was exchanged and political strategies were discussed, and I was invited to a senior staff meeting of a large refugee-resettlement organization. These events helped me to build relationships, identify interviewees, and understand the contexts of migrant advocacy. I recorded field notes after each session, and kept a separate list of analytical notes, reviewing my field notes periodically to refresh my memory.

Over the same period (and after receiving Institutional Review Board approval), I interviewed 17 people (identified via network and snowball sampling) in 16 discrete, dialogic interviews that averaged 65 minutes each. The interview guide is presented in Appendix A. Interviewees included program directors, advocacy directors, volunteers, clients, and activists. Eight of these were U.S.-born, and the others (from Latin America and the Middle East) included refugees, asylum seekers, and those with a variety of other immigration statuses such as deferred action for childhood arrivals. One interview was performed with the help of a Turkish-English interpreter; the rest were conducted in English. All were transcribed by me. I continued with both participant observation and interviewing until I determined that data collection was no longer yielding meaningfully new insights. All names herein are pseudonyms.

To analyze both types of data, I engaged in a phronetic, iterative process described by Tracy (2020). Through primary cycle coding, I identified tentative themes across fieldnotes as well as interviews. Some of the themes related directly to my initial research questions, while others emerged because they were interesting, surprising, illuminating, or expressed forcefully or repeatedly. During the second cycle of coding, I began relating themes to one another and the research questions. At this point, I realized I had three sets of findings: one about the institutional contexts of activists' rhetorical choices (DeTurk, 2021a), another relating to activists' and migrants' social and cultural identities (DeTurk, 2021b), and the third relating to their intended audiences. For each of these, I continued with simultaneous processes of theoretical sensitization, writing, and continued analysis.

Audiences and Objectives

Interviews with advocates revealed that their advocacy for migrants is aimed at four general objectives: (1) educating and persuading the general public, (2) engaging non-supporters through dialogue, (3) supporting migrants and organizing them as activists, and (4) building cooperative relationships with the authorities. Some advocates focused on all four objectives, whereas others concentrated their efforts on only one or two. These foci were typically informed by the nature of the organizations, the identities of the rhetors, and their imaginings of their audiences, all of which shaped each other.

Educating and Persuading the General Public

Most interviewees oriented at least some of their advocacy to the general public, including (but not limited to) potential allies. To a great extent, their efforts were aimed at consensus mobilization through diagnostic framing, in particular by countering inaccurate media messages through education. Laura, a Latina refugee advocate coordinator, described her reaction to an ABC News story that referred to asylum seekers as illegal immigrants:

> We were just like, are you kidding me? . . . So a lot of education goes into that, so we do trainings, and . . . we also encourage advocates to come volunteer their time at one of the detention centers, so they can get a better understanding of what the process is.

Elizabeth, the White director of a local volunteer organization, spoke about striving to raise awareness of the fact that refugees usually go on to become valuable members of the community.

> There's lots of success stories. The first year is hard for everyone, but if you look around the city, you see lots and lots of successful businesses, and successful students that are living the American Dream because they have been working hard to achieve their goals. . . . Those are the kinds of messages we want to get out to the community.

Gina, a former refugee from the Middle East herself, echoed Elizabeth's message:

> We try to show . . . everything positive that has to do with refugees. . . . People think that refugees come here to apply for benefits, you know, and they live off the taxpayers' money. They don't know that refugees, they become taxpayers themselves, and they contribute to the community.

Mona, another former refugee, said that she wanted "to just present myself [so that people] see me, they talk to me, and, you know, 'oh, you came as a refugee!' You know, to get to know me, I'm not a terrorist."

Gina and Mona both work for a large, church-based refugee-resettlement agency, whose fiscal survival depends on public acceptance of refugees within the nation and the state. Their advocacy director is Owen, a White American whose job involves meeting with politicians, tabling at community events, and hosting workshops to teach refugees to engage with the media. When I asked him how he imagined his audience, he said, "I can tell you who I wish was there. . . . People like my dad . . . like people who voted for Trump." Owen said he felt it was his duty to counteract the stereotypes that Muslims are terrorists, Mexicans are job stealers, and both are threats to American culture. His message, as a result, stresses that refugees are in the United States legally, create jobs, pay taxes, share U.S. values of family, freedom, and equality, and are grateful for welcoming Americans. This was borne out by a media-training workshop he co-hosted for immigrants and refugees, which I attended as part of my participant observation. Through examples of op-ed articles, migrants were urged to share their stories (including their hard work, successful integration, and gratitude for welcoming Americans), emphasize shared values (such as family, freedom, and equality), and address the concerns of their audiences (including paying taxes, taking vs. creating jobs, and terrorism).

Owen is aware that this neoliberal, assimilationist rhetoric contradicts a human rights argument for the inclusion of migrants (see DeTurk, 2021b). It is guided, though, less by his personal values than by the exigencies of his employer, the macro-level focus of his job, and the White, possibly Trump-supporting Americans whom he imagines as his audience.

Engaging Non-Supporters Through Dialogue

Joseph is an Iraqi asylee who is actively engaged as a community leader and an activist. Like Owen, he is committed to engaging with people who hold anti-migrant views. Joseph expressed frustration with advocates who focused their attention on already sympathetic audiences.

> Why do we have to preach to the choir? For god's sake, do I have to really tell someone, who's already pro-refugees, "please don't turn your back"? How 'bout send me to the person who might have a different attitude? . . . You have to take the chance to go to the opponents, to the rival, to even "the enemies," if needed.

Joseph's emphasis, though (unlike Owen's), is more on interpersonal dialogue than media messaging. As a community organizer whose advocacy is more intimate, targeted, and interpersonal than Owen's, Joseph aims to "bring even those who might feel intimidated by the presence of refugees to the table" *with* refugees. His message is that whereas terrorism is born of alienation, security is fostered by cultural integration and social inclusion. His attitude is dialogic, acknowledging the perspectives of adversaries: "Anti-immigrant people listen to me," he said, "because I start by addressing the security concern and the financial concern."

John and Mary are a White Christian couple involved in an interfaith coalition in support of migrants even though their own church is not particularly friendly to migrants. They discussed this tension in a joint interview:

> M: Our church is mostly Republican. Ah, conservative. They don't have any idea that . . . we've brought lots of families there that are [undocumented]. They just don't have any idea about these people. But we're getting ready to tell 'em. We're getting ready to see if we can't have a meeting—
>
> J: All in baby steps.
>
> M: We're gonna invite the church to see if they can't learn something.

John and Mary, like Joseph, find it important to change the mindsets of their anti-immigrant church members and feel that dialogue is the best approach to such personal transformation. Also, like Joseph, they were working as volunteers and did not speak on behalf of any advocacy organization.

Supporting Migrants and Organizing Them as Activists

Some interviewees identified migrants themselves as their primary audiences. "Our clients are our first audience because they're really who our first responsibility is to," said Katie, an outreach director of a legal services organization serving migrants with various legal statuses. This is a nonprofit organization with an annual budget of millions of dollars, acquired largely through donations, that has served more than 10,000 clients in its 40-year history. Unlike most of the other organizations studied, it disseminates messages in both English and Spanish. Katie, and others in her organization, expressed a commitment to showing migrants they were supported. Secondarily, she said, her role was to amplify the voices of the

migrants themselves. While these initially struck me as two different objectives, interviewees who talked about one inevitably did so in the context of the other. Lisa's story illustrates her belief that the best way to support migrants is to empower them as activists.

Lisa is a Latina community organizer whose work focuses on intersectional advocacy of migrants, women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people—all groups with whom she identifies personally—and whose employer when I met her worked most centrally with undocumented migrants from Mexico and Central America. Lisa's role, as she saw it, was to support "affected communities" (migrants and their families) and to organize activists. This included actual and potential allies, but her clear priority was base building. Her work was made complicated by the fact that her employer engaged in both advocacy and direct services and strove to maintain cordial and cooperative relationships with government authorities. As a result, she often clashed with her (mostly White and U.S.-born) managers over her confrontational rhetorical tactics.

> If I would say something very radical, like at a rally, like, "fuck ICE!" you know, something like that, there was always someone that would complain, and say, "Well, that's not very nice." And it's like, well, ICE is the devil! . . . Sometimes in those moments, you're just so *angry*, right, there's a lot of *energy*, right? So it's just the march-goers, or the rally-goers, saying, like, "Yeah, fuck ICE!" right? Giving them animo, to fight, right? . . . The message that I wanted to frame to the affected community, to my audience . . . it was always, like, "We're gonna *be here* for you; we're gonna *fight* for you." Um, it was a message of, you know, here's a person that *looks* like you, that has *been through* the same stuff as you, and, like telling you gonna *advocate* for you. Right? But they wanted to craft my message . . . to the *allies*, and to the *donors*.

Lisa was clearly oriented toward action mobilization of the disenfranchised and bemoaned the fact that her organization, and others like it, too often oriented their advocacy toward people in power. Messages were softened to appease what she called "the White church ladies," events were held in places that were difficult for migrants to get to, and too many of the conversations with public officials were held behind closed doors. "Who's gonna hold them accountable?" she asked.

Building Cooperative Relationships With the Authorities

Cristina is a Mexican immigrant who works for an advocacy organization working at the intersection of criminal and immigration law. She is also a leader in a new formal coalition bringing together a variety of local organizations working for social justice and the protection of migrants. She outlined three main channels of messaging. One was the media, which she noted was the only way to reach non-supporters. The second was the education and organizing of immigrants and their (potential) allies. The third was building trusting relationships with the authorities with an eye toward institutional change. She referred to this as "internal" advocacy:

> You meet with your leaders, you meet with your state attorneys, with your chiefs of police, with your president of police unions, right, like, you meet with those folks, and you try and at least engage in a conversation, right? You bring the facts, you bring the

testimonies, whatever you need bring, however, you need to reach those meetings, for you to make a, a *shift* in that person.

Cristina stressed the importance of tailoring messages to particular audiences: "The chief of police is not gonna care about values, sometimes; they're just gonna care about 'do I have enough money to keep all of my officers' benefits and salaries, and can I still fight crime?'" While her organization is still in its infancy, it has already succeeded in persuading the police to adopt a "cite and release" policy toward certain misdemeanors whose enforcement disproportionately affects immigrants.

Differential Activism and Agonistic Dialogue

Interviewees expressed four main objectives for their advocacy rhetoric: (1) educating the general public, (2) engaging non-supporters, (3) supporting and organizing migrants as activists, and (4) building cooperative relationships with the authorities. Many discussed multiple objectives. Cristina, though, was unique in her description of various tactics as comprising a comprehensive toolkit to be deployed situationally and strategically. She differentiated internal advocacy (described above) from "external" advocacy, which is directed at immigrants, allies, and the general public.

In her message to immigrants and their loved ones, Cristina's goal is to empower them to take action on their behalf, to feel a sense of agency, and to remind them of their rights. Her efforts here are very much in line with Lisa's. For allies and members of the general public who may be less invested, her advocacy stresses why they should care and how they can help. External advocacy, for Cristina, involves framing a narrative that is understandable to the public.

You do that through community forums, you do that through know-your-rights sessions, you do that through meetings, and coalitions, you do that through panels, whether in a higher education setting, or just a panel because a nonprofit puts a symposium together. . . . Every time you do a narrative it has three basic things. It has "what's the problem." It has "what's the *ask*." So what is the solution to the problem; what are you asking to do about the problem. And to *who* are you asking. So you have your ask, your target, and your solution. And you have to have all those three every time you tell a story.

For Cristina, internal and external advocacy are equally important. Her organization, though, is careful to keep them very separate:

The direct action team . . . they are our go-getters. They are the ones that are gonna be, like, annoying, and the ones that people are not gonna agree with, because they're just trying to *push* us further, or, like, push us to where we need to go, right? But the advocacy and policy team can't be part of that team, because if you're being arrested in someone's office and then ask for a meeting, they're gonna ignore you.

At a coalition meeting I attended, Cristina made it a point to invite the city government official to leave after his presentation. When I asked her about it later, she explained, "It's just really awkward to talk strategy with the people that we're gonna target on something. I'm sorry, but that defeats the purpose. It puts them in an uncomfortable space."

These dynamics illustrate the presence of agonistic dialogue in the relationships between activist organizations and city authorities. I witnessed agonistic dialogue among coalition partners as well. In one meeting, for example, a nun (whose organization opposed abortion) pointedly asked a speaker whether her organization provided family planning services. When the speaker affirmed that it did, the nun nodded courteously. Their openness and respect for one another enabled them to transcend their differences as partners in the coalition.

Before the formation of Cristina's organization, activists in the community struggled to build a well-functioning coalition in support of migrants. Her organization, and the expertise she brought to it, were vital to healthy local collaboration. Central to this collaboration were agonistic dialogue and differential activism.

Discussion

Advocates for migrants in South Texas expressed four general types of goals for their outreach work. These included educating and persuading the general public (mobilizing consensus through diagnostic framing), engaging non-supporters who might be personally transformed, organizing migrants as activists through motivational framing, and promoting institutional change through cooperative relationships with the authorities. In their tailoring of messages, they frequently experienced frustrations reflecting tensions among priorities, and these tensions were rooted in differences in their social identities, the organizations they represented, and how they imagined (and reached) their audiences. All these factors shaped each other, affirming Blee and McDowell's (2012) observation of the mutually constitutive relationship between social movements and their audiences.

Advocates who focused on the general public, for example, tended to be White representatives of large organizations with ties to power (such as those receiving refugee-resettlement funding). Those advocating dialogue were mostly individuals, including Middle Easterners like Joseph and Gina who want people to get to know them to see that Muslims are not terrorists. Those striving to mobilize migrants as activists were represented primarily by Latinx advocates such as Lisa. Cristina's differential activism, finally, was characteristic of Chicana rhetoric as articulated by Sandoval (1991, 2000). In terms of audiences, while activists like Lisa oriented their rhetoric toward Latinx migrants like themselves, most others seemed to envision their audiences as White, Christian Americans. This was especially true of White advocates such as Owen. These assumptions influenced things such as meeting locations, communication outlets, and languages used, which in turn affected differential accessibility by various constituencies.

Advocates' rhetorical choices involved various tensions and trade-offs. Lisa's efforts to animate her base drew on confrontational language that was effective at inspiring hope, anger, solidarity, and agency among migrants and their family members, but it complicated her White bosses' desire to maintain cordial relationships with the authorities, donors, and White allies. Owen's appeals, in contrast, were more palatable to the general public but often reinforced an "American dream" ideology, which made acceptance of migrants contingent on their assimilation and gratitude. Joseph articulated the value of directly addressing one's adversaries, but without resolving how to engage them in the first place. And Cristina explained the need to build trusting relationships with the police and other authorities although the private nature of this process can come at the expense of transparency and accountability to the public.

These differences in strategy reflect the trade-offs described by Della Porta and Diani (2006), Foust and colleagues (2017), and Hestres (2015) between mobilizing core supporters and enlisting allies, as well as Della Porta and Diani's observation that those with less power tend to use more confrontational forms of activism. This is important for two reasons.

First, advocates' rhetorical choices shape broader public discourse about migrants and migration in terms of whose voices and concerns are prioritized. When advocacy is framed by White, U.S.-born Americans, for example, and targeted toward other White Americans, the perspectives and interests of migrants themselves may be overlooked. The mutually constitutive nature of movements and their audiences, moreover, means that such rhetorical choices shape the very identities of the movements.

Second, when organizations differ in their approaches to advocacy, this can create tension in coalition work, especially in loosely organized coalitions where the audiences and strategies may not be clearly communicated. However, Christina's situational approach to adopting different tactics—reflective of differential activism (Sandoval, 1991, 2000)—provided a successful framework for eventual success in building an interorganizational coalition, which also made effective use of agonistic dialogue to transcend differences. The formal structure of this coalition organization, moreover, enabled it to be clear and intentional about how it engaged different audiences.

This study affirms that actors within the migrant advocacy movement engage their audiences differentially, with tactical attention to cultural values, strategic interests, and power dynamics. Four categories of aims are informed by rhetors' social identities, their organizations' goals, and how they imagine their audiences. Cognizance of these dynamics, and of the notions of differential activism and agonistic dialogue, can help social movement actors to enhance their collaboration as well as their overall effectiveness. Migrant advocates, in particular, are encouraged to (1) reflect on how their rhetorical strategies are guided by their own identities and assumptions about their audiences, (2) adopt flexible repertoires of responses, and (3) understand their communication with coalition partners and audiences in terms of agonistic dialogue.

One limitation of this study was a heavy reliance on interviewees' characterizations of their rhetorical strategies. Another was a breadth of focus, which precluded a certain level of depth. Future research might profitably apply discourse analysis to more closely examine advocates' actual messages and explore how they and their audiences construct each other and what it means for them to enlist public support. Comparisons herein between formal coalition organizations and looser collections of advocates, too, are tentative; future investigation of this phenomenon would be fruitful. These efforts will make important contributions not only to migrant advocacy but also to interdisciplinary theory and the efficacy of democratic engagement more broadly.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide for Allies and Advocates

- Tell me about what you do to help immigrants, refugees, and asylees, especially in terms of advocacy/public relations?

- How do you frame your communication/arguments in support of refugees? What tactics/strategies do you use?

- Does this vary depending on the refugees' origins or their status (e.g. refugee vs. asylee)?

- Who do you help, and how is that determined?

- What is the history of your organization's work with refugees/asylees?

- What is important for you about this work?

- What are some of the barriers or frustrations? How do you work around them?

- What are some of the resources or facilitating factors that enable your work?

- Who are your allies? With whom do you work, and how, to better assist migrants? What about in terms of public relations/advocacy?

- What works well about these collaborations?

- What are some of the challenges of these collaborations?

- What else should I know about your work with immigrants, refugees, or asylees?

- What else would *you* like to know about advocacy for immigrants, refugees, and asylees?