Organizing: People, Power and Change

PAL 177 (HDS 2914)

Organizing Notes
Charts
Reflection Questions

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What Is Organizing
(September, 2006)

Organizers identify, recruit and develop leadership; build community around leadership; and build power out of community. Organizers bring people together, challenging them to act on behalf of their shared values and interests. They develop the relationships, motivate the participation, strategize the pathways, and take the action that enable people to gain new appreciation of their values, the resources to which they have access, their interests, and a new capacity to use their resources on behalf of their interests. Organizers work through "dialogues" in relationships, motivation, strategy and action carried out as campaigns.

Organizers interweave relationships, motivation, strategy and action so that each contributes to the other.

- One result is new networks of relationship wide and deep enough to provide a foundation for a new community in action.
- Another result is a new story about who this community is, where it has been, where it is going -- and how it will get there.
- A third result is a strategy envisioning how a community can turn the resources it has into the power it needs to get what it wants.
- An a final result is action as the community mobilizes and deploys its resources on behalf of its interests - as collaboration, claims making, or both.

Organizers develop new relationships out of old ones - sometimes by linking one person to another and sometimes by linking whole networks of
people together. Relationships grow out of exchanges of interests and resources, the commitment to sustain them, and the creation of a shared story.

Organizers engage people in discerning why they should act to change their world – their values – and how they can act to change it – their strategy.

Organizers motivate action by deepening people’s understanding of who they are, what they want, and why they want it: their values. Mobilizing feelings of urgency, hope, anger, self-worth, and solidarity that facilitate action, they challenge feelings of inertia, fear, apathy, self-doubt, and isolation that inhibit action. Organizers engage people in articulating this call to action as a shared story of the challenges they must face, the choices they must make, and the hope that can inspires to courage the make these choices now – a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now.

Organizers engage people in deliberating about they can turn what they have (resources), into what they need (power) to get what they want (their interests): strategy. Power is the influence our resources can have on the interests of others who hold resources that can influence our interests. Organizing often requires using our resources to mobilize power interdependently with others whose interests we share to challenge the power exercised over us by others whose interest conflict with our own.

Organizers challenge people to take the responsibility to act. For an individual, empowerment begins with accepting responsibility. For an organization, empowerment begins with commitment, the responsibility its members take for it. Responsibility begins with choosing to act. Organizers challenge people to commit, to act, and to act effectively.
Organizers work through campaigns. Campaigns are highly energized, intensely focused, concentrated streams of activity with specific goals and deadlines. People are recruited, programs launched, battles fought and organizations built through campaigns. Campaigns polarize by bringing out those ordinarily submerged conflicts contrary to the interests of the constituency. One dilemma is how to depolarize in order to negotiate resolution of these conflicts. Another dilemma is how to balance campaigns with the ongoing work of organizational growth and development.

Organizers build community by developing leadership. They develop leaders by enhancing their skills, values and commitments. They build strong communities through which people gain new understanding of their interests as well as the power to act on them -- communities which are bounded yet inclusive, communal yet diverse, solidaristic yet tolerant. They develop a relationship between a constituency and its leaders based on mutual responsibility and accountability.

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Introduction: Chart #1
Introduction: Chart #2

Leadership in Organizing

Leadership → Values → Goals → Action → Interpretation (Motivation/Strategy) → Relationships → Resources → Constituency

Introduction: Chart #3

Campaigns

Foundation → Kick-Off → Peaks → The Peak → Resolution → Organization Cycle → Campaign Arrow
In his discussion of the difference between the "raft and the shore", Thich Nhat Hanh helps us distinguish among a framework with which to structure learning, how we learn, and what we learn.\(^1\) Although we may no longer need our raft once we have used it to cross a raging river, we do need a good raft to get across.

For learning organizing, we need a raft because opening ourselves to learning any new practice requires dealing with uncertainty, ambiguity and novelty.\(^2\) And when we face uncertainty, we often feel conflicting emotions. On the one hand, we may be fearful - things will go wrong, we will fail, others will see. We then retract, metaphorically at least, to protect ourselves from danger. On the other hand, we may be curious - the unexpected can be exciting, bring new opportunities and new growth. So faced with the challenge of learning to act in new ways, we may retreat into the security what we know, or, at least, what will reduce our anxiety; or we may risk leaning into the uncertain. We may learn best when we can do both: secure ourselves in enough certainty that we have the courage to risk exploration. Learning to balance security and risk is not only key to our own learning, but to the learning of those with whom we work, for whom security may be more elusive and the risks greater.

Our learning framework can serve as a "raft" - a way to focus on critical tools, attend to key questions, observe the interaction of different ele-

\(^1\) Thich Nhat Hanh, (1993), Thundering Silence: Sutra on Knowing the Better Way to Catch a Snake, "The Raft is Not the Shore" (pp. 30-33), (Berkeley, Paralax Press).

ments, and share a common language so we can learn from each other’s experience. No one masters a craft in a classroom (except perhaps the crafts of teaching and studying). That is a life’s work. But you can learn how to learn craft – the craft of organizing – and that is our goal.

Organizing is a practice – a way of doing things, with the “hands”. Learning practice is different from learning "theory" because it can only be learned from the experience of acting. Acting, in turn, requires the courage to take risks – risks of failure, making mistakes, losing face, rejection, etc. No one can learn to ride a bicycle – to keep their balance - without falling. Because organizing is relational – done in interaction with others – the more you can learn to mindfully distinguish among your actions, the actions of others, and how they interact, the easier it will become for you to learn from the data of your own experience. At the same time, the more deeply committed you are to your project, the more you will learn because you will be motivated to risk new kinds of experience from which you can learn.

Organizing is also theory – a way of thinking about things, with the “head”. But we do not learn theory so we can "apply" it. Theory is not how things "really are". Our ability to theorize allows us to simplify reality for specific purposes, such as predicting likely outcomes. Theories serve us as hypotheses, subject, however, to testing. We all have our own theories -- generalized lessons we learn from our experience that give us an idea of what to expect. But using theory "mindfully" requires stepping back from

3 M.S. Kierkegaard, “When the Knower Has to Apply Knowledge” from “Thoughts on Crucial Situations in Human Life”, in Parables of Kierkegaard, T.C. Oden, Editor. (P)


5 Howard Gardner, (1992), The Unschooled Mind, (New York, Basic Books.)
our experience, writing about it, reflecting critically upon it, and drawing les-
sons from it. And learning from experience requires entering into it with what
Gandhi described as a “spirit of experimentation” – with the discipline to
place it in perspective, compare it with that of others, and reflect on it ana-
lytically.⁶

Learning by reflective practice may challenge your theories of how the
social world works.⁷ These assumptions may serve you perfectly well in pri-
vate life, but not so well in public life. Cognitive psychologists explain that we
develop "schemata" with which we organize our understanding of the world.⁸
Schemata enable and constrain. They enable us to make sense of things,
generalize, make choices, draw conclusions, and act. But, as stereotypes,
they can inhibit clarity of perception, cause us to see what we expect to see,
and make it difficult for us to learn. Psychologist Ellen Langer proposes ways
to learn to be more "mindful" of our assumptions so they constrain us less,
allowing us to develop more useful theory: generating new categories, con-
sidering multiple views, etc.⁹

Being mindful of our assumptions can help us hear the elements of
truth in the arguments of those with whom we disagree, even while we en-
gage in vigorous argument. Fearing argument, debate and conflict only in-
hibits learning. Rabbi Hillel describes argument for “the sake of heaven”—

goal of which is to unearth those elements of truth each of us holds, but none of us holds entirely. He proposes grounding argument in clarity as to one’s values, entering into an argument humbly, recognizing one can be wrong, and learning how to articulate one’s opponent’s argument to his or her satisfaction.

Learning organizing is not only a matter of hands and head, but also of the heart. My approach is rooted in the democratic tradition of engaging people to act on common interests, including holding their own leadership accountable. Although some tactics may be similar, civic organizing is not about how to organize an army, a corporation, or a social service agency. The values that motivate democratic practice grow out of our moral – religious, cultural, political - traditions. The understanding of organizing upon which I build emerged from the religious, civic, and popular traditions of the West. As democracy has become a goal of peoples around the world, this tradition has been enlarged, challenged and enriched. Perhaps the most creative 20th Century innovator of democratic organizing was Gandhi. His combination of Eastern and Western traditions created a legacy further developed in the African freedom movement, the American Civil Rights movement, the work of Solidarity in Poland, and elsewhere.

Our framework consists of just three practices:

(1) identifying, recruiting, and developing leaders;
(2) building community around those leaders; and
(3) building power from that community.

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Our framework is built of just three components:

(1) Actors who do the work: you, your leaders, your constituents, your opposition, your supporters, etc.;
(2) Processes we use to do the work: building relationships, telling stories, devising strategy, and taking action;
(3) Structures we use to create the space within which we can do the work: campaigns (time) and organizations (space).

Much organizing is done as campaigns - a way of mobilizing time, resources, and energy to achieve an outcome – time as an “arrow” rather than a “cycle”. Thinking of time as a “cycle” helps us to maintain our routines, our normal procedures, our annual budget, etc. Thinking of time as an “arrow” on the other hand focuses us on making change, on achieving specific outcomes, on focusing our efforts. A campaign is time as an “arrow”. It is an intense stream of activity that begins with a foundational period, builds to a kick-off, builds to periodic peaks, and culminates in a final peak, followed by a resolution. This creates momentum strategically by gathering more and more resources - the way the snow that a snowball gathers allows it to gather more snow. Campaigns can also create momentum motivationally, as early successes can create the credibility to make later successes more achievable. You may want to think of this course as a 14-week campaign.

To facilitate our discussions I use charts because social processes can often be more easily visualized than verbalized. The four basic patterns I use depict relationship, purpose, feedback, and focus. Relational charts depict interactions, balances, and exchanges among parties fundamental to orga-

nizing. Purpose charts depict movement or development toward a goal, a peak, and an outcome. Loops - or more accurately spirals - depict ways action leads to outcomes that influence subsequent action. And focus charts show the effect of concentrating diffuse energy and resources on specific targets.

Engaging in a new experience, critical analysis of that experience, and reflecting on the values within which that experience is rooted can be very challenging. This is why much our work is interaction with others – constituency, classmates, colleagues, and instructors. This is not an "extra" but at the core of the learning process. Learning how to challenge, support, and motivate those with whom we work - and to accept challenge, support, and motivation from them - can be one of the most useful lessons you can take from this experience.

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**Helpful Hint #1**

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I am organizing **WHO**

to do **WHAT**
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QUESTIONS
Questions about Pedagogy

1. What do you want to get out of your project?
2. What expectations do you bring to your project?
3. What do you think will make for a good project?
4. As a participant, what can you do to make your project good?
5. As an observer, how can you see what there is to see and learn from it?
Mapping the Social World:  
Actors, Values, and Interests  
(Week 3)

Introduction

You can begin “mapping” the social world of your organizing project by asking four questions:

1. who are the actors,  
2. what are their interests,  
3. what resources do they need to act on those interests, and  
4. how much power do they have to mobilize and deploy these resources.

This week we focus on actors and interests - next week, on resources and power.

Actors

Actors attend to their circumstances, act purposefully on those circumstances, and try to mobilize the resources they need to achieve their purposes. Actors are not “social forces” but persons - or groups of persons - who remember, imagine, choose, and reflect on their choices. While "social forces" influence the decisions we make, it is we who make - and are responsible for - decisions that shape "social forces". Moreover, to the extent that we are not isolated individuals, floating somewhere above the social world, we make our decisions interdependently with others, whose decisions also affect our own. How can we understand the "drug problem", for example, without taking into consideration the myriad dealers, smugglers, and producers who mobilize to frustrate every attempt to solve it. Organizers are particularly interested in the roles shown in Actors: Chart #1.
• **Constituents** - Constituents are the people at the center of our work, people whom we mobilize, whom we serve and to whom we are accountable. It makes a difference whether we think of the people with whom we work as our constituents, our clients, or our customers. *Constituent* – which derives from the Latin for “stand together”, are people who understand their common interests, contribute resources to acting on those interests, and who govern themselves. *Clients* – which comes from the Latin for “one who leans on another” – are people whose individual interest is in obtaining services that we provide, are rarely called upon to contribute individual resources to a common effort, and who do not govern themselves. *Customers* – a term derived from commerce – are people whom we offer a good
or service, the purchase of which they judge to be in their individual interest in exchange for resources in which we have an interest.

Clients and Customers are served by an organization, whereas constituents are the organization. When constituents "join" an organization they become its "members", just as "citizens" are members of a democracy. Voters in a particular district are constituents of an elected official. Workers who do certain kinds of work or are employed by particular employers are constituents of a union (why wouldn't they be constituents of their employer?). People with environmental concerns are constituents of environmental organizations. And based on Albert Hirschman’s famous distinction among exit, voice, and loyalty, constituents can influence an organizations to which they belong through voice, making themselves heard through internal means, whereas customers and clients can exert influence only through exit, taking their resources elsewhere. Finally, we can distinguish a community – people with something in common – from a constituency, which is capable of standing together on behalf of their commonality. The organizer’s job is to turn a community into a constituency.

**Leadership** - Leaders are drawn from among the constituency, usually having earned selection by it. They facilitate the work of their constituency to achieve its purposes, interact with other actors on behalf of a constituency, and are accountable to their constituency. Leaders who manage bureaucratic organizations, by contrast, often have no relationship with their clients or customers. Leaders include club officers, union stewards, members of a parish council, etc. The full time or part time people who do the day-to-day work of the organization may also serve as leaders, whether volunteer or

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paid, even if not drawn from the constituency. They follow through on the results of meetings, organize events, administer funds, etc. They may or may not occupy leadership roles and may or may not be drawn from the constituency. Examples include full time local union presidents, chairs of mission committees, and the people who pass out leaflets on behalf of a candidate. Most organizations have a formal governing “body” that decides policy, makes major staff choices, and may or may not be involved in day-to-day activities. Constituency organizations choose governing bodies that overlap with their leadership. In bureaucratic organizations, the governing body may be self-selected, selected by outside groups, or by financial supporters - but rarely include leaders drawn from among their clients. Governing bodies include union executive boards, organizing committees, boards of trustees, etc.

- **Supporters** - These are people and groups whose interests are such that they encourage the organization's work financially, politically, voluntarily, etc. Although they may not be part of the constituency or leadership, they may sit on governing boards. Church organizations and foundations, for example, provided a great deal of support for the civil rights movement.

- **Opposition** - These are individuals or organizations whose interests conflict with those of the constituency. The opposition may not be obvious, sometimes emerging clearly only in the course of a campaign. Employers’ interests usually conflict with employees' interests, a tobacco company's interests conflict with those of an anti-smoking group, a street gang's interests conflict with those of a church youth group, interests of a Republican Congressional candidate conflict with those of the Democratic candidate in the same district, etc.
• **Competitors/Collaborators** - These are individuals or organizations with whom we may share some interests, but not others. They may target the same constituency we have, the same sources of support, or face the same opposition. Two unions trying to organize the same work force may compete or collaborate. Two community groups trying to serve the same constituency may compete or collaborate in their fundraising.

• **Organizers** – Where do the organizers fit in all of this? Organizers play leadership roles in the organizations they work with. They may be elected by constituents or appointed by a governing board. Their role is unique in that their primary focus is moving the organizational agenda through the development of other leaders.

*Actors: Chart #2*
**Needs, Values, and Interests**

We have a picture of who the actors are, but what drives the action - why do we do what we do? Some psychologists use a needs metaphor to describe dynamics at work within us that are not fully understood. Clayton Alderfer characterizes our needs as interactive and focused on existence, relationships and growth.\(^\text{13}\) Existence needs are about physical safety. Relational needs are about social safety (recognition, belonging, etc.). Growth needs are about learning and development. Other psychologists like Jordan Peterson argue that our capacity of consciousness operates so that encounters with anomaly, something unexpected, either spark our curiosity and prompt exploratory behavior or spark our fear and prompt fight or flight behavior. He emphasizes the particularly important role of communal narratives in helping us manage our emotions so as to keep our fear response in check.\(^\text{14}\)

Needs alone cannot explain why we do what we do. Based on who we are, where we are, and when we are, we learn values that translate needs into interests, as Actors: Chart #2 shows. Human beings are situated in specific life circumstances - or social worlds - defined by those with whom they have relationships (family, friends, colleagues, community, etc.), the understanding of the world they have learned (identity, values, beliefs), and the resources to which they have access. Jerome Bruner argues that the communities in which we grow-up teach us to value some needs over others, as well as some ways of meeting these needs over others.\(^\text{15}\) Our identity as members of these communities consists of how we organize the experiences, values and beliefs that define who we are. And we organize our identities, as

Bruner notes, as stories following a similar pattern: a steady state is breached, a crisis ensures, the crisis is redressed, and new possibilities emerge. We grow up, we encounter crises large and small, and we have to figure out what to do. What makes them crises is precisely that we don’t know what to do. So we figure it out. And the way we figure it out, once we are old enough, is to consult a stock of stories, our own and those of others. Of course, at the end of the day we still have to choose which stories will guide our behavior. In choosing we learn lessons, not so much about specific tactics, but about what counts in a time of crisis: friends, courage, faith, family, wiliness, humility, solidarity. In other words, the choice points in our lives, episodes in our “self-story” or identity, reveal our values, allow us to draw energy from them, and enable us to teach others from them.

But it isn’t all about needs and values either. We find ourselves with access to different kinds of resources – resources we have been born with, acquired, and been given. Can you think of examples in which people with similar needs and values enjoy access to very different kinds – or amounts - of resources? This is where “interests” enter the picture. One way to think about interest is that as purposeful creatures, based on our cultural experience, we assign values to our needs and based on our access to resources, we turn our values into "interests" – or goals. Having learned to value economic security, for example, and having had access to the resources to devote years to schooling, we have an interest in completing a graduate degree to get a good job. If our values define our goals or purposes in life, our interests articulate the outcomes associated with the strategic pursuit of those goals. But even our interests, which in Latin means “to exist among”, are defined in relation to others. How might those with far fewer resources – but similar needs and values – conceive their interests?

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Most of us have interests in many domains, although some may be more immediate than others: family, community, work, religious beliefs, cultural or recreational activities, and politics. Again, interests are not the same as values, but are shaped by them. Because of our values, we may have an interest in living environmentally responsible lives, doing meaningful work, or honoring religious or cultural traditions. Interests defined as the accumulation of wealth and power are certainly important, but only play a part in what is a far richer and more complex human drama. Learning to recognize our own interests and the interests of others with whom we interact -- and the values and resources that shape them -- is critical to understanding the dynamics that drive our social world.

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QUESTIONS
Actors, Values and Interests

1. What are your main interests in coming to Harvard, enrolling in this class and doing your project?
2. Draw a map of your project that identifies the main actors involved. Pay particular attention to your constituency.
3. What are the interests of your constituency? How do you know?
4. Where do your interests and the interests of your constituency overlap?
Actors, Resources, and Power
(Week 4)

Last week we identified actors who play a part in the world we are trying to "map" and their interests. This week we focus on the power relationships derived from differences in the resources actors can mobilize on behalf of their interests.

Resources

We mobilize resources on behalf of our interests. A resource is anything we can use to achieve something else. As shown in Power: Chart #1, natural resources are those we more or less came into the world with: our bodies, our minds, our spirit, our time, and our talents. Acquired resources are distributed far less widely – land, skills, information, money, equipment, status. The fact that some resources are scarcer than others and less equally distributed influences whose interests get served. Different kinds of resources also behave in different ways. Albert Hirschman observed that some resources grow as they are used while others diminish with use. Resources that grow with use – like relationships, commitment, understanding – he called “moral” resources, while those that diminish with use -- money, materials -- he called "economic" resources. What kinds of resources did the colonists use in their boycotts and their tea parties?

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What does understanding actors, interests and resources have to do with organizing? We live in a world of competition and collaboration with others. As shown in Power: Chart #2 some interests are shared, some are different, and some are in conflict. Many resources are limited and access to them is often extremely unequal. The scarcer the resources we need to mobilize on behalf of our interests - and the more skewed their distribution - the more likely we are to find ourselves in conflict with others. Conflicts of interest are sometimes obvious. We may want to keep our job to support our family and send our children to school, but our employer may want to lay us off to move the plant to another place where production costs less. Sometimes conflicts are not so obvious. Allocating the funds for better public schools may require raising the taxes of those paying to send their children to private schools. Keeping kids off drugs may threaten the interests of dealers who rely on getting them onto drugs. Recruiting kids for nonviolent conflict resolution may threaten gangs who are recruiting them for something else. Who wins when there is a conflict of interest? Why?
Common interests are not always obvious either. Even when they are obvious, as Jack Walker points out, we don’t always act on them. For example, in the fight over the health care system a few years ago, most Americans told pollsters they had a "common interest" in health care reform. But the insurance industry had an interest in stopping health care reform. They mobilized far more effectively than “the public”. This is evidence of the well-known "collective action problem". All things being equal, those with narrow interests and lots of resources find it easier to mobilize than those with broad interests and fewer resources.

How do you think the interests of your constituency can be addressed? Why haven’t they been? Is it a collaboration problem - one we could solve if enough people realized they had a common interest in pooling their resources in trying to solve it? Or is it a conflict of interest problem - one we

can solve only if the persons whose interests aren’t heard find the means to assert those interests more effectively?

Considering your constituency, does its members have a “moral” problem – a character weaknesses to be reformed by moral exhortation? Do they have an educational problem – one that could be solved with better teaching? Or do they have a “relational” problem – one that could be solved if they just developed more “social capital”? Consider the institutional world within which these individuals live. Is the problem “technological” – one we could solve with the expertise to manage institutional resources more efficiently or design better procedures? Is it “informational” – a problem we can solve by using research and advocacy skills to communicate with those who have the resources to solve the problem? However, if it is a problem of resources, why should those whom the current distribution favors redistribute them?

**Power**

So what does "power" have to do with all this? Power is about the interaction among actors in terms of interests and resources. Dr. King defined power as the “ability to achieve purpose”. “Whether it is good or bad”, he said, “depends on the purpose”. In Spanish the word for power is “poder” - to be able to, to have the capacity to. So if power is simply a way to describe capacity, why, as Alinsky asks, is it the “p-word” - something we don’t like to admit we want, to acknowledge others have, to concede matters to us or even to talk about?

Richard Emerson argues that power is not a thing, an attribute, a quality, a characteristic or a trait -- it is a relationship.\(^{19}\) Sometimes we have ac-

cess to all the resources we need to address our interests, but more often than not we may need access to another’s resources, just as they may need access to ours. This can create an opportunity for exchange: I trade resources that I have that the other person needs to address their interests, for resources they have that I need to address my own. For example, my friend and I want to go to the movies and he has a car, but no money for gas, while I have money for gas, but no car. By entering into exchange we enhance the “power” we are able to exercise “with” each other. We have created greater capacity to address our shared interests.

Bernard Loomer and Jean Baker Miller describe this as “power to” or interdependency. In this setting, mobilizing power is not "zero-sum". New immigrants, for example, may pool their savings in a credit union to make low interest loans available to its members -- increasing their financial power. "Power with" is the basis of the benefits of social cooperation and our capacity to accomplish together what we cannot accomplish alone.

**Power: Chart #3**

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But what if four of us want to go to the movies and my friend’s car only has room for 2 passengers. One solution would be that we draw straws to see who gets to go and who doesn’t, and those who get to go, each contribute half of the gas. But what if my friend decides that he has an interest not only in going to the movies, but also in making some money from the deal? It turns out that he has control over one resource, his car, that we all need, but no one of us controls the resources he needs, gas money. This gives imbalance of need – or dependency – gives him the leverage to exercise power “over” us by offering the two spots in the car to the highest bidders, regardless of how much the gas costs. But we still have an option, depending on how badly he wants to go to the movies. All four of us can get together and agree that we will only pay the cost of the gas and not a penny more. If we want to go badly enough, then we will have restored balance to the situation, turning it back into one of power “with”.

In other words, Actor A can exercise power over Actor B when Actor A holds resources in which Actor B is interested more than Actor B holds resources in which Actor A is interested. Depending on the degree of the imbalance, Actor A can extract so many resources from Actor B that s/he will have to sacrifice other interests to address this one – accepting a job without health insurance, for example, in order to have any job at all. The scarcer the resources I hold and the more vital they are to your interests, the greater my power to access other resources you may hold. Similarly, the more abundant the resources I and other actors hold – and the less vital they are to your interests - the less power I have to gain access to your resources. So as configurations of interests and resources change, so do power relationships.

We often describe power used in this way as exercising “power over” another. I create a dependency on me that I can then use to dominate the
other. For example, an employer who controls most of the opportunities for income (resources) in a “company” town can exercise a great deal of power over individual workers. No one of whose individual resources (labor) is overly valuable to the employer. He can thus get access to their resources (labor) in exchange for far less of his resources (low wages). Thus, although the worker may “voluntarily” enter into the exchange, the benefits of the exchange will accrue mostly to the employer because he has the power advantage. But, of course, this is one reason workers form unions - to correct this kind of power imbalance.

In terms of your constituency, you can uncover the power relations by asking four questions to “help track down the power”:

1. What are the interests of your constituency?
2. Who holds the resources needed to address these interests?
3. What are the interests of the actors who hold these resources?
4. What resources does your constituency hold which the other actors require to address their interests?

Do these questions draw your attention to anything you hadn’t noticed before?

**Two Kinds of Power: Collaboration and Claims Making**

Both kinds of power – power with and power over – come into play in organizing. In organizing based on “collaborative” strategies, we try finding ways to generate more power to achieve common interests by creating more interdependency among the actors who share those interests. Examples of such collaborative strategies include cooperative childcare, credit unions, etc. This kind of power can be used to solve problems that result from a failure to
mobilize around common interests. On the other hand, organizing based on “claims making” strategies, necessary where real conflicts of interest exist, requires finding ways to generate the power to alter relations of dependency and domination. If workers combine their resources in a union they may be able to balance their individual dependency on their employer with his dependency on their labor as a whole. This way a dependent “power over” relationship can be turned into an interdependent “power to” relationship. How did the colonists do this? What were the resources they mobilized? What interests did they challenge?

A key to successful organizing is understanding that generating the power to successfully challenge relations of dependency and domination (power over) may require generating lots of interdependency (power to) first. Many unions, for example, began with death benefit societies, sickness funds, credit unions -- ways to create “power to” based on interdependency among members of the constituency. How had the colonists done this before they challenged the English? It is also important to realize that many efforts that begin generating “power to” wind up challenging “power over” as the conflicts of interest that were not apparent begin to surface. The strongest opposition to a recent effort to create a community credit union in New York came from some actors no one had considered -- the loan sharks and their political allies.

**Three Faces of Power**

Why are conflicts of interest not always apparent? John Gaventa, citing Steven Lukes, explains that power operates on multiple levels, as illustrated in Power: Chart #3. The first “face” of power is the visible face and can be

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detected by observing who wins among decision makers faced with choices as to how to allocate resources. Attend a board meeting, city council meeting, legislative session, or corporate board meeting and you will see one side win and another side lose - giving you a pretty clear indication of who exercises power and who doesn’t.

But there’s more to it than that. Who decides what gets on the agenda to be decided? And who decides who sits at the table making decisions? Lukes calls deciding what gets on the agenda and who sits at the table the second “face” of power. It can be observed when there are groups clamoring to get issues on the agenda, but can’t get past the “gatekeeper” -- the situation that African Americans faced during many years of apparent “racial harmony” before the civil rights movement. There was no lack of groups trying to bring racial issues before Congress, but these issues rarely got to the point of congressional debate because those controlling the agenda kept them off the floor.

The third “face” of power is harder to detect. Sometimes the power relations that shape our world are so deeply embedded that we just “take them for granted”. Before the women’s movement, for example, many people claimed that job discrimination against women was "not an issue". Women’s interests were not being voted down in Congress (there were almost no women in Congress) and women’s groups were not picketing outside, unable to place their issue on the agenda. Yet women occupied subordinate positions in most spheres of public life. Was that because they were “content” with this situation? Perhaps. But sometimes, although people would like things to be different, they simply can’t imagine that they could be -- enough, at least, to take the risks to make them so. To detect the power relations at work in a situation like this, Lukes says, you have to look much deeper - beyond the question of who decides or who gets on the agenda, and
focus on identifying **who benefits** and **who loses** in the allocation of valued resources. If you then ask why the losers generally lose and the winners generally win, you may discover the power disparity at work. (This can be tricky because the winners always claim they "deserve" to win while the losers "deserve" to lose, and sometimes they convince the losers).

From this perspective, take another look at your project and ask, “What are the sources of the problems your constituency faces?” Why don't your constituents have the resources they need to act on their interests? Did someone decide not to allocate the resources, as in voting down a school-funding proposal? Were the concerns of those with similar interests kept off the agenda? Or do people just assume that this is how things are, so it is wise to make the best of themes legitimated? Ask Luke's’ questions to see if you detect conflicts of interest at work that are not readily observable. A couple of years ago, one Sociology 96 student asked why so many Harvard students do public service, but abandon it in their professional lives. The most common explanation was that her generation just “doesn’t care”. She noticed that despite a very elaborate recruiting festival each fall for investment banks and consulting firms, there was virtually no recruiting for careers in public service. She thought this was an example of the third face of power and organized a "careers and social responsibility" conference in response. What do you think?
**Power and Right**

So what about “power” and “right”? What is the relationship between the two? This is the question Thucydides wants us to consider with his account of the Melian debate. Is being “right” enough? Is insisting on one’s “rightness” always responsible? What’s the relationship between being “powerful” and being “right”? What do you think?

**Conclusion**

Organized power begins with a commitment by the first person who wants to make an organization happen. Without this commitment, there are no resources with which to begin generating power. Commitment is observable as action - and we only act when we take the responsibility to do so.
The work of organizers and others who want to bring about effective civic action, then, begins with their acceptance of responsibility and willingness to challenge others to do the same. This discussion should also clarify why developing common interests is so important - it is the basis of the relationships, shared understandings, and interdependent actions that endow an organized effort with the power it needs to act effectively. Understanding why people need to organize is about understanding their problems. Understanding why people choose to organize, however, is about finding solutions -- and finding solutions requires creating the power to make them succeed.

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QUESTIONS
Actors, Resources and Power

1. Use these four questions to help you track down the power:
   a. What are the INTERESTS of your constituency?
   b. Who has the RESOURCES needed to address these INTERESTS?
   c. What are the INTERESTS of those who have the RESOURCES?
   d. What RESOURCES does the constituency have which could affect these INTERESTS?

2. What is the relationship between “might and right” or “power and principle” in your project?

3. What have you observed about the three faces of power in your project? Is there anything that you or others can do to reveal them?
Leadership
(Week 5)

Introduction

We have been discussing the social setting within which people organize: who are the actors and what are their interests, their resources, and their power to act on their interests. Sometimes people gain the “power to” mobilize resources they need by developing greater interdependence around common interests and shared resources (collaboration). In other cases, people challenge the “power over” them of others who deny them needed resources (claims making). In either case, the first step toward problem solving is to engage people with one another to discern their common interests and develop the capacity to act on them. This is what leaders do. And that's why organizers focus on identifying, recruiting, and developing leaders.

What Leaders Do

Who is a leader? Many of us call to mind historic figures like Dr. Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Jane Addams, Robert Kennedy or President Reagan. In reality, we find leaders everywhere - linking together networks through which we work to achieve common purposes. In every community, church, classroom, and organization hundreds of people are doing the work of leadership without which these efforts would not survive.

So what do leaders do that makes them leaders? Leaders accept the responsibility for enabling others to achieve their purposes in an uncertain world. Leaders choose to accept this responsibility. The responsibility they accept is for engaging with others, their constituency. The challenge they accept is one of enabling their constituency to define and achieve desired
goals. When we know exactly what to do, when there are no surprises, no new challenges to face, and we’re following a routine, what need do we have of leadership? It’s when we enter the domain where the rules don’t quite work, where we don’t know which rules apply, where we’re trying to do something that hasn’t been done before – or that we haven’t done before - that’s when leadership enters the picture.

So what is it exactly that leaders do to earn leadership? How do they “enable” others to engage with uncertainty successfully? What is the work they do? And why is it so important?

Most of us have had lots of experience in “disorganizations”, as shown in Leadership: Chart #1. What are they like?

- They are **divided**. Factions and divisions fragment the organization and sap it of its resources.

- They are **confused**. Each person has a different story about what’s going on. There is a lot of gossip, but not very much good information.

- They are **passive**. Most “members” do very little so one or two people do most of the work.

- They are **reactive**. They are always trying to respond to some unanticipated new development.

- They are **inactive**. No one comes to meetings. No one shows up for activities.
• And they **drift**. There is little purposefulness to meetings, actions, or decisions as things “drift” from one meeting to the next.

Being part of a disorganization can be pretty discouraging, demotivating, and disengaging.

On the other hand, some of us may have had experience with organizations that really work.

• They are **united**. They have learned to manage their differences well enough that they can unite to accomplish the purposes for which they were formed. Differences are openly debated, discussed, and resolved.

• They share **understanding**. There is a widely shared understanding of what’s going on, what the challenges are, what the program is and why what is being done had to be done.

• People **participate**. Lots of people in the organization are active - not just going to meetings, but also getting the work of the organization done.

• They take **initiative**. Rather than reacting to whatever happens in their environment, they are proactive in their environment.

• They **act**. People do the work they must to make things happen.

• They share a sense of **purpose**. There is purposefulness about meetings, actions, and decisions and a sense of forward momentum as work gets done.
So what makes the difference? Why are some groups disorganizations and other groups organizations? It is the quality of the work that leaders get done within them that makes groups work.

• Leaders turn division into solidity by building, maintaining, and developing **relationships** among those who form the organization.

• Leaders turn confusion into understanding by facilitating **interpretation** of what is going on in the work of the organization.

• Leaders turn passivity into participation by **motivating** - inspiring people to commit to the action required to accomplish the group's goals.

• Leaders turn reaction into initiative by **strategizing** – engaging others in thinking through how the organization can use its resources to achieve its goals.

• Leaders challenge inaction by **mobilizing** people to specific actions that turn their resources into the means by which they can achieve their goals.

• Leaders transform drift into purpose by accepting **responsibility** for doing the leadership work necessary for the group to succeed. Leaders challenge others to accept their responsibility as well.

In each of the upcoming sessions, we will look at how leadership is exercised as relationship building, motivation, strategy, and action.
Leadership: Charts #1, 2, 3

Leadership as Relationship

Although we will discuss relationships in more depth next week, what is particular about the relationship among leaders and their constituents? James McGregor Burns argues leadership can be understood as a relationship that emerges from repeated “exchanges” or “transactions” between leaders and followers or constituents. Leaders provide resources that constituents need to address their interests and constituents provide resources that leaders need to address their interests in turn. (Leadership: Chart #5) These relationships are not limited to a single leader and a single “follower”, but include relationships between a leader and a team, a group, a community or a constituency whom the leader enables to work effectively together.

What do we exchange in this kind of relationship? Constituents may get a sense of empowerment, access to resources, help solving a problem, etc. Leaders may get the same things - and they get something that is worth accepting the responsibilities that come with leadership. Dr. King de-

scribes this as the “drum major instinct” - a desire to be first, to be recognized, and even to be praised. As much as we may not want to admit it, this might sound familiar. Rather than condemn it - it is, after all, part of us - Dr. King argues it can be a good thing, depending on what we do to earn the recognition we seek. He quotes Jesus as saying to James and John, “if you want to be my disciples you not only “can” be first, you must be first - first in love and first in service”.\footnote{Martin Luther King, Jr., \textit{(1986 (1991))}, The Drum-Major Instinct (4 February 1968}.\footnote{A Testament of Hope: The essential writings and speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr., (New York, HarperCollins) 259-267.}

Based on this view of leadership, then, who makes leaders? Can they be self-appointed? Can I decide one day that I am a leader? Or do I earn leadership by entering into relationship with those who can make me a leader - my constituents? This makes it easy to recognize leaders. There is one simple test. Do they have followers? Fine speeches, a wonderful appearance, lovely awards and excellent work aside - no constituency, no leaders.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Leadership: Chart #4}
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{leadership_chart.png}
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Leadership and Structure

Many of us may not want to think of ourselves as followers or as leaders for that matter. Often we are told, especially in elite institutions, that we are all leaders...or we should be. Leadership is highly praised, but no one says anything about being a good constituent, collaborator...or citizen. But organizations that depend on collective action can be effective only if people accept both leadership and followership roles. Leading and following are not expressions of who we “are” but of what we “do” - in a specific meeting, committee, project, organization, or institution. We may play a leadership role with respect to one project and a followership role with respect to another.

What are the differences in those roles? Most importantly, leaders accept responsibility for the “whole” – the whole team, the whole project, the whole job - while a team member, constituent, or collaborator accept responsibility for a “part” of the whole. Leaders accept responsibility for seeing to the work that a group must do to work together successfully. Doing the work that enables group efforts to succeed is how leaders earn their leadership.

On the other hand, some of us question the whole concept of leadership. Shouldn’t everyone be considered a leader? Is leadership really necessary? Isn’t it repressively hierarchical? Why do we need this kind of structure at all? Can’t we just “come together”?

In her *Tyranny of Structurelessness*, feminist sociologist Jo Freeman argues that organization (or collaboration of any kind) simply doesn't work if we don’t have ways to assign clear responsibilities and hold ourselves ac-
countable for fulfilling them. The idea of a structureless group, she writes, “becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others”. And, “for everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in a given group and to participate in its activities the structure must be explicit, not implicit”.25

Although leadership can be exercised by individuals working in a team - a leadership team can bring complementary strengths to bear on solving a problem - the responsibility of seeing to the team itself still has to rest somewhere. And effective leadership doesn’t imply domination. Effective leaders facilitate interdependence and collaboration to create more “power to”, based on the interests of all parties. Domination is the exercise of “power over”, a relationship that meets interests of the “power wielder” at the expense of everyone else. Leadership can turn into domination if we fail to hold it accountable.

**Leadership and Authority**

We are also wise to distinguish “authority” from “leadership”. Authority is a “legitimacy” of command usually attached to specific social positions, offices, or roles - legitimacy supported by cultural beliefs as well as coercive resources. An organization is a way to formalize authority relations among the participants – people’s rights and their obligations. Bureaucracies structure authority as a set of rules according to which managers direct subordinates. Markets structure authority as a set of rules according to which entrepreneurs can design incentives for persons to make enforceable choices


25 Ibid.
based on their individual economic resources. Civic associations – organizations we are focusing on in this course – usually structure authority democratically in that leaders are accountable to the constituents whom they serve. Exercising leadership in a civic context can require more skill than the other settings because it depends more on **persuasion** than on command.

Most of us have been in situations in which those with authority have not earned their leadership, but try to compel cooperation based solely on their legitimacy or "power over". In these circumstances, to what extent do we think our interests are acknowledged and addressed? How does this affect our motivation and performance?

Cultures have institutionalized beliefs about who is “authorized” to lead and who isn’t that can bar certain “kinds” of people from the opportunity to earn leadership. Leaders who develop under these conditions constitute a challenge to conventional ideas of authority. Authority can also be a resource a person can draw upon to earn their leadership. And sometimes leaders find authority has been conferred upon them as a result of their having earned their leadership. But leadership and authority is not the same thing.

Finally, we can distinguish leaders from “activists”. Hard working activists show up every day to staff the phone bank, pass out leaflets, and put up posters, and make critical contributions to the work of any volunteer organization. This is not the same, however, as engaging others in doing the work of the organization. Leadership is exercised through relational work.

**Leadership Development**

So if leaders are so important to organizations, how can organizations make sure they have the leaders needed to accomplish its mission? Organ-
ized people are empowered to make lots of things happen - especially new organizations learning to do new things - not by the efficiency of their systems, but by the depth of their leadership capacity. This is particularly true of civic associations that bring people together, facilitate their understanding of one another, and enable them to act together on common interests.

Take a look at the "leadership quotient" of your organization. How many leaders do you see doing leadership work? Is there one "leader" with everyone else linked to that leader like spokes to the hub of a wheel? Or are there lots of "leaders" linked with each other and with other members, multiple centers of coordination, inspiration and action. Are some people "followers" in relation to some "leaders" but "leaders" in relation to other "followers"? Or are some people always "leaders" and others always "followers"? Is it "leadership rich" or is it "leadership poor"?

**Leadership: Chart #5**

![Leadership Chart](image)
Giving Up Control to Build Power

So why aren’t “leadership rich” organizations an everyday thing? Why is it that so often we wind up the dot in the middle of all the arrows? What does it take to develop a “leadership rich” organization? It’s not a new problem. As recounted in Exodus, Moses required the intervention of his father-in-law Jethro, who had his own interest in the matter to begin getting the picture. He was trying to do it all himself, but why? Because he was hungry for the power? Because he needed to keep himself busy? A more likely explanation is that, like many of us, he wanted it done right, and he thought that meant that he had to do it himself. But as long as he was trying to do it all himself, it couldn’t be done well, much would not get done at all. The belief that holding onto all the control would ensure all was done well was an illusion. So Jethro offered him a way out. Find the courage to let go of some of the control and risk letting others share in the responsibility for leading. But not just anyone – he urged him to find people with leadership potential, people who were “capable, God-fearing, and honest”.

Far more fundamental than how we structure our organization, what kind of training programs we have, and what kind of awards banquets we hold is coming to terms with this fundamental question: are we willing, and able, to let go of enough control to let others lead? Can we let go of enough control to allow our organization to build the power that can only be achieved by letting it grow leadership rich? And if we are ready, how do we make it work?

26 The Bible, Exodus 18.
Leadership development work occurs as a cycle, as shown in Chart #6: identifying potential leaders (opportunities for them to emerge), recruiting them into leadership positions (opportunities for leadership to be earned), and creating opportunities for them to develop their capacity (opportunities for leaders to grow) on an ongoing basis. It requires learning how to delegate - and mean it; creating a supportive organizational structure; and providing coaching.

**Identifying leaders** requires looking for them. Who are people with followers? Who brings others to the meetings? Who encourages others to participate? Who attracts others to work with them? Who do other people tell
you to “look for?” Alinsky writes about community networks knit together by “native” leaders - people who take the responsibility for helping a community do its work out of their homes, small businesses, neighborhood hangouts, etc. They can be found coaching athletic teams, organizing little leagues, serving in their churches, and surfacing in other informal “schools” of leadership. Where would you look for these kinds of leaders around here?

Although leading is a matter of “doing” and not “being” – and people do leadership work in different ways - there are some clues you may want to attend to, especially when looking for people that will make good organizers. It is hard for a person who has not learned to be a good listener to become a good organizer. You have to understand the interests of your constituency if you are to help them act on those interests. Listening means learning to attend to feelings - empathy - as well as to ideas because the way we feel about things affects our actions more than what we think about them. Curiosity helps us see the novel as interesting rather than threatening, enabling us to learn how to face new challenges that are always a part of organizational life. A good imagination helps because strategizing is a matter of imagining different futures and possible ways to get to them. A sense of humor helps you from taking yourself and your troubles too seriously and helps keep things in perspective. A healthy ego is very important. Arrogance and a wish to dominate others are usually signs of a weak ego constantly in need of reassurance. Leadership also requires courage - the willingness to take risks, make choices, and accept the consequences.

**Recruiting leaders** requires giving people an opportunity to earn leadership. Since followers create leaders, they can’t appoint themselves and you can’t appoint them. What you can do is create opportunities for people to accept the responsibilities of leadership and support them in learning how to fulfill these responsibilities. If you have to get the word out for a meeting,
you can get three of your friends to help you pass out leaflets in the Yard one day or you can find one or two people in each House who will take responsibility for recruiting 5 people from their House to attend. They earn their leadership by bringing the people to the meeting. What other ways can you think of that you can give people the opportunity to earn leadership?

No matter how careful you are, leadership development requires coming to terms with the fact that it entails risk. Risk small failures early in the life of a project in order to avoid big failures later on. If you take the risks required to learn to delegate, you will learn how to do it and you will learn who "comes through" and who doesn't. It is important to learn this with a small meeting at stake and not the monster rally of 5000 at which only 50 people show up. One reason to set up quantifiable goals, regular reports, and ongoing evaluation is to detect early failure and success so they become "learning opportunities" for everyone. "So, Mary, why did that work so well?" "So, Sam, what happened there? What could you have done differently?" Don't assume everyone is going to do everything right from the very beginning because it never happens. Also, it is often not completely clear what the "right" way is at the beginning of a project. Think about how to turn this fact to your advantage. Where can you get the courage to take the risk of letting other people share in the responsibility for outcomes you care about?

We only develop good judgment about whom to select by taking risks, making choices, experiencing success and failures, and learning from this experience - and we will still be surprised. On the other hand, the more experienced we are the better judgment we can begin to develop. There is no "rule book" to go to on this, but if you are afraid to risk making choices, you never learn to make good choices. Here are some questions you might ask yourself. How do you select to whom to delegate? How do you know who the
right person is? How can you find out ahead of time? How do you know when a person is ready for a big job? Are you selecting them because they are easily available or because they are the right people for the job? Are you selecting them because they already know what to do because you have worked together before or because they "look as if they can learn what to do" with some good coaching? Or did you select them because you "heard" they were good? Where did you hear that? Who told you? Should you believe them? How do you know?

**Developing leaders** requires structuring the work of the organization so it affords as many people as possible the opportunity to learn to lead - **delegation**. Distributing the leaflets through House Committees, for example, shares the responsibility for engaging others with many people. It is true organizing the work in this way can be risky. You may delegate to the wrong people; they may let you down; etc. But as Moses learned from Jethro, if you fear delegating, the strength of the community is stifled and can never grow. But you can do things to increase the chances of success. Leadership training sessions help clarify what is expected of leaders in your organization, give people the confidence to accept leadership responsibilities, and express the value your organization places on leadership development.

Developing leaders is not about assigning tasks, but offering responsibility. It is different to ask: “would you make these 50 phone calls telling people about the meeting?” versus “would you take responsibility for getting 10 people to come to the meeting? You will? Great! Here’s some things that may help you contact them and get them there -- a list of names and phone numbers of people who said they were interested, 100 leaflets, some posters, and some sign-up sheets you could use to get commits”. Do you see the difference? With the “task”, the person can become a kind of yo-yo: go do this, come back for what’s next, go do that, come back for what’s...
next. They are “helping” you with your responsibility. With a “responsibility”, the person takes it and runs with it, and you can help them meet “their” responsibility. But when looking for someone to take responsibility, don’t make the responsibility easier, and easier, and easier...until there’s nothing left. The challenge is in learning to motivate people to accept the level of responsibility needed to get the job done. And when a person has accepted responsibility, the motivation work continues. Keeping others motivated, keeping yourself motivated, and getting the work done go together. All are based on real accountability, lots of coaching, and lots of recognition of success.

Responsibility is only real, however, if the person is clearly accountable for the responsibility he or she accepted. Accountability should be regular, specific, and timely. The point of accountability is not to catch someone to punish them, but to learn what kind of results they are getting so everyone can learn from them. If someone is having trouble, we need to learn why so we can figure out what to do about it. If someone is being successful, we need to learn why so we can try the same thing in other places. Without accountability the most important learning we can do in the course of a campaign - systematic reflection on our own experience - is impossible. You cannot expect a person to take responsibility without authority. If you want someone to take the responsibility to get 10 people to a meeting, hold them accountable, provide training, offer support - but give them the authority to do what they’ve been asked to do. If you see or hear of them making a mistake - or think you can do it better - this means going directly to them, not around them or taking care of it for them. It is really a matter of basic respect.

Finally, as Hackman shows, you can provide “coaching” that helps new leaders strategize about their responsibilities and encourages them as they
deal with difficult situations. Once a person accepts responsibility, it is in your interest to offer her as much support as she wants to ensure her success. The challenge is learning to offer support without taking back the responsibility. “Oh, you’ll get the ten people to come? Great! Let’s sit down for a few minutes and “role play” just what you’re going to say to them”. Or “give me a call to tell me how it's going - or if you run into problems”. A regular coaching session means you want to meet not because you think they are in trouble, but because you are interested in their work. These sessions can be very useful for learning what’s really going on out there as well. And coaching is, of course, one of the best ways to make mentoring real.

**Leadership Team or "Lone Ranger"**

The most successful organizers are those who form a leadership team with whom to work early on in their campaign. Although it can be a mistake to recruit people to act as an "organizing committee" too early - especially if you are not careful to recruit people drawn from the constituency whom that community views as leaders or, at least, potential leaders - organizers more often err in delaying too long. The sooner you have a team of people with whom to work, the sooner the "I" of the organizer becomes the "we" of the new organization. Once you have formed a leadership team you can more easily establish a rhythm of regular meetings, clear decisions and visible accountability that will help make things actually happen. You don't build an organization of 500 people by recruiting them all yourself. You build it by finding people willing and able to commit to help building it with you. If you don't have a leadership team working with you by midterm, it's time to look very closely at why.

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Conclusion

Although identifying, recruiting and developing leaders is critical to the capacity - or power - of most organizations, it is the particular focus of organizers whose work is to be leaders of leaders. The primary responsibility of an organizer is to develop the leadership capacities of others and, in this way, of the organizations through which their constituents act on their common interests.

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QUESTIONS
Leadership

1. Have you developed a leadership team? If yes, how are you exercising leadership within this team? If no, what is your leadership role within your project?

2. Who else exercises leadership in your project/organization? How do you know they are leaders? How do they exercise leadership? How do they earn leadership?

3. What kind of organizational structures, procedures, or programs have contributed to the development of the leaders? Who put them in place? How well do they work?

4. Are you delegating leadership? What is being delegating to whom? What have you found to be the challenges of delegating leadership? The rewards?

5. Do you, or others in your project/organization, have conscious strategies for identifying, recruiting and developing leadership? What are they?
We have looked at the setting within which organizing unfolds -- power relations among actors. And we have looked at how leaders can alter power relations by bringing people together to act on their common interests. Organizers do this by weaving three threads together to form new organizations: relationships, interpretation, and action. This week we look at relationships.

What Are Relationships?

How many of you have ever had a relationship? The fact is, of course, that relationship building is a part of our daily lives, something we are all “experts” on. While true, this fact points to a challenge in learning organizing. Because organizing is about working with people, we revisit many of our day to day activities, such as meeting new people, but from an analytic perspective: what’s really going on here, why does this work better than that, how can we become more strategically intentional about the relationships we form and can how we best go about forming them?
One way to look at relationships is as exchanges illustrated in Relationships: Chart #1. We each have interests and resources. Our interests are diverse, rooted in distinct domains: work, family, faith, recreation, public life, etc. And so are our resources: skills, time, experience, wealth, etc. Because we live in an interdependent world, most of us cannot address our interests without drawing upon the resources of others, just as others require our resources to address their interests. This motivates the “exchange” of interests and resources at the center of any relationship. This also makes the point that relationships are as much about difference as about commonality – because difference is what fuels the exchanges that give the relationship purpose.

But a relationship is more than an exchange. A relationship implies a future and assumes a past. A conversation over coffee contributes to a relationship only if there are more conversations. The moment of truth comes at the end of the conversation when one of you, pulling out your schedule, may suggest that you get together again and the other has to decide whether to pull out their schedule as well. If each of you commits some portion of your time – to further conversation, you have the beginning of a relationship. If not, you don’t. It is that conscious choice, the commitment of your most precious resource, your time, that gives the relationship life, a future. So relationships don’t just “happen” – they grow out of a series of choices we make to commit resources to them, sustain them, and, at times, repair them. This commitment to a shared future - and the consequences of a shared past - transforms an exchange into a relationship.

Relationships have another dimension as well because we are more than the sum of our interests, resources, and commitments. Like our rela-
tionships, we have a past, live in the present, and anticipate a future. How do you respond if someone asks “who are you?” Most of us are puzzled at first because we are many things and don’t understand what the other person wants to know. Then we usually begin listing categories to which we belong – I’m a student, I’m a man, I’m a woman, I’m a runner, etc. However, many categories we list, however, we are still likely to find others in exactly the same box. So . . . who are YOU? What is it that is utterly unique about each of us? It is not the categories that describe us but the journey we have made – and are making. And the way we can recount this journey is as a story, our story, as illustrated in Relationships: Chart #2. And it is this story we tell about our journey that defines who we are, our unique identity.

So does that mean that every time someone asks us who we are we pull out a kind of chronology in which we go back to our grandparents, parents, our first birthday party, etc.? No. Because that’s not a story – it’s a list. Our story takes shape about the choice points that have shaped our lives –

challenges we, or our parents, faced; how we chose to handle those challenges; and what we learned as a result of the outcomes. So if we want to learn the story of another – or tell our own – we focus on choice points. And what else can we communicate about ourselves by telling a story of choices we have made? What does a choice reveal? It reveals the value we place on one path over another. It is one thing to list our values, but quite another to allow others to observe our values based on real choices we have made in our lives. So a new relationship is not only an exchange of resources, not only a commitment to continue that exchange, but, because it is a choice, it is also the beginning of a new “story” – the telling of which is the result of our collaboration.

**Building Relationships: Creating Social Capital**

Relationships are beginnings, not endings. Unlike the contracts we make to protect our interests, relationships are open-ended, creating opportunity for our interests to grow, change, and develop. Our interests may change as our interaction with others reveals new interests of which we had not been aware. For example, "Hmm...Before we talked I didn't realize I really wanted to be a doctor, but now.". We also may discover common interests of which we were unaware. As you remember from the skills workshop, we may find shared interests in music, in movies, or in doing something about the dining hall service. Most importantly, we begin to develop an interest in the relationship itself. To the extent we hope to preserve the relationship we must do lots of work to sustain it.

Just as the relationship becomes a source of new "interests", it can also become a new source of resources. We may discover new exchanges for our individual interests and resources. "I'll help you with your problem sets if you help me with my literature essay". Relationships may facilitate de-
development of common resources. "Why don't we pool our funds to hire a tutor to work with both of us?" Most importantly the relationship itself can become a resource on which we both can draw.

New relationships construct new interests and new resources making them what Robert Putnam calls "social capital" - a source of "power to" which simply didn't exist before. This capacity or "social capital" explains why strongly "relational" communities are capable of collaborative action of all kinds. This emphasis on relationships, especially relationships among members, is the key building block of a civic association, a “voice” organization, distinguishing it from groups focused on providing services to the clients instead of relationship building.

**Relationships: Chart #3**

![Diagram of relationship-building process](image)
How We Create Relationships

How do we really create a relationship? Relationships: Chart #3 offers one way to look at this.

• First, we must catch each other’s attention. If I call up a minister to set up a meeting, it will help “get his attention” if I tell him someone he knows referred me. If I’m calling a potential volunteer on the phone, it will be important for me to use their name and explain how I got it. We may also be related to a common institution. Or, across a room full of people, we may just make eye contact.

• Once we have gotten each other’s attention, we need to establish an interest in having a conversation. I may mention to the minister, for example, how I was told he was interested in doing something about domestic violence in his parish and that’s what I’d like his advice on. Or, I was told he is the key person from whom to get advice about what is really going on in the parish. Or, since we both happen to be taking the same class, maybe we should talk about how we can help each other.

• Then comes exploration - asking and answering each other’s questions, of probing for areas of common interest, of testing whether the other has anything to contribute to us, and whether we have anything to contribute to the other. The key here is learning to ask good questions, especially why a person has made the choices they made, moments that reveal values and interests that really count. Why did you go to school here rather than there? Why did you study this rather than that? Why did you decide to emigrate rather than remain at home? And as we begin learning each other’s answers to these questions, we learn more about each other, what moves us, and what we have to contribute.
• As a result of our exploration, we may make exchanges - not just in the future, but then and there within the conversation. We may turn out to be a good listener for someone who needs listening. We may find we are learning a great deal from our interaction with the other person. We may find we have an opportunity to offer another person some insight, support, or recognition that they find valuable. We may find we can challenge the other person in ways that may bring them new insight. We may also discover a basis for future “exchanges” -- such as going to see a movie we both want to see, deciding to come to a meeting the other has told us about, taking responsibility to help pass out some leaflets, or just deciding to have another conversation.

• Finally, if we’ve determined a basis may exist for a relationship, we make a commitment to the relationship by agreeing to meet again, have coffee, come to the meeting, send emails, etc. What turns the exchange into a relationship is the commitment we make to each other and to the relationship. People often make the mistake of trying to go right to a commitment without laying a relational basis for it first.

Relational Dimensions: Social Networks

Although we may enter into a relationship with one other person and they with us, this is only the beginning in a broader sense. And this is why relationships are the foundation of most political work – and what Malcolm Gladwell’s account of Lois Weisberg is all about - the Chicago based people-connector who translates relationships into a powerful capacity to “get things done”...²⁹ So when we enter into a relationship with another, we become a

²⁹ M. Gladwell, (1999), Six degrees of Lois Weisberg. The New Yorker. 52-63.
new link in their social network, as they do in ours. Since social networks are the threads from which society is woven, the social networks we choose to draw upon to form an organization, or use the organization to build, is the most critical strategic choice we can make.

One very important distinction is between relationships with people “like us” and relationships with people “not like us” – what Gladwell, citing sociologist Mark Granovetter, calls “strong” and “weak” ties. By “strong” ties, he means ties with people who are “like us” -- homogeneous. By “weak” ties, he means ties with people who are “unlike us” -- heterogeneous. His insight is that strong ties may actually inhibit our capacity to organize. This is because they quickly create a closed-in, limited circle of people and resources. Lots of “weak” ties, on the other hand, may enhance our organizing capacity. This is because they open into broader networks of resources by opening the circle outward - an important way people find jobs. He shows how the fragmentation of residents of Boston’s West End into intense ethically, religiously, familially, or culturally bounded networks inhibited their ability to combine and mobilize resources to resist urban renewal. Communities with “weak” ties found it easier to collaborate with each other and to find outside sources of support. For some purposes, strong ties may be very important - especially purposes we share with people “like us”. But for purposes that are more inclusive than those suited to people “like us”, weak ties are the keys to success. Granovetter isn’t arguing “strong” ties are bad and “weak” ties are good -- just that they are very different and contribute to common efforts in different ways. Which kind of ties does your organization rely on? Does this work?

Roles

Another way of thinking about relationships is as “roles” in which we perform our parts, as in social “scenarios”. As Shakespeare wrote,

*All the world’s a stage,*
*And all the men and women merely players...*
*And one man in his time plays many parts...*\(^{31}\)

Sociologist Erving Goffman developed a powerful dramaturgical metaphor to help us understand the roles we play.\(^{32}\) He argues we could view our interactions as “performances”, all of which have a somewhat strategic component to them. We both “play” our parts, and at some level, are conscious of the part we are “playing”. He showed the “facework” we do when interacting with others to maintain each other’s “face” and prevent distressing embarrassment if we drop “out of role”. When relationships persist over time, we often think of the patterns of relational interaction we learn as “roles” we play in social “scenarios”.

The more conscious we become of the “roles” we play in different social settings the more we can reflect on the extent to which our performance of these “roles” meets our own interests and those of others with whom we interact. Fear of “losing face” if we are rejected can make it very hard for us to ask for the kind of help we need -- as Cesar Chavez writes about when discussing his difficulty learning to ask for food.\(^{33}\) We also learn to play roles of

\(^{31}\) W. Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene 7, 139-142.


\(^{33}\) Cesar Chavez, (1966)”The Organizer's Tale”, *Ramparts Magazine*, July, (pp. 43-50).
deference and domination, reinforcing inequities of power through every personal interaction. An extreme example of this was in the interaction conventions of blacks and whites in the Deep South before the civil rights movement. Gendering of our public interactions can be viewed in this way as well.

One way we connect the roles we play, giving meaning to them, and making them accessible to others, is through our “stories” – our narrative of where we have been, the challenges we face (and have faced), and where we hope to go. When we enter into a relationship with another, we become “actors” in each other’s stories, not only exchanging resources and making commitments, but influencing how we think of ourselves and who we want to become. Learning each other’s “stories” is a critical step in forming, maintaining, and developing relationships.

Public and Private

Another important distinction is between “public” and “private” roles and relationships. We maintain many “private” relationships with friends, acquaintances, etc. But when we form organizations to pursue common goals, we formalize our relationships to make our roles within the organization explicit. When our friends become officers of an organization to which we belong, there is often a tension due to the introduction of “formality” – or “publicness” - into what had been a private informal relationship. New teachers are often tense about balancing the “private” ways they relate to their friends, colleagues, and family members and the “public” way they should relate to their students, including the authority they are expected to exercise. As a result, they have to negotiate a way to interact with their students that is true both to their own way of interacting with others and to the formal public role for which they have assumed responsibility. Similar issues arise for lawyers, doctors, social workers, ministers, and organizers. They arise
any time we accept formal leadership roles. They require that we distinguish
between the kinds of social interactions appropriate in our “private” relationships from those appropriate in our “public” relationships. Failure to make these distinctions can result in great personal cost to ourselves and to those with whom we work. This underscores how important it is that each of us has a place to go where we are not "on stage".

By understanding this distinction we can be more mindful when constructing our roles in relationships. In Roots for Radicals, community organizer Ed Chambers makes the useful distinction between being liked in our private lives and being respected in our public lives:

"By acting publicly in order to be liked, people invariably violate their group or organization’s self-interest, usually by failing to hold public power brokers accountable at critical moments... What people need in public life is to be respected, which is similar to, but different from, being liked. That is why it is crucial to learn to act for respect in public, to be disinterested in being liked there, to look for liking in the private realm... The most recent in the continuing series of public figures who got liking and respect mixed up inappropriately was Bill Clinton, who thought he could mix public and private with impunity, be President and just plain Bill.... Prophets, visionaries, and ordinary people who value justice and democracy can’t be too concerned about being liked in the public realm, but they must insist on being respected there".  

Relational Strategies and Tactics

Relationship building is central to the craft of organizing because it is within relationships that we develop new understanding of our interests and new resources to act on those interests. Within relationships we can create new direct experiences that may challenge each other’s existing “roles” and open up the possibility of new roles. We may show respect to those with little experience of being respected; we may challenge those with little experience of being challenged.

Relational Strategies

Most organizations employ some combination of a few basic relational recruiting strategies: recruiting individuals, networks, and organizations. Sometimes an organization is built in one way, but continues recruiting in another. Think about the advantages and disadvantages of each of these approaches in terms of your project.

• One approach is to recruit individuals for an organization out of new relationships. Organizers develop relationships with each individual they hope to bring into the organization. Initial recruiting may be done at tables, street corners, sign-ups at rallies, etc. Kris Rondeau combined this approach with the network approach described below.

• A second approach is to recruit networks for an organization out of old relationships. The organization is built by drawing people in through relational networks of which they are already part. New relationships are formed mainly between the organizer and the recruit, but the basic approach is to find people who can bring people in through their own pre-existing relation-
ships. This is how Cesar Chavez built the UFW. Sometimes networks are recruited from old organizations which act as incubators for a new effort. This was the role of many of the southern black churches and colleges in the civil rights movement.

- A third approach is to **recruit organizations** for a new organization. This requires building relationships with leaders of old organizations and drawing them into a relationship with each other to make a new organization possible. There are advantages in this approach in that it makes use of organizational resources that already exist, etc. But it also requires accommodating within the new organization to meet the interests of existing organizational leaders. This was Alinsky’s approach and is that of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization.

**Relational Tactics**

Organizations also recruit by using different relational tactics, some of which fit with certain of these strategies better than others, as shown in Relationships: Chart #4. House meetings, for example, fit with the network strategy. One-on-one meetings, on the other hand, are important for all three. It is also important to distinguish between a “lead” - someone who signed a list indicating interest - and a “recruit”. A person is not a “recruit” until a relationship has been established on the basis of which their continued involvement rests.
• **One-on-one meetings** are individual meetings between an organizer or leader and collaborator or potential member. The primary purpose is to build a relationship out of which further involvement in the organization may develop. The meeting is successful if it ends with a commitment to a “next step”, which may just be another meeting. This tactic is very useful for building solid relationships among people who might not otherwise have them. Those of you who participated in the skills workshop at the beginning of the semester saw how one-on-one meeting could reveal interests we share with others that we never suspected to exist. You also found how much we can learn about each other and how well we can establish a rapport in a relatively short time. At the beginning of the semester, we had one-on-one meetings with each of you in the form of the interviews we scheduled. Kris Rondeau also made extensive use of one-on-one meetings, as do most IAF organizers, as recounted by Simmons.35

• **House meetings** are designed to make use of networks. For a house meeting the organizer first holds a one-on-one meeting with someone whom he or she believes may enjoy lots of relations with other members of the community. At that meeting the person is persuaded to invite a number of his or her friends over to meet the organizer and hear about the organization. If the person agrees, the organizer then coaches the person on how to be successful in getting the people there. At that meeting the organizer leads a discussion of the organizational effort or campaign and asks each of the people present to commit to holding a similar meeting in their home. In this way, one can quickly meet with a large number of people in conversational settings as well as identify among the house meeting hosts a corps of potential leaders. In the 1987 Pelosi for Congress campaign in San Francisco, our team of 6 organizers held 87 house meetings attended by 600 people in just three weeks. In addition to being asked to host another meeting, attendees were asked to volunteer on a phone bank. At the end of the house meeting drive, the 87 hosts and another 50 very active volunteers were invited to a meeting at which they were asked to become precinct leaders. In this way, four weeks into the campaign, we had recruited “proven” leaders for 110 of the 150 precincts we needed to organize to cover the entire congressional district. Each also had their own corps of volunteers with whom to work.

• **Emergency meetings** are well suited to political campaigns or other efforts where “urgency” is very clear. In the 1987 Cranston for Senate campaign in California, we had to organize a get-out the vote campaign in 1200 precincts in the African American and Latino districts of South Central Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose and Oakland. We recruited 50 organizers responsible for recruiting 15 precinct leaders each. Since we had very little time (the whole campaign was done in 5 weeks), we got registered voter lists for each precinct that were coded as to which persons “always” voted, which one’s “occasionally” voted, and which ones “never”
voted. The organizers set to work calling the “always” voters in their precincts, trying to recruit them for an “emergency” meeting the same afternoon or evening at the campaign headquarters. From among those who attended the organizers recruited precinct leaders for particular precincts who agreed to contact the “occasional” voters who lived there and to take the day off work on Election Day to help us get them out to vote. We wound up turning out 160,000 additional voters this way in an election Cranston won by only 110,000 votes.

What all these tactics have in common, although they vary in setting and in scale, is that they make it possible to develop direct relationships with people whom we hope to involve in the work of the organization. This is very different from relying on flyers, phone calls – or e-mail. Relationships are about “influence” as well as “information” – while e-mail can be very useful for sharing information; it is very limited as a means of establishing relationships. Eccles and Nohria show just how limited electronically mediated exchange can be for constructing identities and robust relationships, negotiating uncertainty, and mobilizing collective action.36

Maintaining Relationships

Maintaining and developing relationships provides the “glue” to the ongoing work of any organization - and is itself ongoing work. Old relationships need to be renewed and new relationships developed. If this ongoing work is not done - and the relationships become unraveled -- it becomes harder and harder to accomplish the “tasks” that must be accomplished. We also may remain ignorant of “who” the people are who are in our organizations and

what they have to contribute. And it is in the absence of solid relationships that the “political” difficulties and “factions” with which we are all familiar develop.

Marshall Ganz, Kennedy School, 2006

**QUESTIONS**

**Relationships**

1. How did the leaders of your project begin to develop a relationship with you? How are they maintaining it?
2. What relational strategies and tactics are you using in your project? Is the emphasis on creating new relationships, building on old relationships, or deepening existing relationships?
3. What is being exchanged in the relationships among people in your project?
4. What kinds of commitments are you seeking through relationships in your project? How do you go about asking for commitments? How do you know when you have it?
5. Are there other relational strategies and tactics that you have observed being used in your project/organization?
6. What are the differences in relationships you have built in your project and those that you build in your private life? How do you manage them?
Mobilizing Interpretation I: 
Motivation, Story and Celebration
(Week 7)

What Is Interpretation?

We turn now to the interpretive work of organizing: enabling people to determine what conditions of life they want to change, and how they want to change them. Understanding of ourselves, others and the world is shaped not by raw data, but on how we interpret the meaning of data for us - is it good, is it bad or is it irrelevant. We interpret data by contextualizing it within patterns of understanding that influence what we remember, what we attend to, and what we expect. These schemata or “frames” give meaning to the discrete pieces of information that we encounter. Because they give us our “grip” on the world, once they are formed, they resist change.

Two Ways of Knowing: 
Why and How

We interpret the world in two ways – as narrative and as analysis -- as shown in Interpretation: Chart #1. We develop our understanding who we are, where we are going, and why as narrative. Narrative articulates how we feel about things (affect) more clearly than what we think about them (cognition). Its “truth” is in that which “moves” us, and it dominates fields of religion, literature, poetry, and politics (yes, politics). Psychologist Jerome Bruner argues that narrative engages us because it teaches how to cope with uncertainty, especially with respect to others. An ancient form of interpretation, we enact share stories in symbols, rituals, and celebrations. This way of knowing helps us answer the question of WHY we should act – our motivation.
The analytic (a privileged in the university) consists of the application of rules of critical reason to understanding data in the world. It articulates what we think about things (cognition) better than how we feel about them (affect). It is governed by rules of logic, assesses data as evidence and is constructed as an argument. It dominates the natural and social sciences. Although its “truth” rests on the extent to with data confirms of falsifies its hypotheses, our acceptance of the authority of those who invoke this logic also influences its persuasiveness. It is most persuasive when it "works" - helps us achieve the outcomes we want. In organizations we often do analytic work through deliberation, the job of many meetings. This way of knowing helps us answer the question HOW to act – our strategy. This week we focus on motivation and next week on strategy.
We begin our consideration of motivation by reflecting on a scene said to have occurred on St. Crispin’s Day Eve, October 14, 1415 at Agincourt, near Calais in Northern France. Young King Henry V faces his band of exhausted, discouraged Englishmen, outnumbered many times by fresh French troops they must face in battle the next day. All night long, in disguise, he has wandered from camp to camp, listening to his men. He asks for a hand, climbs atop a cart, and begins to tell a story. But it is a new story, one in which he and his men are the principal characters, and it is a story of hope. The outcome of the battle may well depend on the hope he can inspire, regardless of the odds. Perhaps their Welsh longbows could give them a tactical advantage over the mounted, armored French, but only if they have the courage to stand and fight. And that’s why King Henry has become a storyteller.

This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne’er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remember’d;  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne’er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition:  
And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin’s day.

Henry V, Act IV, Scene 3  
William Shakespeare
So what can we learn about motivation from Henry V’s talk with his men?

What’s his problem? What are his men feeling? How does he challenge those feelings? Why does he have to challenge those feelings? And what kind of feelings does he call on? And one last question, does he ever demonize the French? So what is he doing?

And how does he do it? Does he tell them everything will turn out okay? Does he give them lots of facts and figures? Does he lie about the facts? Or does he alter the meaning of the facts? And how does he alter their meaning? By interpreting them through the lens of one set of values or feelings as opposed to another set of values or feelings.

And how does he make his case? Does he do it by making an argument? Does he present lots of facts and figures? Or does he do it by telling a story – not just his own story, but also the story of his people; a story not about the past, but about the future; a story not of despair, but of hope.

Knowing Why: Emotion, Motivation, and Action

To understand motivation – that which inspires action – consider emotion and their shared root word “motor”, to move. Just as we map the world conceptually by noticing patterns, contrasts, and commonalities, we map the world emotionally, by distinguishing the bad (threatening) from the good (promising) from the irrelevant. Using emotional information we map the value that different aspects of the world – including our behavior - hold for us. Psychologists argue that the “affective” information with which our emotions provide us is in part physiological -- our respiration changes, our body temperature alters; in part cognitive – we can describe what we feel as fear,
love, desire, and joy; and in part behavioral – we are moved to act, to go
toward, to flee, to stand up, to sit down. Because we experience value
through emotion, emotions provide us with vital information about how to
live our lives – not in opposition to what we learn through reasoned delibera-
tion, but more as a precondition for it.\textsuperscript{37}

Political scientist George Marcus focuses on two key neurophysiologic
systems that govern our emotional responses – disposition and surveil-
lance.\textsuperscript{38} Our dispositional system operates along a continuum from depres-
sion to enthusiasm, influencing how hopeful we are. Our surveillance system
compares what we expect to see with what we do see, tracking anomalies
which, when observed, translate into anxiety that calls our attention. Without
this emotional cue, he argues, we simply operate out of habit, unmindful of
what we do. When we feel anxiety, however, it is a way of saying to our-
selves, “Hey, pay attention! You can’t be on autopilot if there’s a bear in the
doorway”. The big question, however, is what we do with that anxiety. That’s
where the dispositional system – and its continuum from hope to despair –
comes in. How do you react if you are a despairing mode when you experi-
ence the anxiety of anomaly? Fear, withdrawal, defensiveness – not very
adaptive behaviors. On the other hand, how do you react if you experience
anxiety when you are hopeful? Curiosity, a desire to explore, an opportunity
to learn – very adaptive behaviors. So Marcus argues that sound, not to say,
creative, reasoning requires both anxiety – a stimulus to reasoning as op-
posed to acting out of habit – and hopefulness. This is very different way of
looking at how reason and emotion interact than trying to take all the emo-
tion out of it.

\textsuperscript{37} \textbf{G. E. Marcus}, (2002), \textit{The Sentimental Citizen}. (University Park, PA, Penn State Univer-
sity Press).

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
Moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues that because we experience value through our emotions, making moral choices – how we “ought” to act - in the absence of emotional information is futile.\textsuperscript{39} She is supported by data on the experience of people afflicted with lesions on the amygdale, that “old” part of the brain central to our emotions. When faced with decisions, people with this disability come up with one option after another but can never decide because decisions are ultimately are based on values and if we cannot experience emotion, we cannot experience the values that orient us to our world. So our readiness to deliberate, our capacity to deliberate successfully, and our ability to act on our decisions rest on how we feel. As St. Augustine observed, “knowing” the good is not the same thing as “loving the good”, being moved to act on it.\textsuperscript{40}

Although how we feel about something influences what we think and what we do about it, because of the power of habit, how we feel about something may have little to do with the present, but is a legacy of emotional lessons we learned long ago. Suppose that, as a four-year-old, you are playing on a swing-set at the park when a bigger kid tries to kick you off. You run to your parent for help, but your parent laughs at you. In that moment you trod back to the swing-set, angry and embarrassed, convinced that your parent didn’t care - and you may have learned the lesson that counting on others to help you is a bad idea. So in evaluating what to do about a pay cut, for example, you fear counting on others, based on past experience, make it unlikely you will join other workers to protest. You may even tell yourself you deserved the pay cut. And when it happens again, you can reassure


yourself that you were right to be afraid all along. And if an organizer comes along and tells you that with a union you could keep the employer from cutting your pay, but you are still in the grip of fear, you’ll see the organizer as a threat, her claims as suspect, and her proposals as hopeless.

So what does Henry V do with his men, gripped as they were by feelings of despair? As he spoke with them, he engaged them in an “emotional dialogue”, drawing on one set of emotions (or values), grounded in one set of experiences, to counter another set of emotions, (or value), grounded in different experiences. This “dialogue of the heart” eventually enabled his men to see their circumstances differently, find hope, and rise to the occasion. Far from being “irrational”, this dialogue restored choices to his men that they had abandoned in their despair.

**Mobilizing Hope**

Which emotions inhibit action and which emotions facilitate action? Inertia causes us to ignore signs of a need for action. Fear can paralyze, driving us to rationalize inaction. Amplified by self-doubt and isolation, we may become victims of despair. On the other hand, urgency gets our attention, hope inspires us and, in concert with confidence and solidarity, can move us to act. As shown in Motivation: Chart #2, organizers engage people by mobilizing feelings that encourage action and challenging feelings that inhibit action. In fact, most of us hold conflicting feelings, some of which are more salient at one time than at another. Mobilizing one set of feelings to challenge another can produce an emotional dissonance, a tension that can only be resolved through action. This is sometimes called “agitation”. For example, the value a person places on not upsetting the boss (teacher, parent, employer) because of their dependency on him may conflict with the value she places on self-respect when her boss does something that violates her
sense of self-respect. She may become angry enough to challenge her boss, or she may decide to “swallow her pride”, or she may get angry with the organizer who points out the conflict. Any resolution can be costly, but one may serve her interests better than another. One of the main ways organizers resolve this tension is with action embedded in the telling of a new story -- a story of hope.

**Motivation: Chart #1**

**BREAKING THE BELIEF BARRIERS**

- **INERTIA** → **URGENCY**
- **FEAR** → **HOPE**
- **APATHY** → **ANGER**
- **SELF-DOUBT** → **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**
- **ISOLATION** → **SOLIDARITY**
Belief Barriers: Inertia, Fear, Apathy, Self-doubt, and Isolation

The biggest “belief barrier” to action is inertia, habit, not paying attention. We process most of the information that comes our way on “autopilot”: we hear, we process, we respond as programmed. For much of what we do, this is efficient. But if there is something new going on, something that could be a threat to us, or that could hold promise of us - and we stay on “autopilot” - we may not only miss an opportunity, but we may wind up in real trouble.

Second, fear of all kinds: threats, danger, standing out, failing, being laughed at, etc. What are you afraid of? If it’s not going to jail, then what is it? Fear of failure? Fear of losing face? When we are afraid we pay little attention to the new leaflet about all the wonderful benefits a union can bring, for example. And we can be very imaginative at coming up with excuses to justify avoiding having to confront our fear. When coupled with self-doubt, fear easily turns into despair, a sentiment many faith traditions identify as a primary sin.

And how about apathy, not caring? Although literally to be “without feeling”, more often it describes the feeling that we can do very little about most things. Coupled with self-doubt, it becomes its first cousin - cynicism or, in the elite world, cynical chic.

One of the biggest belief barriers is “self-doubt” - I can’t do it, people like me can’t do it, we aren’t qualified to do it, etc., etc., etc.

And when we feel isolated, we fail to appreciate interests we share with others, we have little sense of access to common resources, we no sense of a shared identity, and we generally feel quite powerless.
How does this make you feel? What can you do about it?

Breaking the Barriers: Urgency, Hope, Anger, You Can Make a Difference (YCMAD) and Solidarity

We can counter inertia – or habit - with urgency. Urgency creates the space for new action and unless we find ways to make the important also urgent, the urgent alone will take priority. Urgency is less about time than it is about commitment. Imagine that someone calls you up and tells you he is recruiting for a 100 year plan to change the world, he’s just beginning and is considering calling a meeting sometime over the course of the next 6 months and wants to know if you would be interested in coming whenever it happens? On the other hand, what if someone calls you about an election you care about with the news that Election Day is just 7 days away and that within these 7 days, the campaign has to contact and turn out 3000 targeted voters - or about 500/day - in order to win? With help of 220 volunteers who agree to contact 20 voters each they can reach them all. You live near 20 of these voters. If you will come down to the headquarters just down the street from you at 6:00 PM, you’ll meet the other people who are part of the effort, and they’ll show you exactly how to do it. Urgency recognizes the rhythm of change is “time like an arrow” – the deadlines of campaigns another way to create urgency. Commitment and concentration of energy is required to get anything new started and urgency is often a critical way in which to get the commitment which is required.

Where can we turn to find the courage to act in spite of our fear? Trying to eliminate anything that we react to fearfully is a fool’s errand because it locates the source of our fear outside ourselves, rather than within our own hearts – an error most moral traditions recognize. Trying to make ourselves
“fearless”, on the other hand, can be counterproductive if we wind up acting more out of “nerve than brain”. Organizers sometimes prepare others for fear by “inoculating” them, warning them that the opposition will threaten them with this and woo them with that. So when it actually happens, the fact that it is expected, shows the opposition is more predictable and thus less to be feared. So what in general can we do about fear. A decision to act in spite of fear is the meaning of courage. And of all the emotions that can help us find courage, perhaps most important is “hope”.

So where do you get some hope? One source of hope is an experience of “credible solutions”, not only reports of success elsewhere, but also direct experience of small successes, small victories. Another important source of hope for many people is in their “faith”, grounded in one’s religious beliefs, cultural traditions, moral understanding. It is no accident that many of the great social movements of our time drew strength from religious traditions within which they arose (Gandhi, Civil Rights, Solidarity) and that much of today’s organizing is grounded in faith communities. Another source of the experience of hope is in our relationships. Don’t you know people who inspire hopefulness in you when you spend time with them? Eeyore, on the other hand, would make a very poor organizer (“Good morning, Eeyore! What’s good about it, Pooh?”). And isn’t “charisma” a kind of capacity to inspire hopefulness in others, inspiring others to believe in themselves? Lots of people have it, but some need to be encouraged to use it. Just as religious belief requires a “leap of faith”, Cornel West argues that politics requires a “leap of hope”. More philosophically, the Jewish scholar of the 15th Century, Moses Maimonides, argued that hope is belief in the “plausibility of the


possible”, as opposed to the “necessity of the probable”. 43 And psychologists who explore the role of “positive emotions” give particular attention to the “psychology of hope” 44.

**Motivation: Chart #2**

What about apathy? One way to counter apathy is with **anger** – not “rage”, but “outrage” - indignation with unjust conditions. Sociologist Bill Gamson describes this as invoking an "injustice frame" to counter a "legitimacy frame".45 Constructive anger is based on the difference between what “ought to be” and what “is” - the way we feel when our “moral order” has been violated. As scholars of “moral economy” have taught us, people rarely mobilize to protest inequality as such, but they do mobilize to protest “unjust” inequality.46 In other words, our values, moral traditions, and sense of personal dignity are critical sources of the motivation to act. This is one reason organizing is so deeply rooted in moral traditions.

43 Maimonides.


Organizers counter self-doubt with **YCMAD - you can make a difference**. The best way to inspire the belief that one can make a difference is to ground what you do in what people can do, not what they can’t do. If you design a program calling for each new volunteer to recruit 100 people and provide no leads, no training, no coaching and no support, you will only create deeper feelings of self-doubt. It is also very important to recognize - specific people for specific contributions at specific times and in specific ways - visible recognition, widely shared recognition. But recognition not based on real accomplishment will degenerate into flattery no one believes. The idea is to spread accomplishment around and then recognize people for that accomplishment.

*The 1987 Agnos for Mayor Campaign in San Francisco had an extensive volunteer precinct leader operation. When anyone agreed to be a precinct leader, his name was written on a star that was hung from the ceiling of the campaign headquarters. As the election approached, when you entered the headquarters, you would look up and see hundreds of stars hanging from the ceiling in recognition of the grass roots leaders involved: the real “stars” of the campaign.*

There is no recognition without **accountability**. Requiring accountability does not show lack of trust, but is evidence that what one is doing really matters.

*Have you ever volunteered to walk a precinct in a campaign? They give you a packet with a voter list, tell you to mark the responses, and bring it back when you’re done. One time, I’d been out for 4 hours, did a conscientious job, returned to the head-
quarters ready to report and was told, "Oh, just throw it over there in the corner, thanks a lot, see you next week". What about all my work? It didn’t even matter enough for anyone to debrief me about it - let alone mark it up on a wall chart and try to learn from it. Do you think I went back “next week”?

**Training** people to do new tasks is often less about giving skills, than about giving confidence. Training is a way of supporting people in a safe setting where they learn that a new task is something they can do.

And finally, we counter feelings of isolation with the experience of **belovedness or solidarity**. This is the role of mass meetings, singing, common dress, shared language, etc. It is also one of the reasons that developing relationships among those whom we hope to mobilize is so important. And because of the “snowball” effect it is much easier to get people to join others who are already in action.

**Telling Your Public Story**

Henry engages his men not by making an argument, but by telling a story. Why does it work? How does he do it? Why do stories move us to act? What are the components of a story? One thing a story isn’t is a “mission statement”. Had Henry read his men a mission statement it would have been something like this:

*The English Army is an organization established to fight the French, preserve the honor of England, and uphold the values of manliness, godliness, and country.*

Pretty motivational isn’t it? What about a “values statement”?
We believe that it is the duty of Englishmen to defend their country, bring honor to their families, and fight for the king. We’re all in it together.

So what’s the difference between a mission statement, values statement, and a story? Story telling is action speech – it is how we most directly translate our values into the motivation to act. A story exists in the telling of it and is crafted of just three elements: plot, character, and moral. The effect depends on the setting of the story it’s telling: who tells it, who listens, where they are, when they are, and why they are there.

Motivation: Chart #3

Plot

What makes a plot a plot? A plot engages us, captures our interest, and makes us pay attention. “I got up this morning, had breakfast, and came to school”. Is that a plot? Why? Why not? How about this? “I got up
this morning and was having breakfast when I heard a loud screeching coming from the roof. At that very moment I looked outside to where my car was parked, but it was gone!!! What was going on?” How about that? What’s the difference? Why did you start to lean forward when I got to the screeching?

How does it all begin? An actor is moving toward a desired goal. But then something happens? Things go wrong. It’s unexpected. As Chart #3 shows, challenge appears. The plan is suddenly up in the air. The actor must figure out what to do. This is when we get interested. Why at this point? Yes. I know we want to find out what happens. But why do we care?

Dealing with the unexpected – small and large – defines the texture of our lives. The movie theater may be sold out. We may lose our job. Our marriage may break up. In big ways ones are constantly faced with having to figure out what to do about the unexpected. And what the source of the greatest uncertainty around us? Not the weather. Not earthquakes. The greatest source of uncertainty in our environment is other people – and how to interact with other people is the subject of most stories.

As human beings we can be defined as the creature who make choices in the present, based on remembering the past and imagining the future. This is what it means to be an “agent”. But when we act out of habit we don’t choose. We just follow the routine. When we react without thinking, on the other hand, we are not choosing either. Our amygdale is in charge. So it is only when the routines break down, the guidelines are unclear, and no one can tell us what to do that we are on our own, that we make real choices, that we become the creators of our own lives, communities, and futures, that we become agents of our own fate. But these moments can be as frightening as they can be exhilarating.
A plot then consists of just three elements: a challenge, a choice, and an outcome. And because attending to plot is how we learn to deal with the unpredictable, we remain infinitely curious. Researchers report that most of the time that parents spend with their children is in story telling – stories of the family, “children’s stories”, the child’s stories, stories of the neighbors. Bruner describes this as “agency training”: the way we learn how to process choices in the face of uncertainty – as a person, as a member of a family, as of a particular gender, as of a particular faith, and so on. And because the unexpected never leaves us, we remain curious enough to invest billions of dollars a year, not to mention countless hours, in films, in literature, and in sports events – not to mention religious practices, cultural activities, and national celebrations.

**Character**

Although a story requires a plot, it only “works” if we can identify with a character. Through an empathetic identification with a protagonist, we can experience the emotional content of the story. And it is through that experience that we learn what the story has to teach to our hearts, not only our heads. As Aristotle wrote of Greek tragedy, this is how the protagonist’s experience can touch us and, perhaps, open our eyes. Arguments persuade with evidence, logic, and data. Stories persuade by moving us via empathetic identification with a character. Have you ever been to movie where you can’t identify with any of the characters? Pretty boring, isn’t it? Sometimes we identify with protagonists that are only vaguely “like us” – like the road runner (if not the coyote) in the cartoons. Other times we identify with protagonists that are very much like us – as in stories about friends, relatives, neighbors. And sometimes the protagonists of a story are *us*, and we find

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47 *Aristotle*, *The Poetics*. 86
ourselves in the midst of an unfolding story, the outcome of which we have become the authors.

**Moral**

Stories teach. And that is the “moral of the story”. Have you ever been at a party where someone starts telling a story and they go on...and on...and on...? Don’t you ever want to shout, “Point? Point! Get to the point!” We deploy stories to make a point, to evoke a response, to make something happen.

What kind of point can stories make, what kind of moral can they teach? Because of their emotional content, stories can teach the heart, not only the head. The “moral” of a successful story is felt understanding, not simply conceptual understanding. When only stated conceptually, many a “moral” becomes a banality. We do not retell the story of David and Goliath because it teaches us how to fell giants. What it does teach us that a “little guy” can beat a “big guy” – with courage, resourcefulness, and imagination – and Goliath’s arrogance. We hear a story about a fearful character that, out of anger, acts courageously and emerges victorious and we feel the character’s fear, we feel the character’s anger, we feel the character’s courage, and we feel *hopeful* for our own life because the character is victorious. We don’t often tell stories about people being courageous and losing when we want to motivate action. Stories thus teach how to manage our emotions when challenged – how to be courageous, keep our cool, trust our imagination— rather than the tactics to use in any one case.

So stories teach us how to act in the “right” way. They are not simply examples, illustrations, or cases in point. When they are well told, we experience the point – we feel hope, we feel relieved, we feel connected - and
it is that experience, not the words as such, that can move us to action. Because sometimes that is the point – we have to act.

**Motivation: Chart #4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plot</td>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Setting**

Stories are told. They are not a disembodied string of words, images, and phrases. They are not a “message”, a “sound bite”, or a ‘brand’ – although these rhetorical fragments may reference a story. Story telling is how we interact with each other about values; how we share experiences with each other, counsel each other, comfort each other, and inspire each other to action.

As a story is told we evaluate the story, and we find it more or less easy to enter into depending on who the storyteller is. Is it his or her story? We hear it one way. Is it the story of a friend, a colleague, and a family member? We hear it another way. Is it a story without time, place, or specificity? We step back from it. Is it a story we share, perhaps a Bible story, which draws us toward one another? Storytelling is in this way fundamentally relational. We respond. We call up our own stories and tell another in response. And when we retell it, we may "customize" it a bit to bring out our
“truth” of what “really” happened – in case those who are listening are “missing the point”.

**Story of Self, Story of Us, Story of Now**

We can build our public story of three components: a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now. Our story of self allows other to experience the values that move us to lead. Our story of us allows us to make common cause with a broader community whose values we share. And a story of now calls us to act, so we can shape the future in ways consistent with those values, and not be trapped by it.

**Motivation: Chart #5**

![Chart](image)

**Story of Self**

What do we teach when we tell our own story? We teach values our choices reveal, not as abstract principals, but as our lived experience. We reveal the kind of person we are to the extent that we let others identify with
us. The more specific our stories, the more powerfully we can communicate our values or what moral philosopher Charles Taylor calls our “moral sources”.  

A story is like a poem. A poem moves not by how long it is, how eloquent, or how complicated. It moves by offering an experience, a moment through which we grasp the feeling the poet communicates. The more specific the details we choose to recount, the more we can move our listeners.

Some of us think our story doesn’t matter, people aren’t interested, or we shouldn’t be talking about ourselves so much. On the contrary, if we do public work we have a responsibility to give a public account of ourselves - where we came from, why we do what we do, and where we think we’re going. When Aristotle argued rhetoric had three components - *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* – this is what he meant by ethos. The logos is the logic of the argument. The pathos is the feeling the argument evokes. The ethos is the credibility of the person who makes the argument. And we don’t really have a choice about whether to have a story of self or not. If we don’t author our story, others will – and they may tell our story in ways that we may not like. Not because they are malevolent, but because as others try to make sense of who we are, what we’re up to and the why of our actions, they draw on their own experience, especially their experience of people they consider to be “like” us.

Typically a “story of self” is told, in part at least, Barack Obama, for example, told a “story of self” in less than 7 minutes at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. Why did he chose the stories he told? What if he’d left out those stories? How did those stories reveal truths about the person he

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had become. How did those stories enable the rest of us – who are neither immigrants or of color – identify with his values? Think about his phrase “an improbable love” to describe his parents marriage. Why improbable? And why make a point of it?

**Story of Us**

A public story is not only an account of the speaker’s personal experience. Any “self” story includes fragments of stories drawn from our culture, our faith, our parents, our friends, the movies we’ve seen, and the books we’ve read. Although individuals have their own stories, however, communities, movements and organizations – and nations - weave collective stories out of distinct threads, bound together in a common pattern. Our individual threads intersected the day Kennedy was assassinated or when we saw the planes hit the twin towers because we shared a crisis, we learned the morals about how we are to act and how life is to be lived. Points of intersection can become the focus of a shared story – the way we link individuals’ threads into a common weave. My story becomes “our” story when its project is our project, its crisis is our crisis, or its resolution teaches a moral common to us all.

Learning to tell a “story of us” requires deciding who the “us” is, which values shape that identity, and which of those values are most relevant to the situation at hand. How does the story teller become part of this larger story? Stories then not only teach us how to live, they also teach us how to distinguish who “we” are from “others”, reducing uncertainty about what to expect from our community. In the midst of treacherous weather, earthquakes, disease and other environmental sources of great uncertainty and unpredictability – it is the behavior, the actions and reactions, of the people
whom we live among, and our shared stock of stories, can gives us greater safety.

Although many of us identify with Obama as he tells his “story of self”, at a certain point he shifts to a “story of us”. How do we know? Why does he site the Declaration of Independence? Grassroots Sierra Club leaders learning to tell their “stories of us” drew on the inspiration of morals drawn from earlier struggles by their organization for current struggles. Others recounted John Muir’s discovery of his calling, linking it to sense of calling many in their organization share. And one recounted how she felt when she had to speak at a Board of Supervisors for the first time and, as she was standing there, realized that she wasn’t standing alone but with 2800 other members in that county alone. In other words, a “story of us” enables us to experience the values that move us as a community, much as a “story of self” can.

Our cultures are repositories of stories. Community stories are about challenges we have faced, why we stood up to them (our values, our shared goals), and how we over came them (our religious traditions, political beliefs, economic beliefs). We tell community stories again and again as folk sayings, popular songs, religious rituals, and community celebrations (e.g., Easter, Passover, 4th of July). If you look at the Exodus story you'll note God stops the action just as the Israelites are about to cross the Red Sea to instruct them in the telling of the story of what is happening and establish rituals for its annual retelling. Just like the stories of individuals, collective stories can inspire or paralyze, they can inspire hope and generate despair. We also weave new stories from old ones. The Exodus story, for example, served the Puritans when they colonized North America, but it also served Southern blacks claiming their civil rights in the freedom movement. The story of Jesus going up to the Temple to cleanse it of money changers became black clergy
“going up” to conduct prayer services in the “whites only” county court house to drive out the “money changers” of their day.

**Story of Now**

Stories of “now” articulate a challenge we face now, the choice we are called upon to make, and the meaning of “making the right choice”, in particular the hope that may be there. Stories of “now” are really stories set in the past, present and future. The challenge is now; we are called upon to act now because of who we have become, a legacy of the past; and the action that we take can shape a desired future. These are stories in which we are the protagonists. We face a crisis, a challenge. It’s our choice to make. And, if it is a story of hope, there’s hope if we make the right choice. It’s not a sure thing, but there’s hope... and it’s the right thing to do. The story teller among us whom we have authorized to “narrativize” this moment finds a way to articulate the crisis as a choice, reminds us of our moral resources (our stories, stories of our family, our community, our culture, our faith), and offers a hopeful vision we can share as we take our first steps on the journey.
Like any story, a story of hope begins with recognition that an urgent challenge that we face can become a moment of choice. We feel the uncertainty, but it is combined with a sense of promise. We feel the urgency, combined with possibility: do we act or not? By turning a bad, hopeless, or overwhelming situation into a moment of choice, we have narrativized the moment. We have given the moment real significance in our lives. We are in the midst of a new story.

While we may have believed ourselves resigned to an inevitable fate, a story of hope moves us to consider new possibilities. Henry begins his speech to his men by, quite directly, giving them the choice to leave:

*Rather proclaim it Westmorland, through my host*  
*That he which hath no stomach to this fight*  
*Let him depart. His passport shall be made,*  
*And crowns for convoy put into his purse.*
We would not die in that man’s company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.\(^{50}\)

Of course, it’s not just about choice. People paralyzed by fear, who do not have the wherewithal to choose, may not have a real choice. If Henry merely reported the odds of victory, and offered his soldiers the choice to leave, many of them would likely have ran for the hills. So along with presenting a choice, an organizer motivates his constituency by rooting that choice in shared values that call them to action. By presenting the battle as a choice – and a noble choice – Henry opens his soldier’s eyes to the possibility of everlasting honor. Before the speech they feel resigned to a grim fate. After, they willingly choose to fight for their eternal glory.

Having real choice is an experience of freedom. When, given this freedom, we choose to act in a way that honors certain beliefs over others; certain values over others, those values that we honor grow stronger. But the choice is in the action. The change begins when we act. It’s the taking of the action that becomes transformative, that starts a new pathway. Motivation that does not turn into action is meaningless.

The Choice

Why is it that “we” are called upon to choose to face this challenge? What is it in who we are that demands it of us? What is it in who we are that tells us we can do it? Rather than telling tales in flowery phrases, King Henry focused on mobilizing his men’s understanding of their pasts, their identities, their aspiration, to face a current challenge in a way that would make a new future possible – as individuals, as part of the “happy few”, as warriors,

Christians, and Englishmen. These might not be the same “moral sources” that we would draw upon to find courage, but, for his time and place, he knew the moral sources of his men.

And in his telling their story Henry’s men become a “we”. “Stories are nested. One’s own story is never simply an individual account of one’s own experience, but it weaves in threads drawn from the stories of our culture, our faith, our parents, our friends, the movies we’ve seen, and the books we’ve read. When we feel isolated, we often fail to see interests we share with others, have little access to common resources, have no sense of shared identity, and feel powerless. The experience of solidarity – or love – can challenge this. By articulating why we, as a group, are called to face this challenge, by calling up stories drawn from our experience, our shared culture, our community, we evoke values we hold that compel us to act. Each individual’s life story is linked together through the story of shared struggle. The moment of choice is not only a choice for an individual, but for a group. And, in a sense, by transforming ourselves into courageous actors and members of a courageous group, we also transform our world. And through mass meetings, singing, common dress, shared language, and other rituals, we can foster a sense of collective identity that helps each of us feel supported in the risks we take.

So when we start a new organization, we not only form new relationships and mobilize new resources, we also begin a new story – a story that, if it is successful, will weave together our individual stories with a broader community story. “Organizing stories” bridge individual stories to form a shared story, old frames to new, individual interests to common interests, old possibilities to new ones.
The Outcome: Where’ the Hope?

What can we hope for? Where are we going? What’s the “vision”?

To act with courage, is to act in the face of fear. Many emotions can help us act in the face of fear, but hope matters most. Hope for the future can trump the fear to risk reaching for it.

Where does “hope” come from? How can we inspire hope in ourselves and in others? It will not work to pass out cupcakes, sing kumbaya, and announce we should “be hopeful now”.

Hope is specific, not abstract. When God wishes to inspire the Israelites in Exodus, he doesn’t offer vague “hope”, but describes a “land flowing with milk and honey”.51 We can picture it, see it, and imagine what it would feel like. The Prophet Amos tells us that “when there is no vision, the people perish” because a people cannot live without hope.

This is a crucial point at which story and strategy overlap . . . because one key element in “hope”, and element of strategy, is a credible vision of how to get from here to there. So the job of devising a story of hope can’t be completed until the strategic work is done to articulate a vision of how to move forward. This moment in which story (why) and strategy (how) overlap can be a moment in which, a Seamus Heaney put it, “justice can rise up, and hope and history rhyme”.52

51 The Bible, Exodus 3:9.

A vision of hope can unfold a chapter at a time. It can begin, for example, with simply getting the number of people to show up at a meeting that you committed to do. It can build by winning a “small” victory, evidence that change is possible. But what turns a small victory into a source of hope is its interpretation as part of a greater vision.

In churches, when people have a “new story’ to tell about themselves it is often in the form of “testimony” – a person sharing their an account of their experience moving from despair to hope, the significance of the experience itself strengthened by the telling of it. Sometimes other communities have already won what our community seeks. They can come and tell us about it, giving us far greater hope when we hear from them in person.

How does Henry restore hope to his men? Does he tell them the battle will be easy? Does he rundown the French, telling those men that they’re not really up to it? Does he convince them that help is on the way? Does he tell them none will die?

No. Henry doesn’t lie about the facts – they are brutally clear. He changes their meaning. He stirs hope in his men’s hearts by changing his men’s view of themselves. No longer must they remain a few bedraggled soldiers led by a young and inexperienced king in an obscure corner of France who are about to be wiped out by an overwhelming French force. They can become a “happy few”, united with their king in solidarity, holding an opportunity to grasp immortality in their hands, to become legends in their own time, a legacy for their children and grand children. How can they turn away? This is their time!

Henry makes another important choice. He never demonizes the French. Henry enhances his men’s sense of their own worth, without robbing
his opponents of theirs. One of the greatest inhibitions to action is self-doubt – a belief in one’s own inadequacy to handle the task at hand. Self-doubt can be challenged by a call to action that makes clear how one can actually “make a difference” – one can choose, one has a job to do, one is up to the job, and, if done well, together with the efforts of all the others, we will accomplish our mission. And rather than telling tales of jolly old England, he helped his men look to their traditions, their pasts, for the moral resources to reach toward a new future. By engaging his men in telling a new story of who they were, he transformed the meaning of the battle that they faced, turning certain defeat into possible victory. Of course the story didn’t do it alone. Victory also required Welsh archers who with their longbows knocked French knights off their horses. But longbows or not, if the English had believed themselves beaten, there is little doubt they would have been.

Finally, for the claim that “you can make a difference” to be credible, the action must begin right here, right now, in this room, with action each one of us can take. It’s the story of a strategy, a credible strategy, an account of how, starting with who and where we are, we can, step by step, get to where we want to go our action can call forth the actions of others. And their actions, can call others, and together these actions can carry the day. It’s like the old protest song Pete Seeger used to sing,

“One man’s hands can’t tear a prison down.  
Two men’s hands can’t tear a prison down.  
But if two and two and fifty make a million,  
We’ll see that day come round.  
We’ll see that day come round”.

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53 Seeger, Pete, (1964), Fall River Music, Inc.
Celebrations

If we do our deliberative work in meetings, we do our story telling in celebrations. If meetings are about thinking, celebrations are about feeling. A celebration is not a party. It is a way members of a community come together to honor who they are, what they have done, where they are going -- often symbolically. Important life celebrations may be at times of sadness, as well as times of great joy. Celebrations provide rituals that allow us to join in enacting a vision of our community -- at least in our hearts. Institutions that retain their vitality are rich in celebrations. In the Church, for example, mass is "celebrated". Harvard's annual celebration is called graduation and lasts a whole week. Of course, celebrations that lose touch with the day-to-day experience of what the organization does can lose their meaning, become formal, and actually emphasize the need for renewal.

Beginnings are when storytelling is at its most powerful – for individuals, their childhood; for groups, their formation; for movements, their launching; and for nations, their founding. The way we interpret these moments of great uncertainty – about the future, about each other, about what we’re doing – establish the norms, create the expectations, and shape patterns of behavior that influence all subsequent development of our group, organization, or movement. And we draw on them again and again. Nations institutionalize retelling their founding story as an ever-renewable source of guidance and inspiration. Most faith traditions enact a weekly retelling of their story of redemption, usually rooted in their founding as well. Well told stories help turn moments of great crises into moments of “new beginnings”.

Celebrations are a way we can interpret important events, recognize important contributions, acknowledge a common identity, and deepen our sense of community. They can be formal or informal – rallies, fiestas, victory
parties, shared meals, mass meetings, or religious services. Small "celebratory acts" can be introduced into many aspects of an organization's life. In the UFW we learned a "farm worker applause" that celebrated our solidarity, expressed our unity, and identified us as participants in the movement. Certain traditional opening and closing songs can play this role. Amnesty International ends its meetings with a short letter writing session on behalf of one of their prisoners. More important than the number of letters written is the affirmation of what the organization is all about. What sorts of celebrations do your organizations hold? What is celebrated there? How? What is the story these celebrations tell of your organization? How do you conduct celebrations that acknowledge diversity as well as unity?

**Conclusion**

Organizers can offer leadership to others by motivating others to act in ways that can create new experiences that can create new understanding. Have you ever watched a mama bird and her baby birds when it is time for them to learn to fly? Does she peck gently at their ears, persuading them they have nothing to be afraid of? Does she describe the wonders of flying, hoping to entice them? Usually, with a quick push, they’re out of the nest and in the air. They wobble around a little bit, try their wings, go up, go down, but eventually get it. And as they begin to fly instead of seeing the ground as dangerous and distant, they come to see it as a safe place to rest. Instead of seeing the sky as a vast and frightening expanse, they come to see it as a wondrous place to explore. And, as the mama bird would tell you if she could, it isn’t just knowing what to do that matters, but when to do it.
QUESTIONS
Motivation, Celebration, Story Telling

1. What motivates you to do the work your project requires?
2. What motivates people participating in your project? What feelings are being tapped into or challenged? What belief barriers are being broken? By whom?
3. If they are not motivated, how do you think they could be?
4. What is your story of what brought you to this project, why the project matters to you, and why it should matter to anyone else?
5. What stories do people in the community tell about your project/organization? How do you tell the story of your project? How do these stories relate to one another?
6. How does your project tell its story? Is it told in raps, orientations, actions, or celebrations? Upon what symbols does it draw, and what do they mean?
Interpretation II: Strategy, Deliberation and Meetings
(Week 8)

Introduction

Last week we discussed how organizers develop shared understanding of why we should act – motivation, narrative, celebrations. This week we focus on how to develop a shared understanding of how we can act – how to strategize. Last week we discussed moving from passivity to participation, this week from reaction to initiative. And we begin with the story of David and Goliath.

Why begin with the story of David and Goliath? Well, for one thing, people pursuing a mission of change find that the preponderance of resources – or at least what have been considered resources up to that point – is on the other side, the status quo, which almost by definition, those with the most resources have an interest in maintaining. Advocates of change, in other words, like David, must find ways that they can compensate for a deficit of resources, with an abundance of resourcefulness. And this is really what strategy is all about.

Strategy is about turning “what you have” into “what you need” to get “what you want” - how to turn resources into power. If we think of power as the influence one actor can exercise over another because of an asymmetry of interests and resources, as shown in Strategy: Chart #1, one way to correct the imbalance is to aggregate more resources. That’s why people form unions, advocacy organizations, or nations. Another way to correct the imbalance, however, is to move the fulcrum on which the balance rests to get more leverage out of the same resources. This is what good strategists learn.
to do - get more leverage from resources that ARE available. This makes power a matter not only of resources but also of resourcefulness. And because organizers are often trying to change things, they often have to rely on resourcefulness to compensate for lack of resources. Why do you think David was a good strategist? What role did motivation play? What role did resources play? What was the role of imagination?

**Strategy: Chart #1**

![Strategy Chart #1 Diagram]

**Strategy and Tactics**

Strategy is a way of imagining. It is the conceptual link leaders make between the places, the times and the ways they mobilize and deploy resources and the goals they hope to achieve by this mobilization. It is a way of framing specific choices within a broader framework of meaning.

The word strategy comes from Greek for general - *strategos*. When armies were about to clash on the plane below, the general (Strategy Chart #2) went up to the top of the hill and, with the goal of winning the battle,
evaluated resources on both sides, reflected on opportunities and constraints imposed by the battle field, and how to deploy troops in ways most likely to achieve his goal. A good strategos not only had a good overview of the field. He also had intimate knowledge of the capacities of his men and those of his opponent, details of streams and bridges, and mastery of both the forest and the trees. Once the battle was underway, however, the best strategos was often back on the battlefield where he could adjust the plan as conditions changed.

The taktikas were the individual ranks of soldiers with specific competencies whom the strategos deployed to take specific actions at specific times and places. Tactics are specific actions through which strategy is implemented. Tactics are no less important than strategy, but they are different. A strategos with an excellent overview, but who misjudges the competence of his taktikas would be lost. Getting results, taking initiative successfully, requires developing the capacity for good strategy and good tactics.

**Strategy: Chart #2**

![Strategy Chart](image)

**Strategic Action**

Strategy is about turning “what you have” into “what you need” to get "what you want" - figuring out how to use the resources you have to achieve
your goals in light of given constraints and opportunities (Strategy: Chart #3). Strategic action is a way of acting, not an alternative to acting. It is acting with intentionality and mindfulness of one’s goals, as opposed to acting out of habit or impulse. So devising strategy is an ongoing activity, not simply a matter of making a "strategic plan" at the beginning of a campaign and then sticking to it. Planning (getting an overview of the plane) is useful in helping those responsible for leading the organization arrive at a common vision of where they want to go and how they hope to get there. But the real action in strategy is, as Alinsky put it, in the reaction to it – by other actors, by the opposition, and in consequential events. What makes it "strategy" and not "reaction" is that we make mindful choices of where we want to go and how we hope to get there like the potter interacting with the clay on the wheel, as Mintzberg describes it.54

Although strategic action is taken with reference to the future, it is taken in the present. We make choices in the present with an eye to the consequences these choices may have in the future. When we strategize, we give a voice to the future in the present. We make future claims on the present. When we don’t strategize, it is often not because we don’t know how, but because it can be very difficult. When we must make choices about how to invest scarce resources, voices of our present constituencies speak most loudly, even though they were created by choices in the past. The voices of future constituencies are silent. Strategy is a task of leadership in part because it requires real courage - a willingness to say no to current demands, while finding the faith to commit to an uncertain future. Our choices may turn out as we wish, but then again, they may not. Trying to shape the future may require choices that could involve substantial risk in the present.

The first step in shaping the future, however, is to imagine it… and then to find the courage to act on our imagination.

**Strategy Chart #3**

Mapping the “arena” within which you hope to realize your goals first requires being as clear as you can about your goals. The more concrete, imaginable, and specific your goals, the more clearly you - and others whom you engage - can focus on pooling your efforts to achieve them. You make judgments about the constraints and opportunities within your "arena" of action. Surveying the resources of your constituency and those of other actors who may play a role in the unfolding action, including any potential opposition is another assessment that helps you understand your capacities. But resources are also not always obvious and good strategy often involves discovering resources in unexpected places. Strategic action is not a single event, but a process or a loop continuing throughout the life of a project (Strategy: Chart #4). We plan, we act, we evaluate the results of our action, we plan some more, we act further, etc. We strategize as we implement, not
prior to it. As Alinsky writes, and as the cases we read this week illustrate, much strategic action flows from the reactions of others to which one must respond creatively and adaptively. In other words, good strategizing is an ongoing adaptive process that effective leaders learn to do.

**Strategy Chart #4**

![Strategy Chart #4](image)

So strategy requires choosing - committing yourself and your resources to the course of action you believe most likely to yield the desired outcome - yet remaining ready to adapt to new opportunities as they emerge. A laundry list of “what we are going to try” is not a strategy. As Cesar Chavez used to say strategy is not so much about making the *right* decision as it is about making the decision that you made the right decision. In the same vein, Mitzberg writes, “Organizations that reassess their strategies continuously are like individuals who reassess their jobs or their marriages continuously -
in both cases, people will drive themselves crazy or else reduce themselves to inaction”.

How do we know when we need to adapt, or when we need to “stay the course?” One of the primary responsibilities of strategic leadership is to manage this tension between commitment and adaptation.

**Targeting**

We can understand strategy by breaking it down into elements: targeting, timing and tactics. Targeting is figuring out how to focus limited resources on doing what is likely to yield the greatest result - especially in terms of constituency, issues, and opposition. One critical choice is deciding who exactly it is within your constituency with whom you are focusing your initial effort. Another critical choice - as people become more familiar with each other and their interests - is about what problem they want to turn into an "issue" around which to mobilize. California organizer Mike Miller distinguishes between a "topic" such as education, a "problem" such as a lousy school, and an "issue" such as replacing this principal with another one. Topics become problems when they become real within people's experience. They become "issues" when a solution to the problem has been defined. The topic of racial discrimination, for example, becomes a problem when "I have to get on the bus at the front, pay my fare, get off, get on again at the back and sit (or stand) in the back even when there are empty seats in the 'white' section". A problem, in turn, becomes an issue when something very specific can be done about it by specific actors; e.g., telling the bus company to integrate the buses (a solution) or face a boycott. A good issue is achievable, yet significant. A third critical choice is about which decision-makers you will hold accountable for taking action on your issue.

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55 Ibid, 72.
Timing

Timing is about sequencing your activities to take the initiative, retain it, build momentum, and take advantage of particular moments of opportunity. You are wise to use initial tactics that yield resources that can give you a greater capacity to succeed at your next steps. This is how momentum works - like a snowball, each success contributes resources, which makes the next success more achievable. Another timing concern is about when to "confront" the opposition - or, if yours is a collaborative campaign, when to face the most difficult challenge you face. Alinsky also wrote that it was important never to seek a confrontation you cannot "win". Patiently building the capacity you need to launch a credible challenge to the opposition may avoid the necessity of confrontation - if they become convinced of your power. You keep the initiative by never concluding one activity until it is clear how it will lead to the next one. You also keep the initiative by expecting that every action you take will produce a reaction to which you have already considered how to respond.

Tactics

Tactics are specific activities with which you implement your strategy - targeted in specific ways and carried out at specific times. Here are a few hints about good tactics (there are others in the readings by Bobo and Alinsky). They are consistent with your resources but expose your opposition's lack of resources. They build on your strength and your opposition's weakness. They fall within the experience of your constituency, but outside the experience of your opposition. They unify your constituency, but divide the opposition. They are consistent with your goals. Violent tactics in pursuit of peaceful goals are dissonant, as are goals of "empowering" people that rely on mobilizing money. Good tactics are fun, motivational, and simple.
Strategy, Scope, and Scale

There is a fair amount of confusion about at what level of a project strategy plays a role. Do we focus on strategy when we are planning a year long campaign, but only on tactics when plan our next general meeting? Do we focus on strategy when we are operating at a national level, but only on tactics at a local level? The answer is that strategy plays a role at every level of a project and in every stage. What differs is scope of the “outcome” the strategy is intended to achieve.

As Chart 5, Strategic Scope, is intended to illustrate, each level of a campaign requires projecting and outcome, assessing the resources available to achieve that outcome, assessing the relevant environmental factors, and devising a strategy (targeting, timing, tactics) to translate available resources into that outcome. So your general meeting requires strategizing just as much as your year long plan requires strategizing. It is likely different people will be responsible for different strategic scope at different levels of an organization or for different time periods, but good strategy is required at every level – and the more decentralized the organization, the more good strategists are required.

Finally, strategies developed in a well-designed campaign or organization are nested within one another, harmonize and reinforce one another, and do not operate in conflict with one another.
As I argue in “Why David Sometimes Wins” devising good strategy is an ongoing creative process of learning how to achieve one’s goals by adapting to constantly changing circumstances. It is the result of inputs from people with diverse experience – people who have learned the “salient knowledge”, the “nitty-gritty” detail of the situations being strategized, but who have also learned that there is more than one way to look at things. It takes people who have learned what there is to know about the trees, but can also picture the whole forest. It takes people whose life experience, networks, and understanding link them to the diversity of constituencies whose mobilization matters to the success of the enterprise. In civic associations, a key element in developing good strategy is the extent to which its deliberative process facilitates learning by hearing different points of view, encouraging dissent, resolving things through negotiation rather than fiat or consensus,
etc. Finally, the more motivated a leadership teams, the more likely they are to come up with creative strategy. Factors encouraging motivation include viewing the work as a “vocation” or calling, participating in the decision making, enjoying the opportunity for some autonomy in acting on the decisions, etc. Although good strategy can be the fruit of a strategic genius, it is more often the result of a good strategic team that a good leader has put together.

**Strategy: Chart #6**

*Salient Knowledge*

*Strategic Capacity*

*Learning Processes*

*Motivation*

**Successful Deliberation: Holding Good Meetings**

Organizers conduct meetings for a wide variety of purposes in the course of any organizing campaign: house meetings to recruit members, founding meetings to launch an organization, conventions to set major policy, executive committee meetings to do strategic planning, budget committee meetings to make decisions, etc. What most of these meetings have in common, however, is a deliberative element – a time and space within which
participants express views, consider options, challenge each other’s point of view, and make decisions. The word for deliberation derives from “to liberate, to free from assumptions” and is often about challenging “frames” with which we interpret experience. Socrates, for example, challenged people to evaluate their experience against their frames by employing critical reason in the interrogatory “Socratic method”. He also created so much tension that he was accused of impiety and made to drink the fatal hemlock. In more modern dress, Alinsky invokes use of “critical reason” to challenge existing frames or “rationalizations”. Similarly Freire contrasts the "banking method" of teaching with his method of dialogic challenge. Although their styles are different, Alinsky and Freire go beyond Socrates in that they challenge people to act based on critical reflection on their experience. In this way, they create constructive “tension” that can lead to new action.

Meetings

The deliberative life of an organization is conducted in meetings. An old organizer I once knew said meetings for an organizer were like mass for a priest - it’s where they do their business. That they are so important in the lives of our organizations, but that we manage them so poorly, is a strange paradox. It is not hard to hold good meetings. It requires answering questions:

- Who is responsible for managing the meeting?
- How do you make certain everyone is heard from?
- How do you make decisions?


Who is responsible for the meeting?

A good meeting happens only when someone is responsible for making it happen. Taking responsibility for making a meeting work requires clarity about the purposes of the meeting. Is it to plan, to make decisions, to evaluate? These are tasks often best accomplished in different kinds of meetings. Planning is reflective. We get perspective, go up on the hill, get broad overviews, and imagine. Taking everyone away for five days of planning is more likely to "push responsibility down" than the "leader" going "up on the mountain" and coming down with a "revealed" plan. Decision-making requires focus on clear choices within defined time limits. Decision-making can also be widely shared. When mobilizing an entire organization, the decision to mobilize can itself be “pushed down”, facilitating mobilization at the same time. In the UFW, we sometimes pushed decisions down from the executive board to ranch committees, to crew representatives to individual crews so that when we had to turn out several thousand members, they had all been parties to the decision. Evaluation is more like planning, but contributes to accountability and learning when built into normal routines of an organization – like taking five minutes of evaluation time at the end of each class.

Regardless of its general purpose, those responsible for the meeting should be clear about the outcome they hope to achieve. If you don't know the purpose of a meeting, it is better not to hold it. On the other hand, regular meetings can be important because they give an organization's work a predictable rhythm around which we can plan. As with any other purposeful activity, a meeting should be planned strategically. The “agenda” is the strategy for the meeting. It is the plan for what will happen first, second, third, and conclude the meeting. Just like a "mini-campaign", a good meeting will tie together relational, interpretive and action elements. What are the relational elements in the meeting? What is the interpretive core of it? What
are the actions you hope to achieve there? Because in the final analysis a meeting is about the action that comes out of it, it should be evaluated in motivational and strategic terms. A good meeting requires leadership responsible for its success. It may be an officer, an agenda committee, an executive group, an informal “cabal” - but the buck has to stop somewhere. Being responsible for the meeting is not the same thing as “controlling” it. It simply means making sure the group has what it needs to do its work successfully.

Organizing a good meeting requires (1) thinking through the **goals**, (2) designing an appropriate **agenda**, (3) selecting a good **location** (convenience, access), (4) seeing to the **arrangements** (room size, sound, seating, lighting), (5) **turning people out** (getting commitments, sending out reminders, doing reminder calls, one-on-one meetings, etc.) and (6) **assigning responsibilities** for the work of the meeting. Each of these elements is important. I once organized a rally that was a big success because 500 people came, but the sound system was so worthless that no one knew what was going on. After that, I always made sure someone with a rock band took care of the sound.

Meetings require management, leadership or, if you prefer, facilitation. A well designed meeting structures opportunities for participation so people can be heard, questions can be asked and answered, discussion can take place, decisions are arrived at, and the most important items are attended to. This doesn’t just happen “spontaneously”. People sometimes object to “formalizing” deliberative process – why do we need an agenda, we don’t need a facilitator, we’ll just make it up as we go along, etc. Perhaps they fear “rules” will inhibit the creativity of the group. In fact, agreement about basic rules allows a group to be more creative than when it turns in on itself because it can’t decide how to decide. Rules can be “bureaucratic”, but only if
someone else makes them. Civic associations differ from bureaucratic organizations because of who makes the rules – not simply because rules exist. Fear of “commitment” that compromises a person’s individual choice may also be a concern. But an organization that doesn’t entail obligations along with rights isn’t much of an organization.

Opening a meeting separates “regular” time (our own time) from “community” time (time during which we occupy organizational roles). A meeting begins when it is “called to order” at the announced time. Meetings that start late, drag on forever, and end late are disrespectful of our "own time" and our "community time”. The first few times it may be a little rough starting on time, but everyone will get the idea as they realize "this group is different" and takes "its time" and "their time" seriously. Call the meeting to order clearly and crisply -- not "well...gee...I guess maybe it might be...cough, cough...it might be about...time to start...I mean, if no one has an objections...but we can keep waiting if you want to...since so few people are here..”. Welcome people to the meeting. Some groups have a short prayer. This sets off the “specialness” of community time, focuses everyone’s attention, and brings silence to the room so the meeting can begin. When the ancient Greeks prepared to play music they made a loud noise that got everyone’s attention and, as they put it, created the silence into which the music could flow. After welcoming people, review the agenda. Explain the goals of the meeting, how the time will be used to achieve those goals, and what time the meeting will end. Rules of order should be reviewed. It may be important to ask the group for its consent to the agenda. Introductions may be appropriate depending on the size of the group, its familiarity with itself, and so on.

The person managing the meeting must move the agenda along, pay attention to the time and see to participation in the group. Because one
meeting can usually handle only one major item of business, it is very impor-
tant not to spend all the time on the first item just because it is the first item
- like whether to serve chicken dogs or hot dogs at the annual barbeque. Fo-
cus on what you want to make happen at the meeting - a choice about a
program, election of an officer, or adoption of a program. Plan the meeting
so this item is at the center of attention and so that there is adequate time
to discuss it. It is important for the group to feel that something happened at
the meeting - that people's "emotional memory" of the meeting isn't that it
was just a "big waste of time".

How do you make certain everyone is heard from?

Your meetings will be more successful if everyone has a real opportu-
nity to participate. The views of participants based on their experience are
one of the most valuable resources the group has to draw on – especially if it
is a group with some genuine diversity. People don’t speak up in meetings
for many reasons, including fear of being rejected by the group, believing
they have nothing to contribute, thinking others will not take them seriously,
inhibitions of class, race, gender and nationality, and so forth. A skillful facili-
tator is proactive in asking people for their views, especially those who don’t
always have their hands up. The members of the group can help by doing
the same. You may also want to have a time in your meeting when you go
around the room and get everyone’s opinion (if it’s not a meeting of 500
people). Groups that tolerate differences of opinion tend to make better deci-
sions because they can avail themselves of more information and challenge
themselves to think through their reasoning more clearly. Those who have
been party to a decision are also likely to be more committed to carrying it
out. Again, it doesn’t matter so much how you do it, as that you do it.
How do you make decisions in the meeting?

Making decisions requires agreement to a “decision rule” -- voting, consensus, majority, no objections, or some other scheme. Decision rules appropriate in some situations may not be in others. For example, many people seem to prefer consensus because then “everyone agrees”, however the difficulty with this in civic associations is that everyone does not agree, but the work of the organization usually must still proceed. Requiring everyone to agree in fact can make dissent illegitimate by making it threatening to the ability of the group to get its work done. So consensus often turns into pressure on those who disagree to “get them to agree” in ways that can rob the process of integrity. On the other hand, some groups thrive operating by consensus. The important thing is explicit agreement about how you will make decisions.

The most awkward point in a meeting is when the question of who will do what arrives. The most wonderful, creative, wise decisions mean nothing if no one accepts the responsibility for implementing them, for carrying them out. Again, there is no one way to do this. A chair may appoint people. A person may volunteer. People may be chosen by the group. As with delegation, there are many elements to consider – who is most skilled at what is required, who is most motivated, who has relationships with the appropriate people, whom does the group trust, who will learn the most from doing it, who’s turn is it to do it, etc. Again, there is no one way to do this, but if you do not do it, you just wasted most of your time in the meeting.

Meetings should end on time. Before closing, conduct a brief evaluation, repeat follow-up announcements, and set the time and place for the next meeting. Some groups have closing prayers or songs that mark the return to "personal time". Once the meeting is formally adjourned, everyone
can return to normal time, exit their formal “meeting roles” and interact with each other in less formal ways. It may be important to facilitate this with refreshments and some music. Proof of a good meeting is a “meeting after the meeting” - people hang out, energized, wanting to talk more about what just happened. Meetings that just kind of fade away are evidence of an organization that is fading away.

**Conclusion:**

**Story and Strategy**

There is tension inherent in the fact that our experience shapes what we think, but what we think shapes our experience. Are we wiser trying to alter our experience or how we think about our experience? Is it more effective to make new experience accessible in terms of people’s existing frames (frame alignment) or to change people’s frames to reinterpret their experience (frame transformation)? What is the link between “reinterpreting” the world and “changing” the world?

Organizing is not only about changing the world, nor is it only about changing what people think about the world - it is about the connection between the two. Organizers argue taking people on a weeklong “reframing” retreat will change very little if they return to the same “structural” setting they left behind. On the other hand, organizers also argue that changing a “structural” setting without changing the people who operate within that setting, will also change very little. Insofar as people change, they may begin to acquire the power to change their circumstances - and as people acquire the power to change their circumstances, they begin to change. This is one reason this course is called “people, power and change”.
On the one hand, organizers challenge people to interpret their experience differently. This is the value of the “outsider’s” perspective. Organizers don’t just provide “information” but challenge people to reframe their understanding of themselves and their experience through relationships, new stories (frame transformation), deliberative processes, and action tactics. On the other hand, organizers must also make the world accessible in terms of the frames people have (frame amplification, frame bridging, frame extension). This is the value of the “insider’s perspective. Outsiders don’t "frame" things as insiders do. This is why “reframing” is based not on one party doing a “snow job” on the other, but on a dialogic process between and among them. The work of turning “problems” into “issues” (reframing a problem as actionable) lies between the two. Much of the interpretive work of organizing involves finding ways to put new wine into old bottles. If people find they like it, they may decide to rebottle it.

Although story telling is primarily motivational and strategy is primarily analytic, a "credible strategy" plays an important part in a hopeful narrative. Devising a credible strategy and telling a motivational story go together. Most effective campaigns have a complementary "story" and "plan". How we can build from resources we have, how we can take advantage of opportunities, why the constraints will not overwhelm us, how each step leads to the next - all of these are elements in a plausible strategy. Just as good strategy gives individual tactics meaning by transforming them from isolated events into steps on the road to our goal, a good story gives our actions meaning by transforming us into participants in a powerful narrative. Analytics can also help us "deconstruct" an old story, on the way to learning to tell a new one. In organizing, our strategy and story are not only how we persuade ourselves that a particular course of action is worth the risk but also how we mobilize others without whose participation there would be no action at all.
QUESTIONS
Strategizing, Deliberating and Meeting

1. What is the overall strategy of the organization with which you are working? Is it based on claims making or collaboration?
2. Upon what resources does it draw? At what goals is it aimed? To which constraints and opportunities is it responsive?
3. What is the strategy you have used, and how does it fit with the overall strategy of your project?
4. How have you used targeting, timing and tactics in your project?
5. Who participates in deliberating about what your organization does? How often are meetings held? Among Whom? In what settings? How are meetings structured?
Five weeks ago we turned to the work of leadership in organizing. We looked at how organizers build relationships. We looked at the two ways organizers do the interpretative work of motivation and strategy needed to arrive at a shared understanding of what is to be done and the will to do it. This week we focus on action - the concrete ways we mobilize and deploy resources to enact our strategy. In a civic association, its most valuable resources are those its constituency can contribute - time, energy, effort - in a word, their commitment. This commitment of resources - volunteer resources in large measure - is what makes action possible. Whether holding a rally, conducting a delegation, or mounting a petition campaign, all action begins with a commitment. Action does not follow strategy; however, it unfolds together with it. We may learn what is possible only when taking action opens up new possibilities - as when Rosa Parks refused to get up out of her seat on a bus in Montgomery Alabama. Before getting to what it takes to make an action program work, organizers have key strategic choices to make about how to mobilize and deploy resources in general.
Resource Mobilization and Effective Action: 
Paying the Piper and Calling the Tune

The way resources are mobilized affects how they can be deployed, and the way they are deployed affects how they can be mobilized, as illustrated in Action: Chart #1. This helps clarify the relationship between action programs and resources. As Oliver and Marwell point out, resources mobilized from within a constituency can be deployed with accountability only to the constituency. Outside resources, on the other hand, often entail accountability to those who contribute them - placing limits on how they can be used. When a number of foundations decided that the environment was a priority, for example, some inner city organizations dependent on foundation funding decided that the interests of their constituents could be served by focusing on environmental programs.

Similarly, devising tactics that require lots of money, if what you have is lots of people, can impose severe constraints on what you do. Or they can backfire as in Ron Carey’s recent campaign for the presidency of the Teamsters Union that relied on high tech tactics requiring large amounts of funds raised in dubious ways. Basing your action program on tactics that require mobilizing people, on the other hand, can most directly empower your constituency, but it can constrain you to find tactics in which your people are willing to take part.

Although an organization can mobilize resources in a variety of ways, its center of gravity rests somewhere in the area described by Action: Chart #2. If the center of gravity is in the inside/people box then it empowers the constituency, makes the organization accountable to the constituency, and limits the use of resources to the constituency's interest. One example is a union. On the other hand, if the center of gravity is in the outside/money
box, then it can disempower the constituency (unless it is outside), make the organization accountable to its funders, and limit its tactics to those consistent with the interests of its funders. One example is a foundation funded service program.

**Action: Chart #2**

Finally, action programs that generate resources must be distinguished from action programs that drain resources. In union organizing, for example, the more successful the union, the more members it gets, the larger the dues base, the more leadership it can developed, and the greater its human and financial resources. Similarly, as some community organizations conduct parish renewal work among member churches, their human and financial capacity grows. Grant-based action programs, in contrast, often fail to generate new resources from the work they do - and keep themselves in a state of perpetual dependency.

The beauty of the grape boycott was that it was an action in which everyone could play a part - from a person who shunned grapes in a Florida supermarket, to a student who dropped out of school to come to work full
time for the UFW, and everything in between. At one point in 1975, pollster Lou Harris found that 12% of the American public - some 17 million people - were boycotting grapes. The wider the opportunity to act, the wider the participation and the responsibility.

Action entails cost -- time, effort, risk, and hard work. Sacrifice can also be widely shared. The more widely it is shared, the more people have a stake in the outcome. The boycott is a good example of this as well. When one or two people do all the "sacrificing", they quickly become "burned out", while everyone else blames them for whatever goes wrong.

The flip side of shared sacrifice is shared success. When many people have an opportunity to contribute to the effort, they also share in its success. It is "their" victory, not someone else's victory. This, in turn, creates motivation and a sense of entitlement that facilitates accountability. The day after we won the Pelosi for Congress campaign in San Francisco, 15 Filipina women who had served as precinct leaders showed up at the campaign headquarters looking for Nancy (Pelosi). They had turned out her vote very effectively and played an important role in the victory. They had won, they said, and now they had come to find "Nancy" to get help on the immigration problems they had. This was exactly as it should be. It had been their work, their victory, and now they were entitled to enjoy some of the fruits of success.

There is no right or wrong answer to what an appropriate relationship between resources and action should be. Understanding the relationship is essential, however, so you can make conscious choices about how to set up your organization so it has a chance to accomplish its purposes.
What Kind of Action Program? Collaborative or Claims Making?

A second key strategic question with respect to action is whether the organization’s emphasis will be on “collaborative” or “claims making” action: collaborative action focused on building up a community’s “power with” - or capacity - or claims making action focused on challenging power being exercised over a community. Whichever the ultimate goal, however, a sound program usually begins with some form of collaborative action. As shown in Action: Chart #3, an action program can be viewed as a kind of pyramid. At the base of the pyramid are resources an organization can mobilize to achieve its purposes. These resources are usually mobilized as smaller steps lead to greater ones. A first step might be to sign a petition, a second step to come to a meeting, a third step to join in an “action”, and so on. These steps culminate in a very specific goal; Examples include the founding meeting of a credit union, contacting 5000 voters, enrolling enough members to start a death benefit, or getting 2000 people to a meeting addressing the city’s need to allocate drainage funds. Tactics that can help build a broad base of support to develop as much organizational capacity or “power to” as possible are located toward the bottom of the pyramid.

**Action: Chart #3**

![Action Program Diagram](image)
These tactics can be used to achieve collaborative goals such as a credit union, a death benefit, or cooperative day care. But if the organization has “claims making” intent, a foundation built in this way can be the first step in challenging someone else’s “power over” the community, for example, getting the city to allocate funds, an employer to raise wages, or Congress to pass a law. This may require direct action, political action or economic mobilization. In any case, collaborative work lays the foundation by creating enough “power to” begin to challenge “power over”. Social service programs are usually collaborative at best, whereas social action programs usually involve claims making. Mobilizing community resources for after school tutoring program is an example of collaborative action or "power to". Mobilizing to require the university to establish an ethnic studies program is an example of claims making action that challenges "power over".

**Collaborative Action**

Action programs begin with “start-up tactics” that cast a net for support very widely, giving many people the opportunity to commit their support, and drawing in resources that could become very important later on (Action: Chart #3). These tactics may include filling out a census card, signing a petition, filling out a pledge, and getting an endorsement. They are tied to a specific goal - such as getting 1000 signatures - which, in turn, is tied by a credible strategy to the ultimate goals of the project. Can you think of ways that tactics like these can facilitate leadership development, relationship building and developing shared understanding? What can you learn from debriefing your results as you go along that will help you refine your program? What resources are you generating which can be called upon later in your action program?
In the second phase of an action program, organizers build upon individual expressions of support to bring people together, deepen their commitment and broaden support. Tactics may include coming to a meeting, going to a rally, participating in a march, and so on. The main focus of the activity remains one of expanding support, building more “power to”.

The goals of a collaborative action program are based on resources a community can mobilize by itself. For example, the farm workers established a credit union and a death benefit program, and the “orange hats” learned to conduct an effective neighborhood watch campaign. These goals can be achieved based on inside resources such as membership fees, fees for service, volunteer time, and in kind contributions. They can also be achieved with outside resources such as start-up grants and loans. Tactics include committing to recruit others, taking part in a fund-raiser, joining a specific program, volunteering for a neighborhood watch, volunteering to make phone calls, and engaging people in helping solve each other’s problems.

The account of one of Cesar Chavez’s first house meetings offers a glimpse of an action program in the making. Chavez clearly brought with him a vision of where the organization could go. The conversation unfolded, however, in terms of the interests of those who came to the meeting - burial and credit. Chavez led them into a reflection on how they could mobilize resources through the organization to solve these problems - a death benefit, a credit union. And how could these goals be achieved? Each person could begin that very evening by filling out a census card or agreeing to host a meeting of his or her friends. In this way, the goals of an action program evolved from the interests of a constituency, and the steps to be taken were based

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Claims Making Action

A “claims making” action program is intended to elicit a response from those individuals and organizations that hold the resources needed to address the claims. Community organizations often have to pressure local city government to “claim” money for drainage, potholes, schools and other community needs. In the farm worker account, the UFW had to get union contracts from the growers. The organizational resources drawn on are no different from those mentioned above, but may need a greater degree of commitment. Inside resources include dues, tithing, group pledges, and regular fund-raisers. Outside resources include fund-raisers, wealthy contributors, sympathetic groups, direct mail campaigns, second collections in churches, and gate collections outside union halls.

To avoid premature confrontations while building organizational capacity, organizers usually begin making claims with persuasive tactics such as petitions, delegations, public meetings, public protests, demonstrations, rallies, fasts, vigils, exposes, fact finding missions, etc. These tactics also educate one's constituency, potential supporters, the public, and the opposition (or people within the opposition who might be potential allies). They give the organization as a whole an opportunity to learn how to mobilize under conditions less likely to produce a crippling oppositional reaction.

Depending on how the opposition responds, more assertive tactics may be appropriate such as “non-cooperation” (as Gandhi called it) or “disruption” - sit-ins, sit-downs, shop-ins, teach-ins, pray-ins and balloon-ins. Tactics of non-cooperation reveal the fact that most of the institutions to which we at-
tribute so much "power" rely on our active (if unthinking) cooperation to do their business.

Economic tactics can be still more assertive and include such actions as strikes, boycotts, and picket lines. They also include stockholder campaigns, proxy fights, and various "corporate" campaigns used more recently by unions and others. Sometimes tactics of non-cooperation and economics are combined as in the boycotts of the American colonists or Gandhi's salt march.

Legal tactics may be used in hopes they will produce the desired outcome directly (as in winning a lawsuit), but more often because of the economic and other costs they may impose on the opposition, and sometimes because they help delegitimate the opposition. In 1965, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party persuaded two members of Congress to challenge the right to be seated of Mississippi Congressional representatives who had been elected in segregated elections. The hearings this led to throughout rural Mississippi created venues in which black citizens could summon local white officials to account for their actions - and could themselves testify under Federal protection. Although the challenge itself was ultimately lost, the process helped mobilize local African-Americans and outside support while it demoralized the opposition. One of the main reasons the Teamsters Union decided to make peace with the Farm Workers was the legal fees they faced, which approached $750,000. Legal tactics include lawsuits, motions for discovery, interrogatories, depositions, and challenges to legislative seating.

Finally, useful electoral tactics include accountability sessions, candidate endorsements, opposition, getting out the vote, registering voters, staffing phone banks, lobbying, and letter writing. A capacity to mobilize to
influence an election or defeat political officials is one of the most persuasive ways to influence political actions.

Crafting Collective Action: Outcomes, Commitments, Time, Contingency, Coordination

Regardless of whether one mobilizes resources from the inside or the outside and regardless of whether they are used to promote collaboration or make claims, there is a big difference between making something actually happen, and hoping, wishing, or dreaming that it will happen. One of the most common hazards in organizing is dismissing a strategy or a tactic because “we tried that and it didn’t work” when, in reality, it was never tried – not really. We called the meeting, but hardly anyone came. Oh? What was your attendance goal? Did you make a list of the people you wanted to come? Did you get a commitment from each of those people to come? Did you learn from your successes and your failures what you had to do to get a commitment? Did you follow up with reminder calls, especially on the day of the meeting? Did you get a list of who did come? Did you find out who had invited them? Did you compare their performance to that of others? Did you learn what made the difference?

Engaging in effective collective action poses particular challenges that require greater craft than if you were a “lone ranger” operating off by yourself somewhere. Moving significant numbers of people into coordinated action requires doing detailed thinking, anticipating contingencies, providing accountability and support, conducting training – all “craft” activities that need to be viewed as being as central to the action as the action itself, or there’s likely to be no action.
Unless you can answer these questions not only about a meeting, but also about every link in the chain of contingencies that turns resources into action, there is no “craft” in your work. It becomes almost impossible to evaluate the quality of your strategy, because your “craft” – the excellence with which you do things – is so poor. In order to bring “craft” to your organizing work, it is important to focus on the following: measurable outcomes, numbers of specific commitments, deadlines, and responsibilities.

**Measuring Outcomes**

What are the **measurable outcomes** you will accomplish and by when? Without clear outcomes, your team doesn’t know if it succeeded or failed in doing what it committed to do. As Fred Ross once said, if you can’t count it, it didn’t happen. How many votes will it take to win the election? How much loss must a company suffer for our boycott to succeed? The ancient war strategist Sun Tzu speaks about the importance of measurement in the pursuit of one’s goals:

*The rules of the military are five: measurement, assessment, calculation, comparison, and victory. The ground gives rises to measurements, measurements give rise to assessments, assessments give rise to calculations, calculations give rise to comparisons, and comparisons give rise to victories.*

The measurement of outcomes allows a group to assess, concretely, what is happening. Assessment allows a group to calculate how it is doing over the course of time. Have we secured as many votes as we had planned to secure at this point in our work? Calculation, in turn, allows one to com-

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pare one's own outcomes with those of the opposition, or of previous efforts. If we continue at this rate, will we be victorious? What must we do in order to win? These sorts of comparisons, in turn, allow a group to continue or alter its course so as to ensure victory.

Measurement also allows us to learn by making visible who among us is succeeding, who is failing, and why. Who persuaded more people to sign up? Who was not able to persuade as many? What can we learn from this comparison? In other words, how can every organizer perform at the level of the most successful ones?

Similarly, concrete outcomes allow a group to focus clearly on the specific actions that it must take in order to produce these outcomes, and – in turn – what activities unrelated to the outcome can be eliminated. Without measurable outcome goals, it is easy for a group to lose focus, to be unclear about its goals and therefore, unclear about what actions it must take.

Creating measurable outcomes allows us to take control over our goals. Having measurable outcomes – turning out 25,000 votes, for example – lets us focus on something we can control. It becomes both a basis for evaluation and for learning. Was, indeed, 25,000 votes enough, as we thought? Or did the other candidate win despite our turning out 25,000? In the future, what should our outcome goal be?

As we discussed in the chapter on strategy, goals are embedded within goals. Measurements should thus be associated with each goal. Take the following example from a 1990 California campaign for two environmental propositions. Organizers recognized that they needed to secure approximately 75,000 votes statewide in addition to regular voters. This campaign divided their goals into phases:
• Phase I: Kickoffs – Turn out 500 people to 7 Kickoffs across the state on Saturday, October 20.
• Phase II: Voter ID – Recruit and train 1,000 Precinct Leaders to contact 300,000 Occasional Environmental Voters and identify 150,000 supporters among them - complete by 11/2 (14 days beginning with Kickoffs on 10/20)
• Phase III: Turn out 75,000 additional environmental votes on Election Day, November 6.

Of course, each of these outcome goals had several layers of outcome goals embedded within them – For example, how many people needed to be recruited to help turn out the 500 people on October 20, how many of those 500 people needed to assume leadership roles to recruit Precinct Leaders, how many hours did each of the 1,000 precinct leaders need to work every day in order to identify their voters.

**Securing Commitments**

Once we decide on upon desired outcomes we must organize ourselves to produce them. We must decide on the specific action we will ask people to take – the commitment we will ask them to make - such as signing a pledge not to eat grapes, making your own salt, not riding the bus, etc. To secure the participation of a large number of people, we must delegate the responsibility of securing these commitments to a wide range of leaders or potential leaders. One of the greatest challenges organizers face is in learning to ask for – and get – commitments. A commitment is a specific pledge of time, money, or action. Even if we are asking for a commitment to future action, however, a commitment will be stronger if a pledge to take the action is signed now. “Can we count on you to be at our meeting at 7:00 PM? Great,
would you mind putting your name and phone number down on the list so we can be sure how many chairs to put out and so we can give you a reminder call? I’ll try, I’ll do my best, maybe I’ll be there don’t count as commitment. The genuine commitments we secure, then, become an indicator of the outcome we will achieve.

**Action: Chart #4**

So there is a big difference between putting the word out about a meeting and getting commitments from people to attend. Unless organizers and volunteers ask or and obtain commitments to attend – in writing, if possible – meeting attendance will be a “crap shoot”. This is challenging because we fear being rejected, and we often fear placing others under obligation, because it obliges us as well. Whatever the reasons, it takes courage, training, and dedication to develop a team of leaders who are not afraid to ask for and get commitments. Without this, the “action” will remain always just a little out of reach.
Finally, there is also a big difference between making commitments and keeping them. Many of us have experienced saying we will arrive at 10, but instead we arrive at 10:15. We say we’ll get something done by Thursday, but don’t have it done until Friday. When we break commitments, even in small ways, the commitment itself begins to mean less for us and for others who are counting on us. We say we’re going to be somewhere by a certain time, while knowing we’ll likely be later. Within an organization, failure to honor commitments has a negative exponential effect. If commitment stops meaning very much for me, when I commit to organizing 2 house meetings per week with 15 people at each, am I really going to think that I’ll be able to? And if I don’t think I can, how hard will I work towards this goal?

Managing Time

The way we organize our time expresses our priorities. Whatever we say, how we spend our time is what we actually do. This is so because often time is our most valuable resource, especially collective time – time in a meeting, in an action, at a rally, etc. Gandhi is reported to have said that a “deal without a date is not a deal”. In other words, it is not only a question of what you will do, but the date by when you will do it. Deadlines are not only a way to coordinate; they are a way to create the urgency that it takes to give action the priority it requires to get done. Without deadlines, there is no urgency and, as a result, it is very unlikely that what you set out to do will happen.

How we prioritize time within a campaign affects the value organizers place on their work. In campaigns in which meetings never start on time, if they are held at all, in which some people’s needs trump everyone else’s, in which meetings people prepared for get cancelled, pretty soon, no one believes their work has any value, except for a few at the top. This can be
deadly for a volunteer effort, where organizers have to persuade volunteers of the value of their contribution, but themselves feel undervalued.

Managing Contingency: Reminder Calls

The world of organizing is a world of contingency...everything can go wrong. Someone forgets to unlock the hall, the sound system is missing a cable, someone forgot to order the chairs, the map got printed backwards, half the flyers didn’t get printed on time, someone’s car has a flat tire, the date was mistranslated in the Spanish version, etc. etc. etc. Any human endeavor has to deal with contingency. But in a setting in which inexperienced people are trying to achieve major tasks, under pressure of time and with fewer resources than they need – typical of most organizing situations – the potential for disaster is always lurking just around the corner. And much of this we can’t do anything about.

But there are forms of contingency that we can do a great deal about, and it is on those that we must concentrate. For example, asking a person for a specific commitment – and getting them to sign it – removes some of the contingency as to whether they’ll show up at the meeting or not.

In general, one of the most important aspects of the organizer’s craft is finding ways to remove as much of the contingency as possible – there will still be plenty to go around.

For example, an organizer’s responsibility does not end with securing a commitment. Organizer Larry Tramutola recounts learning this lesson from organizer Fred Ross:
Pointing to the chart and handing me a colored marker, he told me, "Write down everything you have to do each day. Who are you meeting Monday?"

I went over to the butcher paper and wrote down the names and times of the three people that I was supposed to meet that day.

Fred continued, “OK, now when are you calling these people to remind them that you are coming to see them?”

Remind them I was coming to see them? “I hadn’t thought of that”, I told Fred.

“Well, write that down”, he stated firmly. “Reminding is the essence of organizing”.

He went over to [the] butcher paper and wrote in the Sunday column: ‘Make reminder calls to:’ Then, he listed the names and phone numbers of the people I was to visit the following Monday.

The lesson continued. “What time are you calling them?” he asked, and before I could answer, he instructed me, “Now write down the time”. I did.

But he was not through with me yet. “OK, now on Monday, before you meet with them, you need to call them again, right?” Fred asked.

I just nodded quietly while privately thinking that all this reminding and writing down was a bit of overkill. It was only weeks later that I came to understand that these details, and the discipline to put them into practice, are absolutely essential to good
organizing. At the time, though I had not learned that for myself, and I certainly did not want to challenge Fred, so I said nothing.

Fred went on. “Good. Now write on the butcher paper the time that you plan to call them, so you don’t forget. It is always good to call people right before you visit them, so you don’t waste time if they are not there”.

And by the way, he continued, “While you are at the house of one of the people on your list, ask if you can use their phone to call your next appointment. That way they’ll see how serious you are”, he said.

He goes on to reflect on Fred’s coaching:

When volunteers who had promised to come to help pass out leaflets did not show up, he would say, “I’ve told you that you need to remind people to come. When you are not successful organizing, you need to take the responsibility. It is not their fault they didn’t show up. It’s yours. You either didn’t do a good enough job inspiring them, or you didn’t follow up and let them off the hook. Either way it’s your fault”.

Of course, Fred practiced what he preached, holding himself responsible for ensuring Larry’s success as he held Larry responsible for ensuring that others made good on their commitments. Tramutola recalls being coached at the end of each day by Ross:

We started every call with what I had accomplished during the day. He peppered me with probing questions that demanded
thoughtful answers and accountability: “Why did you do that?” “What did you say when he said that?” The interrogation went on for two hours and often longer, as I had to report and relive my successes and failures of the day. Fred asked me one question after another, and unless I was prepared to simply hang up and walk away from what I was doing, there was no escape or relief. But I endured the torment, partly out of pride and partly because I knew Fred was teaching me invaluable lessons about the importance of follow-through and disciplined work.60

Good coaches know what questions to ask, and know when they are not getting complete answers from those they are coaching. In different organizing situations, there are different questions that are important to ask, and different ways of recognizing when people are bullshitting.

**Coordination**

Bringing all these elements of collective action craft together – outcomes, commitments, responsibility, time, and coaching all takes coordination. And coordination requires coordinators, a schedule, and measures. Those responsible for providing leadership must make the time to meeting before and action, during an action if need be, and afterwards to evaluate the action. Managing an effective team means scheduling time for the team to meet, to receive training, and for its members to receive one on one coaching as needed.

Coordination also requires benchmarks to evaluate – and adapt to – results. Where are we, in terms of our goals? How might we need to adjust

60. **L. Tramutola**, (2003), Sidewalk Strategies: Seven Winning Steps for Candidates, Causes and Communities, (Turnkey Press), 39
our behavior in order to achieve our measurable outcomes? Who is doing well? Who is doing poorly? How might we need to adjust our measurable outcomes given what has happened over the last period of time?

This also means organizing space to reflect the goals of the group. Paul Milne discusses the importance of organizing physical space in such a way that the focus of the organization is on outcomes – for example, the number of votes secured through phone calls and house meetings is turned into a large chart that hangs in the line of sight of anyone who enters headquarters: “When you walk through an organizing office, it ought to remind people of what needs to be done, what’s important, what things should happen next. The place should have an orienting effect”.

Perhaps most important for coordination, however, is a regularly scheduled coordination meeting that can serve as an “eye’ in the hurricane, the order at the core of what can feel like a chaotic enterprise. For this to work, however, it must be sacred. When I was coordinating Nancy Pelosi’s first campaign for Congress in 1987, I was looking for an opportunity to establish this practice. We had just begun our daily coordinators meeting when someone came running into the room shouting, “Nancy’s on the phone! Nancy’s on the phone! She’s got to talk to you right away!” All eyes turned to me. Was our time really sacred or not? “Please tell Nancy that we’re in our coordinators meeting”, I said. “I’ll call her as soon as we’re done”. A big sigh of relief. From that point on, we never had any problem sticking to our daily meeting.

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61 Interview with Paul Milne, (2005), July.
Evaluating an Action Program

There are three sound ways to evaluate an action program according to Hackman:62

- **First, does it solve the problem at hand?** Did you get done what you set out to do? Are there more books in the school, for example? Did more money get allocated for environmental protection?

- **Second, does it strengthen the organization?** Did it deepen understanding, build relational commitment, and generate new resources?

- **Third, does it facilitate the growth of individuals who take part in the action?** Did people learn, did they gain confidence, were they energized - or were they completely burned out?

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Conclusion

Returning to Cesar’s house meeting, an event at the beginning of his efforts to build the UFW, let’s reexamine the tactics. What were the relational tactics he used? What kind of interpretive tactics did he use? And what kind of action tactics did he use? The goal of the work we have done over the last three weeks is to see how these three kinds of tactics can be woven together in effective organizational strategies - of which this house meeting is an excellent example.

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QUESTIONS

Action

1. What is the “action program” of your project? Be very specific. What are new participants asked to do?
2. Is your action program collaborative, claims making, or both?
3. Where does your organization get the resources it needs to carry out its action program? Does it draw more heavily on people, money or both? How does the kinds of resources it draws upon - a where it gets them - influence its action program? How does the action program influence the kind of resources it can get and where it gets them?
4. What role does commitment play in mobilizing and deploying resources?
5. Evaluate your action program using the three questions from Hackman: Does it solve the problem at hand? Does it strengthen the organization? Does it facilitate the growth of individuals who take part?
Campaigns
(Week 10)

Introduction

This week as we discuss campaigns we begin pulling together all the elements we have discussed since the beginning of the semester. We reflected on the interests that organizers hope to address, who shares those interest, what resources are needed to address them, and power arrangements governing access to those resources. We looked at ways leaders bring people together to discern common interests and mobilize common resources. We reflected on how to mobilize strategically and motivationally build relationships, share understanding, and take action. When people mobilize for civic action, they do so as organizations (in space) and campaigns (in time). Next week we discuss how we can structure organizations to help us make decisions, allocate tasks, and assign responsibility in effective ways. This week we discuss how to conduct campaigns as coordinated streams of activity focused on achieving specific goals. Campaigns unfold over time with a rhythm that slowly builds a foundation, gathers gradual momentum with preliminary peaks, culminates in a climax when the campaign is won or lost, and then achieves resolution (Campaign: Chart #1). When they are done well, campaigns strengthen the organizations that give rise to them.

What are Campaigns?

Our word for campaign derives from a similar source as other words we have come across this semester - the word for field, this time in Latin. Campaigns were conducted on fields of battle. They were concentrated, intense, had a clear beginning and end, and, usually, a winner and a loser. A campaign was an episode in a much greater undertaking, such as winning a war,
but was made of a number of battles that together comprised the campaign. A campaign was not the whole nation, but an event in the life of the nation, which strengthened it or weakened it. Conducting a campaign is not the same thing as managing an ongoing program, but it is how programs are created, strengthened, or renewed.

**Campaigns: Chart #1**

A campaign is a way to organize time - one of the most valuable resources we have. As Gersick shows, organizations have a temporal life as well as a spatial one. Work gets done according to the internal rhythm of an organization that may be more or less well “entrained” with the rhythm of events in its environment. Many people note, for example, that student groups need to get started in the first weeks of the semester or they won’t get started at all. After mid-semester, the rhythm changes as people focus on finishing what they’ve begun, rather than beginning new things. Stephen
Jay Gould says that time is sometimes a “cycle” and sometimes an “arrow”. Thinking of time as a “cycle” helps us to maintain our routines, our normal procedures, our annual budget, etc. Thinking of time as an “arrow” on the other hand focuses us on making change, on achieving specific outcomes, on focusing our efforts. A campaign is time as an “arrow”.

**Why are Campaigns Strategic and Motivational?**

A campaign is a strategic and motivational way to organize our activities - relationships, interpretation, and action. It is strategic because it is a way to link targeting, timing and tactics to maximize our power. It is motivational because it enacts an unfolding story of the hope that we can achieve our objective. As it progresses, we find we can make a difference. Our work acquires the urgency of genuine deadlines. The solidarity of collaborating with others in a common cause energizes us. A campaign allows us to turn our dissatisfaction (anger) to constructive purpose.

Campaigns facilitate targeting resources and energy on specific objectives, one at a time. Creating something new requires intense energy and concentration - unlike the inertia that keeps things going once they have begun. Campaigns are crucibles out of which new organizations, programs, or practices can emerge. Campaigns allow us to maximize the value of our time - our most limited resource. We can invest energy and commitment for a limited number of days, weeks or months at levels we cannot - and should not - sustain for long periods of time. As a campaign ends, we consolidate our “wins” or our “losses”, we return to “normal life”, we regroup, and perhaps we undertake another campaign in the future. The “adventurous” qual-

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ity of a campaign facilitates the development of relationships more quickly - and with greater intensity - than would ordinarily be the case. We more easily come to share a common “story” that we all take part in authoring. How did Gandhi, Chavez, Mandela, the Orange Hats or DSNI target their efforts? Why?

The **timing** of a campaign is structured as an unfolding narrative or story. It begins with a foundation period (prologue), starts crisply with a kick-off (curtain goes up), builds slowly to successive peaks (act one, act two), culminates in a final peak determining the outcome (denouement), and is resolved as we celebrate the outcome (epilogue). Our efforts generate momentum not mysteriously, but as a snowball. As we accomplish each objective we generate new resources that can be applied to achieve the subsequent greater objective. Our motivation grows as each small success persuades us that the subsequent success is achievable - and our commitment grows. The unfolding story of our campaign makes the unfolding story of our organization more credible and, thus, more achievable. Timing has to be carefully managed because a campaign can peak too quickly, exhausting everyone, and then fall into decline. Another danger is a campaign may “heat up” faster in some areas than in others - as some people burn out and others never get going. What role did timing play with DSNI? Why was Gandhi’s “salt march” a particularly good example of timing?

A campaign links relational, interpretive and action **tactics** as each lays groundwork for the next. We may begin the campaign with 5 organizers, each of whom uses house meetings to recruit 15 precinct leaders (75 people), each of whom goes door to door to recruit 5 volunteers for the phone bank (375 people), each of whom contacts and commits 25 voters (9375 people). Along the way, leadership develops, signs go up, people are talked with, rallies are held, and so forth. Using the 1988 California campaign plan,
we turned 300 organizers into 11,000 precinct leaders into 100,000 house signs into 25,000 Election Day volunteers into 750,000 additional voters. Although it was not enough to elect our candidate President, we created a new wave of grass roots leadership for political efforts throughout the state for the next several years. What sorts of tactics were linked in Chavez’s effort or the DSNI campaign? How did each build upon its predecessor? How did the “salt march” tell a story?

campaigns provide an opportunity for learning by allowing for “small losses” in the early days of a campaign. As Sitkin argues, creating space for “small losses” early in an undertaking affords participants the opportunity to try new things, which is essential to learning how to do them.\(^{64}\) It also affords the organization as a whole a chance to learn how to “get it right”. In most campaigns, we know the first “rap” we write will be changed once the “rubber hits the road” and we begin to use it. Of course it is important to use the early phase of a campaign “mindfully” in this way so it isn’t just a pre-view of what we will do wrong on a large scale.

As is the case with strategy, campaigns are nested. Each campaign objective can be viewed as a “mini-campaign” with its own prologue, kick-off, peaks, climax, and epilogue. The campaign also “chunks out” into distinct territories, districts, or other responsibilities for which specific individuals are responsible. A good campaign can be thought of as a symphony of multiple movements, each with an exposition, development, and recapitulation; but which together proceed toward a grand finale. A symphony is also constructed from the interplay of many different voices interacting in multiple ways but whose overall coordination is crucial for the success of the under-

taking. If this seems an overly structured metaphor, you may prefer a jazz ensemble.

**What Are the Phases of a Campaign?**

A campaign strategically integrates relational, interpretive, and action tactics - as well as leadership development - in each of five phases: a foundation, kick-off, peaks, the peak, and resolution. Use Campaign: Chart #2 to look for similar dynamics in the cases we read about or in your own project.

**Campaign: Chart #2**

![Campaign Rhythm & Phases Chart](image-url)
**Foundation**

During the foundation period, the goal is to create the capacity (the “power to”) with which to launch a campaign. A foundation period may last a few days, weeks, months or years - depending on the scope of the undertaking and the extent to which you start “from scratch”. The foundation for the farm workers’ boycott campaign, for example, was built over a period of three years. During a foundation period, relational tactics are emphasized and typically include one-on-one meetings, house meetings, and meetings of small groups of supporters. Interpretive tactics include deliberation to clarify interests, identifying problems, thinking through how to turn problems into issues, researching the terrain, and designing a plan - as well as first formulating the story of the campaign. What kinds of action tactics are most useful for this period? (Remember, you want to build as broad a base as possible while not letting things heat up too quickly). This is the time to nail down resources, conduct a census, handle small issues (claims), deal with individual cases (collaboration), and so forth. This is a crucial period for leadership development. Initial leaders are identified and may be brought together in an “ad hoc” organizing, sponsoring, or campaign committee - a provisional leadership group with whom you can work to develop the initial stages of the campaign.

**Kick-Off**

The kick-off is the moment at which the campaign officially begins. A campaign doesn’t creep into existence, without anyone noticing... or it will fade away the same way. Setting a date for a kick-off creates the urgent focused concentration and commitment it takes to get things going. It is a deadline for initial recruiting, planning, and preparation of materials. Typically a kick-off takes the form of a big meeting or rally for which everyone
with an initial interest is mobilized (*relational*). Leadership can be recognized there, the campaign story told, the plan ratified, and the program adopted (*interpretive*). In terms of *action*, sign-ups can be gathered, and commitments can be made to hold a meeting, make phone calls or pass out leaflets - and so forth. A kick-off is also a deadline for the formal delegation of leadership authority to those who will be responsible for carrying out the campaign. Short campaigns have a single kick-off. During the three years of the Grape Boycott, we had another kick-off each spring.

**Peaks**

The campaign proceeds toward reaching a series of peaks, each one building on what has gone before. In the example in the reader, we set an objective for organizer recruitment, precinct leader recruitment, voter identification, house sign distribution, Election Day organization, and total voter turnout. In the marches you read about, what were the peaks? What were the peaks of the Montgomery bus boycott? Were there peaks in the DSNI campaign? As the program unfolds, *relational* tactics that contribute to the peaks include recruiting, training, committee expansion, periodic “big meetings”, etc. In the Pelosi campaign, we had a weekly Saturday AM rally at which new precinct leaders were recognized, voter contact results announced, and special training conducted. As to *interpretation*, peaks focus on development of issues and interpretation of actions and reactions. Increasingly, *action* tactics become the focus of attention as services are expanded, key events take place, or the conflict escalates. Leadership development continues as more responsibilities can be delegated, training continues, and more people are brought into the planning. The art of leading a campaign through this phase is in finding ever-new ways to broaden support, sharpen the issues, and renew commitment. It is also in devising peaks that are inspirational, yet achievable - and recovering from peaks not achieved.
The Peak

The campaign “peak” should come at the moment of maximum mobilization - even though it doesn’t always work out this way. I once ran a campaign that “peaked” at the kick-off. The leadership fell apart, losing the capacity to follow through on an exemplary mobilization. In some cases, the timing of the peak is predictable as in an election campaign. In other cases, those who lead the campaign can designate the peak. Chavez’s march to Sacramento, or his 28 day fast, Gandhi’s salt march, and the Selma to Montgomery march had “natural” peaks at their conclusion - which created a kind of “crisis” of expectation on everyone’s part. The resources mobilized to reach this peak - even though not directly targeted on the opposition - generated so much capacity that it caused the opposition to respond. In the farm worker’s boycott target, Schenley Industries was so fearful that the march would focus on them when it reached Sacramento that they signed with the union five days before it arrived. This victory turned the end of the march into a real peak as 10,000 people showed up ready to go right into the next boycott. Other times, the “peak” emerges from the actions and reactions of all those playing a role in the campaign. As the first few grape growers signed contracts, it created a powerful momentum - which we worked at heating up - and which continued to grow until the entire industry signed three months later. Relational tactics include mass meetings, rallies, marches, etc. Interpretive work is critical in bringing a campaign to a successful peak - deliberating about appropriate moves and interpreting events in the most persuasive way possible. The peak is the action program.
Resolutions

Campaigns are either won or lost. Their effectiveness comes from the fact that they are commitments to achieve a clear, measurable, accountable outcome. Winning is not only a matter of claims making. If you are doing collaborative work, winning can mean establishing a new charter school by a certain date, enrolling a certain number of students in your program, or successfully completing a three-month program (with specific objectives). Only by risking failure do we make the kind of commitments that make success possible. This is how we can hold ourselves accountable to those with whom we make a contract. Resolving a campaign, however, means learning how to be successful at “winning” or at “losing”. To succeed at winning you must realize when you have won. Alinsky says that organizers have to be well-integrated schizoids who know how to polarize to mobilize, but depolarize to settle. In the heat of a campaign, it's very easy to confuse the “purity” of one’s position with the interests of one’s constituency. When the grape growers were finally ready to sign with the union, we had to compromise on issues that had been very important to us, but would have prolonged the battle much more. It took serious interpretive work to realize that even though we hadn’t won everything, we had won. On the other hand, it is important to know how to lose. Never pretend a loss is really a win - as in "well we didn’t really win the election, but that doesn’t really matter because it wasn’t really important anyway”. No one believes it, and it robs the commitment we put into the effort of its value. We need to acknowledge a loss as a loss, but put it into context, interpret what happened, accept responsibility, recognize those who contributed - and prepare for what comes next. Win or lose, a campaign should always conclude with evaluation, celebration, and preparation. When we win, we are sometimes so interested in celebrating we forget to learn why we won, what we did right and what we did wrong, and recognize those who contributed. When we lose, even when we do evaluate,
we may not celebrate the hard work, the commitment, the willingness to take risk and all that was achieved. The important thing about campaigns is there is a “next time” - and it is important to prepare for it. Or, as many a Red Sox fan has been heard to remark, "Just wait 'til next season!"

Campaigns and Organizations

Successful campaigns contribute to the capacity of the organizations that generate them - it will leave the organization stronger, not drained of its resources. Similarly, successful organizations continue to “risk” campaigns as the price of renewal, growth, and continued development. (Campaigns: Chart #2). Of course, the firmer and broader the foundation, the more ambitious a mobilization it can support. Next week we will look at the dilemmas involved in creating this kind of an organization.

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QUESTIONS
Campaigns

1. How would you evaluate your project as a campaign? Was there a period of foundation building, a kick-off, a series of peaks as momentum built, a peak at which success was evaluated, a resolution?
2. If your project was not organized as a campaign, could it have been? What difference would it have made?
3. How did you control the peaks in your project to build momentum, and not to peak to early or too late?
Organization: Communities in Action
(Week 11)

This week we look at communities in action - organizations through which we mobilize common resources on behalf of common interests. Last week we discussed how relational, interpretive and action tactics could be strategically and motivationally woven together as campaigns. This week we look at how to structure organizations - formalizing our relationships, our methods of interpretation, and our action routines - to make ongoing effective collaboration possible.

Organizations do just three things: they meet, they act, and they celebrate. Although the concept of organization is simple, working as a social change organization in practice is not easy. As collective enterprises that express individual and common purposes, organizations entail inherent tensions or dilemmas. We cannot eliminate these tensions, nor should we try to because they are vital sources of energy and renewal. We must learn to manage them. The first step to doing this is to recognize the tensions that exist. In this chapter we focus on four key tensions in membership associations: inclusion vs. exclusion, stability vs. change, unity and diversity, and part vs. whole.

Inclusion vs. Exclusion:
Bounding the Organization

Who is “in” and who is “out”? And who decides who is “in” and who is “out”? Because every inclusion is also exclusion, as soon as we define the “we” that makes up our group, we have defined a “not-we” outside of the

boundaries of our group. On the one hand, this may limit our capacity for collaboration. On the other hand, a community without boundaries – or, for the matter, a marriage, a family, or any other kind of group – can’t exist. So it is not a question of whether or not we bound an organization, but rather how we bound it that gives it an identity – an identity that those of us who participate in it share.

Although he is writing about small groups, Richard Hackman, in Leading Teams, observes:

*To work well together, team members need to know who they are. Members are sure to run into difficulties if there is so much ambiguity about who is actually on the team that they cannot reliably distinguish between the people who share responsibility and accountability for the collective outcome and others who may help out in various ways but are not team members.*

A community we can enter any time we want (when it is convenient, when it is doing what we want) and exit any time we want (when it is inconvenient, when we disagree) is a community of rights but no obligations. Without obligations, however, it never becomes a community. Obligations give us an interest in making the community work, even when it is difficult and we disagree with it. Communities without obligations – or commitment – can never generate social capital because we never know if there is “a there really there”. Consumers enter a marketplace at will, exercise their preferences, and exit. Constituents, on the other hand, are responsible for govern-

66 Ibid, 653
ance of their community. Acceptance of obligations entitles one to voice within it.

Furthermore, it is necessary for groups to be bounded in order that trust can be built among the members of a group, as Smith and Berg articulate:

For a group to develop the critical internal relationships so that it can become an entity worthy of being trusted, it needs to have the trust of its members and the assurance they will stand by the group through the bad times and the good. The paradox of trust can be represented by the conundrum of a cycle that depends on itself to get started: for trust to develop in a group, members must trust the group and the group must trust its members, for it is only through trusting that trust is built.68

Without knowing who is in a group, the cycle of trust – difficult to begin, even with organizational boundaries in place – is even more difficult to set in motion.

Bounding an organization also entails setting norms for the organization. While norms will develop naturally whether or not we set them explicitly, we are better off being explicit. As Hackman explains, we must set norms explicitly in order to counter human tendencies that actually lead to unproductive organizational work:

The first ordinary tendency is our disposition to react to whatever captures our attention and demands a response, rather than to

68 Smith and Berg, 641
actively scan our environment for less obvious problems and opportunities that may call for non-standard actions... A second human tendency... is our understandable impulse to have harmonious interactions with others, to be approved rather than rejected by our teammates, and generally to keep anxieties as low as possible.69

As a group sets explicit norms to approach its work proactively, and agrees on "the outer-limit boundaries of what behaviors are acceptable", it can effectively counter these tendencies.

**Change vs Continuity**  
**Maintaining an Interest in Change**

If the purpose of an organizing campaign is to create lasting change, doesn’t that set up a paradox? We create structure to create continuity but we challenge it to create change.

As a membership association develops and becomes more successful, it will tend to grow larger, become more geographically diffuse, acquire more assets, engage in tasks of greater complexity, try to preserve more lessons from their pasts, and try to extend their horizons farther into the future. This development both requires and facilitates greater complexity in authority structures, routines of practice, and resource configurations. Seeing to the operation of the organization itself takes the commitment of more – and different - resources, energy, and leadership.

Initiating an organization requires commitment of resources, energy, and leadership as well, but they are used in ways closely linked to the or-

69 Hackman, Leading Teams, 107-108.
ganization’s purposes – especially if experience of the organization itself is one such purpose (the purpose of a church, for example, is largely realized through participation in is core organizational activity, shared worship). As more resources are devoted to the organization itself, the goals of the organization may become confused with the organization itself as a goal. This is especially problematic if, as it grows, the organization’s work becomes more specialized, requires more full time elected or appointed staff. Such a staff begins to compete for organizational resources and can use its control over resources to insulate itself from membership accountability.70

Further, a kind of “elective affinity” may come into play as this organizational tension reflects conflicts in our own feelings about stability and change. On the one hand, our curiosity, sense of adventure, desire to learn may draw us to innovate. On the other hand, our need for predictability, proficiency and stability, may cause us to fear innovation. Although most of us experience both kinds of pull, some of us are drawn more to the innovative, evangelical, and experimental and others to the stable, predictable, and proficient. And since people with one disposition converge on different parts of an organization than those of the other, the possibility of constructive synergy or organizational fragmentation are both created.71 This challenge can become acute in membership associations because their success growing their membership creates the constituency most inclined to resist investment of organizational resources in further growth. And it becomes particularly acute in that control over organizational resources falls naturally into the hands of those stabilizing the organization to a greater degree than those growing it – into the hands of bishops, in other words, rather than missionar-


71 Smith and Berg.
ies. Because of the way this works, it is very important to build-in strong accountability mechanisms – at both the individual and the organizational level - from the beginning.

**Unity vs Diversity**

**Organizational Creativity**

Unity is the source of a membership association’s power because it is through combination that it acquires the resources that it has to deploy. On the other hand, diversity is often the most critical source of an association’s creativity, accountability, and ability to learn. As social psychologists have learned, the more homogeneous a group, the better it can be at “taking the hill”; but the more diverse a group, the better the decisions it will make about whether to “take the hill” or not.\(^72\) Dissent, in other words, can be associated with better decisions, but poorer performance. Unanimity can be associated with better performance, but poorer decisions.

Hackman writes, “A well-composed team strikes a balance between having members who are too similar to one another on the one hand and too different on the other”.\(^73\) Again, this is a concept that is simple and yet not easy. For one, we tend to self-select into groups with people who share many of our characteristics; we tend to seek harmony. Diverse groups often begin less harmoniously, often experiencing rough sledding early in their lives as members struggle to figure out how to work together (and interpersonal conflict definitely is not a boon to performance). But if members make it through their early difficulties, they are likely to come up with products

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\(^72\) Hackman Lecture, (1997), (Harvard University).

\(^73\) Hackman, Leading Teams, 122
that are significantly more creative than those generated by more homogeneous teams whose interactions are smoother from start to finish.\textsuperscript{74}

Too much unity (such as Janis’s “groupthink”) can stifle an organization by destroying its responsiveness to its constituency and its capacity for renewal. If an association fragments into factions, each of which views its interests as the interests of the whole, it loses the capacity to discern the common interests that make combination possible, let alone the capacity to translate those interests into the effective mobilization and deployment of resources. Furthermore, while dissent is critical for decision-making processes, dissent on its own can be divisive and lead to scapegoating within an organization.

\textit{A group may need to be able to receive negative feedback about its processes in order to learn and grow; however, the message may feel like an assault on the group’s norms.... the carrier of such messages is often dealt with as a deviant which, in turn, helps to strengthen those norms, or as a scapegoat which provides some internal catharsis enabling the group to remain unchanged. The bind is that the group may elect not to listen to the very things it needs to hear. Instead, it may choose to reject the carrier of the message so that it does not have to deal with the message, treating the concerns as ‘belonging’ to the person expressing them rather than seeing this as an integral part of the group itself.}\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 124.

\textsuperscript{75} Smith and Berg, 642
The challenge, then, is to design an organization in which interests and resources are concentrated enough to assure effective action, but diffuse enough to assure a capacity for change.

**The Part vs the Whole:**
National Purpose, Local Action

Much of our discussion has assumed associations consist of a single organizational entity. Although groups that are exclusively local do operate as single entities, most successful membership associations combine local units in broader, often three tiered, federated structures that span the distance between local, state, national and, in some cases, transnational. And although it is the fashion to contrast the local, democratic, and responsive with the national, oligarchic and unresponsive, it is more often the case that it is the local that becomes oligarchic and unresponsive.

Political scientist E. E. Schattschneider, writing about political conflict, argues that widening participation by linking groups across localities is a way to amass the power one needs to accomplish organizational goals (it pools resources, creates a broader strategic venue). Additionally, it facilitates accountability – both to one’s constituency and to the broader goals on behalf of which one organized in the first place. Schattschneider claims that elites try to localize conflict, while insurgents try to broaden the arena of conflict – they can access more allies, more diverse resources, more observers who can be mobilized for support. Federated organizations can create venues within which local elites can be held more accountable as well.

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This argument didn’t begin with Schattschneider, of course, but was made by James Madison in *Federalist Paper #10*, when he argued that *large democracy is preferable to small democracy because it is harder for a single faction to take control, turning the “common interest” into factional interest*. We seem to have forgotten this idea with our more recent focus on the virtues of direct democracy over those of representative democracy.

The greater the exclusively of local control and organization, the more vulnerable it is to oligarchy, not at the top, but at the bottom. Not only does this stop the democratic process where it must be rooted, it contributes to the fragmentation of organizational resources as each local group becomes a Madisonian ‘faction”, seeing its own interest as the interest of the whole. In organizations of this type, the “whole” is reduced to the lowest common denominator, becoming less than the sum of the parts, rather than more.

There is another argument as well that relates to the ways in which associational members come to understand their interests. Each of us has multiple levels of interest. For example, a person who works as a carpenter in commercial construction in San Francisco, with an organizational affiliation that is similarly local, will come to understand his or her interest in that way. On the other hand, if s/he also belongs to an organization that links all San Francisco building trades, s/he may come to see his or her interest more as a “building tradesperson”, rather than simply a carpenter. And if, that unit, in turn, links people who work in the building trades with other working people in the area, it may emerge that there are working people’s interests – such as transportation costs, access to health benefits, etc. – that are far more broadly shared and which make broader mobilization possible. And if they are also affiliated with a political party or other political grouping that links working people with others in a similar economic situation, but who earn their incomes differently, interests may emerge in public schools, parks, and
other public facilities. In other words, the associations with which we affiliate are not merely a “reflection” or our interests; they construct our understanding of those interests as well.

One example of the relationship among local control, accountability, and broader mission is in the labor movement. Unions structure themselves in a variety of ways, one of which is their degree of decentralization and centralization. Examples of highly decentralized unions are drawn from the building trades, craft unions, and others that operated in local labor markets in which they could assert control by organizing highly skilled workers. These unions typically had very large locals, they operated autonomously, and they paid a very small per capita to their national organizations, which were typically governed by a national board dominated by the leaders of the large local unions. Examples include the Teamsters and the Operating Engineers.

At the other extreme were the highly centralized unions. These typically were industrial unions that organized employees of companies operating across multiple localities such as autos, rubber, or steel. They could often only assert control in local labor markets by leveraging the influence that they had in some places where they often enjoyed political support, on other places where they did not. In the auto industry, for example, the UAW was able to use leverage it held in Michigan, where it had conducted effective sit-down strikes without interference from a friendly Governor, to organize other states where the politics or labor market conditions were far less friendly. These unions typically had locals of diverse sizes, organized into districts or regions or departments within which they had to collaborate to arrive at common positions, paid large per capitas to their national organizations, and were governed by a board dominated by leaders elected on a regional or national basis.
Which were more oligarchic? Which were more corrupt? And which are most resistant to change. The fact is that the more local, decentralized, and autonomous, the more oligarchic, corrupt, and conservative the organization. The more national, centralized, and integrated the organization is, the more democratic, honest, and progressive it will be. Today, for example, the most successful union organizing in the country is being carried out by SEIU, a union of some 1.6 million members, and one that had to utterly restructure itself internally to move from the old large autonomous local model to a newer more centralized, more focused, more effective, and, arguably, far more democratic model.

In sum, translocal structures can create a balance between part and whole that give insurgents room to maneuver, decreases the control of local elites, and draw members into broader strategic venues, creating the opportunity for them to develop broader understandings of interests they share with others in like circumstance.

Managing the Tensions

Other than the tension between inclusion and exclusion inherent in the bounding of an organization, the following are some ways to consider for managing the tensions of change and continuity, unity and diversity, and part and whole

Pushing Responsibility Down and Broadening Participation

An organization committed to leadership development and wide participation is better equipped to engage with change on an ongoing basis than an organization that walls its leadership off in a tight circle of control. Sustained commitment to identifying, recruiting and developing new leaders and
to finding new ways to engage one’s members more broadly requires organizational leadership to respond to the new currents, new ideas, and new challenges that are out there. So, wide participation can also be viewed as a way to assure ongoing responsiveness to the need for change, albeit within a framework with substantial continuity.

Similarly, openness to bringing in new people and broadening participation confronts leaders with the challenge of how to engage different kinds of people, people with different backgrounds, and, at the same time, create venues within which they can express their concerns, be heard, and see evidence of organizational responsiveness.

And the more extensively responsibility is shared among the leadership and membership of an association, the more the “parts” come to understand – and play a part in – the “whole”, and the more the “whole” has to understand about the interests and resources of the “parts”.

This is all very good, but what are the consequences of taking this approach for organizational performance in general? In membership associations, the more widely we share responsibility for organizational results, the greater the interest we acquire in the common effort, and the more resources we will commit to its success. It may be more “efficient” to get 5 people to spend the whole day collecting signatures in a city, but it may be more “effective” to get 10 teams of 5 to spend one hour each getting signatures in their own neighborhoods. Similarly, scholars of work organization have shown that pushing responsibility down, or “vertically-loading” jobs, can increase motivation and – by extension – productivity.77

Second, pushing responsibility down not only empowers an association by engaging the resources of more people, but it empowers people within the organization because it provides them with access to the resources with which to exercise accountability. The more members share the responsibility for doing the work, the more getting the work done depends on their cooperation. And the more cooperation it requires, the more control over resources that can make accountability real are placed in more hands. If only five people can do the work, theirs is the only cooperation required - so they are also the only ones who can exercise real accountability. On the other hand, if it takes 50 people to get the work done, their cooperation is required.

When an organization’s work depends not on resources generated by the efforts of many people, but on resources generated by a single fundraiser, who holds real power within the organization? Have you ever been in a meeting where you start hearing about what the funders will support and won’t support and why we need to do this or that so we can get the money – all, of course, interpreted by the person responsible for raising the money? No matter how democratic the formal structure of an organization, if one person’s work drives it, that person will “have the say”. This is why effective democratic leadership rests on a solid practice of delegation – a practice that we focused on during our discussion of leadership.

Action entails cost, but also holds promise of recognition. The more widely shared the cost – or sacrifice - the more people have a stake in the outcome. If one or two people do all the “sacrificing”, they quickly become “burned out”, while everyone else blames them for whatever goes wrong. Similarly, when many people have an opportunity to contribute, they can also claim a share in success. It is “their” victory, not someone else's. This,
in turn, creates motivation and a sense of entitlement that facilitates accountability.

The beauty of the grape boycott was that it was an action in which everyone could play a part – from a person who shunned grapes in a Florida supermarket to a student who dropped out of school to come to work full time for the UFW, and everything in between. At one point in 1975, pollster Lou Harris found that 12% of the American public – some 17 million people – were boycotting grapes. The wider the opportunity to act is, the wider the participation, the responsibility, and the accountability on the leaders will be.

It might not be surprising, then, we sometimes resist pushing responsibility down or widening participation to the extent that it threatens our control.

**Collaborative Organization: Diversity as an Asset**

Establishing collaborative work practices within an organization - teams, group deliberation, evaluation, peer learning, etc. – can help address the change and continuity challenge. A key barrier to ongoing adaptive change is an isolated leadership, resistance to open evaluation, avoidance of the openness that teamwork requires, etc.

Similarly, we can manage the tension of unity and diversity more easily based on collaborative work practices. Leading a unified organization requires more than the defensive maneuver of “avoiding faction”. It requires designing the organizations’ work proactively so that it requires greater i-
terdependence, thus enhancing collaboration. One of the dangers of “professionalizing”, is that we may minimize interdependence. Instead of relying on a team of volunteers (and their inefficiencies) we hire someone to do their job. But something is lost with this choice. Whom does this empower within the organization? Whom does it disempower?

Effective collaboration depends on skilled leadership, a chief art of which is learning to blend the unique capacities – and deficits – of different people. This, of course, goes to the tensions around part and whole as well. Work assignments are the result of a negotiation between the actual persons – their personalities, their experience, their talents, and their difficulties – and the "roles" they are needed to play. If everyone were the same age, race, gender, had the same skills, life experience, and so forth, their “power to” would remain limited because of so little opportunity for productive interdependence. We can't lift a table if we all lift the same corner at the same time. But if we each lift our own corner, we can. The trick is to match people and corners.

Effective collaboration also requires some continuity within an organization. Richard Hackman offers this anecdote:

*NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board) staff combed the agency’s database to identify the circumstances under which aircraft cockpit crews are most likely to get into trouble. They found that 73 percent of the incidents in the NTSB database occurred on the crew’s first day of flying together, and 44 percent of those took place on a crew’s very first flight.*

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Hackman continues,

“They learn who is especially knowledgeable or skilled about which aspects of the work and thereby build the team’s capability to actually use what members know and know how to do”.80

Productive collaboration, then, is the result of harmony not homogeneity. This is what it means to learn how to construct community based on difference. The idea is to create a “star team”, not to be a “star player”. A coach begins with the common interest a team has in winning. But it only becomes a winning team if the coach learns how to combine the unique strengths and weaknesses of each player. The team then has an interest in remaining a team.

Dissent Is Not Disloyalty
Organizational Accountability

The capacity of a democratic organization to respond to its constituency and to new conditions is based on accountability. Democracy grows out of a claim that leaders may lead in the public interest not because they are virtuous, but because the public has the power to hold them accountable. Accountability (as in electoral competition) can also be a mechanism that requires democratic leaders to respond to new circumstances. For democratic organizations, then, responsiveness and renewal are directly tied to legitimacy of dissent. Accountability only works if it is linked to open debate of different points of view.

80 Ibid.
The contribution of a “loyal opposition” is not only to hold leaders accountable, but also to deal with the change and continuity challenge, by giving voice to alternatives that can stimulate adaptive response to change.

For this to work, however, requires engaging a full diversity of perspectives, meaning we have to learn to manage difference – neither denying it nor accepting it as absolute. To make “dissent” legitimate, we develop agreed upon ways to continue collaborating, even when we disagree. This requires “decision rules” – rules that allow us to make decisions, move forward, and get work done, even if everyone doesn’t agree. Formal procedures for debate, discussion, voting and evaluation can help by “depersonalizing” disagreements. Robert’s Rules of Order did have its uses.

Leaders can also work to develop a culture which values difference by affirming the single voice that the rest of the group tries to drown out rather than joining the chorus. Learning to deliberate in ways that affirm our commonalties, while protecting dissent, can transform our diversity into an asset, which can aid us in realizing and acting upon our common interests. It is equally important to learn to celebrate in ways which both affirm the distinctiveness of our identities and the communality of our organizational undertaking.

**Principles in Practice**

How do the practices of pushing responsibility down, broadening participation, working collaboratively, and honoring dissent play out in the way an organization meets, acts, and celebrates?
Meetings

While many meetings can take place between two individuals or small groups (indeed, some must), one way an organization comes to life is as a group of people in a room deliberating about what they can do together.

How does pushing responsibility down and broadening participation work in a meeting? How much effort is made to turn people out? Who participates in the planning team for the meeting? Who speaks in the meeting and what do they have to report on?
How about working collaboratively? What is the role of committees? How are committee reports handled? Is any collaborative work done in the meeting, like brainstorming?

And how about understanding dissent is not disloyalty? Is there a role for a “devil’s advocate”? How is debate structured? Are there rules of respect in place?

**Acting**

The second thing organizations “do” is “act” – conduct programs, run campaigns, provide services, etc.

How does pushing responsibility down and broadening participation work in acting? How widely has the responsibility for mobilizing participants been spread? Has responsibility for turnout been pushed all the way down, or only for sharing information? Are there teams? Team captains?

How about working collaboratively? How was the action planned? Who participated? Are there regular evaluations? Who participates?

And how does one understand dissent as different from disloyalty? What procures exist for people with complaints to have them heard? Does the leadership look for opportunities to act on suggestions voiced as dissent?

**Celebrating**

Finally, organizations celebrate their narrative, their successes, their setbacks, and their milestones.
How does pushing responsibility down and broadening participation work in celebrations? Is it a catered meal, or a potluck? Are professional entertainers hired, or are members called upon to contribute? Who does the decorations?

How does working collaboratively come into play? The whole way a celebration is planned, the way committees do their work, and how the event itself is conducted can be an opportunity for widespread collaboration or, the opposite, professionalization.

And how does understanding that dissent is not disloyalty help? Think creatively about how to honor different points of view, different perspectives, and different angles on what is being celebrated.

Organization: Chart #2
Conclusion

In sum, building powerful civic associations poses important challenges that only come fully into play as we begin to succeed. The responsiveness, relevance, and continued vitality of our organizations depend in great part on how we learn to manage the dilemmas of change and continuity, unity and diversity, and part and whole. We have suggested three practices that can help: pushing responsibility down and broadening participation, working collaboratively, and institutionally recognizing that dissent is not disloyalty.

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QUESTIONS
Organizations

1. What are you doing in your organization to widen participation and deepen responsibility?
2. How do the meetings, actions and celebrations of the organization strengthen the organization? Could the organization conduct these actions better?
3. How do you and your organization manage the dilemmas of unity and diversity, inclusion and exclusion, responsibility and participation, and leadership and accountability? Does it work? Could it work better? How?
Becoming a Good Organizer
(Week 12)

Understanding Your Own POWER
Respecting Your Own BELIEFS
Respect for the WORK
Respect for the SELF
Desire to WIN

ORGANIZATION!
QUESTIONS
Becoming a Good Organizer

1. One of the big ideas in the class is about how we can use strong organizations to connect individuals to institutions. To what extent does this happen in your project?
2. What have you learned about yourself this term about becoming an organizer? What does it take to do this work well?
3. What kind of support will you need after the class to continue to learn how to organize?