

theory of power: It came from their own ability to sustain massive disruptions to the existing order. Today, as Theda Skocpol documents in *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, attempts to generate movements are directed by professional, highly educated staff who rely on an elite, top-down theory of power that treats the masses as audiences of, rather than active participants in, their own liberation:

Aiming to speak for—and influence—masses of citizens, droves of new national advocacy groups have set up shop, with the media amplifying debates among their professional spokespersons. The National Abortion Rights Action League debates the National Right to Life Committee; the Concord Coalition takes on the American Association for Retired Persons; and the Environmental Defense Fund counters business groups. Ordinary Americans attend to such debates fitfully, entertained or bemused. Then pollsters call at dinner-time to glean snippets of what everyone makes of it all.¹⁰

As the cases in this book—all situated in the new millennium—illustrate, the chief factor in whether or not organizational efforts grow organically into local and national movements capable of effecting major change is where and with whom the agency for change rests. It is not merely *if* ordinary people—so often referred to as “the grassroots”—are engaged, but *how*, *why*, and *where* they are engaged.

Advocacy, Mobilizing, and Organizing

Here is the major difference among the three approaches discussed in the book. Advocacy doesn't involve ordinary people in any real way; lawyers, pollsters, researchers, and communications firms are engaged to wage the battle. Though effective for forcing car companies to install seatbelts or banishing toys with components that infants might choke on, this strategy severely limits serious challenges to elite power. Advocacy fails to use the only concrete advantage ordinary people have over elites: large numbers. In workplace strikes, at the ballot box, or in nonviolent civil disobedience, strategically deployed masses have long been the unique weapon of ordinary people. The 1 percent have a vast

armory of material resources and political special forces, but the 99 percent have an army.

Over the past forty years, a newer mechanism for change seekers has proliferated: the mobilizing approach. Mobilizing is a substantial improvement over advocacy, because it brings large numbers of people to the fight. However, too often they are the same people: dedicated activists who show up over and over at every meeting and rally for all good causes, but without the full mass of their coworkers or community behind them. This is because a professional staff directs, manipulates, and controls the mobilization; the staffers see themselves, not ordinary people, as the key agents of change. To them, it matters little who shows up, or, why, as long as a sufficient number of bodies appear—enough for a photo good enough to tweet and maybe generate earned media. The committed activists in the photo have had no part in developing a power analysis; they aren't informed about that or the resulting strategy, but they dutifully show up at protests that rarely matter to power holders.

The third approach, organizing, places the agency for success with a continually expanding base of ordinary people, a mass of people never previously involved, who don't consider themselves activists at all—that's the point of organizing. In the organizing approach, specific injustice and outrage are the immediate motivation, but the primary goal is to transfer power from the elite to the majority, from the 1 percent to the 99 percent. Individual campaigns matter in themselves, but they are primarily a mechanism for bringing new people into the change process and keeping them involved. The organizing approach relies on mass negotiations to win, rather than the closed-door deal making typical of both advocacy and mobilizing. Ordinary people help make the power analysis, design the strategy, and achieve the outcome. They are essential and they know it.

In unions and SMOs in the United States today, advocacy and, especially, mobilizing prevail. This is the main reason why modern movements have not replicated the kinds of gains achieved by the earlier labor and civil rights movements. Table 1.1 compares the three models by their distinct approach to power, strategy, and people. Hahrie Han has a somewhat similar chart in her excellent book *How Organizations Develop Activists*.¹¹ However, Han focuses on what I call self-selecting

TABLE 1.1 Options for Change

| | Advocacy | Mobilizing | Organizing |
|-----------------|--|--|--|
| Theory of Power | Elite. Advocacy groups tend to seek one-time wins or narrow policy changes, often through courts or back-room negotiations that do not permanently alter the relations of power. | Primarily elite. Staff or activists set goals with low to medium concession costs or, more typically, set an ambitious goal and declare a win, even when the “win” has no, or only weak, enforcement provisions. Back-room, secret deal making by paid professionals is common. | Mass, inclusive, and collective. Organizing groups transform the power structure to favor constituents and diminish the power of their opposition. Specific campaigns fit into a larger power-building strategy. They prioritize power analysis, involve ordinary people in it, and decipher the often hidden relationship between economic, social, and political power. Settlement typically comes from mass negotiations with large numbers involved. |
| Strategy | Litigation; heavy spending on polling, advertising, and other paid media. | Campaigns, run by professional staff, or volunteer activists with no base of actual, measureable supporters, that prioritize frames and messaging over base power. Staff-selected “authentic messengers” represent the constituency to the media and policy makers, but they have little or no real say in strategy or running the campaign. | Recruitment and involvement of specific, large numbers of people whose power is derived from their ability to withdraw labor or other cooperation from those who rely on them. Majority strikes, sustained and strategic nonviolent direct action, electoral majorities. Frames matter, but the numbers involved are sufficiently compelling to create a significant earned media strategy. Mobilizing is seen as a tactic, not a strategy. |

(continued)

TABLE 1.1 (Continued)

| | Advocacy | Mobilizing | Organizing |
|--------------|----------|---|--|
| People Focus | None. | Grassroots activists. People already committed to the cause, who show up over and over. When they burn out, new, also previously committed activists are recruited. And so on. Social media are over relied on. | Organic leaders. The base is expanded through developing the skills of organic leaders who are key influencers of the constituency, and who can then, independent of staff, recruit new people never before involved. Individual, face-to-face interactions are key. |

groups that do not make class a central issue. This book does focus on class, and on the clear and vital distinction between the strategy of developing activists, who are not always drawn from the working class, and that of developing organic leaders, who always are.

Structure-based vs. Self-selecting Groups

The labor and civil rights movements were located in the landscape of what I call structure-based organizing. The structures were, respectively, the workplace and the black church under Jim Crow. Both movements chose organizing as their primary strategy. Mobilizing and advocacy also played a role, but the lifeblood of these movements was mass participation by ordinary people, whose engagement was inspired by a cohesive community bound by a sense of place: the working community on the shop floor, in the labor movement, and the faith community in the church, in the fight for civil rights. The empirical research that follows and the voluminous literature examining the outcomes of the 1930s through 1960s are fair grounds for arguing that structure-based organizing still offers the best chance to rebuild a powerful progressive movement. Unorganized workplaces and houses of faith remain a target-rich environment, and there are plenty of them, enough to return the labor movement to the 35 percent density it had when inequality was falling, not rising.¹²

Since organizing's primary purpose is to change the power structure away from the 1 percent to more like the 90 percent, majorities

are always the goal: the more people, the more power. But not just any people. And the word *majority* isn't a throwaway word on a flip chart, it is a specific objective that must be met. In structure-based organizing, in the workplace and in faith-based settings, it is easy to assess whether or not you have won over a majority of the participants in the given structure to a cause or an issue. A workplace or church will have, say, 500 workers or parishioners, and to reach a majority, or even a supermajority, the quantifiable nature of the bounded constituency allows you to assess your success in achieving your numbers. An organizer intending to build a movement to maximum power who is approaching a structured or bounded constituency must target and plan to reach each and every person, regardless of whether or not each and every person has any preexisting interest in the union or community organization. Beyond understanding concretely when a majority has been gained, the organizer can gauge the commitment levels of the majority by the nature, frequency, and riskiness of actions they are willing to take. The process of building a majority and testing its commitment level also allows a far more systematic method of assessing which ordinary people have preexisting leadership within the various structures, a method called *leadership identification*. These informal leaders, whom I will call organic leaders, seldom self-identify as leaders and rarely have any official titles, but they are identifiable by their natural influence with their peers. Knowing how to recognize them makes decisions about whom to prioritize for *leadership development* far more effective. Developing their leadership skill set is more fruitful than training random volunteers, because these organic leaders start with a base of followers. They are the key to scale.

This process differs considerably from the self-selecting that goes on in movement work, such as environmental and other single-issue fights, women's and other identity-based movements, and nonreligious community efforts. Self-selecting groups rely on the mobilizing approach, and many of these groups grew out of, or in response to, the New Left project of the 1960s.¹³ In self-selecting work, most people show up at meetings because they have a preexisting interest in or a serious commitment to the cause. As Skocpol says, "[M]any of the key groups were not membership associations at all. They were small combinations of nimble, fresh thinking, and passionate advocates of new causes."¹⁴ In self-selecting work, movement groups spend most of their time talking

to people *already* on their side, whereas in structure-based work, because the goal is building majorities of a bounded constituency, organizers are constantly forced to engage people who may begin with little or no initial interest in being a part of any group. In fact, in the beginning of a unionization campaign, many workers see themselves as opposed to the very idea of forming a union, just as many parishioners may be opposed to a more collective-action orientation in their church when first approached about joining or helping to build a new faith-based group. Consequently, organizers and the organic leaders they first identify and then develop devote most of their time to winning over people who do not self-identify as being “with progressives.” Structure-based organizing deliberately and methodically expands the base of people whom mobilizers can tap in their never-ending single-issue campaigns. Han’s book reinforces my argument that self-selecting groups develop an activist-based approach, whereas structure-based groups develop a strong, more scalable grassroots base, because they focus on developing organic leaders who themselves can mobilize to reach majorities.

Unions as the Hardest Test of Social Movement Success

There are very significant factors, however, that differentiate union and faith-based efforts, despite each being structure-based. The best lessons emerge from success in the hardest tests. Real union fights are always high-threat and high-risk—as were the fights of the civil rights movement.¹⁵ A crucial distinction is that most faith- and broad-based organizations are known as O of Os, that is, “organizations of organizations.” The O of Os more often than not are religious entities—individual churches, synagogues, and mosques—and the initial recruitment happens between an organizer and the leader, who in this model is an official, generally full-time position holder, typically a person with a title that confers a more formal style of leadership: priest, minister, rabbi, imam. Once that more formal leader has been won over to the project of building a broad, faith-based organization, he or she gives the organizer full access to the congregation. Today’s organizers of faith-based groups don’t face conditions anything like today’s union organizers; there is no well-funded effort to prevent them from engaging individual people of

2

The Power to Win is in the Community, Not the Boardroom

Part of the legacy of people like Ella Baker and Septima Clark is a faith that ordinary people who learn to believe in themselves are capable of extraordinary acts, or, better, of acts that seem extraordinary to us precisely because we have such an impoverished sense of the capabilities of ordinary people. If we are surprised at what these people accomplished, our surprise may be a commentary on the angle of vision from which we view them. That same angle of vision may make it difficult to see that of the gifts they brought to the making of the movement, courage may have been the least.

Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*¹

THE UNITED STATES HAS UNDERGONE profound changes since the era of the CIO. Yet today, the unions whose strategies most closely resemble the old CIO's—the unions that still use the strike weapon—are also the unions whose members are negotiating—and gaining—contracts with life-altering improvements. Many of them are situated in the new service economy, which is dominated by women, often women of color. These workers understand that their jobs can't easily be shipped abroad or automated—*yet*. But even these unions—the nation's best—are missing a crucial piece of classic CIO strategy, and if they want to continue to use the strike weapon, they are going to need it. The CIO's organizing methods were deeply embedded in, and reliant on, an understanding of workers in relationship to the communities in which they lived. Rhetorically and tactically, unions today that follow the methods of the old CIO understand that the community is important, but they fail to see their members' organic ties to their communities *strategically*.

This chapter begins by showing why a more transformational model for working with the broader community is so important today, and ends with a theory and strategy for how this work can be done, called whole worker organizing. Sandwiched between the why and how of deep community engagement is a focused discussion about the difference between organizing and mobilizing, the evolution of the mobilizing model, and why each approach produces different levels of power. The schematic showing power in relationship to strategy is built on Joseph Luders's work on concession and disruption costs in his book *The Civil Rights Movement and the Logic of Social Change*.²

Today's service worker has a radically different relationship to the consuming public than last century's manufacturing worker had. People buying a car don't meet and confer with the workers whose hands create it; they don't walk up and down the assembly line insisting that a tweak this way or that might make a better ride. But parents picking their kids up from school often meet with the people who spend more waking hours with their kids than they do: the educators who are helping their children prepare intellectually and socially for adulthood. And parents participate in the educators' production process, attending meetings and volunteering in the classroom. Similarly, nurses and other health-care workers charged with repairing the victim of a car crash are in constant contact with the family, who are also allowed in the workplace, that is, the patient's hospital room. The case studies in the following chapters are filled with evidence that these mostly female, multiracial service workers are as capable of building powerful organizations as they are of building a child's mind or rebuilding a patient's body. In fact, they are among the only workers today engaging in production-shuttering strikes. Their organic ties to the broader community form the potential strategic wedge needed to leverage the kind of power American workers haven't had for decades.

In large swaths of the service economy, the point of production *is* the community. Working on community issues isn't social-movement unionism, it is simply unionism.

As for the large number of manufacturing workers still in the United States, often situated in the underregulated, nonunion South, this book offers case evidence that those who rely more on the CIO-era methodology—a bottom-up model in which workers have primary agency and are understood to be their own lever of liberation—can also

win life-altering improvements. They can do it by *systematically structuring* their many strong connections—family, religious groups, sports teams, hunting clubs—into their campaigns. That a more organic relationship with the public exists for some workers, such as mission-driven service workers, doesn't mean that only they should tether their quality of life to that of the broader community. All workers, whether their shop floor is a call center or a factory, can tell the story of their overstressed work situation—ordinarily not seen by the consumer, but certainly understood by the rest of the working class. Solidarity among human beings can happen spontaneously, as in a flood or fire, or by design, through organizing.

Service workers tend to be less structurally powerful economically in the workplace than the mostly male workers of the CIO era, because it is easier to replace them and because when they do strike, not only the employer but also the consumer immediately feels the repercussions of their collective action. But they are *more* structurally powerful when it comes to engaging their community in a fight. For today's service workers to restore the strike, still the most effective lever available to the working class, the additional power source they need is not a corporate campaign or funds for bigger political donations, but rather a more systematic way to merge workplace and non-workplace issues. There is enormous value to this approach, starting with the political education it offers. Plenty of CEOs whose workplace policies hurt workers on the job also serve on local and regional boards, commissions, and task forces whose public policies hurt the same workers at home and in their neighborhoods—for example, by promoting development schemes that displace working-class renters and homeowners and the shopkeepers they rely on. Workers who understand how corporate power is wielded both in the workplace and outside it can strengthen themselves in both spheres and carry the fight into both, tapping their social and community networks, including key people with access and influence, such as religious leaders.

To rebuild a base powerful enough to seriously push back against the economic and political crises strangling most workers today, unions will have to practice the best organizing methods both inside *and* outside the workplace, simultaneously, in a seamless, unified approach. A bifurcated union and community alliance, which is what Richard Trumka promoted at the quadrennial convention of the AFL-CIO in 2013, will

not be as effective, because the groups Trumka proposed to ally with and that most unions do engage are too weak themselves to make any real difference. Maintaining the bifurcation that has existed for the past forty years also denies agency to today's heavily female workforce. Women have long understood that issues such as child care, good housing, quality schools, clean drinking water, safe streets, and an end to mass incarceration and police violence are every bit as important as higher wages to the well-being of workers and their families. Understanding how to frame a more integrated approach that covers these needs requires further clarity about, and a little history of, the differences between mobilizing and organizing.

Many methods used in successful organizing today had their origins in the struggles of the CIO in the first half of the last century. Certainly, the most successful organizing described in this book draws heavily on methods first developed in the steel, auto, coal, and other heavy-industry sectors. The CIO from its founding in 1935 was grounded on the principle that all workers—skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled—who worked in the same industries and for the same employer should be brought together in one union.³ In fact, it was founded in response to the refusal of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) to unify all workers regardless of skill level. After the early, enormous success of the CIO, the AFL eventually agreed to unionize workers the same way, though its chief motivation may have been expedience—inclusiveness adopted as a defense mechanism rather than a core principal.⁴

Modern Organizing Methods: The CIO's Legacy

Most CIO organizing was based on a mass collective action, high-participation model anchored in deep worker solidarities and cooperative engagement in class struggle. Strikes, the kind that could shut down production—strikes in which most if not all workers walk off the job in a high-risk collective action—were routine, and were evidence that workers *themselves* were the primary agents of their own liberation. “Left” organizers, those associated with various socialist and radical factions, flocked to the CIO because of the principal of inclusion, of uniting *all* workers across ethnicity, gender, race, skill level, and every other working-class division. The AFL had had a long, complicated history not just

of excluding semi- and unskilled workers, and Black workers, but also of having taken positions against European and then Asian immigration, and very narrowly limiting the union struggle to wages and working conditions.⁵

The CIO's left organizers were intensely committed to recruiting and building power across the many "isms" and other divisions among the working class, and they had to develop special methods to do it. Jack O'Dell, an organizer for the CIO and later for the civil rights movement, recalls their success: "I grew up in Detroit, and when people asked you, 'What union are you in?' the guys didn't even say their union; they just said, 'the CIO.' Especially black workers, because the CIO would take on racism."⁶

Nelson Lichtenstein's *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor*,⁷ Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin's *Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions*,⁸ and Saul Alinsky's *John L. Lewis: An Unauthorized Biography*⁹ all document that the left-wing organizers were the CIO's best. All of these authors record at length how the head of the CIO, John L. Lewis, though a fierce anti-Communist and anti-socialist, relied heavily if not primarily on organizers from the left to win the hardest organizing drives and the biggest strikes. Alinsky describes how Lewis hired these organizers as a pragmatic expedient, and was confident he could "control them." Today, people associate the name Reuther with the heyday of the United Auto Workers. As Alinsky himself points out, it wasn't the Reuther brothers—Walter, of great fame, or his brothers, Victor and Roy—who principally helped autoworkers form their union, though they played a part:

When Lewis turned to help the auto workers, he saw that they were being organized and led by leftists. The leaders and organizers of the UAW group in General Motors were the left-wingers Wyndham Mortimer and Robert Travis. These two built the union inside the great General Motors empire. If Lewis wanted to take the auto workers into the CIO, he had to take in their left leadership.¹⁰

Earlier, Alinsky describes how the "inept" AFL had destroyed the hopes and dreams of the autoworkers in 1933 and 1934, which set the stage for Lewis and the new CIO to do what the AFL wouldn't and couldn't:

When the auto workers, filled with disgust, built bonfires with their AF of L membership cards, it was the left-wingers mainly who kept fighting against the disillusionment and cynicism that swept the workers. It was they who kept organizing and organizing and organizing and organizing.¹¹

Later, Alinsky describes how Lewis failed in almost every organizing effort he attempted without the help of left organizers.¹² Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin reinforce the same point in great detail. It was organizers on the left who were the most committed to overcoming class divisions, and who, through uniting workers, were able to help them withstand and defeat the fiercest employer opposition. All three of these books document that employer opposition in those days included physical attacks against workers, and even the strategic use of murder, which ought to help put today's employer offensives in perspective.

Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin devote a chapter to Lewis's dealings with the left: He would hire organizers out of the Communist Party, then purge them once they'd won the campaign. The chapter is titled for Lewis's famous quip about this tactic: "Who gets the bird, the hunter or the dog?" The authors provide a small mountain of evidence that the unions led by these leftist factions were not only the most effective but also the most democratic. Their well-constructed analysis demonstrates that many of the elements that Robert Michels argued were essential to prevent the development of oligarchy in an organization—democratic constitutions, internal caucuses, alternative newsletters—actually existed in these leftist unions, unions that would later be obliterated by McCarthyism, not oligarchy.

One left-led union they discuss is also the subject of Howard Kimeldorf's *Reds or Rackets? The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront*. Kimeldorf analyzes the stark differences between two mostly male dockworkers' unions, one on the East Coast and the other on the West Coast, that developed during the same period, the era of the CIO. On the East Coast, where workers and their leaders fought chiefly for money and other material gains, official corruption became legendary; bribes served to buy off the Eastern unions for decades. On the West Coast, where the unions fought for control of production, that is, for the right to negotiate rules governing safety, hours,

and similar issues, bribes didn't work: Money wasn't what these workers were looking for. The West Coast's Wobbly-inclined base produced a leader, Harry Bridges, who was openly a socialist. Bridges and the West Coast workers routinely engaged in strikes; they had to; their demands were substantial and the employers weren't easy to beat. Kimeldorf concludes that the endless class struggle in which the West Coast workers engaged resulted in high-quality contracts that cemented a high level of participation, active membership, and a strong relationship between the rank and file and the union leaders. He demonstrates that this left-wing leadership showed superior skill in every aspect of running a union, and notes that members routinely reelected socialists to leadership positions, even though their own politics were not uniformly left-wing, but instead quite diverse.

What were the left's winning tactics? In a 1936 booklet, *Organizing Methods in the Steel Industry*, William Z. Foster writes, "Organizers do not know how to organize by instinct, but must be carefully taught."¹³ He argues strongly for the importance of such training:

The campaign can succeed only if thousands of workers can be organized to help directly in the enrollment of members. This work cannot be done by organizers alone. . . . Very effective are small delegations of steel workers from one town or district to another and large mass delegations of workers from organized mills to unorganized mills.

Other methods of drawing in new members included music, and "social affairs such as smokers, boxing matches, card parties, dances, picnics, various sports, etc.," involving the workers *and their wives*.¹⁴ The radicals in the CIO understood that workers were embedded in an array of important workplace and non-workplace networks, all of which could be best accessed—and, for organizing on a mass scale, *only* accessed—by the workers themselves. Foster describes the "list" and "chain" systems,¹⁵ 1930s terms for methods of building a network of the most respected workers inside and outside the workplace who could then mobilize their own networks.

Unions that still run successful majority strikes today, or that run and win National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) elections in the private sector, offer our closest look at the methods deployed by the leftists in

the early CIO. Because union staffers in a private-sector unionization effort are *barred* from entering the workplace, including its parking lots and cafeterias, they must master the old CIO craft of learning who the organic worker leaders are and persuading them to support the union. These organic leaders in turn can use their influence and are the best people to persuade their coworkers to join the struggle. The legal context of the private sector forces 100 percent worker agency: In these settings, the workers themselves are the only ones who can lead an “inside” campaign, which almost always must be waged in an extremely hostile climate.

To connect to rank-and-file dynamics in the workplace, union organizers use a mechanism called organic leader identification, in which they analyze the workers’ preexisting social groups. This is done among the workers and in conversation with them, not apart from them. Workers themselves identify their organic leaders, who become the primary focus for full-time organizers. If these leaders are successfully recruited, they are taught the organizers’ techniques, so that they can recruit their supporters on the shop floor, where outside organizers cannot go. Rarely, if ever, does a worker accurately announce himself or herself as a leader. Kristin Warner, a contemporary organizer in the CIO tradition, notes:

[Organic leaders are] almost never the workers who most want to talk with us. More often than not, [they’re] the workers who *don’t* want to talk to us and remain in the background. They have a sense of their value and won’t easily step forward, not unless and until there’s a credible reason. That’s part of the character that makes them organic leaders.¹⁶

These are the leaders needed for a serious struggle, such as a strike in which most workers must agree to walk off the job. In the CIO model—today as in the 1930s—strikes that cripple production are considered not only possible, but also the highest “structure test” of whether worker organization in a given facility is at its strongest.¹⁷ It is the culmination of a series of tests that begin by measuring and assessing *individual* workers’ power, and end by testing the power and collective organization of the workers worksite by worksite.

A structure test typically used early in the process will gauge how effectively and efficiently a worker identified as an organic leader can get a majority of her shift or unit to agree to a public, and therefore high-risk, action, such as signing a public petition demanding that the employer recognize the union. This will be followed by increasingly challenging tests, considered confidence-building actions, such as getting workers to pose for individual or group photos for a public poster, or join in a sticker day—only considered a success if a supermajority of workers come to work wearing a union sticker or button. These are all high-risk actions; they announce to the manager that the workers participating are pro-union.

Figure 2.1 below is an example of a “majority petition”: a document publicly signed by a majority of workers in a large workplace and then printed as a three-by-five-foot poster to be marched by the workers themselves to the CEO. In this example, the workers are calling on management to settle their contract:

If the worker-leader given the assignment can turn this kind of action around in only one or two shifts, the organizer has correctly identified

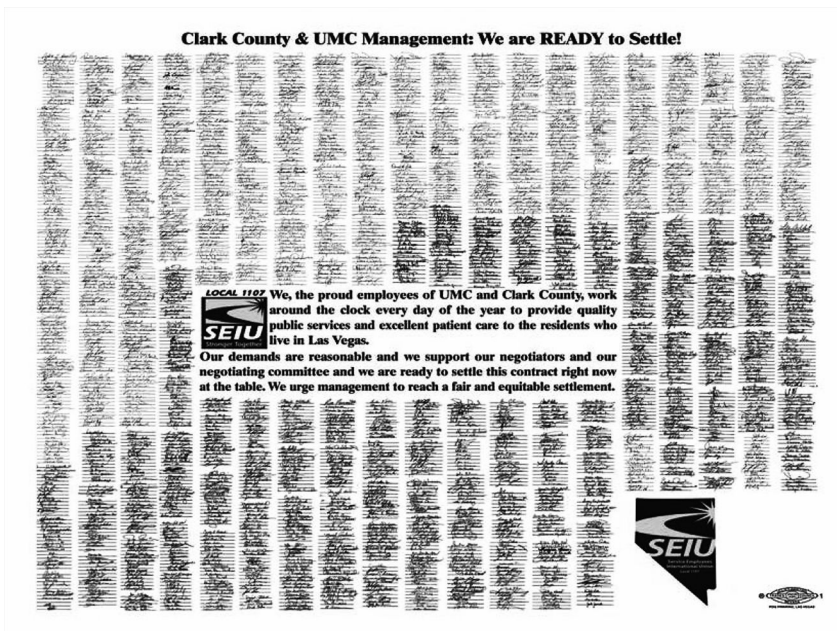


FIGURE 2.1 An example of a structure test

an organic leader. On the other hand, if a prospective worker-leader, even one personally enthusiastic about the union, cannot get a majority of coworkers in his or her shift and unit to do anything quickly—let alone engage in high-risk actions—it is clear that the leadership identification was incorrect, and the organizer must start again, talking with all the workers to better assess which coworkers they most respect and will most willingly follow. The worker who fails at the test is likely a pro-union activist, not an organic leader, and leaders, not activists, win the campaign and have the capacity to build strong worksite structures. The process is not easy; even a true organic leader sometimes fails to get a majority of signatures, often because of either weak personal commitment to the union, or even active hostility toward it.

If an organic leader remains undecided, the recruiting organizer, because of the urgency that always exists in high-risk union fights where the employer's war is either imminent or already in motion, takes the next step: "framing the hard choice." The process begins with understanding an individual organic leader's self-interest and helping the leader come to his or her own understanding, through face-to-face discussions, that this self-interest can only be realized through collective—not individual—action; that is, through a union. Because these organic leaders are often considered good workers by management—for the same reasons that their fellow workers trust and rely on them—they are often favored in small ways; for example, by being given desirable shifts. But they cannot win big things like pensions, sick pay, or maternity leave on their own. The organizer therefore carefully polarizes the conversation so that the worker understands he or she faces a clear and stark choice: Take a risk in order to win the desired benefits, or be safe, do nothing, and get nothing.

For example: A group of workers has identified "Sally" as the most influential rank-and-file person on their shift and in their work area. The organizer has successfully gotten Sally, in a one-on-one conversation, to explain that she is overwhelmed and frustrated by how much her employer automatically takes from her paycheck each month to pick up the cost of an expensive family health-care plan. But she still hesitates when asked if she is willing to "join up with her coworkers to form a union by signing this membership card." Sally knows that signing the card is a big decision. In the United States, employers routinely fire workers for taking such actions, or punish them in other ways. A good

organizer understands this, and at this point will say something like, “So, Sally, I want to be clear about what I am hearing. You are good with the boss continuing to charge you \$440.00 per month, deducted from your paycheck, just to keep your kids healthy and you healthy enough to show up for work, for the rest of your life?”

The best organizers in the CIO tradition call the moment that follows “the long uncomfortable silence,” because the organizer is trained to say *nothing* until the worker responds—and that can take several long minutes of dead silence between two people sitting face-to-face. The organizer respects that silence and waits it out, because the decision Sally is being asked to make is huge, and must be treated that way. Sally is not being lied to, she is not being promised anything, she is not being manipulated, and she is being advised that the employer will take swift and direct action against her and her coworkers. She is having a discussion about going on strike. This is worker agency. An axiom of organizers is that every good organizing conversation makes everyone at least a little uncomfortable. And it’s a conversation that must be had. All other actions come from this one.

Majority petitions, majority photo posters, majority sticker days, majority T-shirt days all serve multiple purposes: They are public activities, socializing workers to take a risk together; they are solidarity- and confidence-building, showing workers the strength of their numbers; and they are part of an endless series of assessments of the strength of each organic leader. For big units, at the beginning of an organizing drive or lead-up to a contract-related strike, these goals might take weeks to achieve. Only true organic leaders can lead their coworkers in high-risk actions. Pro-union activists without organic leaders are not effective enough, and professional staff organizers certainly cannot do it; they aren’t even allowed into the workplace. The organic leader is essential to the organizing model. It took hundreds of thousands of Sallys to lead us out of inequality once, and it will take hundreds of thousands to do it again.

Modern Mobilizing Methods: A Product of McCarthyism, Business Unionism, and Saul Alinsky

If the organizing model is so effective, why was it so widely abandoned? Many factors contributed to the decimation of the labor movement’s best

few are not expected, or even allowed, to speak during the negotiations. This process creates and solidifies the idea that the union is, in fact, a third party. In addition, most unions begin negotiations by signing a document with the employer that in fact they are not legally required to sign, known as the ground rules. These typically include a gag rule, stipulating that the already closed, already too small group of workers who sit, often with a hired lawyer, as representatives of the whole union are prohibited from discussing the details of the negotiations with any other workers throughout the entire negotiation process.

In negotiations for neutrality deals, whether those are for card-check or election-procedure agreements, it has become routine for union staff *alone* to prenegotiate certain conditions, including how “bargaining” will take place and sometimes even including actual contract terms. Alinsky was not known for his governance skills; he famously joked in the *Playboy* interview (and in documentaries) that none of his organizations were any good a few years after the initial campaign victory. New Labor has carried on this Alinskyist tradition too.

By contrast, as Chapter 3 illustrates, 1199 unions, even in negotiations with employers to win neutrality deals, bargain across the table, with no ground rules, and all workers are welcome to take part. Worker agency is a prerequisite for organizing and for building powerful structures.

Whole Worker Organizing: Restoring the CIO Approach for a New Economy

The working class does need more power to win. That is irrefutable. William Foster devotes an entire chapter of *Organizing Methods in the Steel Industry* to what he calls Special Organizational Work. The chapter is divided into four sections: “Unemployed—WPA”; “Fraternal Organizations”; “Churches”; and “Other Organizations.” Under “Churches,” Foster says, “In many instances, strongly favorable sentiment to the organization campaign will be found among the churches in the steel towns. This should be *carefully systematized* and utilized.” Under “Fraternal Organizations”: “There should be committees set up in the local organizations of these fraternal bodies in order to *systematically recruit their steel worker members* into the A.A. [Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers].”⁵⁹ The CIO organizing

methods incorporated an appreciation of power inside and outside the workplace. They used a *systematic* approach to recruiting support not only from the shop floor but also from the broader community in which the workers lived. Yet today, most good unions that *organize* inside the shop *mobilize* outside it: deep inside, shallow outside. It's as if they can't see the full extent of the battlefield or the vastness of their army.

A one-dimensional view of workers as workers rather than as whole people limits good organizing and constrains good worker organizers from more effectively building real power in and among the workers' communities. Since the early 1970s—the period of focus for Skocpol's *Diminished Democracy*, a period dominated by Alinsky's teachings—community power, like workplace power, has decreased. Most groups in the broader community now have little to no power. Yet even unions that organize effectively at the local level have usually contracted their “community support work” out to these relatively weak groups—mobilizing rather than organizing. When the groups then fail to bring serious power to back the workers in a tough private-sector fight, the organizers who enlisted them conclude, incorrectly, “The community stuff doesn't work.” They miss that the problem with “the community stuff” is their own reliance on the weak approach of advocacy or mobilizing, an approach they would never use for the fight inside the workplace.

For the inside fight, these unions have a theory of power; they understand how to identify the most influential workers among the total workforce; they pay attention to semantics; and they create structure tests to assess precisely how much power they are building step by step. Sadly, they check all this intelligence at the door when they step outside the shop and shift their horizon line to the community, for which they have no concomitant theory of power, no concomitant theory of leader identification. If they see the community's potential contribution as weak, it is because they don't apply the same standards to recruiting and building it, with the workers themselves doing their own community outreach among their own preexisting social networks. The very unions that practice “two sides as two sides” inside the workplace practice “three sides” out in the community. To restore worker power to 1930s levels requires an organizing model inside and outside the shop, based on CIO practice in the 1930s and 1940s but adapted to today's conditions.

CIO-model union organizers today frequently take the shortcut of engaging an already pro-union or progressive priest or minister, the equivalent of the staunchly pro-union worker activists inside the shop (who can't win), to stand with them at a press conference—a practice they know wouldn't be effective in the workplace. And just as the most enthusiastic worker activists are often not capable of leading their coworkers, so, too, the most committed activist religious leaders often can't lead *their* colleagues. To build power in the community, the good organizer must apply the same intelligence, skills, and techniques—beginning with painstakingly identifying organic community leaders—as he or she does to building power and organic leadership in the workplace. True organizing in the workplace plus true organizing in the community can and does win; organizing in the workplace plus mobilizing in the community does not.

To clarify the degree of power required, this book builds on a thesis developed by Joseph Luders in *The Civil Rights Movement and the Logic of Social Change*.⁶⁰ Luders's theory about costs structures related to protest outcomes is situated in the civil rights literature, not the labor literature, but interestingly, in order to construct his analysis about success in the civil rights movement he relies in part on *union* literature and the economic outcomes from strikes. This point, so salient, he makes not in his text but in his footnotes. The quote that opens this book is the 162nd footnote in Luders': "Curiously, the labor movement is conventionally ignored by scholars of social movements." Those words follow these:

. . . I suggest that economic actors differ in their exposure to the disruption costs that movements generate in launching protest marches, sit-ins, boycotts, picketing, and so on. Some of these insights have been investigated by labor historians and economists seeking to explicate strike outcomes.⁶¹

Luders argues that the most successful organizing drives in the civil rights movement—a movement fighting for voting rights and individual civil liberties—were those that carried *high economic concession costs* for the racist regime, that is, those by which movement actors could inflict a high degree of economic pain. Luders created what he calls an economic

opportunity structure to explain and predict outcomes of the power of people, that is, of agency. He argues that even though the movement's goals were civil and political rights, it took economic actors to move the entrenched political racists to shift their positions. His thesis is threefold:

First, economic duress is a major proximate cause behind the decision of economic actors to make substantial concessions to movement demands; second, two general movement-imposed costs can be distinguished, and the uneven vulnerability among economic actors to these costs produces distinctive responses; and, third, economic sectors vary in their exposure to the costs movements generate.

The two movement-imposed costs are what he calls the concession cost, that is, how much it will cost a business to agree to the movement's demands, measured against the disruption cost, or the ability of the movement to create highly effective actions against the target.

Luders's concession and disruption costs are central to my overall analysis about power. I build on Luders's thesis, situated in the social movement theory literature, by unpacking it and showing that it can function as a tool for power analysis in workplace and nonworkplace settings. It makes sense that he drew on labor literature to arrive at his framework, because the same framework is routine in successful, high-stakes union negotiations. When I was a labor negotiator, we called Luders's concession costs the *cost of settlement*. And what he calls disruption costs we called the *ability to create a crisis* for the employer.⁶² The two are always seen in relation to each other. I am using Luders's "concession costs" as a broader "power required" variable in this book's discussion of relative success (and relative defeat) in the new millennium. Success in any fight or any contestation waged by movement activists *across* sectors absolutely requires making an accurate assessment of Luders's concession costs *before* the fight begins. Movement actors can and must reasonably predict the concession costs in advance; otherwise, they enter the fight without knowing *which strategies to deploy*. As Luders says, different economic actors are unequally vulnerable and concession costs are not static—they are variable and contingent on the ability of actors to force disruption costs.

If, for example, the movement actors' demand is for single-payer health care, activists must understand what it will cost the health care industrial complex to concede that demand. Without that understanding they will not know the magnitude of the fight on their hands, and might adopt the wrong strategy, applying an insufficient mobilizing approach rather than an all-out organizing approach. An incorrect power analysis can lead people who want to end capitalism to think that small numbers of demonstrators occupying public spaces like parks and squares and tweeting about it will generate enough power to bring down Wall Street. Others might think that the good frames used for *or derived from* these occupations will marshal enough emotion to suddenly overwhelm lawmakers with the revelation that the system is unfair, and the lawmakers then will institute a set of fair regulations to govern corporate capital. Or if movement actors were to demand a more equitable funding of the public school system, but never grapple with what that would cost or where the money might come from, they might well apply strategies *insufficient to generate the disruptive power needed to force attention to their claim*.

Building on Luders's thesis about the relationship between disruption and concession costs in the civil rights movement,⁶³ I extend his logic into my overall argument about what kind of success is possible under the mobilizing approach versus what the organizing approach can achieve. In Table 2.2, Concession Costs = Power Required, I specify a set of conditions that will generate employer concession costs from low to high. The vertical axis is the cost of settlement—meaning, in real dollars, what the employer will have to pay out of the company's overall expense budget and profits to settle a contract with a given group of workers.⁶⁴ Importantly, this cost isn't just the absolute value of wages or benefits; it is the cost in relationship to the overall expense of running the business.

The horizontal axis is what I call ideological resistance. Drawing on my case analyses as well as my field experiences, I propose that there are two types of business leaders: the pragmatic, or practical, and the diabolically anti-union. There might be a partly pragmatic and partly diabolical resistance to unions where there are high-cost employees involved, but I have found no evidence of this. Chapter Three and some works in the literature do offer examples of large-scale employers straddling the

two positions, but these are the employers with less at stake, dealing with lower-cost employees and facing lower-cost union demands. Such employers can be bought if the union pays or arranges to cover the concession cost, for example by securing higher government subsidies for the company, or lowering taxes for the employer (a typical strategy for New Labor era unions).

While ideological resistance is often correlated with, or assumed to be the cost of, doing business, it is not always so. In fact, the key to most high-impact, high-success union strategy for 100 years has been identifying the pragmatic-practical employer *within* the higher-cost workforce's field, because this is how unions with high-cost workers make significant breakthroughs. The entire concept of "pattern bargaining" is based on a union that follows the organizing model—such as the old United Auto Workers of the 1940s or today's 1199 New England. The workers must have the ability to strike, and they must have already "lined up the market," meaning strategically timed all their contracts in a given geography and/or industry to expire simultaneously. When these conditions are met, the union starts the bargaining process with the practical-pragmatic employer to "set the pattern high," assuring this employer that they have the power to win the same settlements with the next employer in the industry with whom they will sit across the table days later. Even in this scenario, striking—or the *credible threat* of a real strike based on recent real strikes—is *required to move employers at the high cost of settlement* level. Case studies in Chapter Three demonstrate that the reason 1199NE is able to win strong contracts—including defined-benefit pension plans enabling health service workers to retire when caring for patients has taken a physical toll, and even contracts winning neutrality deals for nonunion workers of the same employer (but without negative consequences for unorganized nursing home workers) is precisely because they run majority strikes often enough that the employers know their strike threat is real and credible.

Ideological resistance can also be relevant to the issue of shop floor rights versus material gains in contract settlements, since these carry different concession costs. Kimeldorf discusses the role this difference played in the strategies and outcomes of the West Coast and East Coast dockworkers. The West Coast workers, who wanted control of

TABLE 2.2 Power Required (Concession Costs)

| Concession Costs = Power Required to Win | | | |
|--|------|---|---|
| Cost of Settlement | High | Medium- to higher-wage workers and <i>pragmatic, practical employer</i> , willing to settle if union finds the money for costs, and union raises market to level; neutrality acceptable. Includes some private-sector hospitals, some automakers, some Democratic mayors and governors, etc. | Medium- to higher-wage workers and <i>diabolically anti-union employer</i> who hires top union-busting firms and under no circumstances stops fighting. Includes most private-sector employers, many governors and elected officials in right-to-work and/or trifecta red states or regions. |
| | Low | Low-wage workers, few to no demands, small workforce, no pensions, no real health care, union doing business for boss on subsidies and taxes, neutrality acceptable. Includes janitors, fast food restaurants, car washes. | Low-wage workers, small demands, such as a wage increase, regular hours or more hours, numbers of workers medium to large, employer hires union busters but can be bought or will deal for right price. |
| | | Low | High |
| Ideological Resistance | | | |

production, had to strike to win. On the East Coast, because the union was only demanding more money, the boss was willing to settle without a strike. Some employers in the higher cost of settlement category might agree to increased wages and substantial benefits after a strike, but hold out on workers' rights over production decisions for ideological reasons, that is, belief in employer control of the shop floor.

In my own negotiations with hospital employers, there is evidence that the boss will even surrender on production issues when two conditions

are present: the union can mount an effective strike, and the employer comes to understand that the workers might actually make better decisions than line managers, decisions that would positively impact the employer's bottom line. The Affordable Care Act offers a present-day example of this dynamic: New Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement rules tie higher reimbursement rates to better patient outcomes. Bedside nurses almost always have better ideas than management regarding what will heal the patient better and faster, so a pragmatic employer might even grant production decision-making to a high power-generating hospital workers' union.

On the other hand, janitors, for example, are low-wage workers and represent a tiny fraction of the overhead of the corporations whose buildings they clean. If the demand on the part of the union *is also low*, a mobilizing model with only a minority of workers and a handful of not very powerful community allies can "win." This is a typical Justice for Janitors campaign model, and too few people understand that it can't simply be exported to other sectors, especially not to higher-wage sectors where wage and benefit costs alone are literally 60 to 70 percent of the employer's overall expenses, for example teachers with public pensions or nursing home workers with classic defined-benefit pensions. In the mobilizing approach used in the far lower-cost Justice for Janitors model, essentially all the employer needs is the union's guarantee that it will negotiate a "trigger agreement," meaning that the small wage increase for the workers—fifty cents or one dollar per hour—won't take effect until the union succeeds at getting all cleaning contractors in the area to agree to the same terms. Such a settlement is very inexpensive to the corporation, taken as a ratio of cost to overall expenses (concession costs). It's considerably easier to shift even a conservative, anti-union corporate owner to the practical business decision to settle these low-cost workers' demands. I argue that little real power is built by this version of mobilizing. Although the union expands its membership and some janitors get a raise, it is not a life-altering change, and the process develops few real worker leaders, or none. Equally significant, such a fight rarely develops new organic community leaders—those involved are generally already involved, already pro-union priests and pro-union self-selecting activist types. They have not been recruited or trained systematically, and, so, this approach is not an organizing approach in the

community, it is a mobilizing approach in and outside the workplace and isn't expanding the worker army.

With the exception of the Chicago Teachers Union, today even most organizing unions rarely systematize their brilliant approach with workers on the inside by using an equally brilliant approach to the workers' own organic community on the outside. The CTU learned from the British Columbia Federation of Teachers that to win a massive and illegal strike, it had to have staunch support—active support, tested and well prepared—from parents, students, and key community institutions. The Chicago teachers voted in a new leadership in 2010 that already met the first criteria for the organizing model; they believed the purpose of the union is to enable workers to radically change their lives in all aspects, that the union is a tool for class struggle. They knew that this condition could only be met if ordinary workers, not staff, were the primary agents of change. The teachers had built strong ties to key community- and neighborhood-based groups throughout Chicago. The leadership saw the relationship with parents, students, and the broader community as something more than an alliance: If they called a strike, parents would be key, either with decisive support, or potentially decisive hostility (in which case they'd be advancing the agenda of the mayor, not that of the teachers). They were right, and they had just enough of a direct rapport with parents directly through their students and indirectly through their many community allies to beat Mayor Rahm Emanuel and save their union by *rebuilding it through a strike*.

The most profound success of the Chicago teachers' strike was the building of powerful solidarities among teachers *and* between teachers and the whole of Chicago's working class. That their leader, Karen Lewis, an African-American high school teacher, would go on to poll consistently as the most popular person in the city to challenge the incumbent in the mayoral race would have been *utterly* unimaginable before the strike.

I propose a schematic different from the typical corporate-campaign example shown in Figure 2.2. Instead of making workers a one-twelfth peripheral consideration, as do some union strategists, in Figure 2.3 I put them at the very center of every campaign to challenge corporate power. If New Labor devoted the time and energy to understanding and engaging each and every relationship that workers organically possess in their community, rather than focusing on the boardroom

TABLE 2.3 Power Available (Disruption Costs)

| Disruption Costs = Power Group Can Generate | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--|
| Role of Workers Inside Workplace | High = Organizing | <p>Single-day or limited strike = High power Majority worker support; organic leader model and either no secondary campaign (structurally powerful workers) or a comprehensive campaign with staff-led community-labor alliance on <i>workplace issues only</i>. New Labor rarely uses this model; CIO-style unions use it often</p> | <p>Unlimited strike and high degree of community support = Maximum power Majority worker support; organic leader model and workers leading community campaign on union-supported <i>non-workplace issues and workplace issues</i>; whole-worker organizing model. CIO unions can and do use it, New Labor could choose to do so</p> |
| | Low = Mobilizing | <p>Symbolic strike=Low power Minority of workers involved; activist model; corporate campaign (workers and their community are two of twelve units considered); most commonly used by New Labor</p> | <p>I have found no instances of this model. By definition, a majority of workers must be involved for community participation to also be high</p> |
| | | Low = Mobilizing | High = Organizing |
| Role of Workers in Community | | | |

of the employer, the kind and level of power of built would yield far greater success.

To blunt the employers' edge, rank-and-file workers need these strong ties; with them, they will be able to do the organizing and unionizing work themselves that today is mostly being done by paid staff—and do

it far more effectively. When this model was followed in Chicago, the results were stunning.

Jake Rosenfeld, in his book *What Unions No Longer Do*,⁶⁵ published in 2014, argues that there are only two forces in U.S. society that have an equal (and high) rate of influence on how ordinary people vote: unions and religious institutions. He describes how well the right has applied this, making an intentional power move to build an evangelical base of voters, a base that grew steadily while leftists in good CIO-style organizing unions said, “I don’t like religion, I do class, that’s why I am not building relationships with *them*.” That’s an actual quote from this author’s interview with an extremely successful organizer. Yet this is in direct contradiction to the belief system of good organizers, the kind that believe in worker agency. If a community or other tie matters to the workers, that should be enough for *good* union organizers. If faith matters to workers, I argue it has to matter to unions. Otherwise, the union remains a third party in the church—not of the membership, but apart from it. Reverend Nelson Johnson, a key player in a workers’ victory discussed in Chapter Five, said that when union members who are also congregation members talk to faith leaders, and these engagements are personal conversations about the congregation member, labor wins many new and often powerful religious-leader converts to the cause of unions. This work is much more important than devoting time to tactical maneuvers with 1 percenters shareholders or businesses in the supply chain of a corporate target.

People in CIO-style labor unions who say they don’t “do” religion should at least view working with religious leaders through their members as a viable defense tactic. As Rosenfeld points out, it is through religion that the right wing continues to expand into the labor base. As a result, this base has been voting against its own interests for Scott Walker and for Rick Snyder and for many other ultraconservative governors and state legislators, who cynically promise to cut taxes while gutting public pensions to “give the little people, the hardworking taxpayers in our state, a raise.” The many statistics linking religion and voting are the most important numbers in Rosenfeld’s book, because they don’t tell us about the past, they tell us about the future. They hint loudly at the strategy described here; the effectiveness of that strategy is made very evident in the case studies described in this book.

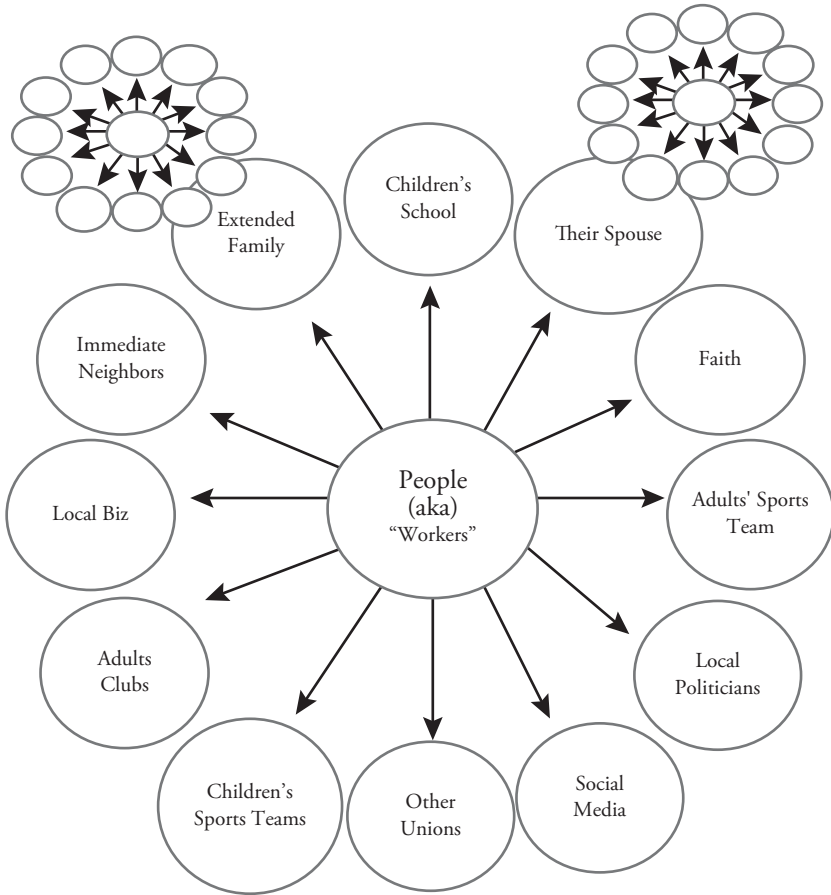


FIGURE 2.3 Whole Worker Charting: Social Networks

For the entire climate to change nationally as it changed in Chicago, good unions need to engage the broader community in the fight, so that the community, of which the workers are an organic part, transforms along with the workplace. That is an organizing model with a bottom-up strategy, capable of movement building rather than mere moment actualization. The large numbers of women in today's workforce—saddled with wage work and endless nonwage work—don't separate their lives in the way industrial-era, mostly male workers could, entering one life when they arrived at work and punched in, and another when they punched out. The pressing concerns that bear down on most workers today are not divided into two neat piles, only one of which need be of concern

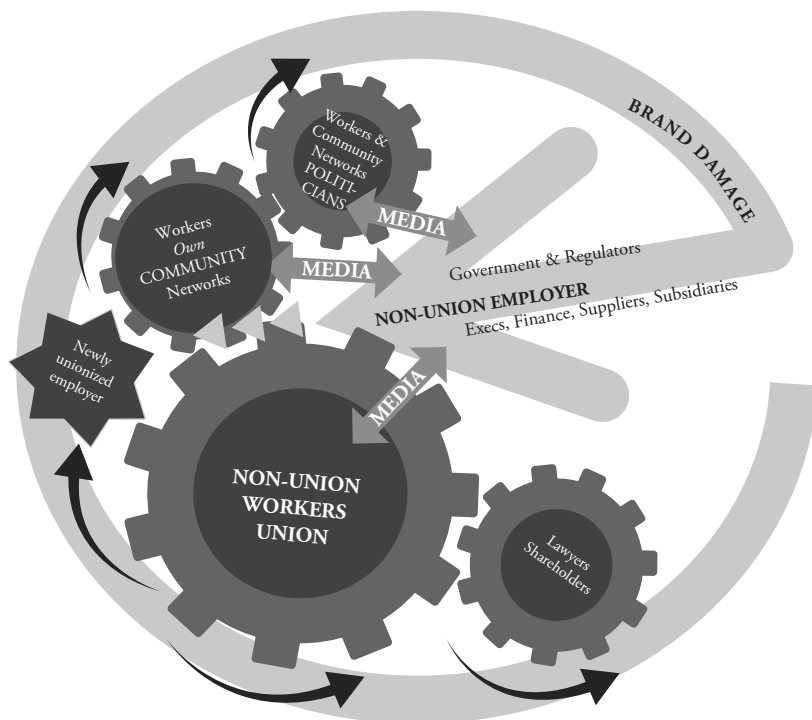


FIGURE 2.4 Whole Worker Comprehensive Organizing

to the union, while the other is divided up among a dozen single-issue interest groups, none of which has the union's collective strength. To effectively challenge neoliberal capitalism in the present moment, to successfully challenge the excessive corporate power that defines our era, unions must create a whole-worker organizing model that helps—rather than hinders—large numbers of Americans to see the connections between corporate domination of their work lives, their home lives, and their country's political structures. Figure 2.4 offers an illustration of how Chicago's teachers behaved after 2010, of how the workers at Smithfield won the third round of their fight, and what Connecticut looks like when the whole union brings the whole community into the fight.

the boss, and filed for an election with 70 percent of the workers on a petition. We had volunteer member organizers with us in every committee meeting from the same employer. They would stand up and say, ‘We won this for you, we expect you to now get strong, be prepared to fight and to strike because we expect you to win a common contract expiration with us, our standards are in jeopardy because you make \$3 less than us and you don’t have the pension, our future depends on you and you better be ready to stand up and fight.’³⁰

When queried why this employer would give a neutrality agreement without asking the workers to surrender anything, David Pickus, the lead negotiator in the fight, explained,

We were negotiating with five other homes of theirs we already had under contract, so we said, ‘If you don’t give us these places, we are going to strike all five homes.’ They knew from past experience we could cause a big problem because we had struck them successfully before.³¹

Even though the union had negotiated a neutrality agreement, Baril states, “the discussion with the workers was a traditional discussion. We didn’t know if the employer would actually follow the neutrality agreement, so we talked about a fight, we talked about building a majority to be able to build to fight the boss, so that the workers understood that they would have to do the work to build the union.”³²

Using the word *strike* early in the organizing process, as Baril says they did above, is part of a strategy that pays very careful attention to semantics, which are absolutely key to successful organizing. As 1199’s nursing-home case in this chapter shows, a key question in 1199 for generations has been “Are there two sides or three in a workplace fight?” Upon learning of a union drive, an employer will usually begin an anti-union campaign by declaring, “We don’t need a third party in here”—by “third party” the boss means a union as a third party, with the boss being one party, and the workers being a second party. In good organizing and in the 1199NE approach, a key to victory (and to a successful strike vote and strike)—is that the workers see *themselves* as the union—in which case there are only two sides, a crushing answer to the employer’s message.

Below are two examples from the opening of two separate new-millennium training workshops in a CIO-style organizing approach. Both are titled “Semantics,” and they reveal the centrality of language and its meaning to the fight, and to the craft of organizing.³³

Introduction

Everything an organizer does must have a purpose that is about moving the vision and the plan forward in their industry. Conversations are the primary vehicle for doing that.

EVERY CONVERSATION MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Have a *purpose* = 70% *DISCOVERY*—*worker speaks*
- *Shift* the worker = 30% *UNION AS SOLUTION*—organizer speaks
- Have an *ask*

Organizing conversations are **not about giving information**, giving updates, and leaving it up to the worker to decide what to do with that information. Good organizers **always have a conversation agenda**, which is about how to shift workers in their attitudes, beliefs, and commitment to both their coworkers and their campaign.

The second example is excerpted from a set of “semantics drills” developed by the local union with whom I worked in Nevada. We used fifteen examples of how to say something badly or the successful way; these were practiced for an hour daily in the organizing department:

Semantics Training

- Why do semantics matter (pose question to the group) 2-3 minute discussion
 - Point = People learn about their union from us and how we talk about it.
- General Principles
 - DO NOT 3rd Party the union
- Examples: (put up the bad statements on the flip chart and have people discuss why they are not good and then the group comes up with a better answer)

1. Bad = “Thank you” as a way to end a conversation
 - a. Better = Good talking to you/See you later/Look forward to seeing you soon
2. Bad = We need you to get a schedule for us.
 - a. Better = It’s important that you and your co-workers know who works at the facility, what days and when, so that you can be effective and efficient in building your worksite structure.

The 1199 nursing home campaign in 2014 that Baril was describing above was a textbook implementation of the *Advice to Rookie Organizers* (see below), including postulate #20, “We lose when we don’t put workers into struggle.” Even with a neutrality agreement, the organizers understand that if the workers don’t do the work of building their own union—including preparing for and having a fight—their leadership will not be tested or developed to the level of strength needed for a solid union, one where the rank-and-file workers themselves can govern the workplace after the election victory.

The list below represents the key postulates taken from the characteristic 1199 organizing “manual”—a handwritten, dated, single sheet of paper that hangs on the door or is pinned on the bulletin board of most 1199 organizers’ offices. It is often covered with coffee stains and marking-pen notes and is called, simply, “Advice for Rookie Organizers.”³⁴

1. Get close to the workers, stay close to the workers.
2. Tell workers it’s their union and then behave that way.
3. Don’t do for workers what they can do.
4. The union is not a fee for service; it is the collective experience of workers in struggle.
5. The union’s function is to assist workers in making a positive change in their lives.
6. Workers are made of clay, not glass.
7. Don’t be afraid to ask workers to build their own union.
8. Don’t be afraid to confront them when they don’t.
9. Don’t spend your time organizing workers who are already organizing themselves, go to the biggest worst.
10. The working class builds cells for its own defense, identify them and recruit their leaders.

11. Anger is there before you are—channel it, don't defuse it.
12. Channeled anger builds a fighting organization.
13. Workers know the risks, don't lie to them.
14. Every worker is showtime—communicate energy, excitement, urgency and confidence.
15. There is enough oppression in workers' lives not to be oppressed by organizers.
16. Organizers talk too much. Most of what you say is forgotten.
17. Communicate to workers that there is no salvation beyond their own power.
18. Workers united can beat the boss. You have to believe that and so do they.
19. Don't underestimate the workers.
20. We lose when we don't put workers into struggle.

Realistically, only one of these postulates—#14—could be practically adopted by an organization like Local 775, and even if 775 did adopt it, it would be applied to external political campaigns in the midst of a machine-like, staff-run 'Get Out the Vote' (GOTV) campaign moment. The team running 775 does heed "*Every worker is show time—communicate energy, excitement, urgency and confidence.*" Professional staff make use of those qualities when driving hard to win a political race or ballot initiative.

But taken as a whole, these 1199 postulates can be seen as defining features that separate the organizing approach from the mobilizing approach. For example, most people who call themselves organizers in the New Labor model would probably adhere to the list below during the unionization phase, but abandon them soon after:

- [1] *Get close to the workers, stay close to the workers.*
- [11] *Anger is there before you are—channel it, don't defuse it.*
- [12] *Channeled anger builds a fighting organization.*
- [14] *Every worker is show time—communicate energy, excitement, urgency, and confidence.*

Each postulate expresses a core value and reflects 1199's roots in the CIO era. Starting with the first one, a close relationship with all or a majority of the workers can only be formed in a majority-worker approach

and by working through the organic leaders. And there are other postulates—the most important ones in terms of worker agency—that can only manifest in a model that vests primary power in the workers themselves. Postulate #2, “Tell the workers it’s their union, and behave that way,” is significantly worded: *behave*, not *act*—no pretense allowed. That’s a commandment, and in the 1199NE tradition, it’s a commandment with teeth: An organizer can be fired for *not* behaving that way. Similarly, postulates #17 (“Communicate to workers there is no salvation beyond their own power”) and #18 (“Workers united can beat the boss—you have to believe that and so do they”) conceive of workers as the primary leverage in their own liberation. A professional organizing staffer trying to play Bruce Lee—the lone hero outmaneuvering the boss in a series of high-flying karate moves—cannot replace the workers’ army when it comes to the long march. Real organizers never underestimate the true fighting value of workers; workers’ struggle is key to the pedagogy.

With the kind of endless anti-union warfare waged by employers, for example—documented and superbly described by Kate Bronfenbrenner—there’s little question that workers need coaching on the employer offensive that they will face and on how to stay ahead of and beat the professional union busters. According to the 1199NE method,³⁵ falling behind the employer’s war is usually fatal; it is crucial that workers know how to build a majority before the first skirmishes begin, and especially before the union busters start threatening workers. For that, you need excellent teachers who can school workers on the stages of an employer fight and coach them through what the workers’ side must do before and during each stage of it. If the fight were easy, if workers didn’t need good coaches, the vast majority of them would already be in unions, based on the consistently high number of workers in the United States who say they want a union. It’s when the boss converts the workplace into a war zone and starts intimidating and firing people that this number drops, and drops considerably. Good organizer-coaches are needed to circumvent that attrition by preparing workers to face and fight the worst that management can do.

The Union Difference: What Being a Unionized Nursing Home Worker Means in Washington and in Connecticut

As shown in Table 3.1 below, a nursing-home worker in New England, where the minimum wage is lower than Washington’s, earns substantially