Additionally, all three chapters show that there are key structural features that can institutionalize governance models that help to thwart oligarchic tendencies in large organizations like unions.

Chapter Six explores a group that organizes the working class as a class, but is not itself a union. Make the Road New York is a social-movement organization that is also a worker center, but it locates the worker center inside an organization that has managed to come as close to a modern union as any nonunion group in the United States today. With over 155 full-time staff, the organization combines direct services, advocacy, and mobilizing into a tight blend, and it has enjoyed more success than most similarly situated groups. Interestingly, many of the group's specific legislative victories, as well as their workplace efforts, largely rely on the continued strength of New York City's unions. While their work is impressive, it raises a fundamental question of whether groups like this can continue producing wins if the unions they rely on—which exist as key players in only a handful of states—get weaker.

The concluding chapter sums up the lessons of the case studies and argues that to reverse today's inequality requires a robust embrace of unions—but of unions that are democratic, focused on bottom-up rather than top-down strategies, and place the primary agency for change in workers acting collectively at work and in the communities in which they reside. The losses of the past fifty years, decades when the corporate right seized firm control of the power structure, can be recouped, but only by readopting and modernizing the methods and strategies deployed by the old CIO and the civil rights movement.

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

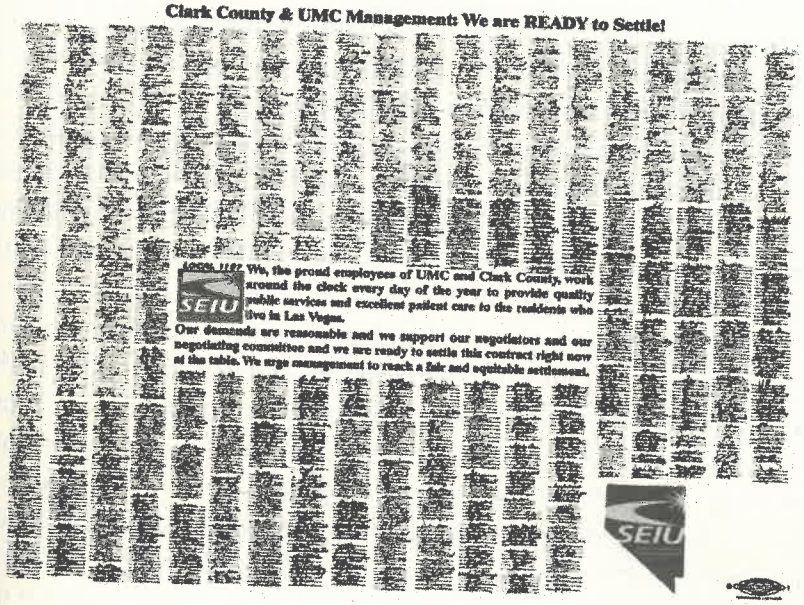

FIGURE 2.1 An example of a structure test

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

organizers and the end of high-participation unions. There were John Lewis's obsession with top-down power and his determination to rein in socialism—more important to him than reining in corporations. There was the self-inflicted wounds of Stalinism and increasing divisions in the American left. There was World War II's "peace treaty" between labor and capital, which instituted strike bans, decreasing opportunities for rank-and-file on-the-job problem solving, and centralized collective bargaining, disempowering rank and file–led negotiations. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 straitjacketed militants by banning solidarity strikes and forcing all unions and eventually all unionists to give an affidavit that they were not Communists or affiliated with the left. The finishing blow was dealt by Joe McCarthy and his Cold War witch hunts.[18] These developments destroyed the most revolutionary aspect of the earlier CIO: *the agency of workers themselves.* Driving leftists out of the unions, the ones who kept "organizing and organizing and organizing and organizing"[19] despite the stiffest odds, also drove out the methods of building strong worksite structures, the very kind that create high-participation organizing.

Marshall Ganz, in *Why David Sometimes Wins,*[20] says the purpose or motivation of leadership teams is central to outcomes. The early CIO did use some full-time left-wing organizers; this was the Depression era, and many were either donating their time or being paid considerably less than today's full-time professionals. More importantly, the old CIO's full-time organizers were *co-leaders* with rank-and-file organizers, the organic leaders among the workers. This point will be explored in more depth in Chapter Three, in an examination of 1199 New England, a local union that serves as a good contemporary example of the CIO organizing method and its results. This union, composed of mostly female health-care workers, routinely runs majority strikes (not without difficulty, but super majority strikes were never easy). In their model, as in the early CIO's, the role of the paid organizer is to identify the organic leaders, recruit them, and coach them how to most effectively lead their coworkers against the inevitable employer war. Organizers in 1199NE are understood to play a leadership role: They lead the organizing committee. The rank-and-file organizers lead the workers. Ganz's book documents a case involving farmworkers similar to the dockworkers' case described in Kimeldorf's *Reds or Rackets.* In Ganz's story, the

same workforce is first defeated and later wins, but as in the case of the Western and Eastern dockworkers, it is the approach to strategy and to the workers themselves that is decisive, not how many resources are brought to each unionization effort. As in Kimeldorf's case, smarter demands—for more autonomy and control of the production process rather than for more money—lead to a smarter strategy, in which worker agency is primary to building the power needed to win.

Ganz's and Kimeldorf's in-depth studies reinforce a core argument in this book: What sociologists and academics have long labeled *structure* is actually human *agency.* Successful workplace organizers today who still run strikes regularly obsess about the two words *structure test.* But the structure these organizers are testing is simply worker agency: the power of the workers' own organization, built up and developed by individuals like Sally—organic leaders. In fact, all structure tests are agency tests. Global trade agreements are structure tests: they measure elite and corporate power. When a successful strike shuts down production and leads to a very strong contract for the striking workers, academics call that contract a "structure." But the real structure involved is the human power, or agency, that won the contract. Good organizers today, like those depicted in the following chapters, make sure the workers know that their ability to win a great contract is in direct proportion to their ability—and willingness—to fight the employer: a test of the agency of one against the agency of the other.

The left-wing organizers in the CIO who developed human structures powerful enough to defeat staggering inequalities, and who were committed to genuine worker agency, were replaced after World War II by a massive bureaucracy. Kim Moody and Nelson Lichtenstein document the expansion of professional union staff in the 1950s, an expansion that was later mimicked in social movements after the advent of the New Left at the end of the 1960s.[21] In her book *Diminished Democracy,*[22] Skocpol focuses on what she calls the "extraordinary reorganization of U.S. civic life after the 1960s, seeking to make sense of the abrupt shift from membership-based voluntary associations to managerially directed advocacy groups." That shift was precipitated by the abrupt and massive shifts in unions. During every period Skocpol methodically analyzes, U.S. unions represented the largest sector of what she calls "cross-class voluntary federations." The U.S. corporate class succeeded in taming

unions by pushing for labor laws and regulations that encouraged or forced the replacement of workers and worker agency with a huge union bureaucracy, which they promised would promote the workers' interests better than could the workers themselves.

Skocpol's "abrupt shift" emerged in part because the corporate class realized they could institute the same weakening mechanisms to quiet the unruly left wing growing outside the unions. A vast new philanthropic focus in the 1970s shifted from naming buildings to professionalizing protest; social activism was legalized to death. Skocpol's exacting analysis of why democracy diminished when professionals replaced ordinary people can be applied in every respect to why democracy diminished in unions, though democracy *decimated* might be a more accurate way of putting it.

One underexplored aspect of this effort to rationalize and contain agency is the role played by the man considered the dean (or father) of modern community organizing, Saul Alinsky.

Saul Alinsky Changes and Compromises the Organizing Model[23]

Throughout the period that stretched from the CIO era to the Civil Rights movement and then into the forty years Skocpol describes, Saul Alinsky was codifying the idea of community organizing. Weeks before his unexpected death, Alinsky described his project to *Playboy* in a wide-ranging interview, published posthumously:[24]

> What I wanted to try to do was to apply the organizing skills I'd mastered in the CIO to the worst slums and ghettos, so that the most oppressed and exploited elements could take control of their own communities and their own destinies. Up until then, specific factories and industries had been organized for social change, but never whole communities.[25]

Alinsky, unfortunately, never truly mastered the CIO's organizing skills because he never did any workplace organizing himself; he was a mobilizer, outside the factories. In fact, Alinsky compromised the CIO organizing model in three significant ways that have weakened

labor and nonlabor movements alike. First, he delinked the method he observed from the mission or motivation of the left-wing organizers—organizers who were committed not only to winning campaigns but also to *radically altering the power structure itself.* He then grafted some of the method to an elite theory of power, and in so doing, he laid the groundwork for what I call the mobilizing model. Second, he was the bifurcator-in-chief: He proposed that unskilled, easily replaced workers in "the community" could—independently of their natural allies, the semiskilled and skilled members of the working class—generate enough power outside of the economic arena to actually challenge the corporate class by themselves. Third, Alinsky, who idolized John Lewis, created an organizing model much more like Lewis's than like that of the left-wing organizers upon whom the CIO was originally built. Alinsky ensured Lewis-like control of the masses through a fiction, still upheld today, that full-time organizers are not leaders and that they answer to the thousands of grassroots people they recruit, whom they call leaders. This fiction has obscured the accountability of the organizers for decades. As I will show in this discussion, and throughout this book, Lewis-Alinsky core beliefs were recycled into the post-1995 New Labor leadership, creating a mobilizing model dressed up as an organizing model.

Saul Alinsky's name has been synonymous with organizing for more than half a century. Though he died in 1972, shortly after the publication of his most famous book, *Rules for Radicals*, his influence today is everywhere. Both major candidates for the Democratic presidency in 2008, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama (and Clinton again in 2016), are linked to Alinsky's legacy. Clinton met with him and in 1969 wrote her undergraduate thesis on him—more than 100 pages examining what she calls the Alinsky model.[26] During Obama's first presidential campaign, he spoke often about his experience working with an Alinsky-influenced community organization in Chicago. Since Obama came to power (perhaps *because* he did), Alinsky has been an inspiration to Tea Partiers, a development that has confounded many community organizers who consider themselves original, true Alinsky believers. In any casual Internet search, after Wikipedia the top three Alinsky hits are radical-right websites, including Glenn Beck's, and these sites urge anyone serious about building power to read *Rules for Radicals*—a top seller

in 2008 and 2009 among right-wing grassroots activists, whose leaders received gift copies from Dick Armey, among others.[27]

Despite a world of differences between them, Saul Alinsky and Karl Marx have this in common: There is what they wrote, and what they did, and what has been done by their followers. There are Alinskyites and Marxists who denounce fellow Alinskyites and Marxists, insisting that other factions misunderstand the founder's true message. In both camps, devotees point to the good work that has been done by members of the tradition, and critics point to the ways the tradition has led the left into problems. Talking about Alinsky can be just as tricky as talking about Marx.

The single biggest source of funding for four decades of community organizing, starting in the early 70's, was the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). A long article by Lawrence Engel in *Theological Studies*[28] asserts, with copious evidence, that the CCHD was developed to support Alinsky's work. Engel's research describes the Catholic bishops' 1969 commitment to raise $50,000,000 to alleviate poverty through a national collection strategy church by church. In today's dollars, this commitment to fund Alinsky-based work would be just over $330 million.[29] Engel asks, "Why would Catholic bishops approve funds for the poor to organize for power, much of which went to the community organizing projects associated with Saul Alinsky?"[30] One answer to Engel's question is that the Catholic Church was sincere in hoping to alleviate poverty. Another comes from Alinsky himself:

> So in order to involve the Catholic priests in Back of the Yards, I didn't give them any stuff about Christian ethics, I just appealed to their self-interest. I'd say, 'Look, you're telling your people to stay out of the Communist-dominated unions and action groups, right?' He'd nod. So I'd go on: 'And what do they do? They say, "Yes, Father," and walk out of the church and join the CIO. Why? Because it's their bread and butter, because the C.I.O. is doing something about their problems while you are just sitting here on your tail in the sacristy.' That stirred 'em up, which is just what I wanted to do, and then I'd say, "Look, if you go on like that you're gonna alienate your parishioners, turn them from the church, maybe drive them into the arms of the Reds. Your only hope is to move first, to beat the Communists at their own game, to show the people you're more interested in their living conditions than in the contents of your collection plate. And not only will you get them back again, by supporting their struggle, but when they win, they'll be more prosperous and your donations will go up and the welfare of the Church will be enhanced."[31]

Alinsky was replacing union dues with Catholic tithing, mediated by bishops instead of bosses. It's not hard to understand why Alinsky-based organizations have dominated the field since the 1970s. And it is important to understand their contributions, but also their limitations. To do that, it is important to understand Saul Alinsky.

Saul Alinsky was born in Chicago in 1909 to two working-class Russian Jews.[32] In 1926, he entered the University of Chicago, where George Herbert Mead, credited with originating the field of Symbolic Interactionism, and sociologist Robert Park were significant intellectual powers. According to Alinsky's biographer Sanford Horwitt, Alinsky took many of Park's classes.[33] Alinsky also spent a full decade doing academically directed participant observation, first with youth gangs and then with the Chicago mob. He published several scholarly articles in the 1930s and early 1940s that reveal his early thinking about power analysis, based on his observations of the power dynamics of both of these nontraditional types of organization.

In the late 1930s, bored with criminal justice work (he often referred to boredom as a kind of chief life motivator) and alarmed by the rise of fascism in Europe, Alinsky transitioned from his job in the Joliet Prison to "moonlighting with the CIO."[34] This gave him his first contact with the people he later said were the best organizers of his day: the "Reds." Working as a volunteer, he helped raise funds for striking mine workers and for the International Brigades heading off to fight in the Spanish Civil War.

Alinsky, unlike the left-wing organizers in the CIO, wanted to defend and protect capitalism; his ideas were very close to Alexis de Tocqueville's. Both Alinsky and Tocqueville were enchanted by the concept of freedom; both failed to recognize that the wage labor system, the place most individuals spend most hours, is anything but a zone of freedom. Alinsky quotes Tocqueville more often than anyone else in both *Reveille for Radicals* and *Rules for Radicals*. He spins Tocqueville's

long digressions about the importance of creating a middle class into his own vernacular, calling Tocqueville's middle class the "have a little, want some more class." Both he and Tocqueville believed that it's essential to have such a class to ward off the influence of Jacobins and socialists.

Stability in our freedom-loving society, Alinsky said, would be achieved by having strong unions, the guarantors of a strong middle class. The unions Alinsky wanted were the kind John L. Lewis believed in; his 1949 book, *John L. Lewis: An Unauthorized Biography*,[35] is a 400-page love letter to the man and his work. The book opens with a full-page black-and-white photo of a regal-looking Lewis standing over Alinsky, his hand gesturing as he explains a concept, while Alinsky takes notes. Both men are wearing crisp suits; the room they inhabit is furnished with handsome lamps and oversize leather chairs. C. Wright Mills's "men of power" would have felt at home in that setting. The photo conveys Alinsky's sense of Lewis as magisterial, and so does his text: "To me, Lewis is an extraordinary individual and certainly one of the outstanding figures of our time."[36]

In 1941, Alinsky wrote in the *American Journal of Sociology*, "The point of view of the [Back of the Yards] Council on organized labor is quite clear. First it looks to the national organized labor movements to cope effectively with many of those major social forces which impinge upon the Back of the Yards community with disastrous results."[37] He might not have been wrong to imagine, back then, that his job, his added value, was to strategically engage faith-based groups to complement, not substitute for, the power of unions. In the abstract for this article he says, "In the industrial area adjacent to the Stock Yards of Chicago, a community council was formed which included the two basic institutions of the area—(1) organized religion and (2) organized labor—as well as all the other interest and action groups in that community." Today, however, labor's power is almost nil, national unions cannot cope effectively with big issues or, often, small ones, and faith-based community groups can no longer simply attend to local affairs. Without real CIO unions, like those Alinsky knew in Chicago, the church and labor alliance can't possibly match in 2016 what it accomplished in 1939.

In fact, Horwitt notes that even in the later 1940s and early 1950s, when Alinsky first ventured outside of Chicago to Kansas City and Los

Angeles, he couldn't create a community-only model that worked as well as Back of the Yards.[38] This caused him real concern at the time, because he was fundraising and couldn't show the model working. It wasn't working because a crucial part was missing: He didn't have the very smart—and left-wing—Packing House Workers Organizing Committee with him. *Conditions and context matter.*

Alinsky's most serious dogma—one that he fervently preached—was that no one should have dogma. No dogma, and only one ideology, an ideology he repeated in everything he wrote and in every speech he made. He sums it up on page 11 of *Rules for Radicals*: "In the end [this is] a conviction—a belief that if people have the power to act, in the long run they will, most of the time, reach the right decisions." Yet that power has resulted in genocide against Native Americans; centuries of slavery; today's mass incarceration of people of color; right-wing opposition to immigrant rights, taxes, and government; and the ongoing denial that unpaid homemaking is as hard as most wage work. None of this easily squares with Alinsky's simple "conviction" that those who have the power to act will almost always act wisely and well. Seth Borgos, a former ACORN staffer, says, "From a historical perspective, that stance about the ends of organizing is astonishing."[39]

This is one reason why Gary Delgado, founder of the Center for Third World Organizing, and his successor and protégé Rinku Sen have each written solid, constructive, nonsectarian critiques of Saul Alinsky.[40] Delgado locates his in the limitations of the politics of place and race in segregated America. Sen, in her book *Stir it Up*, argues that Alinsky's obsession with pragmatism and nondivisive issues resulted in decades of well-meant efforts that often undermined the very people who need good organizing the most—the poor, the working class, and people of color, whose issues could hardly be characterized as nondivisive. She points out that Alinskyist groups focused locally and on winnable fights have often reacted to the infusion of drugs into their communities by calling for more police and more prisons. Enter #blacklivesmatter. Similarly problematic, some Alinskyist groups working on education reform today have embraced charter schools, which undermine teachers' unions and siphon public tax dollars out of the publicly controlled school system.[41] In Chicago, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) has yet to stand with the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), teachers, and

parents who are struggling to keep schools open in black communities, a situation examined in Chapter Four.

A further weakness in the Alinskyist model for community organizing is his discussion of and framework for organizers and leaders, an aspect of his legacy that has deeply penetrated and negatively impacted major union segments, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (UNITE-HERE).

In *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky obscured the issue of organizer strategy. He declared that there are leaders and there are organizers, and that the two are different. The organizer is a behind-the-scenes individual who is not a leader, has nothing to do with decisions or decision-making, and must come from outside the community. (They also had to be men: Alinsky didn't believe women were tough enough, even during the era of the feminist movement.) The leader, on the other hand, must come from the base constituency and "make all the decisions." This is a good narrative, but disingenuous: The organizers in the Alinsky model make many key decisions.

A lot of good ink has been devoted to the problems with Alinsky's view of the "outside organizer,"[42] including in Bardacke's *Trampling Out the Vintage*. Denying that the organizer is a leader, with substantial influence on the organization, leaves the organizer's actions unchecked and not well understood, as Jerry Brown, the longtime leader of 1199 New England—still one of the most militant and successful local unions in the SEIU—observes:

> I never heard anyone use Alinsky in any way as a model for us. He was always talked about only in the context of community organizing, and how their organizers always had to be behind the curtain—their job wasn't to speak publicly, their job was to find and recruit. [The union that] came closest to this was HERE (the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union), because they always had rank-and-file officers who appeared to be the leaders. The rank-and-file officers were often wonderful union members who put a lot of work into the union, but they were very seldom the real, strategic leaders. I thought the 1199 model, with all its troubles with staff being members and sharing leadership, not just facilitating recruitment, it was

> 100 percent more honest to what was going on, and actually who was really leading. I just always felt that the way in which HERE actually led, and the way in which it appeared they led, were very different realities.[43]

Chapter Three describes 1199NE, which Jerry Brown founded and led from the early 1970s to 2005. The union is well known for routinizing all-out strikes every few years; for setting and maintaining the nation's highest wage, benefit, and workplace standards in nursing-home contracts; and for being the most powerful player in Connecticut politics. The role of the organizer in the 1199NE model is transparent, not hidden, and the role of the members is primary, not secondary—only the rank and file can strike against the employers. Majority strikes are one strong indicator that workers themselves are determining their fate, rather than leaving it to a professional staff.

The biggest flaw in Alinsky's organizer-leader theory—one that critiques of the theory have failed to address—is that it never asks the question that grounds the CIO method: Who is a leader? How do you identify the organic leaders in the base? In *Rules for Radicals*, the Alinsky text that most self-identified radicals have read, Alinsky doesn't even discuss the *concept* of leader identification. He does discuss it in the less often read *Reveille for Radicals*, which he wrote in 1946, before McCarthyism and other factors wrecked the CIO. In *Reveille*, Alinsky devotes an entire chapter to leader identification, "Native Leadership." He offers no methodology—Alinsky explained most of his theories with stories. Not surprisingly, his only stories in "Native Leadership" are about unions, like this one:

> Any labor organizer knows of the Little Joes. When a man is being solicited to join a union he will usually respond along these lines: "Everything you say sounds pretty good, Mister, but before I sign up, I want to know if Joe has signed up."[44]

"Joe" is the organic leader: the person on the shop floor who has followers. "Joe" is "Sally," found through organic leader identification and structure tests, the mechanisms used to help map the power of individual workers and their networks and relationships.

There is a direct and profound relationship between leadership identification theory and building *powerful* mass-scale movements. The distinction and relationship between leadership identification and leadership development is crucial, and strategists and organizers will have to understand this before ordinary people, the rank and file, can regain the kind of power they need to tackle inequality. The omission of this central discussion from *Rules for Radicals* did serious damage to the development of the community organizing field during the very period when the largest source of money available to practitioners was founded in the name of supporting Alinsky-style efforts.

To say that individual workers and people have relative degrees of power should not in any way be construed as saying all people aren't equally important and deserving as human beings. Of course they are. But in community organizing and some social movement groups the obsession with leadership development and not leader identification prevents all members of a movement from gaining the collective power they need and deserve. Leadership development without previous leadership identification is a bicycle without wheels. It severely limits how far that movement can go—the success it can and should achieve.

Self-identified radicals, those for whom *Rules for Radicals* has been a de facto organizing manual, exist in and outside of the field of community organizing. Social-movement organizations (SMOs) are typically the self-selecting type that Han's book describes. They, along with most community-based organizations and now, unfortunately, unions as well, label as a leader just about anyone who enthusiastically shows up at two successive meetings (even one sometimes), making the words *activist* and *leader* interchangeable. It's an egalitarian impulse, as is the aversion to power. The Occupy movement has muddied this discussion even more with its talk of "leaderless movements" and "horizontalism." But in any strategy for building power, all people are *not* the same.

Given the $50 million ($330 million today) that the CCHD began granting in the early 1970s to the organizations and groups that carried on Alinsky's work, it's not surprising that Alinsky-based thinking has dominated the field coming out of the New Left period. In the 1970s, some of those funds were channeled into what Mary Ann Clawson[45] calls the redistributionist movements, groups like ACORN and Citizen

Action and other local community-organizing groups. She suggests that these redistributionist groups embraced Alinsky's false "organizer-leader" definition as a way to deflect criticism from those identity-based groups that noted that mostly white, middle-class men, coming out of the New Left, were still leading groups made up largely of poor women of color. The full-time staff of most of these groups said, "Leaders make the decisions, we just implement them"—a claim still made today by SEIU, UNITE-HERE, and many other unions. Clawson points out that SEIU and UNITE-HERE made a conscious decision to hire from outside their ranks starting in this same era, the 1970s, which was atypical. Randy Shaw's 2008 *Beyond the Fields* offers a comprehensive examination of the strong ties between the United Farm Workers and the leadership of New Labor, in particular these two unions. Many of the CCHD-funded groups serve as what Howard Kimeldorf called the social base for New Labor's organizer recruitment.[46]

Aside from the articles and books documenting the links between many of these groups and SEIU and UNITE-HERE, I found evidence for this in my own earlier fieldwork. For example, the United Auto Workers (UAW) maintains a strict policy even today of hiring only from their rank and file. Yet a number of today's key organizers in the New Labor–era UAW came directly from the CCHD groups. Phil Wheeler, the former leader of Region 9A of the UAW, which spans the northeastern United States, a union I worked closely with as part of the Stamford Organizing Project, made unionizing the professional field staff of most of the community-organizing groups in his region a top priority. When I asked why, the union responded, "So we can hire their organizers as our organizers, because they will be considered rank and file." Several of these former community organizers are now in top positions in the national union, having being elevated during the New Labor era.[47]

After 1995, following New Labor's ascent to positions of power in the national AFL-CIO, justified by the Alinsky assertion "Organizers take orders—leaders lead," professional staffing ballooned, with many new positions added—researchers, political campaigners, and communicators. People in these positions have at least as much real power as the organizers, if not more, further diminishing the importance and voice of the real "leaders."

New Labor Doubles Down on Mobilizing: Corporate Campaigns (and Collaboration) Replace Workers

Saul Alinsky is frequently credited with helping to develop the concept of what is now called the corporate campaign. (We will never know whether he would have accepted such a designation or not.) The uncredited authors of a 1993 paper discussing corporate campaigns, published in the *Labor Research Review*, note:

> In fact, for those of us in the 40-something bracket, the classic strategic labor campaign of our formative years was the United Farm Workers Grape Boycott of the 1960s . . . it came from Saul Alinsky and his Chicago brand of community organizing.[48]

Ray Rogers, in an interview he posted on his website, Corporate Campaign, Inc., proclaims the JP Stevens fight from 1976 to 1980 the birth of corporate campaigns, and he, too, references Alinsky.[49] Julius Getman's book *Restoring the Power of Unions* quotes Rogers as saying, "No question Saul Alinsky played a role in my thinking and SDS. . . ."[50] In conversation, Marshall Ganz,[51] who was deeply involved in the UFW and other boycotts, resoundingly rejected the idea that Alinsky was the inspiration for the grape boycott, giving credit instead to the Montgomery bus boycott. But there are many references in recent literature, including a full chapter in Bardacke's *Trampling Out the Vintage*,[52] to the link between Alinsky and the UFW. Add to this the fact that in 1947, Saul Alinsky hired an organizer named Fred Ross to build a new organization in California, the Community Service Organization (CSO); it was Ross who hired Cesar Chavez to be an organizer with the CSO. In the early 1960s, Chavez decided to start the UFW, and in a twist, he hired Ross as its organizing director. Ross was an active organizer before he met Alinsky, and he developed some traditions that were different from Alinsky's, most notably the house-meeting strategy. But Ross, Chavez, and Alinsky were *well within* what Doug McAdams calls ideologically coherent families.[53] There's no reason to doubt Ganz's account, but there's also no reason to deny that Alinsky's name is frequently linked to the UFW's grape boycott and to corporate campaigns. And the corporate campaign model directs and trains unions to see the employer from the employer's point of view rather than the worker's.

This is why workers, who were once central to labor actions, are now peripheral. The corporate campaign, emulating Alinsky's tactical warfare, led by a small army of college-educated staff, has taken hold as the dominant weapon against corporations. Peter Olney, longtime national organizing director of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) expresses how disproportionate the leverage concept has become:

> Just before the split at the AFL-CIO, the conversations [that New Labor was driving] were about how workers really got in the way of organizing. We [the national organizing directors] would actually sit in rooms, in annual meetings about the state of organizing, and the discussion would be that workers often got in the way of union growth deals.[54]

It would be difficult to find a clearer statement of how workers are viewed by key staff and leaders in the New Labor model. There are many flow charts and organograms in circulation that outline the corporate campaign's focus on the employer, including on the website of Corporate Campaign, Inc. Figure 2.2, below, is a fair representation.

In this graphic,[55] the workers are "flat," that is, shown as one actor in relationship to a dozen others; they are a single piece of the "available leverage points" used to get the employer to agree to union demands. This power analysis, widely accepted by New Labor, rationalizes the shift in focus away from workers as the primary source of leverage against employers to *all other actors as equally important sources of leverage*. In New Labor's imagination, since workers represent only one of a dozen possible leverage points, it makes sense to rely equally upon the other eleven. Unfortunately, the workers' interests also get only a twelfth-part consideration in whatever deal is made, and rarely, if ever, are the workers present at negotiations with employers or consulted about terms before the deal is concluded.

Further, because there are so many other leverage points besides the workers, the proportion of union staff devoted to workers has been reduced, while the proportion that drives toward securing victory in card-check and neutrality campaigns and election-procedure accords has been dramatically increased.[56] Nelson Lichtenstein noted this in the spring 2010 issue of *Dissent*, in an article titled "Why American Unions Need Intellectuals":

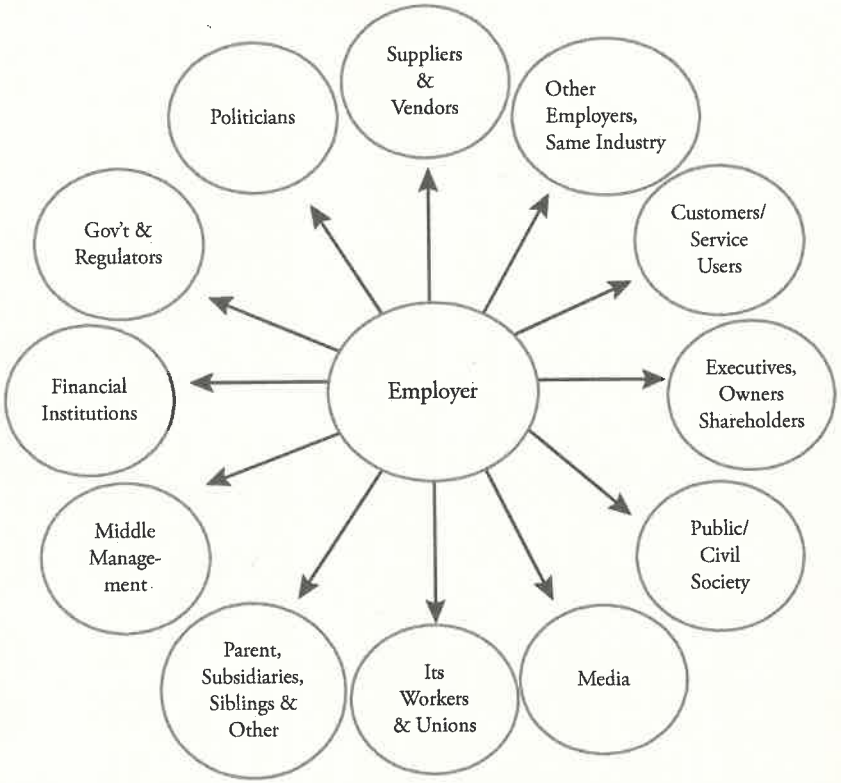

FIGURE 2.2 Typical Corporate Campaign Research Schematic
This Chart Produced by Andy Banks and Teresa Conrow, 2002

This new relationship between unions and intellectuals became apparent to me, as well as to columnist and Dissentnik Harold Meyerson, when we were invited to address the HERE research staff during separate weekend retreats in coastal California. I expected to talk to just a handful of number crunchers. During its heyday, when the UAW represented a million and a half workers, the research staff consisted of Nat Weinberg and three or four of his friends, old socialist comrades of the Reuther brothers. So I was surprised when more than seventy young and energetic researchers awaited my talk, brought together by a union with fewer than two hundred thousand members. There was even a former student of mine whose experience in Virginia's living wage campaign had turned her on to the labor movement. What could they possibly do to occupy their time and justify the expense of keeping all this ex-collegiate talent on the payroll?

> Unfortunately, they had plenty of work. HERE's decision to create a cadre of corporate campaigners was based on the grimmest of circumstances. . . . The union used all those researchers to dream up new and creative ways to pressure hotels and casinos, first to get to a card-check certification and then to bargain for a satisfactory contract.

In this type of power analysis, now the dominant one, workers play the role of what is often called the authentic messenger. Some workers are needed—enough to be presented to the media and perhaps testify before legislative bodies—to dismiss or inoculate against an employer's claim that the fight is not about the workers but rather about the "union bosses." Workers are seen as a largely undifferentiated mass, and the chief criteria for engaging them is whether or not they initially favor a union. From among workers who do, staff select the most telegenic and likely to appeal to an elite audience such as the media, and use them as the public face of the campaign. They will then be called "leaders." Professional communicators write press and legislative statements for them and prepare them to present these well in public. In this model, union staff need not engage more than a minority of the workforce in the fight, since victory is pursued through one or more of the corporate campaign's other eleven points of leverage.

This sidelining of the majority of a workforce, engaging only those already predisposed to support the union—union *activists*—would be impossible in a CIO-style campaign, because the CIO approach is contingent on winning a majority of the workers in a workplace to the cause of the union: class struggle. Majorities are also practically necessary, because CIO-model unions run not symbolic but real strikes, in which a supermajority of workers participate.[57] And as in the case of 1199NE, the union expands its base by running and winning NLRB elections, a strategy that also requires a majority.

In the CIO approach to organizing a nonunion facility, beginning with the opening conversations among and with a newly formed organizing committee of identified organic leaders, one of the key subjects is the importance of being ready to strike to win the first contract. The conversation about strikes is directly linked to the ability of the workers to win *for themselves* the kinds of contract standards that are life-changing, such

TABLE 2.1 Two Models: Mobilizing vs. Organizing

New Labor/Mobilizing "For" = Low Participation	Choice Point	CIO/Organizing "By" = High Participation
Material conditions only Pragmatic, business unionism	Purpose of the Union	Material and nonmaterial conditions Belief system anchored in class struggle
No/few strikes, mostly "symbolic" ones No real strike fund	Primary Leverage	Production-disrupting, majority strikes Members build and maintain a strike fund
Power only calibrated to win growth deals Lower concession costs	Goal (Power Analysis)	Power is calibrated to raise quality-of-life standards at work and at home High concession costs
Pro-union activists central Training of "authentic messengers" Workers "flat"; "Get Out the Vote" (GOTV) operation is staff-driven Minority of workers engaged	Worker Focus	Organic worker leaders central Development of organic leaders into organizers Majority of workers engaged
Union staff Consultants, including pollsters, political operatives, and legal and communications firms	Primary Actors	Workers Organizers in a complementary role
Workers "The community," but disconnected from workers and reached via union staff or sub-contracted to other groups	Secondary Actors	Workers' own community, including faith leaders, and community organizations, activated and engaged via the workers in struggle; Researchers, lawyers, communicators
Corporate campaigns, driving a mostly national focus Amoral tactics: "anything to get the deal," including serious compromises Card check Election procedure agreements (EPAs) Bargain to organize (BTO)	Types of Campaign	NLRB elections, market-based, driving a mostly local & regional focus Principled tactics: ethical limits on tactics used *to get* a deal and, afterward, *in* the deal (if card check) Card check, EPAs, BTO
Unimportant Strict limits on bargaining often tied to "agreement," few or no workers present Negotiators mostly lawyers or union representatives Narrow, material issues on the table Contract standards unimportant	Collective Bargaining	Crucial Achieved through open, transparent bargaining, many workers present and involved Negotiators mostly organizers Contracts used as a tool for teaching self-governance; all issues on the table Contract standards crucial
Narrow, limited to contract terms Contract enforcement follows grievance and arbitration procedures (if allowed by accord; some prevent this)	Representation Model	Broad shop floor issue reach Direct action by workers Grievance and arbitration followed if direct action fails

as control of their hours and schedules, the right to a quick response to workplace health and safety issues, the right to increased staffing and decreased workload, and the right to meaningful paid sick leave and vacation time. Compared with these gains, a pay raise—too often the chief goal of the New Labor model—is a limited win.

In the cases discussed in this book, a set of common traits can be observed that correlate to the two distinct approaches—organizing and mobilizing. The campaigns that win workers the highest-impact success follow the classic CIO-era organizing model. The campaigns that gained lesser victories were fought using New Labor's mobilizing approach. Three core factors distinguish the two models: the purpose of the union, the power analysis defining the fight, and the union's governance method. The first, the purpose of the union, is the most important and frames the other two. Each of the three factors involves a set of strategic choices made by individual actors that determines which model they will adhere to. Table 2.1 above lays out and explains this process.

Very different purposes for forming a union produce very different approaches to power analysis and governance. If individual actors believe that the purpose of the union is to enable a majority of workers to engage in mass collective struggle—for the betterment of themselves, their families, and their class—then in the related choice point, the role of the workers in the union drive, workers will not be mere symbols of the struggle; they will be central actors in it. If, however, the purpose of the union is only to improve the material condition of workers by increasing the share of company profits they receive, the workers' role will be greatly diminished; they will function as symbolic actors, not central participants, much as they do in today's fast-food "wage" campaigns.

The conversation about gaining the strength needed to strike continues with governance, the third of the overall core factors that determine whether the approach is a low participation–mobilizing or high participation–organizing approach. In a union like 1199NE, governance methods are the same as unionization methods: high participation remains a constant goal. Bob Muehlenkamp, the organizing director of the old national 1199, explained this in a brief but brilliant speech, also published as an essay:

> The theme here is organizing never stops. We can't afford to stop. That is why we must in our internal organizing work be as serious and as intense as we are during an NLRB organizing drive about building the union to fight the bosses.[58]

In 1199NE shops, the contract is not enforced primarily through the power of lawyers and arbitration, but on the shop floor, in direct actions led by organic worker-leaders, who ideally graduate from the organizing committee to the bargaining team to a delegate's or steward's post.

And to cement the idea of "three sides to two"—that is, that the union really *is* the workers and not a third party—a foundational principle of the union is that all workers are invited and encouraged to attend contract negotiations with employers. The collective bargaining table is the only place under U.S. law where workers *sit as legal equals* to their employer. As such, it's seen as crucial to the approach, as Bernie Minter notes in the unpublished manual he wrote for 1199:

> How to conduct negotiations becomes very important. If the real negotiations are going on behind the scenes, and the committee participation is a front, it will only further encourage three sides rather than two. Protecting the members from having to cope and deal with the problems the boss creates helps nobody. A maximum mobilization of the membership is our only real source of strength. To get this requires genuine participation. This in no way hampers the flexibility often needed for negotiations.

It's also a good test of whether or not a union is democratic. If the union is truly an organization of the workers, why wouldn't any worker be invited to at least observe his or her own contract negotiations? Three questions can determine whether or not the union is a third party in the renegotiation of a collective bargaining agreement: Does the process involve every worker? Are negotiations fully transparent? Can any worker attend?

In the New Labor mobilizing model, most collective bargaining is handled in top-down, staff-only negotiations with employers. If workers are present, there will typically be very few, say between five and ten, no matter how many thousands of workers are involved. Those chosen

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 ***pragmatic, practical employer,*** 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 ***diabolically anti-union employer*** 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)

Role of Workers Inside Workplace	Disruption Costs = Power Group Can Generate		
High = Organizing	**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 *workplace issues only*. **New Labor rarely uses this model; CIO-style unions use it often**	**Unlimited strike and high degree of community support = Maximum power** Majority worker support; organic leader model and workers leading community campaign on union-supported *non-workplace issues and workplace issues*; whole-worker organizing model. **CIO unions *can and do use* it, New Labor *could* choose to do so**
Low = Mobilizing	**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**	I have found no instances of this model. By definition, a majority of workers must be involved for community participation to also be high
	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 percenter 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.

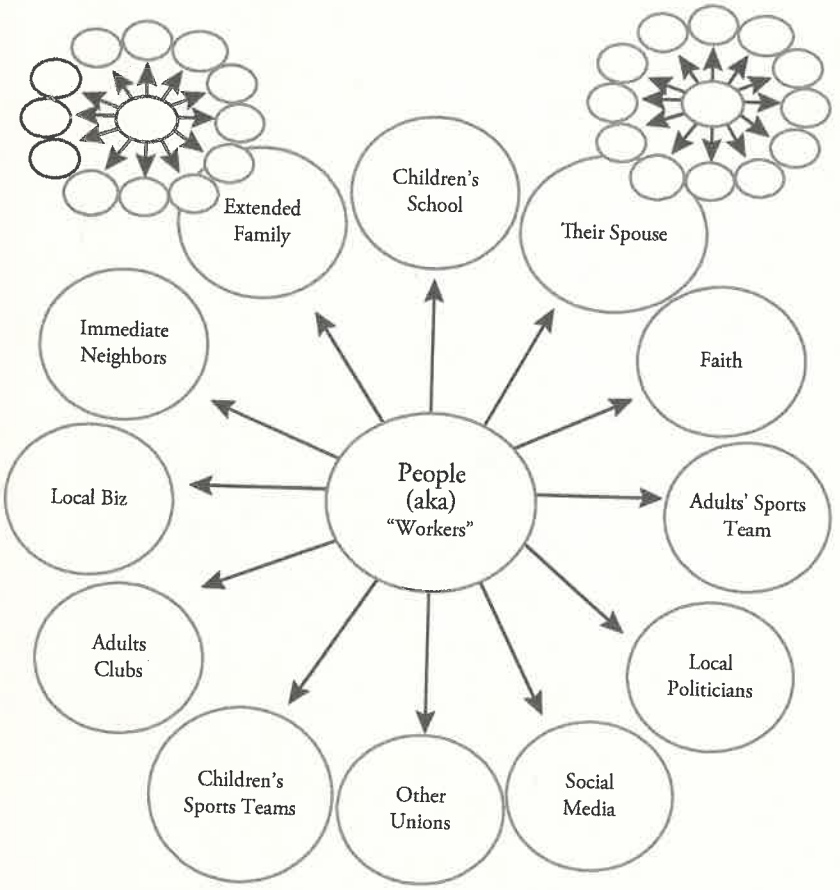

FIGURE 2.3 Whole Worker Charting: Social Networks

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

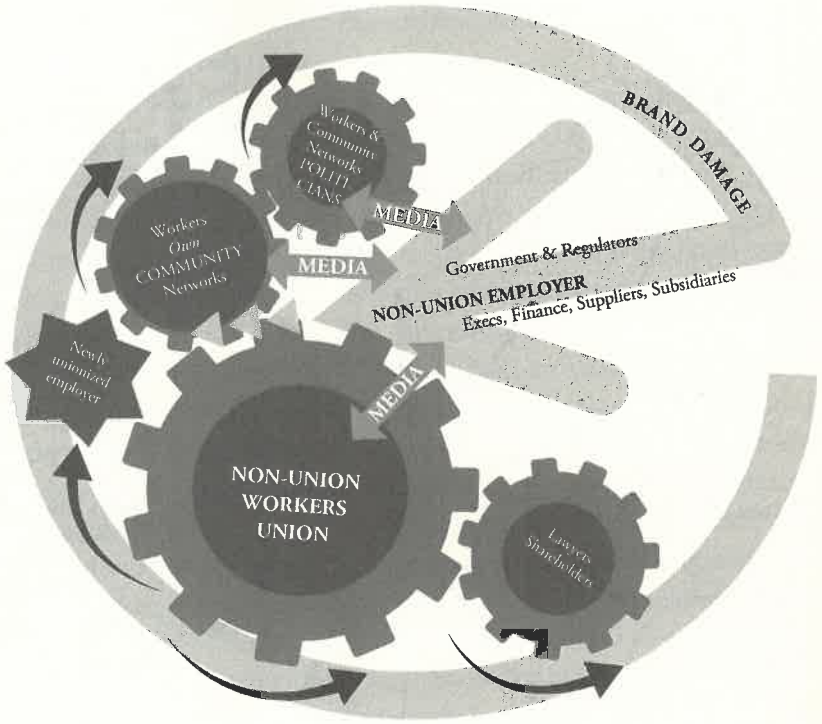

FIGURE 2.4 Whole Worker Comprehensive Organizing

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.

3

Nursing Home Unions: Class Snuggle vs. Class Struggle

The strike muscle is like any other muscle, you have to keep it in good shape or it will atrophy.

Jerry Brown, former president, Local Union District 1199 New England[1]

If workers are ready to go on strike in the United States, and we are ready to pay them to strike, it would be very costly. But paying workers in Indonesia or India or other places to go on strike against the same global employer isn't particularly expensive.

Andy Stern, former national president, SEIU[2]

THIS CHAPTER WILL ANALYZE TWO radically different approaches to forming and governing unions in *private-sector* nursing homes. To reflect how diverse big national unions can be, I have chosen two local unions that are part of the same national union, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

One model, represented by SEIU Local 775, exemplifies the strategies adopted by the national SEIU under Andrew Stern, president from 1996 through 2009. I argue that those strategies significantly diminish the role of workers in their own emancipation and have contributed to labor's ongoing decline.

The second model exemplifies the origins and traditions of another local—SEIU 1199 New England (1199NE), a union still steeped in the CIO-era influence of its founders—that has achieved the highest nursing-home standards in the nation. For the purposes of this chapter, I have turned to that particular local union and not to any other inside or outside SEIU, even those with "1199" in their official name.