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Beyond Single Interests: Broad-Based Organizing as a Vehicle for Promoting Adult Literacy

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INTRODUCTION

For the past 30 years, community organizers and citizen leaders in the United States have built powerful, enduring, and diverse collectives that deliver funding and other resources consistently on issues that matter to their members, including affordable housing, community policing, public education reform, and workforce preparation. I characterize the form of community organizing to be highlighted here as "broad-based" because, at its heart, community organizing is a deliberate effort to cross lines of race, class, religion, and geography to build organizations with sufficient power to stand for the whole and address common-good issues in local communities. It does so not by bringing individuals together, but by connecting mediating institutions such as congregations, neighborhood associations, and other local voluntary associations. These organizations have not only led successful action campaigns in San Antonio, Baltimore, New

York, Los Angeles, Chicago and elsewhere on issues such as those listed here but also, and as importantly, have fostered more inclusive civil and political cultures within those communities. A dramatic example of the latter occurred less than 3 months after the tragedy of September 11, 2001, when on November 18, 2001, 2,000 Muslims and 2,000 non-Muslims came together in a public event called "Chicagoans and Islam," created by the broad-based organization called United Power for Action and Justice. Here is an excerpt from one eyewitness account:

> The meeting was co-chaired by Muslim and majority-group leaders. The event began and ended with Muslim and non-Muslim leader pairs speaking to each other on stage about their cultures, families, and why they came to this event. Its centerpiece was 2000 one-to-one relational meetings between 4000 Muslim and non-Muslim participants lasting 25 minutes each. Self and other, Muslim and non-Muslim, city and suburb dialogued. The action began with one black leader reading an excerpt of the Declaration of Independence, and ended with 4000 people reading the same passage in unison. (Chambers, 2003, p. 123)

At a moment when America was still in shock and reports of anti-Muslim threats and acts appeared daily in news broadcasts, one broad-based citizen organization built a bridge instead of a wall. The event was only possible because Muslim organizations had participated in United Power from its beginning and because preexisting relationships based on mutual interests and respect were there to be mobilized at a critical moment.

Although adult literacy organizations have an issue every bit as compelling as those addressed by broad-based organizations, they typically lack the clout to secure the resources necessary to make a large, sustainable impact. In explaining public funding streams to members of the board of a local metropolitan literacy alliance in a recent meeting, one board member referred to adult education as the "bottom feeder" among publicly funded education programs. Such language surely arises from a sense of relative powerlessness.

The intention of this chapter is to:

• Identify, by way of a limited but significant example, the role of adult literacy as one critical component of a major quality-of-life issue.

• Outline what is widely regarded by both practitioners and scholars as the most efficacious framework that has evolved in the United States to date for bringing social issues to prominence and garnering the resources to address them in an effective and sustained manner.

• Locate broad-based community organizing within emerging theory and research on "social capital."

• Consider adult literacy from the perspective of a classic sociological description of how social problems gain public attention and attract resources.

• Illustrate basic principles of the organizing framework explained here with examples drawn from a metropolitan-wide, broad-based organizing effort on behalf of adult literacy now underway in one of America's historic cities, and offer suggestions for first steps for community leaders interested in implementing such an approach in other places.

LITERACY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Before outlining the significant role that a particular form of community organizing can play as an instrument for advancing adult literacy, let me make the personal and social stakes plain by way of an example. Jobs are a critical factor in the equation of a good life, and their significance cuts two ways in every community. From the worker's side, a "good" job (defined here as one that pays approximately twice the minimum wage, provides basic fringe benefits, and opens up pathways for career growth and promotion) is the usual entry point to full and productive participation in society. Health care, home ownership, reliable and convenient transportation, retirement security, effective involvement in children's education, and civic engagement are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve for those who do not have access to good, secure jobs. The significance of work that promotes dignity and provides fair compensation should not be too quickly dismissed from the debate on adult literacy as a capitulation to a dominating "human capital" ideology; on the contrary, access to such work is, first of all, a question of justice.

From the employer's side, the absence of an adequate number of qualified people to fill available jobs forces choices from a limited and limiting set of options: importing workers from outside the community, paying a stiff premium for contract laborers, burdening current workers with excessive mandatory overtime, or being unable to grow a business. In a chronically undersupplied labor market, neither workers, nor local businesses, nor the larger community for which they constitute the economic base can prosper. When good jobs are not available to most adults of working age in a community, the quality of life of the community as a whole, and of every person and institution within it, are inevitably put at risk (Wilson, 1996).

The following example from metropolitan New Orleans illustrates this double-edged dilemma, presenting one local variation on a theme recurring throughout the U.S. economy today. The training director of Louisiana's largest private employer, a builder of ocean-going transport ships, reports that a lack of qualified local applicants forces the shipyard to import about one sixth of its 6,000-person workforce from outside the local community under contract-labor arrangements. Under these contracts, the shipyard pays a premium of about $8 for every clock hour logged by 1,000 contract workers, or $320,000 per 40-hour week. Available entry-level jobs for pipefitters, electricians, welders, and grinders start at nearly $10 per hour with benefits. Reliable workers who upgrade their skills can move steadily beyond entry-level wages through participation in the company's comprehensive advancement program in all crafts to salaries more than two times higher than the starting level. The shipyard also has a union to protect workers' interests. According to company officials, workers who reach the 3-year mark usually become career employees. About 40% of the shipyard's current workforce is from the city of New Orleans, and company officials estimate that at least 500 of the jobs now being filled by contract workers could be taken by local residents who are in good health, drug free, report on time, take supervision, and are *able to read and do math at the sixth- to eighth-grade level.* Whereas there are local programs available through social service agencies to deal with the other challenges just listed, the literacy barrier has proven to be the most difficult to address—the Achilles heel of efforts by this company to find the workers it needs, and for workers to gain access to these good jobs.

Coupled with labor-market projections that indicate a significant long-term shortage of qualified workers in other identifiable industry clusters in the region,[1] such as health care and food processing, this dramatic example suggests that the shortage of qualified labor will continue unless and until the New Orleans metropolitan area commits to and creates a comprehensive, integrated system to provide motivated un- and underemployed adults with access to the education, training, and other supports necessary to qualify for the good jobs already available in this area and those that will be created in the future—*if* such a system is created and the local economy prospers. Current discussions among employers, educators, workforce-investment boards, community groups, workforce-preparation providers, and government officials about what it will take to create that

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[1] MetroVision Economic Development Partnership/New Orleans Chamber of Commerce, 2000; Louisiana Department of Labor, 2001.

system all point to the need to address low levels of adult literacy as the critical missing piece in local workforce programs.

How significant is that missing piece in New Orleans? The 1991 national projections of adult literacy levels estimate that in the city of New Orleans about 39% of people aged 16 years and older—136,000 adults—function at Level 1 literacy, and an additional 31%—116,000 people—at Level 2 (NIFL, 1998). If functioning at Level 1 literacy means that people cannot get entry-level jobs with significant career potential and Level 2 means that they have little hope of advancing if they do (Quigley, personal communication), then these harsh figures suggest that a staggering 70% of the adult population of New Orleans is at high risk of economic marginalization, of being relegated to low wages and job insecurity—with all the ramifications for themselves, their families, and their neighborhoods. It is equally clear that these educational levels will function as a governing parameter on economic growth in the community, because employers will simply not be able to recruit the workers they need to grow their businesses. Matters of race and justice are significant here because the vast majority of the 70% of people at Level 1 or 2 are of African-American descent and living in poverty. This is just one more indication of continuing racial disparities in America on a whole host of quality-of-life indicators relative to education, health care, home ownership, income, wealth, and criminal justice (Brown et al., 2003).

Clearly there is an entire web of "organizable" issues here, and they are not specific to New Orleans. A report from Columbia University's American Assembly on the future of the U.S. workforce notes, "More than one third of the nation's current workforce lack the basic skills needed to succeed in today's labor market" (Giloth, 2003). How does a whole community, rather than an isolated segment, mobilize to address such an issue?

BROAD-BASED ORGANIZING AS A VEHICLE FOR ENHANCING ADULT LITERACY

During the last half of the 20th century, "community organizing" became part of the everyday vocabulary in the United States. The term ordinarily conjures up one of two images in the popular imagination: people coming together in a neighborhood or some other local geographical unit to address a common concern (e.g., a "Neighborhood Watch" program), or marches and demonstrations orchestrated, on varying scales, for the purpose of

bringing public pressure to bear on decision makers about a particular issue. The practice of community organizing has, in fact, moved beyond these familiar forms over the past 30 years, as broad-based organizations tracing their roots to the work of Saul Alinsky have transformed the theory and practice of organizing. Drawing on the lessons of the burgeoning labor movement in the United States under the tutelage of the legendary John L. Lewis, Alinsky crafted the first democratic citizen organizations in Chicago's infamous Back of the Yards neighborhood in the late 1930s. He accomplished this by initiating what would come to be his organizing hallmark—an unlikely public partnership between local churches and labor unions based not in shared ideology but in mutual interests and respect. With the success of Alinsky's endeavor, the idea of community-based organizations began to spread. Experienced organizer Mike Miller explains the ultimate impact of Saul Alinsky on community organizing in the United States in this way:

> The three principal people who came out of Alinsky's earlier work—Tom Gaudette, Ed Chambers, and Fred Ross—then themselves mentored generations of new organizers. So there's not any community organizing that you can look at in the country today that probably can't be traced back to one of these three people. (Hercules & Orenstein, 1999)

Broad-based organizations in the Alinsky tradition now bring people together through mediating institutions like congregations, union locals, and neighborhood associations to create a common agenda and pursue a whole range of interests on an ongoing basis (Chambers, 2003). Mediating institutions stand between individual households and the large institutions of the state and the market. They give members a place where concerns can be registered and common positions forged around priority concerns. Alinsky (1972) identified two forms of power: organized people and organized money. Mediating institutions are organized people with some money, like a congregation. Broad-based organizations are collectives with institutional members.

Three key terms—interest, power, and broad-based—need further definition as background to this form of organizing. *Interest* is synonymous with motive. Our interests are what move us. Arendt (1958) points out that this English word comes from two Latin words, *inter* (meaning "between" or "among") and *esse* (meaning "to be"). Human interests, the things that move people to act, play out between and among us. The motivating interests of organizations are a mixture of survival and mission concerns. Contrary to the tenets of individualism, interests are thoroughly social or

relational in character. How I pursue my interests inevitably affects others, and vice versa. Persons or groups who think that they can pursue their particular self-interest on an isolated, individual basis will not be capable of acting effectively on the interests of others or even in their own best interests. In the arena of differing interests, the great problem with self-interest is not selfishness, but rather, narrowness of understanding—the failure to recognize how various group interests are always interrelated. Recognizing shared interests and crafting a collective agenda inclusive of them drives all effective broad-based organizing.

Within the tradition of broad-based organizing, *power* is defined as the capacity to act effectively on an agenda, to accomplish chosen purposes. It has two faces: the capacity to *have* an influence and the capacity to *be influenced.* In its full-bodied form, power is relational, not unilateral (Chambers, 2003). The capacity to be influenced—to learn, to grow, to compromise, to change one's position based on new information—is as truly a sign of power as the capacity to influence others. Power is not a bad word; it simply names the ability to accomplish ends that matter to us. Its exercise is good or bad depending on the intentions and methods of those who employ it. To be without power is to be ineffectual, unable to pursue our values and the commitments they engender effectively. In fact, properly understood and practiced, power is such a good thing that all of us, particularly socially committed organizations, should have more. The failure of idealistic individuals and organizations to come to terms with power realistically leaves their best efforts at the mercy of those who do understand how power works, are not bashful about using it, and concede nothing voluntarily.

Broad-based here has two interrelated meanings. First, such organizations are *diverse* because they are intentionally built across racial, religious, and class lines. Second, they are *multi-issue* because their diversity means that the various partner institutions will inevitably bring differing interests to the table. Within the generic realm called "organizing," the broad-based approach has an unparalleled track record of initiating sustainable social change in communities around the United States, one that has been acknowledged, analyzed, and critiqued by sociologists (Wilson, 1999), political scientists (Warren, 2001), theologians (Lee & Cowan, 2003), journalists (Greider, 1992), and activists (Sen, 2003). Broad-based community organizations in every region of the United States have developed a reliable and replicable methodology for building relational power to act for social change on a wide range of public issues in their communities. More than 60 such organizations participate in the Alinsky-founded

Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) Network. The following examples illustrate what these organizations are doing.

In Baltimore, Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD) created the "Commonwealth Agreement," which guaranteed opportunities for advanced education or access to jobs with fringe benefits and a career path for all graduates of the Baltimore public schools who met attendance and grade standards. In Chicago, United Power for Action and Justice initiated the "Ezra Project," which provides affordable home ownership opportunities for thousands of low- and moderate-income Chicagoans who would otherwise be excluded from owning their own homes. In Jackson, Mississippi, The Amos Network took the lead in registering hundreds of low-income children for state-funded health care. In San Antonio, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) responded to the departure of a major employer of low-income Hispanics and African Americans by organizing and securing public and private funding for Project Quest, which is now widely regarded as one of the premier programs in the nation increasing access of low- and moderate-income people to jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and provide fringe benefits and career paths. In New Orleans, the Jeremiah Group initiated the public pressure that led to the creation of a special school in a local school district for students suspended or expelled from other institutions, and the creation of a youth drug court. Examples could be cited from other IAF affiliates, as well as two other national networks and hundreds of local organizing efforts across the length and breadth of the United States, all with roots in the Alinsky heritage (Warren & Wood, 2001).

A broad-based approach offers proponents of adult literacy an organizing strategy for making quality adult education available to all members of a community, regardless of race or class. This potential can be realized, however, only if adult literacy leaders begin to think and act not as a single-interest group with a righteous issue, but as members of larger collectives with a multi-interest agenda for social change. As the final section shows, that orientation requires that local literacy leaders identify other institutions as potential partners with complementary interests, understand the particular interests of those partners, and forge a larger shared agenda that includes, but is not limited to or controlled by, the interests of any of them, including adult literacy advocates. Done properly, this does not mean giving up one's identity and primary commitment, but rather, finding powerful allies with whom we can craft a larger agenda that includes the interests of all participants. The process of bringing differing institutional interests together in order to create social change is illuminated when the

strategy of broad-based organizing is considered as an example of creating a particular form of social capital.

Broad-Based Organizing and Social Capital

It is useful to consider broad-based organizations as generators of what social scientists term *social capital,* and define as "connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000). Playing off Marx's (1887) classic formula for the generation of capital, M-C-M′, where money is transformed into a commodity that is in turn transformed into a profit, IAF national director Ed Chambers (2003) offers the following description of broad-based organizations as creators of social capital:

> . . . the social (or political) capital of a citizens' organization is its power to win on its interests. Its power is rooted in the meanings, values, social knowledge and relationships that hold such groups together in a community of common interests. Social capital is the shared "wealth" of the body politic. By analogy [to Marx], its formula might be expressed as: TEP—CA—TEP′. In this formula TEP = Talent, Energy and Power; CA = collective action; TEP′ = more talent, energy and power. Kept in motion, collective talent, energy and power generate change for the common good. (pp. 68–69)

Our social (or political) capital is the web of connections we have established with others that we can mobilize to seek support, solve problems, and accomplish goals. Social capital involves both trust and shared values. Putnam (2000) distinguishes two forms of social capital: bonding and bridging. *Bonding* social capital is the form of connection that grows, for example, among members of a support or friendship group or small community of faith. Part of the power of membership in such groups is the way they create bonds of personal association and mutual support among their members. When a member of the group calls, a fellow member is often willing to help. As Putnam notes, bonding social capital has an inward-looking, exclusive focus. It is good for "undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity" (p. 22), but limited to those with whom one has developed face-to-face relationships around a shared personal interest or concern. Because such connections (e.g., in a 12 Step or a bible-study group) are based on personal preference and choice, they often become gatherings of people of common background in terms of income, religion, race, culture, or geography, groups that Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler,

and Tipton (1985) call "lifestyle enclaves," gatherings of the like-minded. Thus the relationships that make up bonding social capital tend toward the personal and exclusive.

Bridging social capital, by contrast, is the form of connection that develops among people who share a common social concern (e.g., members of a civic committee or a soccer-parents group). Bridging connections are less personally intense and, because what connects people here are not private experiences or interests but rather a common external concern, bridging social capital has an outward-looking, inclusive focus. As Putnam notes, this form of relationship is good for "linkage to external assets and . . . information diffusion" (p. 22). Bridging social capital can bring people who do not usually associate with each other together around matters of common interest, allow them to share information and resources, and eventually develop the capacity to act together.

In applying the concept of social capital to IAF broad-based organizations, Warren (2001) offers the following observation:

> Building strong local communities is a necessary, but not sufficient, strategy for democratic renewal. Fostering such within community "bonding" social capital provides the foundation for members of those communities to enter democratic life. But local communities can be isolated, even antidemocratic. In order to develop broader identities and a commitment to the common good, we need a strategy that brings people together across communities. . . . [W]e need bridging social capital as well, that is, cooperative connections across the lines, particularly those of race and class, that separate communities. (p. 25)

The power and effectiveness of broad-based organizations over time is rooted in their success in making and sustaining connections grounded in shared interests across lines of race, religion, class, and geography. Commenting on the IAF's remarkable national track record in generating interracial social capital, Wilson (1999) notes that, "In its successes the IAF provides a model for the development of a multiracial political coalition . . ." (p. 89). Here, we catch a glimpse of pluralistic democracy in action. Indeed, according to one respected social commentator, the IAF is the most promising current exemplar of democratic politics at work in a nation where electoral politics is now almost completely dominated by organized money (Greider, 1992). What lessons might the public successes of these organizations on a wide range of social issues provide for literacy's advocates? How do we move adult literacy from a vaguely acknowledged problem to a specific, "organizable" issue?

ADULT LITERACY AND THE
SOCIAL DEFINITION OF REALITY

Bronfenbrenner (1977) once cited what he regarded as "the only proposition in social science that approaches the status of an immutable law—W. I. Thomas's inexorable dictum: 'If men define situations as real they are real in their consequences'" (p. 516). Following that same line of thought, which would be characterized in today's academic vocabulary as "hermeneutical," Blumer's (1971) classic essay, "Social Problems as Collective Behavior," describes what Blumer calls "five discernible stages in the full career of social problems," that is, the process by which social problems come into being:[2]

1. Recognition of the existence of a problem.
2. Legitimation of a problem as worthy of public discussion.
3. Mobilization of action to address the problem.
4. Formation of an official plan of action by a society by creating social policy.
5. Implementation of the official plan of action.

Blumer's insight is at once simple and penetrating: Only to the degree that a society moves through these stages with respect to a particular social issue will the issue exist for that society. For those working in adult education, low levels of literacy are already perceived as real and are, therefore, real in their consequences. For many others in our communities, however, literacy issues are perceived dimly or not at all and, therefore, make no serious and sustained claim on community attention, energy, and resources. This perception gap appears to be one of the great frustrations of those committed to the work of adult literacy.

Quigley (1997) documented how recognition of, and response to, the realties of adult literacy has come into and out of the collective consciousness and conscience of America, pointedly describing the several and varied eras of adult literacy in the United States. His work also makes plain the quite different ways that America has interpreted, legitimated, mobilized, planned, and acted in the area of literacy. One can see plainly

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[2] The author wishes to express his thanks to Professor Lydia Voigt of Loyola University New Orleans for calling this essay to his attention.

how various societal definitions of illiteracy have elicited varied national responses. For example, when a society comes, through Blumer's stages of collective problem definition, to define illiteracy as an individual moral failing, as America did in the 19th century, individual moral reeducation is prescribed as the solution. On the other hand, when a society comes, through those same stages of collective interpretation, to define illiteracy as a national economic development problem, as America has tended to do beginning in the last part of the 20th century, it construes and addresses literacy primarily as part of a workforce-development strategy, and sets funding priorities accordingly. Quigley's analysis makes it plain that the meaning of adult literacy and, therefore, the appropriate social responses to it, are historically contested matters. The outcomes of that ongoing contest are relevant precisely because the perception emerging as real will indeed be real in its formal and material effects on the issue of adult literacy.

The fundamental challenge for literacy advocates is not instructional but political; the challenge is to secure the social and financial capital necessary to address adult literacy in a holistic and sustained manner. This task may be understood as moving a large enough segment of their communities through Blumer's stages of collective definition of the social problem (i.e., illiteracy) to produce a substantial outcome. Literacy remains a marginal problem for a society or a local community as a whole as long as it continues to be the province of the relative few who have come to define it as significant enough to demand action. Unfortunately, those who already define literacy as a real problem constitute a relatively weak voice on the periphery of society's agreed-upon concerns, priorities, and power arrangements.

Unlike the United States, Ireland has recognized and addressed the problem of literacy. While acknowledging the enormous differences in population, geography, and cultural diversity between the two countries, we might still fruitfully compare the relative disorganization of the United States regarding the recognition of literacy as a significant social problem with the situation in Ireland. There, the process of collective definition of the problem of literacy, beginning in a crisis of recognition provoked by the release of the International Adult Literacy Study in 1997 (Blumer's first stage), culminated in the implementation of a comprehensive adult literacy plan with major grassroots input under the direction of the publicly funded but nongovernmental National Adult Literacy Agency (Blumer's fourth stage), leading to an 1,800% increase in government expenditure

per annum from 1997 to 2003 (Blumer's fifth stage). As a result of this national process of collective definition of the problem of adult literacy, Ireland witnessed a five-fold increase in the number of adults participating in ABE programs from 1997 to 2003 (Bailey, chapter 8, this volume; National Adult Literacy Agency, 2001).

Each and all of the steps in the career of a social problem defined by Blumer—recognition and legitimation of a problem, mobilization of action, and formation and implementation of a plan—must be taken by someone, but who is capable of carrying them out? What sort of actor is required? Although powerful individual voices, like that of Kozol (1985) or Sapphire (1997), have their place in calling attention to the grim realities of life without literacy, it seems evident that a collective or collectives of some kind are required to generate sustained and focused action on this issue.

One possible collective actor would be an association of local literacy providers and adult learners. Those are in place in numerous communities around the country, yet the problem remains or grows, so it seems that a more powerful collective is required. The same may be said about local government, civic associations, and educational and philanthropic institutions. If local organizations on this scale could have solved the problem of adult literacy, surely they would have done so somewhere by now. At the other end of the scale, what about national organizations of literacy providers, adult learners, and other concerned stakeholders? These collectives are in place too, yet the problem remains. If low levels of literacy in the United States constitute a major problem for individuals and their families, employers, and whole communities, but the problem is not publicly recognized and systematically addressed (per Blumer's analysis), then a variation of the immortal words of Cool Hand Luke would seem to apply: What we have here is a failure to organize.

PRINCIPLES FROM BROAD-BASED ORGANIZING FOR ADULT LITERACY

Four key principles drawn from the practice of broad-based organizing by its professional practitioners suggest how community leaders can intentionally mobilize a broad-based strategy to address the issue of adult literacy (Chambers, 2003). This section illustrates each of the four principles with an example drawn from a broad-based metropolitan literacy

initiative, and offers a suggested initial action for communities considering such a strategy.[3]

Organizing Principle #1:
Power Precedes Program

Recall the definition of power previously offered: the capacity to act effectively on a particular agenda. Seasoned, broad-based community organizers insist that before anything sustainable can be done to address an issue through programs or policies, the necessary base of financial and bridging social capital must be built. Proceeding to action without that foundation is a constant temptation for those fueled primarily by passionate concern about a particular issue, and the predictable outcome of giving in to that temptation is an organization that struggles to survive from the day it opens its doors, or from the point where its initial funding is depleted. This seems to be the chronic state of most adult literacy programs and indeed of many other nonprofits attempting to address significant social issues today.

Through sustained collaborative work over an 18-month period, the Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans was established in Fall 2002. The Alliance's mission is to support, challenge, develop, and coordinate literacy services in the greater New Orleans area in order to expand and systematically improve available literacy education opportunities for adults. It is a broad-based collective with a policymaking board composed of a diverse group of community stakeholders, including literacy providers and learners, as well as leaders from business, local government, faith-based organizations, higher education, and elsewhere. To insure a comprehensive base of power and a broad frame of reference for the Alliance, its bylaws stipulate that none of the constituent groups may make up more than 25% of the board. As a coalition founded intentionally on a broad

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[3] The broad-based effort to address adult literacy in the greater New Orleans area was convened by Loyola University's Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy in April, 2001, with planning grants from Baptist Community Ministries, a local private foundation, and consulting assistance from Margaret Doughty, former executive director of the Houston READ Commission and a founder of the National Alliance of Urban Literacy Coalitions. An invited gathering of literacy providers, adult learners, and other community stakeholders divided into three working groups to build a solid foundation of data and information on literacy needs, create an inventory and begin to evaluate the kinds and quality of literacy services currently available in the metropolitan area, and investigate national and international best practices. An additional and critical goal was to build mutual respect, trust, and collaboration among a diverse stakeholders group in order to address the situation once it had been understood.

base of institutional power, the Alliance is deliberately building the foundation of bridging social capital that will be required to implement sustainable change with a strategic focus and on a large scale—something that is simply not possible for disconnected, loosely connected, or competing individual literacy providers.

For community leaders considering using a broad-based organizing approach to adult literacy, an initial action is to identify potential partners—institutions and organizations, including but not limited to literacy providers and adult learners—with a significant stake in the literacy of adults. Such partners can be found in institutions and organizations whose success depends on having literate adults as participants. Businesses, schools, and churches are obvious starting points.

Organizing Principle #2: The Issue Underlying Any Particular Problem Is Recognition

An organization that approaches policymakers, funders, or community leaders for action on a particular matter is, at the same time, seeking their recognition of its legitimacy and authority to act on that matter (Chambers, 2003; Taylor, 1995). When a change in policy, funding of a proposal, or a commitment of support is garnered, so is a measure of recognition of the organization that initiated it. Powerful and experienced broad-based organizations constantly balance how much bridging social capital they have currently amassed against how much would be expended in action on a current priority issue of their member organizations. They learn to calculate both the timeliness and likely success of a campaign, and how the potential outcome will affect the social capital of the organization; that is, its capacity to act on other issues. Sometimes the decision is made not to act.

From the early stages of the existence of the Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans, the phenomenon of recognition was discernable in four salient examples. First, in his initial "state of the schools" address to the community in August 2003, the newly hired, reform-oriented superintendent of the New Orleans Public Schools pledged to carry out a complete restructuring of public adult education in concert with the Literacy Alliance. Second, the New Orleans Jobs Initiative, the area's premier work readiness agency for un- and underemployed local residents living in poverty, committed to partner with the Literacy Alliance in the creation of comprehensive, sector-specific programs integrating preemployment

education, case management, hard-skills training for particular jobs, and workplace-based literacy assessment and education. Third, Greater New Orleans, Inc., the newly reorganized regional Chamber of Commerce, invited the Literacy Alliance to its planning table as a principal partner in addressing literacy questions as a critical component of what they regard as the controlling issue for the economic future of the metropolitan area—the development of the local workforce. Finally, the newly elected reform mayor of New Orleans highlighted the city's partnership with the Literacy Alliance in his comprehensive plan to create new worker readiness and job opportunities in the new economy for would-be and incumbent workers in New Orleans. All these connections constitute significant bridging social capital generated by the Literacy Alliance since its inception, and that capital, now in motion, is creating more.

An initial action for community leaders considering a broad-based organizing approach to adult literacy consistent with the principle of the importance of recognition is to identify key decision makers from organizations and institutions in the governmental, private, and nonprofit spheres, whose recognition and support would be crucial to the success of a broad-based organizing effort. Then, community leaders need to do the homework necessary to discover what priority interests of theirs must be explicitly acknowledged in order to command initial attention and ultimately receive recognition and support. Discovering and building on mutual interests is the key.

Organizing Principle #3: All Effective Broad-Based Organizing Starts by Discovering and Building Agendas for Action on Shared Interests

As already noted, organizations attempting to pursue a particular interest on an isolated, narrow basis will not be capable of acting effectively on either their own or others' interests. The typical problem here is failing to recognize how various stakeholders' interests are interrelated and could combine to generate a larger shared agenda. The legendary individualism of Americans is regularly mirrored in organizations that become trapped in passionate pursuit of single interests with little or no effort made to scan the environment for potential partners and a more inclusive agenda. In its simplest form, the question that can help would-be collaborators begin to build recognition of new bases for shared action is: What could we do—or do better—together that we cannot achieve separately?

The history of another local collaborative effort, one of the most successful in the city's history, profoundly shaped the shared-interest organizing strategy being deliberately pursued by the Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans, providing a clear answer to that question. Prior to an effort (sponsored by two prominent local corporations) to bring together programs providing services to the homeless, about $500,000 in federal funds was awarded each year to a number of disconnected, competing providers in the New Orleans area. The creation of Unity for the Homeless in 1992 allowed a multi-interest board of providers and other stakeholders from the business and nonprofit sectors to create a seamless "Continuum of Care" for the homeless in Orleans Parish, approach funding sources with one coordinated set of priorities, and hold funded providers accountable for their results. Unity's effective coordination, management, and oversight of grants created cooperation and trust among providers and credibility with funders and, as a result, $7–8 million dollars per year has come from a variety of public and private sources to support programs for the homeless in Orleans Parish in the past 7 years. The nationally recognized success of Unity for the Homeless provided the founders of the Literacy Alliance with a compelling example of the possible effects of addressing the challenge of adult literacy through the coordinating vehicle of a diverse, metropolitan-wide organization led by a stakeholders group representing a wide spectrum of interests but speaking in one voice to the community as a whole, as well as to public and private funders at all levels.

An initial action for community leaders considering a broad-based organizing approach to adult literacy is to make a serious effort, through preliminary research, to understand the organizational interests and priorities of the potential partners identified in connection with the first principle discussed ("power precedes program"), and then convene focused individual and group conversations with them in order to identify shared interests. Most institutions want to carry out their stated missions and also find the financial and other resources necessary for the organization to continue. Sometimes the latter concern comes into conflict with the former, and an institution sacrifices mission focus for funding. Perhaps the key sign that a would-be broad-based effort has grasped the logic of shared interests, which drives all effective organizing on this scale, is that its primary leaders will not insist on their particular organizations' interests, no matter how important, as *the* larger agenda around which other institutions and organizations must coalesce. In fact, in the practice of contemporary broad-based organizing, the term *primary leader* specifically denotes one with a demonstrated capacity to put the agenda of the larger collective first. Whether

that larger collective is focused on adult literacy with workforce develop-
ment as one constituent concern, or on workforce development with adult
literacy as a constituent concern, or on comprehensive education reform
with adult literacy and workforce development as constituent concerns
matters only in a pragmatic sense: Which way of framing the collective
generates the most bridging social capital, that is, brings the most power to
the table to create and execute an inclusive, multi-interest agenda?

Organizing Principle #4: Don't Sacrifice the Possible for the Perfect

A hallmark of effective broad-based community organizing is a particular
kind of political judgment; namely, the ability to recognize, and the matu-
rity to accept, the best possible compromise available in a particular set
of circumstances. Ideologues and single-interest advocates are too often
prepared to pass up a partial victory as a "matter of principle." Although
there may be times when an all-or-nothing position is required, in the real
world of limited resources and competing interests, such a position usu-
ally reflects a failure to understand adequately how one organization's
interests intersect with those of others, and to seek agreements of mutual
benefit. The more challenges organizations face in terms of resources,
the more necessary such agreements are and the more difficult they are
to forge. Human service organizations in all fields are well acquainted
with this particular vicious circle. In the world as it is, a good compromise
gives nobody everything they wanted, and everybody something impor-
tant. As significantly, it solidifies relationships among the partners for the
inevitable next round of the struggle. When organizations fail to learn the
demanding, definitive political art of compromise, they not only reduce
the probability of winning a particular outcome, but also poison the water
for potential future collaborations. Even when they "win," they lose.

When one reviews the statistics on adult literacy levels in urban Amer-
ica, and discovers dismaying numbers of adults functioning at the lowest
level of literacy while only a small fraction are involved in current literacy
programs, the temptation understandably arises either to take the position
that we must stop what we are doing and begin again, or assert that we
simply must fund what we are already doing at a higher level. In the world
as it really is, however, neither of these positions is tenable. In follow-
ing a broad-based approach to organizing multiple constituent groups with
differing interests (providers, adult learners, employers, etc.) around the
complex issue of adult literacy, the Literacy Alliance has been required to

initiate, coordinate, and facilitate a tough dialogue aimed at compromise between those who are inclined toward using the "starting fresh" strategy (typically employers) and those who lean toward the "more funding" strategy (typically providers). From its first meeting, the Literacy Alliance's board has been forced to search for ways of innovating in the area of adult literacy, creating best-practice capacities that do not currently exist in the metropolitan region, while simultaneously focusing on increasing support and accountability of already existing programs on some discerning and principled basis.

An initial action for community leaders considering a broad-based organizing approach to adult literacy, consistent with the principle of the "possible," is to approach the multi-interest negotiating table with very deliberate consciousness of two kinds of interests: advancing the particular mission and survival concerns of organizations, and developing sustainable relationships based in mutual interest and respect with one's partners. Wise practitioners at the table of inevitably differing interests understand what single-issue advocates typically fail to recognize: Sometimes the other's interest or the larger collective's interests must lead.

Additional Principles

Two final principles drawn from broad-based organizing are nicely suited both to bringing this section to a close and to serving as a caveat to literacy advocates who would move in this direction. The first principle is that *all organizing is constant reorganizing.* Until their concerns are finally and fully addressed, multi-interest collectives must be prepared to scan the local horizon continually for new member organizations, new leaders, new allies, new enemies, and new focal points for action campaigns. Once organized, broad-based collectives must be continually reorganized. Finally, surprising as it may be to the passionate advocates of particular issues, who are quick to divide the world into good guys and bad guys, in the endless search for new partners on constantly shifting constellations of issues, *there are no permanent allies and no permanent enemies.*

OBJECTION AND CONCLUSION

One possible and plausible objection to the examples and suggested initial actions just presented is that, because the Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans has a particular focus—raising the level of adult literacy

in its metropolitan area—it is not really broad-based in its approach. It is true that the Literacy Alliance is not a multi-issue organization in the same sense as the local IAF affiliate, the Jeremiah Group, which has dealt effectively with issues in the realms of public education, affordable housing, and family-sustaining jobs. Nonetheless, the Alliance must and does address multiple interests every time the designated representatives of its constituencies gather to deliberate. The members of its decision-making board—adult learners and literacy providers, leaders of faith-based institutions, employers, political officials, funders, and representatives of public and private education—obviously do not come to the Alliance table with the same organizational priorities. For example, employers and providers start from quite different perspectives based on different life experiences and social locations. The ultimate success of the Alliance requires that the common agenda that those negotiators forge over time be not only sufficiently inclusive of their differing interests, but also strategically focused and limited, in order to generate a feasible plan of action within the constraints of urgent need and available resources.

There is another and more subtle sense in which the social capital being created by the Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans is broad-based or bridging in character, and being mobilized in response to multiple issues. Some board members of the Literacy Alliance whose primary concern is adult literacy have agreed to become part of the comprehensive local workforce-development effort spearheaded by the business community, in which literacy has emerged as a major concern. Others have joined with local church leaders to explore the possibility that the long tradition of Bible study in African-American churches might become a potent vehicle for enhancing not only the faith but also the literacy of its regular participants. Still others have engaged with local health practitioners to discover effective ways and means of connecting literacy enhancement with health care. In each of these examples, and others that could be adduced, differing interests come together into larger wholes. Bridging social capital is being created. As the locus of connection, the Literacy Alliance is the immediate impetus for these partnerships. Each of them represents in miniature what the Literacy Alliance stands for writ large, and all of them reinforce its recognition and power, adding to its social capital.

A broad-based, multi-interest coalition among institutions crossing racial, religious, and class lines outlined here is possibly the strongest candidate now available to become the collective actor necessary to legitimate adult literacy as a critical issue in popular awareness, and to initiate, coor-

dinate, and sustain the actions necessary to create effective plans to address that issue effectively in local communities. There are several avenues for such a coalition to come about. First, already existing coalitions, like the member organizations of Literacy USA (formerly the National Alliance of Urban Literacy Coalitions), may decide strategically to increase their bridging social capital by broadening their collective leadership and partnerships around a larger interest like economic development or comprehensive education reform. A second avenue for coalition building is for communities without existing literacy coalitions to establish collectives that gather from the outset under a larger interest umbrella like comprehensive education reform or regional economic development, including, but not limited to, adult literacy advocates.

Broad-based coalitions may provide a way to form creative, efficacious, and sustainable connections among literacy leaders and advocates for other community concerns. Whether or not this approach is feasible may be considered conceptually, as I have attempted to do here, and will certainly continue to be evaluated empirically in New Orleans and elsewhere. The verdict on this approach will prove in the end, however, to be a matter not of conceptual reflection or scientific inquiry, but rather of political praxis. Going down the broad-based road will require of those devoted to adult literacy the political wisdom and maturity to pursue that particular commitment to justice as one important concern among others. This will require that they enlarge the scope of their concern and be prepared for the act that defines the art of politics—compromise. The ultimate measure of coalitions attempting a broad-based approach to a significant social issue like adult literacy will come in the form that the Black church calls the "fruit test"; that is, their effectiveness will be judged by the biblical injunction that "a tree is known by its fruit." Here the fruit to be tested is how well coalitions that include literacy as one major issue answer in practice, amid the changing contingencies and conflicting interests that make up the messy real world of all communities, the question of shared interests articulated earlier: What could we accomplish through participation in a multistakeholder organization gathered around a more inclusive agenda that we have not been able to achieve by organizing around a single interest? If community leaders, including literacy advocates, can imagine no compelling answer to that question, a broad-based approach will generate no interest because it indeed demands a great and focused effort; if they can, such an approach will be required, because nothing less will do.

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Sen, R. (2003). *Stir it up: Lessons in community organizing and advocacy.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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Warren, M. (2001). *Dry bones rattling: Community building to revitalize American democracy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Warren, M., & Wood, R. (2001). *Faith-based community organizations: The state of the field.* Toledo: COMM-ORG: The on-line conference on community organizing and development [http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers.htm]

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Resources on Community Organizing

Michael A. Cowan

The following list of annotated resources includes books, articles, videos, and Web sites. It is organized as follows to facilitate access according to readers' primary interests:

   I. Practical Resources for Community Organizing
  II. Organizing and Literacy
 III. Theory and History of Community Organizing
 IV. Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts for Community Organizing

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Alinsky, S. (1971). *Rules for radicals.* New York: Vintage.

This, the better known of Alinsky's two books, is subtitled "A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals." (Alinsky's first book was *Reveille for Radicals* [New York: Vintage, 1946].) Alinsky's legendary

pragmatism, as embodied in maxims like "No permanent allies, nor permanent enemies" indeed shines through in *Rules for Radicals.* The text addresses critical issues like self-interest, power, and the tension between means and ends. The seventh chapter, entitled "Tactics," is still regarded by professional community organizers as the classic statement of how ordinary citizens can get attention and response from the powers that be. Anyone interested in grasping the world-view of the founder of community organizing in the United States will want to read this controversial, provocative text.

Chambers, E. (2003). *Roots for radicals: Organizing for power, action, and justice.* New York: Continuum Press.

Edward Chambers was a protégé of Saul Alinsky and has directed the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a national network of broad-based community organizations, for nearly 40 years (since Alinsky's death). In this book, which completes the Alinsky trilogy (see *Rules for Radicals*), Chambers shares the practical wisdom distilled from the work of IAF's broad-based organizations over the past 30 years. Of particular value are chapters on the central role of "relational meetings" in effective organizing, and on understanding the constit-uent elements of the tension between facts and values that motivates people to organize for social change. This is the voice of contemporary community organizing's most experienced and authoritative leader.

COMM-ORG, *The on-line conference on community organizing and development,* University of Toledo at comm-org.utoledo.edu.

The membership of this ongoing online conference, which began as an online course on the history of community organizing, is roughly balanced between academics and practitioners, and includes some government officials and funders. COMM-ORG is sponsored by the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work at the University of Toledo. As noted on its Web site, the COMM-ORG mission is to "help connect people who care about the craft of community organizing; find and provide information that organizers, scholars, and scholar-organizers can use to learn, teach, and do community organizing; involve all COMM-ORG members in meeting goals."

COMM-ORG defines community organizing as:

- People without power getting power, both as individuals and as a community.
- Building relationships (sometimes this is its primary goal).
- Beginning in a local area, often as small as a neighborhood.
- Building on shared experience—rooted in a place or a cultural identity.
- Often leading to development activities and/or larger social movements when it succeeds.

The Web site invites and publishes the reflections of scholars and practitioners in the area of community organizing (see, e.g., Warren & Wood citation in the "Theory and History of Community Organizing" section of this bibliography).

Gecan, M. (1992). *Going public.* Boston: Beacon.

Here is a window into public engagement for the common good through the experience of a seasoned, accomplished professional organizer. The book is structured around four habits (or virtues) that the author regards as central to participation in life beyond the private sphere: relating, action, organization, and reflection. The teaching in this volume is done through powerful stories drawn from a lifetime of organizing experience.

Gustafson, R., & Sato, T. (Eds.). (2000). *Power, justice, faith: Conversations with the IAF.* Los Angeles: Center for Religion and Civic Culture, University of Southern California.

In 24 wonderful vignettes, ordinary people who became experienced community leaders in broad-based organizations tell personal stories of what they did and learned in coming together with others across lines of race, class, and religion to address an amazing range of public issues including affordable housing, toxic landfills in poor neighborhoods, school safety-crossings, and minimum wage. Here are the grassroots voices of community organizing.

Sen, R. (2003). *Stir it up: Lessons in community organizing and advocacy.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Billed as a "practical primer" on community organizing, this book is for people who are already engaged in organizing and those consider-

ing it. The author puts the case for organizing as a tool for changing the status quo pointedly: "Simply put, today's movements for social and economic justice need people who are clear about the problems with the current systems, who rely on solid evidence for their critique, and who are able to reach large numbers of people with both analysis and proposals" (p. xvii). The book offers chapters dealing with the following specific subjects: history of community organizing in the United States since WWII; the importance of recruiting participants from those most affected; how to develop an issue; concepts and methods of direct action; leadership development; research into issues; building alliances and networks; designing effective media strategies; and internal political education and consciousness raising. A series of "Illustrations" exemplify points being explained in the text in the work of actual community organizations. The book includes an integrated series of structured reflection questions and planning worksheets keyed to the content of each chapter. The book is distinguished by strong feminist, multicultural, and third-world orientations.

ORGANIZING AND LITERACY

Bailey, I., & Coleman, U. (2003). *Access and participation in adult literacy schemes.* Dublin: National Adult Literacy Agency.

This study of participation and nonparticipation in adult literacy programs by the National Adult Literacy Agency—the coordinating, training, and advocacy organization for all those involved in adult literacy in Ireland—is notable for locating issues of access and participation squarely within a larger cultural and social context like gender, poverty, and employment. The authors' analysis of factors influencing participation in adult literacy programs and research-based suggestions for increasing same will be valuable as points of comparison and contrast for U.S. communities addressing the perennial concern of recruitment and retention in adult literacy programs.

Doughty, M. (2001). *The voices of Houston reads to lead!: Building an urban literacy coalition through America Reads.*" In L. Morrow, and D. Woo (Eds.), *Tutoring programs for struggling readers* (pp. 31–56). New York: Guilford Press.

In this chapter, Margaret Doughty, the principal architect of the Houston READ Commission, perhaps the most successful urban lit-

eracy coalition (to date), describes the process of engaging 29 community organizations representing a half-million Houstonians in the creation of Houston Reads to Lead!, a community-wide family literacy initiative conceived as a response to the national "America Reads Challenge." Through stories, pictures, and cogent explanations, the chapter takes readers inside the creative relational activity of bringing many diverse partners together to address an issue of common concern.

Literacy USA (formerly National Alliance of Urban Literacy Coalitions) at http://www.naulc.org.

Founded in 1995, the mission of Literacy USA is to support the development of literacy coalitions in the United States. As noted on its Web site, Literacy USA is a "coalition of coalitions . . . functioning as a kind of trade association for literacy coalitions," and acts in the following capacities:

- Serves as a forum for a peer-learning group of coalition leaders across the United States.
- Functions as a clearinghouse of information on best practices, successes, and challenges of literacy coalitions.
- Tracks policy developments and participates in shaping policy.
- Serves as a national voice for local coalitions.
- Interests business leaders in not only funding the cause, but assisting with strategic planning, legislation, and marketing, both on the national and local level.
- Disseminates resources and information to the grass roots and gathers information from the front lines.
- Provides technical assistance to emerging coalitions and those in transition or crisis.

According to Literacy USA, the critical functions of literacy coalitions include:

- Coordinating comprehensive communitywide literacy plans.
- Providing a one-stop source of information on literacy learning and volunteer opportunities.
- Facilitating networking and collaboration among literacy service providers.
- Offering professional development and technical assistance to literacy service providers.

- Collecting data and holding literacy service providers to a high standard of accountability.
- Offering policymakers an overview as well as detailed information on a community's literacy activities and needs.
- Speaking with one strong voice to advocate for literacy.
- Attracting resources and disseminating them for the greatest impact.
- Drawing public attention to the cause.

Literacy USA's membership includes nearly 60 urban literacy coalitions across the country. Together, they represent more than 3,500 literacy service providers serving over 2,500,000 learners. Literacy USA has recently opened membership to state and rural coalitions. Their Web site is updated regularly and contains reports on current trends, local initiatives, and challenges facing literacy coalitions.

Quigley, A. (1997). *Rethinking literacy education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

In this award-winning book, one of North America's guiding lights on the subject of adult literacy puts the subject into perspective both historically and politically. There is something here to inform and trouble all concerned—practitioners, adult learners, experts, policy-makers, and everyday citizens. Quigley does an especially insightful job of showing the ebb and flow of adult literacy as a social issue, evoking as he does so a haunting sense that in this field, as in many others, we repeatedly recycle historical patterns of which we are sadly unaware. Among other things, he challenges readers who have a stake in the issue of adult literacy, from whatever perspective, to organize themselves out of political passivity and perpetual victim status.

THEORY AND HISTORY OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Greider, W. (1992). *Who will tell the people.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

This volume relentlessly outlines the degradation of America democracy by money-driven, single-interest politics. With a seasoned journalist's eye for compelling details and incisive stories, Greider

gives us a diagnosis of the state of U.S. democracy that will confirm for many people that they are quite right to be discouraged and dismayed, if not downright cynical, about the current state of politics in America. However, the book is not a prescription for despair. In a chapter entitled "Democratic Promise," Greider highlights the work of the organizations of the Industrial Areas Foundation as the best current example of the exercise of democratic citizenship in the United States.

Hercules, B., & Orenstein, B. (1999). *The Democratic promise: Saul Alinsky & his legacy.* Chicago: Media Process Educational Films.

This hour-long video documents the historical and continuing legacy of Saul Alinsky, the creator (in the United States) of the activity now referred to as "community organizing." The first half of the video focuses on the history of the emergence of Alinsky as the innovator of a new approach to empowering formerly marginalized people to take the initiative in influencing events in their communities. The second half takes viewers inside Alinsky organizations currently at work in Texas and New York City. "The Democratic Promise" is notable for the up-close-and-personal window that it gives into the life of the larger-than-life Alinsky and the real-life community leaders and organizers implementing and expanding his vision today. The historical perspective provided by this documentary makes plain the links between the American labor movement and Alinsky-style community organizing.

Horwitt, S. (1989). *Let them call me rebel: Saul Alinsky—His life and legacy.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

This is the definitive biography (to date) of the person generally credited with creating what has come to be called "community organizing" in the United States. It is indispensable reading for anyone who wants to understand the strengths and limitation of U.S. approaches to organizing as they have evolved into the present.

Rooney, J. (1995). *Organizing the South Bronx.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

The theme of this book is "the search for the appropriate engine of reform to reconstitute and restructure urban life into genuine communities" (p. 235). Its special contribution to the literature on community organizing is twofold. First it describes the work of the

Industrial Areas Foundation in New York City as a whole, then narrows its focus to a detailed case study of that effort in one (large) corner of the city, the South Bronx. The political struggles of South Bronx churches to provide opportunities for affordable home ownership to the members of its participating congregations is a parable for those attempting to bring people together across racial lines to address significant public issues.

Warren, M. (2001). *Dry bones rattling: Community building to revitalize American democracy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Warren offers an extensive study of the broad-based community organizations affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation. He discusses such organizing as a framework for political renewal with four key characteristics: grounding in local institutions, developing cooperation in local communities, creating "bridging social capital" (see Putnam, *Bowling Alone,* in the next section of this bibliography), and using power effectively. The volume puts a particularly strong focus on broad-based organizing as a way of overcoming the racial polarization of America's cities.

Warren, M., & Wood, R. (2001). *"Faith-based community organizing: The state of the field."* Jericho, NY: Interfaith Funders. [Available at http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers.htm]

This survey of church-based (a common synonym for broad-based) community organizing offers a comprehensive overview of the field of community organizing at the outset of the 21st century. It identifies four national and several regional networks comprised of more than 130 organizations in 33 states representing one to three million members and almost 30,000 active leaders as of the year 2000. The report is particularly helpful in bringing the four national networks into one picture, but less helpful in allowing readers to discern the differing strengths and limitations of the networks.

CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Brown, M., Carnoy, M., Currie, E., Duster, T., Oppenheimer, D., Shultz, M., & Wellman, D. (2003). *White-washing race: The myth of a color-blind society.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

This is the definitive response (to date) to the argument of the "new racial conservatives," that is, those who argue that race is no longer a defining issue in the life chances of citizens of the United States. Drawing on empirical evidence from economics, education, employment, criminal justice, and politics, this interracial and interdisciplinary team of scholars makes it plain that race indeed continues to be a defining matter in America, systematically and adversely affecting the life chances of African Americans relative to every significant quality-of-life indicator. Their integrative explanation of this pattern of racial differences in key life outcomes highlights the notion of collective accumulation over time by Whites paired with a reciprocal process of disaccumulation over time for Blacks, leading to a state of "durable racial inequality." The volume ends with a set of recommendations for changes in social policy in each of the areas analyzed. No stronger empirically grounded argument can be found for the necessity of creating bridging social capital (see Putnam, *Bowling Alone*) as a response to social issues like adult literacy.

Crick, B. (1972). *In defense of politics* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This classic statement of the power and limits of politics highlights diversity and the struggle for recognition as the social conditions that necessitate politics, and makes plain the role of enlightened self-interest in all forms of relationships. After a compelling explanation of the nature of political rule, Crick proceeds in subsequent chapters to "defend" politics against ideology, democracy, nationalism, technology—and its friends! This book is required reading for anyone who wants to rethink organizing on behalf of adult literacy, or any other social issue, so that it is seen as a challenge to whole communities, rather than the chosen issue of a group of single-issue advocates.

Lummis, D. (1996). *Radical democracy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

This extended reflection on the many meanings and correspondingly varied practices of "democracy" highlights the capacity to "stand for the whole" as the central virtue required for democratic participation. This view stands in direct opposition to the notion of democracy as a big tent covering the relentless pursuit of single-issue politics, arguing in effect that authentically democratic politics demand the creation of multi-interest agendas characterized by mutual respect and

willingness to compromise. This book articulates the deep under-standing of democracy now being actualized in the work of broad-based community organizations. "Standing for the whole" has in fact become a catchphrase in the public culture of broad-based organizing in the United States and elsewhere.

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

This is the most important work (to date) on the subject of "social capital," which Putnam defines as "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." Social capital is the glue that allows individuals to get beyond a narrowly defined version of self-interest and join together on matters of common concern. The author provides massive empirical documentation of the unraveling of social capital in the United States over the past 25 years, and locates that unraveling in the social and cultural events of the last quarter of the 20th century. Of critical importance for understanding the lessons of broad-based organizing for the promotion of adult literacy within our communities is Putnam's distinction between "bonding" (or exclusive) and "bridging" (or inclusive) social capital.

Sandel, M. (1996). *Democracy's discontents: America in search of a public philosophy.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press.

In this volume, one of America's foremost political philosophers gives an account of what has happened to U.S. politics as a result of the cultural triumph of the economic or individualist view of the person. He notes: "Self-government . . . requires political communities that control their destinies, and citizens who identify sufficiently with those communities to think and act with a view to the common good" (p. 202). Sandel's clear historical account of how we got here, like the sociological investigation of social capital (see the Putnam: *Bowling Alone* reference), helps anyone attempting to mobilize a whole community to address adult literacy as a common concern in order to understand which cultural forces will support and which resist such an effort.

Taylor, C. (1995). The politics of recognition. In C. Taylor, *Philosophical arguments* (pp. 226–256). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

In this classic essay, Taylor, an eminent philosopher and political activist, explains the development in 20th-century political thought of the notion that, far from being irrelevant in the world of *realpolitik,* recognition is essential to the sense of worth and value of individuals and groups, and integral to healthy politics in pluralist societies. His work complements and develops, in conceptual terms, the pragmatic treatment of recognition in the IAF broad-based organizing tradition (cf. Chambers, 2003).

Wilson, W. J. (1999). *The bridge over the racial divide: Rising inequality and coalition politics.* Berkeley: University of California.

In this brief, readable volume, America's preeminent sociological expert on the realities of race, class, and poverty in urban America, builds on his empirical studies to sketch his vision of a unifying progressive politics. The volume is notable for eschewing the ideological insistences of both left and right, seeking instead acceptable pragmatic ground for groups uniting in the pursuit of common-good issues like housing, education, and jobs, despite differences in race, class, and religion. His suggested vehicle for the pursuit of such progressive politics is the "multiracial political coalition." He highlights the contemporary work of the organizations of Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation as our best operative example of such coalitions.

Wolin, S. (1989). Contract and birthright. In S. Wolin, *The presence of the past* (pp. 137–150). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

In this classic essay on citizenship, Wolin defines human "politicalness" as our "capacity for developing into beings who know and value what it means to participate in, and be responsible for, the care and improvement of our common and collective life" (p. 139). (Note the nonelectoral and nonpartisan understanding of politics in the definition.) For Wolin, "politics" means adults in a community coming together (i.e., organizing) to deal with matters of common concern. A broad-based community organization can be thought of as an arena or laboratory in which people can learn and practice what is necessary in order to realize their potential as citizen leaders, in order to develop their politicalness. In this essay, Wolin offers a powerful counter not only to overly partisan politics, but also to privatized withdrawal from public engagement.