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Leading Change

Leadership, Organization, and Social Movements

By

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19

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Introduction

Social movements emerge as a result of the efforts of purposeful actors (individuals, organizations) to assert new public values, form new relationships rooted in those values, and mobilize the political, economic, and cultural power to translate these values into action.[1] They differ from fashions, styles, or fads (viral or otherwise) in that they are collective, strategic, and organized.[2] They differ from interest groups in that they focus less on allocating goods than on redefining them—not only on winning the game, but also changing the rules.[3] Initiated in hopeful response to conditions adherents deem intolerable, social movement participants make moral claims based on renewed personal identities, collective identities, and public action. In the United States, they have been the major drivers of social and political reform since the American Revolution.[4]

Leadership is accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty. Leaders accept responsibility not only for their individual "part" of the work, but also for the collective "whole." Leaders can create conditions interpersonally, structurally, and/or procedurally. The need for

leadership (a need often not met) is evident when encounters with the uncertain demand adaptive, heuristic, or innovative response: past practices are breached, new threats loom, a sudden opportunity appears, social conditions change, new technology changes the rules, and so on.[5]

The role of leadership in social movements goes well beyond that of the stereotypical charismatic public persona with whom they are often identified. Social movements are organized by identifying, recruiting, and developing leadership at all levels. This leadership forges a social movement community and mobilizes its resources, a primary source of social movement power.[6] Sometimes those who do this leadership work, especially when they work at it full time, are called *organizers*, or, more colorfully, *lecturers*, *agents*, *travelers*, *circuit riders*, *representatives*, or *field secretaries*. Sometimes they are simply called leaders. The Grange, for example, a rural organization key to the agrarian movement of the late nineteenth century, enjoyed a membership of 450,000 organized in 450 chapters, a structure that required recruiting men and women for 77,775 voluntary leadership posts, of which 77,248 (99.3 percent) were local, 510 at the state level, and only 17 at the national level. One of every 5 members occupied a formal leadership post at any one time. More recently, a mainstay of the Conservative movement, the 4-million-member NRA, rooted its activities in 14,000 local clubs, governed by some 140,000 local leaders, 1 of every 25 members.[7] And the Sierra Club, a 750,000-member environmental advocacy organization with some 380 local groups organized in 62 chapters, must recruit, train, and support volunteers for some 12,500 leadership posts, of which 10,000 are local: 1 of every 57 members.[8]

Because social movements are dynamic, participatory, and organized primarily to celebrate collective identity and assert public voice, their structures of participation, decision making, and accountability are more like those of other civic associations that celebrate collective identity (churches, for example) or assert public voice (advocacy groups) than of those that produce goods or services.[9] They interact with constituents, not customers or clients.[10] Authority rests on moral suasion more than on economic or political coercion. Outputs depend on the motivated, committed, and voluntary participation of members and supporters.[11] They are often incubators of social movements in the way that black churches, student groups, and NAACP chapters incubated the Civil Rights movement.[12]

Despite the deep roots of leadership studies in sociology,[13] especially within radically different authority regimes, social movement scholars have, with few exceptions, eschewed the project.[14] A structural bias in social movement studies seems to have made it more productive for scholars to identify the constraining conditions that make certain outcomes more probable than to focus on enabling conditions that make many outcomes possible. Agency, however, is more about grasping at possibility than conforming to probability.

One of the few scholars to address the challenges of leadership in voluntary associations, not only social movements, is James Q. Wilson:

> In most voluntary associations, authority is uncertain and leadership is precarious. Because the association is voluntary, its chief officer has neither the effective power nor the acknowledged right to coerce the members—they are, after all, members and not employees. In a business firm, the chief officer may, within limits, hire and fire, promote or demote, his subordinates . . . In most associations, power, or the ability to get a subordinate to do what the superior wants, is limited, and authority, or the right to exercises such power as exists, is circumscribed and contingent.[15]

> Though the authority of many association leaders is weak, the demands of the office are great. The chief officer of a voluntary organization must usually combine the executive task of maintaining the organization with the leadership task of defining and advancing its objectives . . . [M]aintenance needs are better served by having vague or broadly stated goals, whereas task achievement is facilitated by having explicit and concrete ones.[16]

In this paper I focus on leadership in social movements: a volatile context in which motivational, relational, strategic, and action skills—and the capacity to develop these skills in others—play key roles. I draw on examples from the first social movement about which I learned, the Exodus; the Civil Rights movement; the farmworkers' movement; the women's movement; and American politics.

Social Movement Leadership: Who Does It, Where Does It Come From, and Why?

At least since Moses, social movement leadership—exercised by individuals or by teams—has come from conflicted backgrounds. Moses, a Jew, the oppressed, was raised in the house of the Pharaoh, the

oppressor. He struggles to link a desire for change (freeing his people) with a capacity to make change (as an Egyptian prince). His reaction, killing an Egyptian taskmaster, doesn't work, bringing down upon him censure from other Jews. He flees to the desert (where you go to get your act together in the Bible) and assumes a third, quite liminal, identity as neither Jew nor Egyptian, but as the son-in-law of a Midianite priest, a shepherd.

Remaining curious, one day he steps off a path to attend to a strange light, a burning bush, where, it turns out, God is waiting for him, challenging him to accept a call to return to Egypt, confront Pharaoh, with whom he grew up, and free his people. He accepts this charge only when God promises him the help of a brother, Aaron, and a sister, Miriam. He learns how he can combine his desire for change with a capacity to make change, but only by engaging with God, his family, and his people. Importantly, however, in Exodus 18, after he has brought his people out of Egypt he is visited by his father-in-law, Jethro, who teaches him two things: he reminds him he has a family that requires his attention and he observes that Moses is burning himself out—and burning the people out—by trying to do all the work himself. He proposes a structure in which among every ten men, one is recruited to provide leadership, and among every ten of those, one, and so on. In this way he turns Moses's attention to the critical role of leadership development that his movement will require if it is to grow strong.[17]

Leading in social movements requires learning to manage the core tensions at the heart of what theologian Walter Brueggemann calls the "prophetic imagination": a combination of criticality (experience of the world's pain) with hope (experience of the world's possibility), avoiding being numbed by despair or deluded by optimism.[18] A deep desire for change must be coupled with the capacity to make change. Structures must be created that create the space within which growth, creativity, and action can flourish, without slipping into the chaos of structurelessness, and leaders must be recruited, trained, and developed on a scale required to build the relationships, sustain the motivation, do the strategizing, and carry out the action required to achieve success.

The need for committed, hopeful leadership on a large scale is one reason that social movement leadership is often drawn from among the young (other than Moses). Dr. King was 25 when he was chosen to lead the bus boycott. César Chávez was 25 when recruited as a professional

organizer and 35 when he initiated the farmworkers' movement. Some attribute the affinity of young people with social movements as due to "biographical availability" (having the time, but no family).[19] Although this may hold the "costs" of activism down, it says little about the benefits. It has much more to do with Brueggemann. Young people often come of age with a critical eye, an evaluation of their parent's generation, and a hopeful heart, almost a biological necessity. As we can see in the presidential campaign that unfolded before our eyes, the combination can be transformational.

Leadership Practices: Relationship, Story, Strategy, Action

Building Relationships

Because social movements are new, the leaders who initiate them learn to form interpersonal relationships that link individuals, networks, and organizations. In the absence of formal structures, the voluntary commitments people make to one another create the fabric from which formal structures may be woven. In this context, relationships can be viewed as exchanges of interests and resources between parties (figure 19-1).[20] An exchange becomes a relationship, however, only when a mutual commitment of resources is made to a shared future.

FIGURE 19-1

The nature of relationships in social movements
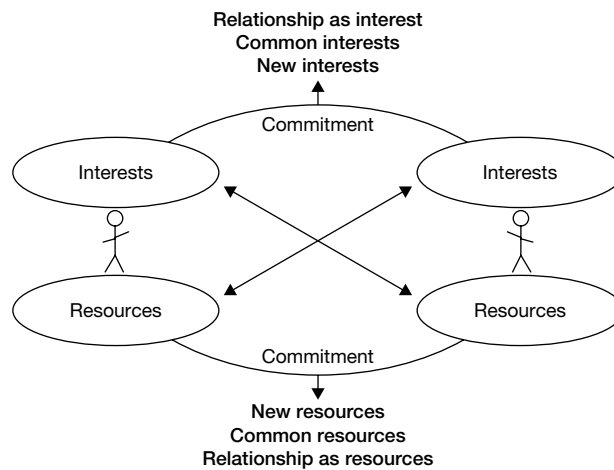
Commitment to a shared future and the consequences of a shared past transform an exchange into a relationship.

Because relationships are beginnings, not endings, they create opportunity for interests to grow, change, and develop. Similarly, participant resources irrelevant to the initial exchange may become relevant—and the basis for new forms of exchange—over time. Participants may also discover common interests of which they were unaware. And most important, participants may develop an interest in the relationship itself, creating what Robert Putnam and others describe as "social capital": a "relational" capacity that can facilitate collaborative action of all kinds.[21]

In social movement organizations, relationships among peers are as significant as those among leaders and between leaders and members. One joins a movement not only by entering into relationship with a leader—or organizer—but also by entering into a set of peer relationships with other members. Interpersonal relationships are thus critical to forging the shared understandings, commitments, and collaborative action that constitute a movement. And as Mark Granovetter taught us, the kinds of relationship—or networks—to which one commits make a big difference. Strong ties facilitate trust, motivation, and commitment, and weak ties broaden access to salient information, skills, and learning.[22] Successful movements learn to combine both.

The challenges of forging movement organizations across lines of race, class, culture, generation, and ethnicity are considerable, and rarely engaged successfully in the abstract or as a matter of principle. For example, the organizers of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)—a community organization of over one hundred churches, synagogues, mosques, community development corporations, unions, and other groups—devoted their first two years of work almost entirely to holding "one-on-one meetings," a relational practice that has achieved ritual quality in an organization that operates across so many traditional boundaries. On May 27, 2009, GBIO, which shares major responsibility for the Massachusetts health care reform, celebrated its tenth anniversary with an assembly of some 1,700 people, drawn from all these communities, attended by the mayor, speaker of the assembly, and governor.[23]

Because relational resources are so central to social movements and entering into new ones and sustaining old ones so labor intensive, scale can be achieved only if leaders at all levels are recruited to accept the

responsibility. The challenge is to cast a net widely enough to recruit others to do this work, create the capacity to train them, and offer the coaching to support their development.

Most active social movements thus train participants in some form of one-on-one meetings as well as "house meetings," a way to grow a movement utilizing preexisting relational networks.[24] In a one-on-one meeting, organizers recruit a host who will commit to invite members of his or her network to his or her home to meet the organizer, share experience, and discuss the movement. Attendees are then recruited to organize a similar meeting of their own, and so forth. The advantage this approach offers from a movement perspective is that it identifies potential community leaders—those successful in hosting a meeting— and avoids reliance on existing organizations and institutions that may be resistant to change. In the movement-like Obama campaign in South Carolina, for example, organizers had conducted some four hundred house meetings by October 2007, attended by some four thousand people, the foundation for a mobilization that deployed fifteen thousand Election Day volunteers, most of them active politically for the first time.[25]

Because relational work is so foundational for a social movement and can only be conducted to scale by many leaders skilled in this practice, a capacity to train leadership—not only at the top—is a core social movement competency.

Telling the Story

A social movement tells a new "story." Learning how to tell that story, the craft of what I call *public narrative*, is a second important leadership practice. And, like relationship building, its contribution to a movement depends on sharing the practice widely.

Values, Emotion, and Action

A puzzle social movement scholars of an earlier era faced was the question of why grievances produced protest in some cases but not in others. Scholars of moral economy showed that actionable "grievances" were experienced as an injustice, not simply an inconvenience, but as a wrong that demanded righting.[26] Psychologists showed that grievance leads to action only if combined with efficacy, or hope.[27] Thus, action on a grievance becomes more likely when it is experienced as an injustice, coupled with the presence of the sense of efficacy, solidarity,

and hopefulness required to undertake the sacrifice, make the commitments, and take the risks that acting to create change entails. The discursive challenge, then, is not only to articulate grievances but also to muster the moral energy, especially the hope, to drive the whole project. And although we tend to attribute this work to a single, visible, charismatic leader, it is a leadership practice required at all levels if a movement is to flourish.
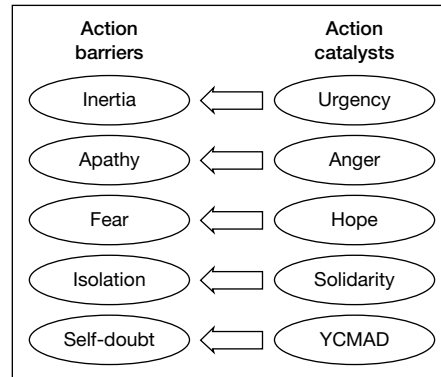
Psychologist Jerome Bruner argues that narrative is how we learn to exercise agency—choice in the face of uncertainty. We interpret the world in analytic and narrative modes.[28] Cognitively mapping the world, we can discern patterns, test relationships, and hypothesize empirical claims—the domain of analysis. But we also map the world affectively, coding experience, objects, and symbols as good for us or bad us for us, fearful or safe, hopeful or depressing, and so on. When we consider responding to a challenge with purposeful action, we ask ourselves two questions: why and how. Analytics helps answer the "how question"—how to use resources efficiently, detect opportunities, compare costs, and so on. But to answer the "why question"—why this matters, why we care, why we value one goal over another—we turn to narrative. The why question is not why we think we *ought* to act, but rather, why we *do* act, that which actually moves us to act, our motivation, our values. Or, as St. Augustine wrote, it is the difference between "knowing" the good, an ought, and "loving the good," a source of motivation.

Moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues that because we make choices based on values we experience via emotion, making moral choices without emotional information is futile.[29] She supports her argument with research on people afflicted with lesions on the amygdala, a part of the brain central to our emotions. When faced with decisions, they can come up with one option after another, but cannot decide because decisions rest on judgments of value. If we cannot experience emotion, we cannot experience values that orient us to the choices we must make.

Facilitating Purposeful Action

Some emotions inhibit agency expressed as purposeful action, whereas others facilitate it (figure 19-2). Exploring the relationship between emotion and purposeful action, political scientist George Marcus points to two of our neurophysiologic systems—surveillance and disposition.[30]

FIGURE 19-2

Emotions that inhibit and facilitate purposeful action

Action barriers		Action catalysts
Inertia	⇐	Urgency
Apathy	⇐	Anger
Fear	⇐	Hope
Isolation	⇐	Solidarity
Self-doubt	⇐	YCMAD

Our surveillance system compares what we *expect* to see with what we *do* see, tracking anomalies that, when observed, translate into anxiety. Without this emotional cue, Marcus argues, we operate out of habit. When we do feel anxiety, we say to ourselves, "Hey! Pay attention! There's a bear in the door!" Our *dispositional system*, on the other hand, operates along a continuum from depression to enthusiasm, or, as we might also describe it, from despair to hope. If we link an experience of anxiety with despair, our fear kicks in, or our rage, or we freeze—none of which facilitates adaptive agency. On the other hand, if we are hopeful, our curiosity will be provoked to explore the novelty in ways that can facilitate learning, creative problem solving, and intentional action. Thus, our capacity to consider action, consider it well, and act on our consideration depends on what we feel.

Social movement leaders mobilize the emotions that make agency possible. When we experience the "world as it is" in deep dissonance with values that define the "world as it should be," we experience emotional dissonance, a tension only resolvable through action. Organizers call this *agitation*. For example, because I depend on my job, I fear upsetting the boss (teacher, parent, employer); however, this may conflict with my self-respect if the boss violates my dignity. One person may become angry and challenge her boss, another may "swallow her pride," and another may resist the organizer who points out the conflict. Any of these options is costly, but one may serve a person's interests better than another.

As figure 19-2 illustrates, inertia—the security of habitual routine—can blind us to the need for action, but urgency and anger get our attention. Fear can paralyze us, driving us to rationalize inaction; amplified by self-doubt and isolation, fear can cause us to become victims of despair. On the other hand, hope inspires us and, in concert with self-efficacy (the feeling that you can make a difference) and solidarity (love, empathy), can move us to act.

Urgency that captures our attention creates the space for new action and is more about priority than time. An urgent need to complete a problem set due tomorrow supplants the important need to decide what to do with the rest of life. The urgent need to attend to a critically ill family member supplants the important need to attend a long postponed business meeting (or ought to?). The urgent need to commit a full day to turning out voters for a critical election supplants the important need to review the family budget. Because commitment and focused energy are required to launch anything new, creating a sense of urgency is often the only way to get the process started.

What about inertia's first cousin, apathy? As discussed earlier, we can counter apathy with anger—not rage, but outrage or indignation. Constructive anger grows out of experiencing the difference between *what ought to be* and *what is*—the way we feel when our moral order has been violated.[31] Sociologist Bill Gamson describes this as using an "injustice frame" to counter a "legitimacy frame."[32] As scholars of "moral economy" have taught us, people rarely mobilize to protest inequality as such, but they do mobilize to protest "unjust" inequality.[33] In other words, values, moral traditions, and a sense of personal dignity can function as critical sources of the motivation to act.

Where can we find courage to act despite our fear? Trying to reduce our fear by eliminating external provocation is often a fool's errand because it locates its source of courage outside, rather than within our own hearts. Trying to make ourselves "fearless" is counterproductive when acting more out of "nerve than brain." Leaders can inoculate against this tendency by warning others that the opposition will threaten them with this and woo them with that. The fact that these behaviors are expected reveals the opposition as more predictable and thus less to be feared. But in reality, it is the choice to act in spite of fear that constitutes courage. And of the sources of courage, perhaps the most important is hope.

Where do we go to get hope? One source of hope is the experience of "credible solutions," not only reports of success elsewhere,

but also direct experience of small successes and small victories. Another source of hope for many lies in faith traditions, spiritual beliefs, cultural practices, and moral understandings. Many of the great social movements—Gandhi, Civil Rights, and Solidarity—drew strength from religious traditions, and much of today's organizing occurs in faith communities. Relationships offer another source of hope. We know people who can inspire hope just by being around. "Charisma" can be understood as a person's capacity to inspire hope in others, of believing in himself or herself. Psychologists who study the role of "positive emotion" give particular attention to the "psychology of hope."[34] More philosophically, Moses Maimonides, the Jewish scholar of the twelfth century, argued that hope is belief in the "plausibility of the possible" as opposed to the "necessity of the probable."

Leaders counter self-doubt by enhancing others' sense of self-efficacy, the sense that *you can make a difference*, or YCMAD. One can inspire this sentiment by framing action in terms of what we *can* do, not what we *can't* do. A leader who designs a plan requiring each new volunteer to recruit one hundred people but provides no leads, training, or coaching will only exacerbate feelings of self-doubt. Recognition based on real accomplishment, not empty flattery, can help. In other words, there can be no *real* recognition without accountability. Accountability does not show lack of trust, but is evidence that what one is doing really matters.

Finally, social movement leaders counter feelings of isolation with the experience of belovedness or solidarity. This is the role of mass meetings, celebration, singing, common dress, and shared language.

The Power of Story

The discursive form through which we all translate our values into action is story. A story is crafted of just three elements: *plot*, *character*, and *moral* (figure 19-3). The effect depends on the *setting*: who tells the story, who listens, where they are, why they are there, and when.

Plot. A plot engages us, captures our interest, and makes us pay attention. "I got up this morning, had breakfast, and came to school." Is that a plot? Why? Why not? How about: "I was having breakfast this morning when I heard a loud screeching coming from the roof. At that very moment I looked outside to where my car was parked, but it

FIGURE 19-3

Narrative structure
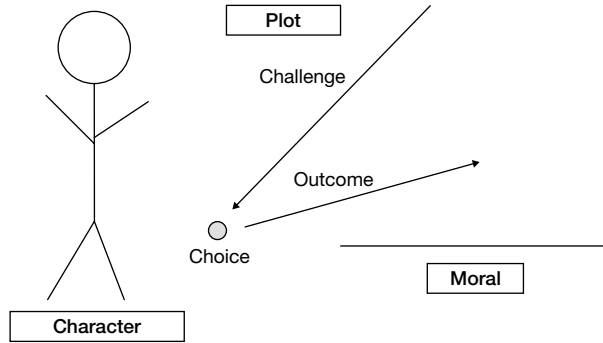
was gone! All I could find was a grease spot!" Now what's going on? What's the difference?

A story begins. The protagonist moves toward a desired goal. But the unexpected intervenes, a challenge looms. The plan is up in the air. The protagonist must figure out what to do. This is when we get interested. We want to find out what happens.

Why do we care?

Dealing with the unexpected defines the texture of our lives. There are no more tickets at the movie theater. You lose your job. Our marriage is on the verge of break-up. We are always learning how to deal with uncertainty, the greatest source of which is other people. The subject of most stories is therefore about how to interact with other people.

As human beings we are capable of agency: making choices in the present based on remembering the past and imagining the future. When we act from habit, we don't choose; we just follow the routine. Only when the routines break down, when the guidelines are unclear, when no one can tell us what to do, do we make real choices and become the creators of our own lives, communities, and futures. It is in these moments, as frightening as they are exhilarating, that we become the agents of our own fate.

A plot consists of just three elements: a *challenge*, a *choice*, and an *outcome*. Attending to plot is how we learn to deal with the unpredictable. Researchers report that most of the time that parents spend with

young children is in storytelling—stories of the family, the child's stories, stories of the neighbors. Bruner describes this as *agency training*: the way we learn how to process choices in the face of uncertainty.[35] Because our need to learn how to handle the unexpected is infinite, we invest billions of dollars and countless hours in films, literature, and sports events—not to mention religious practices, cultural activities, and national celebrations.

Character. Although a story requires a plot, it only works if we experience its emotional content by identifying empathetically with the protagonist. That is how we learn what the story has to teach to our hearts, not only our heads. As Aristotle wrote, the protagonist's tragic experience touches us and, perhaps, opens our eyes.[36] Arguments persuade with evidence, logic, and data. Stories persuade through empathetic identification. Have you been to a movie where you couldn't identify with a single character? It's boring. We may identify with protagonists that are only vaguely "like us"—like the road runner (if not the coyote) in the cartoons. Other times we identify with protagonists very much like us in stories about friends, relatives, and neighbors. Sometimes the protagonists of a story are *us*, as when we find ourselves in the midst of an unfolding story in which we are the authors of the outcome.

Moral. Stories teach. We've all heard the ending "And that is the moral of the story." Have you ever been at a party where someone starts telling a story and goes on and on? Someone may say (or want to say), "Get to the point!" We deploy stories to *make a point* and to evoke a response.

The moral of a successful story is emotionally experienced understanding, not only conceptual understanding—a lesson of the heart, not only the head. When stated only conceptually, many a moral becomes a banality. Saying "haste makes waste" does not communicate the emotional experience of losing it all because we moved too quickly—but it can remind us of that feeling, learned through a story. Nor can we expect morals to provide technical information. We do not retell the story of David and Goliath to learn how to use a slingshot. The story teaches us that a "little guy" with courage, resourcefulness, and imagination can beat a "big guy," especially one with Goliath's arrogance.

We feel David's anger, courage, and satisfaction and feel hopeful for our own lives because he is victorious. Stories thus teach how to manage our emotions, not repress them, so we can act with agency to face our own challenges.

Stories are not simply examples and illustrations. When well told, we experience *the point*, and we feel hope. It is that experience, not the words, that moves us to action. Because sometimes that is the point—we have to act.

Setting. Stories are told. They are not a disembodied string of words, images, and phrases. They are not messages, sound bites, or brands, although these rhetorical fragments may reference a story. Storytelling is fundamentally relational. As we listen, we evaluate the story, and we find it more or less easy to enter, depending on the storyteller. Is it his or her story? We hear it one way. Is it the story of a friend, a colleague, or a family member? We hear it another way. Is it a story without time, place, or specificity? We step back. Is it a story we share, perhaps a Bible story? Perhaps we draw closer to one another. And even as he tells his story, the storyteller attends to our reactions, modifying the story if need be to make the desired point. Storytelling is how we interact with each other about values; how we share experiences with each other, counsel each other, comfort each other, and inspire each other to action.

Public Narrative: Self, Us, and Now
Social movement leaders tell new public stories: a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now (figure 19-4). A story of self communicates

FIGURE 19-4

Telling a public story
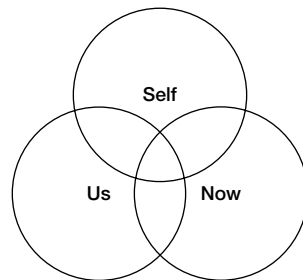
the values that call one to action. A story of us communicates the values shared by those in action. A story of now communicates an urgent challenge to those values that demands action now. Participating in a social movement not only often involves a rearticulation of one's story of self, us, and now, but also marks an entry into a world of uncertainty so daunting that access to sources of hope is essential. In this section I'll draw examples from the first seven minutes of Senator Barack Obama's speech to the Democratic National Convention in July 2004 (see chapter appendix).

Story of Self. Telling one's story of self is a way to communicate our identity, the choices that have made us who we are, and the values that shaped those choices—not as abstract principle, but as lived experience. We construct stories of self around *choice points*—moments when we faced a challenge, chose, experienced an outcome, and learned something. We can access the values that move us—and communicate them—by reflecting on these choice points and describing what happened to another person. And because storytelling is a social transaction, one that engages our listener's memories as well as our own, we often adapt our story of self in response to feedback so the communication works. We construct our identity, in other words, as our story. What is utterly unique about each of us is not a combination of the categories (race, gender, class, profession, marital status) that include us, but rather, our journey, our way through life, our personal text from which each of us can teach.[37]

A story is like a poem. A poem moves not by how long it is, nor how eloquent or complicated. A story or poem moves by evoking an experience or moment through which we grasp the feeling or insight the poet communicates. Because we are gifted with episodic memory, based on our ability to visualize past experience, we can imagine ourselves in the scene described.[38] The more specific the details we choose to recount, the more we can move our listeners, and the more powerfully we can articulate our values, what moral philosopher Charles Taylor calls our "moral sources."[39]

Some believe their personal stories don't matter, that others won't care, or that we shouldn't talk about ourselves so much. But if we do public work, we have a responsibility to give a public account of ourselves—where we came from, why we do what we do, and where we think we're going. Aristotle argued that rhetoric has three components —*logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*—this is the ethos.[40] The logos is the logic of

the argument. The pathos is the feeling the argument evokes. The ethos is the credibility of the person who makes the argument.

One who serves in public leadership really has little choice as to telling his or her story of self. If we don't author our story, others will—and may tell our story in ways that we may not like. Not because they are malevolent, but because others try to make sense of who we are by drawing on their experience of people whom they consider to be like us.

Social movements often serve as crucibles within which participants learn to tell new stories of self interacting with other participants. Stories of self can be challenging because social movement participation is often prompted by the "prophetic" combination of criticality and hope. In personal terms, this means that most participants have stories of both pain and of hope. If we haven't talked about our stories of pain very much, it can take a while to learn how to manage it. But if others are to understand who we are, and we omit the pain, our account will lack authenticity, raising questions about the rest of the story.

In the early days of the women's movement, people participated in "consciousness raising" group conversations that mediated changes in their stories of self, who they were, as women. Stories of pain could be shared, but so could stories of hope.[41] In the Civil Rights movement, blacks living in the Deep South who feared claiming the right to vote had to encourage one another to find the courage to make the claim—which, once made, began to alter how they thought of themselves and how they could interact with their children, as well as with white people, and each other.[42]

In Senator Obama's "story of self," he recounts three key choice points: his grandfather's decision to send his son to America to study, his parents' "improbable" decision to marry, and his parents' decision to name him Barack ("blessing"), an expression of hope for a tolerant and generous America. Each choice communicates courage, hope, and caring. He tells us nothing of his resume, preferring to introduce himself by telling us where he came from, and who made him the person that he is, so that we might have an idea of where he is going. In his presidential campaign, a key element of the training provided for organizers, leadership teams, and volunteers was in learning to tell their stories of self. Although many arrived expecting they would have to learn Obama's biography, become public policy experts, or both, they discovered that their own experience could provide them with all the stories they needed to communicate their own motivations, and to motivate others to join them.[43] One of these personal stories, told at a South

Carolina house meeting by twenty-three-year-old organizer Ashley Baia, provided the conclusion to Obama's historic speech on race, "A More Perfect Union," delivered in Philadelphia on March 18, 2008.

Story of Us. Our stories of self overlap with our stories of us. We each participate in many us's: family, community, faith, organization, profession, nation, or movement. A story of us expresses the values, the experiences, shared by the us we are evoking at the time. But a story of "us" not only articulates values of our community; it can also distinguish our community from another, reducing uncertainty about what to expect from those with whom we interact. Social scientists often describe a "story of us" as collective identity.[44]

Our cultures are repositories of stories. Stories about challenges we have faced, how we stood up to them, and how we survived are woven into the fabric of our political culture, faith traditions, and so on We tell these stories again and again in the form of folk sayings, songs, religious practice, and celebrations (e.g., Easter, Passover, Fourth of July). And like individual stories, stories of us can inspire, teach, offer hope, advise caution, and so on. We also weave new stories from old ones. The Exodus story, for example, served the Puritans when they colonized North America, but it also served Southern blacks claiming civil rights in the freedom movement.

For a collection of people to become an "us" requires a storyteller, an interpreter of their shared experience. In a workplace, people who work beside one another but interact little, don't linger after work, don't arrive early, and don't eat together never develop a story of us. In a social movement, the interpretation of the movement's new experience is a critical leadership function. And, like the story of self, it is built from the choice points—the founding, the choices made, the challenges faced, the outcomes, the lessons learned.

In Senator Obama's speech, he moves into his "story of us" when he declares, "My story is part of the American story" and proceeds to list American values that he shares with his listeners—the people in the room, the people watching on television, the people who will read about the speech the next day. And he begins by going back to the beginning, to choices made by the founders to begin this nation, a beginning that he locates in the Declaration of Independence, a repository of the value of equality, in particular. He then cites a series of moments that evoke values shared by his audience. And in his

presidential victory speech, delivered in Chicago on the evening of November 4, 2008, he declared:

> If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer . . . It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled—Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America.

Story of Now. A story of now articulates the urgent challenge to the values that we share that demands action now. What choice must we make? What is at risk? And where is the hope?

In a story of now, we are the protagonists and it is our choices that shape the story's outcome. We must draw on our "moral sources" to respond. A powerful articulation of a story of now was Dr. King's talk, often recalled as the "I have a dream" speech, delivered on August 23, 1963. People often forget that he preceded the dream with a challenge, white America's long overdue debt to African Americans. King argued that it was a debt that could no longer be postponed—it was a moment possessed of the "fierce urgency of now."[45] If we did not act, the nightmare would grow worse, never to become the dream.

In the story of now, story and strategy overlap because a key element in hope *is* strategy—a credible vision of how to get from here to there. The "choice" offered cannot be something like "we must all choose to be better people" or "we must all choose to do any one of this list of fifty-three things" (which makes each of the items trivial). A meaningful choice is more like "we must all choose—do we commit to boycotting the buses until they desegregate or not?" Hope is specific, not abstract. What's the vision? When God inspires the Israelites in Exodus, he doesn't offer a vague hope of "better days" but describes a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:9) and what must be done to get there. A vision of hope can unfold a chapter at a time. It can begin by getting the number of people to show up at a meeting that you committed to bring. You can win a small victory that shows change is possible. A small victory can become a source of hope if it is

interpreted as part of a greater vision. In churches, when people have a "new story" to tell about themselves, it is as "testimony"—a person shares an account of moving from despair to hope, the significance of the experience enhanced by the telling of it.

Hope is not to be found in lying about the facts, but in the *meaning* of the facts. In Shakespeare's version of his speech on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt, King Henry V stirs hope in his men's hearts by offering them a different view of themselves. No longer are they a few bedraggled soldiers led by a young and inexperienced king in an obscure corner of France who are about to be wiped out by an overwhelming force. Now they are a "happy few," united with their king in solidarity, holding an opportunity to grasp immortality in their hands, to become legends in their own time, a legacy for their children and grandchildren.[46] This is their time! The story of now is that moment in which story (why) and strategy (how) overlap and in which, as poet Seamus Heaney writes, "Justice can rise up, and hope and history rhyme."[47]

Senator Obama moves to his "story of now" with the phrase, "There is more work left to do." After we experience the values that we identify with America at its best, he confronts us with the fact that they are not realized in practice. He then tells stories of specific people in specific places with specific problems. And as we identify with each of them, our empathy reminds us of pain we have felt in our own lives. But, he reminds us, all this could change. And we know it could change. It could change because we have a way to make the change, if we choose to take it. And that way is to support the election of Senator John Kerry. Although that last part didn't work out, the point is that he concluded his story of now with a very specific choice he called upon us to make. And in his presidential campaign, Obama appropriated Dr. King's "fierce urgency of now" to mobilize voters on behalf of his cause.

Through public narrative, social movement leaders—and participants—can move to action by mobilizing sources of motivation, constructing new shared individual and collective identities, and finding the courage to act.

Devising Strategy

A third function of social movement leadership is creative strategizing. Just as storytelling is key to meeting the motivational challenge, so strategy is key to dealing with the resource challenge: the fact that challengers of the status quo rarely have access to the conventional

resources that its defenders do. Challengers must therefore find ways to compensate for resources with resourcefulness. And, because of the participatory, decentralized, and voluntary structure of most social movement organizations, the gifts of one entrepreneurial "genius" will not do—the practice must be learned throughout the movement for its potential to be realized.

As I have argued elsewhere, for the social movement strategist, the story of David and Goliath is most instructive.[48]

> And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath . . . whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail . . . and he had greaves of brass upon his legs . . . and the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron . . . And he stood and cried to the armies of Israel . . . Choose you a man for you . . . If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants . . . Give me a man that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid . . .
>
> And David said unto Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth . . . David said . . . The Lord that delivered me out of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee. And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had . . . ; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near unto the Philistine . . . And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance . . . Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword,

and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts . . . And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.[49]

When Goliath, veteran warrior, victor of many battles, arrayed in full battle gear, challenges the Israelites, their military leaders cower in fear. It is David, the young shepherd boy, to whom God gives the courage to face the giant. David's success begins with his courage, his commitment, and his motivation. But it takes more than courage to bring David success. David thinks about the battle differently. Reminded by five stones he finds in a brook, he reflects on previous encounters in which he protected his flock from bears and lions. Based on these recollections, he reframes this new battle in a way that gives him an advantage. Pointedly rejecting the offer of shield, sword, or armor as weapons because he cannot use them effectively against a master of these weapons, David conceives a plan of battle based on his five smooth stones, his skill with a sling, and the giant's underestimation of him.

The strategic challenge that social movement leaders face is how to successfully challenge those with more power. In an interdependent world of competition and cooperation, using one's resources to achieve one's goals often requires deploying those resources to influence the interests of others who hold a resource one needs—power. Although no one is entirely without resources, people lack power when unable to mobilize or deploy their resources in ways that influence the interests of critical others. A person's labor resource, for example, can become a source of power vis-à-vis an employer if mobilized collectively. Strategy is how actors translate their resources into power to get "more bang for the buck."

Opportunities occur at moments when actors' resources acquire more value because the environmental context changes. Actors do not suddenly acquire more resources or devise a new strategy, but find that resources they already have give them more leverage in achieving their goals. A full granary, for example, acquires greater value in a famine, creating opportunity for its owner. Similarly, a close election creates opportunity for political leaders who can influence swing voters. A labor shortage creates opportunity for workers to get more for their labor. This is one reason timing is such an important element of strategy.

Strategy is how we turn what we have into what we need to get what we want—a hypothesis that if we do *x*, *y*, and *z*, then *a* will result. Rooted in a theory of change, it orients current action toward future goals, adapting to an ever-changing environment, especially the actions and reactions of other actors. In fixed contexts in which rules, resources, and interests are given, strategy can be assessed in the analytic terms of game theory. But in settings in which rules, resources, and interests are emergent—such as social movements—strategy has more in common with creative thinking. Strategic action is thus an ongoing creative process of understanding and adapting new conditions to one's goals.

Development of effective strategy is thus more likely to occur under conditions in which strategists are highly motivated, enjoy access to diverse sources of salient knowledge, and employ deliberative practices committed to learning—what I call *strategic capacity* (figure 19-5).

- *David committed to fight Goliath before he knew how he would do it.*
  He knew why *he* had *to do it before he knew* how *he* could *do it.*
  Motivation influences creative output because it affects the
  focus one brings to one's work, the ability to concentrate for
  extended periods of time, persistence, willingness to take risks,
  and ability to sustain high energy. Motivated individuals are
  more likely to do the work to acquire needed knowledge and

FIGURE 19-5

Strategic capacity
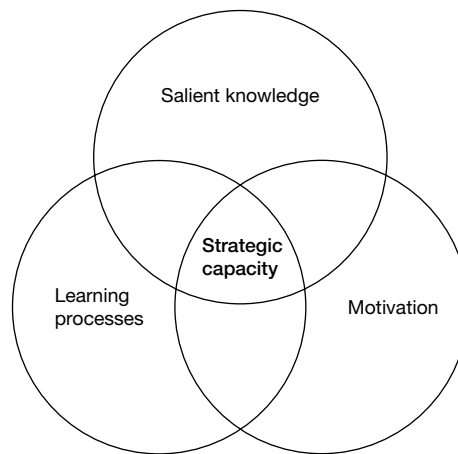
skills. Individuals think more critically and reflectively, overriding programmed modes of thought, if they are intensely interested in a problem, dissatisfied with the status quo, or have experienced a schema failure as a result of sharp breaches in expectations and outcomes. To the extent that success enhances motivation, it not only generates more resources but also may encourage greater creativity.

- *David did not know how to use King Saul's weapons, but he did know how to use stones as weapons.* A second element of creativity is possession of skills, mastery of which is requisite for developing novel applications. Creative jazz piano players have learned how to play the piano very well. In terms of strategy, mastery of specific skills—or tactics—is relevant, but so is access to local knowledge of constituencies with which one is interacting. We expect effective military strategists to command skills required for battlefield success and to understand the troops, the enemy, the battlefield, and so forth. The better our information about how to work within a domain—local knowledge—the more likely we are to know how to deal with problems arising within that domain. Since environments change in response to initiatives, however, regular feedback is especially important in evaluating responses to these initiatives.

- *David could use his skill with stones because he had imaginatively recontextualized the battlefield, transforming it into a place where, as a shepherd, he knew how to protect his flock from wolves and bears.* An outsider to the battle, he saw resources others did not see and opportunities they did not grasp. Goliath, on the other hand, the insider, failed to see a shepherd boy as a threat. When we face novel problems, we can use heuristic processes to devise novel solutions, recontextualizing data or synthesizing data in new ways. But to think creatively, we must recognize our problems as new ones—at least to us—that require new solutions. Innovative thinking is facilitated by encounters with diverse points of view, whether based on the life experience of individuals or diversity of experience within a group. Access to a diversity of salient knowledge not only offers multiple routines from which to choose, but also contributes to the "mindfulness" that multiple solutions are possible.

Structurally, strategic capacity is most effectively developed among a leadership team, rather than in the head of a single individual. It will be most productive if it includes insiders and outsiders to relevant constituencies, leaders with strong and weak ties to those constituencies, and persons experienced with diverse repertoires of collective action. Social movement leaders can make the most of these factors if they conduct regular, open, authoritative deliberations; establish accountability to key constituencies; and can draw critical resources from these actions.

I offer one example of how strategic capacity works from the early days of the California farmworkers' movement led by Cesar Chavez. In February 1966 in Delano, California, grape workers had been on strike for union recognition for five months. In November the season had ended with no breakthroughs, and a boycott called in December against Schenley Industries, a major liquor company with four thousand acres of grapes, had produced no results. So Chavez convened a meeting of leadership at a supporter's home near Santa Barbara to devote three days to figuring out how to move on Schenley, prepare for the spring, and sustain the commitment of strikers, organizers, and supporters. I quote from my notes of that meeting:

> As proposals flew around the room, someone suggested we follow the example of the New Mexico miners who had traveled to New York to set up a mining camp in front of the company headquarters on Wall Street. Farm workers could travel to Schenley headquarters in New York, set up a labor camp out front, and maintain a vigil until Schenley signed. Someone else then suggested they go by bus so rallies could be held all across the country, local boycott committees organized, and publicity generated, building momentum for the arrival in New York. Then why not march instead of going by bus, someone else asked, as Dr. King had the previous year. But it's too far from Delano to New York, someone countered. On the other hand, the Schenley headquarters in San Francisco might not be too far—about 280 miles which an army veteran present calculated could be done at the rate of 15 miles a day or in about 20 days.
>
> But what if Schenley doesn't respond, Chavez asked. Why not march to Sacramento instead and put the heat on Governor Brown to intervene and get negotiations started. He's up for reelection,

wants the votes of our supporters, so perhaps we can have more impact if we use him as "leverage." Yes, some one else said, and on the way to Sacramento, the march could pass through most of the farm worker towns. Taking a page from Mao's "long march" we could organize local committees and get pledges not to break the strike signed. Yes, and we could also get them to feed us and house us. And just as Zapata wrote his "Plan de Ayala," Luis Valdez suggested, we can write a "Plan de Delano," read it in each town, ask local farm workers to sign it and to carry it to the next town. Then, Chavez asked, why should it be a "march" at all? It will be Lent soon, a time for reflection, for penance, for asking forgiveness. Perhaps ours should be a pilgrimage, a "peregrinación," which could arrive at Sacramento on Easter Sunday.[50]

On March 17, farmworkers began their *peregrinación*, carrying banners of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexico, portraits of *campesino* leader Emiliano Zapata, placards proclaiming *peregrinación*, *penitencia*, *revolución*—pilgrimage, penance, revolution—and signs calling on supporters to boycott Schenley. One striker, Roberto Roman, carried a six-foot-tall wooden cross, constructed of two-by-fours and draped in black cloth. Timed to coincide with a visit by Senator Robert Kennedy for U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor hearings in Delano, the march attracted public attention from the start. Televised images of a line of helmeted police temporarily blocking the marchers' departure evoked images of police lines in Selma, Alabama, the year before. A crowd of more than one thousand welcomed them to Fresno at the end of the first week. Reporters profiled strikers, examining why they would walk three hundred miles, and analyzed what the strike was all about. The march articulated not only the farmworkers' call for justice, but also the Mexican American community's claims for a voice in public life. At an individual level, as Cesar Chavez described it, the march was also a way of "training ourselves to endure the long, long struggle, which by this time had become evident . . . would be required. We wanted to be fit not only physically but also spiritually."

On the afternoon of April 3, as the farmworkers arrived in Stockton, a week's march south of Sacramento, Schenley's lawyer reached Chavez by phone. Schenley had little interest in remaining the object of a boycott, especially as the march's arrival in Sacramento promised to become a national anti-Schenley rally. As a result, just three days

before the march would arrive, Schenley signed the first real union contract in California farm labor history. So Saturday afternoon, a crowd that had grown to two thousand gathered on the grounds of Our Lady of Grace School in West Sacramento, on a hill looking across the Sacramento River to the capital city that they would enter the next morning. During the Easter vigil service that evening, more than one speaker compared them to the ancient Israelites camped across the River Jordan from the Promised Land. That night Roberto Roman carefully redraped his cross in white and decorated it with spring flowers. The next morning, barefoot, he bore it triumphantly across the river bridge, down the Capitol mall, and up the Capitol steps, where he was met by a crowd of ten thousand farmworkers and supporters who launched the farmworker movement.

A key challenge social movement leaders face, one overcome in the above example, is that of focusing the use of movement resources, a function of participant commitment, on a single strategic outcome for a sustained period of time. Individual participants often identify with a particular issue or position. And when identity is at stake, strategic choices can become very difficult. Given a fragile governance structure, leaders often try to avoid conflict by saying "yes" to everyone. This "thousand flowers" approach, however, diffuses effort, squanders resources, confuses supporters, and trivializes the value of individual contribution. One strength of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, for example, was the clarity of its strategic objective: desegregating buses in Montgomery, Alabama, a goal to which almost every member in the community could contribute resources by withholding bus fare. Had the organizers fragmented their resources by attacking voting rights, housing, and lunch counters as a way to accommodate the preferences of various groups of participants, the campaign could easily have failed.

A strength of the Civil Rights movement leadership was creation of a mechanism, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, which, roughly from 1956 to 1967, provided a venue in which strategic focus was considered. This focus was not achieved without debate, conflict, and argument, some of it very intense. Its duration was limited, and at times multiple campaigns would be in play. But one clear reason for this relative success was the creation of organizational structures within which this work could be done at local, regional, and national levels. One of the most salient challenges faced by the climate change movement today is precisely one of bringing strategic focus to its efforts.

Catalyzing Action

Action refers to the work of mobilizing and deploying resources to achieve outcomes. It is the bottom line of the relational, motivational, and strategic work. Social movements are, in the end, about changing the world, not yearning for it, thinking about it, or exhorting it. The resources a social movement can mobilize are those held by their participants—time, skills, and effort—and are matters of voluntary commitment.

How leaders mobilize resources affects how they can be deployed; how they are deployed affects how they can be mobilized. Resources mobilized from participants can be deployed with accountability solely to participants in ways that empowers them to achieve results.[51] Outside resources entail accountability to donors, who often place limits on how they can be used, creating a counterproductive dependency rather than empowerment. When foundations began to prioritize the environment, for example, inner city organizations dependent on foundation funding found that constituency interests could now be served by focusing on environmental programs.[52] Similarly, if one's resource advantage is numbers of people, using tactics that require money makes little sense. On the other hand, action based on resources that participants can commit may limit tactics to those in which they are willing to participate.

A key strategic question social movement leaders face is where to emphasize "collaboration" or "claims making." Collaboration builds power "with" others, interdependently, making the most of participant resources—for example, credit unions, death benefits, and cooperative day care. Claims making challenges actors who use their power over the participants in ways that compromise participant interests. This might include getting the city to allocate funds to new community needs, an employer to raise wages, or Congress to pass a law. Collaborative work often is required to create enough "power with" to challenge "power over."

Some action generates new resources, whereas other action drains resources. Union success, for example, yields more members, more dues, and more leadership. When faith-based community organizations do parish renewal work among member churches, their human and financial capacities grow. Grant-based action programs, in contrast, often fail to generate new resources through their work, holding themselves in a state of perpetual dependency. There is no consistently

"right" answer to the appropriate interaction of resources and action. But understanding the relationship is essential so leaders can make conscious choices about how to improve the odds that their movement will succeed in its goals.

Perhaps the greatest social movement "action" challenge is consistently translating intent into outcome: making things happen, on time; counting them; and evaluating them for continual improvement. Developing such a "culture of commitment" is critical if a movement is to use its most precious resource, volunteer time, well. Meeting the challenge is not a matter of exhortation, but of establishing norms, processes, and structures to make commitment real, coach excellent performance, and realize motivational benefits of intrinsic reward generated by well-designed work.

The key to social movement action is the craft of getting *commitments*. And it is a leadership skill that people find most difficult to master. A commitment is a specific pledge of time, money, or action. "Can we count on you to be at the meeting at 7:00 p.m.? Can we count on you for your phone bank shift at 4:00 p.m.? On the one hand, a person asking another to commit may "underask" to avoid getting a "no" and having to deal with the feeling of rejection that can go with it. On the other hand, they may underask to avoid getting a "yes" and the reciprocal commitment that goes with it. A game of "face work," as sociologist Erving Goffman describes it, often develops around commitment.[53] Just as I pretend not to see the soup you spilled on your shirt, so you pretend not to see that I see, and I, in turn, pretend not to see that you see that I see—all in the interest of avoiding embarrassment. Those asking others for commitment often ignore a response that falls far short ("I'll try") to avoid the tension of clarification. The fact that we avoid making commitments we do not intend to keep points to their power of calling forth behavior that is consistent with the commitment.[54] Securing commitment is thus the primary means by which social movements can get resources that they need to do their work. Whatever the reasons, it takes courage, training, and dedication to develop a movement culture of asking for and getting real commitments.

A second key to effective action is turning strategy into *specific measurable outcomes with real deadlines*. Without clear outcomes, neither leaders nor participants have any way to evaluate success or failure, to learn, or to experience the feedback essential to motivation. An advantage of

electoral campaigns is that a specific number of votes are required to win an election. Even in that setting, however, intermediate outcomes are often avoided. One of the main reasons movements avoid commitment to specific outcomes is a fear that failure will diminish the motivation needed to sustain the movement. The cost of avoiding this risk, however, is not only strategic, but motivational as well—only at the front end. One of the most important leadership challenges in a social movement is learning to handle loss. In part, it is a matter of narrative interpretation whether a setback is experienced as "contaminating" the enterprise or as a necessary cost of "redemption."[55] But it is also a function of building in outcome evaluation as a routine practice, allowing participants to experience it as a source of learning, rather than of negative judgment. One possible tactic is organizing physical space to focus on outcomes—for example, turning the number of votes secured through phone calls and house meetings into a large chart that hangs in the line of sight of anyone who enters headquarters. "When you walk through an organizing office, it ought to remind people of what needs to be done, what's important, what things should happen next. The place should have an orienting effect."[56]

A third key factor is designing volunteer tasks in such a way as to avoid the "grunt work" experience in favor of the far more motivational experience of intrinsic reward. This need not be a pipe dream, because the principles of motivational work design are well established in the work of Richard Hackman and others.[57] In a project with the Sierra Club more fully described later in this chapter, my colleague Ruth Wageman and I trained volunteer leaders in how to redesign tasks, such as phone banking, so as to make them more rewarding. This required attention to the skill variety, task identity (a whole task), task significance (meaningful impact), autonomy (choice as to how to achieve the outcome for which one is responsible), and feedback (seeing the results of one's work).[58] This approach to the design of volunteer work remains almost entirely untapped.

Securing excellent outcomes requires consistent *coaching*, a practice I address more fully later in the chapter as leadership development. In social movements, because "new" people are usually trying to make "new" things happen under novel conditions, ongoing learning and teaching is required. On the one hand, performance feedback, especially short-term failure, is critical for adapting tactics and strategy.[59]

On the other hand, to develop the leadership skills of those with less experience, leaders must learn to coach, avoiding both micromanagement on the one hand and hands-off management on the other. This requires making time to meet before an action, during an action if need be, and afterward to evaluate the action. Managing an effective team means scheduling time for the team to meet, to learn, to coach each other, and to receive expert coaching. Regular "learning" meetings can become the eye in the hurricane, the order at the core of what can feel like a chaotic enterprise. For this to work, however, it must be sacred. When I was coordinating the organizing of Nancy Pelosi's first campaign for Congress in 1987, I looked for an opportunity to establish this practice. We had just begun our daily coordinators meeting when someone came running into the room shouting, "Nancy's on the phone! Nancy's on the phone! She's got to talk to you right away!" All eyes turned to me. Was our time really sacred or not? "Please tell Nancy that we're in our coordinators meeting," I said. "I'll call her as soon as we're done." A big sigh of relief. From that point on, we never had any problem sticking to our daily meeting.

Finally, the world of social movements is a world of *contingency:* almost everything that can go wrong likely will. Someone forgets to unlock the hall, the sound system is missing a cable, someone forgot to order the chairs, the map got printed backward, half the flyers didn't get printed on time, someone's car has a flat tire, the date was mistranslated in the Spanish version, and so on. In a setting in which new recruits are trying to achieve daunting tasks, under pressure of time and with fewer resources than they need—typical of most social movements—disaster lurks just around the corner. Because most contingency is outside our control, however, effective leaders focus on that over which they can have some control. For example, making a reminder call two hours before a meeting may persuade someone who was on the fence to come, or it may reveal that no one is coming, allowing one to save his or her valuable time. The best way to handle contingency, however, is to remain in learning mode: resilient, creative, and ready to adapt practices in real time.

Structuring Social Movements

Paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould wrote that time is sometimes a "cycle" and sometimes an "arrow."[60] Thinking of time as a cycle helps us to maintain our routines, our normal procedures, our annual budget,

and so forth. Thinking of time as an arrow, on the other hand, focuses us on making change: we begin at a specific moment, we end at a specific moment, and in between is change.

Social movements generally operate within the time-as-an-arrow framework, more generally described as a *campaign*, a way to organize that most valuable, yet widely distributed, resource: time. As Connie Gersick's work shows, organizations have a temporal life as well as a spatial one.[61] Work governed by the internal rhythm of an organization may be more or less well "entrained" with the rhythm of events in its environment. Student groups, for example, need to start a new project in the first weeks of the semester or they won't get started at all. After mid-semester, the rhythm changes as people focus on completing what they have begun. Managing timing is especially important for organizations that must be attuned to the sudden appearance of opportunities; on the one hand, making the most of the opportunity, but, on the other hand, not operating in such a reactive mode that forward momentum is lost.

Campaigns unfold over time with a rhythm that slowly builds a foundation, gathers gradual momentum with preliminary peaks, culminates in a climax when the campaign is won or lost, and then achieves resolution (figure 19-6). When done well, campaigns strengthen the organizations that give rise to them.

A campaign is a strategic and motivational way to organize change activity. It is strategic because it is a way to target effort. It is

FIGURE 19-6

Campaigns
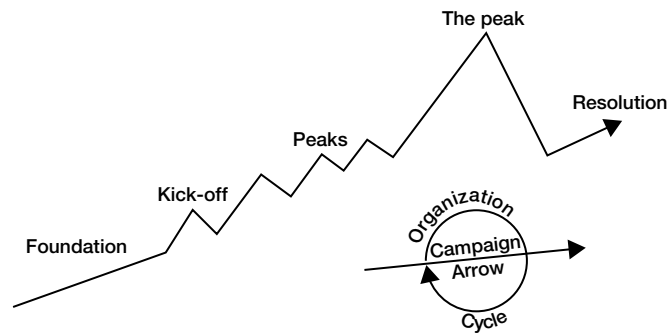
motivational because it enacts an unfolding story of the hope that we can achieve our objective. As it progresses, we find we can make a difference. Our work acquires the urgency of genuine deadlines. The solidarity of collaborating with others in a common cause energizes us.

Campaigns facilitate *targeting* specific objectives, one at a time. Creating something new requires intense energy and concentration—unlike the inertia that keeps things going once they have begun. We can invest energy for a limited number of days, weeks, or months at levels we cannot—and should not—sustain for long periods of time. As a campaign ends, we consolidate our wins or our losses, we return to normal life, we regroup, and perhaps we undertake another campaign in the future. The "adventurous" quality of a campaign facilitates the development of relationships more quickly—and with greater intensity—than would ordinarily be the case. We more easily come to share a common story that we all take part in authoring.

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

Campaigns provide an opportunity for learning by allowing for small losses in the early days of a campaign. As Sam Sitkin argues, creating space for small losses early in an undertaking affords participants the opportunity to try new things, which is essential to learning how to do them.[62] It also affords the organization as a whole a chance to learn how to get it right. In most campaigns, we know the first rap we write will be changed once the rubber hits the road and we begin to use it. Of course, it is important to use the early phase of a campaign "mindfully" in this way so it isn't just a preview of what we will do wrong on a large scale.

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

Leadership Development

Social movement leadership requires not only adapting to the rhythm of change, but also structuring the space in which effective leadership can grow. Social movement leaders face particular challenges given the decentralized, self-governing, and voluntary mode in which movements operate. Command and control structures alienate participation, inhibit adaptation to local and often rapidly changing conditions, and curb organizational learning.[63] On the other hand, as sociologist Jo Freeman famously noted, antipathy to structure creates a "tyranny of structurelessness" in which authority is exercised in opaque ways, off the books, so to speak, with little or no public accountability.[64] And while decentralization has benefits, it too can inhibit learning, constrict resources, and inhibit strategic coordination.

The challenge has become particularly difficult in recent years because institutional mechanisms that equipped large numbers of people with basic civic skills are in eclipse. De Tocquville's "great free schools of democracy," the extensive three-tiered civic associations that, along with churches, structured our participation in public life for most of our first 180 years of our history, have fallen into sharp decline since the 1960s.[65] These organizations created extensive leadership development opportunities, especially at the local level. Leadership roles, expectations, and obligations had an almost ritualized clarity; collective deliberation and decision making were established practices; and opportunities for learning, development, and growth were afforded by frequent conventions and multitiered leadership ladders. They came apart, however, confronting the combined challenges of race, gender,

and generational change (most of them had been gender and race segregated); the development of new communications and, especially, fundraising technologies that marginalized the role of local groups; and the professionalization of advocacy.[66] The vacuum created by this atrophy of collective action leadership skills has so far not been filled by the Internet, a tool far better suited to creating new marketplaces than to forging organizational commitments. The Obama campaign, however, was an important exception in that it combined large-scale training in organizing skills with the development of innovative new media techniques to support the organizers and their local leadership teams in putting those skills to work.[67]

Three structural challenges that social movements face today are in the organization of leadership; processes for effective deliberation and decision making; and mechanisms of genuine accountability. In recent research on the Sierra Club, Ruth Wageman and I employed three approaches to address these challenges: team design, deliberative practice, and mechanisms of accountability.[68]

We restructured leadership practice away from the dominant model of a heroic individual, standing firm in the face of cosmic challenge, to a team approach. Individuals acquired skills in a context in which they would use them,[69] the skills they learned were inherently collaborative,[70] and accountability and motivation embedded in team membership enhanced the odds that new practices would persist, thus creating new capacity. Adapting the work of Hackman and Wageman on "real teams" to this setting, we found that restructuring volunteer leaders as bounded, stable, and interdependent teams with a common purpose, specified roles, and clear norms encouraged goal attainment and learning.[71] The experience of the Obama campaign, where we also introduced this team-based approach, was that volunteers affiliated with teams volunteered ten hours more per week, on average, than those who were unaffiliated.[72]

To address the challenge of decision making that veered from autocracy to consensus and from an overreliance on process to chaos, we introduced deliberative practices that enabled teams to engage conflict without suppressing it, and to differ without personalizing differences. These are much easier to cultivate when the group has done the work of articulating its shared values, identifying its common purpose. In this context a process of defining the problem, establishing outcome criteria, generating alternatives, evaluating alternatives, making a decision, and learning from the decision proved quite positive.

In terms of accountability, we noted that participants were reticent to claim authority, especially when it came to holding each other accountable to commitments, a common refrain being "you can't fire volunteers." In the absence of accountability practices available to traditional social movements, we focused on naming the problem, identifying norms that could help solve the problem, and institutionalizing those norms—something real only in the context of an entire team. Recognizing the centrality of commitment to volunteer effort, we focused on equipping teams to confront (offer feedback to) those who did not honor their commitments, celebrate those who did, and provide coaching to each other across the board. We found that teams with clear norms contributed more effort to their tasks, developed better work strategies, and used talent more efficiently. They also did far better in accomplishing goals.

Conclusion

Social movements make a vital contribution to our capacity for economic, social, political, and cultural adaptation and renewal. Their very nature, however, as broadly based harbingers of change creates unusual leadership challenges: they are voluntary, decentralized, and self-governing; they are volatile, dynamic, and interactive; participants are motivated by moral claims, but results depend on strategic creativity; and their capacity to make things happen depends on their ability to mobilize broad levels of commitment. As a result, perhaps their most critical capacity is consistent formal and informal leadership development.

Appendix 19-1

Senator Barack Obama, "The Audacity of Hope"

Democratic National Convention, Boston, MA, July 27, 2004

Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Dick Durbin. You make us all proud.

On behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, Land of Lincoln, let me express my deepest gratitude for the privilege of addressing this convention.

Tonight is a particular honor for me because, let's face it, my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely. My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father—my grandfather—was a cook, a domestic servant to the British.

But my grandfather had larger dreams for his son. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place, America, that shone as a beacon of freedom and opportunity to so many who had come before.

While studying here, my father met my mother. She was born in a town on the other side of the world, in Kansas. Her father worked on oil rigs and farms through most of the Depression. The day after Pearl Harbor my grandfather signed up for duty; joined Patton's army, marched across Europe. Back home, my grandmother raised a baby and went to work on a bomber assembly line. After the war, they studied on the G.I. Bill, bought a house through F.H.A., and later moved west all the way to Hawaii in search of opportunity.

And they, too, had big dreams for their daughter. A common dream, born of two continents.

My parents shared not only an improbable love, they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. They would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed," believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. They imagined—They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential.

They're both passed away now. And yet, I know that on this night they look down on me with great pride.

They stand here—And I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my heritage, aware that my parents' dreams live on in my two precious daughters. I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that, in no other country on earth, is my story even possible.

Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our Nation—not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. Our pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

That is the true genius of America, a faith—a faith in simple dreams, an insistence on small miracles; that we can tuck in our children at night and know that they are fed and clothed and safe from harm; that we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door; that we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe; that we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted—at least most of the time.

This year, in this election we are called to reaffirm our values and our commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we're measuring up to the legacy of our forbearers and the promise of future generations.

And fellow Americans, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, I say to you tonight: We have more work to do—more work to do for the workers I met in Galesburg, Illinois, who are losing their union jobs at the Maytag plant that's moving to Mexico, and now are having to compete with their own children for jobs that pay seven bucks an hour; more to do for the father that I met who was losing his job and choking back the tears, wondering how he would pay 4,500 dollars a month for the drugs his son needs without the health benefits that he counted on; more to do for the young woman in East St. Louis, and thousands more like her, who has the grades, has the drive, has the will, but doesn't have the money to go to college.

Now, don't get me wrong. The people I meet—in small towns and big cities, in diners and office parks—they don't expect government to solve all their problems. They know they have to work hard to get ahead, and they want to. Go into the collar counties around Chicago, and people will tell you they don't want their tax money wasted, by a welfare agency or by the Pentagon. Go in—Go into any inner city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can't teach our kids to learn; they know that parents have to teach, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. They know those things.

People don't expect—People don't expect government to solve all their problems. But they sense, deep in their bones, that with just a slight change in priorities, we can make sure that every child in America has a decent shot at life, and that the doors of opportunity remain open to all.

They know we can do better. And they want that choice.

In this election, we offer that choice. Our Party has chosen a man to lead us who embodies the best this country has to offer. And that man is John Kerry.

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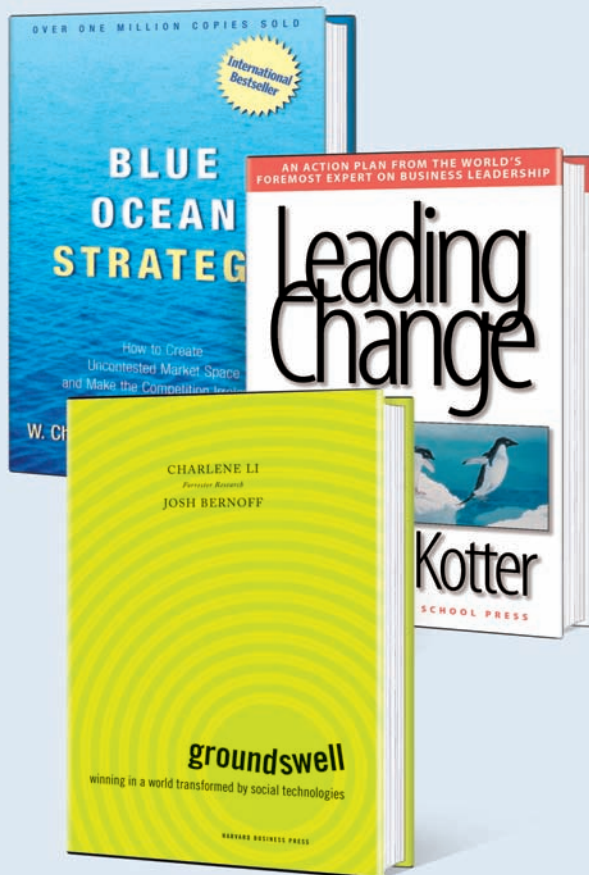
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