the populous by experts. At the same time, however, it also augments the humanitarian, stewardly conception of that jeremiad, attempting to address the issues of paternalism embedded in its evasion of materiality by explicitly taking into consideration issues of power, context, and culture not originally included in the narrative extending from it.

Through this revision of the progressive pragmatic model, reframing becomes more than just an attempt to, say, shift the focus of coverage of a news subject—for example, students in college-level writing courses or the work that is completed in those courses. In fact, it is an attempt to create a different kind of public sphere, a republican (small "r") one requiring "often cacophonous conversation" (Carey 1997b, 219). These models for intellectual work, like the models for action based on that work presented by the NCTE's success with reframing coverage of the SAT writing exam, rest on making connections between what compositionists (and WPAs) value, what is important to us in and about our work, and then proceeding from that point to build alliances with others that provide benefits for us and for them. These points are reiterated by the community organizers whose work is used as the basis for developing strategies for WPAs and writing instructors to use in our reframing work described in the next two chapters.

4

CHANGING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WRITING AND WRITERS
Working through a Process

WPA: Writing Program Administrator

Justine, a tenured WPA at a small, religiously affiliated university, has a dilemma.[1]

> At the last minute the chair decides to move a faculty member from first-year composition to a course in the major. As WPA I have to scurry and find a replacement instructor. The dean won't allow either of the two single course adjuncts that we have to teach another section because it will make them "full time" so I have to hire someone new on short notice. Our pay falls in the middle range of the many colleges in the area—higher than most state schools but lower than the other private schools that are more of our peer institutions. But because this is already late December, it is hard to find people whose schedule can accommodate the course.
>
> After interviewing two people the more experienced, more qualified person turns it down because of the pay. What should I do? Hire the second choice, someone who has only one semester of teaching first-year composition at community colleges with very different curriculum, student population, etc.? What if I decide not to hire anyone and just say we don't have any qualified people available? How can I get the chair—and the dean—to understand that we need more than a warm body . . . and that all of our students— who pay $30,000 a year for tuition—deserve more and in fact need highly qualified instructors?

CHANGING STORIES: STRATEGIES WITH IDEALS

Justine's story encompasses some of the field's most pressing challenges, all of which extend from the stories about writing and writers discussed in chapters 2 and 3. How are students'

literacies defined when they come in to composition courses? What should courses teach to develop students' literacies—or, in the language of the progressive pragmatic jeremiad, to cultivate students' critical intelligences—and for what purposes? Finally, how should students' literacies (or critical intelligences) be assessed at the ends of these courses?

Institutional responses to these questions extend to some of the most critical issues identified in WPA research in the last 20 years. These include the role of WPAs' work within the institution (how is it defined? valued? rewarded? [e.g., Bloom; Huot; Micciche 2002]); the relationships that exist between WPAs and other instructors teaching writing courses (are they equals? who has more authority? why? how is this authority extended? [e.g., Desmet 2005; Hesse 1999]); and, of course, hiring and staffing practices (who should be hired, at what salary, with what benefits, why, and how? [e.g., Schell 1998; Hansen; Miller and Cripps 2005; Bosquet 2004; Harris 1997.) The short-term solution—hire the second choice—addresses Justine's immediate problem. But in choosing that option, she runs the risk of perpetuating narratives about the purposes and design of writing classes and programs that she might not want to, like "anyone can teach writing classes," or "writing instructors are a dime a dozen, so we don't need to pay them well." The long-term solution—not hiring anyone and instead taking up questions about who is qualified to teach, or what students deserve and why—may have other consequences for students in the (unstaffed) course or for Justine herself.

This chapter and the next one offer frameworks for WPAs to think about dilemmas like Justine's, as well as the many other kinds of dilemmas we face. Embedded in these frameworks is an argument that we can borrow strategies from people who are already engaged in the work of changing stories—not stories about writing per se, but other stories—and adapt them to our own needs. These frameworks and the strategies within them draw from interviews with and observations of community organizers and media activists as well as literature on organizing and

change to identify processes and actions that are potentially useful for the purpose of affecting conversations about writing and writers. At each step, though, there are decisions to be made—about appropriate directions for work in our specific contexts, about the implications of decisions, about where to go and what to do next. If WPAs and writing instructors can use these strategies, maybe we won't face the kind of Faustian bargain that Justine will make here, a dilemma that both reflects and flows directly from the kind of frames reflected in big-picture policies analyzed in the previous chapters.

Other WPAs have suggested that ours is a position from which it is possible to affect what I am here referring to as story-changing work. Barbara Cambridge and Ben McClelland, for example, made the case over ten years ago that the WPA position affords the possibility to "orchestrate [a] broad strategic vision, develop [a] shared administrative and organizational infrastructure, and create the cultural glue which can create synergies" between writing programs and their institutions (Cambridge and McClelland 1995, 157). Lynn Bloom, similarly, outlined several areas where she believed that WPAs might have an effect in a relatively short period of time: training instructors, "influencing graduate . . . [and] undergraduate education," and shaping other faculty members' work with writing (Bloom 74). The strategies here build on the potential embedded in statements like Cambridge and McClelland's and Bloom's by situating them in the current context for discussions about writing (and education more generally), and by bringing to them a framework for potential change-making strategies.

This framework is drawn from the work of community organizers and media strategists who work for a number of organizations—MoveOn.org, Wellstone Action, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the Rockridge Institute, the SPIN Project, and others. Although these organizations address diverse concerns, they do so from ideologies that are considered progressive and left-leaning and from values that are certainly not dominant in the late stages of the Bush administration. While

there are certainly right-leaning conservative organizations that also engage in frame-setting, their work seemed less salient for the purposes of this research. The success of the right's efforts to control terms of discussion about everything from foreign policy to education has been well documented in books like Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas* and Geoffrey Nunberg's *Talking Right*; in films like Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 911*; and almost nightly on shows like *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. Educators who want to change stories—WPAs, for instance, who might want to employ strategies to shift the frames around writing and writers on their own campuses—are often working against instantiations of this dominant narrative as it is represented in documents like *A Test of Leadership* (the final report of the Spellings Commission on Higher Education), *Ready or Not*, and the report on the ACT National Curriculum Survey discussed in chapter 3. Rather than look to expert sources whose strategies have been used to maintain and develop this dominant cultural narrative, it seemed more logical to look to ones who had achieved some measure of success in shifting this narrative in the ways that WPAs and writing instructors might want to do.

MEET THE INFORMANTS

The analysis in chapters 3 and 4 suggests that WPAs and writing instructors need to at least be cognizant of the ideologies associated with the frames currently shaping discussions about education (and writing), and perhaps work from different ideologies. Additionally, the Llewellyn quote invoked in chapter 1 attests to our need to learn how to change stories about writing and writers in systematic ways.

The very talented informants whose intelligence and ideas appear throughout this project, and from whose ideas I'll borrow to propose some possible strategies for story-changing work, include:

Joan Blades, a cofounder of MoveOn and of Moms Rising. With 3.3 million members (as of this writing),

MoveOn is an Internet-based organizing effort bringing together Americans who are interested in working for progressive social change. Hundreds of thousands of MoveOn members have mobilized to affect debate and action on issues from health care to voting. MoveOn was also the first organization to use the Internet as a mobilizing tool, creating online and offline forums for members to shape the direction of the organization. Moms Rising (www.momsrising.org), a new organization devoted to advocating for the rights of working mothers, was founded in May 2006.

Bruce Budner, executive director of the Rockridge Institute. Founded by linguist George Lakoff, Rockridge is a progressive policy institute that partners with allies to reshape the frames through which individuals and groups communicate their messages. In the last year, Rockridge has also become active in advocating for left-leaning frames, writing and distributing articles on important issues to blogs like the Huffington Post and Truthout. Rockridge's research demonstrates that their work on framing has affected the ways that targeted issues are discussed in mainstream media and online (Rockridge 2007).

Michel Gelobter, director of Redefining Progress, "the country's leading policy institute for smart economics, policies that help protect the environment and grow the economy, also known . . . as sustainability policy" (Gelobter 2006). Redefining Progress was founded in the mid-1990s as a "direction-setting institution" whose mission is to change the ways that Americans think about and work toward the future of the nation, using sustainability as a centerpiece for that thinking (and related action).

Eleanor Milroy, senior organizer for the Bay Area Organizing Committee, a project of the Chicago-based

Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). Founded in 1940 by Saul Alinsky, the IAF is the nation's oldest established community organizing agency. IAF organizers work with local networks and individuals around the United States to identify issues for action. Among their successes are living wage ordinances (in New York, Texas, and Arizona); the development of affordable housing (in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington D.C.); and job creation programs (in Texas).

Erik Peterson, director of Labor Education Programs for Wellstone Action, an organization devoted to training grassroots leaders and activists. Founded in 2003 after the deaths of Paul and Sheila Wellstone, Wellstone Action's mission is to train and mobilize individuals and organizations. Wellstone Action sponsors over 70 "Camp Wellstones" each year, including special camps for college students where individuals can learn strategies for political campaigning and grassroots organizing. They also offer a number of specialized trainings to specific groups (e.g., labor unions, political candidates). Camp Wellstone graduates have been elected to school boards, state legislatures, and mayors' offices, and are involved in a number of grassroots organizing efforts. Peterson is also director of Northern Minnesota Programs for the Labor Education Service at the University of Minnesota.

Anat Shenker-Osorio, cofounder of Real Reason, an organization that "conducts long-term, cognitive research" to help organizations discover the values that underlie their existing or potential messages, develop strategies to implement messages that are in accordance with that message, and develop educational curricula on developing and aligning organizations around core

principles. Before cofounding Real Reason, Shenker-Osorio was affiliated with the Rockridge Institute, where she and colleagues worked to develop and articulate the linguistic strategies that underscore that institute's work.

Laura Sapanora, communications strategist at the Strategic Press Information Network (SPIN) Project. SPIN helps other nonprofits develop communication strategies—developing communications plans, framing messages, developing skills to communicate with media organizations, and putting together a public profile.

IDENTIFYING STORIES/SETTING GOALS

What stories do we want to change? And how do we do it? Justine, for example, could talk to people already working in her writing program and listen, through their conversations, for issues that they felt were important, then try to work on those issues. Those issues might or might not include the issues that she raised in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter. Alternatively, Justine could try to rally people around values that she considers central to her own work and the work of her program, articulated in statements about "what students deserve" or "the foundational core of a good education." She also might try to organize people in her program and across campus around issues that she, as the WPA, has identified as important, like the qualifications of instructors teaching writing courses.

These three hypothetical approaches represent different approaches that stretch along a spectrum of organizing approaches. They also lead to different (but related) processes for organizing, processes that are also in some senses rooted in progressive pragmatism as it has evolved through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This chapter will describe each of the three approaches—interest-based organizing, values-based organizing, and issue-based organizing—and explore how they might be useful in our own context of writing instruction and administration.

For the sake of clarity I will separate them into three models; however, it is important to stress that they share points of intersection. In fact, organizers employ elements of all of these strategies at different times. In her book about applying organizing practices to K-12 teaching and advocacy, *Teachers Organizing for Change*, Cathy Fleischer introduced the term in organizing literature used for this blending: "mix[ing] and phas[ing]" (Fleischer 83).

Each of the approaches to story-changing work described here begins from common assumptions. First, they assume that story-changing work incorporates and proceeds from principles—ones held by those participating in the organizing, ones held by the organizer, or both. Identifying and articulating principles, in fact, are essential for this work and serve as its very core. Second, they assume that changing stories, even stories like the ones in policy documents like *A Test of Leadership* or news stories, must begin at the local level and is best done proactively. Acting locally and ahead of "crisis," WPAs and writing instructors can work in our own milieus, with our own people, and work to steer the discussion. These three approaches also share common goals: affecting change; developing a broad, self-sustaining base of supporters; and using change to expand that base. The tactics used in each approach vary slightly, however, and also affect the ways that the first of those common goals—affecting change—is defined. In interest-based organizing, change is defined by and stems from the specific, short-term interests of individuals who have come together to work for that change. In values-based organizing, change is framed in the long-term, strategic values held in common by a group. Issue-based organizing, especially as it is discussed here, blends interest- and values-approaches, working to achieve identified interests that reflect individuals' short-term goals in the context of long-term, strategic values.

TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

Conceptualizing these terms and understanding the choices associated with *tactical* and *strategic* decisions are important for writing instructors and WPAs who want to change stories, as they are for more experienced organizers.

Most discussions of tactics and strategies in academic literature draw on Michel deCerteau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*. There, deCerteau defines "tactic" as a flexible, nimble action taken by the weak within a space defined and controlled by the strong:

> The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base. . . . Because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing." Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events to turn them into "opportunities." (deCerteau 1984, xix)

Interest-based organizers (like Saul Alinksy and the IAF) argue that tactical actions should be the primary focus of organizing work because they provide the most immediate benefit for the greatest number of people, regardless of the motivations or motives of those involved. Paula Mathieu, in her book *Tactics of Hope*, argues that it is important that educators draw on tactical, rather than strategic, work when engaging in partnerships with communities because only in this way can they ensure that the university's strategic position will not subsume the organization's goals and desires.

In deCerteau's schema, strategy is the opposite of tactics. It is

> the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment." A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper . . . and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, "clienteles," "targets," or "objects" of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. (1984, xix)

But community organizers see tactics and strategies as more closely aligned than deCerteau's definitions suggest. Erik Peterson, an organizer and trainer for Wellstone Action, says that strategies and tactics are

> cojoined—or at least they should be. A strategy is a road map to build the power necessary to accomplish a purpose . . . and tactics are the tools/actions taken as part of a strategy. Without strategy—without answering the question, "How does this move us toward our goal?", tactics are simply random and unconnected acts. They may disrupt, get attention—but they do not "win." (Peterson 2007)

In other words, for Peterson, strategy is the long-term plan while tactics are the ways that strategy is achieved.

Others, though, draw a sharper distinction between tactics and strategy. NCTE Director Kent Williamson, for example, notes that sometimes educators have made tactical choices that aren't necessarily strategic. As an example, Williamson describes the strategic trade-offs that he believes educators have made in the context of NCLB and the Bush administration's education policies:

> To employ a too-simple dichotomy, I think that our challenges are more strategic than tactical. The orthodoxy among policy-makers . . . is that literacy education and teacher education is badly broken—regardless of what data is presented to them. Unfortunately, many education groups are the culprits in spreading this perception, because the standard approach to "winning" more federal/state resources seems to follow a familiar recipe: 1) there is an urgent problem of unprecedented magnitude; 2) fortunately, with a fresh infusion of federal funds, we can fix it; 3) we can accept limits on how the funds will be spent, even if they eliminate or curtail teaching/curricular/assessment approaches that we know to be effective. The consolidation of message about "the problem" is what led to a skewed interpretation of the National Reading Panel report (that in turn brought us Reading First and No Child Left Behind) and is now being re-enacted with an adolescent literacy focus (Striving Readers) and, possibly, higher education (Spellings Commission report). (Williamson 2006)

Williamson's point here is important, and one that WPAs and writing instructors need to consider in story-changing work. Framing our goals within existing strategies, as Williamson suggests, can result in tactical gains—more money for existing programs, new programs themselves. But the strategic costs of tactical gains can be extraordinarily high—high enough, in fact, that they (and we, because we participate in them) undermine the very strategic goals for which we are working in the first place.

Interest-based organizing is the most tactical model here; values-based is the most strategic. Issue-based organizing lies at the midpoint between tactical and strategic work. What is important for WPAs and writing instructors who want to create change is to think about what they gain and lose, tactically and strategically, in making particular choices, and to keep that analysis in mind as they work to change stories.

CHANGING STORIES AND BACKWARD PLANNING

At first glance, it seems like identifying a story *to* change should be the first step that a WPA or writing instructor takes to change stories about writers and writing. Justine, for example, might say she wants to change the perception of writing instruction in her university. But if we stop for a minute and think about the teaching practices of thoughtful instructors whom we know and thoughtful research we have read, we'll probably recognize that there's considerable groundwork to be laid before we address what we want to affect. We don't start planning a class by creating a laundry list of what we want students to do, after all: "I want students to read a source from Sociology Abstracts, and do some ethnographic research, and create a multigenre piece, and summarize and work with surface conventions."

Instead, we plan backward, working from what really are the *strategic*, or long-term, goals of our courses and programs, to short-term ones that could be seen (through the Peterson definition above) as *tactical*. We might say, "I want students to

develop their acumen with rhetorical analysis; sharpen their critical thinking, reading, and writing strategies; and enhance their abilities to work with surface conventions. To accomplish this, I'll design assignments that ask them to do X, Y, and Z." Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, authors of *Learning by Design*, have described this as "backward design." They propose that teachers identify the desired results, then determine "acceptable evidence" of achievement or learning, and *then* plan learning that will help students achieve those goals (Wiggins and McTighe 1998, 9). In organizing terms, this is strategic thinking and planning—considering the end or the goal, then designing tactics that keep that goal in mind.

Interest-, value-, and issue-based approaches to organizing also contain strategies to take the all-important valuable first step in the story-changing process, and then to move beyond that first step. Each starts from principles held by the WPA and the institution, principles that reflect the passions and interests of those individuals and entities embracing and espousing them. Interest- and issue-based approaches also offer strategies for accessing these interests; a values-based approach offers strategies for working with them. The difference between these approaches is that they outline different endpoints for organizing/story-changing work, and thus reflect approaches to engaging tactics (and, in some cases, strategies).

Interest-Based Organizing

Interest-based organizing is commonly associated with grassroots work. In organizing circles, it is considered the oldest and best-known model of community organizing. Because values- and issue-based approaches extend from and draw on this element of interest-based work, it's important to discuss a bit of its origins, which are firmly rooted in the progressive pragmatism outlined in chapter 2.

Interest-based organizing proceeds from the work of Saul Alinsky, perhaps America's foremost community organizer (Sen 2003). Although others engaged in organizing work before,

Alinsky was the first organizer to codify a "method" for interest-based organizing. Philosopher Lawrence Engel suggests that Alinsky came to this method through his undergraduate and graduate work at the University of Chicago. There he worked with Robert Park and Ernest W. Burgess, both of whom were aligned with the Chicago school of pragmatic sociology. This "school" emanated from and embraced the values and ideals of the progressive pragmatic jeremiad discussed in chapter 2, a jeremiad that was itself rooted in the Chicago-based work of Dewey, Jane Addams, and other Chicago-based progressive reformers. Among the principles that Alinsky took from this work was that sociologists were not to determine action or engage in research per se, but should instead "organize the community for self-investigation" (quoted in Engel 2002, 54).

Alinsky came to prominence as an organizer working in the neighborhood known as Back of the Yards on Chicago's south side, where he eventually founded the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The approach guiding his work and the organizations is encompassed in Alinksy's "Golden Rule": Never do for others what they can do for themselves (Alinsky 1947 passim 190–204). The principles guiding Alinsky's application of this rule reflect the progressive pragmatic jeremiad's fundamental tenets: optimistic faith in the power of individuals' creative intelligence, collectively applied, to obstacles that interfere with the nation's progress toward a virtuous democracy. "Only through organization," Alinsky insisted, "can a people's program be developed," but it must be developed *by the people affected or desiring change*, not by an organizer (Alinsky 1946, 54). The organizer, instead, serves as a conduit to facilitate the development of individuals' creative intelligences individually and in contact with one another, and then to help those individuals articulate a process for change-making that makes sense to them. While affecting change was a primary goal, cultivating individuals' senses of themselves as intelligent actors in a democracy was the goal behind the goal. As Alinsky explained,

the real democratic program is a democratically minded people—a healthy, active, participating, interested, self-confident people who, through their participation and interest, become informed, educated, and above all develop faith in themselves, their fellow men, and the future. The people themselves are the future. The people themselves will solve each problem that will arise out of a changing world. They will if they, the people, have the opportunity and power to make and enforce the decision instead of seeing that power vested in just a few. No clique, or caste, power group or benevolent administration can have the people's interest at heart as much as the people themselves. (Alinsky 1946, 55, emphasis in original)

Every page in Alinsky's two most influential books, *Reveille for Radicals* and *Rules for Radicals*, attest to his faith in the principles of progressive pragmatism: a powerful belief in the potential of humankind; an unwavering commitment to the potential for organizers ("radicals") to cultivate individuals' creative intelligence so that they would work together to achieve creative democracy; and profound belief that the democracy could and would support the interests of those individuals. In the preface to a reissued edition of *Reveille for Radicals*, for example, he explained that:

In the end [the free-society organizer] has one all-consuming conviction, one belief, one article of faith—a belief in people, a complete commitment to the belief that if people have the power, the opportunity to act, in the long run they will, most of the time, reach the right decision. . . . Believing in people, the radical has the job of organizing people so that they will have the power and opportunity to best meet each unforeseeable future crisis as they move ahead to realize those values of equality, justice, freedom, the preciousness of human life, and all those rights and values propounded by Judeo-Christianity and democratic tradition. Democracy is not an end but the best means toward achieving these values. (Alinsky 1946, xiv–xvi)

"The democratic way of life," Alinsky insisted, "is the most efficient instrument that man can use to cut through the barriers between him and his hopes for the future" (Alinsky 1946, 39).

Today, Alinsky's approach forms the foundation for the work

of the IAF, which is still based in Chicago. IAF organizers work across the country through locally based community organizations, such as the Bay Area Organizing Coalition (BAOC), which serves as IAF organizer Eleanor Milroy's home base. The IAF's interest-based approach to organizing begins with conversation, which allows the organizer to learn about what motivates people and fuels their actions. What makes people angry? Inspires them? Fuels their passions? The interest-based organizer's first goal is to learn, person-by-person, what makes people tick. Then the interest-based organizer begins connecting people to one another through and around their shared mutual interests. The short-term goal of interest-based organizing is action, because action both addresses issues and helps people understand that they have the power to make change (which, in turn, attracts others with the same goals). The long-term goal is to cultivate individuals' senses of power and authority to make change within the culture. As IAF/BAOC organizer Milroy explains,

The absolute foundation of [the individual and small group meeting] is to get at people's stories, to get at their anger, to get at their self-interest. If we don't do that, then we're just trying to sell the IAF or our organization or sell an issue, or whatever. And that happens sometimes, and we have to catch ourselves all the time. So our work is to really work hard at getting people to share their story. And obviously we have a million aspects to our stories. So that can go from spiritual journey to educational story to economic story, to cultural stories, whatever. (Milroy 2006)

From these stories, as above, interest-based organizers like Milroy learn about individuals' passions, their anger, the things that motivate them through their daily lives.

The goal of hearing stories for organizers like Milroy is to get to peoples' self interest and use this as the basis for forming relationships. IAF Executive Director Edward Chambers explains: "Power takes place in relationships. . . . Seeing clearly that every act of power requires a relationship is the first step toward realizing that the capacity to be affected by another is

the other side of the coin named power" (Chambers and Cowan 28). Describing her job as an organizer, Milroy also emphasizes the importance of relationships:

My job is to take that collective self-interest and be smart enough to figure out how her self-interest connects to his self-interest connects to her self-interest until you have a broader circle that can give you some measure of power, whether it's something very local and very small, to something like changing health care policy in San Francisco. (Milroy 2006)

Through the process of one-on-one or small group discussions called relational meetings, IAF organizers keep their ears and eyes open for two things: *issues*, which lead to definable, winnable fights; and *leaders*, community members who can rally a group to act on the issues. A base for action is formed when individuals form groups around their shared self interests about a specific issue, and leaders help shape the direction that action takes.

The distinction between *issues* and *problems* is crucial for the IAF's work and for WPAs and writing instructors as well. IAF's Chambers describes the difference between issues and problems in his definition of "actions":

Actions are aimed toward something you can do something about. It's called an issue. Some things are so large as to overwhelm action efforts. These we term "problems," something you can do nothing about. The number of children living in poverty in America is a problem; training for single mothers with children is a possible issue for an organization with some power. The sale and consumption of illegal drugs is a problem; tearing down six specifically identified crack houses in a neighborhood is an issue. The dysfunction of urban public schools is a problem; getting rid of an abusive sixth grade teacher is an issue. Effective actions target issues, not problems. (Chambers and Cowan 84, emphasis added)

Issues, in this conception, emerge from relationships. The organizer doesn't bring them, but hears them. Equally important, issues are definable, specific things that can be changed. This is distinct from problems, the kinds of big picture issues—"perception of writers and writing"; "discussions of plagiarism in the broader culture"; "relationships between written work and dominant cultural values"—that are certainly there, but are headbangingly frustrating. Identifying issues (not problems) for story-changing work is crucial. With an issue, it's possible to identify a goal, a definition of what success will look like. Success—accomplishing what it is we wanted to do—is crucial for encouraging participation. And while our professional ethos may to some extent value Sisyphus-like efforts to fight the good fight, efforts that seem never to achieve what they've set out to do can sap the energies of even the most enthusiastic person.

With issues, a goal is clear. Issues also lend themselves to specific, focused strategies, which in turn can lead to the sharing of responsibilities for implementation among a variety of people. This again helps to increase participation and buy-in, and distribute the workload of the change-making effort among a broader group. And issues extend from conversations and relationships, *not* from the interests of the organizer (in our case, the WPA or writing instructor). Chambers explains, "issues follow relationships. You don't pick targets and mobilize first; you connect people in and around their interests" (46).

Once issues have emerged from relationships and conversation, the interest-based organizer next identifies leaders who can shape approaches to and action on the issue. Leaders aren't necessarily "names" in the community. Instead, as Milroy explains, a "good leader is . . . someone who has a lot of relationships that people respect and listen to, not necessarily who is the best educated [or] most articulate—they're the people who seem to know a lot of other people and understand their motivations." Identifying leaders is another of the IAF's primary goals. As Eleanor Milroy explains, one measure of success comes

when this work truly becomes transformative—people who don't see themselves as public people, who haven't been invested in,

people who . . . people say, "Why do you want to talk to me? I'm just a mom." I hear that all the time. All the time. "I'm just a mom." Well, what have we done, for crying out loud, to support that kind of thinking that they're "just a mom?" (Milroy 2006)

"Just moms," "just" people in the community . . . these are the leaders that the IAF seeks to develop.

But IAF organizers aren't as concerned about *why* people are interested in making change—what's important for them is the short-term, tactical actions rather than the long-term, strategic goals. As a result, their focus on *issues* and *relationships* some-times produces surprising foci and alliances. Milroy says that she initially wrestled with the idea, but has come to recognize the value of this approach through her experience with the IAF.

There's an article that we use called "The Importance of Being Unprincipled." And when I first saw the title I said, "What do you mean? Of course I'm principled." But . . . we want people to do the right thing, even if it's for the wrong reasons. And so we aren't going to get into motive, as long as the end result is what leaders are fighting for. So for example, we've had some key business people who we have fought against like sons-of-guns. But in one case, [one of these people] was getting toward the end of his career, and it was legacy time. How did he want to be remembered? And he was a major banker—major. Well, it turned out that he became our major champion of this job training initiative we were doing [in El Paso]—and I think it was because of his legacy. And I think . . . so people, we're at different points in our lives and we get impacted by different things. In some ways, that's the hardest part of this work is to not stereotype and not make assumptions and to with-hold judgment, even though we may have a history with someone that we know is not so good. But we've got to give people room for change, we've got to give ourselves room for change, or we get into this narrow, rigid, . . . we just keep on going the way we were going. (Milroy 2006)

In this story Milroy brings to life Alinsky's commitment to nimbleness of the organizer, whom Alinsky stressed must be

"loose, resilient, fluid, and on the move in a society which is itself in a state of constant change. To the extent that he is free from the shackles of dogma, he can respond to the realities of the widely different situations our society presents" (Alinsky 1946, 11).

Engaging in relational conversations, identifying issues through those conversations, and identifying leaders (who can then bring others into action on the issue) are the three funda-mental steps of the base- and relationship-building process used by interest-based organizers like those in the IAF. The next steps are to develop a message about the issue to take action on it and to assess the result, processes that are discussed in the next chapter. Ultimately, though, *all* interest-based organizing activi-ties must lead to action, because action both leads to change and draws attention to the organizing effort.

Summary: Interest-Based Organizing

Key elements involved with an interest-based approach to organizing are:

Holding relational meetings to identify interests and form relation-ships. One-on-one and in small groups, holding conversa-tions to learn about what inspires, motivates, and angers people is crucial for learning about what inspires them, motivates them, and where their passions lie. Edward Chambers lists some simple questions for these kinds of meetings: What do you do? Why do you do what you do? What inspires you? What makes you angry? Why? How?

Identifying issues, not problems, to connect people to and through their interests. In interest-based organizing, the role of the organizer is to listen carefully to hear the issues that emerge from conversations with community mem-bers and leaders. What is important to them, and why? What are some *specific* issues that might emerge from concerns? One of the central principles of interest-based (and other) organizing is that *action* attracts support;

identifying issues that can lead to action (and, ideally, victory) is important for building and sustaining a movement.

Identifying and developing leaders. Who in the community might take leadership on these issues? What kinds of research, mobilizing, or involvement actions might be developed based on these issues? How can these actions cultivate leaders and lead to greater involvement among the community? As with identifying issues and taking action, both short-term and long-term goals are embedded in the idea of cultivating leadership.

Building alliances. As Alinsky, Chambers, and Milroy all point out, power comes in relationships, in alliance. The more that are involved in addressing an issue—regardless of their motivations *for* that work—the better.

Mobilizing leaders and community members to take action. As Alinsky said, "change means movement. Movement means friction" (Alinsky 1971, 21). Movement and change are necessary to attract attention—and attract supporters. At the same time, IAF regional director Ernesto Cortes cautions against an overemphasis on mobilization because it might imply that the bulk of the responsibility for action rests on individuals, rather than on a shared commitment by individuals and institutions. "An overemphasis on mobilization," he warns, "can increase the pressures" on the institutions that *do* remain to facilitate social action, "rather than counteract them" (Cortes 2006, 51).

Assessing action and identifying next steps. "What worked? What didn't? What needs to be repeated? What should happen differently next time?" These are key questions for the organizer, who is what we might call, drawing on Donald Schon, a "reflective practitioner." It's important to reiterate that interest-based organizing extends from conversations facilitated *by* the organizer, not *from* the

organizer's own agenda (beyond a desire to facilitate good work). So while I make the case that it is important to identify principles, we might not draw from or refer explicitly to these principles save for general guideline for ourselves.

Returning to Justine's situation, it's useful to think about how interest-based strategies might be useful for addressing her dilemmas. Perhaps the first thing that the savvy reader might note is that interest-based organizing doesn't offer particularly handy quick-fix strategies for situations like hers. It relies on alliance building, and that takes time. But her situation does present occasions for that building. Justine might talk with the chair and the dean, but in an interest-based conversation she would be not pushing her own agenda. Instead she would learn about their passions and interests—given the context, perhaps about *academic* passions and interests—like writing. The purpose of the conversation would not be to promote a perspective or view, but to listen for moments of anger, intensity, commitment (maybe about writing-related issues, or maybe about something else entirely). Then Justine might engage in similar conversations with other stakeholders and interested parties—other faculty, students, administrators, writing instructors—and listen for similar passions and issues. Her goal would be to connect these individuals around these issues, rather than advancing any perspective of their own. The interest-based organizer always seeks to cultivate individuals' interests and passions and use them as the basis for accessing and cultivating creative intelligence, then to help individuals put that creative intelligence to work by identifying and creating solutions for overcoming obstacles interfering with their own happiness and, by extension, their ability to contribute to the health of the democracy.

As this example makes clear, putting elements of an interest-based approach to organizing into WPA practice might lead us to shift the focus of our work somewhat. It might, for instance, involve talking to a group of people—people inside of the

writing program, those outside of it—about their passions, their concerns, and their interests. These *might* be related to writing; they also might be related to a host of issues or concerns that are seemingly unrelated to writing. The WPA, acting as an organizer, might then bring people together around these issues and identify actions that could be taken to address them, then engage in the mobilizing and assessment activities implicit in interest-based organizing work. The advantages of interest-based organizing, then, are that it facilitates the development of communities aligned around individual and collective interests; the identification and development of leaders within the community; the decentralization of power and mobilization, spreading it throughout the community; and increased investment by community members in the long-term development of the community.

As with all of these approaches, an interest-based approach also presents some potential challenges that WPAs and writing instructors should also consider. Many stem from the fact that interest-based organizing models were not intended for systems as explicitly hierarchical and interest-focused as academe. For instance, interest-based organizers mobilize communities and leaders around issues that emerge *from relational meetings*, not from their own agendas. The WPA's agenda, in other words, becomes *mobilizing others around their interests*, not mobilizing others around *her* interests. Additionally, interest-based organizing focuses on tactical action, taking a very long view of the notion of strategy. Interest-based organizing, as Eleanor Milroy says, is about "doing the right thing, even if it's for the wrong reasons." The presumption in this organizing model is that those "right things" will eventually, over a period of time, lead to strategic change—but this is a long, slow process. As we'll see below, other organizing models and activists believe that engaging in this kind of tactics-focused work has resulted in progressives putting themselves in a corner that it's hard to emerge from, so that achieving those long-term goals is especially difficult.

QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE AN INTEREST-BASED APPROACH TO ORGANIZING

Since interest-based work proceeds from conversation, questions to facilitate this approach focus on before- and after-conversation.

Before Conversation

Who are potential allies for your writing program? With whom might you be interested in forming relationships? For each person/entity (e.g., department) that you list, be sure to note why they are of interest to you.

What might be useful questions to learn about these people/entities? What might you ask to learn about what motivates them, what inspires them, what makes them angry?

After Conversation

What did you learn? What inspires/angers/motivates this person or entity?

What issues/problems seem especially important to this person/entity?

Who are others who might share this interest?

How might you put these people into communication with one another around their common interests?

What resources exist (on your campus, in the community, etc.) to facilitate action around this interest?

VALUES-BASED ORGANIZING

Values-based organizing stems from the recent extension of linguistic theory, especially the concept of framing, into organizing work. George Lakoff and the Rockridge Institute have been at the forefront of this approach. Shaping the message,

setting out terms for discussion, determining the direction—these are all central to values-based organizing. In this sense, a values-based approach is focused on long-term strategy (as opposed to the focus on short-term tactics in interest-based models). A base for action is developed when people come together in and through their values, their principles, and use those values as a basis for shifting frames around issues important to them. Lakoff and Rockridge colleagues explain that in this values-based model "issues are secondary—not irrelevant or unimportant, but secondary. A position on issues should follow from one's values, and the choice of issues and policies should symbolize those values" (Lakoff 2006, 8). The idea here is that people come together in and around their values, not issues, but that through these values-based coalitions issues emerge.

George Lakoff, whose work is prominently featured in this approach, has long been interested in the ways that human beings use metaphors to shape their approaches to the world.[2] In *Metaphors We Live By,* Lakoff laid out an analysis of cognitive processes, arguing that human beings are hardwired with some fundamental value systems. These systems lead to metaphors through which we experience the world, such as the nurturing parent and the strict father metaphors. A later book, *Moral Politics,* analyzed the ways in which these two metaphors led humans to interact in political arenas. In what Lakoff has since identified as the *Moral Politics* model, he explained that the strict father and the nurturant parent "produce two fundamentally opposed moral systems for running a nation—two ideologies that specify not only how the nation should be governed by also, in many respects, how we should live our lives" (Lakoff 2006, 50). Growing from this work, in 2004 Lakoff became frustrated with the Democrats' seeming inability to take smart and strategic action (especially during the election cycle). He authored a short, accessible book called *Don't Think of an Elephant!: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* that distilled analysis and ideas from the two previous books. The book became wildly popular

and has been used by many candidates, especially on the left, as a framework for action.

Of the three models discussed here, values-based organizing is the newest; as such, there are fewer examples of this model in action from which to draw. However, a number of organizations are incorporating values-based ideas in their work, such as MoveOn.org. As MoveOn founder Joan Blades explains,

> [MoveOn] started with a petition [for Congress to move on after the Clinton impeachment hearings] that went viral. We sent it out to 100 of our friends and families and it grew to a half million people. . . . And the process was very much a dialogue with the MoveOn members. [Members] are letting us know what they care about in all sorts of ways all the time, and our job at MoveOn is to listen—really well—and combine that with what opportunities there are to act on . . . issues. So it's not us telling them what to do, so much as them telling us what they're interested in and then [engaging that interest] in meaningful ways. . . . It is about giving up yourself for your ideals, and that's what MoveOn members are doing. (Blades 2005, emphasis added)

In other words, according to Blades, MoveOn members come for the values and define issues from there. Michel Gelobter, executive director of Redefining Progress, also describes the importance of focusing on values:

> If we win, as we just did, a huge victory on climate in California and in that victory is embedded the potential of a charge—a polluter pay system for California where the polluter would have to pay for their emissions—that is a big piece of what we worked on in that legislation, and that's great. But if five years from now, if we have to implement it and we still can't say "gas tax" without being laughed out of the room, we're not winning the values battle. (Gelobter 2006)

Blades's and Gelobter's statements illustrate a premise embedded in the values-based approach to organizing: unless action proceeds from values, the long-term strategic objectives won't

be met. Anat Shenker-Osorio, a former Rockridge researcher and a cofounder of Real Reason (a language policy institute in San Francisco), explains that these ideas are activated through language, and that's why working in language is especially important. Shenker-Osorio describes how language establishes the terms of a frame:

> How you have a society in which there is opportunity for all, like how that works, at any level, how it makes sense that it's not a zero sum game, how what the nature of the reciprocal relationship is between government and citizens, what taxes are, what having your latte and still being environmentally friendly—what that even means or looks like, how that works in society, is not even worked out. It's not worked out at the level of "How does that even work?"
>
> On the right . . . there's a model . . . that makes sense, and it goes straight back to . . . a [cognitive] predisposition toward individualism. . . . We really feel like the basic thought structures of how the world is supposed to work, when you are working from a set of predispositions on the left, is not very clear. . . . I want to live in a society with opportunity for all. But I can't even describe to you . . . at a mathematical model level, even—and I'm not even talking policy—how that would work. . . .
>
> The competitive model is so well understood and so well activated. We can say words like "cooperation" or "inclusion," but I don't think people understand—and I include myself—what that actually means. How would that work? Would the stores have less things? Are prices cheaper? What happens? (Shenker-Osorio 2006)

Through language, values-based organizers believe, people can discover and articulate the values at the core of their central beliefs. This approach lies behind commonly used communication strategies, for instance when groups are asked to "imagine the headline at the end of your campaign" (see chapter 5 for more on this and other activities). The assumption is that, by playing with potential language, groups can explore their beliefs. At the same time, also embedded in this model is the premise that the wrong word or choice of words can activate

the wrong frame. This is the theory behind Lakoff's reminder that "a word is defined relatively to [a] frame. When we negate a frame, we evoke a frame" (Lakoff 2004, 3). In other words, say what you want, not what you don't want. What the left has failed to do, these analysts argue, is address the values at the core of people's beliefs.

Once individuals and organizations have come together around language that activates and reflects their values, the next step in values-based organizing is to present those values in public settings. Lakoff argues that a number of frames must be used in combination for the purpose. First are deep frames, "moral values and principles that cut across issues and that are required before any slogans or clever phrases can resonate with the public," such as the idea that all citizens should have the opportunity to participate in democracy on their own terms (Lakoff 2006, xii). Next are argument frames, frames that reflect the values of deep frames and can be used to frame discussions of multiple issues, like the case that all students should have equal access to higher education (Lakoff 2006, 124–25). Then come surface frames, also referred to in a derogatory way as "spin," the surface frame that is put on top of issues (Lakoff 2006, 124–25). Last are messaging frames, the semantic frames established within genres that outline roles (such as "messengers, audience, issue, message, medium, and images") (Lakoff 2006, 36).

The Opportunity Agenda (OA), a public policy advocacy institute, provides numerous publications and announcements (through its listserv and Web site) that illustrate values-based frames in action. For example, in a "communications toolkit" collaboratively developed with the Strategic Press Information Network (SPIN) Project, OA lays out the "dimensions of opportunity" that they propose serve as the deep frames of the progressive position, and then show how those frames can be extended to argument, surface, and messaging frames. For instance, one element of their deep frame is "mobility," the ability to advance beyond one's current station and participate

in economic and civic life (2006, 6). The deep frame of "mobility" can be translated into argument frames in multiple discussions—higher education, economic access, wages, housing, and so on. Surface frames can also invoke the concept of mobility, such as the statement, "Because the SAT writing exam is a high-stakes test privileging one genre, and that genre reflects particular values, it denies students the promise of mobility extended through higher education." Surface frames like this one also imply messaging frames—particular roles and players in the message.

Summary: Values-Based Organizing

Where an interest-based approach has organizers facilitating conversations to identify others' interests and passions, values-based approaches proceed from the assumption that individuals will unite around values that reflect their interests. The values of the organizer, as the convener of discussions, play a more prominent role here, since she must work from those values (which themselves reflect her principles). Further, a values-based approach proceeds from the idea that language—in the form of metaphors and frames—can be used to trigger particular conceptions of individuals' principles and values. Among the three models discussed here, values-based organizing is the most long-term and strategic of the models. Interest-based work begins with concrete issues that are immediate to peoples' experiences; values-based organizing starts with the conceptual notion of values, and then works backward to issues. Values are the core of the organizing effort, and tactics are always designed with the strategy in mind. In terms of the tactics-strategies trajectory, then, values-based organizing has the most immediate potential for affecting strategy and frame; however, the trade-off is that operating within this model may mean compromises with regard to tactics that could result in short-term loss (or loss of the tactical alliances that such actions can create).

A values-based approach to organizing involves:

Identifying values important for individuals and organizations (such as the WPA or writing program). Values are always central to the organizing effort, and issues extend from them.

Identifying others who share the same values. Values can serve as points where people come together as they discover common values, or individuals holding the values can extend those values to others and invite them to participate in them.

Developing frames that reflect values, and using those frames to shape issues. Framing is key here, and working through the values reflected in frames ensures that the values reflected in the frame remain prominent.

As with all of these models, values-based organizing holds advantages and disadvantages for WPAs. It is the most strategic, big picture, and long-term of the approaches described here. Its focus on articulating deeply held values and building alliances around those means that WPAs and writing instructors have the potential to articulate their visions and their values, ideally in concert with others who share those same values. Returning to the dilemmas posed in Justine's scenario, values-based organizing presents different strategies for change-making work. First, Justine would identify her own values and use these as a starting point. Then she would consider the frame surrounding writing instruction, perhaps by learning the viewpoints of individuals on her campus that she wanted to affect. Then she would consider the connections between frequently used terms (like "remediation" or "process") and the larger metaphors to which they are connected by examining other uses of these terms in education-related contexts, perhaps by invoking the conceptions of code words and excess meanings described in chapter 1. Justine could then use this analysis to propel her frame-changing actions. She might analyze alternative conceptions of writers and writing that they want to advance, and

consider terms (words, metaphors, frames) to advance these conceptions. Again, she could then turn to the research and the language corpora, examining the uses of these terms in other contexts. The goal of this work would be to consider what values might be triggered by these "deep frames" in order to consider their usefulness for her purposes, changing the conception of writers and writing held by those administrators. Once she developed a set of frames that they considered successful and useful, Justine could craft different kinds of messages (written, verbal, and otherwise) reflecting these frames to advance a consistent message that reflected their shared values. In the short term, these frames might or might not affect the immediate dilemmas they face; the presumption is that they would have considerable effect in the long term.

Perhaps because it grows out of academic work, values-based organizing is also the most conventionally academic of these models. It's possible to dig into and spend a lot of time thinking through the theoretical premises of the work (such as whether values are really hardwired—cognitive linguists like Lakoff say yes; more culturally oriented theorists, like Stuart Hall or Norman Fairclough, would say no), which some of us could spend years discussing. But this, of course, appeals and speaks primarily to academics. For this reason, it is a disadvantage of this approach (e.g., it might contribute to the narrative, discussed in chapters 1 and 3, that academics do not understand the nature of the virtuous democracy and, therefore, their actions have little relevance for preparing students to participate in it).

Values-based organizing also holds some other challenges. As the most strategic of the three models, a hard-line values-based approach might mean enormous tactical losses. Scholars of educational structures (e.g., Miller 1998 Palmer 1998; O'Reilley 2005a; Thompson 2005) have made compelling arguments about surviving the bureaucratic, hierarchical realities of the educational system (K-16). As Miller argues, success in this system is based on imperfect compromise, and to think otherwise

is to live in an unreal world (Miller 1998). As the newest of the three models discussed here, values-based organizing is also simultaneously the best and least well-conceptualized. The theoretical basis of the work is clearly well developed in the academic literature, but the extension of that work to action is less realized.

However, the potential weak points in this approach should not lead WPAs and writing instructors who want to change stories to cast aside this model entirely: there are important elements here to which we must attend. Chief among these is the need to develop, and work from, a vision of what we *want*, not what we *do not* want. As the OA's Executive Director Alan Jenkins said in a presentation I attended, "Martin Luther King never said, 'I have a critique'" (Jenkins 2006). As academics, we are well trained to argue *against*. We are far less expert at arguing *for*, at expressing a vision of what we *want* and why we think it is important. And Shenker-Osorio, Rockridge scholars, and linguists like Geoffrey Nunberg argue that a vision *of the possible* (not of the not-feasible, difficult, or unrealistic) must be developed in and through carefully chosen language—whether you buy the argument that this language activates either cognitive processes or cultural patterns. The key to change, argues Nunberg, is asserting *stories*—narratives—about the purpose of education and how our work is important in it. Strategically it also is wise to consider how these narratives are linked to others, like those stemming from the progressive pragmatic jeremiad. Values-based organizing provides strategies for asking questions about these concepts and their historical and ideological antecedents. If the words (narratives, stories, metaphors) that we use do tap into elements of that jeremiad, what are we invoking? Do the (deep, argument, surface, and other) frames in our language reflect the values that we want to advance? Developing stories and working from them also serves as a grounding point in values, in the kinds of principles that can underscore our work for change.

QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE VALUES-BASED ORGANIZING

Based on your own analysis, what are the principles or values that are central to your work as a writing instructor or WPA?

What issues do you see as central to your writing program (e.g., class size, instructor qualifications, instructor salaries, control over curriculum, etc.)? List the three most important ones.

    a.

    b.

    c.

To whom are these issues important (e.g., you, instructors in the program, administrators, etc.)?

What values do you see extending from the relevant issues that you have identified? For this, you might refer to the principles that underscore your approach to WPA and teaching work. For example, if one of the issues that you identified is "class size," you might extend that to a value of "individual opportunity." Remember that values need to cross *multiple* issues.

Who else might also participate in the *values* that you have identified as linked to your issues, and why might they participate in them (e.g., what is their motivation)?

What are the key words and phrases in those values? How else have they been used, by whom, and for what purposes? Might you need to restate/reframe your values based on this analysis?

What questions might you ask of potential allies, or what overtures might you make to them, to involve them in organizing efforts around one of the issues you (or they) have identified as extending from values?
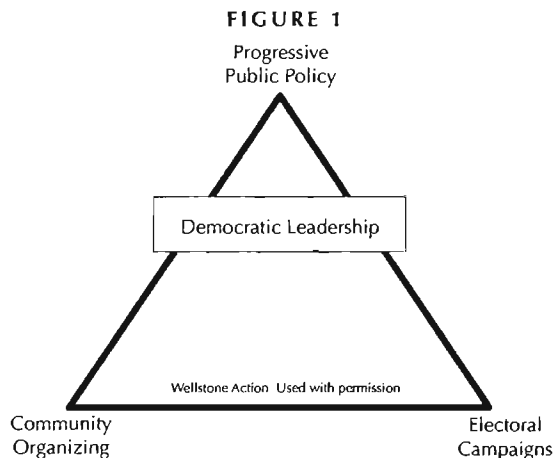
ISSUE-BASED ORGANIZING

Traditional issue-based organizing is likely familiar. Someone—a political candidate, the leader of a union or a political party—identifies and defines issues upon which to take action (with varying degrees of input) and forms an agenda or a platform based on those issues. Through existing (and sometimes hierarchical) structures, people under that leadership take action. However, they do not have a prominent voice in shaping those issues.

Wellstone Action (WA), a Minnesota-based organization formed after the death of Senator Paul Wellstone, both uses and continually develops a new version of issue-based organizing for its work training grassroots activists and political candidates. These trainings typically take place in a "Camp Wellstone," an intensive, three-day institute. Camp Wellstones are held around the country throughout the year. WA also offers advanced camps for those who have already been through the initial training, as well as "training the trainer" sessions for organizers. WA has a long list of "successes"—candidates who have participated in Camp Wellstone and been elected to political office, college students across the country who have participated in Campus Camp Wellstones, and grassroots activists who have attended the "organizing" strand of Camp Wellstone. (WA also offers Camp Sheila Wellstone sessions, which focus specifically on advocating for the rights of women and children.)

For WA, organizing work is a three-part activity that consists of developing a base in and through individuals' interests, considering the long-term policy consequences and implications of the base, and working on affecting the electoral system to accommodate and affect the short- and long-term goals extending from interests and long-term implications. In this sense, issue-based organizing blends elements of interest- and values-based approaches. There *are* issues here, as WA organizer Erik Peterson explains, "I always start with the question: what are we facing and where do we want to move? This is what we are focused on—we come out of an issue or an

agenda-based position. There is an agenda." So while "there is an agenda" in issue-based organizing, issue-based groups like WA seek to extend beyond that issue to values and interests (Peterson 2007).

To explain the relationship between issues, policy, and political work, WA uses a triangle where pieces are connected, and sometimes in tension with one another:

FIGURE 1

Progressive
Public Policy

Democratic Leadership

Wellstone Action Used with permission

Community
Organizing

Electoral
Campaigns

In an issue-based approach to organizing, issues serve as the magnet that attracts people to the cause, as is the case with interest-based work. But issue-based organizers like those associated with WA don't see making progress on or "solving" those issues as the *endpoint* of issue-based organizing, as interest-based approaches sometimes do. Instead these issues serve as the beginning point of a long-term process that involves extending from interests to values, as in a values-based approach. In this way, issue-based approaches also involve moving from short-term goals (tactics) within the context of longer-term ones (strategies). To that end, WA organizer Erik Peterson explains, issue agendas are starting points. From them, issue-based organizers seek to develop relationships, like interest-based organizers, but unlike interest-based work these relationships are designed to achieve short-term (tactical) success *and* targeted, long-term (strategic) change.

Relationship building is the long-term part of organizing which co-exists with and helps build for issue-organizing. This relationship building is at the heart of what we [WA] talk about when we talk about community organizing and base-building. . . . Too often [community organizing, base building, and electoral campaigns] are seen as oppositional or unconnected activities. (Peterson 2006)

As the WA organizing triangle implies, relationship building can begin at one of several points. As in an interest-based approach, it might start with an individual's (self-)interest, as Peterson suggests above, especially as that person's interest is represented through stories. In this sense, issue-based organizing draws on strategies used by interest-based organizers, like conducting meetings to hear about peoples' passions and interests. Alternatively it can also stem from values, and the organizer might listen for or identify values that seem central to the individual or organization. Wherever the starting point, base-building is also central for issue-based organizing. Here, though, the key is to balance short-term interests and long-term goals. As Peterson explains, action—"what are we facing and where do we want to move"—is a starting place.

Like interest-based organizers, WA also encourages groups or organizations to conduct a power analysis as they identify issues and mobilize for action. In a power analysis organizations analyze who the "core constituencies" are on whom they can count for support; who are likely allies they might target for mobilization; who are likely opponents of the group, organization, or action (and why); and who might be the primary and secondary targets—that is, the "individuals or groups that *actually* make a decision about your issue/program," and "the individuals or groups that influence the primary targets" (Peterson 2007).

The challenge comes if organizations try to mobilize people around issues *without* base-building. As Erik Peterson explains:

In the labor movement we often focus on mobilizing people: for example, we need 15 people for a picket line, we need 50 people for a rally; we need X people for this action or that one. We need

you to contribute X dollars to Y. And when they don't volunteer or don't contribute, we oftentimes blame members for not caring or being apathetic, or blame the staff for not working hard enough or for not caring or being on program. But it's really because the union hasn't done its work: we need to organize before we focus on how to mobilize. (Peterson 2007)

Analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the organization and situating these within an analysis of larger power structures is also an important part of issue-based organizing. The key difference between that strategy and issue-based work, especially as it is enacted by WA, is the extension from issues and (self-)interests to values. This difference emerges in the distinction that Peterson makes between *organizing conversations* (which are intended to build relationships, add to the base, and move people to and around long-term values that are important for them) and *mobilizing conversations* (which are intended to motivate members of the base to advocate for particular issues or causes that they have *already identified* as important to them).

FIGURE 2

Organizing Conversations	Mobilizing Conversations
Intentional conversations that go deeply into a person's: Issues—what we act on Values—principles, things we care deeply about Interests—things we have a stake in	Prompted conversations that aim to connect an issue with a person's interests, anger, and hope Find points of common concern; make a link between the person's problem and the solution (the campaign) that leads them to take some action (vote, volunteer, contribute, etc.)

Wellstone Action. Used by permission.

Again, there are connections between this portion of issue-based organizing and the interest-based strategies of groups like the IAF. It is predicated on the formation of relationships; like all of the models discussed here, it also puts self-interest at the center of mobilizing or base-building work. But it also quickly puts that self-interest to work in the service of a larger issue that represents and reflects a larger, strategic position identified by

a candidate, an organization, or a leadership, and that issue serves as the point for mobilization. In a follow-up interview after reading a draft of this chapter, Peterson reflected on the ways that WA blends existing strategies and pulls from interest- and values-based work:

There's an IAF [interest-based] component to our training, and we [also] talk about values and reframing the debate. Issues come and go—that's the transitory nature of [them]—and we talk about that. You can't build long-term progressive power around an issues-based agenda. It has to be connected to interests and communities, and grounded in a moral vision of the world. It has to be values-based. The power of the agenda comes from values and that connection. When we talk about messaging, we always talk about it as a conversation with folks that is grounded in values. You lead with those values, and that story, as opposed to leading with the issue. Why do people vote against their best interests? Who says they did? They voted against issues, perhaps, that went contrary to their material well-being—but who says that's the most important thing in their self-interest? . . . We locate ourselves . . . somewhere in this continuum—where we can freely grab. But ultimately, we go back to tactics and strategy. With tactics and strategy, we see strategy . . . really as longer term and in some ways it's the road map of how you achieve your goal. It's the broader plan, [and] the tactics are the tools that you use to get there. Strategy deals with much more the larger picture, and tactics are included within the strategy. The tactics feed into an overall strategy. A tactic might be that we're going to march on the boss—hold a rally. [But we ask the] strategic question: how does that move us to power, change the power and relationships, to achieve that end? [We] draw on the realm of tactics—mobilize, create energy. But the question is, [only employing tactics,] do you actually move or hold power that moves an agenda? (Peterson 2007)

Summary: Issue-Based Organizing

The approach to issue-based organizing reflected in WA's work blends elements of interest- and values-based approaches.

Issue-based organizing involves:

Working from an agenda that addresses issues of concern for the group. Issue-based work has an agenda; however, that agenda is flexible and accommodates (as much as possible) the interests of constituents and allies within long-term, strategic goals.

Listening to and working with the ideas and interests of a base of supporters. Who is among the core constituencies, and what are their interests? What about potential allies? What do they see as strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats? What are their interests in these issues?

Using short-term goals (tactics) to achieve long-term objectives (strategies), and situating these within values. Issue-based organizing asks how individuals can be brought into work for long-term, values-based change through short-term campaigns. How can a base sharing common values and interests be expanded and mobilized?

Working strategically, through a series of steps, to conduct analyses and plan action. Strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) and power analyses are important steps to action for the issue-based organizer, as is the process of shaping and communicating messages described in the next chapter.

Some elements of issue-based organizing probably also feel familiar to WPAs and writing instructors. Justine's dilemma illustrates that there are a lot of issues stemming from dilemmas WPAs and writing instructors typically face, and there are many issues underscoring those dilemmas that could be tackled by the activist WPA. Often we see our roles as defining and advancing positions *on* issues, as well. After all, as the discussion in chapter 1 about principles and actions illustrate, we're motivated by some pretty strong emotions and firm principles that lead us to want to take action. But the issue-based

approach described here also can provide a framework that we can use to temper our own commitment and think systematically about how to work *from* it, not necessarily *through* it, to connect with others. Again, that work starts with conversation, as in interest-based organizing; it also involves learning about and connecting to peoples' values, as in values-based work. Embedded in these conversations, of course, are our own principles, beliefs, and values—and hopefully we can connect to others around those.

QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE ISSUE-BASED ORGANIZING

What are the principles or values that are central to your writing program?

What issues (not problems!) do you see as central to your writing program? (e.g., class size, instructor qualifications, instructor salaries, control over curriculum, etc.) List the three most important ones.

    a.

    b.

    c.

What are the connections between these (short term) issues and the values that you have identified as important?

To whom are these issues important? (e.g., you, instructors in the program, administrators, etc.)

What individuals and groups do you see as important for supporting your writing program mission? What are their motivations and their interests in your issues?

What questions might you ask of individuals and groups to initiate a discussion around your common interests?

What short-term (tactical) actions might you take, ideally with allies identified above, and how will they be integrally connected to long-term (strategic) goals and values?

SUMMARY: ORGANIZING MODELS

While there are differences between interest-, values-, and issue-based approaches to organizing, they are all rooted in the progressive pragmatic jeremiad (and, in many ways, in the work of Saul Alinsky [e.g., Sen 2003, xliv]). All invest enormous faith in the power of individuals to cultivate creative intelligence; all try to facilitate dialogue and action with the intent of making change; all believe that these processes of dialogue-facilitating and change-making, and the changes that result from the processes, will ultimately move the nation closer to the achievement of a just democracy. All also (implicitly or explicitly) address some of the shortcomings of progressive pragmatism addressed by West and others, like the lack of immediate attention to material conditions such as class, race, and gender (Sen 2003, xlv–xlvii).

All of these approaches engage in this work through some common steps as well. The first step involves identifying the principles that we hold important. What are our values? What do we believe, and why do we believe what we do? A values-based model would have us work from these principles consistently and without compromise; an interest-based model would have us understand them and put them into dialogue with more pragmatic exigencies of "everyday life," and an issue-based approach would have us land somewhere in the middle between these two positions. Nevertheless, understanding principles (even if the principle is that short-term gain and tactical action is the most important goal) is the starting point for this work.

The next step is thinking about goals and allies. What do we want to do? Who are our allies? How can we reach out to them? Through an interest-based model we would engage in relational conversations to learn about others' interests and attempt to form coalitions among those interests (and, perhaps, our own); a values-based model would suggest that we should plan conversations and activities that might allow us to form coalitions around shared values; and an issue-based approach would suggest that we might investigate potential allies' passions and work from them to bring them on board with an agenda that both reflects and might be further shaped by our shared values.

A third consideration is how we want to approach the work *of* that change? How can elements of these three models (and additional ones) facilitate efforts to establish and further develop a base? While each of these models provides different motivations for and approaches to this development, all put a premium on dialogue, conversation, and listening. This is because each acknowledges that we can't go it alone—building alliances, whether with those who share our short-term interests or our long-term visions, is absolutely crucial to achieving change. Connecting people in and through self-interests is a crucial part of building a base, another feature common to all of these models. The base is a core, but it also must be constantly evolving and expanding to form the nexus of change-making efforts. Sociologist William Gamson points to key reasons why people join social movements, all of which speak to the notion of self-interest—they find places where their personal visions and skills are enhanced, but they also connect those visions and skills to larger visions and consciousnesses (Gamson 1991, 38–41). Each of these models recognizes the importance of developing leaders and expanding the base through these connections.

The questions that emerge, then, are about how to develop a vision: Collectively and organically from a group of stakeholders, as in interest-based organizing? Reflecting a set of shared values held by a group, as in values-based work? Or through an agenda that is open to amendment based on the input of others sharing the same vision, as in issue-based organizing? Each present different opportunities and different challenges. No one is better than any other; each is useful for different purposes and different goals.

If the actions and activities embedded in these models feel familiar, it's because so many of them are involved in the work we already do. As in so many cases, in fact, adapting these models for WPA work is less a matter of developing new skills

and more one of repurposing those we already have. As I suggested above, for instance, the kinds of questions that interest-based organizers ask in relational meetings are quite similar to those that we might ask on student papers: Could you tell me more? Could you help me understand? The literature on commenting (e.g., Sommers 1982; Straub and Lunsford 1995; Straub 1996; Smith 1997) provides numerous examples of effective (and ineffective) comments, and an examination of why particular questions are more (and less) useful for developing student work; the commenting approaches discussed there are reminiscent of the kinds of questions involved in relational meetings.

Another element of organizing involves listening—to what fires people up, what makes them mad, how they understand the world. This impulse, too, can be located in the scholarly literature. Peter Elbow has written extensively about listening with students as they write (see, for example, "High Stakes and Low Stakes" and "Getting Along"); Glynda Hull and Mike Rose's "This Wooden Shack Place" remains a touching and important testament to the importance of letting people define their own perspectives and ideas rather than imposing judgments on those ideas based on our own perceptions or perspectives. As discussed in chapter 1, pedagogies that build on the germinal work of scholars like Mary Rose O'Reilley, Parker Palmer, and Paolo Freire also expand on the idea of listening to and working with students' ideas as a central part of a dialogic educational process. "There is no knowing (that is, connecting one thing to another) something that is not at the same time a 'communication of the something known," Freire explained in his final book, *Pedagogy of Freedom.* "There is no intelligibility that is not at the same time communication and intercommunication, and that is not grounded in dialogue" (Freire 1998, 42). This dialogue emerges—"produced by learners, in common with the teacher responsible for their education"—and enables the development of meeting points where learners and teachers are transformed (Freire 1998, 46). This is the process of conscientization, an awareness of one's self and the unfinished nature of that self in relation to others and to the world (56).

Building alliances, too, is a practice familiar to many writing instructors. An illustration of this kind of work can be found, for instance, in the assessment-focused WPA work discussed in chapter 1. The reconceived notion of validity proposed by O'Neill and Huot, for example, requires assessments to identify and consider what assessments are being done, for what reasons, and with what effects. Huot also advocates bringing others—stakeholders in the program from a variety of constituencies—into the assessment process. By engaging in this kind of public discussion of writing and writing programs, it is possible to work from and with a variety of voices to address questions about important principles, and then to consider how to balance principles from inside and outside of the program. This kind of approach also stresses connections between conceptualization—identifying the goals of a project or activity and theorizing those goals—and assessment. This connection speaks to the issue of identifying *issues*—something concrete, something attainable and "measurable" (or, at least, assessable) rather than a problem so vast as to be unmanageable.

The smart organizer—the smart WPA or writing instructor who wants to change stories—will "mix and phase" elements of all three models, drawing on "strategies and techniques from [different] approaches as they go about their work, mixing the strategies and techniques from [different approaches], depending on the needs of the community and the demands of particular projects, and phasing in and out of a particular model depending on the part of the process they find themselves in on a given day" (Fleischer 2000, 83). The key, as Karl Llewellyn's quote implies, is balance. Techniques without ideals, tactics without strategies, actions without principles—a menace. But ideals without techniques, values without tactics, principles without compromise and reality-checking—a mess.