POLITICAL and CIVIC *Leadership*

A REFERENCE HANDBOOK

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POPULAR EDUCATION

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Thanks to the civil rights movement in the United States and various farm workers' movements in Latin America, the work of popular education is nowadays an important element within the toolkit of organizers in both contexts. Its adaptation in the United States has made it one of two important paradigms of organizing (Su, 2009)—one following Saul Alinsky, the American community organizer, the other following Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator. Both paradigms have leadership development at their core.

The Freirian approach to organizing is less well known and yet is gaining currency within the field of social change. In this chapter, the case of Latino immigrant social change organizing is used to examine and explore how popular education contributes to leadership development. More than just a tool for literacy, popular education has become for Latino social change organizations (SCOs) a way to nurture learning and leadership for action that incorporates the social and political characteristics of knowledge. Through processes of collective learning, popular education enables immigrant communities to increase their understanding of the social conditions that impact their lives and prepares them to transform those conditions. Key features of popular education, particularly the focus on leadership development, offer an important contribution to the cross-cultural understanding of civic and political leadership.

The chapter is structured as follows: First, the concept of Freirian popular education is discussed in connection with civic and political leadership. Then popular education is located within the broader social change organizing map in civil society. Examples from four Latino immigrant SCOs are then used to demonstrate on-the-ground applications of popular education. Finally, lessons from these organizations about leadership development are presented. These lessons are located within a new trend in the leadership field that views leadership as collective achievement. The examples and lessons presented in this chapter draw from a 7-year research project about social change leadership in the United States.[1]

Theory: Popular Education and Civic and Political Leadership

Paulo Freire, acclaimed as a leading figure in critical pedagogy, was a Brazilian educator whose work became known in the 1960s for bringing a participatory component to adult education. At first, Freire's main interest in participatory education was in bringing adult literacy to the masses, and therefore he was not initially known as an organizer per se. Yet popular education became increasingly seen as a useful approach to organizing because it is inherently political, seeking social transformation rather than Band-Aid solutions.

The emphasis on systemic change makes popular education particularly aligned with the missions of SCOs practicing civic and political leadership These organizations are distinguishable from other nonprofits that apply a traditional service delivery model or partake in mainstream economic development in that they tackle systemic inequities and help

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to create a world that is "less ugly, less cruel, less inhumane" (Freire, 1996, p. 42). For SCOs, a Freirian approach is fitting because it recognizes fundamental structural inequities, which unless redressed will continue to repeat cycles of injustice.

Drawing on his experiences in Latin America, Freire understood society to be composed of relations of power and domination. Freire used the concept of hegemony, borrowing from Antonio Gramsci, to explain how the ruling class imposes its power (Gramsci, 2000). He saw hegemony as a social condition in which all aspects of social reality are dominated by a single class. Hegemony extends beyond the concept of ideological domination to form a whole body of practices expressed in its power over decision making and physical resources, as well as knowledge production. The malevolence of hegemony lies in its invisibility—its ability to socialize and reproduce individuals in a way that does not summon resistance.

From this analysis, Freire formulated his theory of education as liberation, positing that the remedy against hegemony lies in *conscientizacao* or conscientization. This is education facilitated through dialogue that enables people to reflect on the structural causes of their situation, their roles in both the current and envisioned societies, and the solutions that will transform society (Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987).

Popular education places the learners' voices and lived experiences at the heart of the learning, weaving in a deeper analysis of power to sharpen critical thinking and create links to organized community action. Although it could well take place in the classroom, the underlying ideology of popular education makes it suitable to many sites of social practice, such as the street, the factory, or the field. This contrasts greatly with what Freire refers to as the "banking model" of education, in which there is a clear hierarchy between teacher and student and the former transmits knowledge to the latter (1970).

To Freire, an individual is not merely a "spectator" *in* the world, but is *with* the world as "re-creator" (1970, p. 75). He starts with an assumption about human creativity and capacity—that people facing injustice are themselves knowledgeable, resourceful, and capable of transforming their situation. Because people are creative agents who can find the key to liberation in their own knowledge and life experiences, they have the *power* to free themselves and their oppressors as well. As discussed in the following section, such assumptions are shared with other organizing models that have human flourishing and liberation at their core.

Popular Education and Organizing Models

Adaptation of Freirian popular education to the U.S. context did not occur in a simple one-way transfer of ideas. Thanks to the civil rights movement and to educators such as Myles Horton and Septima Clark, versions of popular education have been central to social change organizing in the United States for a few decades. Founded by Horton in 1932 to serve as an adult education center for community workers involved in social and economic justice movements, the Highlander Center was in part modeled after Denmark's folk high schools, which were centers for adult education and community empowerment. Education focused on liberation and political subversion is, in fact, a transnational phenomenon, with models dating back to the French revolution and with contemporary versions practiced in Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere. As activists, including Horton's students, applied insights from their learning trips and solidarity engagements in Latin America to their work in the United States, elements of Freirian popular education were incorporated into organizing practices in the United States (Theodore & Valenzuela, 2007).

U.S. organizing is probably best described as a mélange of models from many contexts. A Freirian model, as intently practiced by Latino immigrant SCOs, can be contrasted to Saul Alinsky's model, which prevails within the civic and political arena of the United States. Alinsky is considered the father of contemporary American community organizing and is known for his derisive, confrontational, and pragmatic organizing style. While Horton and his colleagues were founding the Highlander School in rural Tennessee, Alinsky was organizing the Back of the Yards neighborhood in urban Chicago. In 1940, he founded the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) to train organizers and support community organizations around the country. Today, IAF continues to provide training and consultation as it organizes and develops national strategy for a broad-based affiliation of community organizations.

What distinguishes the Alinskyite model from the Freirian one is its primary focus on building the organization instead of individual development or human flourishing that is the focus of Freire. In Alinskyite organizing, leadership development defines the organizer as teacher, whereas in the Freirian approach, organizer and community member engage in conscientization together as partners (Su, 2009).

Another area of contrast is how community members become engaged in the organizing work. Alinsky's pragmatism compels an enlisting approach, with a focus on recruiting more individuals to a campaign that has a concrete policy reform goal. Freire's emphasis on participation, on the other hand, is concerned less with increasing numbers than with individuals reaching a fundamental awareness that enables them to become more "fully human." To Freire, people need to attain the conviction of the necessity for struggle: "This conviction cannot be packaged and sold; it is reached, rather, by means of a totality of reflection and action" (1970, p. 67); thus the process of human development is as important, if not more important, than policy change.

Some scholars and practitioners have lamented a particular current application of popular education, arguing that

what was once a tool for social change is often applied as an animated aid to conventional learning that is devoid of the raw realities of inequality (VeneKlasen, 2006). Latino immigrant SCOs, however, offer a context where popular education can be examined and understood as an integrated framework comprised of a worldview and a set of values, practices, and tools. That is because to these organizations, popular education offers a rich historical tradition with which their communities can identify.

The incorporation of popular education in the United States by Latino immigrant SCOs represents an innovation. Their approach complements the recognized forms of civic and political work in the United States, which tend to be based on Alinsky or are primarily concerned with representation or civic engagement as achieved through voting. Next, we will examine the use of popular education by Latino immigrant organizations and how it relates to leadership development in a much larger context.

Applications: Popular Education as Practiced by Latino Immigrant SCOs

SCOs offer rich lessons about civic and political leadership because of their grassroots focus and agile forms, unlike many larger social movement organizations that have tended to become more professionalized structures with top-down decision-making mechanisms (Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006; Salamon, 2002; Su, 2009). SCOs play an important role in strengthening the civic and political fabric of American life. They tackle important issues that go beyond the interests of their immediate communities while acting as sites for democracy by giving voice to the most marginalized and facilitating the participation of ordinary community members. While government and mainstream nonprofits often apply a one-size-fits-all approach, SCOs address problems in a tailored way.

Latino immigrant communities are the focus in this chapter because their work is infused with a Freirian worldview that treats popular education as a "repertoire of contention"—a bundle of memories, a common language for struggle, and a cultural signifier—not merely a methodology for adult education (Theodore & Valenzuela, 2007). Popular education has been central to the activities of radical social movements in Latin America, creating a particular history of contention for farm workers, the urban working class, community organizers, educators, rebel soldiers, and activists who endured struggles for political-economic reform. Similar groups that now struggle with injustices in the United States can use this history of contention as a way to relate to and learn from a Latin American legacy of organizing.

SCOs on the whole tend to be conflated with mainstream nonprofits rather than treated as a group in their own right (Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006). Latino immigrant SCOs are even less recognized. Immigrant SCOs aimed at enhancing the livelihood of the immigrant community have neither been labeled nor studied as actors of civic participation. Scholars are more likely to view such work as minority attempts to adjust, acculturate, and assimilate into mainstream culture or as informal acts of volunteerism (Brint & Levy, 1999). Yet these organizations are using, adapting, and enriching an organizing model informed by Freire that represents an important asset for those working for social change.

At an instrumental level, Latino SCOs work as much with newly arrived immigrants as those who have been in the country for years. The uprooting experience of being in a totally new context warrants a process that facilitates the location of oneself in a complex web of actors and situations—which is precisely what popular education aims to achieve. At an expressive level, popular education for Latino immigrants is a way of connecting to the mission of the organization. It creates a sense of purpose and belonging. Because popular education is part of the public culture in some segments of Latin American societies, immigrants carry with them memories and experiences that they are able to draw on in the context of their lives. An ability to establish a connection is especially important in the context of day labor, an activity many Latino immigrants engage in given the fluid nature of this type of employment and the geographical mobility of this workforce.

The following narrative illuminates the specific ways in which Latino immigrant SCOs employ popular education as a tool for learning, a statement of identity, and a pedagogy of personal and collective transformation. For them, popular education offers a historical and contextual grounding that heightens relevance with their communities. Three applications of popular education highlight the pedagogical dimensions of social change leadership and the organizations' contribution to accomplish the mission of promoting social transformation. First, popular education provides information to its constituents as a power tool. Second, it generates shared meaning making and shared identity; and third, its working assumptions and practices model participation and promote equitable relationships. In reality, these applications are intertwined but are analytically distinct, with varying emphases on information provision, meaning making, and equalizing relationships.

Information Exchange as a Tool for Empowerment

It may seem as if any process of providing information would run counter to the state of critical consciousness espoused by Freire. Yet the SCOs discussed here understand that newly arriving immigrants find themselves in a completely unfamiliar environment and are in need of specific information that can enable them to settle and survive in their early days in a new context. Later on, information about issues associated with the work of social change continues to deepen their understanding of this society.

Finding the right balance between providing information and encouraging a process that stimulates critical reflection can be a challenge. As outside dynamics increasingly shape local realities, organizers dealing with social change issues find it crucial to gather accurate information that is often unavailable locally (VeneKlasen, 2006). SCOs understand that lack of information is not just a coincidence but the product of a power structure that places immigrant communities at a disadvantage. People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources (PODER)[2]—is an organization that mobilizes East Austin, Texas, a community of primarily Black and Mexican American immigrants, to safeguard its environment in the face of encroaching pollution from industry. Sylvia Herrera, one of the organization's leaders, sees that East Austin has been historically "left out of the loop," so PODER is obliged to provide them with the "facts" they know. Providing critical information is regarded as a right, a first step toward engaging the community in an act of collective leadership over their issues of concern.

PODER considers information and education as key factors in increasing awareness and involvement, framing issues, and as a powerful tool for empowering the community. PODER members start by collecting information within the community and by talking with the people directly affected and with government officers or other actors involved in the problem. If necessary, they obtain statistics, urban plans, maps of the zone, and any other documents and tools that allow them to understand the problem. They then present the facts to the community, the press, and government officials. This work is done in conjunction with their diverse range of workshops to educate the community about relevant issues. Some workshop topics include: taxes, health and ecological issues, voting registration, and other citizen and immigrants rights.

What makes this a Freirian approach is the reciprocal nature of the information sharing, which establishes a relationship of exchange—in effect, sharing leadership between the organization and the community. PODER works as a kind of container where community people can raise their issues, examine them, and begin to frame them as collective issues. This is the beginning of a process where the community is intimately involved in finding solutions.

For PODER, sharing information and generating knowledge helps people become active participants. The organization operates with the assumption that if people know the facts and understand the issues, they can advocate for their needs and represent their community. PODER believes that awareness and action result from sharing the information with the community, in other words from education and sharing. Janie Rangel, PODER's board chair, relates in an interview:

> And only through education, because they don't just say, "Oh, okay, our job is done." No, they go back and they educate the community. And they go door to door, because not all minority people, we're poor people, we can't afford . . . most people, minorities, African Americans, Hispanics, some people can't afford phones, much less computers. Because you go on the other side of town, they have e-mail and everything, they e-mail each other what's going on. We don't, so we have to go door to door. A lot of people can't read English; we have to explain to them in Spanish what's going on.

Lideres Campesinas[3] provides another example where exchanging information with the community prepares the ground for exercising collective leadership (Blackwell, 2003). The organization works with a disenfranchised group of farm worker women in California—*campesinas*, who earn as little as $5,000 a year. One of the organization's approaches is training women as resources for specific issues, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and women's health. These women in turn organize events and use community gatherings and celebrations to raise awareness about a particular issue. Yet it is a more intricate approach than just disseminating information. Milly Treviño-Sauceda, the organization's director explains in an interview:

> This is not about me bringing the information to the women and then expecting them to just change their lives just because I think this is the best. It's about, okay, there are some programs or there are some rights or there are some options. It's not just about giving them that information. It's about, first, let's listen to what's going on with her and her life.

Moreover, once that information is made available, there is a follow-up to see that it is being used and whether the campesina needs further support, such as accompaniment to the doctor. With time, the women realize the power of the information they have obtained and take stewardship in sharing with others. Even the simple act of sharing information is regarded as an act of leadership. The concept of leadership at Lideres Campesinas is grounded in the everyday, even mundane, experience of farm worker women. They are recognized as leaders for the tremendous work that they already do as income earners, mothers, family, and community supporters. For example, one girl was commended for her role in educating other girls about Pap smear tests in a comment from Treviño-Sauceda: "That's leadership, that's doing change."

The evolution of Lideres Campesinas and the personal journey of Treviño-Sauceda are significant in terms of the relationship between information exchange and the understanding of leadership as a collective undertaking. The organizational precursor to Lideres Campesinas was a group called Mujeres Mexicanas, founded in 1988. Mujeres Mexicanas emerged out of a needs assessment survey of women farm workers. About 50% of all the women interviewed explicitly stated that women needed to organize, engage in dialogue and problem solving together, and unite to address the conditions that negatively shape their lives. Treviño-Sauceda was one of the original interviewers and had the idea to respond to the campesinas' need to organize themselves and engage in dialogue. She

shared how participating in the study transformed her sense of leadership:

> Before I saw myself as the leader of my community but after I saw that I just had a big head. Participating in the study helped me to understand leadership differently. The women did not need me to come around and help them. They were asking for information so that they could solve the issues and problems themselves. (Blackwell, 2003, p. 5)

Shared Meaning Making and Shared Identity

At the core of popular education is a systematic process of critical reflection and thinking about solutions in a way that places the learners' voices and lived experiences at the center of the learning. Latino SCOs facilitate a process where organizers and immigrants interpret reality and find meaning together through critical consciousness. This is a process in which people begin to question their reality, discuss the factors shaping their world, and think through what needs to be done. This is not a process that is done unto learners but something that is done in fellowship between organizers and community members, as Freire states:

> The thinking Subject cannot think alone. In the act of thinking about the object s/he cannot think without the co-participation of another Subject. There is no longer an "I think" but "we think." It is the "we think" which establishes the "I think" and not the contrary. This co-participation of the Subjects in the act of thinking is communication. (Freire, 1973, p. 137)

Engaging in critical consciousness enables both organizers and immigrants to arrive at new meaning together, making sense of their circumstances and understanding that it is a confluence of factors—many beyond their own control—that creates a web of disadvantage for immigrants. In making meaning together, the organization is not immune to the critical lens that immigrants apply in interpreting their world. An example from the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON) will clarify.

NDLON[4] is a national coalition of day laborer organizations opposing discriminatory, anti-immigrant, and anti–day laborer public policies. One way NDLON engages in critical consciousness with immigrant day laborers is through a power analysis exercise. Day laborers examine and explore their situation and identify the different actors who in some way have influenced it. These actors can even include the organization, which potentially leads participants to become critical of NDLON itself. In connection with this process is an unpacking of the concept of *leader*. Accustomed to the widely entrenched idea that denies leadership for impoverished workers with no formal authority, day laborers are often quick to see a politician or a public official as a leadership figure but are unable to accept it in one of their peers. A facilitated conversation based on a series of questions helps day laborers reflect on their mental models, the outcome of which is often the realization that day laborers are capable of being leaders.

This is a painstaking process because its realization signifies that new meaning has been created in the process of critical reflection and dialogue. This is an important practice that distinguishes Latino immigrant SCOs from others using traditional organizing techniques and from mainstream nonprofits that depend more on campaigns using highly processed sound-bites to attract as wide a base as possible. Latino organizations, on the other hand, are more concerned with engaging immigrants in the struggle as equal partners rather than counting heads.

CASA de Maryland,[5] the state's largest community-based organization serving Latinos, exemplifies the distinction, as a community organizer explains in an interview:

> Civil rights organizations on a state level or national are not uncommon and they exist in many different communities, but it's very rare that those types of organizations are really membership or community based, where members actually have power. Typically they're top heavy, technical organizations that view membership involvement merely as a fundraising mechanism or as a way to walk into a congressmen's office and say, you know, "Our 10,000 member strong organization wants you to support this bill." So, like a numbers counting experience. And I think that what CASA can really contribute that's distinctive is to get involved in these types of issues in a way that really empowers the membership base, and keeps that as a priority.

When immigrants see themselves as active agents in the process of social change and not just as a mass of protestors, they are more ready and able to exercise collective leadership. They can engage in meaning making through processes of critical consciousness. When they find a common cause, shared history, or common sense of identity, they are enabled to partake in collective leadership. Serving as a cultural magnet of sorts, popular education provides this repertoire. This is especially important because Latino immigrants in the United States represent different nationalities and cultures. Popular education also helps community members make sense of their new reality as immigrants and define issues and grievances in the context of a different culture and sociopolitical reality.

Popular education not only serves as a recognizable organizing form to identify with. The approach itself is used to construct a positive identity that challenges the negative image ascribed to the Latino immigrant community. This distinctly Latino identity embraces the most positive aspects of the Latino identity and reaffirms the principles of solidarity, friendship, and cooperation, which are common cultural elements of the Latino immigrant groups in the United States. This in turn instills pride and provides a referent through which the groups articulate their aspirations and demands (Hunt & Benford, 2004). SCOs working with Latino immigrants in the United States have made this significant contribution of revising popular education to include identity, in addition to poverty and class, as an axis of disadvantage.

The term *popular* in popular education refers to extruding elements of culture that can instill pride and become cornerstones for organizing. Pablo Alvarado, NDLON's director explains in an interview that: "When oppressed people gain that sense of identity and unity, then it is more difficult for unscrupulous employers and other law enforcement agencies to come and discriminate against that common oppression, because a lot of workers will stand tall."

In 1996, there was an Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) raid on day laborers who were participating in a blood donation campaign. To recount that experience, one of the laborers wrote a ballad that was to become the inspiration for creating a day laborer band—*Las Jornaleros del Norte*—which now performs at hiring centers, fundraisers, and churches and sings of the lived experience of immigrants. "When you use culture as a tool to celebrate your struggle and as a tool to struggle as well—both for celebration and as part of the struggle itself, then culture becomes an experience of liberation," says Alvarado in an interview. NDLON deliberately incorporates cultural elements such as music, dance, and poetry in its organizing, not merely as amusement activities, but as means to humanize the relationships between day laborers who, because of the harsh reality of day labor, often had to compete to get in the back of employers' trucks.

Participation and Enactment of Equitable Relationships

Equally important to the previously discussed practices are efforts to level the playing field, representing an enactment of equitable relationships between organizers and immigrants. Pablo Alvarado of NDLON explains that popular education is not about mere technicalities, it is also about "the human connection." This is consistent with a deliberate emphasis on participation, which is absolutely fundamental to a Freirian approach.

Participation refers to the communities' active engagement in identifying needs and opportunities, devising courses of action, and taking action. It is based on the assumptions that the people suffering from lack of resources, marginalization, or oppression are the "experts" on their situation and should be the ones framing the problem and driving the solutions for change. Apart from the emotional and symbolic power of engaging the community, participation, at a very pragmatic level, also serves two functions. First, participating in the decision-making process of an organization is a reflection of the organization's commitment to share leadership with its community. In a way, the organization serves as an incubator for people exercising their leadership so that they are enabled to do the same outside the organization as well. Second, participation makes people subjects rather than objects of action. In the words of Freire: "To alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects" (1970, p. 85). Participation ensures that programs and activities represent the needs/issues of the community. Through participation, the role of the community is transformed from passive recipient to active agent of change.

Equality can be enacted through joint decision making, encouraging immigrants to serve as "experts" in conversations with policy makers, supporting the community in articulating its needs and demands for change, and fostering generative leadership development. Leadership development is not only about building skills but also about valuing collective achievement and developing human capacity. A participatory stance recognizes that the community does not need to be rescued nor enlisted, but is a real partner with the organization in making change. In an interview, Pablo Alvarado of NDLON articulates this in terms of leadership:

> My understanding of leadership is that it's not the person that speaks beautiful, the person who speaks on behalf of others. It's about sharing leadership with the people impacted. I think, like if I were to speak on behalf of the day laborers, I will not be as effective as they are, you know, when they speak on their own behalf. So we're partners in their struggle.

CASA provides an example where the community is the real driver and authority on change. When advocating for special fast-track visa rights under the Victims of Trafficking Act, a law aimed at helping those who had been coerced to come to the United States as virtual slave labor, the Latino community was relied on as the expert. A *promotora* in one of CASA's outreach programs gave her testimony before Congress, as told by a community organizer in an interview:

> She was a national expert because she and other promoters in the project spent untold hours speaking to hundreds of domestic workers and she was able to present across that broad experience. . . . We don't often move over into the situation where people are—community members are recognized as the actual experts.

This organizer jokingly explains that CASA is unable to keep up with the amount of initiative coming from the community:

> The reality is that the community members were a hundred million miles in front of us. They were just pushing . . . [us] into it because we were way behind the level at which they wanted to be doing leadership development. That is evident on a daily basis from people really demanding us to provide a vehicle for them to do this type of work. I mean CASA was behind.

NDLON presents a good example of engaging the community in joint decision making and dialogue. The organization and the day laborers it works with are faced with frequent police raids on the street corners where laborers solicit day work. Rather than single-handedly decide on a

reaction, NDLON together with the laborers choose one of two options depending on the situation: either collaboration by which dialogue will be established between the laborers, the municipality, and the police; or confrontation, when NDLON together with the laborers decide to file a lawsuit and/or demonstrate. The course of action is decided based only on what the laborers want and the circumstances they know and understand; for example, if the ordinance is unconstitutional, laborers will select the confrontational route.

NDLON also promotes the concept of *dirigente popular*—organic leadership—as a way to enact equitable relationships. The concept of leadership itself is democratized—shifting it from one of influence between leader and follower to one that recognizes that leadership is about sharing power with others. *Dirigente popular* is a form of leadership that embraces democratic principles, especially the right of those affected by decisions to participate in the making of those decisions, thus distributing leadership more horizontally. Even when ascribed to an individual, the *dirigente popular* is dedicated to creating new leaders (Theodore & Valenzuela, 2007) and to listening to those being served for guidance. This way, leaders and followers engage in reciprocal influence.

The Collective and Pedagogical Dimensions of Leadership

This chapter has argued that Latino immigrant SCOs have been a force in adapting popular education to the U.S. context, presenting social innovation in its application, and making it an important element of the organizing toolkit. Beyond this role, what are the leadership implications of the use of popular education?

Popular education taps into and builds on people's understanding of their world, their sense of self and profound connection to others, and their desire for and ability to affect change. It can be a powerful process for leadership development because it combines critical thinking, visioning, self-empowerment, relationship building, action, and, when done well, hope and energy. As painstaking as it may seem to truly engage with people as colearners rather than acting quickly to build a wide base of support à la Alinsky, Latino immigrant SCOs realize that leadership development through popular education is essential for organizing and movement building.

Popular education has been a critical aspect of immigrant social change leadership. The way that these organizations have used it offers lessons for leadership development that in turn are relevant to civic and political leadership. In terms of leadership development, one of the organizations' inflections has been to shift the idea of leadership from being an individual act to one of collective empowerment. Leadership is not a thing developed and horded by individuals, but an ever-expansive positive force that can be shared. When Ramona Felix, an organizer with Lideres Campesinas was asked about empowerment and leadership, she reflected on how they belong both to the individual and to the group:

> Empowerment is something that flows inside of you, that is always constantly there; that you convey. It's something you [will always] have . . . that no one can take away. Like my leadership, what I have learned I will always have it and will share it. (Blackwell, 2003, p. 40)

This approach to leadership is consistent with new developments in the field that emphasize its coproduction between leaders and followers (Shamir, Pilai, & Uhl-Bien, 2007). It resonates with the notion of shared leadership, that is, leadership roles and functions distributed among different organizational participants, rather than being exclusively the property of a formal leader (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003; Pearce & Conger, 2003). This emphasis expands scholarship beyond individual leaders, followers, and their relationship (Uhl-Bien, 2006) to study the "work of leadership" (Heifetz, 2004), the "interactive . . . processes" related to this work (Gronn, 2002, p. 444), and the processes that help all members of a group make meaning together of what they must do to carry out their common goals. Some leadership scholars consider this to be the real substance of leadership (Drath, 2001; Fairhurst, 2007; Hosking, 2007; Ospina & Sorenson, 2006).

A second important contribution of Latino immigrant SCOs' use of popular education is establishing learning as an important dimension of leadership. Leadership development in the organizations previously discussed and as informed by popular education is about facilitating and encouraging community members to reflect, analyze, inquire, and alter their actions based on cycles of reflection and action. An organizer with a member organization of NDLON, Renee Saucedo, says that NDLON treats education and learning as a "power tool":

> It's a tool for people to feel more confident to be able to participate politically, or it's a tool to understand a larger context when we struggle for things here locally. It's always something to be used concretely, not just for the sake of sharing information. (Theodore & Valenzuela, 2007, p. 12)

In another profound quote, Oscar Paredes, founder of an NDLON member organization claims: "we're not interested in armed revolution. Our revolution is through education" (Theodore & Valenzuela, 2007, p. 8).

Yet, consistent with the tenets of popular education, learning does not happen by removing people from their everyday life to teach them about leadership in the vacuum of a classroom. One of the assumptions these organizations operate by is that immigrants will begin their own leadership and organizing experiences within their own immediate social contexts of street corners, families, and communities. That is why lived experience is an important and valid

source of knowledge, deemed more valuable than conventional sources of knowledge such as "expert" reports. Sylvia Herrera of PODER reflects on this as she describes how their presentation of information about community problems to government officials is followed by the question: "Which book is that in?" And they must insist: "Well, we know the issues, listen to me, don't read those books, listen to us, we live it every day." She concludes: "You know, so they can't tell us, 'Well, this is not what's going on' we know because we live it every day, we live these issues that they're still trying to read about."

The notion of learning as leadership is examined by several leadership scholars. For example, Heifetz (2004) argues that leadership is about dealing with challenges that have no obvious solutions and thus requires continual learning and reflection—what he refers to as adaptive leadership. Belenky, Bond, and Weinstock (1997) call this type of work "developmental leadership," which, they argue—drawing from their study of community-based organizations—includes establishing a personal relationship with each individual, articulating common goals, finding each person's strengths to serve as foundations for the work, and drawing from people's culture as a building block for community. According to these scholars, developmental leaders "listen with care. . . . Then they look for ways to mirror what they have seen, giving people a chance to take a new look at themselves and see the strengths that have not been well recognized or articulated" (p. 14). Finally, critical analysis through permanent and deep conversation helps the group to develop a vision of how things should be.

Similarly, in Preskill and Brookfield's (2009) view, leadership that acts for social justice has, at its core, a commitment to support individual and communal learning. Using leadership examples from the civil rights movement, they identify nine learning tasks of leadership, including being open to the contributions of others, reflecting critically on one's practice, supporting the growth of others, developing collective leadership, analyzing experience, questioning oneself and others, living democratically, sustaining hope in the face of struggle, and creating community.

A focus on the collective and learning dimensions of leadership expands our views of leadership beyond an "influence relationship" and recognizes it as a process of collective meaning making, developmental capacity building, and collaborative action (Ospina & Hittleman, in press). This approach explores the work involved in building the capacities of people, organizations, and communities, and replacing the idea of "followers," with that of communities empowered to act together to bring about change.

In summary, immigrant SCOs engage in the work of leadership through three applications of popular education: exchanging information for empowerment, generating shared meaning making and shared identity, and promoting participation and equitable relationships. From these, two key features of social change leadership were highlighted: a conception of leadership as both individual and collective, and the importance of learning in the leadership process. Both of these, we argue, are about the broad leadership work of unleashing human potential—a process of creating the conditions that will allow every member of the group to reclaim their right to selfhood and their full humanity and, in doing so, recognize their inherent power to direct their lives. Unleashing helps unlock and develop human potential at the service of individual, organizational, and movement capacity, all in turn leveraging power for social change.

Notes

1. The Leadership for a Changing World program recognized exceptional social change leadership across the United States and inquired into the ways in which communities working toward social change engage in the work of leadership. The program was a partnership between the Ford Foundation, the Institute for Sustainable Communities (formerly the Advocacy Institute), and the Wagner School for Public Service at New York University.
2. See www.poder-texas.org for more information.
3. See http://wagner.nyu.edu/leadership/reports/files/Lideres.pdf for more information.
4. See www.ndlon.org for more information.
5. See www.casademaryland.org for more information.

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