From Needs to Action:
Community Organizing at Heritage Common, Lawrence, Massachusetts

by

Madeline C. Fraser

B.A., Political Science and Economics (1995)

Swarthmore College

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
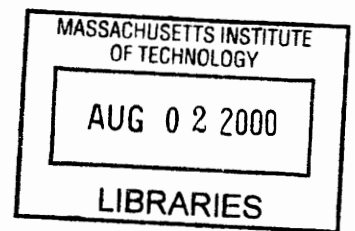In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master in City Planning

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

June 2000

Signature of Author ......*Madeline C. Fraser*..............................
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 18, 2000

Certified by ....
Aixa N. Cintrón
Assistant Professor
Urban Studies and Planning
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by ....
Paul Smoke
Associate Professor
Chair, Masters in City Planning Committee
Department of Urban Studies and Planning

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the effect researchers and their methods have on the process of community organizing. It specifically focuses on Heritage Common, a subsidized housing development in Lawrence, Massachusetts with a population comprised of 81% Latino residents. A survey on the social service needs of the residents was conducted for the owner and management company, The Community Builders (TCB). During the survey process, the residents of Heritage Common voiced their desire to organize a Tenants' Committee that would be formally recognized by the management and have a say in the future of their community.

The project started as a social services needs assessment and became a community organizing case study with an interest in the role of the researcher and the research methods as catalysts in the process. The results of the survey were used to inform the residents about which groups within the community as well as which social services could be identified as targets for organizing efforts.

This project was begun in October 1999, and as of May 2000, Heritage Common has established a formal Tenants' Committee. The first meeting between management, the Tenants' Committee and the residents to address community concerns will be held on May 18, 2000.

Thesis Advisor: Aixa N. Cintrón

Title: Assistant Professor of Urban Studies and Planning

Acknowledgements

I first would like to thank my thesis advisor, Aixa Cintrón, for her incredible guidance throughout this exercise. Her patience and feedback have been invaluable. I also would like to express my gratitude to Phillip Clay, my reader, for bringing his wealth of knowledge to this process.

To Rafael Morales, who showed me that hard work and selflessness will always pay off in the end. To all of the residents at Heritage Common, who have welcomed me into their community, and put their trust in me to help them affect change. I would especially like to thank Miriam Baez for opening the doors of her home to me, and sharing with me the joys her grand-daughters bring. Also, to the people of the Merrimack Valley Project and the Lawrence Planning and Neighborhood Development Corporation, especially Danny LeBlanc and Tito Mesa, who were so willing to step up and provide us with help.

To Quinn and Chato, thanks for keeping me company while I sat hours on end typing at the computer. Hedgehogs and flying pens provided needed breaks to the writing.

I want to thank my close friends at D.U.S.P. who helped me get through all the ups and downs in the past few months. Especially, Josh and Tammy, whose willingness to listen and give support has been incredible.

Thank you, Ben. I really could not have done this without you. Your advice, critical thinking, patience and great humor have sustained me through this process. You never cease to amaze me.

Finally to my family. Grandpa and Grandma thanks for all those years of learning to think analytically at holiday dinner conversations. Mom, Dad and Cathy, once again, you proved that there is nothing more important than family. Thank you for all your love and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: A Brief History and Its Link to the Research

"Working together and helping one another is very important." – *resident, age 28*

This paper will cover research that was conducted at a subsidized housing development called Heritage Common in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Heritage Common is owned and managed by The Community Builders, Inc. (TCB) which is a non-profit affordable housing developer based in Boston. TCB has developed affordable housing all over the United States, and in New England alone, they own and operate more than 6,000 units of housing. The research project began as a social service needs assessment of the residents under the auspices of the Human Services department at TCB.

Although originally an examination of the social service needs of the residents at Heritage Common, the project evolved into a study of the process of community organizing and the effects that the researcher and the research tools had on this process. The reason for the change of focus is primarily due to the pressing need that the residents saw for an established Tenants' Committee. Organizing their community to address their main concerns became the overarching goal of the residents.

In order to understand the current situation at Heritage Common, it is important to review the financial history of the development. Since its inception, Heritage Common has had its share of financial woes. It was built in 1989-1990 and financed in part by the

Massachusetts S.H.A.R.P. loan program.[1] When funding for the S.H.A.R.P. loan program was scaled back in the early 1990's due to the real estate crash, a considerable amount of funds were withdrawn from the construction budget (ground was already broken at the site.)

The downscaling of the S.H.A.R.P. program in conjunction with the real estate market downturn caused Heritage Common to experience financial difficulties from the beginning. The value of the property was projected to rise over time, but instead, it declined because of the market downturn. The appreciation in the value of the property was supposed to breakeven with the operating expenses at the beginning and then exceed them with time, leaving a surplus. What happened instead was that the value of the property declined, the operating expenses remained constant, and the property experienced a deficit. Today, Heritage Common is still experiencing an operating deficit.

The financial situation is linked to the research project because of the residual effects it has had on the management/resident relationship. The biggest complaint from the residents has been about maintenance. They want the management to address repairs and replacements, but the financial situation is such that the management simply cannot pay for them.

Communication between management and the residents concerning the problems at Heritage Common has been virtually non-existent. As a result, the residents felt that in order to open these lines of communication, it was necessary to form a Tenants'

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[1] The S.H.A.R.P. loan program, which is a program, financed by the state of Massachusetts has had a troubled history. Its troubles were augmented by the real estate crash in Massachusetts in the early 1990's. Today, it continues to by plagued by problems, including a lawsuit against the state brought by several borrowers. To learn more about the program and its history, you can contact the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency. Documentation on the program will be difficult to obtain given the ongoing lawsuit. It

Committee that is formally recognized by the management. Their goal is to be able to share their concerns with the Heritage Common staff as well as get feedback on future plans for the property. In the course of conducting the survey on social services, it was clear that the residents had been looking for an opportunity to share their concerns with TCB and Heritage Common staff. The survey afforded them this opportunity, and the researcher was a link to not only community resources but also to TCB headquarters in Boston by virtue of an internship with them.

By the end of the research process, a group of residents had been successful in forming a Tenants' Committee. With it in place, the residents hope that they will have a place to go to voice their concerns about their community as well as rally around issues, such as social services, which are important to all who live there.

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was suggested that the best way to obtain information about it, is by using the Freedom of Information Act (FIMA).

Chapter 2: The Purpose

"Heritage Common could become a community with an excellent standard of living if there is the opportunity for the residents and the management to work together to improve the conditions." – *resident, age 46*

Meeting the social service needs of low-income residents has increasingly become a pressing issue in the affordable housing field, and funding these needs has always been an issue. Originally, the focus of this research was to gain insight into what social services are needed, offered and how they are used at subsidized housing developments. Towards this end, I created a survey to assess and catalog the social service needs of the residents of Heritage Common. After initial conversations with the pilot group of residents testing out the survey, it became apparent that there were more interesting questions to be researched in this particular community. Latent concerns of the residents and ideas about how to solve some of the communities' perceived problems surfaced and compelled an expansion of this research project.

As the research progressed, the purpose shifted to examining how the process of community organizing works in a low to moderate income and minority community such as Heritage Common.[2]

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[2] Note that the study will reveal a lot about one specific site, which may or may not reflect the experience of other communities.

The research problem at this point became apparent:

> *The population at Heritage Common has needs for social services and has had difficulties in acquiring and accessing them. They have not had an organized tenants' group to help the management and resident services staff deal with these issues in six years.*

Out of this problem came one main research question with two subparts.

How can researchers and their research methods serve as catalysts for community action?

a) How do communities like Heritage react to and utilize the resources that outsiders such as researchers bring into the community
b) How do communities capitalize on these resources and mobilize their own resources to effect community change.

With these research questions and the main problem to solve being the lack of community organization and participation, the ultimate goal of the research[3] is to establish a framework by which residents can organize to deal with the many issues that they face in their housing community. Specifically, this framework is one in which research methods serve as a catalyst to identifying and addressing social service needs.

I strongly believe that the importance of these questions lies in the possibility that this research process will open channels of communication between people at the site and between residents and management, that will be beneficial to both parties in the long run. In addition, the community itself can meet these needs in a way that does not rely as heavily on external funding sources and cuts back on the time it takes to deliver these services. The residents benefit because instead of TCB's services being based on needs as perceived by the TCB management, the services will be based on needs that the residents themselves have articulated. TCB benefits because it meets its objective of providing the

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[3] This research is referred to in the literature as participatory action research (PAR.) PAR is a research model which is culturally sensitive and "aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually

services that are most needed by the residents, and builds the trust between the staff and the residents that it has lacked for so long.

Although this is a case study, the findings can be generalized to a certain extent. That having been said, this research will give TCB information on the social service needs of the residents at Heritage Common which it can in turn use to better provide these services at other properties which have similar residents with similar needs. The same can be said for any group that is interested in the results of this research.

In a broader context, the policy implications of this research are that it can add to the best practices of effective and efficient service delivery by property owners/operators. Given the increasing importance of human services in affordable housing, this is a worthwhile contribution. In addition, this case study shows the importance of open communication between management and residents, and the benefits of these two groups working together to address the concerns of the development.

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acceptable ethical framework." (Hopkins, 1985). See for example, Brown (1983), Cancian and Armstead (1992), Freire (1982), and Patai (1991.)

Chapter 3: The Methodology

"I feel good. The system [here] is good." – *resident, age 43*

Background for the Research:

For the last year, I have been interning with The Community Builders (TCB), a non-profit housing developer based in Boston but owning and operating properties all over the country. With them, I have focused on various aspects of affordable housing including management and human service delivery. Through my internship, I have had the opportunity to get involved with a social service needs assessment of one of their properties, Heritage Common, in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Heritage Common's residents are primarily Puerto Rican and Dominican, and a majority of them are receiving some type of assistance from government sources.

I began working at Heritage Common in October 1999. My assignment was to create a survey to administer to the residents that would give TCB a better idea of the demographics of Heritage Common as well as illustrate the social service needs of the residents. The first staff members that I was introduced to were Joyce Rinaldi, the Portfolio Manager and Rafael Morales, the Residential Services Coordinator for the property. At that point, Heritage Common was going through a staffing change in the management office. I subsequently was introduced to Tony Decearse, the new Site

Manager. Since my first meetings with staff, I have worked most closely with Mr. Morales given that the results of the survey directly affect his work. Mr. Morales is the only Spanish speaker other than the receptionist on staff at Heritage Common. He has the most tenure of any of the staff, has a close relationship with most residents, and knows where all residents live in the property. These facts together have lead to his leadership position among the community at Heritage Common. He is well respected and trusted by the residents. The respect that he earned from the residents has been invaluable in helping me conduct the survey and begin organizing the community.

Steps in the Research Process - A Mixed Method Approach:

The goal of my research instruments was to gauge what the residents' needs are at Heritage Common. The research consisted of a survey of residents, as well as focus groups with the newly-formed Tenants' Committee. Using the results of the survey, I performed a quantitative analysis of the data. Given the relatively small sample size and the purpose of the results, I found obtaining the frequencies of the variables and running cross-tabs with chi-square tests to be the most appropriate statistical tools for the analysis. The focus groups as well as the three open-ended questions at the end of the survey served as the qualitative piece of the research.

I formulated the questions by taking questions from sample surveys that have been done in the past on related topics and adapting them to my specific areas of interest. The most useful were samples from HUD and public health community surveys. In addition to the more general questions, I have included questions that are specific to Heritage Common, for example, tenure in Lawrence and at Heritage Common.

In order to help me refine the questions before taking the survey to the residents, I tested the survey instrument by using a pilot group of respondents. This group consisted of people with the same basic demographics as the Heritage Common population at large (i.e. similar income, educational attainment, ethnic background, etc.) The pilot survey was administered to a group of eight people, five women and three men. After they had taken the survey, feedback was encouraged to gain insight to which questions were confusing or poorly worded. The responses of the pilot group proved to be an invaluable tool for improving the survey. In hindsight, the survey would have been much improved had I had the opportunity to test the questions again before administering it to the residents. A limitation to the effectiveness of the survey was that one of the important questions was misread by some of the respondents, and therefore, its usefulness as an analytical tool was hampered.

The final survey consisted of 31 questions, 28 of which were multiple choice and 3 that were open-ended. The questions covered demographics, social service needs, federal/state assistance[4], and general opinions about Heritage Common. The survey was designed for descriptive purposes as well as association purposes (e.g. which groups need which services.)

The target population was all the adult heads of household at Heritage Common (one adult per household.) This revised survey was given to 89 residents to find out what their needs are and whether they are satisfied with the services that they have received at Heritage Common. This sample encompasses 64% of the households at Heritage Common. It was analyzed statistically to:

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[4] Assistance refers to income assistance, medical coverage, and fuel and rental assistance.

- Describe the background of the respondents
- Describe the responses to significant questions[5]
- Determine if there is a connection between needs for services and tenure
- Compare preferences of residents by parenting status, if their spouses live with them, and age (determine if these differences are statistically significant using chi-square tests.)

The survey was administered at the Heritage Common community room. Starting in mid-January, Mr. Morales and I distributed a leaflet to all the residents informing them that there would be a survey conducted at Heritage within the next month. We then went door-to-door to invite the residents to participate in what I termed a "survey dinner." To encourage residents to come to the dinners, we had one of the residents, Miriam Baez, cook a full dinner for the participants. Childcare was also provided. The residents had their choice of 8 dates. We tried to limit the attendance to 10-12 people at each dinner, but in reality the turnout ranged between 7 and 22 people. In all, we held 8 survey dinners. All the activities occurred in the evenings between Wednesday and Friday to allow people enough time to return home from work, while at the same time not being obtrusive on their weekend schedules with family.

The survey was self-administered. Both Mr. Morales and I were available at the respondent's request for clarification of the questions. In addition, if they chose, they had me read the survey to them and/or help them fill it out. The major reason for asking for assistance with the survey was low literacy of the respondent. The majority of the people filled out their own surveys; only six people asked for assistance. In all of the six cases, they asked for assistance due to their low level of literacy. There were some situations where people were ill or had other responsibilities at home, so in those cases, they filled the survey out at home and returned them to me at a later date. There is the limitation

14

here that all of the surveys were not administered equally, but I felt at the time that gathering as much of the data as was possible was paramount.

In addition to the survey, I conducted a focus group with the Tenants' Committee. In March, we held three meetings to discuss some of the issues pertinent to the work of the Tenants' Committee. Among the items discussed were which services would be most valuable to all the tenants at Heritage. These discussions helped to better inform my research and delve deeper into some of the issues brought up by residents in the survey. Another topic of conversation at these meetings was to begin to strategize about which concerns were most important to discuss with the management and how to build a relationship with management that ensures cooperation between the two groups and is sustainable into the future. We specifically tried to address the resident's presentation to the TCB staff.

These meetings were an integral part of the research. Community organizing was taking place, and many of the steps that I have talked about being crucial to organizing were being taken. Leadership and membership development was taking place, deciding on organizing issues by way of open discussion, strategizing on the best ways to achieve goals, and taking stock of the group assets was all happening at these meetings. There are still many steps that the organizing needs to go through at Heritage Common, but the initial building blocks of a strong community group are in place.

Once all of the surveys were completed, the data were entered in an Excel spreadsheet. I then ran some pivot tables on the data that gave me a preliminary look at the findings. With some of the trends becoming evident, I was able to move on to

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[5] Significance was determined through informal conversations with the residents and the focus group.

statistical analysis. Using the statistical software, SPSS, I formulated frequency tables and carried out the cross-tabs with chi-squares to determine the relationship among the variables. With the data parsed into meaningful tables, I was able to begin drawing some conclusions about community concerns, which groups are more likely to need what social services, and which issues have potential to be rallying points for community organizing.

For the purposes of helping the Tenants' Committee organize the data and develop an approach to organizing the residents, the respondents of the survey were split into three easily identifiable groups: single persons, parents of teenagers, and people residing at Heritage Common more than 5 years. The single persons included all those that answered the question about whether or not their spouse lived with them as no. The variable used for this group was SP_LIVE. Parents of teenagers include parents of all children between the ages of 13-18. The variable used in this grouping was CHILD_AGE. Finally, the variable used for the amount of time at Heritage Common was HC_YRS. These groups were split out because traditionally organizing efforts around the country have used these groups as starting points for community organizing. Groups that cater to the concerns of single persons and teens are common, and generally speaking, people that have lived together for an extended period of time can often share similar experiences have common perspectives on issues.

These groups were analyzed according to which services they found to be most useful to them. Specifically, the responses to the multiple-choice questions were analyzed using quantitative measures, and the open-ended responses were treated as qualitative data. Out of these open-ended questions came many of the resident quotes. These quotes identified what issues were on the resident's minds but not necessarily

covered by the survey. The focus groups served also served as a vehicle to gather qualitative data. To round out the data collection participant observation data was used from the informal interactions with residents throughout the last 8 months.

Chapter 4: The Theories Behind the Action

"I want the staff to have a meeting with all of the residents." – *resident, age 61*

Historical and Theoretical Background of Community Organizing:

Organizing theory has grounding in many different disciplines. It has been influenced by political science, sociology, and education theory. Saul Alinsky and Paulo Freire are often referred to when considering the origins of modern organizing theory.

Alinsky's organizing style stresses the importance of the group recognizing their inherent power, as well as emphasizing the importance of challenging the fear of standing up to those in positions of power. Alinsky is not the only one to note the effect of fear on a communities action/non-action. John Gaventa, a political scientist writing on power noted that "apathy can be attributed to fear and vulnerability [felt by community] to power elites." One of the major roadblocks to organizing is the idea that "there is nothing we can do about it." Often, Alisky's theories are thought to be conflict-based, but in actuality they are much more than that; they are based in using your power effectively in order to be able to avoid conflict. Putting it succinctly, he said, "Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have."[6] By using the perception of power to a group's advantage, Alinsky felt that conversations and negotiations could

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[6] Saul Alinsky, Alinsky quotes, http://www.bemorecreative.com/one/1521.htm

much more readily be planned, and therefore, conflict avoided, than if one side perceived itself to be more powerful than the other.

However, Alinsky did feel that conflict was a part of bringing about change. In fact, he recognized that, "Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict."[7] Breaking his theories down to the most essential pieces means understanding his positions on power and how to obtain it, as well as realizing that although conflict is not inherent to all organizing efforts, it is a major part of being able to affect change. Another important aspect of Alinsky's theories is that they also emphasize the role of the individual in moving their community towards change. The voluntary community organizations that Alinsky organized "provided a connection between the individual and the larger society."[8] Each member of these organizations became involved in a movement towards a greater good. With the commitment of many individuals, Alinsky saw the potential for power-sharing between those that were traditionally in power and those that were discovering their powerbase.

Paulo Freire also emphasized the importance of power sharing. His theory came out of the work that he did as an educator in Brazil and Chile. He strongly believed that empowerment is not individual. Especially for the poor and dispossessed, empowerment can be found in the strength of numbers. Liberation achieved by an individual at the expense of others is an act of oppression.[9] Empowerment is the means as well as the outcome of his philosophy. Freire's pedagogy, the how to and general guidelines of his

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[7] ibid.

[8] Horwit Sanford, "Alinsky: More Important Now Than Ever", L.A. Times, July 20, 1997.

[9] Tom Heaney, "Issues of Freirean Pedagogy",http://nlu.nl.edu/ace/Resources/Documents/FreireIssues.html

educational approach, has come to be known as *liberatory education*.   Liberatory

education is "mutually supported learning for empowerment." It sees the student and the

teacher as equals in the learning process. It rejects the idea of 'banking education' where

the student is an 'empty vessel' for the thought and theories deemed acceptable and

passed on by the power elite. Empowerment is achieved by obtaining critical

consciousness and the necessary skills related to liberatory praxis[10] which in turn help the

individual gain a voice in order to move towards social action; a necessary element to

achieve change.

Critical consciousness[11] has three major stages.   The first is the "semi-

intransitive" stage where the individual is completely centered on his/her own world and

does little beyond ensuring his/her own survival. The second stage is "naïve transitivity."

This is where the person oversimplifies problems surrounding them, prefers "fanciful

explanations of reality", practices polemics rather than dialogue, and among other things,

has a disinterest in investigation.[12] In the final stage, "critical transitivity", the individual

understands their connection with the world outside their own sphere of existence. They

reject polemics and opt for dialogue, they are open to testing their own findings, they try

to avoid distortions in their analysis, they reject passivity, and in short, they are ready to

act on carefully thought out issues. An important point to note is that these stages are not

mutually exclusive, and that they all link learning with action; a basic element for

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[10] *liberatory praxis:* "a complex activity by which individuals create culture and society, and become
critically conscious human beings." (Heaney, 1999)
[11] The process by which people are able to formulate their own interpretations of their situation in the world
and are able to analyze them free of preconceived notions. They are receptive to new without necessarily
rejecting the old simply because it is old. (Heaney, 1999)
[12] ibid.

transformation to occur.[13] In the case of Heritage Common critical consciousness was seen in the interest of some of the residents to form a Tenants' Committee, and in their realization that the survey process and the presence of an outside researcher was their opportunity to raise issues that were important to them.

Both Alinsky and Freire placed importance on power and how it relates to movement politics and organizing. A central question to organizing theory then is: What is power? In addition to Alinsky's and Freire's theories on power, there are multitudes of writings on power theory that have come out of the political science sphere. There are several useful definitions of "power over." One is that A has the power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something that B would otherwise not do.[14] Adding to that definition is the idea that A exercises power over B to the extent that A influences, shapes or determines B's needs and wants.[15] Power can be placed in the community context by seeing "who participates, who gains and loses, and who prevails in decision-making"…in addition, "power serves for the development and maintenance of the quiescence of the non-elite."[16] This, says Gaventa, is the second face of power. According to Bachrach and Baranz, power can be thought of as follows:

> Power is exercised not just upon participants within the decision-making process but also towards the exclusion of certain participants and issues altogether…Power pre-determines the agenda of the struggle to determine whether certain questions ever reach the competition stage.[17]

This definition of power and how it works is particularly applicable to the power struggles that low-income and dispossessed communities face when trying to organize.

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[13] ibid.
[14] Robert Dahl, "The Concept of Power", in Political Power: A Reader in Theory and Research, 1969, p.80.
[15] Nelson Polsby, Community Power and Political Theory, 1963, p.55.
[16] John Gaventa, Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley, p.4-5.
[17] Ibid, p.10.

21

Those who possess power often become so out of touch with the real issues facing their "constituents" that they at times become oblivious to the inequities. There is also the internalization of the roles of the individual and their perceptions of their positions in the group, and as a result, the acceptance of the status quo. With people on both sides of the power debate upholding the status quo, there is no conflict and, according to Alinsky, no change. As Gaventa states in his writings on power, the "most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from arising in the first place."

Table 1: The Dimensions of Power

1st Dimension (Dahl and Polsby)	♦ Emphasis on observable conflict and decision-making ♦ Power is determined by who prevails in bargaining for resolution of key issues
2nd Dimension (Bachrach and Baranz)	♦ Mobilization of bias and "rules of the game" work systematically for certain groups at the expense of others ♦ Those who benefit are in a preferred position to promote their vested interests ♦ Suppress challenges, suffocate them before they are voiced ♦ Institutional inaction, non-event
3rd Dimension (Luke and Gaventa)	♦ Specifies the means through which power influences, shapes or determines conceptions of the necessities, possibilities and strategies of challenge in situations of the latent conflict

Another important point when considering power is the distinction between *power over* and *power to*. *Power over* is the traditional or widespread definition of power, meaning dependency or domination. *Power to* is the type of power that low-income and dispossessed communities should strive to obtain. This type of power "is the basis of the benefits of social cooperation and our capacity to accomplish together what we cannot accomplish alone."[18]

One of the basic tenets of community organizing is getting groups of people to mobilize for change. A key starting point is identifying who is in power and empowering those that are perceived not to have power. There are many ways to do this and many

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[18] Marshall Ganz, Organizing Notes, "Mapping the Social World: Actors Resources and Power", Spring 2000.

steps to make it happen. It is a difficult undertaking that when done properly, can have many fruitful results. Careful attention to details along the way to organizing and making sure that all participants in the process are heard is essential. A case in point is the mobilization of parents at the Zavala Elementary School in Austin, Texas. This school was one of the poorest in terms of academic achievement and attendance in the Austin school system. The parents, in conjunction with a community organizing group, rallied around these issues, approached the school system and the teachers at the school, and eventually came up with an action plan aimed at improving academics and attendance. With parents and teachers working together, Zavala Elementary improved dramatically.[19]

Basic Principles of Community Organizing:

Organizing groups of people successfully is a challenging undertaking for a great number of reasons. First, there is the organic nature of the group. People are constantly flowing in and out of the matrices which define the landscape under which a community or group functions. This is especially true in a community such as Heritage Common. People move in and leave according to the circumstances of their lives. For example, they may have a homeownership opportunity or a job opportunity which requires them to move. New people bring with them new opinions and perspectives on the situations in their community. The relationships change with every new person that enters or leaves the process. These changing relationships have a direct effect on the motivations that drive the group towards their goals. Even within the most tight-knit group, there will be differences that need to be recognized if not reconciled before the group can move forward.

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[19] Richard Murnane and Frank Levy, *Teaching the New Basic Skills,* New York: The Free Press, p. 80-107.

Second, every group needs a reason to be organizing, and choosing a particular issue or set of issues can be a difficult process. A part of identifying the issue is strategy selection. There will be different strategies that are better suited to deal with certain issues. For example, at Heritage Common, targeting specific groups such as parents of young children for participation in a daycare service may be one strategy and targeting the community as whole for participation in monthly meetings with management may be another strategy. In addition, deciding on the one strategy that is best suited to achieve results can often cause strain on the inter-personal relationships within a group. Some may be strongly in favor of targeting the parents of young children, while others feel the approach of targeting the community as a whole is more important, and therefore a more appropriate strategy in order to achieve results.

Third, there is the question of the resources and assets that are at the disposal of the group struggling to organize. This is closely tied to the strategy that is chosen. If the group has limited funds, much like the Tenants' Committee at Heritage Common, then there are certain approaches that they cannot take at this time. As the organization grows and becomes more established, the resources and assets will also be more plentiful.

Fourth, there is the underlying goal of developing leadership. In other words, being able to define what makes effective leaders and followers, and identifying whom within the group will fall under each category. This is especially important since it is the ability of the leader to lead and the members to follow that defines the relationships within the group. If the president of the Tenants' Committee, for example, is not effective in vocalizing the ideas of the group and translating them to management, then the group as a whole will not be effective in achieving their stated goals. At the same

time, if the members are not willing to trust the president in his representation of them, then there will be friction within the group, which can endanger its long-term sustainability.

Finally, there is the role of the organizer. Key questions include: what assets does he/she bring to the table, and how does their participation fit into the goals of the community organizing effort? This is especially pertinent to the Heritage Common case since there are several people playing the role of "organizer." Each of these people brings different resources and assets to the table.

Often, when we think of community organizing, we think of empowering communities to act for themselves in order to achieve a certain aim. Thus, we can think of empowerment of a community as equivalent to its responsibility to act.[20] Commitment to the organization that is being formed is the first step to taking this responsibility. Without commitment, there are crucial steps that the organization cannot take in order to move forward. For example, identifying the key issues for the group, deciding on strategy to pursue their aims, and choosing the leadership to move the group forward is virtually impossible without the firm commitment of individuals to the organizing cause.

Strong relationships are the foundation of a successful organizing effort. Relationships between people imply that there has been a past exchange between them and that there will be future interaction.[21] The idea of past/future interaction between members of the group being organized is directly related to commitment because without a core group that is willing to attend meetings regularly, gather information, volunteer to

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[20] Michael Ganz, Organizing Notes, "What is Organizing?", Spring 2000.
[21] Michael Ganz, Organizing Notes, "Relationships", Spring 2000.

disseminate that information, etc. trusting relationships of interdependence cannot be established, and therefore, common interests cannot be achieved.

In terms of the relationship between the group being organized and those on the other side of the issues, it may be that establishing a new relationship may pave the way to highlighting new interests and new solutions to problems. The management and the residents at Heritage Common have a long-established relationship that has not always been a positive one. At this point in time it is in the best interest of both groups to re-establish a positive relationship so that in turn, they can communicate with each other and seek viable solutions to the problems that Heritage Common faces.

These new relationships grounded in common interests are the starting point for getting people motivated to move their cause forward. The passive attitudes that people may have felt before finding common interests can be moved to action by motivation. A starting point to motivating groups is helping them become conscious of the problems, see their roles in fixing the problem, and formulating and vocalizing their opinions on the issues. In short, in the spirit of Freire, reaching "critical consciousness" is the first step to becoming motivated.[22] Motivation is deeply rooted in emotion. If there are no strong feelings for the issue, motivation to act on it is less likely. For example, at Heritage Common, people have strong feelings about the quality of the maintenance at the property. They are more likely to be involved in a process that tries to deal with this issue rather than one where the focus is job placement and training, an issue that the majority of the respondents to the survey felt was not very important.

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[22] Michael Ganz, Organizing Notes, "Interpretation I: Motivation, Narrative, Celebration", Spring 2000.

Choosing the issues and defining the strategy that the group being organized will use are foundations for an organizing effort. In terms of selecting the issues that will lead the organizing effort, they have to be salient to the majority of the group. Having a vested interest in and being passionate about an issue makes motivation much easier to achieve. At the same time, it is important to choose issues that will generate enough interest while also being reasonable 'winnables' for the group. This is especially critical for a group that is undertaking their first organizing effort. A failed attempt at 'winning' an issue can mean low morale or lack of interest at the next issue that is confronted. Issues should, therefore, be chosen while keeping the resources and assets at the disposal of the community in mind.

For every issue that a community rallies around, there are many strategies for achieving their goals. When beginning an organizing project, the group being organized must first consider the membership's strengths and weaknesses, what their skills and abilities are, the financial position of the group, and who their allies are. See which strategies build the organization's skills, membership and credibility.[23] This will be valuable for future campaigns.

Several strategies should be chosen in case there are any unforeseen circumstances that should arise preventing one strategy from being followed through to completion. Then, consider the time and difficulty of the chosen strategies. Keeping the group energized and interested throughout the process is important for future organizing efforts. The strategies that are picked should be planned and carried out by both the leadership and the membership. They both need to be aware of he long-term and broad

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[23] Si Kahn, Organizing, 1982.

picture and how all the individual parts fit in. It is crucial to avoid the "let's cross the

bridge when we get there" mentality because doing this invests a lot of emotional energy

in *one* outcome. If the outcome is not favorable, morale suffers.

The following are useful pointers to follow for good organizing strategy:

1. Ask questions in order to encourage wide-open thinking.
2. Make sure the strategy is well thought out.
3. The strategy should build on the experiences and skills of the group.
4. Involve members: "People learn just as much from the process as from the product."[24]
5. Be flexible and choose several strategies.
6. Have depth; strive for good ideas but have steps to carry them out as well.
7. Root the strategy in reality – what can the group realistically do?
8. Base the strategy on culture and togetherness.
9. It should be educational. In the process of carrying out the strategy, people should be learning about themselves, the organization, politics, and power.

As outlined above, part of choosing a strategy involves outlining the resources

and assets of the community group. Typically, when we think of resources and assets we

think in financial terms. When mapping resources and assets, we should think outside the

financial box. Resources can be split up in several ways. There are moral resources and

economic resources, as well as natural resources and acquired resources. The latter two

refer to how resources "behave", the former two refer to how they relate to individuals.

Moral resources grow with use. These include but are not limited to relationships,

commitment, and understanding. Economic resources are those that do diminish with use

such as money and materials. Natural resources are what people are born with; spirit,

charisma, time, talents. Acquired resources include skills, money, information, and

equipment.[25]

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[24] ibid, p.158.
[25] Marshall Ganz, Organizing Notes, "Mapping the Social World: Actors Resources and Power", Spring 2000.

Once the strategy has been chosen, and the resources identified, there needs to be a person or group of people that are willing and able to lead the group. Identifying what makes an effective leader is the next step in the process. The main job of a leader is to "facilitate the interdependence and collaboration that can create more *power to* – based on the interests of all parties."[26] A leader needs to not only to bring a group of people with common interests together, and garner their respect and support, but also be willing to listen carefully, discuss openly, and take new ideas from the membership.

Table 2: Key Components of an Effective Leader[27]

"A leader turns….."	"…into…"
…division…	…solidarity by building, maintaining, and developing relationships
…confusion…	…understanding by facilitating interpretation
…reaction…	…initiative by strategizing
…passivity…	…participation by motivation – inspiring people
…inaction…	…action by mobilizing
…drift…	…purpose by accepting responsibility for doing leadership work, and challenging others to accept responsibility

If a group has an effective leader, then what becomes of the role of the organizer? An organizer has different roles depending on the situation of the community they are organizing. In the case of Heritage Common, the organizer was a connection between the inside (in this case the residents at Heritage Common) and the outside (which includes the owners/management company and resources in Lawrence and the academic community.) The organizer in this case also ensured that different variables came together in such a way that the wheels of community organization were set in motion.

In the case of Heritage Common, these variables included the survey that was done of the needs of the community, the surveyor/organizer, and the identification of

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[26] Marshall Ganz, Organizing Notes, "Leadership", Spring 2000.
[27] ibid.

inside leadership which enabled trusting relationships to be built. The act of surveying

the community brought to light issues that were on resident's minds, but not out in the

open. The survey afforded them the opportunity to vocalize their thoughts and opinions.

The surveyor/organizer had the added advantage of crossing the line of institutional

boundaries by being both a graduate student and responsible for a survey mandated by

the owners/managers and crossing cultural boundaries by being bilingual and bicultural.

The organizer in this case brought to the organizing effort resources from both

institutional worlds as well as garnered trust more readily because of the cultural links to

the community.

The relationship between the organizer and the community also benefited from

what Granovetter termed "the strength of weak ties." That is to say that while the

residents had their own, micro-level, networks with each other, their link with the

organizer offered them an opportunity to connect to macro-level networks. Often, micro-

level networks while demonstrating strong ties between the individuals in the network,

tend to close the group off from larger networks with more resources. The weaker ties

that define the connection between the micro and macro levels can often be advantageous

in that they give the community access to more influence and information.[28] The

organizer's role in this case, then, was to be the weak link between different institutional

boundaries and cultural realities. This strengthened the position of the residents in the

organizing efforts.

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[28] Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 78, Number 6.

Theoretical Models for Group Building:

There are many theoretical models for group building. Some models focus on the individual and others focus on the group. Despite having different focuses, the main components of these models can explain motivations for action, styles of group interaction, and stages in the organizing process. These models are applicable to the processes in which the residents of Heritage Common are involved.

A useful model to think about how individuals become involved in community organizing is the Transtheoretical Model of Social Change as put forth by James Prochaska.[29] Although this particular model is regularly applied to changes in health behavior, it can be applicable to the stages individuals go through in the process of becoming active participants in community change. In the case of Heritage Common, the stages of individual change are related to the realization that their participation in the community organizing process is a valuable asset; that community change begins with individual's commitment. The centerpiece of this model is individual empowerment which begins with understanding their roles as members of the community, and the responsibilities that they can assume in the community affect positive change.

Table 2: Transtheoretical Model Constructs[30]

Constructs*	Description	Heritage Common Relevance
Stages of Change		
Precontemplation	Has no intention to take action within 6 months	No thought of participating in group
Contemplation	Intends to take action within 6 months	Intends to participate
Preparation	Intends to take action within the next 30 days and has taken some behavioral steps in this direction	Has shown interest in group activities and will attend next meeting
Action	Has changed overt behavior for less than	Has gone to monthly meetings

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[29] Prochaska et al. "The Transtheoretical Model and Stages of Change", Health Behavior and Health Education: Theory Research and Practice, ed. Glanz, Lewis and Rimer, 1997, p. 60.
[30] Ibid., p.62.

	6 months	
Maintenance	Has changed overt behavior for more than 6 months	Has attended for 6 months
Decisional Balance		
Pros	The benefits of changing	Benefits to residents of participation
Cons	The costs of changing	Costs in terms of private time
Process of Change		
consciousness raising	Finding and learning new facts, ideas, and tips that support the healthy behavioral change	Seeing that participation matters by way of new facts, ideas, tips
dramatic relief	Experiencing negative emotions (fear, anxiety, worry) that go along with unhealthy behavioral risks	Experiencing stagnant community relationships and no positive change
self-reevaluation	Realizing that the behavioral change is an important part of one's identity as a person	Realizing that one's opinion counts in the community process
environmental reevaluation	Realizing the negative impact of unhealthy behavior or the positive impact of healthy behavior on one's proximal social and physical environment	Realizing that individual action contributes to positive community change
self-liberation	Making a firm commitment to change	Making a firm commitment to change the community for the better
helping relationships	Seeking and using social support for healthy behavioral change	Constructing new support networks for the community as a whole
social liberation	Realizing that the social norms are changing in the direction of supporting the healthy behavioral change	Realizing that atmosphere of the community is changing in a positive direction due to action

* Some parts of the theory less applicable to individual participation in community organizing. These include self-efficacy, counterconditioning, contingency management, and stimulus control.

For the sake of this analysis, "healthy behavioral change" as applied to community organizing can refer to an individual resident's decisions to become involved. Whereas unhealthy change is the process by which that individual does not feel that community participation is important, and therefore, insulates themselves from community action. In the case of Heritage Common, there are several people that can be thought of as having already gone through these stages. They see the importance of their participation in the activities benefiting the community as a whole. This is not to say that only those individuals active in the monthly meetings are exhibiting "healthy behavior." There are many people who know the importance of community action yet cannot participate due to

familial and time constraints. They have, however, volunteered their time should the need arise.

In light of the research at Heritage Common, however, it is safe to say that the majority of the residents are somewhere in the process of realizing the value of community action. The reasons for lack of participation are many. They can range from not identifying with the issues that are being promoted by the organized group, not feeling a part of the community due to tenure or class/racial/ethnic differences, feeling that their privacy will be invaded, and lack of time. For some, participation in community action will never be a part of who they are. For others, it is a question of time and gaining access to information through the efforts of others in the community that will start them on the process of being a part of community organizing efforts.

In terms of theoretical models for groups, the best known typology is Rothman's categorization of community change.[31] Within this framework, there are three models of practice: locality development, social planning and social action. Locality development is very process oriented. The group moves forward by concentrating on "consensus and cooperation" as well as "building group identity and a sense of community."[32] Heritage Common fares well in the regard because it is a relatively stable community. There is not a frequent turn-over of residents. Most stay long enough to be invested in activities that promote improvement for the community. On the other hand, social planning is very task oriented and is usually carried forth by an "outside expert." This type of organizing would not be very successful at Heritage Common because there is a core group of

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[31] Ibid, p. 60.

residents that have taken the task of action for change very seriously. Finally, the social action model is a combination of both locality development and social planning models. It is both task and process driven. Specifically, "it is concerned with increasing the community's problem-solving ability and with achieving concrete changes to redress imbalances of power and privilege between an oppressed or disadvantaged group and the larger society."[33]

It is important to note that while these models of community organizing have been practiced for over twenty years, they have their limitations. The most glaring is that it is problem based and organizer centered. The models put forth in Rothman's typology have become building blocks to other models that include a focus on building communities' strengths and leadership. As a result, newer models have included effective ways to "identify shared values and nurture the development of shared goals" from within the community context rather than garnering them from an outside source (i.e. a community organizer that is not a member of the community.) The result of mixing methods are models such as Himmelman's collaborative empowerment model.[34] It includes traditional approaches such as "clarifying the community's purpose and vision, examining what others have done, and building on a community's power base" but also includes allowing the community to play the lead role in change so that 'empowerment' can be achieved.[35] Heritage Common exemplifies this model in that the organizing effort was a result of an outside force clarifying the purpose and vision. At

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[32]Minkler and Wallerstein, "Improving Health Through Community Organization and Community Building", Health Behavior and Health Education: Theory Research and Practice, ed. Glanz, Lewis and Rimer, 1997, p. 246.
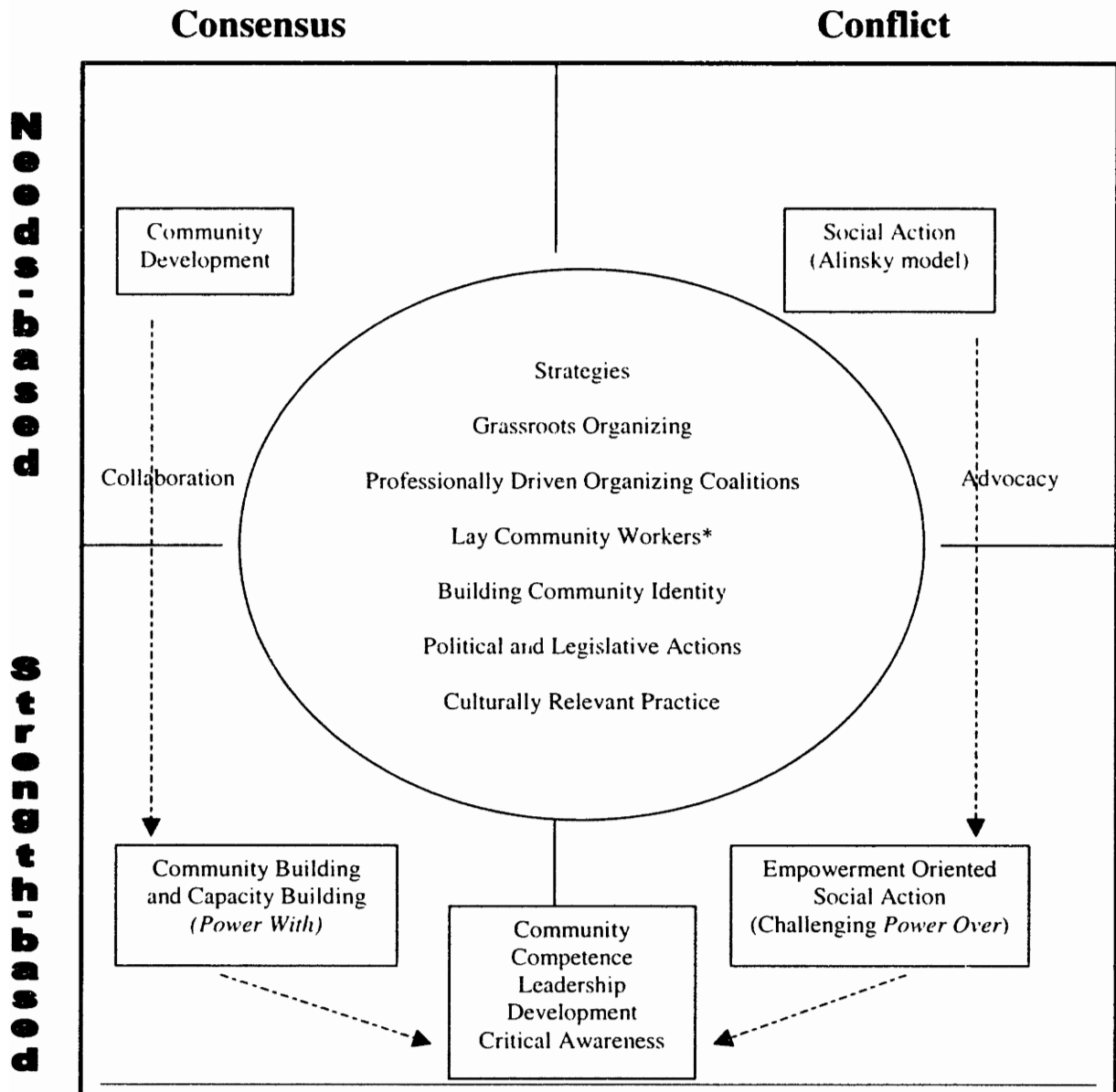[33] Ibid.
[34] Himmelman, A.T. "Communities Working Collaboratively for a Change." Unpublished manuscript. July 1992.

the same time, inside forces, namely the resident's desire to participate in a group whose goals is to mobilize change, played the lead role in the changes taking place.

A useful way of visualizing the intersections of older organizing approaches with newer approaches appears in the following chart:

Figure 1: Community Organization and Community Building Typology[36]

Consensus   Conflict

Needs-based / Strength-based

Community Development

Social Action (Alinsky model)

Collaboration   Advocacy

Strategies

Grassroots Organizing

Professionally Driven Organizing Coalitions

Lay Community Workers*

Building Community Identity

Political and Legislative Actions

Culturally Relevant Practice

Community Building and Capacity Building *(Power With)*

Empowerment Oriented Social Action (Challenging *Power Over*)

Community Competence Leadership Development Critical Awareness

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[35] Minkler and Wallerstein, p 247.
[36] Ibid., p. 248.

This chart suggests that both organizing approaches can be carried out simultaneously. Ganz suggests that the group needs to gain the knowledge of challenging *power over* before it can begin the process of demanding the *power with*. In the case of Heritage Common this is especially pertinent because the residents are establishing their roles as players in the power structure of the community. Their role as a part of the formal process and the responsibilities of management to the residents needs to be explicitly stated. In other words, the Committee must demand formal recognition from the management and demand a position in the decision making process.

As cited in various examples above, the theories on organizing and the theoretical models of group building are directly applicable to the research conducted at Heritage Common. In this case study, the theory informs the practical.