Generational Changes and Leadership:
Implications For Social Change Organizations

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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

The Generational Change project was designed to investigate and understand differences between older and younger people working in progressive social change organizations in the nonprofit sector with a special emphasis on building young leadership. The project is a qualitative study of thirty-seven directors and staff in sixteen nonprofits located in Boston and New York.[1] The findings of the study seem to refute the notion of large generational differences. Older and younger people involved in these organizations have many of the same qualities: commitment, concern, energy, interest, and a strong belief in justice. However, there are differences between those who were born in the Baby Boom generation and those who identify more with Generation X. These differences and their impact on future leadership are noted below.

Summary of Findings

Background
- Older participants frequently referred to their involvement in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which provided them with an exposure to ideas and situations that unveiled the 'causes' of the problems facing society. They entered the nonprofit sector to work in an organization where they could, 'change the world' and never left.

- Most of the younger participants were drawn to social change nonprofits because of personal experiences and a desire to help those in their communities or in situations similar to their own.

- Younger directors were more likely than their older peers to report having worked in the for-profit sector, which they found especially useful in their current position. In addition, all but one of the younger directors had attended an elite college or university that no doubt added to their credibility as young leaders of social change organizations.

- Younger staff, especially those from the organization's constituent groups, often reported how young directors had identified and then recruited them into their current positions.

Work/Personal Life Divide
- Younger participants in the study were committed to their work and to their organizations, putting in long hours on the job. However, many of the younger

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[1] Directors were usually the executive director of the organization. In some cases they were one of the co-directors, and in collectives, it was either a founder or someone in the collective chosen to represent the group. Older participants were 45 years or older and younger participants were under 40.

respondents were struggling with how to balance the demands of their work and having a life outside the job. Several, particularly the young men, worried about how to continue their work and make time for a family.

- Most of the older people interviewed seemed to have resolved the tensions between their work and their personal lives. It remains unclear whether they had less conflict because they were different than their younger peers or simply because they are in a different stage of the life cycle.

- Younger participants did not report talking with older directors or staff about the work/personal life challenges they faced, nor did older directors seemed to be aware of this conflict.

Enjoyment
- When asked what they enjoyed in their work, all respondents talked about the satisfaction they found in helping other people, whether it was providing a service, advocating for reform, or providing venues for constituents to organize for their own political interests. For staff and directors who came from the communities being served, there was a special enjoyment in being able to help others like themselves.

- Young staff members talked about how they enjoyed working in their particular organization because of its values and the people they worked with. They especially talked about the collegiality or family-like feeling of the staff.

- Directors – both older and younger -- mentioned the challenge of the position as a great source of enjoyment. They liked the creativity, problem solving and daily juggling (of time and resources) that the position required.

- In general, younger respondents were more effusive about their work, often talking about their 'love 'of their jobs, and their desire never to have to leave.

Challenges
- The interviews revealed differences between the generations in the challenges individuals felt their work and organizations presented them, however, those difference tended to be most closely tied to an individual's role in the organization. For older directors, the challenges lay in administrative tasks and the demands of funding. Younger directors were more focused on the challenges they faced of how to grow and change their organizations while still meeting the needs of their constituents.

- Young staffers were particularly challenged by trying to meet the demands of constituents which often meant they spent long hours at the job. This challenge was exacerbated in situations where the young staff member did not feel their friends and family understood why they put so much time into their work.

- Participants at all ages and levels within organizations frequently mentioned their impatience with the slow pace of change. In addition some of the young participants were particularly struck by the inability of different groups to work together and expressed frustration that the larger goal of social change was subverted by individual 'ego' needs.

Decision-Making
- Overall, there was an unspoken assumption that involving staff members in decision-making was an important value in social change work. However, despite the directors' determination to include staff (and in some cases constituents), staff were often confused about the process, especially in organizations with older directors. Young staff members would talk about having 'input' into decision-making, but often seemed unclear about their real power and authority.

- The study revealed two major styles of decision-making. The first, used by older and younger directors, ranged from input to collective decision-making (with high levels of discussion), which required a lot of time and energy of all staff. The second, more likely to be used by young directors, operated on a flattened hierarchical model (that gave staff autonomy and freedom to accomplish certain tasks), which required less time and energy of all staff.

- Younger directors were more likely to talk about and try different approaches for making decisions. One organization had both a leadership circle and weekly staff meetings, another had several team meetings led by the director, and a third discussed a team approach that would make decisions by consensus and bring any conflicts to the executive director. All of these processes were designed to maximize staff involvement.

Leadership
- Vision, communication skills, collaborative style and concern about staff were noted across all age groups and positions as qualities of good leadership in social change organizations.

- Older directors discussed leadership in two ways. Founders were more likely to focus on the values and skills that would be needed for their successor. Older directors who were not founders tended to describe leadership as a way to reflect on the qualities they have been able to bring to their work.

- Younger directors were more focused on building new leadership, both in their organization and as an important quality of a leader. They also talked about how good leaders need to listen to and get help from others.

- For younger staff members, vision and communication were key components to leadership. They were more likely to have high expectations of leadership and seemed surprisingly unconcerned about their own leadership qualities.

Training for Leaders
- The respondents in this study seemed to believe that any formal training on how to run an organization was unnecessary and perhaps even harmful. For the most part they were skeptical of graduate programs in administration or nonprofit management and felt what skills were needed could be learned from experience on the job.

- Several of the directors we talked with noted that they had gone back to get an advanced degree for 'the credential'. People of color and young people were more likely to talk about this need.

- The importance of life as well as work experience was noted by several of the younger staff members that were part of the constituencies the organizations served. Young staff members were also more likely to talk about the need to learn more theory about the root causes behind the problems that their work was intended to address.

Race and Gender
- Race and gender, but especially race, are still subjects that are hard to address, even in social change organizations. Age does not seem to be a determining factor though older white male directors seem to be more on the defensive than their younger counterparts.

- Many of the people of color we interviewed – both staff and directors – talked about the race dynamics among the different groups that make up the people of color category. For leaders of color, this often meant fighting stereotypes, especially that they were only interested in serving their own race/ethnicity. Older leaders of color were also more likely to talk about how the problems of race in the social change community worsened over in the last twenty years.

- Older and younger white directors and staff answered the questions about the impact of race and gender on leadership in terms of their own organizations efforts to hire and maintain a racially diverse staff. Race was often talked about separate from its relationship to power.

- In general, there was less overt tension around the subject of gender. When asked directly, most directors, men and women, thought that gender was not an issue in their organization, citing as evidence the number of women working in the organization, especially those in leadership positions. However, the staff did not always corroborate this response.

Future
- Most of the older directors had no intention of leaving their jobs. They often had built their life around their work, and the idea that they would do something else made

little sense to them. They seemed at loss imagining what they would do if they were no longer to run their current organizations.

- Younger directors' ideas about the future were similar to their older peers. Although several were conflicted by a sense that they should move on for the sake of the organization, leaving their position was something that they were clearly in no hurry to do. Like their older counterparts, younger directors talked about the importance of staying with the organization as a place to express their creativity and passion.

- Although they were clearly dedicated to their jobs and to social change, staff members of all ages found it far easier than directors to envision future work outside of their current organization. Their responses ranged from older staff members thinking of retirement, to young people talking about returning to school.

- Staff members who were in their mid-thirties to mid-forties experienced the most conflict. They were in supervisory or administrative jobs, but it was clear that they were not going to have the opportunity to head their current organization, so they struggled with what that meant for their future.

Summary of Recommendations

The Generation Gap in Leadership
Among the respondents, it was evident that there was a gap between younger staffers and directors, and current older leadership. Older directors almost never spoke of younger staffers or peers either as people to mentor or nurture, as colleagues, or as future leaders in their organizations. Very few of the younger directors talked about learning from or talking to older peers, instead they learned from the work. If there is a real interest in the continuation of existing social change organizations that sustain and build on existing work, it is not clear how that will happen in any systematic way in light of these findings.

- Older directors could be encouraged and taught how to recognize young leadership from within and outside of their organization. Younger directors could also be encouraged to continue to identify and build new leadership.

- Young people in social change organizations could be encouraged by their directors to take on positions of authority and responsibility with support that would give them the types of experiences they need to develop their skills.

- Funders could support directors in this endeavor by encouraging organizations to invest in young leaders.

Integration: Work and Personal Life
The culture of social change work -- never being able to do or give enough -- seemed to be passed on directly or indirectly from one generation to the next. And though this did not cause a problem for everyone, it was painful to see how much some young people –

so dedicated to social justice – were left without guidance or tools for how to solve this very basic dilemma.

- There needs to be serious consideration of how to create manageable jobs that allow time for family life and relaxation. It is important to acknowledge that staff members do derive meaning from their work, and at the same time need to limit the reach work has into every aspect of their life.

- Older directors should spend time with young staff and younger directors to help them strategize ways they can stay in the work while maintaining activities outside.

Training for New Leaders
Older respondents entered social change work full of political knowledge but without management skills; younger people were often more interested in management but lacked education about the structured causes of problems. Both age groups stressed the lack of relevancy of nonprofit management degrees to *their* type of work. Ironically, without appropriate programs in this area, there is a danger that only those who attend elite institutions of higher education will have the legitimacy needed to be credible leaders of social change organizations, new or old.

- Programs designed to train nonprofit managers need to be questioned about their relevancy to those involved (or interested) in social change work. Management programs should include room for those interested in pursuing a variety of alternative organizational models

- It should be made clear to staff members what pathways will lead to higher leadership positions. These should be realistic and based on examples, and staffers should be given support – through scholarships, time off, work/study – to pursue these different options.

Running the Organization
Clearly articulated expectations of staff especially in organizational decision-making is not only helpful in retaining employees, it can also be a fertile ground for training new leadership. Directors need education about the different ways to run organizational decision-making processes.

- Different models of structuring and making decision in social change organizations should be defined to use for training directors and staff.

- There needs to be a clearer understanding of which models work well under what circumstances, as well as what type of person thrives under the different models.

- This type of education should be accompanied by case studies either from the participants or from other organizations. All of these can be used to train staff and to further develop models of decision-making that develop young leaders and support older ones as well.

Race, Gender, and Power
Looking to encourage new directors to enter social change work may mean that social change organizations need to look more closely at how they address the issues of race, gender and power within the organization.

- Training in diversity is now commonplace in most of the social change organizations. These efforts should continue to be supported, and expanded to include an understanding that the numbers of people of color or women alone does not address the complex issues related to race and gender.

- Directors of social change organizations should be encouraged to think how addressing the issue of race and gender might help them to identify new potential leaders in the organization.

Planning for Succession
It appears to be extremely difficult for older directors, even those who are in the process of changing their jobs, to think about working outside of their organizations. Based on their responses, it would not be a surprise if many of the younger leaders became long-term leaders of their organizations and eventually confront some of the same problems as their older peers.

- Structuring exchanges between younger and older leaders could be a useful tool in addressing the growing concern about developing and training strong leadership. In addition, providing places where older directors together are encouraged to think about the future of their organization might help them to discuss these sensitive topics.

- Not addressing succession at all is problematic for both the individuals who have run these organizations for so long and for the staff members who work with them.

- There needs to be a better way to acknowledge and support – financially and otherwise - older directors who are thinking of leaving their positions. Giving them the respect they deserve for a lifetime of work is extremely important and a good model for emerging leaders of the future.

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Introduction

The Generational Change project was conceived as a way to investigate and understand differences between older and younger people working in progressive social change organizations in the nonprofit sector. The project is a qualitative study of thirty-seven leaders and staff in sixteen nonprofits located in Boston and New York. All of the groups selected for the project were committed to social change, that is, to transforming larger systems that they identified as the cause of problems facing their constituent populations. The people interviewed – older and younger directors[2] and staff – were asked a series of questions that were designed both to identify whether there were differences in attitudes and assumptions between older and younger people working in social change organizations, and to uncover other issues or concerns.

The Generational Change project asked people – directly or indirectly – about these different areas to see how those working in social change organizations fit into these reported trends. The findings of the study seem to refute the notion of large generational differences. However, the responses do indicate that older and younger people working for social change have different needs. This summary will report on nine different areas we explored with those we interviewed: 1) their backgrounds; 2) their views of the work/personal life divide; 3) the things they enjoy about their work; 4) what they find challenging; 5) their reports on how decisions are made within the organization; 6) their views of leadership; 7) the type training leaders need; 8) how they saw issues of race and

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[2] The director is usually the executive director of the organization. In some cases it was one of the co-directors, and in collectives, it was either a founder or someone in the collective chosen to represent the group.

gender; and 9) their thoughts about the future. We also will make recommendations on how both practitioners and researchers might proceed based on these findings.

Contrary to our initial expectations, there were not consistent and sharp differences between older and younger generations, either leaders or staff. What the project did uncover were the pathways, or lack thereof, for dedicated younger staff to become leaders in organizations, especially those run by older directors. It became clear for those groups in the study, that training for and assuming leadership of a social change organization was a difficult road for a young person to follow, even for those who had been successful. The findings also point to how the organizational context in which people worked, that is, the structure and history of the organization, has a significant affect on the way older and younger leaders and staff operate within those organizations. As a result, information such as to whom the current leader was accountable; whether the organization reflected the leader's vision for change or a larger vision built with the board, staff and/or constituents; and the reasons funders invested in the group may all turn out to be extremely important. The findings of the study point to the need for us to understand the way these organizations operate as well as the people drawn to leading them, in order to have a significant impact on recruiting and maintaining the next generation of leaders.

Background

In 1991, Douglas Coupland's novel, *Generation X* created a sensation as it described a post-Baby Boomer generation whose values and interests were highly divergent from those that preceded them. Distinguishing themselves from the Baby-Boomer generation (born between1946 and 1964), GenXers (born between 1965 and1979) claimed to have a different attitude and orientation towards work and life.

The release of Coupland's book marked the beginning of a proliferation of books, magazine and newspaper articles, websites and discussions devoted to generational differences. (for example, Levin, 2001; Filipczak, Raines, and Zemke, 2000; Jurkiewicz 2000; Bagley, 1998; Bennett and Rademacher, 1997; Tulgan, 1996; Strauss and Howe, 1993, 1991; Ratan, 1993) GenXers are often characterized as "slackers" (Filipczak et. al.,

Tulgan) materialistic (Halstead, 1999, Hornblower,1997); independent (Filipczak et. al.,Tulgan); technologically savvy (Filipczak et. al , Tulgan); adverse to micromanagement (Lancaster, Lynne and Stillman, 2002; Tuglan); distrustful of government and traditional institutions (Hornblower; Tulgan); less loyal to a specific workplace (Lancaster et. al.; Tuglan); and interested in spending less time at work without giving up a high standard of living (Filipczak et. al.). Various speculative explanations were offered for these characteristics, such as less parental involvement and supervision while growing up -- making them strongly independent and self-reliant --; rejection of their parents' dedication and hard work that resulted in ruthless job cuts -- causing Xers to lack of loyalty to organizations and place more emphasis on work/personal life balance--; and exposure to technology at an earlier age -- resulting in the Xers' techno-savvy approach and preference for getting things done quickly (Filipczak et. al.; Lancaster et. al., 2002; Tuglan). However, despite these and a host of other assertions about GenX and now, Generation Y, there was little research evidence that supported or refuted these claims.

A brief look at some of the available survey data sheds some light on the reports in the popular literature. A survey conducted by Catalyst of New York showed Gen X's attitudes about work to be contrary to those proposed in the literature. (Catalyst, 2001) Of 1263 Gen Xers, 85% reported to care about the fate of their organization and 83% stated a willingness to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected in order to help their organizations.

The General Social Survey (GSS) was revealing in exploring the differences between the generations suggested in the literature. (General Social Survey, 1972-2000) GSS asked 'Baby Boomers' and 'Gen Xers' questions about their work values and behaviors and the data show remarkably little difference between the generations in relation to their attitude and habits at work.[3] For example, the GSS data reports that 2.4% of the Gen Xers and

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[3] The age ranges used to define the Baby Boomer generation and Generation X reflect definitions found in the literature. In our study, the older directors and staff members tended to be slightly older than the referenced "Baby Boomer", however, adjusting the statistics for that difference reveals no notable difference in the responses.

2% of the Baby Boomers surveyed responded that short working hours was the most important aspect of a job. The survey also found that 24.4% of Gen Xers and 24.5% of Baby Boomers said that high income was most important. Gen Xers confirmed their willingness to work harder that necessary to help their organizations, despite current lore to the contrary. In fact 90.3% said they strongly agree or agree that they are willing to work harder than is necessary, a number almost identical to – and even slightly *greater* – than the Boomers' 89.1%. Data on job satisfaction showed that 45% of the Baby Boomers surveyed reported themselves to be very satisfied with their current job, with Gen Xers at only a slightly lower figure of 42.3%. Furthermore, in 1983, when the Boomer generation was approximately the same age as the Gen Xers, only 36.1% of the Boomers reported they were very satisfied in their jobs. This suggests that differences in job satisfaction between the two generations could be attributed to a life-stage/cycle phenomenon rather than generational difference.

Other data sets yielded similar results. For example, in 1997 the Labor Day Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates (Princeton Research Associates, 1997) showed that 49% of the Gen Xers and 51% of the Baby Boomers interviewed reported that in conflicts between work responsibilities and family responsibilities, their families suffer more.

Differences did appear in some surveys, but not always in ways described by the popular literature. For example, the results of *Time* magazine's 1997 survey revealed that 48% of Gen Xers thought that it was a good time to cut back on work hours to spend more time with family, compared to 58% of the Boomers. (Time, C.N.N. and Yankelovich Partners, 1997) In 1997 the Virginia Slims American Women's Survey conducted by the Roper Center found that 39% of Gen X men responded that their work was a "career" than "just a job" compared to 65% of the male Baby Boomers. The statistics, however, look different for women: 32% of the Gen X women and 47% of the Baby Boom women considered that their work was a career, suggesting, in addition to the generation gap, there are also differences between the genders. (Virginia Slims American Women's Opinion Poll, 1995)

An interesting findings appears in Radcliffe Public Policy Center's Life's Work survey: 82% of males aged 20-39 ranked "having a work schedule which allows me to spend time with my family" as the most important characteristic of a job, versus 67.5% of their baby boom counterpart. (Radcliffe Public Policy Center, 2001) In addition, 70% of Gen X men said they want to spend more time with their families and would be willing to sacrifice pay to do so. This particular finding came through in this study as well, indicating that the popular assumption that Generation X is more concerned with balancing work and personal life is in fact true. And yet, Generation X still reports far less success in achieving this balance. The Virginia Slims survey reported that only 26% of female and 25% male Gen Xers feel strongly that they do a good job balancing work and family, whereas of 36% of women ages 40-59 and 42.5% of men ages 40-59 feel strongly that they do.

The data raise questions about the role of life-cycle and gender difference, and perhaps also a difference in *meaning attached to work* between the generations.[4] Karl Mannheim (1952) argued that generations are "indispensable guides to an understanding of the structure of social and intellectual movements." He also noted that sharing "location" alone does not ensure a common outlook or participation in a common destiny. Mannheim distinguishes between a generation and "generation unit". A generation unit, according to Mannheim, represents a more concrete bond formed through shared mental data, fundamental attitudes, and responses, all of which transcend the "biological rhythm of birth and death" and historical co-presence. Such bonds may be unconscious or intentional. Viewed in this manner, any generation is comprised of different, and perhaps opposing, generation units. Mannheim claims that these distinctions are important, because otherwise purely biological data may be used to generalize and gloss over more complex social and cultural forces and subtleties.

In light of this, one might question the appropriateness of applying the characteristics of "Generation X" across an entire birth cohort. Indeed, if one examines more closely the

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[4] An argument proposed by the study's Research Assistant, Curtis Ogden, an Xer.

targets and creators of this label, a more fractured picture emerges. Andrew Levy (1994) writes that the term "Generation X" is most appropriately applied to white people, and not necessarily to African American, Latino, and other non-white ethnic and cultural groups who would not identify with its popularly defined characteristics. Anthropologist Beth Kaminow agrees that Generation X is a "temporal subculture" defined more by "social signs" than by birth years. She suggests that "Gen X" as a subculture tends to be mostly white, from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds, and encompasses certain social or sub-cultural practices, including an affinity for technology and Gothic style of clothing. (Kaminow, 1999, Strauss and Howe, 1991) Kaminow wrote that people who self-identify as Generation X are to be considered most seriously as members. Similarly, Strauss and Howe point to "awareness of generational membership" as a key to shaping a boundary cohort, both in terms of where it is at any given moment, and where it expects to go.

Thompson, Clark and Gunn Jr. (1985) suggest that understanding generational differences or attributes may be further complicated by life or developmental stage, or by lineage position. For example, they note that parents often perceive greater continuity of attitudes across generations than do their children, perhaps due to the fact that parents have a greater stake in maintaining these cross-generational relationships. This therefore raises some questions about the *source* of stated generational differences.

The nonprofit sector literature on difference between Generation X and Baby Boomers is more focused on civic engagement than on organizational leadership. For example, Goss (1999) has shown that rates of volunteering have remained constant since 1975, a fact that she attributes to the increase in time given by older volunteers rather than the entry of new and younger volunteers. The participation of younger people - --especially Generation X -- in volunteer activities is highlighted in a study done for Public Allies and the Surdna Foundation. The study found high rates of volunteer activity among those aged 18 –30, but low rates of political involvement. (Hart, 1998) Another study of civic and political involvement had a similar finding, showing Generation X less likely to vote than Baby Boomers and other older cohorts. (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, and Jenkins,

2002) Younger cohorts' civic activities also are reported to be more focused on changing individuals than institutions. (Hart 1998; Mesch, Tschirhart, Perry and Lee, 1998)

One exception to these studies is the work of Onyx and Maclean (1996) who looked at motivation among paid nonprofit staff in Australia. They found younger workers were more likely to have a political and/or philosophical commitment to their work, where older workers were motivated by religious beliefs. Across generations, workers were unlikely to be motivated by prestige and over 80% preferred working in teams where they can participate in the decisions made by the organization. In addition, Nazy'at and Baily (1999) speculate that young staff and constituents in community based organizations lack Baby Boomer mentors.

Methodology

METHODS

In keeping with the aims of this research project–to explore the ways in which generational differences might be interacting with leadership transition in social change organizations–the study relied on qualitative methods of data-collection and analysis. Respondents were selected based on theoretically relevant characteristics, including their organizational contexts, rather than for statistical generalizability. Most of the data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews in which respondents were guided but not constrained by a set of open-ended questions.[5] Interviews were conducted by project staff members (three women, two of whom are women of color) at the respondent's organization. Interviews ran between 50 and 180 minutes in length and were tape-recorded.

Additional data on the organizations were gathered from a variety of sources, including agency documents, websites, and informational forms completed by agency respondents. Interview transcripts were analyzed for content relating to the original research questions and for themes emerging from the respondents' accounts of their experience. The analysis was conducted using QSR N-Vivo, a computer program designed for qualitative-data analysis.

Sample Selection

Given the project's motivating questions, the data collection plan was designed to gather information on the experiences and attitudes primarily of older leaders and younger staff members in social change organizations. But if the sample were limited to these two groups, there would be no way to disentangle differences associated with organizational

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[5] A copy of the topic guide may be found in Appendix C

position from those relating to age. For purposes of comparison, then, the total sample also included younger leaders as well as staff members in their organizations.

Because race and gender had been identified (through discussions and literature review) as potentially important factors affecting leadership style and succession, the design called for diversity among respondents on these dimensions as well as on age. In addition, certain organizational characteristics–such as location, size, age, and nature of activity–were expected to be relevant to the study concerns. The combination of respondent characteristics with organizational features informed the design of our intended sample, which included the following objectives:

- variation by city, in this case, approximately half of the organizations in Boston and half in New York;
- variation by nature of principal activity, categorized as advocacy, service, and organizing, with roughly one third of the organizations in each category;
- all organizations would be small to-mid-sized, ideally with staffs of at least 5 people and no more than 40, and annual budgets between $300,000 and $2,000,000;
- most leaders would be in "established" organizations –i.e., in existence roughly 10 years or more, but a small sample would be young entrepreneurs–i.e., young founders of organizations in existence less than 10 years;
- half or more of the leaders would be older (over 45) and the rest younger; they would be diverse in terms of gender and race;
- the second respondent in each organization would be a young staff member who could have leadership responsibilities or be in line for such responsibilities.

The initial plan was to identify 18 agencies–half in Boston, half in New York, evenly divided among the three activity categories–in which we could locate appropriate respondents. We began by developing a comprehensive list of possible organizations,

gathering data on their leadership and other characteristics. We approached 18 organizations for possible inclusion in the study; 16 ultimately agreed to participate.

The final sample deviated from the initial design in certain respects–for example, several organizations had budgets higher than the original limit and some "established" organizations were younger than 10 years old. (See Table 1, Appendix D, for characteristics of the final group of organizations in which respondents were located; note that data are incomplete for three organizations.) As planned, though, the agencies ranged in size from small (staff size 4 or less; smallest annual budget $76,848) to medium-sized (the largest had a staff of 49 people with a budget of $3.3 million); the median number of staff members was 14 and the median budget roughly $1.5 million. Though the oldest agency had been in existence for over a hundred years, the median organizational age was 18 years, with five agencies in existence less than a decade. As intended, slightly over half of the single-director agencies were headed by older leaders (ages 45-69). Of the two agencies with co-leaders/collective members, one was led by younger people and the other by a mixed-age team.

The organizations were diverse in many respects.[6] Most had predominantly female staffs (the median percent male was only 30%), though three were about half male. People of color were also heavily represented among agency staffs: The median figure for the proportion of the staff that was white was only 27%, and only four agencies had staffs that were predominantly white (53%-92% white). Agency directors were somewhat more likely to be white (of organizations headed by a single director, over half had a white leader). Compared to staff members, directors were disproportionately male (about 64% of agencies with a single director had a male leader). Organizational activities were highly varied, including providing legal assistance for minority communities, organizing

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[6]Because this was an exploratory study, the sample was constructed to include considerable diversity (along a variety of dimensions), and not to reflect the composition of social change organizations as a whole. The data gathered in this study shed light on the problem of leadership in social change non-profits and raise interesting questions for further study, but should not be used to draw conclusions about all social change non-profit organizations.

and serving poor women, educating and advocating for youth, and doing community-based development and organizing, among others.

For purposes of understanding the context in which our respondents worked, it is relevant to note that organizations headed by younger leaders were different, on average, from those headed by older leaders.[7] Older leaders tended to head larger, older agencies: The median age of these agencies was 21 years (none was younger than 10 years old), median budget $2,150,000 (the smallest was $325,000), and median staff size 21 (smallest 4). By contrast, organizations headed by younger leaders had a median age of 8 years (two-thirds were less than 10 years old), a median annual budget of $1,174,000, and a median staff size of 14. The staff demographics between the two groups of agencies were similar for gender (median about 30% male) but slightly different for race: The median percent white was 26% in agencies with younger leaders, versus a median figure of 31% white among older-leaders' agencies.

The agencies headed by our respondents of color had, on average, smaller staffs (median 14 versus 21) and somewhat smaller budgets (median $1.4 million versus $1.9 million) than the agencies headed by white respondents. Most notably, though, agencies headed by people of color had staffs that were considerably less white (23% median versus 49% median among agencies headed by whites) and somewhat less male (27% median versus 35% median). Agencies headed by women were roughly the same age and size (in terms of budget) on average as those headed by men, though the staff size in women's agencies was larger. Median staff demographic figures were similar across these two sets of agencies (about 30% male and roughly 30% white for each group).

The primary selection of respondents was on the basis of leader and organizational characteristics. Table 2, Appendix E, gives some basic demographic characteristics of the respondents by organizational position and age group. Thirteen respondents were single directors of established organizations (i.e., organizations that had been in existence

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[7]These observations are based on organizations that had a single director, 14 of the 16 organizations in which interviews were conducted.

over ten years, or in one case, an organization that was younger but not founded by the current leader.[8] Of this group, nine were older (ages 45-69) and four were younger (ages 27-36). Two of our interviewees were members of a self-described collective and therefore not categorized as single leaders; one of these was older (54) and one younger (32). Finally, in accord with our plan to talk to young people who had established their own organizations rather than assuming leadership in an existing non-profit, we interviewed four young "entrepreneurs"–one of whom (at 41) was slightly older than the other young leaders. In the analysis that follows, this entrepreneurial group is usually included within the general category of "younger leaders." Where they differed in ways relevant to the analysis, they are identified as a separate group.

It is also noteworthy that several of our older leaders were founders of their organizations, which gave them a particularly strong connection to the organization and undoubtedly shaped their views on the questions we asked. Of the nine older, single leaders, five were founders and one had been with the organization for most of its life (over 20 years, far longer than anyone else in the organization). The analysis of the general category of older leaders reported below is thus strongly influenced by the founder roles most of them occupied.

Of the total of 19 leaders interviewed, roughly one-quarter fell into each of the four race/gender categories (women of color, men of color, white women, white men). The ten older leaders were evenly divided by race (half whites, half people of color) and gender. Slightly more of the older leaders of color were female and slightly more of the older whites were male. Among younger leaders, five of the nine were people of color and five were men. Here the whites included two men and two women, the people of color three men and two women. Finally, it should be noted that three of the four co-leaders/collective members were women, and three of the four were people of color, so among single leaders the proportions of men and whites were higher than among all leaders.

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[8]As noted on Table 2, two of these were associated with the same organization: One was the recently retired director and the other newly hired.

Once a leader had been interviewed, he or she was asked to identify a younger staff member with some responsibility who could represent a different view of the organization. We followed up on these referrals and arranged interviews with the designated staff members. On conducting the second set of interviews we learned that several of the staff respondents were older than we had intended for this part of the study sample (the intent was to interview staffers under the age of 35).[9] In most cases, the staff members in question were only slightly older (still members of Generation X), but in a few cases were old enough to be members of the Baby Boom generation. To learn as much as possible about the organizations, we went ahead with all these interviews, and in addition, in some organizations we conducted a third interview to ensure adequate representation of the very youngest staff members in our sample.[10] As shown on Table 2, of the 19 staff members we interviewed, eleven were ages 21-34, five were slightly older members of the younger generation (36-42), and three were old enough to be considered part of the Baby Boom generation (50-62). All of the staff respondents aged 35 and over had significant responsibility within the organization. Among the youngest respondents there was more variation on this dimension, but most did have some autonomy and/or responsibility in their work.

The inclusion of a range of ages among staff members turned out to be revealing in several ways. Interviews with the oldest staff members allowed us to investigate the phenomenon of a leader preparing to leave an organization by bringing in a second-in-command who was much closer in age to herself than to younger staff members. Interviews with the older members of Generation X provided a perspective on the organizations that was quite different from the views of either the leaders or the youngest

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[9]When asking for the name of another person to interview, we tried to indicate that we wanted to talk to someone who had some responsibility in the organization, to distinguish potential next-generation leaders from other staff members. It may have been this framing of the request that led some leaders to refer us to somewhat older staff members than we were seeking.

[10]We were able to obtain interviews with staff members under age 35 in all but three of the organizations, and even in these cases, the youngest staff member interviewed was still a member of Generation X, albeit at the older end (they fell into the 37-42 age range).

staff members. Some of the nuances of generational differences, and differences within generations, will be explored in the text that follows.

Finally, in terms of the demographic characteristics of the staff respondents, almost two-thirds were people of color and the same proportion were women. These proportions did not vary significantly across the age groups within the staff respondents, except for the lower proportion of people of color among the oldest staff members (two of the three were white).

Findings

1. Background of Respondents

Kay, now in her mid fifties, began working in an exciting time.[11] The civil rights, women's, anti-war/peace, environmental and other movements were changing the world. In her early thirties, Kay left her job to start her own research organization and persuaded a colleague to come work with her. That was the beginning. She started the organization to make a contribution toward a better society, a more democratic society, a society that would support values of justice and give hope to those who had been ignored and underserved. In its first few years, the organization operated on a shoestring budget, but gradually it grew both in size and stature. Kay laughs when she talks about how she only thought the work would last five years. After dedicating so many years to building and sustaining the organization, Kay is trying to change her role. She is letting go of the management so she can pursue some of her own interests. As she reduces her involvement in the daily operations, she worries if the organization will survive intact, that is, keeping the principles and values she worked so hard to maintain over the past two decades.

Gary was introduced to his organization, Stop Hate, when he decided to volunteer during his sophomore year of college. It was a fledgling group, but Gary was so taken by the work, that he started spending more and more time developing and promoting the organization. He continued to go to school accumulating incompletes, and looking for support for his work. He became director while completing first his bachelor's and then a master's degree.

Gary's interest in Stop Hate was not simply based on altruism. His own childhood experiences were a large part of his motivation to help others who found themselves in similar situations. Driven and entrepreneurial, Gary – now in his late twenties -- has continued to grow the organization. He has placed several of his former professors on the board of directors, and has used their expertise for everything from management to business planning. As he continues to develop the vision of the organization, Gary talks about several important decisions he will need to make in the next few years. He believes that once he navigates the organization through this next set of challenges, he will think more about what he might do next.

Like Kay, older directors and staff were heavily influenced by the political events and prevailing attitudes of the 1960s and 1970s. Younger respondents did not have the exposure to a culture of change in the same way. Younger respondents were more likely

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[11] To preserve the anonymity of the respondents and their organizations, the some of the personal details of the respondent and the organization have been altered with the intent of keeping the integrity of the information.

to refer to their personal motivation for becoming involved in their organization. For many, their interest was often motivated by personal experience combined with a strong sense of social justice, and as Gary demonstrates, a lot of hard work.

Older Directors: Life Changing Movements

For many people who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, the nonprofit sector was a burgeoning new frontier. Government money was funding Model Cities and a host of anti-poverty programs, foundations were supporting demonstration projects to address social problems, and there was a prevailing optimism that going into nonprofit work was a way to have a real impact on the world. So it was not surprising that older directors and staff often mentioned the influence of growing up in this period.

For many of those we interviewed, the political context of the time catapulted them into social change organizations. Older directors and staff often described their involvement in the social movements of this era as an *educational process* that resulted in the desire to work in an organization where they could, 'change the world.' They often referred to their exposure to ideas and situations that unveiled the 'causes' of the problems facing society. For example, an older male respondent had grown up in white working class neighborhood in the Midwest. He credits his exposure to the politics of the neighborhood in teaching him a life lesson about the importance and uses of power to make significant social change. In his teens, he heard Martin Luther King speak and was part of a religious youth group that was addressing the issues of civil rights. He explained,

> And to see the civil rights movement was a stunning thing for a person, sixteen, and you're watching this, because on one side, you're in this white area right across from a black area. So, you've never seen what life is like in another community. Nor had black kids seen what life was like in our area. And, for the most part, neither of us wanted to. But these were eye-opening experiences, none of which were to my credit. I mean, I just happened to get dragged along.

Several other people we interviewed who were fifty or older described similar experiences ranging from their exposure to liberation theology to joining the anti-war

movement in college. All of the events took place while this cohort was in their teenage or young adult years. The impact was, to them, unforgettable as it put them on a life course to the organizations they now work in and in some cases lead. The importance of these external events provided *a context, an education* for those who entered and stayed in these organizations. It gave the older interviewees a belief that there was something that they could do to contribute to the overall climate of change.

Nonprofit (and Founder) for Life

None of the older respondents in the study mentioned any significant job they had ever held outside of the nonprofit sector, and few seemed to have even considered other alternatives.[12] This group began their work in social change nonprofits at an early age and they stayed, often in the same organization.

It is probably significant that of the ten older directors we interviewed, eight had been with their organization more than a decade, and five had founded their organization. They often had similar stories. Many of the older directors saw themselves as visionaries whose organizations had grown around them, and they had to learn how to manage that growth. Kay talked about this when she described how this happened in her case.

> I was not ambitious to start a larger organization at all. I imagined this to be a small effort. … It all started on a shoestring, and I was able to raise enough money to keep us going. I think our budget for the first couple of years was about $80 or $90,000.

Younger Cohorts: Personal Experience

Younger respondents – both directors and staff – often described their background and interest in social change work based on their own *personal experiences* or what they witnessed happened to people like them. They were aware that they had *not* been involved in the movement era of the 1960s/1970s, although there were some who referred to participating in their own activities especially on college campuses, such as the anti-

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[12] We did not probe all the details of the respondents' background, so we are not sure how many may have had some experiences having worked in for-profits.

apartheid or anti-sweatshop movements. A few of the younger directors talked about how their parents' experiences had influenced them. Overall, however, younger respondents usually described their interest in social change work as a result of individual experiences or from a desire to work with 'their own' community. They were far more likely to refer to their *personal* connection as a motivation to enter into social change work than older respondents who described how the *education* they had received about injustice in the world brought them into the field.

So, for example, Gary talked about his commitment to the organization he runs as a result of his own background,

> I experienced a significant amount of violence growing up as a kid. And like a lot of people who experience violence, I was a really angry kid…I took this anger and directed it towards organizing.

There were others who also mentioned very specific personal or family related motivations. As one young staff member noted,

> We [our family] were always struggling … and I always had an affinity for politics and legal issues and just sort of thought a lot about justice, economic justice in particular because of my own personal experiences with economic justice or lack thereof.

Some of the younger respondents joined social change organizations to find more meaning in their life. A staff member in her mid-thirties described how she had nursed her mother through a long and painful death. She then quit her corporate job to find a position where she could work with women and children. As she describes it, she was looking for a place where she could express her spiritual side.

Recognizing the importance of personal experience turned out to be a way that younger directors were able to identify and recruit new staff. Younger staff often described how a younger director had listened to their stories, brought them into the work and found ways to integrate their experiences and skills into the organization. For example, a twenty-

three year old staffer who had grown up in the neighborhood that the organization served, explained how a local priest introduced him to the co-directors,

> I told them about basically that I want to start a gay and lesbian group for gay youth, gay adults, and that, I mean, I never had any experience in organizing, never, nothing in organizing, and they just, they basically opened up their arms and said, 'Yeah, come in with us, and we'll teach you, we'll give you training.'

The organization's directors then helped him join AmeriCorps, placing him in their organization. When he completed his AmeriCorps stint, he was hired as the office manager, and he continues to run his gay and lesbian group. This young respondent had a personal interest that brought him into contact with the organization. He also needed a type of training and support that not all organizations were able to give. He observed,

> I mean, we all need support in out lives. I mean, frankly, I didn't know a freaking lawyer in my life or a teacher you know… And then I met a lot of people in this organization that are.

Younger Directors: Validation

Overall, younger leaders were more likely to talk about personal experiences but they were also more likely to have a history – spoken or unspoken – that legitimized them in their current positions. Unlike older respondents, younger directors were much more likely to talk about the value of learning from the for-profit world and referenced their own work history in business. One twenty-seven year old director mentioned throughout the interview the positive impact his business training and experience had in both his being selected for the position and running the organization. Another director in her early thirties reported on how she had worked her way up to executive director after starting as an advocate in her field. However, she was convinced that her background in marketing had given her the added skills that made her a desirable candidate for the director's position.

Just as significant was the unexpected finding that of the seven directors under forty, all but one told us in the interview that they had attended an elite college or university. Most referred to this fact in passing, but one director who had grown up in the Midwest told us,

But you know, what Harvard gave me was tremendous privilege… If I'd gone to Ohio State, I wouldn't be here. And I don't take that lightly.

So, in addition to their personal experiences, younger directors found ways to convince themselves and others of their *ability and credibility* to jumpstart their careers as leaders of social change organizations.

Older directors did not mention the ways that they were legitimated in their work, perhaps because so many of their peers were entering into the nonprofit sector at the same time with a similar level (or lack of) skill. Younger people interested in leadership positions in social change nonprofits are competing with far more existing organizations in a climate where government support is far reduced. They may be more likely to come with educational and/or business skills that allow them to convince funders and other supporters of the validity of their vision and their ability to implement it.

Movement for the Next Generation: The Organization

The different backgrounds of the respondents are important reminders that context matters. Even though both age groups were extremely committed to their work, their pathways towards involvement differed. The tendency for younger directors and staff to enter into social change work based on personal experience or identification with the constituent community led to an interesting phenomenon. For many of them, it was their participation in the organization that provided them with the tools for a systemic understanding and analysis of the issues they faced. *Where older respondents joined or started social change organizations as a result of a kind of 'political education,' younger people were more likely to receive that education as a result of their work in the organization.* One young staffer put it this way,

I always knew growing up that different people were treated differently, because of the color of their skin or of who they were, whether they were female or male … I would be aware of this, but not as much as in a social context. That obviously I had to develop, had to figure out -- how systems work and institutions work.

That was something I really came to be passionate about…I feel a lot of me has grown up here at [the organization].

There are also two interesting observations about younger staff entering social change organizations today. First, there were several examples where younger directors were able to *recruit and support* staff that they felt had long-term potential with the organization. There may be several reasons for this. Younger staff may simply be 'closer to the ground' or they may understand better the importance of how to recruit people based on personal experiences or they may have more interest in recruiting new and different types of staff. Second, many younger staff could benefit from a systematic education program about the issues they are addressing once they enter the organization, that is, to find ways to take their personal experiences to help them understand the larger systemic issues. This was already taking place in some of the organizations in the study, but often in an ad hoc rather than a consciously thought out way.

Despite the different backgrounds of those working in social change organizations, the quality and intensity of the commitment was strikingly similar as can be seen in the sections that follow.

2. <u>Work/Personal Life Divide</u>

One of the common themes in the popular literature on generational differences at work in corporate settings is the claim that Generations X and Y are reported to 'work to live' whereas Baby Boomers 'live to work'. To find out more about this issue, respondents were asked to talk about the work/personal life continuum.

The story that emerged was not nearly as simple as the literature had led us to believe. Older respondents for the most part did talk about the deep significance their work had in their life. In many cases, this led to long hours at the job, especially with founders and long-term directors. However, there were other older respondents that kept a strict work/personal life divide, leaving work at five and spending a significant amount of time with activities outside of the job whether it was family or traveling or pursuing other interests.

Just as striking was the fact that *all* of the younger directors and many of the young staff members were also putting in long hours. They, too, talked about the importance of their work in their life. The difference, however, was that several of the younger respondents were actively struggling with how they were going to address the challenge of keeping their commitment to their work while making room for other important parts of their life, especially having a family.

The interviews indicate either there is a *life cycle issue*, that is older respondents have already worked out work/personal life conflicts and that younger respondents will find a similar resolution over time, or there is a *generational difference* in which older leaders were less conflicted when they were young about the need to balance time at work with personal time. In either case, the example below gives some indication of how one younger staff member and the older director in the same organization report on the work/personal life divide.

Loving or Living for the Job

Eric is in his mid-thirties and has been a loyal employee at UFS for over ten years. He loves his job and has clearly found a mentor in the organization's founder/executive director. He is proud to be part of an organization that believes in staff dedicating themselves to the needs of the constituents. He explains, "There's a culture here. You do everything."

However, it also clear to Eric that these demands have had other repercussions. He explains how many staffers have either turned down job offers or left the organization because they do not feel they can be available day and night. He is especially focused now on those who left for family reasons, maybe because Eric himself is struggling with how to stay in the organization and start his own family. There are several times in the conversation that Eric refers to the conflicts he feels about wanting to have children and still meet the demands of the job. Up to this point, Eric has made the choice to have work absorb most of his life. He notes what he has given up (exercising, free time), but as he puts it, when he was younger it was not such a big issue. Now, he doesn't know how to reconcile the work/personal life split that he anticipates. He is keenly aware of how much time the founder gives to work. And despite how closely they work together, Eric doesn't mention discussing this dilemma with the founder. He talks about it as something he needs to work out himself.

UFS' founder/director, Tony, has been in this field for all of his adult life. Now in his fifties, he is happy with the organization he started over ten years ago, a labor of love. His wife has worked with him in developing UFS and now that their children are teenagers, she is an employee. Tony points out that when their children were small, his wife was more focused on their home life, noting the amount of time and energy they required.

Tony presents work as one of many interests in his life. He is a musician, he likes to spend time with friends, and he enjoys just doing nothing. But despite these other interests, Tony refers back to the commitment his work requires. He points out how he used to work longer hours, averaging eighty a week. He has tried to cut down but adds that he has to work these hours for the big events sponsored by the organization every year.

Despite the long hours, Tony does not seem the least bit worried about his work/personal life divide. It is clear that the organization is what Tony loves to do even if he loves other things as well. If there were once conflicts about the amount of time his work demands, they do not seem to be present at the moment. In fact, the organization is both an expression of how Tony views the world and the ways he feels he can help change it. As Eric points out in his interview, Tony is intensely driven, both by his love for the work and the belief that he has figured out a method that makes a real difference in the lives of their constituents. Maybe that is why Tony sees himself in the job for at least another ten years, and then he hopes to be able to continue the work in some way while he writes about and trains people in this methodology.

Both Tony, the older founder/director and Eric, the younger staff member have a deep commitment to their work, and Eric clearly holds Tony in high esteem. So why does Eric's future work/personal life balance appear to be so unresolved, especially in an organization where use of a participatory process of decision-making and conflict resolution is a primary goal?

It may be that both Tony and Eric believe that there is no resolution. It's not clear whether Tony was conflicted at a similar age. We don't know if Eric expects to do more with his children while they are young than Tony, or if the conflict he anticipates will even be realized. Given their relationship, it is surprising that Eric does not appear to be looking to Tony for help. Maybe Eric has tried and it hasn't worked, or maybe he thinks he should figure it out on his own, or maybe he doesn't trust that Tony knows how to help him in this instance.

These interviews point out how the issue of the work/personal life divide is not simply a generational difference in the commitment toward work or an organization, but more a difference in the commitments younger people have or anticipate having outside of work. What the literature misses is the *deep conflict that younger staff or directors may feel when they have to make work/personal life choices*. It also points out that many older directors and staff may lack the capacity needed to help younger people navigate this rocky terrain.

The case of Tony and Eric was not unusual in the study. Older directors and staff talked freely about the deep importance of their work in their lives, and it was clear that their sense of identity was intertwined with the job. The fact that many do not seem able to imagine it another way may be a serious issue for a younger generation that is struggling for an expanded meaning that includes life choices outside of the job.

For so many of the older directors, the job has become essential. One respondent explained, "it is my life…It's integral to my life. If I weren't doing this, I'd be doing

something else quite similar.," and another told us, " The mission of [the organization] is the mission of my life. So it's totally consuming for me," and another reported, "all I do is work. Everything's integrated into my work. Work, personal, there's no distinction." And another, noted, "I think it defines in large part what I do, who I am."

Yet most of the older people we interviewed seemed to have resolved the tensions between their work and their personal lives. Some found a partner with a similar life style, some limited their time at work, some had families that supported their commitment, some integrated their personal lives into their work, and some did not have a personal life and were only committed to their work.[13] Clearly people who could not reconcile this tension left the directorship or other leadership positions, or decided not to opt for these positions in the first place.

It was not as if there had been *no* conflict, but most had reached a solution. A long-time executive director whose children are now grown had recently taken a new position. She was committed to spending more personal time with her husband and commented,

> I think I can see it [the job] consuming a good two-thirds of my life. I really think that. I'm going to try to hold it there if I can. As it turns out, the coincidence of my husband being a cultural and community worker is somewhat helpful… I think that we both have energy and commitment for our own work and putting as much into it as possible.

Drawing the Line

> Finding balance. Balance with personal, spiritual, business. Is there a difference between business and personal? In this line of work there really, unlike many other lines of work [where] there's a clear line between what you do after work and what you do during work, and here the lines are all blurred. I think that is the greatest challenge. [Pause] Yeah, there's nowhere to draw the line.

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[13] One respondent whose life work is dedicated to the mission of the organization was part of a religious order.

The interviews with younger directors and staff members revealed how many are on a path similar to older directors. All of the young directors and many young staffers spent long hours at the job and the work itself consumed an enormous amount of energy. Even though they had worked far fewer years in the field, they spoke with the same sense of commitment and dedication as the older respondents.   For example, one thirty-seven year old director told the interviewer, "I didn't expect that I would have a career. [Laughter] I don't. I see this as my life commitment. I don't see it as a job. If you see it as a job, it would be very sad." However, this director also explained how she would have to leave the job within the next two years to spend more time with her children. She talked about the systemic problem of running a nonprofit and raising a family,

> I think this is something applied to the nonprofit world, how can you support the
> executive staff to juggle with their own personal life. Because it's a very
> demanding job. Sometimes I don't see my kids in two days …So I think my
> question with other colleagues in this field is, the demanding job, how [will] the
> nonprofit world support this?

What is it about these social change jobs that compel people to work so hard with so little obvious support? In a time when the literature claims Gen X is looking for more time outside of work and has less loyalty to the job, what is it about these organizations that inspire such commitment? Part of the answer may be found in the meaning younger people find in these organizations. For example, one young staffer found himself in a similar position as Eric, planning to have children and tormented about the consequences for his work. The irony is he works in an organization where the older director leaves every day at 5:00 pm. He explained,

> I can't keep twelve-hour days forever… I think that this place is very
> understanding and incredibly flexible and incredibly respectful of people's lives
> outside of work. I don't know how good *I* am at that balance. [emphasis added]

Later he goes on to say,

> I would love to have this job for the rest of my life. I don't know if that's going
> to be possible.

What is striking in this respondent's comments is how this job has inspired such love. Perhaps because of this strong attachment, he is unable to imagine how he could spend more time outside of work and keep his job. His director either is unaware of this issue or appears not to have offered him help. So this staffer, who wants nothing more than to stay, may have to leave.

It is important to point out that not all the respondents faced this conflict. There were some young staffers, especially two right out of college, who clearly limited their time on the job. There were also examples of older directors who set strong limits on their time at work and felt little conflict about it. One older director who had been with the same national organization for over two decades emphasized how his work *was* a job,

> I entered organizing not because I thought it was a religious calling. I thought it
> was a good, interesting career. I thought it was a good job…I hoped it would be
> something that would be meaningful and satisfying and I can make a living at that
> would allow me to have a normal life and raise a family, because those were real
> important to me. So, that has proven to be the case.

However, it was the older member of a collective that expressed how the work/personal life divide played out for most of the respondents.

> Oh, it's all encompassing. [Laugher] And it's certainly one of the most important
> things in my life. I don't know. To me, it supports my whole concept of family.
> But I think my family's the most important part of my life. And in order for me to
> be able to take care of my family, I have to be an activist that encourages
> everybody to think about everybody's family and how important that is.
> [Laugher] And so I see it as supporting everything I do.

Implications: Work/Personal Life and Social Change

The claim that Gen X and Gen Y have different attitudes towards the work/personal life divide may be true for those working in social change organizations, but the responses in this study indicate that they are not necessarily based on a different attitude towards work. In fact, for younger staff and directors, the job seemed to provide a sense of

meaning, a sense of responsibility to those they served, a sense of family with other staff, and a sense of identity through the job.

There are several reasons why this might be the case. It may be that for Baby Boomer men, there were fewer expectations of or desires on their part to spend time with their family. The older women directors we interviewed either had grown children or were not parents. It also may be that the tensions older respondents had are now resolved, so their answers differ from younger respondents simply because of where they are in the lifecycle. Or it may be that those who had more tension with the work/personal life balance found themselves in different types of jobs or different organizations.

For the younger generation struggling with the work/personal life balance there are six different aspects that are be important to consider when thinking about attracting and sustaining future leadership in social change work.

1. *Structure of the Work*: It is important to acknowledge and articulate the ways the work is structured to encourage people to devote such long hours to the organization, and to determine ways this can be addressed. This seems to be true at all levels of the organization, not only the executive director position.

2. *Acculturation*: In many cases, it appeared that the culture of the organization and of the field supported long hours and complete commitment to the job. However, it may be that the culture could also consciously support and identify a continuum of ways staff could approach the work/life.

3. *Community*: There are both benefits and challenges in how the job can become a family for staff, filling an important need for a community with shared values. There needs to be a better understanding of ways that work plays this role, and how to make room for people to find community in other arenas as well.

4. *Identity*: It is not surprising that people – older and younger -- find a great sense of identity in work that provides such an important sense of mission and purpose. There are ways to both support this identity and to encourage the organization to have an identity separate from its staff and to have staff that have identities outside of the work.

5. *Support and Training*: Younger people might have less conflict if they had others to talk with about how to figure out this balance, either older mentors or peer support. Both older and younger people could use some help in how they could really limit or better structure their time at work to accommodate work/personal life demands.

6. *Acceptance*: The demands of the job and the desire to put in long hours might be a positive part of the work for many people, so it is important to look at how this works well for older and younger people working in social change organizations.

Exploring and determining the extent of each of these issue can help support young people who feel the work they do is so essential to their life and well-being, and also help them fill their desire to have a life outside of the job without losing the connection and devotion they feel in their work.

3. Enjoyment: The Work _and_ the Organization

Popular literature on Generation X (and to some degree Generation Y) indicates that these cohorts are committed to the ideas but not to the 'company'. As evidenced by the previous two sections, the respondents in the study were overwhelmingly committed to their work. Line staff members were just as effusive as those in leadership positions. Respondents found pleasure in both the ways the job was a place they could work with constituents and how the organization could give back to them. The study also points to how many people -- especially younger people -- were committed not only to their work, but also to their current organization.

Having an Impact

When asked what they enjoyed in their work, respondents talked about the satisfaction they found in helping other people, whether it was providing a service, advocating for reform, or providing venues for constituents to organize for their own political interests. An older director/founder told the interviewer,

> the most important thing is I enjoy women and families who were once struggling
> and who had such a poor image, etc., move up and out of poverty and come back
> to make a difference to other families. That's what I enjoy the most.

Others had similar responses talking about how they loved "the kids" or "the community" or a host of other constituencies. Some people referred to how they could make significant overall change in a neighborhood, visible evidence of the work of the organization. For some it was more generalized. One respondent explained,

> I'm always trying to 'fight the system' so to speak, but I'm really being able to
> utilize my time, my energy towards something that is making the world a better
> place. And it's something that I can be proud of, that I can look back and I can
> talk to people about and I can eventually tell my children about it and that I can be
> proud of what I've done, my commitment and I think my actions.

The work with and for constituents was, for many, deeply personal. Older respondents were more likely to talk about justice and developing the power base of underrepresented groups. For younger respondents, the personal aspects were often more explicit. For example, a twenty-seven year old responded,

> I'm very religious. And I think this is actually…. this is God's work, right? And I feel fulfilled doing this work on the spiritual level and that's very important to me.

For staff and directors who came from the communities being served, there was a special enjoyment in being able to help others like themselves, even if they had not faced exactly the same obstacles. For example, one young respondent worked in a collective of primarily low-income women. She had previously been on welfare, and talked about the shame and silence she experienced. So she took enormous pleasure from helping other low-income women find their own voice by encouraging them to write for the organization's paper, which the respondent edited. She was excited by both the voice the paper gave to women like herself and the fact that the paper provided others with information that would otherwise not be available.

> I always love it [the paper] when it comes out… I love to know that teachers use our paper in their classrooms. I love to know that people are getting the facts. I love to know that women have a space where they can tell their stories.

Having an impact on their own community or helping other communities was a deeply satisfying part of the work for these people, something that they often did not think they could find in other places. The job was a base for the expression of their personal, political, and spiritual commitment.

Finding a Home

Contrary to our expectations that the work -- not the actual organization -- was most important, many of the young staff members talked about how their particular organization was part of the reason they 'loved' their jobs. Several mentioned the values of the organization and the approach to problems that made it an especially enjoyable

place to work. It was the combination of what they saw as a unique organization with unique people working in it that made the work experience so positive. One young staff member explained,

> I love my job. I find it incredibly gratifying…And I think the thing I love the most about it is the fact that we do things differently, that we really do our best to recognize and uphold the dignity of our clients and provide services that the client needs, that the client determines that he or she needs, and are in the client's best interests rather than providing services that the lawyer finds are the things that the client needs.

Another young staff member talked about what she enjoyed about her job by saying,

> I guess the number one thing is that there are a lot of people here who I think are really engaged and intelligent, have a lot of analysis … whenever I have a question about something I've read or whatever, that I feel like I can just sort of bring it up and have a pretty interesting conversation with someone.

Another commented,

> I just really, I don't know if you think it's corny, but I just really love the fact that I could come to work with such a great group of people. You know? And besides the fact that I now that I'm doing something that's helping somebody else, you know, is icing on the cake.

It was interesting that directors – older *and* younger -- rarely referred to their collegial relationships even though several older and younger directors had worked with the same people for many years. It may be that the responsibility of directing the organization made it feel less familial to them, something that is expressed in the next section on challenges. It may also be that they share more with their peers in other organizations than with their staffs. These differences make it even more important for directors to understand the impact of the organization's values and internal environment on young staffers. Disruptions in either of these areas may have more repercussions for those *not* in leadership than those in it.

<u>Self-Expression</u>

Directors of all ages differed from their staffs in other ways as well. Directors were far more likely to talk about how they enjoyed the creativity, daily challenges, and problem-solving demanded by their work. Several mentioned how they thrived on the fast pace and crisis-driven mode of operating. One young director explained,

> I like the fact that no day is ever going to be slow…that there's always way more work than I'll ever be able to get done. That I have to be a closer; I have to be the one that actually makes sure that projects get done

Older directors also mentioned the continuing challenge posed by the work, often noting it as a reason they had stayed in their positions for so many years. There always seemed a new challenge around the corner. There was no better expression of this than from an older director whose enthusiasm throughout the interview was irrepressible,

> The most fun is being able to do things that you're not supposed to. … One validating thing is when you can't raise money. That's great. It means you really are getting people all uptight. The other one is, especially back then, I'm a lot nice now, but back then, I'd walk into a room of, let's say, Puerto Rican politicians, and they all would like walk away from me; they all gave me dirty looks. [That] also made me feel very good, because it felt like, 'Good, these slime buckets, good, they don't want to talk to me. Fuck 'em.' And I felt like we were having an impact.

<u>Implications</u>

Respondents' passion for their work was evident throughout the interviews. But it was the responses of the younger respondents that were the most surprising. They were far more likely than older interviewees to talk about how they *loved their jobs.* For example, one young founder/director commented,

> The reason I stayed here for nine years is because my job constantly evolves, and it's always something new. There is honestly not been a day I've not loved my job.

And a young staff member who was moving positions in the organization commented,

> I thoroughly enjoy the work that I do now…I find it incredibly gratifying, and so
> to change my job, to leave my colleagues in a way and do different work was a
> difficult one because, like I said, I love my current job.

Another young director told the interviewer,

> I love the fact – the thing is – I love our mission. You know, I like the fact that
> we get to serve this audience of people that are working really hard for making
> the city a better place and making, and are just fighting for…a better world.

The challenge is to build and support this love of the work while acknowledging the limits of what the workplace can provide over the long haul. It may be that older directors and staff could offer help in this area by sharing how they manage over time. This is especially important given the challenges reported below.

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4. **Challenges in the Work**

Respondents also were given the opportunity to talk about what they found frustrating in their work. Given the claims in the literature, we wondered how often older directors would talk about the lack of commitment of younger staff, or how often younger respondents would talk about their frustration with the structure and leadership in organizations run by older directors. In fact, there were relatively little of the expected complaints. However, there are still some findings worth noting.

Older directors rarely talked about the challenges they expected the organization to face in the future. Instead, they expressed a kind of familiarity and sometimes weariness about the constant demands of funding and administrative tasks. Younger directors were far more engaged with the challenge of how to build the organization, and analyzed this dilemma at great length. Young staff members seemed most concerned about their ability to meet constituent needs. When they did bring up challenges with internal operations, the issue was often around efficiency and decision-making, something that will be further explored in the next section.

Older Directors: Committed for the Long Haul

Older directors – especially those who had been with their organizations for a long period of time – expressed a keen awareness, if not acceptance, of the challenges they faced and/or their frustrations with the work. For several directors, the day in and day out work of raising money and administering a program was taking its toll, especially when they had originally become involved because of the *content*. For example, the challenges of finding funds were noted by almost every director, young and old, and often by staff as well. However, the older directors had been at it longer, and had seen their organizations ebb and flow based on the changing priorities of the funding sources, especially government, foundation and corporations. One older director described how he had to constantly shift strategies to meet the (new) analysis of what was needed to solve the problem, often developed by a (new) staff person at the funding organization. Administration in general seemed to be a constant challenge for older directors, who often found it a diversion from their *real* work. Several talked about the need for an

administrative director to take on issues such as staffing, finance and budget, grant writing, and other similar tasks. One older founder commented,

> And I'm getting less patient with having to do so much administrative work. I don't want to write grants anymore, and I don't want to follow the budget… I'm really tired of kissing the ass of rich people who don't know what they're talking about. Some of them do, but many of them don't and you can't tell them. I'm really tired of the panhandling. That's challenging.

Some of the older directors talked about the obstacles they faced in making systems change. Many had seen the results of their successes, but they were always preparing for the next – and often harder – challenge that was just around the corner. For some, this was a source of renewed energy, but others were drained by the larger political context in which they currently worked. One respondent told the interviewer,

> The greatest frustration is to see the movement where your heart lies constantly battered about by a movement that I consider to be anti-democratic… there is a certain way in which the defeats, we collect the defeats, and they're kind of cumulative. So what we can see is, how is the Right coming down on the environmental movement; how is it coming down on the women's movement; how is it coming down on the civil rights movement? We can see it all, and that can have a cumulatively depressing effect.

Although the older directors seemed jaded at times, it did not mean that they were tired of the job. In response to the interviewer asking about the challenges posed by the work, an older director responded,

> Well, it's impossible, it's impossible, basically. There's no way we can do the things that we need to do; just like impossible from the beginning. It's like, it can't be done. We don't have the resources to do the things that we need to do. It's no way. It's not going to happen. So that's the best part. It's to try to make something happen that you know it's impossible to do it, for anyone to do it. I think that's the best part.

<u>Young Directors: Being Ready</u>

The challenges and frustrations described by younger directors echoed many of those identified by their older peers. The tone, however, was different. Younger directors spent far more time in the interview exploring and analyzing their challenges than did their older counterparts. They were less sure of their next step, but perhaps more open as well.

Younger directors were struggling with how to find the resources they felt they needed to implement their vision of what the organization could and should be. But their challenge extended beyond simply securing funds. They were less seasoned than the older directors and were often conflicted about how to move the organization ahead, especially their desire to grow the organization. One young founder explained how his "big challenge is growth," and talked about the "two voices" he heard in his head on this issue. One voice told him he was successful already and shouldn't risk more growth; the other challenged him to expand as a way to "open up new resources and new opportunities to help all of our sites." Another enthusiastically explained a similar conflict. He was stymied by his interest in growth and his commitment to an inclusive governance structure in the organization.

> I think that as our staff gets bigger, having a collective governance structure is also more challenging. So I think that's a concern. That's why we wouldn't want to grow more… [but] then you get to the position where you could do something really exciting and positive and excellent and then you end up wanting to do it; so you're going to end up wanting to grow even if you say you're not going to want to grow.

Younger directors seemed to have high expectations of the organization and of themselves. One younger director talked about the constant search, "always trying to think of what can we do better." Another talked about the challenge of how to "fit in as many ways as possible to learn from what we're doing and continually try and improve it."

<u>Young Staff: Giving Enough</u>

Younger staff respondents – in organizations run by older and younger directors -- were more likely to mention the importance and difficulty of being available to constituents at all times. They seemed to be filling in for other agencies they felt had failed. For example, one younger staff member talked about his frustration this way,

> There is not enough time in the day to do everything that you want to do… No matter how much time I spend in there… I work basically twenty-four hours a day. If you need me to do something, if you need me to sit down and talk, if you want to do it on a Saturday or a Sunday, I'll come in.

Ironically, this need to spend long hours at work also left some young staffers feeling frustrated by friends and family who didn't seem to understand the importance of their work. A young staffer talked about the difficulty in getting "support from other people for the type of work that you do." When asked about her challenges she explained,

> You know Friday night I'm here till like eight o'clock, 8:30 doing [her program]. And I'm twenty-three and you know, that's when twenty-three year olds, normal ones I guess or whatever, hang out and have a good time. And I just don't do anything on Fridays…And just having support from people in your personal life to understand well, this is important to me, too.

At the same time, as noted in the previous sections, several of the young respondents raised the issue of managing the work/personal life divide as a significant challenge.

<u>Changing the System</u>

Many older and younger respondents – directors and staff – frequently mentioned their impatience with the slow pace of change. In addition, one young director was particularly struck by the inability of different groups to work together and expressed his frustration that the larger goal of social change was subverted by individual needs.

> People are so invested and identified with whatever political position they have, [it] makes it hard to actually discuss, debate, talk about divergences of opinion.

Another young staffer described her frustration at how few people seem to be able to envision the needs of a functioning community. She noted the proliferation of community-based social services that try to fix systemic problems. She went on to say,

> So what's frustrating is the fact that we want to fix all our problems ourselves, and we're not looking to other resources that exist in order to have them do what they're supposed to do, have them do their job. So sometimes, I feel like...I fall into the trap of saying, 'all right, we'll do it ourselves.'

Implications

What does the description of respondents' challenges tell us about generational differences? It is significant that so many of the challenges were the same across generations and across position in the organization. Younger respondents overall seemed to have higher expectations of what they could and should be able to achieve. They wanted to be available to constituents, address systemic issues, receive the support they needed from family and friends, and work with others to find the elusive solutions to the social problems they faced. On the one hand, these expectations are fertile ground for innovative and creative work. On the other, not being able to meet such high expectations might deter young people from entering or staying in social change work.

As we have noted in other areas of this report, it is surprising that there is not more cross-generation dialogue about how younger people can build on and bring new energy to the work of the older leaders. Although we did not ask about this issue specifically, clearly the challenges that a new generation is facing seems to replicate some of those that older directors and staff also have and continue to struggle with. The challenges facing older people were more likely to be expressed as frustrations, no doubt as a result of repeated struggles over so many years. Younger directors framed their challenges more as obstacles that they were planning to overcome. One question is whether there can be learning across generations that would nourish older directors and encourage, not discourage young people from entering these fields.

5. Decision-Making: Who's Involved

> You have to understand, I come from a completely different culture… I came from the private and public sector[s] where management told you this was what's going to happen and you just kind of said, 'oh, OK'.

One aspect of generational differences frequently discussed in the popular literature is the desire for Generations X and Y to have power and responsibility in organizations while Baby Boomers believe younger people need to first 'pay their dues'. Based on the responses directors gave on the process of decision-making in their organizations, younger generations should be flocking to social change nonprofits. Directors talked at length about the involvement of staff in decision-making. They also tangentially addressed another popular assumption, that younger generations prefer to work in teams, rather than in the hierarchical arrangements favored by Baby Boomers and their predecessors. Most directors in this study were keen on a team approach to the work where all staff had a voice in the operations.

However, a careful look at the interviews reveals that the idea of inclusion can be ill-defined and confusing for staff. Decision-making discussions were a window into how these social change organizations were structured, and a fuzzy picture emerged as the interviews were closely examined. The directors' determination to include staff (and in some cases constituents) often left staff confused about the process. Young staff members talked about having 'input' into decision-making, but often seemed unclear about their real power and authority. In several organizations, there also seemed to be a significant gap between the directors' perception of the process – especially in organizations with older directors -- and the staff's, as evidenced in one organization where the staff unionized despite (or because of) what was supposed to be a power-sharing arrangement. Many directors – older and younger -- were reluctant to discuss how they all had power in the organization, either directly or indirectly, even in organizations that had very little hierarchy. However, there were a few older directors that made no pretense about wanting input from staff. As one said, "ultimately it is kind

of authoritarian, you know, I run the shop kind of thing. A benevolent dictator."   And another admitted, "We never got flat [Laughter], I'm too much of a control freak."

The study revealed an odd conflation between *collective decision-making* (with high levels of discussion and input), which required *a lot* of time and energy of *all* staff, and *flattened hierarchical models* (that gave staff autonomy and freedom to run with their own ideas or units to accomplish certain tasks), which required *less time* and energy of all staff. Simply acknowledging and discussing these differences and their implications would be a significant contribution to understanding organizational structure and its impact on staff in social change work. In addition, many younger directors were committed to alternative organizational models that they felt gave staff real power. However, they struggled with issues of process over getting the work done. Looking closely at different models of organizational structure and leadership would be extremely useful for those pursuing this path.

From Input to Collectives: Involving Staff

Overall, there was an unspoken assumption that involving staff members in decision-making was an important value in social change work. However, how staff were involved varied among organizations based on size, organizational history, and style of the director. It was difficult to get a complete understanding of the decision-making process with the limited number of respondents we had in each organization, but certain themes are worth exploring.

Older Directors: Providing Input into the Hierarchy

In one organization, there were clearly many competing agendas that the older founder was trying to address when she put decision-making structures in place. She wanted a structure that protected the agency from external threats at the same time that she rejected traditional hierarchical models. She explained to the interviewer,

> The internal organization is hierarchical and was set up that way originally on purpose, because we are always subject to lawsuits, we're always subject to attack. … So that's the reason it was set up on a hierarchical model, but it … has

never really run that way. Internally, we operate with as much power sharing and sharing of decision-making as we can manage. It's always been, in my opinion, a great strength of the organization that we do operate that way.

Despite her pride in the inclusiveness in the organization, however, there was some uncertainty reflected in the reports by other staff. For example, a new (older) staff member who was hired to take over operations valued staff inclusion but also wanted to move what she considered certain "administrative" decisions forward. When she wanted to draft personnel policies, she simply wrote them, had them reviewed by a lawyer and then ratified by the board. She noted that there was no need to bring everything to the staff,

> There are plenty of decisions that are now made by me, or me and the office manager, for example, or me and the development director.

However, she also believed that "big decisions" needed to include all staff, and gave several examples of how programmatic decisions were made through a combination of staff meetings and individual work. The problem was figuring out the boundaries between decisions needing no input, decisions that needed input without staff involvement in the final decision, and decisions that were made collaboratively with staff.

The third interview in this organization was with a staff member in her early twenties. She both appreciated having a voice in the organization and was confused about when her voice would be heard. She commented,

> There's sort of this sense that everyone gets to have their two-cents in, but I really think ultimately, there are a lot of decisions that there are a few people who make them, even though they will take everyone's opinions about them… like, I don't know, there's a certain style where it feels like it's collaborative, but ultimately it's not.

This example illustrates some of the issues staff members at all levels had with the decision-making process in several of the organizations in the study. The directors were

often very conscious of needing both a process for the staff to make significant contributions to the content of decisions in the organization, but there were mixed signals about the role staff played in decisions about the internal process. The intention of the director is often to maximize the feeling that staff members can contribute to the work of the organization, but the implementation is often unclear to those whose contributions are being sought. In most of the organizations, there were differences between giving input and having the power and authority to make a decision. The actual process of decision-making was often hard to discern.

In the end, it was often the staff member who was left trying to figure out the rules. The danger is that staff members may begin to doubt that the desire for input is real. In the example above, the founder supports collaborative decision-making but lacks a clear sense – at least to the staff -- of when 'the buck stops here.' The administrator is trying to separate out when the decisions require staff involvement and reframes inclusion as input rather than collaboration. Finally, the young staffer seeks clarity that will inform her on how much she should invest in the organization's decision-making processes.

Younger Directors: Finding a (new) Collective Model
The second example is an organization that was founded by two young co-directors. We interviewed one of the co-directors who is in his early thirties and a twenty-three year old staff member. The organization had a very complicated decision-making process including a membership board and a staff collective. As explained by the co-director,

> [The organization] is a democratically structured organization, where the board of directors is composed entirely of people from the neighborhood who are members of the organization who are elected by the full membership… the staff is structured as a collective so everyone on staff has an equal say, …and we decide things kind of through some sort of modified supermajority voting system that tries to capture some of the benefits of consensus decision-making, but not capture some of the disadvantages of consensus decision-making.

The founder went on to explain in greater depth how these structures work, and then expressed his concerns about the future of the organization as it grows. He noted how

growth called for more hierarchical decision-making structures, but these pose potential problems by muting the voice of staff. However, without more structure, he feared that a large collective staff could spin their wheels in process and bog down the work.

The young staff member was closely aligned with the director in valuing a collaborative process. He explained, "We all make the decision. And that's good about an organization." The staffer continued,

> Before they had a little collective group who would make decisions, like five people would just be on that group. But the other staff had a problem with that because the majority of people who were on that group was white…I know they're not making decisions that would mess us up, or hurt us in any way, but we still want our say in it. And they abolished that group and they made it a staff collective. Instead of making up a little group collective, they made a staff collective.

When the interviewer asked the staff member whether this decision-making structure will always remain a part of the organization, he responded, "Oh, yes".

In this example, both the director and the staff member are extremely reflective about the process, perhaps a result of the collective decision-making process, and both describe it similarly, seeing the whole staff with the power. The young staff member is clear about his role, power and responsibility. However, there are two interesting points related to how power works in this collective model. First, the young founder is struggling with the model and wondering if it will be able to continue as the organization grows. And it doesn't appear that he has used the collective decision-making process to help figure out what might come next. The younger staff member clearly believes that the current process will remain a permanent feature of the organization.

Second, there is a marked absence of a discussion of the power dynamics underlying the decision-making process by either the director or the staff member. Race (and in this case probably class) is noted as a problem that the staff confronted, but is not mentioned

by the director. And the power of the director's advanced degree, status as founder, and holder of the organization's vision are not even mentioned.

In the end, the younger directors interested in staff involvement seem to be grappling with many of the same issues older directors faced in an earlier era. It is not clear if the results, in the end, will be the same.

Older versus Younger: The Difference

These two examples exemplify some of the generational difference identified in the interviews. Younger directors were more likely to talk about and try different approaches for making decisions. One organization had both a leadership circle and weekly staff meetings, another had several team meetings led by the director, and a third discussed a team approach that made decisions by consensus and brought any conflicts to the executive director. All of these processes were designed to maximize staff involvement as the organizations grew, and all of these young directors were carefully watching the structures to see how they held up over time.

Older directors might have begun their careers with similar models and then opted for a more traditional hierarchy with input as time went on. For example, in one organization a staff member in his mid-thirties explained how when he entered the agency, it the director and his administrative staff had set up a system where staff had input into all decisions through committees. The staff member added,

> It was very, very democratic. It was nice, but I mean, a little convoluted and a little too many steps to really do things and get things accomplished in an efficient manner because everything that needed to be done and every decision that needed to be made was made by some type of committee.

In a surprising move, the staff then unionized, and the organization was forced to abandon the committee structure set up by the director and operate in an explicit hierarchical model. The staff person reflected on what might have happened in the agency to cause staff to unionize despite the high level of input.

The hierarchy [leadership of the organization] I think sometimes, especially when you're in an organization like this where you're doing really good things for poor people, I think the hierarchy of organizations like this sometimes get really self-righteous and start thinking that they know what's best for poor people, even more than poor people know…And the staff started to resent that. You come to an organization like this and the hierarchy that's been here for fifteen, sixteen years, you know, ... they expected people to work the same way they work.

This is another example of how input or joint decision-making may not appear the same way to directors and staff. That is, the way the 'hierarchy' operates including its motivation is perceived differently by those in positions of more power than by those who are not. In this case, power also included race, which is often an important and unacknowledged element in the structure of decision-making.

Flattened Decision-Making

There were some younger and older directors that had implemented a more decentralized model of decision-making. They gave program directors power and authority to run their own units. As one younger director put it,

In the past, there would be one person [the executive director] making all the decisions. And now it is not. I make the supervisor who's responsible for that program make the decisions and then we talk about it, we discuss it. And I think that part really makes the program a lot easier to operate because the supervisor has some sort of the decision-making power. It's easy for them to improve what they want to improve… If you don't try, you don't know if it fails or if it succeeds, it is a success. How do you know if you don't try, if you don't take a risk?

And another director, an older founder, described his style of management. Each project operates independently. In addition, there is a process by which all the project directors make larger organizational decisions. He explained,

I've never been interested in controlling anybody else, but have always had a great interest in doing what I want to do… I guess that's who we are. In a lot of ways it's a reflection of me. I, ah, you know, *I wanted* to be independent and doing work I want to do; so I have an office of people who are independent and doing the work they want to do. That works for us.

Directors of flattened hierarchies saw their role as helping to knit together the different pieces of the organization, and all ran meetings among the program unit heads to make organization-wide decisions when needed. In some cases the vision of the director, the independence of the units and the consensus on organizational issues created tension. In one organization, the young director who gave significant authority to the program heads explained,

I don't think anyone at all sees what the potential of the organization is in the same way that I do. … Like, I have this view of the way I'm sort of seeing the future organization…. Nobody, my board and my staff, really has a sense of where this place could be in the same way I do, and that's on purpose.

The young program director from this same organization was generally happy with her "very cool" job but was stunned and confused by a recent unilateral decision made by the director. She commented

So, it's just frustrating because things here are so consensus driven that to have something that is not, it just surprised me… I can't conceive of having done something like that… I just wouldn't, given how things, decisions work in the organization, the idea of moving forward on something with such strong implications for people there without consulting them on it just, you know, it's not how I would do it. But that was how it was done.

And in another example, one young staff member in flattened organization summed it up nicely when he talked about the independent program directors making decisions about the organization as a whole,

There is a tension between growth, efficiency, consensus-based decision-making and independence.

Overall the flattened hierarchical model seemed to work well in organizations where there were several different projects that could operate somewhat autonomously. What appealed to the staff we talked with was the sense of trust, independence and director support. However, they still struggled with both how they managed their own projects or units, and with their role in the overall organization.

Implications

Directors of organizations included in the study clearly value staff input in decision-making. However, the results do not always work well for staff despite the best intentions of directors. It was usually with older directors that this tension was most clearly manifest. These directors both wanted to find a way to include staff while also reserving their right to make organizational decisions. They were not, as some staff felt, trying to manipulate staff, they were simply trying to balance when and how input works for the organization. For staff, the concept of input was unclear, which often led to conflict or disillusionment with directors. Some ways that the next generation of social change nonprofit leaders might be supported in participatory decision-making are listed below.

1. *Articulating Models*: Many younger directors are looking to run their organizations in ways that seem to them to differ from older styles, ranging from a more collective decision-making approach to more autonomy and flattened hierarchies for staff. Developing a continuum of decision-making styles including what works well in different settings as well as what works well for younger staff members would be extremely useful to young people contemplating or working in leadership positions.

2. *Acknowledging Race*: The two examples above in which race was noted had white directors and people of color on staff. It is better that directors raise and examine the role of race in its decision-making structures directly, than have staff attribute meaning to their silence on this issue. Directors, especially

older white directors, could be assisted in exploring these issues with staff members – given the significance of race in the operation of the organization.

3. *Clarity and its Consequences:* One of the most consistent findings from the study is the need for organizations to be clear about how they operate and what they expect from staff. In the long run, this process might make social change nonprofits more appealing to younger people and could help avoid disappointments that are inevitable when directors and staff have different assumptions. It would also force organizations to think more clearly about their own process. Inclusion, autonomy and trust do not mean that everyone has equal power in the organization; making that explicit could only be helpful to young staff.

6. <u>Leadership</u>

Respondents in the study were asked about their view of leadership, including what it took to lead an organization like theirs. Given the phrasing of the question, it was not surprising that many of the answers focused on the current leader, either their strengths/ weaknesses or the qualities that would be desirable in a successor.

The answers revealed some interesting generational differences. When older directors talked about future leadership, they were more likely to raise questions about whether anyone would ever be able to take over their organization successfully. Several of the younger directors were focused on building new leaders, both in their organizations and as one important quality of leadership. Younger directors also talked about the need to listen to and to get help from others as a sign of a good leader. Staff members for the most part answered in very general terms, noting the need for vision, communication skills, collaborative style and concern about staff. In fact these very broad themes were noted across all age groups and positions in these organizations.

<u>Older Directors: Keeping the Vision</u>

The responses of older directors, especially founders, revealed their concern about who would carry on their ideas and vision if they were to leave their organizations. Several focused very specifically on the leadership qualities needed to run an organization like theirs. Sometimes this was couched in a discussion of leadership in general, and sometimes it was explicitly about them or their potential successor. A good example is seen in the response of this older founder,

> I'm not going to do this forever one way or another. [Laughter] So then what,
> how do you develop that ongoing continuity? … Here… the program is constantly
> developing and growing and changing, it's very specific in nature. So, the
> leadership has to come out of people who've come in here and developed their
> leadership here and then know this organization, know this set of philosophies

and this set of methodologies, are committed to and have the talents and abilities to carry it on.

Founders in particular were keenly aware of leadership skills needed to run an organization since many assumed that it was their responsibility to think about *their* next leader. This is not surprising, given that many of these organizations were built as a result of the founder's vision and principles. No doubt, founders and long-term directors want to insure that they preserve what they consider the core of the organization.

Older directors who were not founders were more likely to talk about the issue of leadership in terms of what leadership qualities they felt *they* brought to the organization. One older director who had recently been hired told the interviewer,

> I think what you have to do is you have to keep persevering in the face of these challenges in a way that you're feeling tall and strong...And I don't think you can do this kind of work without making mistakes.... Myself, I have to be able to be open to suggestions and to the support of those around me. You can't be arrogant. [Laughter]. … I'm a big idea person and so forth. But I think the ideas are only as good as those people who are going to support them … I really spend a lot of time trying to inspire people to understand the possibilities of what they can accomplish.

The older directors, in general, seemed to be reflecting on what has made them good leaders and who might fill their role in the future. Yet, there appeared to be a gap between these reflections and the steps older leaders were taking to support new leaders. It is interesting that not one of the older directors mentioned mentoring or nurturing future leaders as a quality of leadership, even though from interviews with staff members there were clearly several who were 'mentors'. Nor did they discuss whether they believe leaders should be of a certain age or have a certain number of years of experience. Some older directors talked about the number of years of training in their methods new leadership would need, but it did not appear that many were wedded to that

idea. So we are left with the unanswered question: Do older directors believe that younger people are able to join the pool of future leadership?

At lease in one case, the interview with a twenty-three year old staffer demonstrated the work of an older director who had all the elements of a great teacher. The staff member talked about how her director gives her important assignments feigning his own need to 'get things off his plate.' He then talked her through how to approach the situation and was available during and after to give her guidance and to debrief. He assigned her responsibilities, demonstrated his trust, kept the focus on her abilities and skills, and built in time to give her support and learn from the process. It may be that older leaders need help in how to support young staff in ways that clearly were natural for this older director. This could include a structure to think about how their years of experience can be used to help build future leaders that could help take over their organizations, a concern that is clearly on their minds.

Younger Directors: Continue to Build

Younger directors, in contrast to their older peers, often talked in detail about the development of new leaders in the organization who could take over their position. For example, one young founder in his late twenties who is part of a directors' team explained,

> You [need to] nurture the people who are on your staff at this point in time so that they can eventually take over the leadership.

And a twenty-seven year old director, who took over the organization after a series of older directors, told the interviewer,

> Looking at the future, it's creating the space and building leadership that will take over. So it's allowing this office to be touchable; allowing the space for folks to say, I want to be the ED, now what does it take?

In addition to thinking about new leaders, several younger directors were also contending with being relatively new themselves. They often seemed to be looking for a chance to show their leadership in their own way. One young director explained.

You have to be open also to learning new things and to recognizing that everybody's got something to teach. Experts as we are, we're always learning new things… Obviously, you learn from what's been done before, but also it's like doing something totally different… I think [you have to be] bold, in a lot of senses, because you are challenging, at times, conventional thinking. And you come under fire at times for the things that we do.

Are these responses from young directors simply examples of a difference in lifecycle? Will these directors change over time, and as they age give responses similar to those given by older directors in this study? It is impossible to know. However, it is important to consider how young directors can be supported both in their desire to build leaders of the future and their determination to make their own mark on social change organizations.

Younger Staffs: Wanting it All

For younger staff members, vision and communication were key components to leadership. They were more likely to have high expectations of leadership and seemed surprisingly unconcerned about their own leadership qualities. One younger staff member commenting on the qualities for good leadership described the perfect leader,

> The vision to be able to move the organization on an administrative level but also stay really closely in touch with the program and what happens in a community, what happens in a school, just from the smallest interaction that goes wrong – the little piece of conflict that happens, staying engaged in that at the same time. So, I would say a leader has to be able to see the big picture and have a vision of what it would look like, but also be able to see and feel every small detail that happen…

He continued,

> Open mindedness, passion, commitment, communications skills [pause], depth of experience or thought and character. And vision. It's hard to lead any of us without being able to see the world being a better place, whether the outcomes happen or not.

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This thoughtful description is, of course, completely unrealistic. No one will possess all these qualities. In other cases, young staffers seem to have a good handle on the differences between the current leaders and the qualities that might be needed in the future. A twenty-three year old commented,

> And so within that particular culture, it's sort of being responsive to people's needs and demands on a consistent basis. Whether that's how I would run it is a different question, but I think that certainly that's within the organization right now, that's what it takes. But I think that other qualities [that] could serve equally well, I think, are sort of a strong communication skills; very, very strong charisma; and perspective, sort of long-term, both being able to combine short-term reactiveness and long-term thinking; and setting priorities.

Some young staffers were able to identify with the organization's leader, whether older or younger, feeling they may have or may develop similar qualities. They could imagine themselves in the director's role. Others did not think of their current directors as role models, even if they aspired to one day have a similar position. Still others seemed either unable or uninterested in seeing themselves as the leader of the organization. For those who were interested in leadership, they could develop their skills if they are given opportunities to make decisions and have responsibility. The challenge then is to develop ways to identify and reach out to younger staff members that are interested in development as future leaders.

Implications

The most interesting findings in this area were how the responses reflect on the potential for building future leaders. Older directors are more likely to be reflecting on what has made them good leaders, and who could fill their shoes in the future. Younger directors are trying to make their own mark as leaders, and are unusually conscious of bringing others along in the process.

Two comments by young staff members about their current directors help to point to the future need. In one organization, a staffer in her mid-thirties brought in to help administer the organization pinpointed the impact of a potential leadership gap as she worried about the organization without the older founder.

> I mean if [the current director] died, could this place continue? I don't know. I'm not sure. … I guess, I wonder about whether there is a significant enough pool of people out there who could step into a place like this… I mean, if you're [the current director], you can make your own decisions. This is a membership organization – he's the sole member. He doesn't have to listen to the Board. He can do whatever he wants. He chooses not to. And he has created this agency. I don't know. I haven't decided yet whether I think someone else could step in and kind of keep the same model.

In contrast, the staffer who had been mentored by her older director as described above told the interviewer,

> He's about developing leadership, so I think a good leader is not scared of putting anybody else in an equal position as him or teaching them everything or showing all their cards, you know, because you confide in that person and you think, that, you know, you're developing other people. It's not just about you. Other people share your vision, because you brought people into that vision. That vision wasn't just created by you, but developed by you and other people… I think that's really why I consider [current director] to be one of the most effective managers.

7. <u>Training for Leaders</u>

What does it take to train leaders of social change organizations? The respondents in this study seemed to believe that any formal training on leadership or how to run an organization was unnecessary and perhaps even harmful. Directors talked about the importance of content knowledge, or skills such as a law degree needed for advocacy, but graduate programs for administration or nonprofit management were rejected except to legitimate a leader to the outside world. The qualities needed for good leadership according to these respondents were learned on the job and from life experience.

<u>Older Directors and the Challenge of Management</u>

For the most part, older directors were absolutely convinced that any sort of formal training or education especially on nonprofit management or leadership was a waste of time. These directors entered their jobs when there were no nonprofit management programs. They valued knowing the content area over having management skills. As one older director observed,

> I know about housing; that's what I got trained in and got interested in. I don't think any of us -- I don't think I got a lot of training to do the things that you have to do as executive director. You sort of picked it up as you were thrown into it -- fund raising and budgeting, and financial management and personnel management -- all those kinds of things. I don't think I got any; those weren't the things that I learned

These directors, for the most part, thought that what they needed could be learned from experience on the job - a kind of trial and error method. For some, formal training in how to run an organization was the antithesis of visionary leadership. In fact, such training was seen as limiting the potential of the organization. For example, one founder explained,

> I'm not sure exactly the wording I want here, but it [training] can encourage you to think inside boxes, when a lot of the work of the program director or the founder or the visionary or whatever that set of roles is in a social change

organization is to think outside the box and to see possibilities where they weren't obvious.

One theme that ran through many of the respondents' answers was the belief that leadership and even parts of management could not really be taught. Formal education could supplement, but not build leadership. One older director told the interviewer,

> If you don't have certain aptitudes or formative experiences, I don't mean mine, but you've got to have some sense of power and the way the world really works and doesn't work, and what's real and what's not real…And you have to have an instinct about it. Do you know what I mean? So, nobody can teach that… Then there's a whole lot of other things you can teach: how to do individual meetings, the necessity of them, how to think broadly instead of narrowly, how to be less parochial…how to raise money. That all you can teach.

Another older director who had told the interviewer she regretted not having an advanced degree in either law or business then wondered about whether either degree would have actually been useful. She mused, "Maybe, my skills lay more in management and that's very hard to teach although there are some skills and things you can learn."

Overall, the older directors supported management training, but not formal education. Many feared that the emphasis on management would supplant the deeper knowledge or instincts of leaders in social change organizations.

Younger Directors: In-Between

Most of the younger directors agreed with older directors, though overall, they did not appear to have the fear or hostility that was expressed by their older peers. As noted earlier, several of the younger directors had worked in the for-profit sector and felt those experiences had been invaluable training for the administrative aspects of their work. One young director wavered in describing whether or not she would benefit from a Masters in Business Administration. She reflected on her own skills, claiming, "I do

think that having management and leadership capabilities is an innate talent," but then later talked about how management skills can "definitely can be learned."

Young directors were also more likely to mention the importance of leadership development as it related to the type of work in which they were engaged. The development of young potential leaders who otherwise might be overlooked could have an important impact on a young person's direction and expectations. One young director noted,

> I attribute part of me being able to be executive director here, to the leadership development that I received here. And so the development opportunities and opportunities to engage and really be involved as a resident, to understand the business, to understand the work, [and] to understand what we do here in a way that was so profound.

Degrees for Legitimacy

Several of the directors we talked with noted that they had gone back to get an advanced degree for 'the credential'. People of color and young people were more likely to talk about this need. An older African-American woman director explained,

> I did the formal piece. I did do that. But you know, I think about that as a [pauses] door opener. I worked hard to get the degree.… But it's not the same things as somebody shaping you and teaching you. It gave me some kind of currency. And I don't disrespect it for what it continues to be. But I think when somebody says, 'how did you get to learn to do what you do,' you do it in the practical.

A young staffer of color told us she would probably have to go back to school for the credential, she explained,

> Even if I would have gotten … my master's in administration, public administration, you know, I could say that and be like, 'oh, I got my degree,' … You need to love what it is that you do and really want to get it done. And I don't think school's going to give that to you, regardless of whether you go to Harvard or you go to any other institution. I think it has to do with the person, but in the

end, credentials matter. In the world, that you're, you know, fighting for credibility.

One of the white younger director's also talked about going on for a graduate degree so people would take him and his work more seriously,

> I went to get my Master's Degree… and I went because I wanted letters after my name. I was really clear about that. I was twenty-two. I looked twelve, and I wanted some credentialing. And so, I took the courses I needed to do for that credentialing.

Younger Staff: From Common Sense to the Importance of Theory

Staff responses about training did not differ substantially from those of directors. Several staff members stressed the importance of learning from experience rather than from school. For example, echoing the responses of older directors, one young staff member talked about how he had noticed his experience seemed to hold up better in the workplace than the knowledge of staff that had masters degrees but no experience.

The importance of *life* as well as work experience was noted by several of the younger staff members that were part of the constituencies the organizations served. One staffer who worked for directors that came from outside the community, talked about the importance of leadership actually having experienced what it was like being a member of the constituency. A twenty-one year old staff member talked about how his life had been invaluable in his work,

> You lived through, you know the court battles; you lived through the media. You lived through walking down a pitch-dark street. You've lived through that, and you take from every type of situation that you're in, that an institution can never teach you.

The one respondent most enthusiastic about school was one of the younger members in a collective of low-income women. Though her work was clearly based on her life experience, she found that school had opened her up to a new way of thinking. However, she too complained that her college program -- geared to low-income women -- had been too practically oriented. She explained,

> I think it's good to learn about organizing and it's good to do things in the community, but it's also important to understand the history and root causes. I think you have to understand sociology and you have to understand the history… there's more that they could learn that would help inform their experience. There's more than just being in the community. There's also an understanding of how things got to be this way.

In a similar vein an older staff member expressed regret that she had not had the opportunity to have more formal training. When asked about formal training for leaders she suggested that there could be a kind of "social justice MBA."

Implications

The negative response by *all* respondents in the study to nonprofit degree programs, or any degrees in administration was unexpected. It is possible that directors already working in the field might find questions about training for leadership a challenge to their own competency. However, the vehemence and universality of the response requires more careful examination. There is the perception that degrees focused on administration will detract from the work because they do not teach about the content of or causes for the problems social change organizations are trying to address. So, even those who had a desire for more education seemed to have trouble figuring out where to go. There also appears to be a strong belief in the innate qualities of leadership. In this case, school or training is an enhancement of otherwise natural qualities. There was also a subtle undertone to the distrust of administrative degree programs for those working in social change nonprofits, a kind of suspicion that these programs would acculturate potential leaders in ways that made them palatable to funders and other people in power, but cause them to lose their true values and vision.

In the future, especially in this increasingly complex world of social change work, there needs to be much more attention paid to the way leaders come into their roles and to the supports to help provide the real skills future leaders will need to do these jobs. More important, however, is to identify and give voice to young people who have leadership potential. In addition, management programs should be examined for their relevancy to nonprofit social change work. Finally, there needs to be education that is able to integrate and acknowledge the skills people learn from life and the job, and encourage individuals to continue to learn in other venues.

8. <u>Race and Gender</u>

It was common in the popular literature to find claims that Generations X and Y were more comfortable than previous generations working across race and gender lines. So we asked respondents if they thought "race and gender influence the leadership of an organization like this one." In addition, we analyzed all the data to see if responses from different age cohorts differed by race and gender.

Overall, the data cast doubt on the assumption that younger people have moved 'beyond' issues of race and gender. In fact, it was difficult to find any major differences from participants based on their age in either analysis. Race and gender remain issues for all age groups and responses to the question revealed tensions and frustrations, particularly with respect to race.

<u>Tension about Race and Gender</u>

Almost all of the respondents noted how issues of race and gender play a role in the leadership of social change organizations but there was no consistency either within or among age groups about what this meant. [14] White respondents tended to answer the question about the impact of race and gender in terms of their own and their organizations' efforts to hire and maintain a diverse staff. Even in the most racially diverse white-led organizations, the power positions in the organization seemed to be predominately held by other white staff members. In contrast, it was more likely for women to hold positions of power and authority in male-led organizations. Responding to this question, white staffers – both men and women - drew comparisons to other places they had worked and some talked about how much 'better' their organization was than most at thinking about diversity. In general, white respondents talked about how hard it was to hire people of color staff and wondered if it was possible to attract a more diverse group of applicants especially for higher-level jobs.

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[14] It's important to note that the interviews were done by three women, two women of color (older and younger) and an older white woman. We have no doubt that the race/gender of the interviewer had some impact on the responses.

More specifically, white women directors were more likely to answer the question referring to gender differences, especially in management style. In general, they viewed the way women run and manage organizations as a benefit. For example, one older female director told the interviewer,

> I am naturally collaborative and I think that I also am nurturing, inside and outside the organization… And a lot of those I think are just qualities that women bring to the workplace and bring to the work.

Older white women directors were more likely than their male counterparts to express concern about issues of race and racial representation among the staff.[15] They talked extensively about the need to hire more people of color in management positions. However, their organizations did not reflect the diversity they sought. Younger white men were more likely to express concern than younger white women. In one organization where most of the staff was female, under thirty-five and white, the young director responded to the question on race and gender by commenting,

> The thing is, it would be important to have diversity of experience in the organization and we've worked hard on that. But in the end, there's a couple of overriding things that tend to force out people who aren't on our same wavelength… I mean we'll work 12-hour days, so that gets rid of your families, gets rid of your older people. And I need people to be willing to that for $30,000 a year, and that gets rid of your minorities.

White men across age groups and positions were also aware of the importance of race but some seemed more skeptical about the question of the impact of race and gender on leadership. As it turns out, three organizations run by white male directors had been challenged on issues of the staff's racial diversity, but the information about these incidences came from the staff members interviewed, not the directors. One older white director remarked,

> My experience is that it's an incredibly explosive issue. And it is an issue that is extremely difficult to talk about rationally and can be a serious problem. I'm

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[15] Younger white men were more likely than older to be concerned in this way.

becoming a bit of a reactionary here.. …I think too much of the Left has gone overboard in the requirements of having a diverse, of adding the extent of diversity that people want.

Among both older and younger groups, white men sometimes focused on the issue of whether they themselves were able to provide as good service as others who looked more like the community the organization serves. The respondents were candid about the conflicts they felt. For example, one younger staff member notes,

> The idea of having staff that reflect our clients is so that our clients are comfortable with us. My experience over the years has been that that is an important but not a determinant issue.

He goes on to say,

> I think overwhelmingly my clients have appreciated the role that I played with them. They cared that I was a hard worker, that I respected them and that I worked hard for them, and that I've had clients who had advocates of color before me or after me and they appreciated me more than they appreciated their other [providers] because they weren't treated as well by those other advocates as they were treated by me.

Respondents of color – across position and across age groups – tended to focus their responses on the race dynamics between different groups of people of color. For the directors this often meant fighting stereotypes.[16] An older woman director told us about how she was viewed when she first started the job.

> I certainly was the first woman director of [her organization], and I don't remember feeling anything particular from the Board around that issue. I think I felt more there was a lot of flack when I was hired because I was a Hispanic woman, Latin woman, and everybody assumed, the people who were opposed assumed, that I was going to turn it into a Puerto Rican agency or something. And I was conscious of that always.

Another woman of color director explained,

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[16] We suspect there were differences between Boston and New York in this area as well.

But because somebody black was sitting in the seat, it was perceived as a black organization. So there are all of these kinds of issues that are challenging. And you're not going to change in a day, but you do have to be able to be mindful of all this. And when it's time, you have to call the shots. I think I feel prepared to do that, and doing it in a way that does not jeopardize the organization vis-à-vis its mission.

And a young male director of color observed,

In terms of the race piece, it's incredibly important that I represent [my constituency], so me being black is important. In a neighborhood like this, representation or race in leadership is huge. But in a neighborhood that's this diverse, though, I'm not West Indian, I'm not African American. I'm Cape Verdean. And there's this huge question mark of, 'what the hell is that?' And do you really consider yourself black, or not like us?' So, I mean, there's all this interracial, really ethnic question.

Two of the older directors of color noted how the climate related to issues of race has changed for the worse in the last twenty years. Rather than thinking that things had moved on, they were discouraged by what they saw as loses in the area of race consciousness. One respondent, a male director of color noted,

Years ago, I'd be at a meeting where they're talking about, I don't know, poverty in [the city] and then 99% of the people in the room are white people, and then I would also get up and say, 'You know, I think there's something wrong here. There's a lot more blacks and Latinos and Asians; they're not represented in the room.' And you know, maybe 15 years ago, somebody would say, 'Yeah, we really screwed up. Let's do something about it. Oh, yeah, we really messed up.'

Now I raise the issue and somebody gets up and goes, 'Well, yeah, well, you know, I don't understand what the problem is, I mean these are the people who come. We invited everybody, and this is who came.' So I don't know, you know, it's kind of a dismissive kind of thing.

An older black female leader related similar experiences:

> All of a sudden we're supposed to be colorblind. That's such denial. I think we're going backwards because at least in the '60s and the '70s, we admitted, 'You know, we have issues with race so let's tackle them.' Now they're saying, 'Oh no, we don't need affirmative action and we don't have a problem with race anymore.'…I thought we were going to start facing racism in the '60s and early '70s. I really thought we were turning this country around and really going to address things. And now we've decided, 'Oh no, we don't need to address them, we've cured it all.' No way.

Staff of color in white organizations were more likely to express their concern about the power differentials based on race, and spoke of the race/class divisions within the organization. For the few in this position we interviewed, they were aware of the race/class divisions within the organization. A young African-American male staffer commented,

> I've only been in management since I started, I came as a supervisor, so I don't have the point of view from the staff, but just from observing, there was a lot of anger. And because it's an organization that is structured much the same way other organizations are structured racially… meaning the hierarchy were white and the rest of the organization were minorities …people had that attitude that OK, this is the typical thing. Everybody else is minority, and the hierarchy is white and when it comes down to it, they're doing to do what they want to do.

A young Latino staff member, who loves the organization, talked about the white people he works with who come from families with money where, "they have beautiful houses in the country." He goes on to say,

> So like personally, to me and to my other co-workers, we've been there. We know how it is. We were raised in poor families. We were raised in the projects. We were raised in huts. We were raised with rats. We were raised with food stamps.

…So [you've] got to have a sense of humor about it, because it you are like depressed about it , trust me, it'll kill you.

<u>Implications</u>

Race and gender, but especially race, are still subjects that are hard to address, even in social change organizations but age does not seem to be a determining factor in the responses.

Clearly race and gender are issues that need to be addressed when building future leadership in these organizations, especially looking at the ways these factors reflect issues of power and style. Directors of color still find it necessary to explain that they can think beyond their own ethnic background to address the needs of a larger constituency. The question is whether people of color can be supported in their efforts to lead social change groups that are not only identity-based.

For white led organizations, the challenge is to look at race and gender beyond simply issues of diversity (number of staff in the organization that represent diversity) to issues of power and the organization's dominant culture or way of operating. In addition, in white run organizations race is often conflated with class. Lending support to organizations to address these issues might be important in overcoming some of the barriers to finding new leaders.

One younger white woman in a collective provided some clarity as she talked about her desire and fear of talking about issues of race, class, and other 'isms'. She told the interviewer how hard it is for her to bring these issues to the table since they carry so much history and weight, yet she was convinced that not talking about them would prove to be disastrous. She mused,

So I get nervous about that. I feel like there could be rifts, divisions that could really split us. They never do but it doesn't mean that they won't.

9. **Looking Toward the Future**

What do respondents in this study see themselves doing in the future? Most of the directors in the study – older and younger –plan to continue on doing what they have been doing, often for decades. Some of the older founders were trying to change the *type of work* that they did in the organization, especially reducing their administrative responsibilities. Younger directors were usually looking to build organizational capacity, and talked about the need to provide continuity of leadership. None of the directors in the study seemed to have any definite plans about future work outside of the organization.[17]

Staff members' views of the future differed and those views also different from those of the directors. As might be expected, there were a variety of plans especially for younger staff. Some talked about going back to school, others were interested in finding new positions and still others wanted to stay in their organization for their career. Several had ambitions to run their own organization in the future or to become the director where they worked.

One interesting note, the few staff members in their late thirties and early forties had the most conflict about their future. They were all in some type of administrative role and there was usually no room for them to move up in their organization, and certainly no chance they would become director anytime soon. Most recognized that if they wanted more responsibility or different opportunities, they would have to leave their current position.

Older Directors: Always Something New

Most of the older directors had no intention of leaving their jobs. They often had built their life around their work, and the idea that they would do something else made little

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[17] The one exception was a director who had already left her position. Even though she was retiring, this director was planning to stay in touch with the organization for several months to be available for the transition.

sense to them. The work was interesting, they had spent enormous time and energy in building their organizations, and there was little incentive to find something new. A few were trying to reduce the amount of time they spent at work and two were already transitioning out of their administration role in the organization. However, older directors for the most part were giving up what they liked least to concentrate on the pieces they liked best. One founder talked about stepping back from her work, transferring the administrative tasks to someone who could run operations. At sixty-four, she talked about how the job still offered many opportunities for her to be creative and do new things.

Another older founder told the interviewer how he loved the program work, but was pulled by the organization's need for administration,

> So the major thing that we're trying to do now is we're trying to hire a COO, a Chief Operating Officer, someone to take my administrative tasks, although they're never all going to go. But I'm trying to get as many of the fundraising, financial oversight, evaluation, administration, *administration, administration* away from me.

Since most directors really enjoyed their job, it often jolted them when they were asked about their future plans. One older director answered,

> I don't know. I'll just keep doing what I've been doing. I don't have any plans. You know it remains interesting, because we're always doing new things… How long would I continue to do this? I don't know what else I would do if I didn't do *something* like this.

Another older director told the interviewer,

> To be honest, I have no idea. I'll probably keep going, doing this stuff until I drop dead. In fact, I'll probably drop dead right in this chair like, I always tell my staff, one day somebody's going to come in, in the morning, I'm going to be dead. So that's as much as I can tell you about that. I have no idea.

<u>Younger Directors: My Dream Job</u>

It was striking how similar younger directors' ideas about the future were to their older peers. Although several were conflicted by a sense that they *should* move on for the sake of the organization, leaving their position was something in the fairly distant future – usually five to ten years – hardly something they felt had to be addressed right away. Founders were especially attached, often comparing the organization to giving birth or raising a child. One young founder explained,

> I view my job as the holder of the mission, one of the holders of the mission. But the holder of the history, the holder of the 'come from' place, and the values.

Like their older counterparts, younger directors talked about the importance of staying with the organization as a place to express their creativity and passion. One young director who is part of a leadership team imagined pursuing other interests, but then added,

> But I don't think any of us will ever pursue other passions so that we are not involved at some level with what's going on here.

Another young director explained,

> The reason I stayed here for nine years is because my job constantly evolves and its always something new. There is honestly not been a day I've not loved my job.

It was often this love for the job that confused directors who thought they should move on. Several talked about how their goal was to get the organization in 'good shape' before leaving, though they did not usually talk about what they were *going to.* Instead they emphasized that it was better for the organization that they did not stay too long. This conflict was exemplified by a young director who explained,

> I have always told myself that I'm going to get it [the organization] to a place, where it is just fairly powerful, has a fairly large market, it's very stable. I will have built a nice wall of cash around it both in terms of incoming cash and then in additional reserves, and have found like the right next person, and then I would leave it… Now, that said, I laugh at myself because once I do build this, I think it's going to be like my dream job.

The commitment that young directors felt for their organization confirmed how much they loved their work. A young co-founder began by telling the interviewer that five years ago, he had made a ten year commitment to the organization. When asked what would happen next he responded,

> I would just as soon stay here if I felt like it was effective, like it remained a challenging environment and it remained an environment that I felt was positive and also catalyzing the type of social change that I am interested in dedicating my life to seeing happen. So I could stay here, I think, for my entire life.

These young directors are devoted to their respective organizations and seem unlikely to leave unless circumstances in their lives – work or personal – significantly change. Following in the steps of their older peers, they have no motivation to give up a job they love.

Staffs: Looking at the Future

Although they were clearly dedicated to their jobs, staff members of all ages found it far easier than directors to envision future work outside of their current organization. Their responses ranged from older staff members thinking of retirement, to young people talking about returning to school.

Young staff members had lots of different ideas about the future. At one end of the spectrum, a twenty-three year old wondered if she might be happier doing something "more vital and more immediate than what we do here," while a twenty-four year old planning to go to law school responded,

> If feels like it's a real privilege to be able to do a lot of the stuff that I do. It's just really, you know. I can't think of another job right now that would really kind of have all elements that I have. Like so, you know, I don't have a lot of motivation to leave at the moment.

Young staffers had no trouble imagining themselves in leadership positions in the future. It was not uncommon to hear someone talk about starting their own organization or as one respondent put it, "I mean my whole objective is to one day be the Executive Director of this organization."

When staff members were asked about their ambition within the organization, it was clear they were interested but cautious. Most understood that the current leadership had no intention of leaving. Asked if he would like to be the executive director, one staff member in his early thirties put it this way,

> I don't know, maybe some day. I mean [the current director] is the man right now, and has always been and I hope he holds up forever. Last I checked that's still impossible. I'm too focused on the here and now. Does my ego say that some day I'd like to? Sure. I don't think about that too much. I've got too much to do.

The few older staff we talked with were more focused on ending their career and making sure that they were still making a contribution. One person who was brought in to help the (older) founder move out of her current position responded,

> I don't have a lot of ambition. You know, I'm fifty five years old. [Laugher] I'm not, you know going to light the world on fire.

Finally, it was the staff members who were not beginning or ending their careers that appeared to have the most conflict. Although there were a small number in this category, their comments were revealing. These staff members were in supervisory or administrative jobs, and clearly understood that they were not going to run the organization. Becoming the head administrator did not translate into being in line to run the organization if the director decided to leave. So they struggled with what that meant for their future.

One staff member in her late thirties who was brought in to help get the organization's systems into place admitted, "Well, I'm kind of thinking about the next step, quite frankly, because I don't really want to be the Director of Administration."

One staff member in this age group was less concerned about the future tenure of the director or whether he was in line for the job. He explained,

> I can see myself here for another contract period… I could do something else within the organization that was more focused on that development aspect and proposal writing and the things like that I want to learn how to do, before moving on and doing my own thing. I don't really intend to work for someone for the rest of my life.

He explained why he was not interested in becoming the executive director,

> I don't know if I want the baggage that comes along with being the ED of this organization, unless there was a serious turnover of staff in the hierarchy, where that would give you more of an ability to try to start fresh. But you have certain ideas and attitudes that are just embedded and ingrained in the institution of [the organization] that would be extremely difficult to change.

As reported earlier, there were also staff members that reported conflicts between the family and the job. These responses give us clues about some of the problems people face with the demands that family can make during this time of life. When asked about the future, one staffer responded,

> When I first started with this organizing stuff I was, for me it was like cotton candy, I couldn't get enough and I had the energy for it. I mean, I was going at it, reading about it, thinking about it. …[now] I've set my priorities because I have two kids. The oldest one is sixteen…This next year will be his final year in school, so I have to spend a lot of time making sure that he keeps up with his grades and stuff like that. I also have some health concerns of my own so I had to set back my time and not run out there too much.

Implications

Overall, directors – young and old – are not certain what they would do without the organization and are not sure how the organization would do without them. Older people

who have run agencies for a long period of time, have no reason to move on while they still enjoy the work and may be reluctant to leave the organization in the hands of someone with a different vision.

Young directors often seem headed in a similar direction. These findings are self-evident. Why would any director want to leave after investing all the time, energy, thinking and commitment that goes into building a social change organization? In fact, the organization often reflects the director and the director's identity is often merged with the organization. So it is harder and harder to walk away even for those who might want something different. While younger people are excited by the potential of the organization and want to see it fulfilled, older directors have opportunities that building that capacity has given them that there is no reason to give up.

What does this mean? The staff members' responses help to explain the implications of the long tenure of many directors in social change work. There are few opportunities for those who might want to run an organization in their current positions, and there is almost no discussion about staff being trained to be the next director of their current organization or to help them to find an executive job someplace else. So staff members are pretty much left to find their own way.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nonprofit social change organizations have vital staffs that exhibit extraordinary leadership. Older and younger people involved in these organizations have many of the same qualities: commitment, concern, energy, interest, and a strong belief in justice. However, there are differences between those who were born in the Baby Boom generation and those who identify more with Generation X. These differences and their impact on future leadership are noted below.

The Generation Gap

The similarity in responses from older and younger participants in the study seems to defy the claims made in the popular literature about generational differences. However, there are differences between the generations that are more complex than the literature describes. Among our respondents, it was evident that there was a gap between younger staffers and directors and current older leadership that seemed to reflect a *different meaning* attributed to the same behaviors, a difference that was subtle yet extremely important.[18] For example, both older and younger leaders have a strong commitment to the work that often leads to long hours, identification with the mission, and a connection with constituents. However, young people tend to enter these organizations based on a *personal, often experience-based motivation* while older respondents came as a result of a *political commitment*. Therefore, ways of recognizing, approaching, understanding, and nurturing a (potential) leader might be very different for these two groups.

It appeared that to older directors, younger people --including potential leaders -- were nearly invisible. Older directors almost never spoke of younger staffers or peers either as people to mentor or nurture, as colleagues, or as future leaders in their or other organizations. Very few of the younger directors talked about learning from or talking to older peers, instead they learned from the work. And only a small number of younger staff members considered an older director as a mentor. Younger directors seemed far more aware of building new (young) leadership than older directors, even though the

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[18] Thanks to Curtis Ogden for this insight.

older directors were more likely to talk about the problem of 'succession'. If there is a real interest in the continuation of existing social change organizations that sustain and build on existing work, it is not clear how that will happen in any systematic way in light of these findings.

Recommendations: There is no reason why the issue of young leadership development cannot be raised in social change organizations. More specifically, older directors could be encouraged and taught how to recognize young leadership from within and outside of their organization. Furthermore, younger directors could also be encouraged to continue to identify and build new leadership. Examples of practices for building new leaders that have worked well should be documented, and the results used as a basis for training. For example, the organization in this study in which a young staffer talked extensively about the important training and support she received from her older director could be used as one model to build upon. There is also a role for frank discussions about generational differences in experience and expectation within social change organizations as part of staff development and team-building.

In addition, young people in social change organizations could be encouraged by their directors to take on positions of authority and responsibility with support that would give them the types of experiences they need to develop their skills. Funders could support directors in this endeavor by not penalizing the organization for the mistakes that might ensue as young people try out new positions and ideas. They might also create incentives for organizations to actively engage in leadership development as part of capacity building and long-term impact. Finally, training of young staffers might result in these staff members moving out of the organization to accept a leadership role elsewhere. Therefore, there also needs to be support for organizations that are willing to make this investment.

Integration: Work and Personal Life

For young staffers the organization for which they work is important. It provides them with social networks, teaches them about the issues they are trying to confront, and gives

them the support they need to do social change work. However, younger staff members who are putting in long hours and making an emotional commitment to their organizations seem to be floundering as they try to figure out how to continue their work and make a life for themselves alongside the job. These demands on staff members did not seem to be simply a problem of older directors' expectations. Staffers in organizations run by young directors, and young directors themselves, experienced the same pressures and dilemmas. The culture of social change work -- never being able to do or give enough -- seemed to be passed on directly or indirectly from one generation to the next. Though this did not cause a problem for everyone, it was painful to see how much some young people – so dedicated to social justice – were left without guidance or tools for how to solve this very basic dilemma.

Recommendations: The conflict between having both a meaningful job in social change work and a life outside the job may only be important in certain periods of a staffer's life. For older and younger people who derive so much meaning and identity from their work, putting in long hours can give them a lot of pleasure. On the one hand, the staffs' identification with the work promotes the type of commitment that is so valuable. On the other, this same identification can make it hard either to stay and to have a life outside or to leave the job and create a life outside. There needs to be serious consideration of how to create manageable jobs that allow time for family life and relaxation. Again, frank discussions within organizations about how best to sustain social change work would be useful. The goal would be to acknowledge that social change work *is* more than a 'just a job' and that staff members do derive meaning from their work and at the same time note that the only option should not have to be giving the rest of one's life away. Sometimes this lack of balance can lead to a lack of perspective that is detrimental to social change efforts. Older directors should spend time with young staff and younger directors to help them strategize ways they can stay in the work while maintaining activities, not to mention families, outside.

<u>Training for New Leaders</u>

One of the most confounding problems posed by the respondents was their disdain for any advanced degree to prepare people for leadership positions. Older respondents entered social change work full of political knowledge but without management skills needed to lead an organization. Younger people were often more interested in management and growth but often lacked education about the structured causes of problems the organization was designed to address. Both groups' perceptions of nonprofit and other management programs stressed their lack of relevancy to *their* type of work. Future leaders in this area do not simply want hard management skills, though many could use them. They are looking for a place where they can learn both about the social systems they are trying to change and about organizational structures that would support their social change work.

Ironically, without appropriate programs in this area, there is a danger that only those who attend elite institutions of higher education will have the legitimacy needed to be credible leaders of social change organizations, new or old. The idea that anyone can simply work themselves to the top of an existing social change group does not appear to be a realistic expectation.

Recommendations: Programs designed to train nonprofit managers need to be questioned for their relevancy to those involved (or interested) in social change work. Rather than only stressing professionalization, these programs should include room for those interested in pursuing a variety of alternative organizational/service/advocacy models, perhaps even developing case studies on the opportunity for developing new ways of running nonprofit organizations. Of course, not all of the education that staffs and directors need has to come in the form of advanced degrees. However, it should be made clear to staff members what pathways will lead to higher leadership positions. These should be realistic and based on examples, and staffers should be given support – through scholarships, time off, work/study – to pursue these different options.

Running the Organization

Closely related to the issue of training is the understanding by directors, especially older directors, of the different models of decision-making within organizations. Directors want both to give the staff the opportunity for input and to reserve the right to decide when the director will make the final decision. Unfortunately, this method does not always work for staffs who are unclear when they do and do not have authority over decisions. This is especially difficult as organizations grow. In this study there were at least two models that were used in decision-making. One required a high level of staff involvement, valuing input and deliberation, at a minimum, on any major decision. The other was more decentralized and required a high level of staff autonomy, especially by program directors. How and when each worked well was not always clear, though each had certain advantages and disadvantages.

Recommendations: Clearly articulated expectations of staff, especially in organizational decision-making, is not only helpful in retaining employees, it can also be a fertile ground for training new leadership. Directors need education about the different ways to run organizational decision-making processes. This type of education could contain the following: First, alternative models should be defined, with examples. Second, there should be an opportunity to understand which models work well under what circumstances. Third, there could be a discussion of what type of person thrives under the different models. And finally, this type of education should be accompanied by case studies either from the participants or from other organizations. All of these can be used to train staff and to further develop models of decision-making that nurture young leaders and support older ones as well.

Race, Gender, and Power

Looking to encourage new directors to enter social change work may mean that social change organizations need to look more closely at how they address the issues of race, gender and power within the organization. Lamentation about the lack of new leaders may be in part due to the current leadership's (directors', funders', boards') inability to see potential leaders that do not look and act like themselves. The issues of race in

particular and gender are difficult to address, and are often given surface attention in social change organizations, especially those run by white leadership. On the one hand, directors often feel attacked for their inability to solve within the organization, a problem that is systemic in society. On the other, their frustration can often lead to avoidance in taking on the issue in a straightforward way. In addition, leaders of color face similar issues when it is assumed that they can only represent people from their own race/ethnicity. Most important, however, is the understanding that issues of race and gender are not only issues of representation. They are issues of power.

Recommendations

Most staffers in social change organizations have been exposed to some sort of training in diversity. Directors often talk about race and gender by calculating the percentage of staff who are people of color or women. If the numbers are high, it is assumed that the organization has already solved this issue. However, given the complexity of these issues in the society at large, neither of these methods alone addresses the larger issue. Directors of social change organizations might identify new potential leaders as they address the issues of race and culture directly. Organizations may also need help in developing an ongoing and systemic way to support an honest exploration of these issues.

Planning for Succession

It appears to be extremely difficult for older directors, even those who are in the process of changing their jobs, to think about working outside of their organizations. For those not looking to leave immediately, there is a little interest in identifying someone who could succeed them. Most of the older directors we interviewed did not seem to want to touch this topic at all. Perhaps in reaction to their older peers, young directors are wary of staying too long in their positions. Based on their responses, however, it would not be a surprise if many of the younger leaders became long-term leaders of their organizations and eventually confronted some of the same problems as their older peers.

Directors overall feared that the next person in their position would change what they worked so hard to build. When pushed, they often talked about finding a successor who

understood and continued to support the existing values, principles, methods, decision-making style, and a host of other organizational characteristics. In other words, they would like to find a new director who would not make fundamental changes to the organization.

Recommendations: Directors who have worked for many years in the same organization are unlikely to leave for new jobs, especially considering how difficult it would be to find another position that would offer them more. This does not mean that they cannot be tapped to think about and help train new leadership, as well as to listen and learn from young leaders in other organizations. Structuring exchanges between younger and older leaders on a variety of different issues - including building new leadership - might be a productive endeavor. In addition, providing places where older directors together are encouraged to think about the future of their organization might help them to discuss these sensitive topics. Not addressing succession at all is problematic for both the individuals who have run these organizations for so long and for the other staff members who work with them. There also needs to be a better way to acknowledge and support – financially and otherwise - older directors who are thinking of leaving their positions. Giving them the respect they deserve for a lifetime of work is extremely important and a good model for emerging leaders of the future. Finally, it might be useful for current directors to think about how their respective organizations contribute to a more general push for social justice in the nonprofit sector. Seeing themselves as part of something larger, not just their organizations, might help motivate these leaders to think more seriously about contributing to a legacy of new leadership.

Appendix A – Resources

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Appendix B – Topic Guide

Sample Topic Guide – Generational Changes in Nonprofit Leadership
Respondents: Older Leaders of Established Organizations[*]

I. The Work of the Organization; Meaning and Future of "Social Change" Work

Tell me a little bit about the kind of work this organization does.

Do you think of this organization as working toward "social change"?
(If not: why not? What would look like social change?)
(If so:) In what way(s)? (Invite explanation.) Follow-up/probes: Details? Part of mission? Part of organization's philosophy? Specific activities? (*Explore what social change means to the respondent*.)

What do you see happening to this organization in the future? (Follow-up/probes: will it continue doing the same kind of work? Will it be a leader? What will the field look like?)

What kinds of resources will be needed (by the organization) in the future? What kind(s) of challenges will the leadership face? Will those call for special leadership skills, do you think? What kinds? Different from what's been required in the past?

What do you see as your own role in the organization's future?

II. Organizational Structure Form and Experiences of Change

We're interested in the way nonprofit organizations work, and how decisions get made. Perhaps you could walk me through a recent example of how a decision was made here?

Is that typical of the way decisions get made here? (Probe for roles of exec, board, etc.) Has it always been this way? (Probe for how changes in leadership may result in a change in decision-making process.)

Have you seen this organization go through much change?

Can you give me a couple of specific examples? (Probe for details: What generated the change? How did it come about? How easy/difficult was it, and why?)

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[*] Note that this guide was for an older leader. The topic guides differed only slightly depending on the age and position of the respondent.

Are those examples typical of the way change happens in this organization? (Probe for key forces generating change, how it happens, etc.)

(If not already answered:) Have there been times there was disagreement over change? Or when change was promoted but failed to occur (Explore specifics.)

(If not already discussed:) I'd like to ask you specifically about changes in organizational leadership. Has there ever been a change in top leadership here? How did that work?

What do you think the process will be the next time?

III. Individual's Beliefs, Attitudes on (Social Change) Work

How did you come to be doing this work? (Probe: how long, how started, why.)

What do you enjoy in your work? What gives you satisfaction?

(If not mentioned:) Do you have a sense of connection to the community the organization serves? (Explore.)

What do you find challenging in the work? Is there anything that frustrates you? (Probe for information re: colleagues' workstyles, autonomy issues, teamwork, communication, feedback etc.)

How does this job fit into the larger path of your work life? (E.g., is it a side-path, a natural step in an ongoing process, something to build on . . .?) (Explore in detail. Probe for work motivations: important to build career? Commitment to mission? Loyalty to organization?)

(If not already answered:) How long do you see yourself continuing to do this work? What do you see yourself doing next?

People have different ways of thinking about how work fits into their lives -- can be most important thing, least important, can be important but balance more so. How do you think about the place of work in your life?

IV. Leadership Values and Styles

When you think of effective leaders in this kind of organization, what qualities do they have? What does it take to lead an organization like this?

What do you think are your own strengths and weaknesses as a leader in this type of organization?

How did you develop your own skills? Was formal education or training important?
How about informal training (OJT, mentoring/coaching, learning from peers,
etc.)?

Do you feel that process was adequate, or would you have liked more training, or a
different kind of training or support?

How much of the preparation for this kind of work do you think can be acquired in
formal education programs?

Some people think that gender and race play a role in leadership and or
decision/making in this kind of organization? What is your experience in this
area?

V. Demographic Questions

We have a form with a list of questions with some factual information on your
organization and I was hoping you could tell me the least intrusive way I could fill this
out. However, before we do that, I wondered if you could tell me a couple of things
about yourself?
Your age?
I'm not exactly sure how you describe your race/ethnicity?
How long you have been in this position?
How long you have been in this organization?
How long you have been in the field?

Thanks, now way is the easiest way for you or your staff to help me get some sense of
this information (show form). A best estimate is fine with me.

Appendix C – Table 1 Characteristics of Sample Organizations

Agency/Number of Respondents	Age (Years)	Size Budget	Staff	Staff Demographics Percent Male	Percent White	Leader(s) Demographics* Age Group	Race/Ethnicity	Gender
Boston								
Advocacy agencies:								
ARP (3)	20	$766,000	8	38%	63%	O	W	F
CEA (2)	9	$530,565	10	30%	30%	Y	POC	M
Service agencies:								
HOP (2)	20	$2,400,000	44	7%	20%	O	W	F
SED (3)	111	$3,300,000	49	33%	27%	O	POC	F
ATF (3)	7	$1,600,000	23	0%	9%	Y	POC	F
PGM (3)	5	$2,300,000	28	30%	45%	Y	W	M
Organizing agencies:								
TEC (2)	10	$1,458,000	19	37%	53%	O	W	M
SRV (2)	n/a	$76,848	n/a	n/a	n/a	O/Y	POC/W	F/F
DUS (2)	18	$1,147,932	14	29%	21%	Y	POC	M
New York City								
Advocacy agencies:								
UBJ (3)	17	$2,400,000	37	22%	62%	O	W	M
PLD (2)	30	$2,000,000	13	14%	14%	O	POC	M
CUF (2)	25	$1,200,000	12	33%	92%	Y	W	F
Service agencies:								
BRS (3)	8	n/a	13	54%	0%	Y/Y	POC/POC	M/F
Organizing agencies:								
EBR (2)	22	$325,000	4	25%	25%	O	W	M
UHB (2)	29	$2,300,000	23	52%	35%	O	W	M
MRW (2)	5	$790,000	14	57%	21%	Y	W	M

Abbreviations: n/a = data not available; O=older; Y=younger; W=white; POC=person of color

*Multiple categories indicates more than one "leader."

Appendix D – Table 2 Respondent Characteristics

	Number of Respondents	Age Range	Demographics People of Color	Women
Directors*				
Older	9	45-69	3 (33%)	4 (44%)
Younger	4	27-36	3 (75%)	2 50%)
Entrepreneurs**	4	27-41	2 (50%)	1 (25%)
Members of Collectives				
Older	1	54	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
Younger	1	32	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
Staff members				
Older	3	50-62	1 (33%)	2 (67%)
Younger***	16	21-42	11 (69%)	10 (63%)
Total respondents	38	21-69	22 (58%)	21 (55%)
Leaders/Collective Members	19	27-69	10 (53%)	9 (47%)
Staff Members	19	21-62	12 (63%)	12 (63%)

*Included among the older directors are two women of color from the same organization, one of whom was just retiring and the other of whom was just starting, at the time of our interviews. As a result, the table of respondents includes one more leader than is reflected in the organizations table.

**Entrepreneurs were people who had started and were now leading young organizations. One of these organizations was headed by a team of two leaders, one of whom was 41 (the oldest of the "young" leaders). The other two entrepreneurial agencies were each headed by one younger leader.

***Five of these were over 35 years old.