

Appendix II Literature Review

An Analysis of Research on the Recruitment, Development, Promotion and Retention of People of Color in Non-Profit Management Positions

The Leadership Learning Community was engaged by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to bring the lens of leadership development to deepen our understanding of how to successfully increase leadership opportunities for people of color. As a first step in this project, the LLC conducted a review of current literature and research to build on existing knowledge in framing questions that would help us tap the broader field of leadership development to better support the leadership of people of color.

Research Collection:

A letter was sent to a target list of foundations and organizations participating in the LLC asking them to share the results of research, scans, data collection and analysis relevant to our research questions. Two organizations responded to the initial query: Southern California Association of Philanthropists sent “Crossing Boundaries: An Exploration of Effective Leadership Development in Communities” and the James Irvine Foundation sent the publication “Community Foundations Initiative.” A search of the websites of the 30 foundations and management centers participating in the Leadership Learning Community produced eight additional and helpful reports.

The following reports have also been included in the initial analysis: “Engaging New Leadership Voices for Catalyzing and Sustaining Community Change” by W.K. Kellogg Foundation 2002; “Lessons Learned about Grassroots Leaders: An Analysis of the W.K. Foundation’s Grassroots Leadership Initiative” produced by Campbell and Associates; “Daring to Lead: Nonprofit Executive Directors and Their Work Experience” published by CompassPoint 8/01; “On the Rise: A Profile of Women of Color in Leadership” published by CompassPoint 11/02; “The Case for Dialogues that Reach Across Differences” published by Third Sector New England 2003; “Our Common Leadership Challenges,” found on the W.K. Kellogg website; “A Framework for Organizational Development: The Why, What and How of OD Work” produced by the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, and “Inside Women’s Power: Learning from Leaders” a report produced jointly by the Winds of Change Foundation and Center for Research on Women at Wellesley College.

The preliminary research review was not exhaustive but has nonetheless identified common themes and surfaced several questions about the framing of this research.

Interesting Omission:

Before addressing some interesting themes and questions that have emerged from an analysis of existing research, it is worth noting that only one of these reports actually provides any documentation on the lack of diversity in the sector. Of 1,072 executive directors surveyed by CompassPoint for the article “Daring to Lead”, 75% of the respondents were white. While many of the reports reviewed describe the costs of under representation and what could be achieved by increasing the diversity of leadership within the sector, there is very little detailed analysis of the nature of the problem.

Two of the more substantial reports point to the importance of increasing the access to power, control over resource allocation and voice in decision making of those who are the intended beneficiaries of services, policies and community change agendas. There is an implicit assumption in our research question that stronger representation of ethnic minority groups in non-profit leadership would increase their access to power. In a report based on focus group lunches and surveys of women of color, participants agreed that although they had achieved positions as Executive Directors they did not have the same access to resources or decision making power as their white counterparts. This same CompassPoint, “Women on the Rise” also points out that men who are a minority in the sector hold a majority of the better paying positions in large nonprofit organizations with budgets exceeding \$5,000,000. It is difficult to assess the appropriateness of proposed pipeline strategies and interventions intended to increase the voice, access to power and increased agency of people of color without more thorough research that identifies, quantifies and articulates the nature of the problem.

It is important to understand more about how different ethnic minority groups, classes, generations or genders are situated within the sector in entry, mid or management level positions and in what types of organizations. There is a danger of limiting the discussion of power, perspective and influence too narrowly to recruitment.

Common Themes:

Costs and Opportunities:

The PolicyLink report concludes, as a result of its 111 interviews and focus group conversations, that leaders of color are needed to “advance a new generation of policies that address the economic and social inequities confronting children, families and communities.” The W.K. Kellogg report, “Engaging New Leadership Voices for Catalyzing and Sustaining Community Change” shares a similar premise, “decisions are made that have a profound impact on peoples lives without significantly including them in the decision making process. Welfare recipients, the uninsured, parents and children – all have limited voice in discussions about welfare reform, health insurance and curriculum development.” This report takes a broader view of new voices needed to strengthen community change efforts that include: socially and economically marginalized leaders; those who have emerged as community leaders but have not gained

access to resources, decision making and policy development; those active in policy whose reach into and connection to community is only emerging.

Evidence collected for the report, “Engaging New Leadership Voices for Catalyzing and Sustaining Community Change,” looks at what is being accomplished when more ethnically diverse groups and individuals are promoted to leadership positions. The results of this study provide a compelling picture of positive changes that are supported by diversifying leadership. The research looks at the impacts that occur as individuals gain more sense of confidence and agency as leaders. “As these leaders gain influence through increased skills and new positions they challenge the perspectives of existing leaders, bring new resources to communities, change organizational cultures, participate in advocacy and build new networks within communities.” Women interviewed by CompassPoint for “On the Rise: A Profile of Women of Color in Leadership” describe themselves as better connected with constituents and partners, better able to employ non-traditional styles that help build consensus, and positioned to serve as role models to encourage women of color.

Theory of change:

Most of these reports are informed by assumptions or implicit theories about how change, specifically systemic change, occurs. It is helpful to understand the context for suggested interventions by articulating more clearly the assumptions about leverage points where under represented groups will have more influence over change. PolicyLink expresses a clear view on the role of policy, “The success of our work—whether focused on equitable development, access to technology, or health equity—depends on the ability of community leaders of color to take an active, central role in developing policy solutions.” A secondary assumption implied in this report is that new leaders are most effectively engaged in policy at the local level, community and state. Although there is discussion about the importance of ‘constituency’ and accountability, there is no clear view about the relationship between direct service and advocacy organizations as one means of increasing the influence of people of color in policy development. The report recommends activities that support a career path to advocacy positions without much exploration of the policy making process. There was mention of drawing more from movement building theory and history although these connections were not made.

The W.K. Kellogg report examines what they have learned across a set of initiatives about how to effectively support new voices in order to sustain community change. The basic assumption addressed by these initiatives is that, “Leaders make change. The kind of change that leaders make is based on who is at the table when priorities are set and decisions are made that have an impact on the social and economic well being of individuals and communities.” The report does not offer an analysis of the “table”, and whether they are speaking specifically of the policy table. The strategies outlined in the report would suggest that influence and power is seen within a broader context of a set of strategies (education, advocacy, community leadership, knowledge development, economic development) and the interplay of all of these fronts of work as integral to community empowerment in change.

The report, “Crossing Boundaries: An Exploration of Effective Leadership Development in Communities” takes a slightly different approach to the issue and concludes that we will only be able to address the growing economic disparities that are encroaching on the rights of poor and ethnic minorities by cultivating leadership that can cross boundaries. A similar conclusion was drawn in the Kellogg report, “Lessons Learned about Grassroots Leaders: An Analysis of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Grassroots Leadership Initiative” produced by Campbell and Associates. They find that, “real community change occurs when individuals and organizations transcend narrow interests in favor of an overarching community agenda that supports systemic change.”

The PolicyLink and Kellogg report on ‘Engaging New Voices’ are founded on representational/constituency models that assume community change agendas will be most effective when all stakeholders are more equitably represented at the table. The Crossing Boundaries and Kellogg report on grassroots leadership initiatives suggest that real systemic change can only be achieved when specific constituencies are able to identify a common agenda that transcends individual organizational or group interests. These apparently subtle differences may compliment each other or actually imply very different strategies about the composition and role of leadership in community change. It is important to surface what we think about how change occurs since this will effect the populations we target, the skills we emphasize, the career paths being promoted, the intention with which networks are cultivated, the composition of cohort/network development, and the anticipated outcomes and impact of intervention strategies.

In some of our early interviews the questions that have been asked of us include, “Do you really think people of color will be able to more effectively represent their communities and organizations in leadership positions of non-profit organizations?” One person interviewed felt that some people of color ‘choose’ not to work in many non-profit organizations because they are perceived as bureaucratic, disconnected or paternalistic towards their communities. Another interview respondent expressed concern about tokenism within large organizations where people of color are promoted without the authority to deliver for their communities. One interviewee pointed out that many small non-profits that serve a specific constituency actually are led by someone from that ethnic minority group. He felt that these organizations are often marginalized, have less access to resources and more limited influence. These opinions surface a contrary assumption about potential impact that people of color could expect to have in non-profit leadership, and in some cases about the role of organizations in change.

The Executive Summary of the Diversity Initiative evaluated by Third Sector New England in their publication, “The Case for Dialogues that Reach Across Differences” affirms their strategy of providing financial and technical support that enable non-profits to become more inclusive in their policy and delivery of programs. Their strategies aim to shift leadership to people of color in organizations and communities. Their diversity initiatives focus on working within organizations to create a cultural shift towards inclusion and to create policy changes in hiring practices and in board selection.

Obstacles:

Across reports there were several universally identified obstacles to engaging new voices and increasing the representation of people of color in management positions within the non-profit sector and policy development arena. There was clear agreement on:

- Institutionalized Racism: Racism in organizations was characterized as entrenched prejudices and inequalities that lead to exclusion in recruitment and advancement, deep wounds and internalized oppression that undermine the confidence and agency of people of color, white privilege, exclusive culture (unwelcoming environment), and exclusive language.
- Inequities in Access: Inequities were described on the job and more significantly in early preparation. A lack of competitive advantage was attributed to lack of skills development, education and networking opportunities.
- Economics: The cost of educational programs prevents many community representatives from educational programs that could prepare them. Even management non-profit jobs are not plentiful enough in communities to keep good candidates in their community.

The multiple sources broadened the picture of challenges also citing as factors:

- Sustainability: Organizations don't institutionalize changes beyond an initial intervention that would support the continuous recruitment of new voices and people of color.
- Gate Keepers: Current leaders do not always want to share power. In a perceived market of competition for resources, new leaders may be seen as a threat.
- Resistance: New perspectives often challenge the status quo and are perceived as a threat to individuals or an organizational culture that is resistant to change.
- Black/White View of Race: In some areas of the rural south, issues of diversity are limited by a Black/White characterization of race issues that leaves out small Latino and Asian American populations.
- Dominant Leadership Model: The prevalence of a white, heroic, male model of leadership does not resonate with the cultural experience of leadership of many ethnic minority groups, e.g. Asian Americans who value collective leadership or Native American's who see leadership expressed over many generations.

Proposed Interventions and Strategies for Increasing the Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Positions of Influence

Leadership Development: Leadership development was strongly supported as one of the most significant strategies for cultivating new voices and increasing the diversity of the non-profit sector. It is important to look at leadership development opportunities that will increase the recruitment of external candidates as well as development strategies that increase the promotion of internal candidates. A disproportionately larger number of the Women Executive Directors of Color (referred to as WEDOC's) were recruited internally, unlike white counterparts who were predominantly external recruits. This

raises the questions of mid management development opportunities. In this situation, leadership interventions aimed at mid managers or even junior employees may accelerate diversification from an internal pool. These women were generally promoted within organizations in which the community had strong representation on the staff and board. This indicates a positive (or conversely negative) role that boards play in the selection process and the inclusion or exclusion of internal and external candidates of color.

There were specific leadership development strategies that were uniformly recommended by most reports:

- Mentoring: The three major sources (Kellogg, PolicyLink, and Boundary Crossing) all supported the importance of mentoring: the value of personal encouragement/support, someone to show you the ropes of networking/survival, someone to problem solve. The WEDOC's interviewed for "Women on the Rise" expressed a strong interest in being mentored in their positions as Executive Directors. In many cases they were also serving as mentors to younger women entering the field.
- Community Projects: The application of new skills and experiential learning on a project of immediate community benefit enhances learning, confidence and skill building or participants.
- Network/Relationship Building: High value was placed on the importance of network building and particularly on access to networks and relationships that introduce participants to new perspectives and resources. The WEDOC's expressed strong interest in being part of a network that would increase their access to decision makers and individuals with resources.
- Knowledge Development: Different perspectives on this general topic include the importance of collecting and using data analysis for policy work, peer learning, new knowledge development that supports community innovation and problem solving capacity, and cross cultural learning and empathy that are critical to boundary crossing.
- Skill Development: All of the research supports the importance of skill development. There are some differences about what skills are most important, related to the specific context and strategy, e.g. policy skills, boundary crossing capacity.
- Resources: Resources surfaced in numerous ways, as a sustainability issue for keeping people of color, often with high college loans in the sector. The W. K. Kellogg research found that individuals often need some enabling support for basic needs, e.g. bus fare, childcare support, and wardrobe. This was also a finding of The California Wellness Foundation Evaluation. One of their findings was that people cannot be compartmentalized and that you must look at the leader as a whole person to understand how to support their leadership capacity. Across the board, all reports point to the problems of overworked, under compensated Executive Directors facing extreme stress in the face of financial sustainability issues for their organizations.
- Cultural Competence/Boundary Crossing: PolicyLink describes the importance of helping people of color develop the skill to maintain their values while knowing

how and when to make compromises in a policy arena. This involves accountability to one's constituency while simultaneously understanding the needs of other communities. Boundary crossers describe the immense pressures of maintaining trust while working across community boundaries. Those engaged in the Boundary crossing research acknowledged, as did other researchers, the critical importance of self-knowledge, cultural esteem and self-reflection as a prerequisite to developing positive relationships with others outside ones own group.

Social Entrepreneurism: Although Social Entrepreneurism is often identified as a leadership development strategy it may deserve specific attention in the context of strategies for diversification of the non-profit sector. Several interview participants mentioned that graduates of their programs, frustrated by lack of advancement opportunities within their organizations, sometimes leave these organizations to start their own. Social entrepreneurship is also recognized as a way to support innovative organizations that are more creative and adaptive to multiple cultural styles. It might be helpful to look at the demographics of the social entrepreneurial movement to understand who is initiating new organizations and why. This may be an important strategy for increasing the representation of different ethnic minority groups in the sector. It is important to learn more about these ventures, e.g. how effective and influential are these new start ups?

Dealing with Institutionalized Racism:

Several of the reports reviewed, Babcock, Third Sector New England and Irvine, focus on strategies that identify and deal directly with institutionalized racism in order to create conditions for the recruitment and promotion of people of color. The Babcock Foundation used external organizational development consultants. They worked with the staff of organizations to understand the ways in which racism was at play among individuals and within the organizations. Third Sector New England also stresses the value of hiring diversity consultants to work with the staff and boards of organizations to create a culture of inclusivity and to change hiring practices. The Irvine Foundation, as part if their Community Foundations Initiative, worked at the top level to diversify boards of directors. They placed priority on creating a leadership team within community foundations that would reflect multiple perspectives and bring a diversity of understanding to community issues. One leadership program that was part of the Kellogg initiative, The Southern Empowerment Project, talked about the importance of working with white people to help them understand white privilege. Part of their strategy was to increase potential allies among those who already had access to power to help open doors for new voices.

The Role of the Organization:

Many of the strategies addressed in these reports offer suggestions about interventions and supports that will enable people of color to gain more access to leadership positions. Once in these positions there is often resistance to proposed changes. This has been identified as one of the significant challenges to the success and influence of people of color. There has been little mention in the reports reviewed about the strategies that will help organizations adapt a positive culture towards change, address institutional racism, deal with founders who are resistant to sharing power and increase organizational sensitivity and representation of constituencies served. The strategies being developed, especially leadership development approaches need to be integrated with the organizational development supports being offered by non-profit management centers.

Individual Initiative vs. Support Systems and Equity of Opportunity:

One report, Winds of Change, interviewed 60 women in their 30's to 60's that had attained some stature in leadership positions. Over one third of the women represented ethnic minority groups. The report characterized two types of women central to these success stories, adapters and resisters. The adapters developed a capacity to successfully adapt their style to a dominant male culture and the resisters managed to successfully integrate characteristics that they attributed to being women into their leadership style. The message was that both types of women had been successful because of their resilience and perseverance. The limitation of this report is that only women who met some stringent criteria of success were interviewed. There were no questions about connections that helped them to attain their job. The focus was only on their success in their current position. The women who were unable to get in the door may suggest a lack of resources and opportunity rather than resilience. This is the danger of the prevalent view that would believe that opportunity is available to those who exercise persistence. This is also why it is important to understand the obstacles, as elaborated by those who have experienced them, and to look broadly at the strategies that will begin to comprehensively address them.

Conclusion:

Several interesting new questions have surfaced through a scan of pertinent research and initial project interviews. The most important questions are those related to specific assumptions about how to increase the influence and the agency of people of color on behalf of community change. The research question for this project operates on a premise that there is a negative cost to the lack of representation of ethnic minorities in leadership positions of the non-profit sector and that increased diversification of non-profit leadership will benefit change efforts. While the research agrees that there is benefit to diversifying non-profit leadership it is important for us to understand that there are also opinions being expressed from several quarters that this may not be the most effective strategy for increasing influence and access to power. For example some research and participants suggest that:

- There are good numbers of people of color in leadership of small organizations, and organizations that represent specific ethnic communities. Leadership of these organizations does not necessarily guarantee influence or power.
- Many non-profit organizations are not respected by communities they serve as legitimate partners or representatives of community interests due to bureaucracy, history, staff demographics, paternalism, lack of community empowerment, etc.
- Leadership within a non-profit organization without development of a constituent base can amount to tokenism and the lack of authority to implement change.
- Many non-profit organizations emerge from a dominant culture that does not support particular, leadership styles of people of color; many organizations have not grappled with internal racism and most are resistant to change. Without first addressing organization barriers, leadership may be a set up for people of color.

While looking at the contributions of leadership development strategies it is important to remember that this is just one set of interventions among many that are needed to set the stage for increasing the influence of people of color as agents of change. It will also be important and helpful to expand our thinking and research to address more broadly how issues of class, age and gender intersect, are understood and reflected in recommendations about how to prepare the next generation of leadership. This acknowledged, the literature and interviews do still point to the importance of leadership development and support strategies. The lessons from the leadership development experience do point to a set of strategies that may provide increased opportunities for entry into the sector, advancement and the sustainability of people of color in leadership of non profit organizations.