



Toward a Framework of Social Change Leadership

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Abstract

This paper presents and describes an emergent framework of social change leadership, based on a multi-year, multi-modal, qualitative study of social change organizations. The framework posits that the consistent use of a set of leadership drivers, anchored in a set of assumptions and core values of social justice, helps members of these organizations engage in practices and activities that build collective power, which is then leveraged to produce long-term outcomes for social change. We suggest the study of social change leadership has implications for broader work on leadership, in two ways. First, it helps illuminate social constructionist understandings of leadership that see it as shared or collective rather than inherent in one or more visible individuals. Secondly, it highlights the importance of both beliefs and behaviors -- worldview and action – and the interaction between them as fundamental to leadership.

Introduction

This paper offers and describes an emergent framework that is the product of an effort to theorize about social change leadership from the ground up.¹ The framework emerged inductively, using a constructionist lens to gather, analyze and interpret empirical data collected in collaboration with members of organizations doing social change.

The study of social change leadership (SCL) has been relatively absent from the active conversation about the nature of effective leadership (Hunt, 1999; Conger, 1999,

¹ We define “framework” as a mental map, or set of ideas and assumptions that help us understand or negotiate a particular territory (Bolman and Deal, 2003), in this case, the territory of social change leadership.

Shamir, 1999; House, 1999). Yet we argue that exploring social change leadership not only teaches us more about this important type of leadership but also about leadership more generally, in two ways. First, SCL helps illuminate social constructionist understandings of leadership that see it as shared or collective rather than inherent in one or more visible individuals or in the dyadic relationships between leaders and followers. Secondly, it highlights the importance of both beliefs and behaviors -- worldview and action – and the interaction between them as fundamental to leadership.

This paper represents our first effort to integrate the preliminary findings of a multi-year, national study of social change leadership, which is still in process. We offer a systematic description of the framework, by discussing its logic, describing its dimensions, illustrating them with examples from our data set, and then linking the insights to the relevant literature. In the future, the notion of social change leadership needs to be further differentiated from general understandings of leadership, of nonprofit leadership, and of public service leadership, all of which have their own literatures. However, in this paper, our focus is on articulating the framework.

Toward a framework of social change leadership

The new leadership school – especially transformational or neo-charismatic theories – has dramatically changed the way we understand leadership (Bryman, 1996; Hunt, 1999; Conger, 1999). The scholars behind this wave of empirical research have broadened the scope of study to include different kinds of leaders and different contexts. They have shone the spotlight on higher level actors, including world class and historical leaders, as well as lower-level actors, including low- to mid-level managers. They have explored educational, political, and military contexts, in addition to the corporate context. Some scholars argue that the shift has also stimulated a breadth of topics, epistemological approaches and

methodologies, including the use of more qualitative research (Hunt, 1999; House, 1999). For example, transformational leadership studies heighten attention to the symbolic and emotional aspects of the work, stressing concepts such as vision, inspiration, role modeling, intellectual stimulation, meaning making, empowerment, and collective identity (Conger, 1999, p 156).

Conger (1999), however, argues that the field's turning away from theory building toward testing theories with standardized variables and measures is premature. In his view, there is a need for more theory development and continued exploratory research, as many domains of knowledge about transformational leadership remain obscure. We concur with this assessment, both on methodological and epistemological grounds (Ospina, 2004).

From a methodological point of view, the widening of contexts has largely excluded the experience of leaders in community-based organizations explicitly engaged in doing social change (Selsky and Smith, 1994; Ospina and Schall, 2001). Yet much could be learned about leadership by exploring it in this type of context. In particular, scholars have too often looked for leadership only in the expected places, usually in hierarchical organizations or systems (Allen, 1990). Allen argues that most leadership researchers sample in one of three ways: by position, by individual reputation or by organizational success. Reliance on these assumptions and the consequent choice of sampling criteria, argues Allen, decreases the diversity of views of leadership because it reduces the pool from which to sample. Most people studied using these techniques are members of dominant groups with only a limited representation of women and people of color who have been successful in negotiating the traditional hierarchical system. Hence this author argues for the need to "look where we have not looked before" (p. 8) to better understand leadership and to expand our present knowledge of it.

We would go even further in our critique to challenge another methodological assumption of most empirical work on transformational leadership, that its study requires focusing primarily on the leaders or the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers. We argue that individual traits, styles, or behaviors, as well as dyadic activities between leaders and followers, processes or relationships, must be viewed within the on-going work of a given community to pursue a collective purpose. This suggests a change in focus from individuals to the collective work of leadership. This suggests looking for *instances* of peoples' experience in doing the work of leadership as the focus, or as the preferable *unit* of analysis for studying leadership. We argue that Allen's suggestion of looking elsewhere should include not only looking at different kinds of people, but also looking at different kinds of contexts and paying greater attention to the nature and content of work in these contexts (Ospina and Schall, 2001). This represents, of course, an epistemological as well as a methodological shift.

From an epistemological point of view, the paradigmatic convergence described in the transformational literature (Conger, 1999; Hunt, 1999; House, 1999) rests on the use of a behaviorist approach which has helped advance the research agenda, but has limited our capacity to think creatively about leadership. Indeed, despite its recognition of social processes, others have argued that empirical work in the transformational literature continues to be too psychological and leader-centered in its approach (Shamir, 1999; Beyer, 1999). An emergent, constructionist approach offers alternative ways of theorizing a post-heroic perspective on leadership that heightens its relational and collective dimensions (Fletcher, 2002) and that suggests the need for new lenses and thus different methodological approaches to studying leadership.

A relational approach sensitizes the analyst to the dangers of confusing leadership with the person who is identified as the leader (Rost, 1993; Vanderslice, 1988; Schall et al,

2004). These emergent approaches view leadership as a meaning making process in communities of practice (Drath, 2001; Drath and Palus, 1994; Palus and Horth, 1996,) or as a set of functions and relationships distributed among many, rather than concentrated around a single individual (Pearse and Conger, 2002). For example, Gronn's (1999) study of a famous mountain school campus in Australia explored the relational dynamics between two leaders credited for this school's success. Analyzing correspondence, school council records, alumni files, archival material and newspapers, he shifted the unit of analysis away from methodological individualism to consider the relational dimension of leadership.

While others have pointed out the potential advantages of a constructionist perspective to leadership (Tierney, 1987; Pfeffer, 1997; Smircich and Morgan (1982), Meindl, 1995,) and published empirical work based on this approach (Pastor, 1998; Fyol et al, 1999; Gronn, 1999), more empirical work is needed to further develop it. We view our research as a contribution to develop this goal (Ospina and Schall, 2001; Schall et al, 2004; Ospina et al, 2002; Foldy et al, 2004; Ospina and Saz, 2005). For example, even Gronn's approach suggests that there were two clearly identifiable leaders who shared responsibility for the mountain school. We argue that in many contexts leadership and followership are fluid roles, with individuals leading in some contexts and following in others, or leading at some times and following in others. Everyone can be both sensegiver and sensemaker. We further argue that social change organizations, given their basic values and beliefs, provide an excellent opportunity to study this kind of leadership – and to assess whether it may be more widespread than traditional leadership approaches would suggest.

Using a constructionist lens to focus on social change leadership

We explore the nature of leadership with a constructionist perspective by focusing on social and organizational contexts outside of the mainstream management domains typical to the

leadership literature. These contexts include community-based and alternative organizations and groups connected to social movements, as well as networks of organizations engaged in civic reform. For them, the basic leadership tasks of direction, commitment and adaptation (Drath and Palus, 1994; Drath, 2001) cluster around the goal of social change. Therefore, these organizations face high degrees of uncertainty, complexity and even hostility from the environment. They also share an aspiration to embody democratic values, pursue human dignity and citizenship, and work for the common good (Evans and Boyte, 1986; Bryson and Crosby, 1992; Terry, 1993). Learning about leadership in these contexts can contribute new insights to the theory and practice of leadership.

Social change organizations address what Bryson and Crosby (1992; Crosby and Bryson, 2005) call “shared power problems” which require, they say, “public leadership” and inter-organizational coordination. Selsky and Smith (1994) argue that these organizations represent contexts for exercising leadership that are very different from traditional organizational settings because participants are diverse, there is no single agreement on decision making processes, and the level of environmental turbulence is extreme and very sensitive to political changes. Moreover, independent of the issue domain, the locus of the problem being addressed does not lie within the one single organization itself, but “in the structural and normative relationships among a large number of organizations, and with the wider institutional setting” (p. 278).

Several scholars have started to study public and nonprofit organizations that enact this type of so-called public leadership, (Chirslip and Larson, 1994; Selsky and Smith, 1994; Crosby, 1999; Huxham and Vangen, 2000, 2005; Crosby and Bryson, 2005), building on a strong tradition of research on inter-organizational collaborations (Milward and Provan, 2003; Gray, 1996; Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Berry et al 2004).

Our work joins this emergent empirical research, offering an understanding of leadership from a constructionist lens and within a particular context, that of social change organizations. This context fits under the umbrella of public leadership, but illustrates a unique manifestation of it. Unlike other public service organizations interested in creating social value from within existing structures and systems, be they public sector or nongovernmental, social change organizations have at their core an explicit intention to challenge and change the status quo for the sake of a particular social group. This distinguishes them as one particular context that calls for public leadership.

Chetkovich and Kunreuther (forthcoming) argue that while the label of “social change organizations” (SCOs) has great meaning for practitioners and activists in this country, it is relatively absent from the academic literature, in part because they tend to be categorized and lumped together with social movement organizations, which is too broad a category. These authors define social change organizations as small, grass-roots, nonprofit organizations “that aim not only to serve those who have been disadvantaged, but to address systemic problems in a way that will increase the power of marginalized groups, communities or interests” (p. 2). It is the focus on systemic change, the call for social justice and the bottom up effort, these authors argue, that characterizes SCOs as distinct from other social service non-profits, from larger, professionalized nonprofits working within mainstream politics or from other social movement organizations. In fact, Chetkovich and Kunreuther argue that, while ignored in the literature, and despite their smaller size, SCOs represent a key feature of today’s socio-political environment in this country, and a “potentially significant force for change” (p. 2). As this force for change, and given their social justice values, they present a ripe opportunity to study leadership, especially collective leadership processes.

There are very few empirical studies of leadership for social change in general, and even fewer studies of leadership in the context of SCOs in particular. There is great potential

to further develop leadership theory by expanding empirical work into a relevant context and a type of leadership that has not been considered sufficiently before.²

Of particular interest to our discussion are scholars who, like us, offer empirically derived frameworks or models as the contribution of their research. For example, Selsky and Smith (1994) draw a framework of social change leadership from two interwoven interpretive action research projects about leadership in an inter-organizational community setting in Philadelphia. Crosby and Bryson's "Leadership for the Common Good Framework" targets public and nonprofit organizations because of its emphasis on "developing regimes of mutual gain" (Crosby and Bryson, 2005, p. 182).³

These two frameworks offer significant contributions to building not only social change leadership theory, but broader leadership theory that moves beyond the behaviorist paradigm. In both cases, the interest focuses on the tasks that call for leadership (Drath, 2001). However, they also tend to highlight the importance of visible leaders, rather than the collective capacity of the group. Further, they focus more on the management of meaning, events and stakeholders from the organization out, with a bias toward understanding how particular organizational leaders influence other stakeholders and organizations in a turbulent environment. This is necessary to understand social change efforts, which are, indeed, embedded within the dynamics of a shared-power world (Crosby and Bryson, 2005). But this emphasis leaves unattended the important questions of how leadership happens inside the organization: how those within each organizational boundary find the direction, ensure the commitment and adapt to new challenges to advance the common work? Using a

² In 1994, a special issue of *Leadership Quarterly* was devoted to "change-advocacy leadership", which focused mostly on the environmental movement, featuring invited essays and empirical case studies in the corporate, nonprofit and public organizations. Only one of them focused explicitly on social change leadership in community based organizations (Selski and Smith, 1994).

³ We also identified a few "models" that are pertinent because of their reference to social change, but one is normative (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996 and the other focuses on private sector efforts to engage in public leadership, which represents a very different approach (Flannery and May, 1994).

constructionist lens, and focusing on the work of social change organizations and their leaders, we hope to start making a contribution to unpack those questions.

Methods

Since 2001, the Leadership for a Changing World (LCW) program, has recognized and awarded 17 to 20 leaders or leadership teams per year. This paper draws on data co-produced by the LCW awardees and members of the Research and Documentation (R&D) component of the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. Awardees undergo a rigorous selection process, beginning with 1000-1500 nominations per year, whittled down by national and regional selection committees.⁴ (The R&D team plays no role in the selection process.) Given the high nominee to awardee ratio (at least 50:1), the rigor of the selection process, and the selection criteria, these organizations can be considered leadership exemplars and, therefore, suitable subjects for leadership research. However, the Ford Foundation's liberal leanings did introduce bias into the sample. Only progressive, social justice organizations were selected as awardees. Conservative social change organizations are not included.

Selection criteria state that award recipients are leaders or leadership teams who are tackling tough and critical social problems with effective, systemic solutions, and, though largely unrecognized outside their field or community, if recognized, would inspire others. As part of this program, the Ford Foundation charged the R&D team to develop new knowledge about leadership, based on the study of this non-traditional leadership population.

⁴ The process begins when individuals and teams are nominated by colleagues or supporters. A national committee selects about 250 top candidates who move on to one of six regional selection committees. The regional committees, using newly submitted essays from each nominee, select 5 primary and 4 secondary regional finalists. These are whittled down to 36 semi-finalists who host site visits from the reviewers. A national selection committee reviews all the materials from the semi-finalists, and by consensus recommends 24 finalists, 17 to 20 of whom will make the final cut.

This paper is based on analysis of data from the LCW's 2001 and 2002 cohorts, or 40 organizations.⁵

The proposed framework emerged from the integration of findings with the first two groups of LCW awardees. These findings are the product of the inductive approach for the first half of the research process, which will be followed by a more deductive approach for the second half. The research design for the overall research Project consists of three parallel streams of inquiry: narrative inquiry, cooperative inquiry and ethnographic inquiry to answer the broad research question: in what ways do communities making social change engage in the work of leadership?”.⁶ This multi-modal design affords multiple angles from which co-researchers can reflect upon their leadership experience, offering both individual and collective sense-making opportunities in the process.

The narrative inquiry stream consisted of at least two rounds of in-depth interviews that became the primary source for constructing leadership stories. Researchers designed the interview protocols to both address these particular dimensions as well as cast a broader net to catch other salient organizational characteristics and activities. The interviews followed a fluid interpretive technique, allowing the participants the freedom to move the conversation in a broad range of directions to describe their experiences. Once the interviews were transcribed, two researchers, who may or may not have conducted the interviews, carefully read through the transcripts and developed an “analytic memo” for each organization that described the organization, its work, and highlighted particular kinds of leadership exemplified by the organization. The awardees gave feedback on the analytic memo, to make sure it represented, from their perspective, both the spirit and letter of their work. This feedback enhanced the validity of the analytic process, as did the participation of at least two researchers in the interviews and the creation of the memo. These memos represent first-order

⁵ See appendix 1 for list of Group 1 and 2 organizations, issue area and geographic location

⁶ See appendix 2 for research design figure

analysis of the data. Individual leadership stories were written for each organization from the memos. In addition, horizontal analysis (on specific topics and from selected groups of organizations) are being developed by the core research team, drawing both on the original transcripts and the analytic memos to develop second-order, more conceptual interpretations.

LCW program participants were also invited to participate in the cooperative inquiry research stream. Cooperative inquiry groups of eight to ten members focused on a topic of their choosing over the course of a cohort cycle. Engaging in the cooperative inquiry process of “action-reflection-action,” the group members produced practitioner-based knowledge. There is no predominant voice in the product of this stream, as all group participants, including members of the core research team, co-produced knowledge, and documented the learning process and the collective answers to the explored leadership questions.

The third stream of research, ethnography, was both collaborative and community-based whereby the ethnographer facilitated ethnographic inquiry driven by the community members invited to participate. The collaborative ethnography stream offers a window on the experience of leadership from the inside out, over time and in context. The ethnographies generated rich descriptions of the relationships, practices and processes within which communities engage in the work of leadership.

Finally, in addition to these sources of data, members of the research team attended meetings of awardees and took field notes on their presentations and discussions.

As new co-researchers, new research projects and new research products were added over the years, the research team engaged in comparative analysis, generating a summative integration of insights across organizations, research streams and research products. By systematically analyzing all of the products from each research stream (leadership memos and stories, cooperative inquiry reports and ethnographies as well as field notes from program wide meetings, online and applications materials), the R&D team captured learnings from the

awardees rather than imposing existing theoretical models to capture and interpret their experience.

To generate the proposed framework, the R&D team identified key dimensions from repeated patterns in the existing documents and iteratively looked for additional instances of the dimensions in the incipient materials for Groups 3 and 4, while remaining open to new ideas.⁷ Engaged in an in-depth discussion of the framework, members of the core research team also refined and incorporated insights from their own fieldwork and case analysis. The R&D team also used the framework to gauge the resonance of emerging ideas with other audiences through three regional conversations with groups of social change leaders which included a mix of LCW participants and members from organizations that did not participate in the program. The insights gained from those conversations will be incorporated into next iterations of the framework.

The framework

The proposed framework posits that the consistent use of a set of leadership **drivers**, anchored in a set of **assumptions** and **core values** of social justice, helps members of these organizations engage in **practices and activities** that **build collective power**, which is then **leveraged** to produce **long-term outcomes** for social change. Together, the drivers, assumptions and core values act as an integrated philosophy or worldview that becomes a powerful source of meaning to help frame and to ground the practices, activities and tools used to engage in action and accomplish the work effectively. The worldview we call **grounded humanism**; the practices and activities we summarize as **strategic action**.

⁷ See appendix 3 for list of research products

Toward a Social Change Leadership Framework



The identified elements of the framework apply variably depending on the context and strategic choices of any particular organization. Therefore, the nature of the leadership that emerges among a group engaged in social change work is the result of the different emphasis its members give to the various elements in the framework. We describe each of these elements as well as discussing the relationships among them. We have structured the discussion of these dimensions of the framework into two broad sections. The first, Grounded Humanism, unpacks the worldview; the second, Strategic Action, focuses on the instruments used to build and leverage power as well as the long term outcomes expected from doing so.

Grounded humanism

We have identified a set of leadership drivers, beliefs about the nature of people, change, knowledge, power and the self, and an ethics of social justice that ground the work of members of social change organizations. Together, these drivers, beliefs and ethics produce a world view which represents a coherent and encompassing organizing principle for the work, “grounded humanism”. The organizing principle is defined as ‘humanism’ because it reflects an appreciation of the humanity of all individuals and a faith in their potential contribution to create a more humane society. It is defined as ‘grounded’ because this faith is supported by a systemic understanding of how society operates, and an awareness of the importance of power dynamics to attain social change.

Leadership Drivers

Social change leadership is driven by images of both the present and the future. Individuals identify a current, pressing systemic inequity and name that inequity as a problem. They also envision a world without that inequity; they create a picture of a just and fair future state. These depictions of both the current state and the future motivate action.

Current Systemic Inequities - At the core of the work in social change organizations is the motivation to redress an identified systemic inequity. In fact, often one of the first tasks of social change leadership is to draw attention to this inequity and to name it as a problem. Very often, the inequity has existed for decades, even centuries, but has been ignored or taken for granted. Social change leadership explicitly surfaces the inequity and makes the case for addressing it.

Therefore, systemic social change is firmly rooted in the present, not just an abstract ideal in the future. It is about confronting immediate problems, identifying their underlying causes, marshalling the resources to address these causes and thus producing tangible, enduring results for those facing the inequity. However, while the immediate problem may appear local and discreet, social change leaders understand this problem as symptomatic of larger systemic dynamics. Systemic inequities are firmly rooted in existing power relations that influence resource distribution.

Systemic inequities trigger action when a group agrees on the need to redress the problem for a community. For example, the New Road Community Development Group in Virginia began when the largely African American neighborhood residents explicitly named their lack of indoor plumbing as a problem which shouldn't exist in 1990's America. They were quite aware that the white neighborhoods around them all had indoor plumbing – as, of course, did the vast majority of U.S. households. In 1993 the neighborhood identified this inequity and came together to do something about it.

Visions of the future - Redressing these immediate inequities drives the work toward creating new visions for the future. While specific visions of the future vary among social change groups, they share some underlying characteristics. One subgroup in the dataset, a

collection of eight organizations, tried to identify these characteristics. In their cooperative inquiry report, they articulate “a common vision for health and life for all people” (CI-The Council, p. 10). The group describes how its members invite their constituents “to dare to dream” this vision (p. 5).⁸ This vision, the dream of a society where all are healthy and alive, helps propel their work. “Daring to dream” refers to the fact that the vision is long term and hard to attain. It also means that only by daring to believe in its possibility will it become possible. This is a perfect metaphor to illustrate the second set of drivers that help move the work forward, the groups’ visions of the future.

Visions of the future link immediate action with the ultimate goal of eliminating the systemic inequity that drives the work. These visions of the future strategically address specific inequities and link them to systemic causes. They help convey a long-term vision that helps to motivate action by helping people dare to dream. The New Road group ultimately developed a much more far-reaching vision of the future than simply getting indoor plumbing. They envisioned a future which included more significant renovations to their existing homes and then extended beyond that to home ownership and greater community control.

Variations of the visions of the future -- While all social change groups have a vision for the future, they don’t all share the same one. There are two key distinctions. One is the extent of systemic change being demanded: this runs on a continuum from Inclusion to Transformation. The other is whether the group has also articulated a need for Preservation, running parallel to its call for change.

Transformation – In this view, systemic change means literally replacing the current system with another system. This view sees “the system” as the source of the identified problem. The goal is to fight for changes that will replace the system (or at

⁸ This concept comes from one LCW cooperative inquiry report, *Social Justice Leadership and Movement Building Cooperative Inquiry Report* <http://leadershipforchange.org/insights/research/files/Movement.pdf>.

least weaken it). Groups address a wide variety of “systems” from extremely broad ones like the government or corporate America, to more specific ones like the education system, the health infrastructure, etc.

The Burlington Community Land Trust, for example, works for land reform which, for them, means changing the fundamental nature of land ownership in the United States. The group’s leaders disagree with the basic notion of private ownership of the land. “People should not think that they can own a piece of land and do whatever they want with it. They can’t own water. They can’t own air,” said one member. The group wants to change from individual ownership of land to communal ownership: “That is the essential element of land reform: that land is owned in common. And individuals make use of the land as they need it.... But the land is ultimately owned by the community...” This group’s long term vision is one of transformational systemic change.

Inclusion – In this view, systemic change means altering the current system so that its benefits reach everyone equally. Groups holding this viewpoint out that some groups are systematically excluded from benefits such as adequate housing, clean air and water, and educational opportunities. The excluded community fights for the benefits it has been denied. New Road again provides a useful illustration and a contrast with the Burlington Community Land Trust. New Road doesn’t envision the fundamental changes sought by BCLT. It is simply interested in gaining access for its community to the same resources and privileges held by other communities, like appropriate housing and home ownership. It wants the current system to include its disenfranchised membership.

Preservation – According to this view, systemic change means stopping the destruction of traditional cultures by the great maw of American life. This view

focuses on making room in the system for an independent cultural heritage that has been undermined or nearly eradicated. Groups fight to preserve their own unique system because it has value and worth independent of the dominant system. The goal of preservation is most often held by immigrant or indigenous groups concerned that their way of life is disappearing.

While preservation is an end in itself, that notion of preservation generally accompanies a more inclusive or more transformational view of systemic change. Groups can fight to preserve their way of life while also demanding to be granted the same benefits as other Americans. Or they can simultaneously advocate for the wholesale replacement of particular systems, even as they struggle to preserve their own.

The Gwich'in Nation, a native tribe in the northern reaches of North America with members in both the United States and Canada, has seen massive changes over the decades that threaten their traditions and customs. They are battling against opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development in order to preserve their way of life. That fight for preservation, however, means that they must advocate for the systemic changes that will protect their way of life. Those changes tend to be more inclusive than transformational: the group does not advocate for a whole new system; rather they argue that the current system should protect their human rights as it protects other' rights.

Again, all these ways of thinking about the future are related to systemic social change, but each conceives of that change somewhat differently. These visions of what is possible, the future state, combine with depictions of the present state, the naming of the social inequity, as the most immediate motivators of action. However, these drivers are rooted

in even more fundamental assumptions and values. These beliefs also motivate action, but in a more distal way.

Working Assumptions and Beliefs

Effective leadership in SCOs is based on underlying assumptions held by its members, about the nature of people, change, knowledge, the self, and power. These core assumptions both influence and are reflected in the language, routines, practices, tools, and strategies used in the organization. These assumptions are implicit because people do not necessarily articulate them on a daily basis. Rather, they are taken-for granted as part of a common group worldview.

Assumptions about people – Social change leadership underscores the humanity of individuals, particularly of those who have been socially excluded and thus have been traditionally stereotyped, marginalized or judged negatively by mainstream society. The culture of SCOs promotes valuing people as human, independent of their social status, and has faith in the potential contribution of anyone who is, or can become, involved in the work. This respect for the humanity of individuals manifests as a relentless commitment to interrupt any belief, statement or practice that dehumanizes individuals and groups of people. SCOs work is grounded in this “relentless humanity.”

Assumptions about social change – By definition, members of SCOs see social change as institutional and systemic, as truly “social.” Social change does not come about simply through the agglomeration of individual changes. It is driven by the understanding of individual problems as manifestations of broader social problems and by an understanding of social problems as inter-connected and based in broadly inequitable structures and institutions. Social change leadership strategies take into account a dynamic social system composed of interrelated parts, located at different levels of organizing – individual, group,

community and neighborhood, organizational, institutional. It also assumes that these levels, and parts operating at different levels, are interdependent. Changes in one level affect the other levels.

Assumptions about knowledge – Social change leaders believe in the power of knowledge as a key resource to make decisions about how to organize the work of social change. It also takes a critical epistemic posture: a challenging position about what constitutes valid knowledge. It recognizes many ways of knowing and thus many paths to knowledge. All forms of knowledge can shed light on new ways to address the problem and thus help inform the work. Stories are as important as numbers. Images and metaphors are as important as statistical analysis.

Assumptions about the self – In addition, social change work is driven by a fourth assumption about the self in the world. For social change leaders, the self is intrinsically and evidently a self-in-relation or a self-in-connection with others, nature, the earth, or even the universe. Organizational members variously draw from philosophy, religious faith and/or cultural heritages to give meaning to this connection.

Assumptions about Power – Social change leadership is grounded in an understanding of power as central to the work. To begin with, social inequities are rooted in power imbalances. Some societal groups are advantaged while others are disadvantaged. Indeed, some groups and individuals face systemic disempowerment, in the form of racism, sexism and other forms of institutional discrimination. Social change leadership is geared towards eliminating those inequities. But those advantaged by those inequities will use their power to prevent change. Therefore, change can only come from amassing power, in some form.

The working assumptions about people, change, knowledge, the self, and power underlie social change leadership. However, they themselves grow from even deeper core values of social justice.

The core values of social justice

Anchoring the implicit drivers and assumptions of social change leadership, is a shared set of explicit **core values** that inspire, awaken, fuel and direct the passion of those engaged in the work. In a group conversation, awardees defined the work of leadership as one of connecting values to actions: “There are a wide variety of strategies that allow effective social change leadership to happen. What seems to be constant is a strong commitment to core values as the ‘bottom line’ to guide decisions about the work” (from field notes). These core values are those of social justice – a call for fairness and equality of opportunity for all human beings. This concept of social justice can then be broken down into more particular values of inclusion, social solidarity, democracy, equity and transparency and accountability.

Inclusion represents a commitment to continually enlarging civic involvement and participation of those individuals who are disenfranchised and even silenced and excluded from basic services and resources that others enjoy. In one group meeting, awardees noted the need to “draw the circle” larger in terms of voice, participation and access to resources (from field notes). Inclusion also represents a commitment to pluralism, a belief that multiple perspectives and voices should define the terms of the conversation and the agenda for change.

The value of ***social solidarity*** is its emphasis on mutual responsibility and reciprocity. Across groups, organizations, movements, members of SCOs believe that we all have the responsibility to look out for and take care of each other and of any other human being who is in a vulnerable position.

The values of ***transparency and accountability*** refer to SCO's commitment to develop practices and systems that are open and accessible and to avoid anything that smacks of smoke-filled rooms and secretive processes. They also make explicit the belief that those in authority – from politicians to corporate leaders, from board members to executive directors -- cannot operate with impunity; intercrossing ties of accountability are a mechanism for keeping all of us honest.

Democracy articulates the hope that this country embodies the basic principles of governance by the people and for the people. For some organizations the aspiration is to recover the lost values of democracy upon which the US society was built, or to make those available to a larger population, thus making the society more democratic. For others, the aspiration is to achieve a state of democracy that has never existed, despite the rhetoric.

Equity applies both internally externally; it demands fair organizational practices that help the group “walk its talk” and equitable opportunities and outcomes in American society, a future where all enjoy the same rights, privileges and obligations.

Commitment to the core values influences how working assumptions are interpreted and enacted and the way organizational members use their understanding of the problem and their visions of the future to develop the practices that leverage power. For example, the belief in the power of experience as a source of knowledge to give direction to the work is clearly linked to the use of dialogue and collective narratives as on-going practices that help both find the direction for the work and help engage and sustain members' commitment to the work. Similarly, the design and implementation of on-going practices, primary activities and means are supported by the commitment to these values. For example, honoring the values of equity inclusiveness and democracy, in their effort to create organizational capacity the executive staff of the New York Immigration Coalition invest considerable time ensuring that small grass roots organizations have both formal representation and air time at the

coalition's governing Board, so that decisions made are not determined exclusively by the large, professionalized and more powerful nonprofits who are part of the coalition by virtue of the services they provide to immigrants in the city.

Altogether, the drivers, assumptions and values constitute the worldview or organizing philosophy of ***grounded humanism***. This worldview offers an optimistic outlook and an appreciation of human beings, independent of their social condition, which propels members of the organization to act in a connected way. This worldview also offers a counter language to the dominant, taken-for-granted discourses about people, problems, and solutions that support existing structures of power. The new frames are grounded in the experiences and stories of the people who face the problem, and the work is often done in reference to the identity and experience of that particular social group. At the same time, given the commitment to values of social justice, that perspective is used to advocate universal benefits for everyone.

Strategic action to build collective power

SCOs take a variety of actions to make change. We call these integrated practices and activities ***strategic action***. This action is strategic because it is outcome-oriented and attends to the particular challenges and opportunities in the environment. It is also strategic because it recognizes that power is central to making change, and its goal is to build and leverage the power necessary to achieve long-term outcomes.

Social change leaders believe that systemic inequalities are firmly rooted in existing power relations. They are aware that people do not give up power unless they have to. Using a variety of strategies to build and leverage power – from direct confrontation to open collaboration and persuasion -- they view the expected outcomes as things that are won, not granted. This framework makes a distinction between building power and leveraging power.

We begin this section by describing how social change leaders view power; then we describe the difference between building and leveraging power. Then we go through the individual elements in greater detail.

Leaders working to create social change hold a sophisticated view of power. They utilize different approaches as necessary, from “power over” and “power with” to “power against” (Teske and Tetrault, 2000). They wield “power over” or dominating strategies when they have either or both the required resources and an intransigent opponent. They use “power with” or cooperating strategies when they either lack the necessary resources to predominate, when they find or develop allies inside the institutions they are fighting against or when they believe they will achieve more through negotiation with others. In addition, some also use a broader “power-against” strategy, particularly those with the most transformational visions of the future requiring the greatest degree of social change.

“Power against” comes from feminist scholars Teske and Tetrault. They explain that those who want something different than the status quo cannot hope to use the same language that is used to justify it. So they must challenge the way things are using imagery from their vision of the future. In other words, this view of “power-against” demands a different type of language, one that also challenges the assumptions and language dominated by the status quo forces. Fighting against mountain top removal, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC) engages in practices such as using a billboard on a highway that says “‘Stop destroying my mountains’—God”. This statement humorously draws legitimacy to the challenging actions of environmental activists by placing the highest possible authority on the side of those disrupting the status quo. As stated in an ethnography of OVEC’s work, the bill also talks directly to those doing the destruction, “invoking a higher authority...[to] call attention to the illegitimate use of power” (Hufford et al, 2004, p. 15), while reminding the

mining industry that churches in the area are among those expressing opposition to mountain top removal.⁹

To distinguish between building power and leveraging power, we draw on Gamson's work on power in social movements (1968, 1990). He suggests there are two different kinds of power: power in repose and power in use. Power in repose is potential power and is manifested in various kinds of resources and assets. This is a way of conceptualizing organizational and, often, inter-organizational strength.

Power in use is manifested in real outcomes or concrete changes. It can be further broken down into two categories. The first is the gaining of new advantages. An organization's power is determined by whether it can bring about the specific outcomes it fights for: can it pass legislation, build housing, change the way people think about prisons and prisoners? The second kind of power in use is the gaining of acceptance. Does the organization have a seat at the table? Is it included in the decision-making process on those issues it cares about? Do those in power consult with this organization before they take a particular step?

In our framework, power in repose is called "building power." Power in use is what we call "leveraging power." Building power is the work of identifying and marshalling the financial, political, and symbolic resources necessary to attain an organization's goals. Leveraging power is the act of attaining the tangible and enduring benefits for the communities they care about. The work of social change organizations is thus about building the power that its members can then leverage as they enter the social, political, economic and cultural arenas in which they operate.

⁹ This quote and references are from the LCW Ethnographic report: "Waging Democracy in The Kingdom of Coal, OVEC And The Movement For Social And Environmental Justice In Central Appalachia", by Janet Fout, Award Recipient, Dianne Bady, Award Recipient, Mary Hufford, UPenn Center for Folklore and Ethnography <http://leadershipforchange.org/insights/research/ethnography.php>

In reality, of course, organizations build and leverage power concurrently and simultaneously. There is also a feedback loop or virtuous cycle: leveraging power successfully will help the organization attract resources, thus building greater power, and then enabling more powerful leverage in the future. However, we think it is useful to identify them as separate processes and to delineate the steps involved in building power to the point where it can be leveraged.

Building collective power begins with a multitude of on-going practices that make up the day-to-day work of the organization, including collaborating with others and engaging in internal dialogue about how to proceed. These practices are given cohesion by their integration in a primary activity (or often, a mix of several activities) that guides the work in the organization. Other work on nonprofit and social change organizations identifies four primary activities: organizing, advocacy, community development and service provision (Wood, 2002; Smock, 2004; Su, 2005). These activities create the capacity on multiple levels which allows the leveraging of collective power to create the outcomes the organization seeks. Therefore this capacity is a means to an end. However, it is also a significant intermediate outcome of leadership work in and of itself.

Ongoing practices

Over time, social change leaders find or invent means and practical strategies to pursue their work in ways that are consistent with their worldview – their working assumptions and beliefs and their core values. These practices represent the unique ways the group undertakes the tasks that call for leadership – direction, commitment and adaptation to changing circumstances. Among many practices, our model focuses so far on the following, which we are in the process of developing:

Cultivating collaborative capacity – Research on networks (Agranoff, and McGuire. 2003; Berry et al, 2004) and on collaboration (Gray, 1996; Huxham and Vangen, 2004) take

for granted the relevance of leaders for effective collaboration, but only recently has there been an interest in exploring empirically this link (Mizrahi and Rosenthal, 2001; Crosby and Bryson, 2005; Huxham and Vangen, 2000). We suggest that the artful management of paradox is a key dimension of inter-organizational collaboration in SCOs. For example, leaders of both the New York Immigration Coalition and the Chicago based Coalition of Asian, American, European and Latin Immigrants of Illinois (CAAELII) devote considerable energy to manage effectively the paradoxical goals of maintaining unity to pursue common agendas around immigration issues and nurturing the diversity organizations bring in their mission, size, ideology, ethnic and national identities, and so on.

Engaging in dialogue - We propose that social change organizations use dialogue and other kinds of conversations to make meaning across communities defined by diverse worldviews, experiences, and backgrounds (Isaacs 1999). This idea is consistent with an emerging approach to leadership that is variously called relational (Drath 2001, Yankelovich 1999) post-heroic (Fletcher 2002), and post-industrial (Rost 1993). Yet we extend the arguments to suggest that communication practices represent a strategic approach to build collective power. For example, Tonatierra, a SCO that organizes day laborers in Phoenix, Arizona, strategically engaged both Latino day laborers and members of White neighborhood associations in a two-year dialogue to design a city ordinance that would allow taco vendors to continue to work in the city, although with some regulation.

Using identity narratives - Recent work on the role of culture, identity and narrative in collective action within social movements (Hirsch 1986; Jacobs 2002; Snow 2004;) complement leadership theories that emphasize social meaning-making processes occurring when groups engage in a common activity (Drath 2001). We suggest social change groups use collective narratives to effectively produce leadership practices that aid in addressing the tasks that call for leadership. Indigenous traditions, oral history, spirituality and a human

rights framework play essential roles in leadership for social change. For example, indigenous organizations, such as Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission in Oregon and Tohono O'odham Community Action in Arizona have forged collective identities strongly tied to spirituality, nature and the preservation of culture as a means of safeguarding their very existence.

Managing frames of reference - The cognitive leadership literature (Lord and Emrich, 2001) has long recognized the importance of leaders as “sensegivers” (Gioia and Chittipedi, 1991). We suggest that social change leaders deliberately frame important aspects of their work in carefully crafted ways that will reach and motivate key audiences. For example, the Gwich'in Steering Committee of the Gwich'in Nation is fighting to preserve the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. However, it frames the issue as one of human rights, rather than only an environmental concern, which then reaches constituencies who are more motivated by threats to human beings than to landscape or wildlife.

Primary Activities

Primary activities manifest the group’s overall approach to achieving its goals. Groups choose activities that they believe represent both the most effective and most legitimate way to leverage power, given their visions, values, assumptions, and the pressing demands and challenges they face. We have identified four types of activities in which groups engage to advance their collective work:

Organizing - Organizations engaging in organizing recruit, educate and mobilize a base of members directly affected by the organization’s issues in order to reach their long-term goals. Strategies may include creating membership structures in which constituents can be organizational decisionmakers and spokespersons, engaging in direct actions such as strikes or mass demonstrations and forming alliances to build a broader social change movement.

Public Policy Advocacy- Advocacy refers to involvement in the legislative process on the local, state or federal level. Organizations using advocacy as a primary activity protect and obtain goods and services for their constituents by crafting or reacting to legislation, and directly addressing elected officials and policymakers. Strategies may include participating in issue-based coalitions, educating the public, giving public testimony, writing letters to elected officials and collaborating with researchers and lawyers.

Community Development an/or Community Building - Community development is the creation of physical infrastructure by financing and/or constructing housing, businesses, parks or other community resources. Strategies may include engaging in community planning, analyzing economic impact and training constituents to acquire community planning, business development and property management skills. Community building is the developing of social capital and collective efficacy to act on behalf of a group whose individuals share a common sense of identify – based on social identities, geography, culture, nationality and so on. Strategies may include those described for community building, as well as more culturally based activities such as community-based theater, and the creation of cultural spaces such as community gardens or other spaces to engage in community interaction.

Direct Service Provision - Service provision involves meeting immediate and/or long-term needs of social groups or populations by providing goods, such as food or clothing, and/or services, such as job training, health care or counseling. Strategies may include developing self-help skills among service recipients, providing case-management in order to meet needs holistically and guiding people with one-to-one advocacy.

While SCOs may adopt a single strategy, it is more common to see organizations integrate two or more activities, to keep pace with increasing demands and uncertain conditions, and in accordance to the social change model that they espouse. One awardee

organization, CASA of Maryland, engages in all four activities. As the primary representative for immigrant Latinos in Maryland, the organization provides services such as English language instruction and health education; it lobbies at the state legislative and local levels on such issues as domestic trafficking; it provides support for tenants in public housing organizing for building improvements and it has established an employment and training center for day laborers, a contribution to community economic development.

Means and Intermediate outcomes of the work: Creating community capacity

These activities build power by creating community capacity. As we discussed earlier, Gamson's (1968, 1990) framework on power suggests two kinds of power: power in repose, or potential power, manifested in organizational resources and infrastructure, and power in use, which is manifested in real outcomes or concrete changes. Community capacity is power in repose; it is capability waiting to happen. It is then leveraged as a means toward achieving long-term outcomes: this is the point where power in repose becomes power in use. But it is also an outcome in itself; enhancing individual, organizational and inter-organizational capacity – even without the gaining of concrete changes – builds confidence, strengthens commitment, and allows hope. Here we describe and illustrate these different levels of capacity.

Developing individual capacity - Individual capacity is an essential ingredient in creating social change in contexts where poverty, discrimination and disenfranchisement may have depleted individual resources. It is also a key ingredient in building collective power: Groups need to marshal intensive human energy to make real change occur. In fact, “change,” be it micro or macro, is not abstract, nor is it something separate from the living experience of real individuals. Change happens only through real people and because of real

people. We have identified two approaches to building individual capacity: personal transformation and leader development.¹⁰

Personal transformation emphasizes the need to heal the often unrecognized personal traumas that come out of the experience of injustice. Awareness of the structures that shape one's life, and engagement in changing those structures for healthier selves, families and communities, are not viewed as separate but as one and the same. The goal of personal transformation highlights the need to address barriers that individuals erect to protect themselves in the world, but that get in the way of human expression at its best. Healing is a critical aspect of the work when the authentic experience of constituents is at the core of visions and strategies for change.

For some groups, the transformation is not about acquiring this self-efficacy from the outside; rather, it is about unleashing something that already exists but not been tapped. Wing Lam from the Chinese Staff and Worker Association which defends workers' rights, describes it this way: "A good leader gets the best out of everyone: so much intelligence...so much experience... so much capacity out there! I say: 'You don't speak English and yet you do this so well? If I were an injured worker I would be dead meat already. But you are an injured worker and you are kicking butt. See? You have power, you don't know it, that's all, you don't know your strength.' People have a lot of intelligence, a lot of knowledge. Leaders unleash all this potential. Unleash it, liberate it." (from interview transcripts)

Leader development is the commitment to finding the leadership potential in everyone and facilitating its growth and development. Whether done formally or informally, the development of leaders starts at the moment when individuals recognize that

¹⁰ Consistent with the Center for Creative Leadership suggestion, we differentiate between leader development, something that happens at an individual level, as a person develops competencies to exercise leadership, and leadership development, an organizational process by which leadership happens and is strengthened to produce collective resources (McCauley and Van Velsor, 2004).

leadership is not something external to them. When they recognize that they are or can be leaders, they start acting accordingly. That internal process is then usually accompanied by external supports that help people learn the skills and competencies associated with leadership.

As the CI group on leadership development stated: "...each person, in his or her own way, has something to bring to the work, and when each contribution is valued, people recognize themselves as leaders and change is possible" (p. 3). They added later: "The 'when' of leadership has to do with when it feels real for each person". (p. 4).¹¹

Likewise, Rufino Dominguez from the Oaxaca Indigenous Binational Coalition highlights the need to identify and develop leadership among community members. "Every one is a leader – Rufino claims – and what is needed is recognizing yourself as a leader, and holding the big picture, to be able to do it where ever you go" (field notes). The potential strength of distributing leadership among many members of the organization is consistent with the working assumptions about the power of the experience of people described earlier as one key driver of the work.

Analytically, personal transformation and leader development are separate components of individual capacity, but in practice, they are intertwined. Lateefah Simon emphasizes how preparing young women of color to take up their leadership in her organization, the Center for Young Women's Development, first requires a process of healing. The CYWD recruits young women of color leaving juvenile detention to work with other at-risk peers in the street. But they may not immediately be ready. To illustrate the problem of asking women in pain to engage in this type of

¹¹ From LCW Cooperative Inquiry Report "Unpacking" Leadership Development: A Dance That Creates Equals", by Denise Altvater (awardee), Bethany Godsoe (core research team), LaDon James (awardee), Barbara Miller (awardee), Sonia Ospina (core research team), Tyletha Samuels (awardee), Cassandra Shaylor (awardee), Lateefah Simon (awardee), Mark Valdez (colleague of awardee).

work without first attending to their own healing, Simon offered the image of a wounded arm lifting a weight: you cannot lift heavy weights without first healing the wounds from past experiences. Learning about the social and political factors shaping their lives and communities helps them understand how they arrived at the place they did. With this understanding, they are trained to counsel others and to engage in community activism. Turning their pain into power, the young women build their self confidence and work collaboratively even with others from rival gangs. The Center thus explicitly develops strategies that enable the young women to heal themselves and to take up their own leadership in the community.

Developing organizational Capacity - Organizational capacity allows organizations to influence the contexts in which they work in order to further their agenda. Organizational capacity requires identifying and marshalling the financial, material, symbolic and relational resources needed to deploy the work: creating the necessary infrastructure. In addition, a key manifestation of organizational capacity is the presence of effective leadership at all levels of the organization.

Leadership development is a critical approach to building organizational capacity, as well as individual leaders. It is an intentional process to distribute leadership throughout an organization, thereby building the collective power of the group to make things happen around a common purpose.

Social change organizations devote considerable energy and resources to leadership development activities. Some use formal mechanisms like training programs, systematic provision of information, and participation in actions. Others work on deepening relationships to help nourish leadership potential in an informal, more organic, but equally deliberate process. Mentoring, on-going conversations,

encouraging a person to take risks and staying close to support them are examples of this approach.

Formal strategies such as training and informal ones such as deepening personal relationships in support of personal growth are not mutually exclusive but complementary approaches, and in some cases they go hand in hand. In fact, extensive data on leadership development within our sample suggest that social change leadership emerges when both processes of self-efficacy (at a personal level) and collective efficacy (at a group level) are triggered at the same time by way of these combined strategies. Collective efficacy refers to a group's capacity for effective action, which stems from a collective sense of trust and cohesion and a willingness to intervene for the common good of the group (Bachrach and Abeles, 2004; Sampson et al, 1997).

Infrastructure - Organizations require a host of material and conceptual resources to do their work, ranging from office technology to strong networks and alliances to strategic thinking. One might also imagine that particular organizational structures might be required, but that is not supported by our data. Different organizations have different governance structures allowing for diverse use and distribution of leadership roles across the organization. Though all organizations are committed to leadership development and the fluidity of leader and follower roles, they vary in how these are enacted. Some organizational structures are more bureaucratic and others more organic. Some are more hierarchical and others more participatory. Some are based on more centralized leadership roles while in others leadership roles are more dispersed through out the organization. Some use shared leadership forms – co-directorships, leadership teams – both at the top and around the organization while others have single individuals in positions of authority. While participatory leadership forms are

more common, there is also the explicit understanding that sometimes more directive approaches are appropriate.

Developing Inter-organizational Capacity - Inter-organizational Capacity is connections with other like-minded organizations and “unlikely allies” in various sectors to strengthen the work of the organization. Building inter-organizational capacity, as an intermediate outcome, is directly linked to the ongoing practice of nurturing collaboration.

Network and movement building recognizes that the work will gain depth and speed if connected to and channeled within a broader collective effort. At a minimum, people in social change organizations feel connected to a broader community of social justice activists. In some cases there is explicit participation in a social movement such as environmentalism, prison abolition, or in relation to a particular identity, like indigenous rights.

Network and movement building may happen by organizing new or joining existing coalitions, but it also happens by strengthening organizational relationships one at a time through partnerships, alliances and collaborations. The ethnography “Building Alliances: An Ethnography of Collaboration between Rural Organizing Project (ROP) and CAUSA in Oregon” (Lynne et al, 2004) examines the components that allow quality solidarity work to happen between two organizations, one primarily white and the other primarily people of color. PCUN and ROP of Oregon have developed a working relationship over ten years that has contributed to numerous victories for immigrant and farm worker rights, as well as greater consciousness among white, rural activists around what it means to provide support as anti-racist allies. This study suggests the importance of in-depth and sustained dialogue around the key values of work, and staff training around the issues involved with connecting to the other organization. The organizations use these techniques to build common ground.

Hence, collaborative capacity can be mobilized quickly to support each other's actions as needed.

While these different levels of community capacity are ends in themselves, they are also the means to long-term outcomes. Community in capacity represents power in repose. Leveraging collective power means turning that power in repose into power in use in the service of the long term outcome of social change.

Long term outcomes

Long-term outcomes are the actual achievements of groups engaging in successful social change leadership efforts. They represent the coming together of **grounded humanism** and **strategic action**, the culmination of campaigns motivated by a vision of equity and justice and guided by pragmatic thinking and evaluation. That a systemic view of change is part of the larger organizing principle of grounded humanism has ethical consequences for how organizations conceptualize long term outcomes. Grounded humanism motivates members of SCOs to consider the impact that the actions to produce long term outcomes have on real human beings. Work that happens at the expense of the dignity or rights of individuals, whether this manifests itself for a single person, for a community or for all of society, is undesirable, even when it is effective.

We have identified three broad categories of concrete gains that social change efforts are meant to produce: ***Changing policies*** refers to changing some kind of rule, law or regulation at the local, state, federal or even global level. ***Changing structures*** is more abstract, but generally addresses longer-term, more systemic change. It could refer to particular systems such as the health care, educational or prison systems. It can also refer to changing the broad governance structures that influence the enactment of democracy, such as voting rights or how campaigns are financed. Finally, for some it may also refer to implicit

ways our society is structured – by race or class, for example – and how those implicit structures result in inequality.

Changing thinking is about influencing the very language and mental models that help sustain existing structures of power. Social change leaders work to influence the collective imagination, to interrupt or challenge myths and mental models about both the way things are and what people believe is possible. This political work in its most effective form, is at the same time institutional and symbolic, focusing both on changing policies and frames. Some awardees prioritize one or the other, some are experts at both.

Justice Now, an organization based in Oakland, CA focused on California's women's prisons, works toward all three types of outcomes. Several years ago, it worked for policy change in prison health care after nine women prisoners died in an eight-week period. It participated in legislative hearings, influenced the language of introduced legislation and lobbied for passage of the bill. It focuses on broader structural change by arguing for the abolition of the prison system, because it sees prisons as the problem, not the solution. Of course, to advance such a fundamental shift, it has to change popular thinking about prisons as well. They use prison medical care as an example. They argue that, while better health care of course would be beneficial, such changes wouldn't address the inherent toxicity of prisons – for prisoners, their families and the communities they come from.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper offers a framework that helps us understand in what ways communities making social change engage in the work of leadership. The framework is built from the integration of preliminary findings of a multi-year, multi-modal, national qualitative research project that engaged leaders of social change organizations as co-inquirers. The broader project used a constructionist lens to advance our empirical agenda, thus complementing empirical work

that, so far, has largely used a behaviorist lens. We thus focused on the work leaders engage in to make things happen, and on the meaning making that underlies that work, rather than on their characteristics or attributes as leaders.

Our findings suggest an interplay between a collective worldview, which we have called grounded humanism, and the ongoing practices and activities of strategic action. This action builds collective power which is then leveraged in order to advance a social change agenda. The interplay between grounded humanism and strategic action profoundly affect the way organizational members address the tasks of setting direction and of adapting to the complexity of the work SCOs attempt to do, both tasks that call for leadership (Drath, 2001). Here we briefly discuss how this work both builds on and distinguishes itself from previous work on leadership and social change leadership in particular. We begin with the social change leadership literature.

We earlier identified two important, empirically based models of social change leadership: Selsky and Smith (1994) and Crosby and Bryson (year.) We share important areas of overlap with these models, yet also part company in key ways. In their framework of social change leadership, Selsky and Smith (1994) argue that the notion of community entrepreneurship as a leadership strategy offers a more helpful lens to examine complex social change processes in community than traditional leadership approaches. Indeed, using this construct, they focus less on the individuals *per se*, and more on the collective strategies these individuals engaged in as they tried to produce social change. As we do, they help us understand the meaning making processes that motivated the larger set of stakeholders to move the work forward in a direction that produced the desired change. Also, like us, Selsky and Smith acknowledge the importance of community capacity: they claim that community entrepreneurs used all opportunities associated with the organization's primary task – community development – to build organizational and community capacity.

Finally, Selsky and Smith find that the leaders were committed to a multiframe perspective so they could actively reframe divergent meanings to capture the attention of other stakeholders; used those meanings to manage events proactively to activate commitments and mobilize resources; and were reflective in their practice, learning from ambiguous situations through organizational retreats and meetings, and constant involvement of stakeholders in dialogue about shared goals. These types of leadership tasks resonate considerably with various dimensions of our framework, particularly with the on-going practices that we name.

These are significant areas of overlap. We do differ as well, however. First, Selsky and Smith are most interested in the meaning making process of visible leaders, and their efforts and ability to manage and frame meanings to pursue the organization's vision. In fact, the authors themselves were the leaders of the studied projects, perhaps influencing their focus on individuals in leadership positions. Second, while we agree that building capacity is key to social change leadership, we look at three levels of capacity: individual, organization and inter-organizational, whereas Selsky and Smith focus on the inter-organizational level. This may be because they are largely focused on external, rather than internal, leadership. We also explicitly name capacity building as both a means and an end. Third, while we named a number of similar organizational practices and activities, we argue that these actions are in the service of building and leveraging power, which is not central to Selsky and Smith's argument. Finally, Selsky and Smith's data comes from the two organizations they ran, while ours draws on data from 40 social change organizations.

Crosby and Bryson's work (Crosby and Bryson, 2005; Bryson and Crosby, 1992; Crosby, 1999) also provides a point of reference for our findings. Like us, they are quite sensitive to the importance of power dynamics in the quest for social change. They also attend to multiple levels of action: the self, team, organization and larger context. However,

they used a different sample which lends a somewhat different emphasis to their work. Their framework is proposed for any type of public-oriented organization and includes a variety of public service organizations. Given their sample, they focus more on social change through policy shifts, exploring different arenas for policy change like the courts and legislatures. Our sample of 40 social change organizations includes a broader array of tactics and strategies and allows greater detail on social change leadership in particular.

Given the uniqueness of social change leadership, does it have anything to tell us about leadership more broadly? While some may consider such organizations outliers with little relevance for more general thinking about leadership, we disagree. We suggest two ways in which learnings from SCOs could influence broader thinking about leadership. First, social change leadership is grounded in a set of rich and complex values and beliefs. As we've tried to illustrate, these beliefs are supremely important to these groups. Most organizations make these values and beliefs explicit in order to distinguish themselves from the mainstream social processes that they are trying to change. These values and beliefs, then, are very salient and have a profound effect on the activities and practices in which these organizations engage. We see a constant interplay between the various elements of the worldview espoused collectively by those in the organization, and the actions that are designed and implemented to achieve the long term outcomes.

Yet, we would argue, that all organizations – public, private and nonprofit -- are embedded in value systems that affect how they act in the world. Some organizations make these connections deliberately and explicitly; many do not. With SCOs, these connections are relatively easy to see; while this may not be true with other organizations, that doesn't necessarily mean those connections aren't there. So, one thing we learn from social change leadership is to be attuned to the interaction of values, beliefs, actions and practices and how they mutually influence each other.

The second learning is related to this first one. The worldview of SCOs comes not from the visible leader, but from the collectivity, expressed in the organizational culture, via stories, language, attitudes and beliefs. The worldview is not something imposed by a person in a position of authority, but a negotiated reality that emerges for members of the group as they engage in their work. This departs from most work on leadership, which continues to elevate the importance of visible leaders, especially those in formal positions of authority. While there is work that conceptualizes leadership as the outcome of collective sensemaking, rather than inherent in an individual, it often has a disembodied sense to it; we lose any sense of living actors and the concrete actions they take.

Yet social change organizations provide a concrete example of embodied collective leadership. Social change organizations, grounded in values of inclusion, equity and democracy, generally reject the notion of leadership as limited to the few. They believe that everyone has the potential for leadership and they invest in leadership development as core to their work. This results in a much more fluid and shared sense of leadership. Individuals may be leaders in one sphere and followers in another. They may be in a leadership position for some period of time and then step back, only to step forward again at another time. Thus, SCOs provide fertile terrain for exploring the notion of leadership as arising from shared sensemaking, as opposed to the vision of one or two key figures.

However, we also argue that applying this conceptualization of leadership to other organizations may allow us to see collective leadership in different guises and contexts. While other organizations may have more rigid hierarchies, there may be informal ways in which members slip in and out of roles as leaders and followers. If we focus only on visible individuals, rather than on how groups come together to set direction and spur commitment, then we won't see this fluidity or shared responsibility for the work.

We submit this framework of social change leadership as a work in progress. To continue to develop the framework, we are presenting it to both practitioners and academics and incorporating their insights. We are also isolating particular aspects of the model for more intensive study, focusing on connecting the ongoing practices to other elements. In addition to further exploration of the data from earlier awardees, we are also engaged in further data collection with recent awardees and thus will have additional opportunities to test and refine the model. Our goal is to illuminate and elaborate understandings of social change leadership in the service of enriching leadership theory and practice more broadly.

Appendix 1: Group One Awardees, Issue Area, City and State

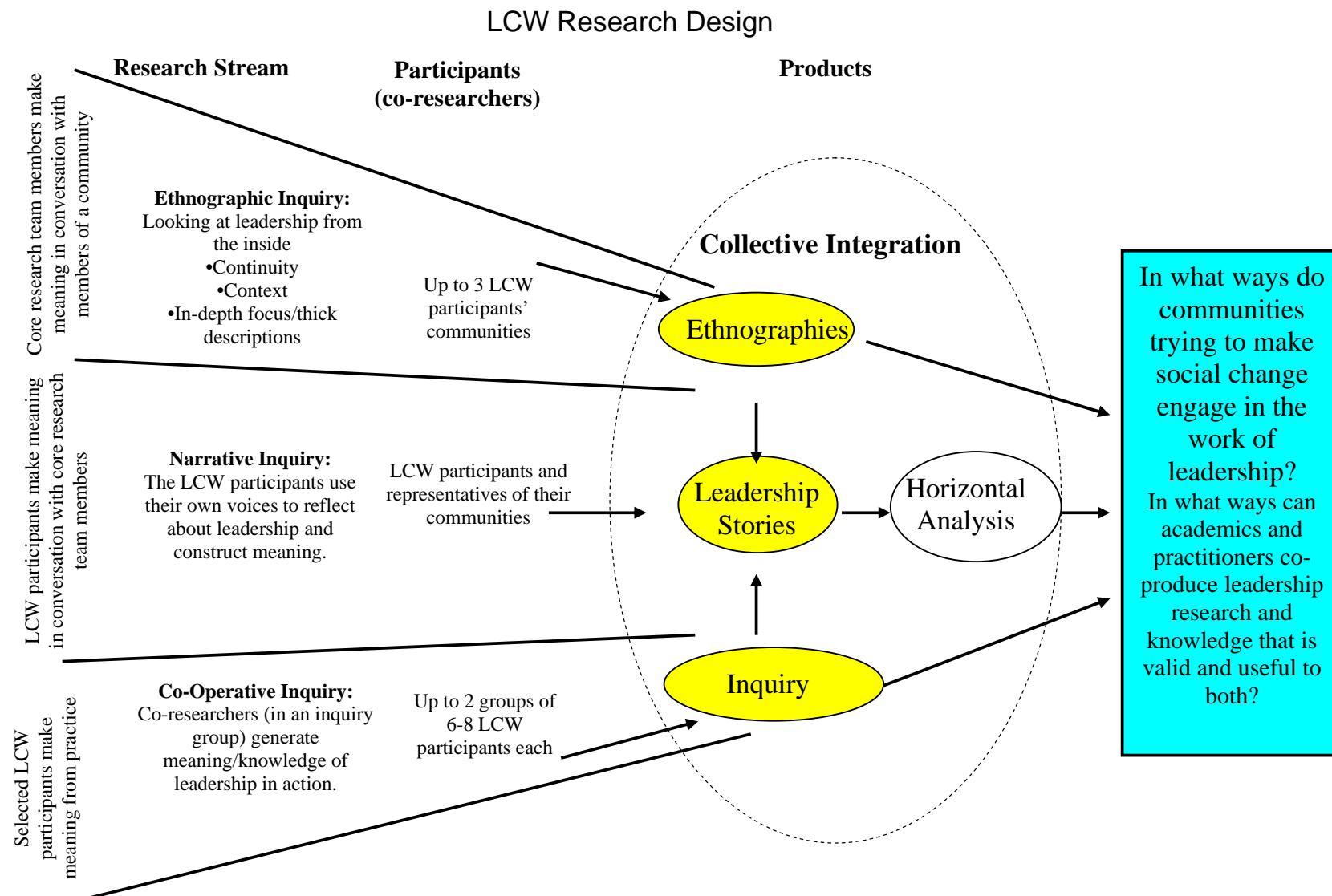
Organization	Issue	City/State
AIDS Housing of Washington	housing / AIDS	Seattle, WA
Black AIDS Institute* (Formerly: African American AIDS Policy and Training Institute)	AIDS	Los Angeles, CA
CASA of Maryland	workers' rights	Takoma Park, MD
Center for Young Women's Development	human development	San Francisco, CA
Chinese Staff and Workers Association	workers' rights	New York, NY
Coalition of African, Asian, European, and Latino Immigrants of Illinois	immigrants' rights	Chicago, IL
Community Voices Heard	workers' rights	New York, NY
Cornerstone Theater	community building	Los Angeles, CA
Gwich'in Steering Committee	human rights and environment	Arctic Village, AK
Justice for Janitors	workers' rights	Los Angeles, CA
Justice Now	human rights	Oakland, CA
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest	workers rights	Lincoln, NE
New Road Community Development Group	community development and housing	Exmore, VA
New York Immigration Coalition	immigrants' rights	New York, NY
Oaxaca Binational Indigenous Coalition (FIOB)	workers' rights and human rights	Fresno, CA
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition	environment	Huntington, WV
Silver Valley Peoples Action Coalition	environment	Kellogg, ID
Tonatierra Community Development Corporation	workers' rights and human rights	Phoenix, AZ
Triangle Research Options for Substance Abusers	human development	Durham, NC
Wabanaki Youth Program of the American Friends Service Committee	human development	Perry, ME

Group Two Awardees, Issue Area, City and State

Organization	Issue	City/State
Burlington Community Land Trust	economic and community development	Burlington, VT
Colorado Coalition for The Homeless	human rights	Denver, CO
Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission	environment	Pendleton, OR
EVS Communications	media	Washington, DC
Families Against Mandatory Minimums	human rights	Washington, DC
Fanm Ayisyen Nan Miyami, Inc.	human rights	Miami, FL
Fifth Avenue Committee, Inc.	economic and community development	Brooklyn, NY
Hazard Perry County Community Ministries	economic and community development	Hazard, KY
June Bug Productions	arts	New Orleans, LA
Laotian Organizing Project	environment	Oakland, CA
Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength (MOSES)	economic and community development	Detroit, MI
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations	human rights	Seattle, WA
PODER	environment	Austin, TX
Project H.O.M.E.	economic and community development	Philadelphia, PA
Regional AIDS Interfaith Network	HIV/AIDS	Charlotte, NC
Sacramento Valley Organizing Community	economic and community development	Sacramento, CA
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center	economic and community development	Washington, DC
Teamsters for a Democratic Union	human rights	Walla Walla, WA
The Re-Genesis Organization	environment	Spartanburg, SC
Tohoro O'Odham Community Action (TOCA)	human rights	Sells, AZ

Participatory and Appreciative Inquiry

Appendix 2: Research Design Figure



Appendix 3: Co-Research Products for First Research Cycle of LCW

Leadership Stories (40 in total) on Award Recipients from Groups 1 and 2 by the NYU/Wagner Research Team and Award Recipients

Cooperative Inquiry Report: “Unpacking” Leadership Development: A Dance That Creates Equals”, by Denise Altvater (awardee), Bethany Godsoe (core research team), LaDon James (awardee), Barbara Miller (awardee), Sonia Ospina (core research team), Tyletha Samuels (awardee), Cassandra Shaylor (awardee), Lateefah Simon (awardee), Mark Valdez (colleague of awardee).

Cooperative Inquiry Report: “Social Justice Leadership And Movement Building - The Council”, by Dale Asis (awardee), Rufino Dominguez (awardee), Janet Fout (awardee), Sylvia Herrera (awardee), Sarah James (awardee), Lewis Jordan, Wing Lam (awardee), D. Milo Mumgaard (awardee), Salvador Reza (awardee), Linda Sartor, Gustavo Torres (awardee), Ruth Wise (awardee).

Cooperative Inquiry Report: “Leaders as Lead Learners”, by Victoria Kovari (awardee), Reverend Tyrone Hicks (awardee), Larry Ferlazz (awardee), Craig McGarvey, Philanthropic Consultant, Mary Ochs, Center for Community Change, Lucia Alcántara (Facilitator), Lyle Yorks (Facilitator).

Cooperative Inquiry Report: “Social Change Leadership Success and The Role for Operating Values” by Susana Almanza (awardee), Michelle de la Uz (awardee), Stan Eilert (awardee), Theresa Holden (awardee), Mary Houghton (awardee), Deborah Warren (awardee), Monica Byrne-Jimenez (facilitator), Linda Smith (facilitator)

Ethnographic Report: “Each One Teach One. Learning Leadership at Triangle Residential Option For Substance Abusers (TROSA)” by Kevin McDonald (awardee), Barbara Lau (Center for Documentary Studies)

Ethnographic Report: “Leadership Development for Community Action: An Ethnographic Inquiry” by LeeAnn Hall (awardee), Lisa Weinberg (Organizational Consultant)

Ethnographic Report: “Building Alliances: An Ethnography of Collaboration between Rural Organizing Project (ROP) and CAUSA in Oregon” by Lynn Stephen (University of Oregon), Jan Lanier (awardee), Ramón Ramírez (awardee), Marcy Westerling (awardee)

Ethnographic Report: “Waging Democracy in The Kingdom of Coal, OVEC And The Movement For Social And Environmental Justice In Central Appalachia” by Janet Fout, Award Recipient, Dianne Bady, Award Recipient, Mary Hufford, UPenn Center for Folklore and Ethnography.

For full reports, go to **leadershipforchange.org** web site, Leadership Insights Link

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