INFLUENCE, RECOGNITION, AND REWARD:

THE QUEST FOR GENDER PARITY WITHIN NONPROFIT ARTS LEADERSHIP

THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Kathryn Murphy

Major paper submitted to the faculty of Goucher College in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Arts Administration

2019

Abstract

Title of Thesis:	INFLUENCE, RECOGNITION, AND REWARD: THE QUEST FOR GENDER PARITY WITHIN NONPROFIT ARTS LEADERSHIP THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
Degree Candidate:	Kathryn Murphy
Degree and Year:	Master of Arts in Arts Administration, 2019
Major Paper Directed by:	Marcia James
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The major premise of this paper is arts organizations embracing flatter organizational models will more aptly reflect within key positions the current gender demographics of the nonprofit arts community, thereby increasing relevance and innovation.

The first chapter looks at the beginnings of organizational structure, linking the development of tax code to the adoption of hierarchical structure by nonprofit organizations. The second chapter looks at hierarchical structure and its relationship to second generation bias towards women in nonprofit arts organizations. The third chapter looks at flat organizational structure and the increased access it may offer women to information, agency, and the expression of vision.

The final analysis suggests that in order to shift gender demographics in nonprofit arts organization leadership, a hybrid organizational structure is necessary. The consideration of an alternate metaphor to the pyramid assists in the visualization of

hybrid structural possibilities that combine the strengths of the hierarchical and flat extremes.

Research for the paper included interviews with thirteen seasoned arts administrators who were also women. Their experience and insight added to the argument that key leadership demographics are more likely to exhibit gender parity at nonprofit arts organizations embracing flatter structures. This in turn brings nonprofit arts organizations a step closer to relevance and innovation to better serve the communities within which they exist.

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This paper is dedicated to those who helped instill in me my love for the arts, but most especially: my mother who took me to my first live performance, my father who introduced me to the church choir, and family friend Helen Althaus who took me to hear August Wilson speak at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival opening luncheon in 1992.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge thank you to my faculty advisor, Marcia James, for providing solid parameters, a consistent voice of support, and a strong academic backbone. I would also like to thank Jordan Roeder Brown for her insightful feedback, Gregory Lucas for his clarity and humor, and the incomparable Ramona Baker for her vision and leadership. Unparalleled thanks to the thirteen incredible arts administrators who agreed to be interviewed as part of this process.

Thanks to my cohort—Flannery, Kevin, Naomi, Rebecca and Tylor. It would not have been nearly as memorable without you; my respect for each of you is great; I look forward to watching your careers progress. To the incredible Goucher College MAAA faculty and alumni network: I am more knowledgeable and more resilient because of your commitment and kindness. And finally, eternal love and thanks to Robert and the boys, who relinquished the dining room table for three years, ate months' worth of fast food, and lifted me up with endless words of encouragement when I doubted myself, insisting that we could do this—together!

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"The clear gender imbalance seems almost too mundane to point out, but for a sector that prides itself on creativity, new ideas, and respecting different viewpoints, the lack of women in leadership roles in the nonprofit arts has become a serious point of contention…" –Eleanor Whitney

Women make up 75% of the nonprofit workforce and yet, according to the Center for Global Development, fewer than 20% of nonprofit executive leaders are female (Jaluka and Kenny). Although the arts are sometimes thought to be especially hospitable to women, this hospitality is predominantly visible in the large number of women in rank-and-file positions as opposed to in the numbers of women who are key decision-makers. In February of 2018, the Wellesley Centers for Women and American Conservatory Theater published a five-year study regarding leadership at seventy-four nonprofit regional theatres: only 26% of the executive leadership was female (Ceder and Erkut). The National Museum of Women in the Arts website echoed these statistics, stating that the number of female executive leaders at museums with budgets over $15 million is only slightly higher at 30% (*"About: Advocate."*). The existence of these data implies a growing awareness of the need for continuing studies around gender parity at the executive leadership level in the nonprofit arts sector. Further analysis is necessary to determine the relationship of such data to executive leadership access by women in the twenty-first century at nonprofit arts organizations.

Historically, the for-profit sector has been the trendsetter in terms of organizational and management practices, with the nonprofit sector following its lead

(Joslyn). The slow pace at which gender parity is taking place in nonprofit arts executive

leadership is of concern, as it has been in the for-profit sector for quite some time, as

well. Almost thirty years ago, a twenty-one-member, bipartisan federal commission

entitled the Glass Ceiling Commission was created by Title II of the Civil Rights Act of

1991. The purpose of this Commission, made up of sixteen women and five men, was to

study and make recommendations on: (1) eliminating artificial barriers to the

advancement of women and minorities; and (2) increasing the opportunities and

development experiences of women and minorities to foster advancement of women and

minorities to management and decision-making positions in business. (United States 4)

When the Glass Ceiling Commission released its results in November of 1995, it

found that only 3-5 % of Fortune 500 company senior managers were female. To curb

gender inequity, commissioners recommended measures such as top-down commitment

to internal diversity, proactive mentoring, talent retention, professional development,

family friendly policies, anti-discrimination laws, bias training, and continued data

collection. Based on in-depth studies, the expectation was that these recommendations

would create a rise in the number of women occupying executive leadership positions at

major United States corporations (United States 17, 18).

Twenty-three years later, however, women still only hold 5% of CEO positions at

Fortune 500 companies ("Commitment"). In over two decades, very little has changed.

The 1995 study was not inaccurate. The resulting recommendations were not ill-

informed. The findings did not lack the depth to understand the complexity of the issue at

hand, either. Recommendations alone were simply not enough to alter the significant

gender disparity in executive leadership at Fortune 500 Companies. Good ideas without

structure to support their implementation are just that—good ideas. Unfortunately, statistics on the gender of executive leaders at arts nonprofits, although significantly more balanced, also still continue to fall short of parity.

Progress alone is not parity, a fact that is sometimes easy to overlook by the percentage of women who do actually reach positions of executive leadership in nonprofit arts organizations, as compared to their for-profit peers. In order to be impactful and relevant on a national scale, as well as to optimize innovation, the percentage of women in executive leadership roles at nonprofit arts organizations needs to be proportionally representative of the overall number of women who are United States residents, at the very least.

When asked to reflect on her thirty-year career as a nonprofit professional, Peggy Outon, Executive Director of the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management, recounted, "The preponderance of women in the nonprofit workforce and their lower pay and status went unnoticed [because] individuals were advancing and, thus, unaware of the systemic imbalance." Ms. Outon refers to the proliferation of nonprofits during the Reagan era and the myopia that existed regarding gender bias and structural inequities in the workplace in the 1980s (Outon). The tendency of women to deny the existence of barriers to executive leadership is one of the things that makes the journey toward gender parity proceed at such a slow pace.

The denial of barriers to advancement of women by women is known as the "denial of personal disadvantage phenomenon," documented in the late 1980s by social psychologist Dr. Faye Crosby. She put a name to a perplexing but apparently common experience among women and minorities. Crosby observed and described how "people

typically imagine themselves to be exempt from the injustices that they can recognize as affecting their membership or reference groups" (Schmukler 235). Reluctance to risk accomplishment by calling attention to institutional or individual discrimination in the form of hierarchical structural inequities and bias is an occurrence that Crosby's work attempts to understand (Morris and Peng 955). Assumed weakness by association and the possibility of jeopardizing already precarious positions of power have been and continue to be very real fears for women and minorities who might consider calling attention to bias in the workplace.

Currently, women of color represent 39% of all women in the US, or nearly 20% of the United States population. By 2060, racial gender demographics will have flipped and women of color will represent 56% of the US female population, or nearly 30% of the US population ("Age"). In order to be relevant to all women, conversations focused on female gender representation at the executive leadership level must include women of color. To this point, Theatre Communications Group decade-long Executive Director Teresa Eyring recently emphasized:

> …while I've faced gender-related challenges, I have also benefited from the privileges of being a white cisgender woman in a world that is rife with dynamics such as structural racism, transphobia, and ableism. There is increasing awareness that, while white men have held the majority of leadership roles in both for-profit and not-for-profit settings, white cisgender women are the next most likely to be given these.

Bias toward white women is the reason women of color require intentional inclusion in the search for and achievement of gender parity in executive leadership positions in the nonprofit arts sector. Gender parity without racial parity is inadequate.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of nonprofit arts organizational structures, both hierarchical and flat, to determine the effects these structures have on female access to and occupation of executive leadership roles. Central to this examination is the proposal that nonprofit arts organizations embracing flatter organizational structures will more aptly reflect within key positions the current gender demographics of the nonprofit arts community. Also of importance is the premise that a demographic shift towards more female leadership will increase the relevance and innovation of nonprofit arts organizations, improving the richness and impact of the sector as a whole.

When approaching the research for this paper, it quickly became evident that women's voices were relatively absent from the canon of organizational structure and management theory. Instead, women had mostly written about bias and leadership. To make up for the absence of formal writings on organizational structure by women, interviews were conducted with thirteen current or retired nonprofit arts administrators who also identify as women. These women represented nonprofit organizations that included museums, theatres, dance companies, performing and visual arts centers, and arts advocacy organizations.

During the writing of this paper, the social construct of gender identity was and continues to be in flux. Cisgender, transgender, and nonbinary are all gender classifications that, until recently, were not part of the vernacular. For the purposes of this

paper, the term gender will refer to cisgender, the gender identity one is assigned at birth, although transgender individuals identifying as male or female may unknowingly be included in gender statistics ("Cisgender"). Furthermore, demographic representation will be limited to the study of disproportionate gender representation at the executive level of leadership in nonprofits arts organizations, although significant evidence to support bias and structural inequities against other demographic segments certainly exists and warrants further exploration.

Chapter I
Structure

"If you want to understand function, study structure" –Francis Crick

What an organization does and why it does it can be similar between hierarchical and flat organizational structures; it is how results are achieved that sets hierarchical and flat structures apart. With regard to work processes and leadership, structure and function are inextricably linked for better and for worse. If this relationship is not fully understood, stereotypes are perpetuated, skill sets remain underdeveloped, and employee growth and advancement are inhibited, especially among women. The organizational structure in place influences who becomes an executive at nonprofit arts organizations today, ultimately affecting the innovation of internal practices and policies, as well as the relevance of programming content to the external community.

Mechanistic and Organic

In the *The Management of Innovation*, a landmark work on organizational theory, Tom E. Burns and G. M. Stalker identify two types of organizational structure, the mechanistic and the organic. Mechanistic organizations employ centralized authority, top-down communication, stratified levels of management, and extreme job specialization. Organic organizations, on the other hand, encourage decentralized authority, communication that flows in all directions, networking across boundaries, and dynamic job descriptions (Lunenberg).

In the United States and other first-world countries, we are so used to mechanistic organizations that we may forget that other structures exist, even as we struggle with mechanistic inadequacies. Our government, our corporations, our educational and religious institutions all function as hierarchies, wielding power from above. In the nonprofit arts world, too, we customarily construct our organizations hierarchically, allocating power to one key position. The staff is led by an executive director, a president, or a chief executive officer; the board is led by a chairperson. A lesser degree of responsibility and, with it, power is then delegated to vice presidents, program directors, or committee chairs and so on down the steps of the organizational chart.

Today, groups of volunteers that in an earlier time might have adopted an organic or flat structure are affiliated with hierarchical organizations, deepening the impact of their work by widening its scope. The National Audubon Society, for example, has thousands of "citizen scientists" nationwide ("2019 Policy"); the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has more than 1,200 Citizen Corps Councils ("National Citizen"). Unaffiliated, non-hierarchical groups still perform charitable work--caps are crocheted for the homeless, food is provided for the hungry--but these groups are small and have rarely left a distinct trace in official records.

Regardless of the structural form, policies, responsibilities, accountability, and communication all contribute to the organizational business of getting things done. The desire or intent to deliver on a shared purpose or mission is the reason nonprofit organizational structure exists. Although today nonprofit organizations operate under predominantly hierarchical structures, in an earlier era, affiliations assisting the mentally

ill, the destitute, the sick, the poor, the homeless, the uneducated, the elderly, the enslaved were opportunities to make an impact by answering a call to contribute to charitable work through collaborative efforts ("Organizations"). High school students in Advanced Placement United States History courses study how "since the antebellum era, middle-class white and black women engaged in various forms of civic activity related to the social and moral welfare of those less fortunate" ("Women"). Civic activity was not just about lifting the unfortunate; it also provided organic outlets for budding female leaders.

In the paper, "A Sense of Place: A Short History of Women's Philanthropy in America" published by the Women's Philanthropy Institute at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, answering a call meant observing a need and committing to addressing it by taking action. The action required might very possibly involve learning new skills, applying influence, and informally establishing oneself as a leader when formal opportunities to do so were not always open to all due to class, race or gender. Women organizing libraries "learned new skills apart from their domestic sphere. They gained expertise in the value of money, lobbying, the art of persuasion, and how to manage real estate" ("Sense" 7*)*. At the turn of the twentieth century, through civic activity and work in affiliations, "women had learned fundraising and organizational skills, had influenced public policy, and operated more fully in the public sphere" ("Sense" 5). As the Women's Philanthropy Institute at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University suggests, a sense of mission is something to which women have responded for quite some time, long before the establishment of a charitable tax-exempt

code that set the fiscal stage for the formal nonprofit organization requiring a mission ("Sense" 1) .

<div align="center">Tax Code Influence</div>

A link exists between hierarchical structure within charitable organizations and the passing of the Sixteenth Amendment in 1909 that subsequently established the federal government's ability to levy an income tax through the Revenue Act of 1913. The Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act of 1894, which imposed a 2% corporate flat tax, included the first tax-exempt language addressing charitable, religious and educational purposes. Although the tax was later ruled unconstitutional and struck down, the Act set the tone for future charitable exemptions. Volunteer affiliations engaged in by many women became formalized with the application of the income tax and the subsequent exemption of charitable organizations. Social reform work, if not social justice work, was in essence legitimized by the value personal and later corporate charitable deduction tax codes had for mostly men, heads of household, and corporations (Arnsberger et al.).

The tax code adjustments, starting with the Revenue Act and extending to the ever-growing body of new tax regulations, made charitable organization financial structure more formal and complex (Thorndike). This provided a reason to shift the leadership of charitable organizations away from the organic structures of the past to governance of a more hierarchical and, in theory, more accountable nature. Nonprofits were being recognized by the federal government as a legitimate source of societal benefit, but were also being tied to individual and corporate benefit through the eventual availability of the charitable deduction (Thorndike). The recognition by the government of the value of charitable organizations to society and the resulting action it took in the

form of tax code regulation to support nonprofit funding, began to solidify the transition

of power away from the female gender to the male gender. What had been a philanthropic

environment replete with collective and individual women's voices got "weaker to the

point of [women] not being heard at all" after 1920 ("Sense" 9). As charitable

organizations moved away from the organic structures that had spawned settlement

houses, schools, libraries, and hospitals, to a hierarchical organizational structure which

mirrored the corporate logic of modern companies, leadership switched from being

predominantly female and arguably more collaborative to being male and more

centralized ("Sense" 10).

With the Revenue Act of 1950, charitable organizations became true nonprofits

with no tax-exempt revenue allowed except that which was mission-driven (Arnsberger

et al.). This coincided with the predominance of commercial management theories

growing out of hierarchical structures, including the theories of Max Weber on

bureaucratic management theory and later Elton Mayo on human relations management

theory, Douglas MacGregor on human work motivation theory, Roger Freeman on

stakeholder theory, W. Edwards Deming on systems theory, Brian Robertson on

Holacracy theory, and Frederic Laloux on teal management theory ("Organization

Theory").

Women are conspicuously absent from this group of theorists and other influential

conversations on organizational structure and management theory. That does not,

however, mean they had nothing to contribute. The attempt of some nonprofit arts

organizations to return to an organizational structure more organic in nature is proof that

the ideas of some women, such as nineteenth century sociologist Mary Parker Follet, had

merit that was overlooked (Noble).

Second Generation Bias

In the post-modern era, large numbers of women serve as employees in nonprofit

arts organizations. Many, like women in other sectors, make annual incomes that are less

on average than their male peers (Walker). They can expect to watch as men "leapfrog

over them," bypassing middle management positions to executive leadership positions,

illustrating the common experience that women are the doers in nonprofit arts

organizations while men are the strategists and directors (Courage). Statistics show that

women are better educated and more experienced than ever before, holding a majority of

graduate degrees and middle management positions that make them better poised to take

the helm and lead than any other time in history (Hewlett and Rashid). For the majority

of women, though, leadership remains elusive in nonprofit arts organizations regardless

of one's preparation and experience.

Lack of gender and racial diversity in nonprofit arts leadership is the result of an

outdated structure that needs to be addressed. As organizations evolve and respond to the

changing needs of their external environments, it is equally important that they shift to

address their stagnant internal environments. Decades of inequity have created a paradox

in which structural form follows function, but function also follows form. In other words,

nonprofit arts organizations construct and arrange themselves to deliver cultural

programming, but they do it based on the direction of their leadership, which is most

likely to be a white man limited by his own perspective and cultural experience (Joslyn).

Whether the status quo is a forty-hour-work-week or white male leadership, values such as work ethic and white male dominance are frequently communicated in the structure of the organizations within which they are found. This is true even if such values are not consciously connected to the organization's primary purpose or mission. In her 2012 article entitled "Can We Break the Glass Ceiling of Arts Leadership?" Eleanor Whitney points out that "underlying assumptions about gender and leadership run deep in the social fabric and are hard to shake, even in a 'progressive' field like the arts" (Whitney).

Harvard authors Herminia Ibarra, Robin Ely and Deborah Kolb coined the term "second generation bias" to refer to the kind of deeply engrained assumptions that Whitney discusses, based on gender stereotypes that "create a context within which women fail to thrive." The resulting harm is not intentional, but is rather an environmental byproduct that has only been strengthened by hierarchical organizational structures that are unaccustomed and ill-equipped to address the unfamiliar and therefore discomfiting perspective and experiences of women and minorities (Ibarra et al.). Bearing this in mind, intentional reflection and evaluation are necessary in order to assure that organizational practices and outcomes align with standards of equity, diversity, and inclusion recognized today.

Nonprofit arts leadership that is gender balanced nationwide could have a significant impact on relevance and innovation within a sector that has been predominantly white and male for over half a century. Although "gender inequality is not ignored in the arts world…the underlying causes behind it, and the effect that has on the structure of arts organizations, is not deeply discussed" (Whitney). This pattern of neglect

has failed to take advantage of the full set of cultural resources that could potentially enrich our democracy. The consequences have been that "men's work and men's stories have been unfairly overvalued for centuries as a result of, and in service to, a hegemony of patriarchy that has excluded multitudes of talented women" (Gilman).

Recently, however, some nonprofit organizations have sought alternatives to entrenched hierarchical structures, looking for more direct routes to equity, relevance and innovation via the opposite end of the continuum. Disappointingly, flat organizational structure, it turns out, is also less than perfect. What is needed is an organizational structure that falls somewhere in the middle, taking the best of both and culling the rest.

In order to identify a hybrid option, a closer look must be taken at hierarchical and flat organizations to determine the characteristics that best serve both gender parity in key leadership positions and the ability of organizations to perform at capacity. A closer look at how organizational structure affects gender parity in nonprofit arts executive leadership follows.

Chapter II
HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE

"There is no hierarchy of values by which one culture has the right to insist on all its own values and deny those of another." –Margaret Mead

Hierarchical organizational models aid in preserving male-dominated ranks of executive leadership, even in the arts. Stratified authority itself is not intrinsically a negative characteristic, however. It can be an integral part of maintaining accountability, preserving confidentiality, and moving strategy forward (Jaques). The pyramid structure can also be seen as providing wide entry-level access to large numbers of individuals. In arts nonprofits, this manifests as customer service positions in box offices and house management, technical positions in operational maintenance and production, administrative support positions in marketing, development and finance, assistant positions in curatorial, and teaching artist positions in education, and the list goes on. In addition, stratification can also allow for differentiation of work based on expertise and experience, ultimately streamlining efficiency and facilitating on-the-job training. However, without adept leadership, the emphasis that hierarchies place on separation and control has the ability to disenfranchise those who are not part of the dominant culture, creating barriers to individual advancement (Kashtan).

Culture of Exclusion

Overcoming a hierarchically influenced culture of exclusion requires awareness of structural barriers and their consequences. When opportunities for contact and

engagement between levels of an organization arise less frequently for those outside the dominant group, women and people of color are often left without access to the leadership pipeline. A lack of contact and engagement between levels prematurely caps the development of young and re-introduced talent. In this case, fewer methods exist to learn the hard and soft skills essential to climbing the pyramid. Held back in lower level positions, attending to minutiae and denied risk-taking opportunities that foster broader perspectives, women are too often constrained from influence, recognition and reward (Reardon). Leadership is iterative; it requires access to information and experience (Ibarra et al.). It is a false assumption that hierarchical organizational models justly reward all hard work and talent equally, based on performance.

For decades, the glass ceiling metaphor has implied that the barriers to female leadership only arise near the executive suite. However, according to Alice Eagly and Linda Carli, the metaphor is an oversimplification of the reality women face when attempting to advance professionally in hierarchical workplaces. In their book *Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership*, the authors claim that "a general bias against women appears to operate with approximately equal strength at all levels" of hierarchy. In their 2018 article entitled "Now What?" Joan Williams and Suzanne Lebsock confirm that hierarchical organizational models have not always promoted policies, practices, and procedures championing work environments that are welcoming, supportive, and productive for everyone. The result is disengagement by those outside the dominant culture (Dobbin and Kalev). In the nonprofit arts, disengagement is not evident in the number of women in the overall workforce. Rather, it manifests as a lack of women engaged in the most influential leadership positions, especially in institutions with the

largest organizational budgets (Joslyn). While this lack of women in arts leadership might look like the result of a locked door to the executive suite because so many women are engaged at lower levels, Eagli and Carli argue that the problem is much more subtle, infiltrating all hierarchical levels as a result of second-generation bias.

Second-generation bias, or structural inequity that favors men unintentionally, results in what is too often mistaken as lack of ambition and ability among female populations, according to Anna Fels in her 2004 *New Yorker* article, "Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Lives." Fels describes the connection between the perception that a goal is attainable, the value of the anticipated rewards, and the pursuit of ambition. She writes of the "quantitatively poorer and qualitatively more ambivalent rewards" that women receive for their accomplishments in traditional hierarchies and blames fewer and less attractive rewards with a relinquishing of goals and dreams among generations of women. Nonprofit arts organizations bear witness to this claim in the lopsided gender composition of boards, the relative homogeneity of people in key leadership positions, and the lack of woman-generated and female-centric program content.

Susan Fisher Sterling, the Executive Director of the National Museum of Women and the Arts, speaks strongly on challenges faced by women administrators and artists in museums: "While there have been these changes, I think people in the art world want to believe that we're achieving gender parity more quickly than we are. When it comes to the largest museums with budgets over $15 million, women are not a large percentage of the directors." She goes on to talk about the broader impact on the art world because of this imbalance. "Generally, women artists are only 27 percent of the solo shows at major museums, and only—at best—30-some-odd percent of representation and shows at

galleries. The auction market is probably the worst: last year women were maybe five percent of the highest sales of the top one hundred." The dearth of women in leadership at major art museums influences the number of solo shows by women, which in turn influences sales of art by women ("Susan"). Popular taste and lasting value of artwork is influenced by the collections and exhibitions at major museums, evidence of the even wider influence wielded by those in power at arts nonprofits, influence that reaches beyond the nonprofit sector to the commercial realm.

We see male-dominated narratives in performing arts programming, as well. In a commentary she wrote for the *Chicago Tribune* in January of 2019 entitled, "Men Still Dominate Top Theatre Jobs: Here's How That Hurts Women," playwright and Northwestern University Professor Rebecca Gilman refers to a "hegemony of patriarchy." She draws attention to the fact that "plays written by women account for only 29 percent of all plays produced — a percentage that is vastly out of proportion to the number of women writing for the stage, not to mention the number of women in the general population" (Gilman).

Kaisha Johnson, Executive Director of Women of Color in the Arts, believes that many extant arts nonprofits have been "built on the backs of the disenfranchised," with female artists of color being the last voices invited to the table, much less the executive suite where they would certainly have an impact on programming. Kristy Edmunds, currently the Executive and Artistic Director at the Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA and formerly of New York's Park Avenue Armory, states that the hierarchical model in arts nonprofits frequently manifests as one person doing all of the decision-making, "quietly programming to themselves" (Edmunds). Programming to oneself

results in program content that is a reflection of the decision-maker and can lead to a disconnection between the decision-maker and staff members, as well as audiences with a different profile. Executive leaders, however, are hired by the board. The influence governance has through its choice of organizational leaders is significant and effects both processes and outcomes.

<div align="center">Influence of Governance</div>

According to a National Endowment for the Arts study of more than four-hundred arts nonprofits, organizational size is correlated with having one or more male board members of racial and ethnic minority, but is associated with a lower percentage of female board members (Ostrower). This is in spite of the fact that research claims organizational financials are positively influenced by higher gender diversity on boards (Barlow). Once again, Edmunds weighs in acknowledging that gender representation is an issue facing the largest arts nonprofit boards: "Large arts organizations still have largely male boards…and are highly hierarchical." She continues to say that this shows up as "endemic rigidity" and an intense need of the "executive mind to protect the brand."

Without leaders such as Edmunds who are both savvy and fierce in their advocacy of artists, including women and minority artists, bureaucracy and its organizational hierarchy can have a chilling effect on nonprofit arts programming; content is easily steered toward that which is safe and familiar, working in direct opposition to innovation. In this sense, mission and brand are vulnerable to bias. Bias shapes behavior and decision-making. Within bureaucracy, the hierarchy of authority places the highest value

on the biases of the person at the top of the pyramid. This has resulted in a "crisis of homogeneity" in nonprofit arts organizations today (Montgomery)

Gary Hamel, innovation theorist and *Harvard Business Review* author of the article "First, Let's Fire All the Managers," calls out bureaucracy for having "little tolerance for curiosity, playfulness, intuition, artistry, hope" and other qualities which mark humanity, including diversity. Kimberly Koller-Jones, Executive Director of the Hoyt Center for the Arts in New Castle, Pennsylvania, observed that even organizations that start out as grassroot endeavors become more corporate and encumbered as they grow: "Boards want more oversight the larger the organizational budget—not necessarily from an increased sense of responsibility and opportunity, but from an increased awareness of potential power."

Edmunds, of Center for the Art of Performance and the Park Avenue Armory, made note of how male boards influence hiring practices not necessarily in a pro-female way. The power that the hierarchical model allocates to the board allows it to set not only policy but also tone at organizations through the filling of executive leadership positions. Executive leaders have the ability to maintain or disrupt working environments supportive of women. However, the board is so influential that even upon hiring a woman to a key leadership position, a male-dominated board may be less than willing to listen to one who is perceived as an outlier. Jessica Andrews, a veteran managing director of five League of Resident Theatres (LORT), found herself in this situation. Often faced with a board of predominantly high-powered men, she identified several ways that allowed her to remain effective, if not recognized. Andrews remembers a difficult executive committee meeting at one of the theatres:

There were a few women on the board, but they were very quiet—didn't speak up. You could see the testosterone in the room going back and forth. I felt totally invisible. I couldn't get strident and scream. I kept trying to be heard. But I had to find a different strategy. It was tricky. I had to find other ways to get my message across; sometimes I just waited until there was a pause in the discussion and jumped in quickly or sometimes it was necessary to ask the board member next to me - usually a man - to say the things that needed to be said. It didn't matter if I was the one who shared the information; it was important that the board get the information one way or the other. Luckily, over the years, boards became more diverse and women managing directors had fewer problems being taken seriously by the men on the board. (Andrews)

When Andrews took her first managing director position, there was only one other female managing director among the League of Resident Theatres. Sara O'Connor (who Andrews believes had just gone to Milwaukee Repertory Theater from Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park) was the first woman managing director of a LORT theatre. There was soon a third woman managing director and then the field opened up much more to women. Years later at a LORT conference, a group of women managing directors formed a network of professional theatre women that became known as the "Ladies of LORT." Andrews claims that it was the source of much needed support in the days when few women were in leadership roles at LORT. This example of early female mentorship indicates the importance of even an informal pipeline formed by women to help women not only survive but thrive in an inhospitable environment.

Today, the president of LORT is a woman, Jennifer Bielstein ("Board" *LORT*).

While LORT may have made progress in promoting women, its member theatres are still

working to rid their organizational cultures of discrimination and harassment. The

Guthrie Theater, a LORT member, also has a woman, Martha Aronson, at the helm,

chairing a board where men outnumber women 2:1 ("Board" *Guthrie*). Asked about

organizational structure, Aronson said, "For the last 30-ish years, we've been in a single-

leader model. So our feeling as a board right now is that's the model we prefer. Does it

mean someday we won't change again? We can have that debate. We're not really having

that debate right now" (Hewitt "Guthrie leader"). However, a predominantly male

board's preference for a hierarchical organizational structure does not necessarily ensure

stability.

In 2018, a female carpenter resigned from the Guthrie, alleging gender

discrimination. Her resignation led to a charge filed with the National Labor Relations

Board by her union and an independent investigation by the Guthrie (Neal). In addition,

half the staff signed a letter, made public by Aronson and Artistic Director Joe Haj, to

"communicate frustration and pain" and to convey that the Guthrie "has inherited . . .

sexist operational practices and structures that place women+ [gender non-

conforming and trans communities, as well as cisgender women] at a distinct

disadvantage in negotiating our institution and at a distinct disadvantage in making

our individual, unique truths heard" (Liestman et al). To add to the instability initiated

by the carpenter's resignation, three of the four members of the Guthrie's senior

leadership team left that year: two white women and a man of color (Hewitt "Guthrie

Theatre"). One of the women was Jennifer Bielstein, the current LORT president, who

became the executive director of a LORT theater with a slightly flatter structure, American Conservatory Theater ("A.C.T."; Hewitt and Preston). There she shares staff leadership with Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon and works with a board where women outnumber men 2:1 ("Board of Trustees").

In an interview, the Guthrie's Haj said about the pursuit of equity: "This work is messy, it is lurching, it contains mistakes and missteps…but we can be an example to one another and to society at large of what a functional, respectful, safe, collegial, nonprejudicial workplace looks like" (Justin). Haj and the Guthrie are making public a revered institution's process of dealing with gender issues long embedded in the hierarchical organizational model, as in society at large.

Haj's example may be timely for Bielstein and MacKinnon at A.C.T. While they have not experienced any publicized incidents of gender discrimination in their first year of leadership, they are facing "a lawsuit alleging a decade-long pattern of racial discrimination and harassment" brought by a former MFA faculty member and choreographer (Tran and Weinert-Kendt). In an open letter, they apologize "to anyone who has ever experienced insensitivity, racism, sexism, or other forms of oppression at A.C.T. [They] acknowledge that it has been difficult for people of color, especially Black people, at A.C.T." (Bielstein and MacKinnon). At both the Guthrie and A.C.T., staff members are looking, some more hopefully than others, to their boards as well as to staff leadership to implement systemic change. If the leadership at these organizations is insightful, it will find structural ways to address bias, harassment and inequity, stepping beyond value statements to policy changes and action steps that are more likely to ensure adjustments in organizational structure and, therefore, culture.

The Guthrie and A.C.T. are not alone in struggling with issues of gender, race, hierarchy, and power. Arts nonprofit organizations with the largest budgets are particularly inclined to institutionalize white male leadership. The J. Paul Getty Trust, with its $9.5 billion in net assets, funds the Getty's four charitable wings and has had four men in the position of president and CEO since the Trust's formation in 1981. In contrast, there has been only one female interim who has served on two separate occasions, once in 2006-2007 and once in 2010-2011. As is standard practice, the president and CEO of the Trust is appointed by its board of trustees. Five of the trustees, one-third of its current board, are women, two of whom are people of color; the balance, two-thirds of the board, are white men ("Governance"). The Trust and other institutions of its wealth and authority are strong purveyors of culture and play influential roles in shaping historical context and setting trends for the future, giving far-reaching power to their choice of leaders.

<u>Roots of Power</u>

The roots of hierarchical power and top-down management theory can be traced as least as far back as the pre-medieval Divine Right of Kings. University of Madison Humanities Professor Emeritus Johann Sommerville states that "The theory of the Divine Right of Kings aimed at instilling obedience by explaining why all social ranks were religiously and morally obliged to obey" their rulers (Sommerville). In the case of traditional organizational structure, this has translated as the assumption of ultimate respect due executive male authority, the pinnacle of the hierarchical pyramid. In the United States, even though the pilgrims fled England in pursuit of religious independence and lives based more on participatory governance, their value systems were still based on ideas bound by gender and racial stratification (Moane).

Stratification and assumed reverence are still evident today in both our corporate and our nonprofit organizational structures. Having *plenitudo potestatis*, or "supreme authority in all matters," dates all the way back to the fifth century and the unlimited power of the Pope to uphold papal law (Burke). One might say it is still linked to our command and control models of hierarchy, which attempt to govern punitively and by fear ("Divine Right"). Modern management theory has attempted to move away from its Draconian roots, especially in the innovations of human resource, stakeholder, systems, and self-organizational theories. However, hierarchical organizational structures are still somewhat stuck in the past due to outdated and inequitable policies, practices and procedures that make it difficult for women and minorities to question authority.

If nonprofit arts organizations are to transcend inequity in an authentic search for gender parity, another organizational structure must be embraced. Flat organizational structures offer an alternative.

Chapter III
FLAT STRUCTURE

"Leadership is not defined by the exercise of power but by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those led. The most essential work of the leader is to create more leaders." –Mary Parker Follett

Flat organizational models remove hierarchical stratification in order to allow a larger and more diverse pool of employees to influence what and how work gets accomplished. This in effect renders the pyramid metaphor inaccurate.

Flat, however, does not necessarily equate with the absence of structure. When working towards flat structure, the removal of all forms of management is a mistake often resulting in less than productive chaos ("From Top-Down"). Rather, flat organizational models must include some web of interconnected policies and rules serving a mission in order to be effective on a small or large scale ("From Top-Down"). At the same time, too much constraint inhibits creativity, diminishing the impact of nonprofit arts organizations if not negating their reason for being. A delicate balance must be struck between governance and access to influence in order to justly serve the arts and the populations whose stories the arts tell.

For nonprofit arts organizations, balance through flattened organizational structure means a more vital connection to the potential contribution of women by allowing access to influence. The diversification of those developing strategy and carrying out internal operations cannot help but change the content and nuance of the deliverables. As Theatre Communications Group Executive Director Teresa Eyring notes,

"new generations of arts practitioners are demanding that organizational cultures become more inclusive and less hierarchical" (Eyring). Results can be as varied as the populations embraced, from a wider variety of artists and program content to broader audience engagement and more diverse donor pools.

Mary Parker Follett, a sociologist and classical management theorist born in 1868, referred to an "invisible leader" when talking about organizational structures. She spoke of the advantages of "power with" as opposed to "power over," believing in the strength of diverse groups of people working together to get things done as opposed to the single direction of one superior individual. Although her papers and speeches survive to this day, her contribution is one that was lost amid a sea of male contemporaries who favored dominance as opposed to a more collaborative style of leadership. The disappearance of her ideas is evident today in the gender imbalance present in positions of executive leadership in many nonprofit arts organizations (Kastelle, "Before").

The loss of Follett's voice in the organizational and management theory movement is unfortunate. Because she was a nineteenth century woman, her research was not respected and elevated to the level that its merit deserved. Her work relegated to the annals of irrelevance, this loss manifests in the inequity experienced by those who execute programming in nonprofit arts organizations. Often thought of as below those who do the planning, program workers are frequently referred to as lower-level employees beneath higher-level thinkers. Many of these program people are women. University of Queensland School of Business Senior Lecturer Tim Kastelle believes that one false assumption the success of hierarchy is based upon is that "the people who do the work are of lower status than those who decide what work to do" (Kastelle,

"Before"). Boston StageSource Executive Director Dawn Simmons echoes this sentiment. She sees a need for program people to be recognized for the importance of the work they do, in essence flattening out the hierarchy by changing at least recognition, if not also reward. Simmons asks the question, "How do we honor the level at which all employees are functioning?" adding "Titles need to instill more autonomy" (Simmons). Whether flattening of structure occurs by raising the status of program people by changing their function and giving them more autonomy and decision-making authority or by lowering the status of those already in positions of authority so that they have less autocratic power, the result is the same: more voices have the opportunity of being heard and appreciated.

If hierarchy can be defined as being led by a single leader, then its opposite is being led by more than one leader. This is a concept with which Follett, Kastelle, and Simmons all seem to agree. "It is time to start thinking differently about management," Kastelle argues. "Making everyone a chief is a good place to start." He acknowledges that entrenched systems of thinking and acting are hard to shift within large groups of employees. He advocates for creating organizations that from their beginnings support a culture of independent yet interdependent teamwork (Kastelle, "Hierarchy").

New Mexico start-up Meow Wolf originated as an artist collective with seven such chiefs. All seven original founders, several of whom were women, had chief in their title. Lauded for its highly popular permanent installation in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the *House of Eternal Return*, Meow Wolf currently boasts a multi-dimensional arts experience which also includes a children's learning center, a café, a bar, and a music venue. Its uniquely interactive and highly creative product is the result of eleven years of

collaborative work (Wasserman). Two years ago, "Meow Wolf dissolved the old consensus-driven egalitarian collective" and is now registered as a benefit corporation (Monroe). Benefit corporations, currently allowed in nineteen states and the District of Columbia, are for-profit corporations with shareholders who own the company as well as its assets. The purpose of benefit corporations is to make a profit; however, they are also "committed to dedicating resources, funds or both toward its chosen public benefit, and shareholders cannot extinguish or water-down the commitment from year to year" (Bell and Scott).

Now over three hundred employees strong, Meow Wolf blends work for social good, profit for shareholders, and interactive entertainment for a unique employee and audience experience (Wasserman). In its 2017 investors' report, Meow Wolf listed $9.2 million in revenue ("Meow Wolf"). The same year, the corporation made available, by application, $100,000 in funding for artists engaged in creating DIY arts and music spaces around the country (Kadlubek).

Although extremely successful from both an artistic and a financial point of view, what started out as a gender diverse flat collective has with exponential growth given way to a more traditional hierarchical structure lacking female gender representation in key leadership positions ("Meow Wolf"). Given that "the company's most enthusiastic boosters claim that it's poised to become the Disney of the 21st century," a change in structure favoring hierarchy is disappointing but not surprising for a start-up with billion-dollar goals. "Six years ago, the group was an anarchic collective of artists who were barely known outside Santa Fe…their hometown" (Monroe). Now, Meow Wolf is a legitimate business venture run by a team of men led by a single male executive.

Financing can be a notable challenge for flat organizations trying to make unfamiliar

management and governance models comfortable or at least not fiscally threatening to

potential investors. However, financial success and hierarchical structure are not

inextricably linked. Board influence can make a difference.

<u>Board Influence</u>

The common form of governance for nonprofit arts organizations has typically

been a white male board. Unfortunately, women have not always shared equally in the

nation's economic boon. This has informed the assumption that women are less valuable

board members. However, as women become more economically influential, it is only

logical that there is monetary value in including women at the board level of arts

nonprofits. There are other reasons for recruiting female board members besides

monetary contributions, as well. Connecting an organization to larger networks of

supporters and developing skill sets among staff leadership by the sharing of a board's

professional expertise are both good reasons to recruit female board members to serve.

Delivering on the tax-exempt status by connecting the organization to its community is

another reason.

The IRS 501(c)3 status dictates that nonprofit organizations hold the public trust

in hand—the public of which women represent 51% ("Age"). Gender and racial balance

on boards is one approach to creating an accurate reflection of this. While it does not

directly dismantle the hierarchy, it does attempt to flatten the power dynamic at play by

opening the door for questions and conversations generated by a different point of view.

This increases nonprofit arts organizations' chances of supporting content relevant to the

public to whom they are bound to answer. It also makes for a more welcoming environment for women to grow and succeed.

Kaisha Johnson, founder of Women of Color in the Arts (WOCA), agrees there is a great need for arts organizations that are in tune and responsive to their communities. In founding WOCA, she chose fiscal sponsorship as opposed to 501(c)3 status in order to remain unrestricted by a board that might not align with her values. "A fiscal sponsor is a nonprofit organization that provides fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative services to help build the capacity of charitable projects," without transferring the weight of fiscal responsibility ("Tools"). Johnson's priority as a leader is to remain as connected to her community as possible. She sees the need to meet the public where they are as opposed to creating empty access points (Johnson). Empty access points are opportunities for audience engagement that do not reflect the interests, values, and capabilities of the audience, such as over-priced tickets in a low-income neighborhood, non-representative story-telling to a diverse demographic, and cultural education that favors an elite view of art.

Mara McEwin, Founder and Artistic Director of Treehouse Shakers, a twenty-year-old nonprofit producing theatre for young audiences, expresses frustration at the process of staying connected to a grassroots level community and supported by high-net-worth board members. Fundraising goals and community friend-raising goals can easily seem at odds. Simply put, business people provide money and operational expertise, whereas grassroots constituents provide cultural perspective and boots-on-the ground insight to community engagement. McEwin sees the need for both, but feels pressure from voices on her board to move away from some of her community connections

representing cultural and economic diversity as her organization experiences growth and success. She continues to resist the hierarchically influenced elements of her board and push for diversity and inclusion embodied by many voices as opposed to fewer, although her leadership priorities are often in direct opposition to those of her board chair (McEwin). Treehouse Shakers, like Meow Wolf, exemplifies an organization whose growth and success cause pressure to be put on its flat structure in the name of financial security, control of resources, and centralized reporting. With the loss of a flat structure, however, also go opportunities for influence by women, people of color, and people of lower economic status.

In an uncommon move, Kimberly Koller-Jones' organization, the Hoyt Center for the Arts, went from embracing one board to two upon experiencing a major financial windfall. This includes a parent board and a subsidiary board. The parent board handles the money and the subsidiary board handles the programming, acting as a system of checks and balances. Although two boards could be seen as another form of hierarchy, subjugating the program board to the money board, this balance allows the cultural concerns to be more equal in importance to fiscal concerns. Koller-Jones' instinct at the Hoyt to create a secondary board that advises programming is a valid method of raising the artistic process up, allowing the time and space to grow and develop creative ideas before putting them up for judgement by those who hold the purse strings (Koller-Jones). Two boards also subscribe to the flat structural concept of smaller teams practicing independence but also working interdependently. Breaking the board into two smaller units encourages quieter, perhaps marginalized board individuals to speak up and to be

heard. Koller-Jones facilitates the communication between the two boards to maximize their incubatory characteristic while preserving broader accountability.

Washington State nonprofit The Whidbey Institute acknowledges the "tremendous courage" it takes for "a group of people who are liable for the health and future of an organization" to embrace change away from traditional command and control models for the purposes of building equity among staff, and connection amid board and community (De Jong). Command and control models are known for their rigid order and required compliance with a reputation for being stable. Heather Johnson, Executive Director at the Whidbey Institute, calls the willingness of her board to try non-traditional models in their search for alternate organizational structures "an act of bravery and trust" in light of unknown results. She found this to be especially true considering that most board members assumed there were only two choices: hierarchy or consensus-based anarchy (De Jong). Johnson's experience illustrates the importance of a continual lateral flow of information in making successful change at the board level, both to educate and be educated. Otherwise, it is too easy to be blinded by assumption and hemmed in by our own inexperience.

Communication

How an organization is set up for and approaches communication is a distinguishing characteristic within organizational models. The methods by which communication happens are largely dependent upon how hierarchical or flat an organization is, affecting the direction or flow of information, the frequency of disbursement, and even the quality of content. Transparency is a buzz word that nonetheless holds meaning in terms of an organization's culture of communication. A

lack of transparency can affect morale by leaving situations open to conjecture and making employees vulnerable to the feeling that they are being manipulated or ostracized. In order for an organization to be flat and successful, communication must be both intentional and organic, come from many directions, and place equal weight on listening and responding.

To avoid confusion, communication needs to be strategic and include both formal and informal methods. At the corporate level, Steve Jobs was famous for insisting that the Pixar Headquarters would function as a place that "promoted encounters and unplanned collaborations," as well as prioritizing large scheduled meetings ("Pixar"). Few arts nonprofits are operating under budgets as lofty as Pixar's, denying them the luxury of architectural renovation and design that orchestrates chance meetings and well-worn pathways. However, even small budgets can support intentionality around communication. Intentionality can inform open-door policies and the frugal adaptation of community spaces in which seemingly unrelated but often essential conversations can happen, in addition to scheduled gatherings.

Constant communication of both an informal and a formal nature prevents silos from forming (Simmons). In order to facilitate this consistency, BRIC, the leading presenter of free cultural programming in Brooklyn, enacted a policy that encourages people not to work from home in orderto maximize daily contact (Smulyan). In theory, this ensures that employees take advantage of physical proximity to colleagues, attend regular staff meetings, and engage in on-location conversations. This has also allowed BRIC to address bias with open discussion, although the on-site requirement cuts into

flexibility often needed by women in particular to maintain jobs and family responsibilities (Oakley).

When talking about communication, arts administrator and consultant Deidra Montgomery raises the question, "What conditions need to exist so that people will share dissenting opinions?" President and CEO of the nonprofit Community Partners Paul Vendeventer notes that when working collaboratively, conflict is never far from the surface (Vendeventer and Mandell 7). He says that the organizations which are successful plan how they will deal with conflict in order to establish trust. As Montgomery intimates, trust is an issue that should not be overlooked in order to include historically marginalized populations, chiefly women and minorities.

Along with internal communication, arts nonprofits need to communicate to external audiences. Flat arts organizations are taking important steps towards reaching out to commonly neglected community voices and championing professional and community-based work that acknowledges women and minorities. StageSource, a Boston arts advocacy organization, is intentional about publicizing programming that is female-centric and female-generated. By doing so, the advocacy organization provides recognition and reward to organizations that create opportunities for female artists. Through what StageSource calls "Parity Parties" and "Standing O" designations, organizations successful at presenting women or any other marginalized genders are called out and celebrated on a regular basis ("Sector"). Although StageSource does not create a direct pipeline to influence for women, it does acknowledge the value of female contribution to the community. Public acknowledgement encourages agency among the female population of Boston artists, as well as amid both male and female arts

administrators. StageSource encourages its community to keep working towards gender parity, not just for women but for all marginalized genders, through artistic content worthy of recognition and reward.

<u>Agency</u>

Another way to start to build a culture of organizational trust within flat structures is by encouraging agency among artists, practitioners, and administrators. At Heidi Duckler Dance (HDD) in Los Angeles, after a probationary period, employees are asked if they would like a title change and, if so, what they would like it to be. With a title change also comes the opportunity for a raise and a diversification of job responsibilities (Monea Evans). Jessica Monea Evans, Community and Education Manager at HDD, who holds a master's degree in arts management from Caltech, notes, "For a while I had the mindset that I had to wait for someone to do something for me. I have moved past that." Evans pinpoints the challenge women face coming from a system that often does not foster independent decision-making or allow the freedom to fail.

For female artists, it is not unusual for this kind of agency to take the form of venturing out on one's own when support is lacking elsewhere. Detroit female hip-hop collaborative Emergence credits its name to a conversation with political activist Grace Lee Boggs in which she said, "We should not be waiting for singular charismatic leaders to tell us what direction to go, but instead be like midwives, supporting the birth of movements that are already emerging" ("About." *Emergence*). Boggs defends the need for agency among populations of women and minorities in order for new content, new solutions, and, thus, new leaders to be sourced.

The word emerging doesn't always carry a positive connotation, however. StageSource Executive Director Dawn Simmons expresses exasperation at the number of years she has been referred to as an "emerging" leader. Her sense is that within many hierarchical nonprofit arts organizations, legacy leaders who have grown up and grown grey in their organizations will have to leave in order for diverse voices to be taken seriously and given the opportunity to be heard (Simmons). Flat organizations, in theory, bypass this waiting period by giving legitimacy to all voices, at least within their own organizational boundaries. Although agency, the ability and will to take action, is not usually permission-based, it does require a supportive environment in order to thrive. Flat organizations can better establish parameters within the confines of mission which make it acceptable to try and fail and then try again. However, it is not just individuals who exhibit agency in moving away from the status quo. StageSource's board expressed agency in responding to what Simmons refers to as a call to hire a person who represented the change the community wanted to see: a woman of color (Simmons).

Agency fosters what Nick Petrie at the Center for Creative Leadership calls important "heat experiences," which are too often denied women in hierarchical organizations. These experiences are risk-taking opportunities—not always pleasant or successful—that develop skills to add to a person's professional tool box. One of the sets of tools developed that contribute to an individual's ability to successfully exercise agency are what Petrie refers to as "mental maps." According to Petrie, a mental map is a visual memory that forms from a challenging experience and serves as a reference point when a similar situation is encountered. These maps, he claims, are an invaluable resource that allow one to make faster, better decisions. Petrie argues that the more

mental maps an individual creates, the more successful the individual will be (Petrie). Successful flat organizations are dependent upon the ability of their individual employees to drive work forward. If "heat experiences" and "mental maps" create employees who are more successful at agency, then Petrie's ideas are an important element for flat organizations to consider.

Harvard authors Ibarra, Ely and Kolb, in their article "Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers," highlight the difficulty of women surviving in professional cultures that do not foster female agency. They make the important point that women seeing themselves as not only capable but also industrious, talented, and worthy is a step-by-step process. It requires the opportunity not only to practice new skills but also to employ new ideas of who one is and can be (Ibarra et al.). Even upon mastering skills proving their ability, women frequently experience the "imposter syndrome," requiring extra evidence of the merits of their work. Keeping women doubtful of their contribution is an effective way to curtail the ability to envision bigger opportunities for themselves and their organizations. Flat organizational structures, however, make an effort to sidestep this pitfall by instilling the ability to cultivate vision.

<p align="center">Vision</p>

Critics argue that flat models can be an excuse for myopic, detail-oriented work lacking in vision (Roslansky). Vision, the "ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom" from which more immediately practicable strategies, goals, and missions arise can be equally accessible at a flat organization as it is within a hierarchical one ("Vision"). In fact, those who believe that envisioning is the power and privilege only of those at the top of a hierarchical structure are missing the opportunity to enrich an

organization's future through the different perspectives and experiences of an entire staff. When certain groups or individuals are empowered by the dominant culture to be the only envisioning population within an organization while others are mired in doubt and inequity, the opportunity to develop and share vision is lost (Ibarra and Obodaru).

Flat organizational models through inclusive governance, intentionally orchestrated communication, and employee agency foster environments in which women can develop vision. Although hierarchical organizations favor big-picture thinking in which "everyone understands what their specific role is," this can have negative repercussions for populations that have understood for far too long what their expected roles are (Roslansky). Caregiver, cheerleader, assistant, and secretary are all roles women have been asked to play too often in the past. The structure of hierarchy proactively limits the ability of the female population to envision possibility by quashing access to information, experience, and strong, intelligent female role models. Flat models within nonprofit arts organizations offer an opportunity for traditional roles to be challenged, allowing non-stereotypical choices to be made and new visions embraced.

As encouraging as the opportunity to challenge stereotypes sounds, not all people desire agency and vision. What is more, both accountability and communication require a focal point on which external entities can focus. A certain amount of acumen and education is also required to negotiate high level challenges and inquiries (Edmunds). These are some of the reasons that a hybrid structure combining the best elements of hierarchical organizational structure and flattened organizational structure should be considered by nonprofit arts organizations wishing to capitalize on the unique qualities of

a more feminine style of collaborative leadership and a more masculine style of laser-focused efficiency.

Chapter IV
TOWARDS A SOLUTION

"Becoming a leader involves much more than being put in a leadership role, acquiring new skills, and adapting one's style to the requirements of that role. It requires a fundamental identity shift." –Herminia Ibarra, Robin Ely, and Deborah Kolb

It is necessary to think hard about how organizational structure contributes to and detracts from the goals of equity, diversity, and inclusion of the female sex when searching for gender parity in nonprofit arts leadership today. While value statements that address the triumvirate of equity, diversity, and inclusion are important, they are not enough when it comes to facilitating the "multiplicity of voices" needed to authentically represent our local, state, and even national populations (Easter). Representative leadership is needed, as well as structures that support the addition of more marginalized voices in key-decision-making positions, namely women and minorities. Leadership on a broader level becomes increasingly paramount as organizational structures move away from hierarchy and the singularity of executive decision-makers. Changes in function through changes in structural form can assist the growth of alternative organizational models seeking gender parity. Hybrid organizational structures on the continuum between hierarchical and flat can make it easier for women, in particular, to make what *Harvard Business Review* authors Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb refer to as the "fundamental identity shift" required by some to assume leadership roles, increasing the percentage of women in positions of influence. Within these hybrid organizational structures, women and a more feminine style of leadership are more likely to succeed. Alternative metaphors to the pyramid model are helpful in suggesting the structural design changes needed to

provide access to women and those who represent a more feminine style of leadership. Metaphors, by taking "an abstract, hard to understand idea…[and comparing] it to a simple, concrete, well-understood idea…enable people to 'see an old thing in a new and vivid way'" (Berkley).

<u>Alternative Metaphors</u>

The hierarchical structure represented by the pyramid metaphor is discouraging to employees who desire opportunities to gain influence, recognition, and reward but feel stuck at the lower and mid-levels of nonprofit arts organizations, namely women. A more apt and encouraging structural metaphor might be that of a bicycle wheel, or an atomic science symbol, or, as former Girls Scouts, Inc. and Peter Drucker Foundation CEO Frances Hesselbein prefers, a web (Helgesen "Forum") (see Figures 1-3).
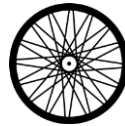
Fig. 1 Bicycle Wheel
(Tschan, Stirling, CH. "Bicycle Wheel." *Thenounproject.com,* Creative Commons, 2019)
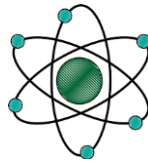
Fig. 2 Atomic Symbol
(Atom molecule biology science structure." VectorStock.com, #15390173, 2019)

Fig. 3 Web
(Spider Web Clip Art." Clipart Library, 2019)

The New York Times article "Forum; the Pyramid and the Web," by Sally Helgesen, aptly identifies the meaning captured by the pyramid and web metaphors for organizational structure. Whereas the pyramid "values position, individual achievement won by competition…the web puts a premium on affiliation, on staying close." Hesselbein refused to buy into the idea of winners and losers within organizational structures. As CEO, she rejected the thought that she was "on top of anything," even with a volunteer corps 650,000 people strong (Collins 9). Instead, she favored working through a "diffuse power map," looking to activate influence through "inclusion…language…shared interests…[and] coalition" (Collins 10).

Whether a bicycle wheel, an atomic science symbol, or a spider's web, visual metaphors are an important part of translating meaning beyond the intellectual to a more visceral level. Although critics might argue that such visual models are merely variations on a hierarchical theme, visual metaphors assist key decision-makers in understanding their options as nonprofit leaders. They also help employees understand the access they have to opportunities that further their engagement and ultimately their recognition and reward.

A Hybrid Structure

As flawed as hierarchies may be, they may also contain valuable elements of order and stability. As promising as flat structures may be for amplifying the voices of often neglected stakeholders, they may also lack the ability to promote vision and streamline execution of a plan. The most compelling aspects of hierarchical and flat organizational structures combined might create the perfect organization: a hybrid. This organization would have structure with both order and access. Governance would provide

both stability and flexibility. Authority would be both accountable and approachable. Communication would be both responsive and listening. Agency and vision, both, would be expressed and cultivated. However, the reality is that there is no perfect organization. Like all nonprofits, nonprofit arts organizations exist by virtue of their unique missions and their communities served. For the time being, effective organizational structure exists on a continuum between hierarchical and flat.

By combining the strengths of both ends of the organizational continuum, arts nonprofits can shape a richer, more diverse future, with key leadership positions that are open to all deserving candidates. By giving voice to deserving stakeholders, namely women, who are representative of groups who have not ascended the steps of hierarchy in large numbers to influence, recognition, and reward, hybrid organizational structures may begin to pave the way to nonprofit arts organizations that make a better world for most. All nonprofit arts organizations, regardless of where they are on the continuum, have a responsibility to stay connected to their communities, whether local, state, or national. All nonprofit arts organizations have a responsibility to uphold a culture infused with the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Nonprofit tax-exempt status indirectly requires it.

After all, the most important stakeholder in a tax-exempt organization is the public. Arts nonprofit leadership has been operating ineffectively when it comes to serving the female half of our public. This is not auspicious for nonprofit arts organizations or our country as a whole. As nonprofit CEO Kim Williams says: "Women are needed on every side of the table…not only to make the community better across the board but to represent it" (Williams). A civil society is inextricably linked to the health

and relevance of its cultural institutions. In order for communities and arts nonprofits to survive and thrive, leadership, and thus programming, must be synchronized with evolving demographics.

Otherwise, top down structure is in danger of becoming an exclusionary vision instilled with the authority to shape community and culture in less than inspiring and even harmful ways. Demagogues and dictators provide vivid examples of hierarchy gone awry. Holacracy founder Brian Robertson, a consultant on alternative organizational models, commented in an internationally live-streamed webinar in October 2018, "Who ever said hierarchy doesn't pose any risks?" Whether exclusion is economy-based, ignorance-based, or willfully neglectful, the outcomes are the same: less than optimal results based on lack of relevance and missed opportunity for innovation. Making certain that women and particularly women of color have access to the iterative steps which contribute to learning and practicing leadership skills is one step in the direction of authentic inclusion that is better for the female population and the United States public as a whole.

<u>A More Feminine Style</u>

Access to information, experience and mentorship is a priority for women wishing to advance to positions of influence, recognition, and reward, especially at larger nonprofit arts organizations. A more feminine style of leadership also has much to offer. In preparation for her book *How Women Rise,* Sally Helgesen documented traits and values of highly successful professional women. They included a high capacity for relationship building, the prioritizing of direct communication, and participatory leadership. Helgesen also found the women that she studied exhibited a high capacity for

empathy, comfort with diversity, and integration of personal with professional life ("Sally" 4:44). These characteristics exhibited by a leader can set a tone that inspires an organization to go beyond equity to the realm of inclusion, the difference between being invited to the party and actually feeling welcome at it (Reese).

Although many large organizations could use an infusion of feminine style, it may be particularly effective at small to midlevel arts organizations which are "crucial artist to audience connectors" (Edmunds). Practices and policies that emphasize communication grounded in listening and reflecting are essential in creating program content that is both relevant and challenging to community members. Small teams and networks that foster agency and the ability to respond quickly in a detailed manner will give nonprofit arts organizations nimbleness important to future innovation (Vandeventer and Mandel 7). Mentorship pipelines that encourage young women leaders, in particular, to delegate when it comes to detail so that they may look up and develop the vision necessary for strategy are crucial contributors to a more feminine style of organizational structure (Helgesen 127).

In her 2013 interview for the *Harvard Business Review*, Sheryl Sandburg made the statement that battling bias and discrimination is "not that hard if we're committed to doing it." Sandberg's suggestion that the battle is not difficult is a blatant afront to the numbers of women and minorities who struggle with second-generation bias every day. The journey from margin to center is not an easy one, whether female leaders are facing the challenge of adapting organizational structure to a more interactive feminine style or they are embracing the order and authority of a more hierarchical model. Even women who make it to the executive suite and try practicing a collaborative approach to

leadership may experience resistance and a lack of understanding that makes them

rethink embracing a more feminine style. As Dr. Ellen "Nan" Plummer, former Executive

Director of the Arkansas Arts Center and current CEO and President of LexArts,

recognized after being let go from her contract for practicing what she calls participatory

leadership in her position in Arkansas, "If I am going to be saddled with the blame

regardless of my style, then I might as well speak my truth with authority." For women

who are already in positions of leadership and influence, embracing the strength of

authority is a powerful act when used to create action around values of equity, diversity,

and inclusion. For women who are attempting to find their way to positions as key

decision-makers, looking towards nonprofit arts organizations with flatter organizational

structures can offer more opportunities to access and practice iterative steps on the path to

leadership at larger nonprofit arts organizations.

Conclusion

"'How can we constantly improve and evolve our contribution to the larger cultural conversation about equity and institutional responsibility?'" –Mia Locks

Within our democracy, women in particular are again calling for their voices to be listened to and actively reflected in content and leadership, possibly more loudly than ever before. Historically women have fought to be heard as abolitionists, temperance advocates, social reformers, suffragists, pacifists, feminists, civil rights supporters, Equal Rights Amendment lobbyists, #MeToo movement proponents, artists, and educators, among many other activist roles. Today, in order for nonprofit arts organizations to equitably connect to their communities, women must call for and be ready to take advantage of opportunities within organizations all along the structural continuum. By actively demanding and engaging in experiences which foster skill development, information sharing, risk-taking, and mentorship, women are more likely to achieve the influence, recognition and reward they desire and deserve within nonprofit arts organizations of the modern era.

Allowing and encouraging more access by women through changes in organizational structure is not just a matter of fairness. There are other substantive benefits. Innovation at nonprofit arts organizations that is relevant to the men and women of the United States represented by the public trust depends upon authentic diversity and inclusion beginning at the structural level of organizations. Cognitive diversity, which

affects nonprofit arts organization programming and process, is informed by gender and racial diversity and inclusion that reaches beyond tokenism to real equitable standards.

Having a more equitable gender representation of arts administrators is about democracy. Democracies must be relevant to their constituent bases. Nonprofits, because of the tax structure which supports them, are inextricably tied to democratic values. In his article for *The New Republic* entitled "Taxation and Democratic Values," Kenneth Arrow argues that "commitment to democratic values strongly implies an ideal of redistribution of income and wealth." Nonprofits pledge to assist in attaining this ideal through the application of the charitable tax deduction and the investment of funds acquired through it in mission driven works. That is why the creation of the charitable tax deduction was inspired. It created a reason besides altruism to "invest" in charitable causes for those who had the means, but tied those investments to the larger public good as opposed to the interests of any singular investor.

According to author and former Stanford Graduate School of Business faculty member, Jim Collins, however, nonprofit organizational structure has lost touch with its legislative and more collaborative roots, and nonprofit missions on a large scale are no longer being served by organizational structures that function totally through executive power (Collins 12). Nonprofit organizations, in short, have become undemocratic. Democracy is about providing access on a large scale. Democracy is the long-distance race where in the end, or at least the future, there is a larger pool of ethical leaders and masterful artists. However, not just a larger pool is created. A richer, more diverse pool of leaders, artists, and audience members results if barriers are broken down and access is

ensured. With diversity and education comes the possibility of innovation, the ability to respond more creatively to both specific and general needs.

Hierarchical structures that exclude the voices of the many in favor of the voice of a single executive leader are facing pressure to change. Arts advocacy organizations with flatter structures provide important access to influence, recognition, and reward by women, as well as other marginalized groups. These organizations will allow leadership skills to be practiced, encourage risks to be taken, and embrace failure, as well as success, until hierarchies are penetrated by enough women to shift the gender balance of leadership.

Structure is so omnipresent that we often take it for granted. It is in the shape and function of the buildings we inhabit, our families, our schools, our government, even our solar system. It can be a source of comfort and discomfort, relevance and irrelevance, innovation and preservation. In addressing the future of nonprofit arts organizations in the United States, it is important to know the difference between structures that are fixed and those that are malleable. Fortunately for women, nonprofit organizational structure is malleable. Change is on the horizon. The future of leadership is distinctly female.

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