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Social Institutions, Organizations, and Relations

San Francisco Bay Area: A Left Coast Metropolis Grapples with Technocracy and Inequality

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How do civic organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area straddle the paradox of challenging entrenched inequalities in an ostensibly progressive region that has been transformed by tech-driven wealth? Local nonprofits face the tension of maintaining access to elite resources while building connections to distribute those resources and navigate divides between the haves and have-nots. We draw on original data collected over the course of two decades on a representative sample of Bay Area nonprofit organizations. With rich information from both quantitative and qualitative data, we examine different aspects of nonprofits' relationship to their constituents and environments, including their community embeddedness, cross-sector collaborations, and engagement in advocacy. We then turn to the internal operations of these organizations and survey the professional backgrounds of nonprofit leaders and the usage of practices that purportedly make nonprofits more professional, accountable, and digitally savvy. Our findings reveal a sector that is developing its own model of what community-directed management looks like, neither tethered strictly to a Left Coast ethos nor displaying uniform responses to strong institutional pressures. Although the Bay Area sector pursues heterogeneous approaches to repairing social ruptures, there is a consistent theme of rebuilding and re-creating community. We argue that the region's diversity in values, practices, and orientations stems from fighting deep fractures that resist simple solutions in a place marked by paradox.

INTRODUCTION

In 2003 we interviewed Lucy Munson,[1] who directed Saint Francis, a religious organization on the San Francisco Peninsula with a simple mission to provide food, clothing, and housing for those in need. Instead of heading to an office, the interviewer was given an apron and a ladle to help serve lunch. Hours later, the interview began:

> Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about your career trajectory. What brought you here?
> Lucy: Well, I'm a child of God. I was raised in an orphanage. That's probably my point of reference for how I operate and understand who I am and who I serve. Many years ago I felt a call to walk with folks that were on the downside of fortunate.

Lucy went on to describe the organization's work, using phrases like "neighbor helping neighbor" and practicing "faith in action." Her background was in pastoral ministry, so she had to learn the "administration" part of the job. By contrast, building relationships with those in need came effortlessly. When we asked about finances, she commented, "We're a faith-based organization. We depend heavily on grace and what we call providence." She later said, "We trust in faith that when we do our budgeting and set up logical goals, we know we can approach people. But when you get turned down and turned down, then you say, Lord, help."

In 2020 we interviewed Sam, a new executive director for a multisite after-school program for disadvantaged youth, also located on the Peninsula. We started with a similar question. Sam told us, "My wife and I moved our family to Silicon Valley ten years ago from DC, where we both worked in politics. I have been a tech exec for ten years. I made friends with the mayor of [city], and he pushed me to ap-

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Authors are listed in reverse order of seniority; this is a collective effort.

1 The names of individuals, organizations, and specific places have been changed to protect confidentiality of interviewees.

ply for this job, and they were kind enough to offer it to me." Sam's reflections on his role offer a striking contrast to Lucy's:

> The problem that afflicts many nonprofits, it certainly does ours, is that the mission becomes more important than the inputs and more important than accountability. So you have a lot of good-hearted people who tend to frankly not move fast enough and not operate at a level sophisticated enough to get the organization to meet its potential. My job, my hope and strategy, is: how can I push the organization to function more like a business and more in a way that holds people accountable on goals, and to a higher account on its ability to grow and achieve deliverables?

Some readers may be surprised to find that leaders like Sam are at the helm of contemporary nonprofits. Others will be surprised that, in the technocratic, libertarian culture of the Bay Area, leaders like Lucy have long had strategies for finance that rely on faith and prayer, even as her shelter receives volunteer and computer support from several leading tech companies. In this article, we show how these different voices and emotions coexist, revealing the tensions and paradoxes inherent in the San Francisco Bay Area, where business and technology skills are abundant but much of the work of nonprofits involves old-fashioned relationship- and trust-building.

Although outsiders may think of the Bay Area in terms of its tech giants and liberal politics, for those living in the bubble of technocracy, income inequality is omnipresent, and this gap widens as the tech-driven economy booms. Although jobs in the high-tech industry have higher pay and better benefits than those in other fields, tech firms hire fewer employees as they grow than large corporations of past generations (Davis 2016). The achingly slow progress of tech companies to improve diversity has left some groups better off and others excluded from these "good" jobs. Compared to the overall private sector, the high-tech industry employs more Whites, Asians, and men, and fewer Blacks, Hispanics, and women; moreover, executives are overwhelmingly White men, with other groups significantly underrepresented.[2] In addition, venture capital financing crowds out employment in traditional industries, inflates cost of living, and widens income inequality, recently dubbed by Kwon and Sorenson (2021) as "the Silicon Valley syndrome." With tech as the major source of the region's economic growth, the divergence between the rich and the poor in essential aspects of everyday life—such as where they live, what they eat, and ultimately what they need—grows. These economic struggles and their social and political reverberations are creating new and diverse demands for assistance from nonprofit organizations.

Nonprofits grapple with these social fractures daily in many different guises, from the hungry people they serve to the people sleeping on the streets outside their offices and staff whose wages are insufficient. In the words of Joan Didion (1968, 172), "California is a place in which a boom mentality and a sense of Chekhovian loss meet in uneasy suspension." We shed light on how nonprofits navigate this suspension in surprisingly heterogeneous ways, using the voices of leaders like Lucy and Sam to illuminate how they work to mend the fractures between the haves and have-nots. Our study of the ecology of different types of organizations, connected by geography, helps us understand the peculiarities of place in the context of problems, like housing insecurity, that are increasingly global.

THE SETTING

The San Francisco Bay Area has long been a fertile ground for nonprofits, with a greater presence on a population basis and higher medium budgets than nonprofits in other California cities. It has been a landing spot for waves of immigrants, who have created nonprofits to serve the distinctive needs of their communities. The region has a storied history of activism and political engagement, which spurred the creation of the environmental movement early in the twentieth century, the student movement in the 1960s, AIDS activism in the 1980s, and more recently the marriage equality movement (Armstrong 2002; Cairns 2021; Freeman 2002). The local environment also houses a considerable number of private foundations, community foundations, and wealthy, high-profile philanthropists, many of whom have been at the forefront of new philanthropic practices. The donative scale of these entities diverges, however, with foundations such as Hewlett, Irvine, Packard, and Sobrato highly involved in the local scene, whereas philanthropists such as Chan and Zuckerberg, Pierre Omidyar, and Laurene Powell Jobs are more directed toward national and global issues (Culwell and Grant 2016; Horvath and Powell 2020).

The San Francisco Bay Area is made up of ten counties, including the urban areas of Oakland, San Jose, and San Francisco, the suburbs of Marin and San Mateo, and formerly rural counties such as Napa, Santa Cruz, Solano, and Sonoma. This is a large expanse, linked geographically through its common connection to water—the Pacific Ocean, the San Francisco Bay, and the Sacramento Delta. The connection to the bay is heightened as it has been an entry point for successive waves of immigrants. Back in the 1960s, environmentalists banded together to get all the diverse communities to recognize the pressing need to save the bay, which was then very polluted. Through joint efforts across cities and communities, the bay was successfully restored, and it is now possible to swim, fish, and enjoy it. This success also helped knit dispersed communities together. Thus, unlike some other urban agglomerations, the San Francisco Bay Area has a shared consciousness and operates as a community of shared fate (Storper et al. 2015).

This sense of connection is important in a number of respects. Perhaps most vital is the circulation of ideas, where both organizational practices and cultural attitudes diffuse

2 Data source: "Diversity in High Tech," a special report by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (https://www.eeoc.gov/special-report/diversity-high-tech), accessed on April 24, 2022.

across the wider community at a rapid pace (Powell, Packalen, and Whittington 2012). The frequent movement of people around the Bay Area builds social integration and attachment to a collective vision of a metropolitan area. But shared cultural attitudes do not necessarily mean that diverse groups interact with one another on a regular basis outside, say, social media, attachment to sports teams, or an affinity for the newest ethnic cuisine. Real integration entails that people have the experience of different social environments in a meaningful way (Blau and Schwartz 1997; Sampson 2012; Phillips et al. 2021).

Presently, the environs are beset by the intertwined challenges of affordable housing, homelessness, and drug abuse, which are exacerbated by huge income disparities (McClelland 2018). Once again, mayors, community leaders, and activists contend it will require a community-wide effort to tackle these problems. That collective spirit has been sorely tested in recent years by soaring income inequality generated by tech riches, resulting in a fault line between the uber wealthy and those who struggle to afford to live while providing the service and office work that everyone depends on.[3] Despite its higher income levels and faster recovery from the last financial crisis, the Bay Area has a wider income gap than anywhere else in California. The area's top income earners at the 90th percentile make 11.5 times as much as those at the 10th percentile. Residents in the Bay Area are also much more likely than the rest of the state to think that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing (Bohn et al. 2020).

Nonprofits are often found in interstitial spaces (O'Mahony and Bechky 2008), mediating and reconciling public policies that some critics term "pathological altruism"—policies that are intended to mitigate social problems but that sometimes exacerbate them (Shellenberger 2021)—while asking for money from the ultrarich to support those who are struggling. Whether it is the challenge of organizing and advocating for those less well off in a region of contrasts, learning to teach constituents how to advocate for themselves, or creating digital forms of connection with shut-ins, nonprofits in the Bay Area live and feel the tensions of this moment on a daily basis.

As the only western urban area with a history of philanthropy and nonprofit services dating back to the 1840s gold rush, and with a substantial population early in the twentieth century, this region, not surprisingly, has more established and larger nonprofits than other West Coast cities. Still, in terms of the composition of activities, the Bay Area is similar to other metropolitan areas of the United States. Bay Area organizations of all stripes, however, tend to be initiators and early adopters of novel ideas and practices, many of which subsequently spread across the country and the globe. What is old in this region may well be new in other locales.

METHODS

Our data are based on an in-depth longitudinal survey conducted in three waves. The research began in 2002. Working with the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), we drew a random sample from the full population of 10,149 501(c)(3) public charities operating in the Bay Area, using administrative data collected by the Internal Revenue Service for fiscal year 2000. The sample includes museums, universities, sports clubs, soup kitchens, day care centers, and an array of health and human services, but does exclude congregations, private foundations, or organizations with annual revenues under $25,000.00. It took a year to clean these data, develop a survey protocol, pilot-test it with 20 interviews, and contact 264 organizations to secure a sample of 200. Between 2003 and 2005, we interviewed 200 nonprofit leaders (executive directors, CEOs, presidents, etc.), following a protocol that combined directed questions and open-ended queries. The interviews lasted approximately 90–120 minutes and were typically conducted at the offices of the nonprofits. We discussed the organizations' histories, management practices, public engagement, and experiences with funders. We collected founding stories and the managerial experiences of the leadership. Our overall response rate for the first wave was 76 percent (Hwang and Powell 2009). The 64 organizations that did not participate either opted out or did not respond to four contact attempts.

Ten years later, we administered an online follow-up survey with executive directors, asking comparable questions regarding their education, training, and work background, tenure in their current post, and changes in their organization over the previous decade. We inquired about the challenges the organization had faced, the use of online media, performance evaluations, strategic planning efforts, collaborations, changes in mission, and participation in advocacy efforts. The response rate for the second wave was 63 percent.

We wanted to put the interview data in dialogue with organizational behaviors; thus we used data from IRS form 990 to chart the organizations' financial health. Tax filings were analyzed not only for fiscal data but also as public-facing representations. We observed that over the 2002–16 period, organizations wrote more text in their tax forms about their mission and activities, increasingly referring to outputs and outcomes in quantified terms (Horvath 2021). We also analyzed websites and social media usage—in particular, Facebook. In addition, we conducted 26 one- to four-hour interviews in 2015 with selected employees to understand how nonprofits managed multiple, conflicting pressures from external stakeholders, their handling of the financial crisis of 2008 and the ensuing recession, perceptions of benefits and challenges of social media, and how

3 The greater Bay Area routinely ranks as either the most expensive place or among the most expensive places to live in the United States. In 2019 apartments in San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley were 107.4 percent higher than the national average, and San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara were 130.6 percent higher. Overall living costs make San Francisco the most expensive city in the country and San Jose the fifth most expensive. Similarly high prices are found in Napa, Santa Rosa, and Santa Cruz, all cities in our sample (US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, December 15, 2021).

they practiced accountability (Horvath, Brandtner, and Powell 2018).

In 2019 we launched a third wave of interviews, designed in consort with our collaborators in the Civic Life of Cities Lab. This new survey provides numerical data, reflective thoughts about current activities, and general opinions of executive directors about current issues they were facing. For the new round, we created three subsamples. One includes the organizations that we have followed since 2000. We wanted to see which ones are still viable. In addition, we drew a "replenish" sample from the same master data file from 2000. These are organizations that were alive at the time the original sample was created; this replenish group enables us to have a full sample of more than 200 nonprofits from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We also wanted to explore the intuition that there is a difference between organizations that had to adapt to the internet and those that are "born digital" (Turco 2016). Thus, we have a third subsample of "digital natives," all founded after 2001,[4] which allows us to compare whether nonprofits founded recently differ in any consequential ways in their use of social media and their familiarity with delivering services over the web.

From our original group of 200, 44 have exited. Of that number, 31 discontinued operations, and the rest moved out of state, merged, or changed legal form. From our original sample, 81 percent of the organizations completed the third survey. For the replenish group, 70.5 percent completed it, and 65 percent of the digital natives did so. Our overall response rate of 72.7 percent resulted in 313 completed surveys.[5] All surveys were completed by February 1, 2020.

In March 2020, the Bay Area began locking down in response to COVID-19. We soon wanted to see how our organizations had been affected by the pandemic. In July 2020 we did short "check-in" interviews with 60 executive directors to see how their activities may have changed, and if they applied for emergency funding and whether they were successful. Later in the year, we followed up with 40 additional, longer interviews for deeper discussions about whether their activities have been curtailed, or if they were embarking on new initiatives and/or modes of service delivery. We tracked the webpages for all members of the sample and found that roughly a third had been "repurposing" or transforming their work (Horvath and Lin 2020). For some nonprofits, but by no means all, there is a recognition that things are not going to improve unless they fight for it. The Bay Area has the lowest rate of death from COVID-19 of any big American metropolis, but the pandemic has revealed a greater set of issues, from crime, drug overdose, dysfunctional school boards, and population exodus to debates over returning to work. We take up these challenges at the close of our article.

A PROFILE OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE BAY AREA

To explore the different approaches that nonprofits pursue in their effort to create connections and tackle inequalities, we use multiple data sources. Quantitative responses allow us to create statistical profiles of both the leaders and their strategies, while the qualitative data adds color and texture to the wide range of avenues that nonprofits take. For purposes of comparison with the other articles in this special issue, we primarily report survey results data from the most recent round of interviews and note the dates when we use qualitative data from the earlier periods.

Faced with the task of juggling disparities, leaders and staff often engage with business executives and elite philanthropies for resources, while trying to maintain trust with their local communities in order to channel resources effectively to those who need them. Given this core tension, we begin with community embeddedness and explore how nonprofits relate to their local communities and foster social capital. Whether in the form of reciprocity (Bowles and Gintis 2002), cohesion (Coleman 1990), or solidarity (Baldassarri 2015), commitment and trust are vital to sustain cooperation in settings of mutual collective action (Ostrom 1990, 2010).

Nonprofits are embedded not only in local communities, however, but also in wider societal systems that they can connect their constituents to. Thus, we turn to questions about collaboration and advocacy. With the former, we address the extent to which nonprofits collaborate with other nonprofits, businesses, and local governments in addressing problems that affect the common fate of the region. With the latter, we discuss how nonprofits advocate for and with their constituents in the broader political sphere. In the next two sections, we analyze the backgrounds of nonprofit leaders and study their management practices. How do nonprofits prioritize different forms of expertise and deal with pressures to be "businesslike?" We then take up accountability, examining how nonprofits represent themselves to multiple stakeholders. These features are largely external (in terms of how organizations relate to their environments and constituents), but they are shaped by internal organizational features and dynamics. Increased pressures for accountability are entangled with the tools of social media, and we highlight how organizations in a region known for technological advancement use the digital tools created in their backyards. We close with a discussion of the most paramount challenges facing Bay Area nonprofit organizations today.

4 See the appendix for the distribution of founding years of the organizations in our sample.

5 Based on NTEE codes, 31 percent of organizations in our sample operate in the area of human services; 25 percent in education; 15 percent in arts, culture, and humanities; 9 percent in health; 8 percent in public and societal benefit; 6 percent in environment; 4 percent in religion; and 3 percent in international. Response rates do not differ significantly across these groups.

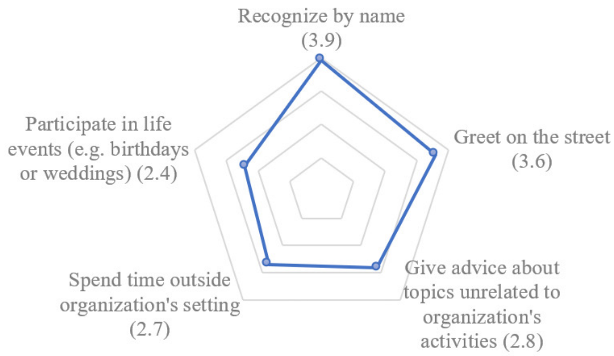

Figure 1. Closeness of interactions of organizational staff with beneficiaries.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND COMMUNITY EMBEDDEDNESS

Nonprofits can play an important role in strengthening the civic fabric of communities (Brandtner and Dunning 2020; Klinenberg 2018; Sampson 2012; Sharkey, Torrats-Espinosa, and Takyar 2017; Small 2009). In the Bay Area, nonprofits enable the flow of resources across the region; hence it is not surprising that they have a strong local compass in terms of the geographic scope of their activities and services. Nearly 70 percent attend to people and organizations within the Bay Area—be it a neighborhood, a municipality, a county, or the metropolis as a whole, whereas the rest address California, the nation, and/or the world. There is wide variety in how nonprofits go about their work, but at a basic level, one of the most fundamental tasks is creating spaces for members to interact with one another (bonding social capital) and to build relationships that cross lines of difference, whether in terms of race, socioeconomic status, or other identities (bridging social capital) (Putnam 2000; Paxton 2020). More than 60 percent said that building trust with their constituents was critical to their mission, and another quarter see trust-building as a support to their mission. Building community is demanding work in any circumstance; doing so as the community changes underneath you through gentrification and population exodus is especially hard.

What does building trust look like in practice? Although the majority of organizations see trust-building as important to their mission, they diverge in the breadth and depth of relationships with their beneficiaries. In terms of frequency of interaction, 57 percent indicate that their staff members and volunteers interact with beneficiaries daily; when we combine daily, weekly, and monthly interactions, the figure rises to over 80 percent. Figure 1 illustrates the closeness of these relationships, based on responses to a series of questions on a 1- to 5-point scale (with 1 being "least close" and 5 being "most close"). This closeness is skewed, however, with some reporting maximum scores for all forms of interaction and others not involved in any.

Some of this proximity is due to greater reliance on funding sources located within the Bay Area rather than money from other parts of California, the United States, or the world. We estimate that, on average, Bay Area nonprofits are more than twice as reliant on local funding relative to nonlocal sources. Importantly, there is no significant correlation between the reliance on local and nonlocal funding, implying that local sources do not diminish external opportunities. Organizations that depend more on local funds attach more importance to the goal of building trust with beneficiaries, whereas nonlocal funding has no significant effect on trust-building. With respect to the closeness of interactions with their beneficiaries, the more nonprofits are reliant on external funding sources, the less their staff members or volunteers know their beneficiaries. Hence the idea of embeddedness—often debated in scholarly circles—is multidimensional (Granovetter 1985; Brandtner and Laryea 2022). Organizational goals of trust-building and interactions with beneficiaries represent two central but different aspects of nonprofits' ties to their local community. Local funding leads to more emphasis on trust-building goals, whereas nonlocal funding reduces the closeness of organizations to beneficiaries.

Researchers have posited a linkage between sources of revenue and community embeddedness that is contingent on where the money comes from—for example, reliance on donations versus fee for services (Fischer, Wilsker, and Young 2011). Nonprofits that depend more on individual donations report significantly less earned income (such as program-related revenues, service fees, sales, or membership dues). One might expect that the donation-driven organizations would be closer to their beneficiaries and strive to build trust more than the entrepreneurial nonprofits (Hansmann 1987). But this turns out not to be the case. Neither the proportion of donations nor earned income dictate the importance of building trust with beneficiaries, nor do they predict closeness of interactions with beneficiaries. This null effect stands in contrast to the concern that commercial revenues may dampen sensitivity to the heartbeats of local communities (Weisbrod 1998). In sum, all of our findings on propinquity and funding carry a clear message: community embeddedness has more to do with *where* nonprofits obtain funding (local versus nonlocal funding) than with the *type* of funding (donation or earned income). Thus even in our digital age, spatial location matters.

We turn to a few cases to illustrate what community embeddedness looks like. One organization that is highly embedded in its neighborhood and effective at fostering social capital is Hope Arts. Their artistic director, Simone, explained how this orientation had always been central:

> Our founder was really good at engaging the neighbors, folks in the immediate neighborhood—she still lives here. She was really good at connecting with the kids and their families and making sure that it was accessible for them to come—like having little performances at the library down the street, which is the Black history library, literally twenty paces from the original building. Her community spirit really laid the ground for the way we could do this. She never made it about money. When she left after nine years, I was like, we gotta make it about money somewhat, because it has to be financially sustainable for the people who are teaching, and I want something more beautiful than the space. So those were two of my main goals when I stepped into leadership.

What is striking to us about this quote is that Simone shows that a community orientation and a "money" orientation are not necessarily contradictory. Maintaining a community orientation but failing to pay staff well, in her view, would mean not fully upholding their social justice orientation. She went on to describe how the initial leadership team shaped their local footprint:

> Our leaders are a lesbian White woman, an African American man, and me, a queer, biracial Black woman. So the three of us—it wasn't just this whitey-white organization that then we have to diversify later. It was based in the neighborhood from jump, right? We are fully based here, we were at lake festivals, we were just performing for folks. We're available and present for the community as they need us. So it's not only the kids and the families that we're serving directly, but also other organizations, and we're in schools—we do programming in all public schools, and we work with them even if they don't have money to contract us. We work with them to write grants so that we can be in their schools.

Not all organizations are as embedded as Hope Arts is. Some do not prioritize community presence as much, striving ambitiously for growth and service expansion instead. But there are also organizations that take a hybrid approach. For example, College4All builds pipelines to college for underrepresented students living in San Francisco. Their executive director, George, expressed how the last decade has been a time of expansive growth, opening up programs in many schools beyond their original neighborhood. On the other hand, George explained how they still try to connect locally at each site:

> I think there are multiple communities. I see myself as a San Francisco resident. I've been here since right out of college. But in terms of our organization, I see myself as an ally leader. I don't come from the same lived experience as the families we work with. When we're talking about our community, we're talking about specifically Latinx community, African American or Black community, and other newcomer or immigrant communities. We think it's critical that our staff reflect that, our board reflect that, and our leadership team reflect that. And that we have staff that look like our students, talking to them about the importance of college. So we tend to be pretty involved in various communities. You could talk about [the] San Francisco community—but then each school has a very separate school community. So we integrate ourselves into our school community, we integrate ourselves into the larger San Francisco community. So I think there's a lot of pieces of community that we do.

George's comments, as well as Simone's, reflect the challenges of community—tying together multiple audiences, the pressures to keep the organization afloat and remain vital, issues of representation, and the code-switching necessary for all of these activities. To be sure, such efforts are not unique to the Bay Area. In the current moment, as democracy erodes and there is a reckoning with our past, nonprofits are at the front lines of these tensions. Accordingly, we may presently see more emphasis on sustaining community, with nonprofits caring more about how they relate to "community" and increasing coupling with identity politics. It is notable that many leaders answered these community questions by first discussing whether their own demographic characteristics reflect or contrast with their constituents.

For nonprofits, maintaining representation with their constituents can be challenging in the face of a rapidly changing local demography. Census data from 1980 to 2020 show a remarkable increase in racial diversity within the Bay Area.[6] Back in 1980, 69.6 percent of the population was White, 12.2 percent Latino, 8.5 percent Asian, and 8.9 percent Black. By 2000, the population was only 50 percent White, 19.4 percent Latino, 18.8 percent Asian, and 7.3 percent Black. In 2020, the percentages change to 35.8 percent, 24.4 percent, 27.7 percent, and 5.6 percent, with the Latin and Asian communities burgeoning and fewer Whites and Blacks residing in the region.

Staying apace with these changes and being viewed as demographically matched with their constituents matter because these things signal "grassroots authenticity" to audiences and legitimate knowledge of the pains and needs of constituencies that they claim to work for and represent (Walker and Stepick 2020). Demographic matching also affects nonprofits' efficacy in fostering social capital and building community within a diverse population. When internal demographics follow the changing demographics of community environments, nonprofits connect otherwise diverse and segregated individuals (Longhofer, Negro, and Roberts 2019) and better function as civic intermediaries (LeRoux 2009). We collected data to compare the staffs of Bay Area nonprofits with the demographic composition of their beneficiaries and with the overall Bay Area population in terms of race, gender, and age.[7] Figure 2 shows that on average, women are overrepresented in the nonprofit workforce, whereas minority beneficiaries are generally underrepresented by nonprofit staff (or volunteers). Although the degree of mismatch certainly varies across individual organizations, the alignment of internal demographics with the wider population is a ubiquitous problem facing the Bay Area's nonprofit sector.

Embeddedness in a community is often a first step, but nonprofits do not stop there. We conceptualize community embeddedness as the extent to which nonprofits are in relationship with people and neighborhoods. Such relation-

6 Data source: US Census Bureau (https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/2020/2020-census-main.html) and Bay Area Census compiled by Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments (http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/index.html).

7 There are notable demographic differences across cities and counties in the Bay Area, and we are examining these micro-level matches in related work.

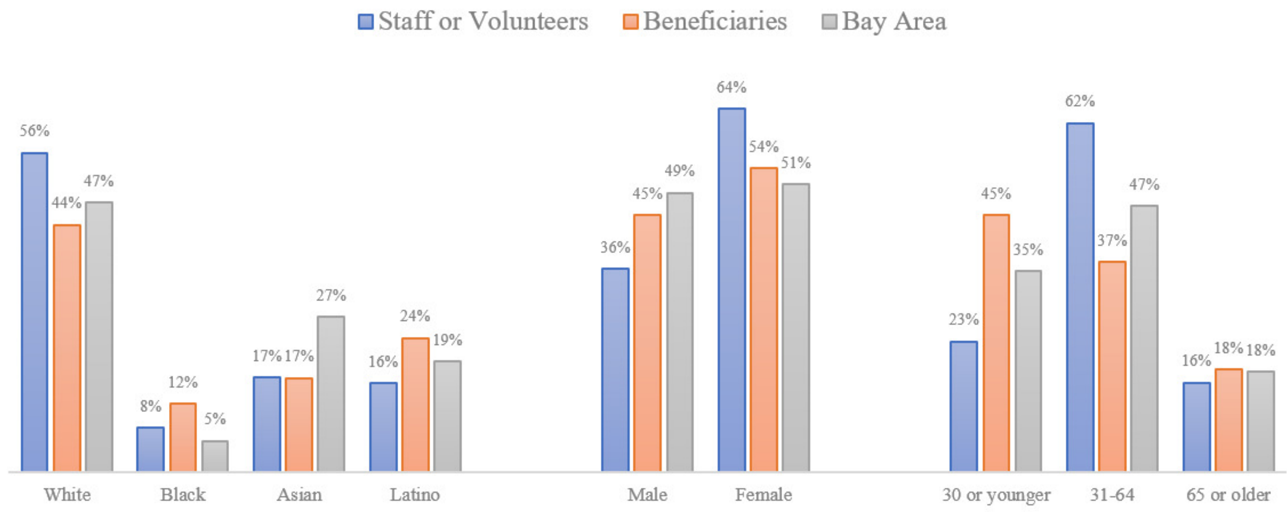

Figure 2. Demographics of nonprofit staff, beneficiaries, and the Bay Area population.

Note: In this figure, the Bay Area contains ten counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, and Sonoma. Its profile is based on the data from the most recent 2015–19 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate.

ships are often complex, and as Levine (2021) notes, organizations may claim to value the community in order to pursue their own interests. Nonprofits are also embedded in the broader structures of their city, including the political and for-profit spheres (Marwell and McQuarrie 2013; Levine 2016). The bridging role of nonprofits often entails linking individuals to these broader systems or advocating for individuals in the political sphere. Thus, we next turn to describing how Bay Area nonprofits collaborate with other organizations and sectors, followed by a discussion on how these organizations engage in advocacy.

COLLABORATION

An important component of building linkages is through collaboration with other institutions, including business, government, and other civil society organizations (Gray and Purdy 2018). We find that collaborations of all kinds—service delivery, advocacy, capacity building, commercial activities, volunteer recruitment, and event organization—are widespread. More than 75 percent partner with other organizations from the same or different sectors. With respect to the frequency of collaboration, nonprofits work most extensively with other nonprofits, followed by for-profits, governments, and foundations (figure 3). Moreover, collaboration is not hampered by competition among organizations that provide comparable services or products. We find that nonprofits who report having nonprofit or governmental competitors also tend to have more collaborators in these two sectors. This implies that nonprofits develop relationships of "co-opetition" where they compete with each other but in a cooperative way (Mariani 2007). These types of collaboration also deepen interpersonal ties across organizations, which help build bonding forms of social capital (Ansari, Munir, and Gregg 2012; Klitsie, Ansari, and Volberda 2018).

Cross-sector collaboration is fairly common: 43 percent of nonprofits have partnered with for-profit organizations or governments in various areas of activity. Figure 4 below compares the percentage of organizations in collaboration with for-profits and governments. Relative to other areas of activity, nonprofits have a higher level of collaboration with for-profits than with government in commercial activities (6 percent versus 1 percent) and volunteer recruitment (10 percent versus 4 percent). Since revenues from commercial activities and volunteers afford both financial and human capital, partnerships with for-profit organizations are important avenues for access to these resources.

Collaboration helps to build relational capacity, enhancing both how and when nonprofits are able to combine their existing competencies with the abilities and resources of others. These skills are not static, but emerge and deepen over time as nonprofits both develop existing relationships and explore new ones (Powell 1998). As mutual learning develops, trust can be enhanced. Moreover, when organizations collaborate across sectors, ideas and skills can be transferred. In research on university-industry relations, for example, Powell and colleagues have shown that organizations positioned in a dense network of external relations adopt more administrative innovations, and do so earlier (Powell, Koput, and Smith-Doerr 1996; Owen-Smith and Powell 2004).

Collaboration aids in the transfer of ideas and builds recognition in a community. Another crucial role for nonprofits is raising the voices of their constituents through representing their constituents and communities in the broader political sphere. We turn now to discuss the extent to which Bay Area nonprofits are engaged in such advocacy.

ADVOCACY

Nonprofits that are more engaged in advocacy—such as policy or legislation development, giving testimony, or participation in official community consultations—are more attentive to their neighborhood, municipality, and county than to issues outside the region. Nonprofits that are en-

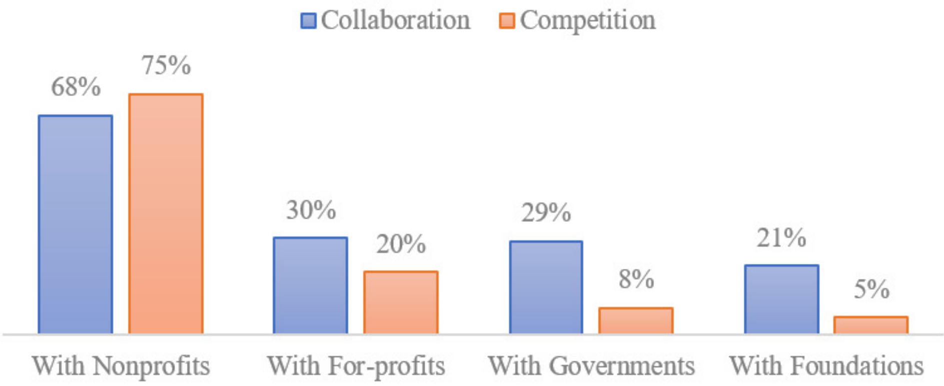

Figure 3. Interorganizational collaboration and competition.

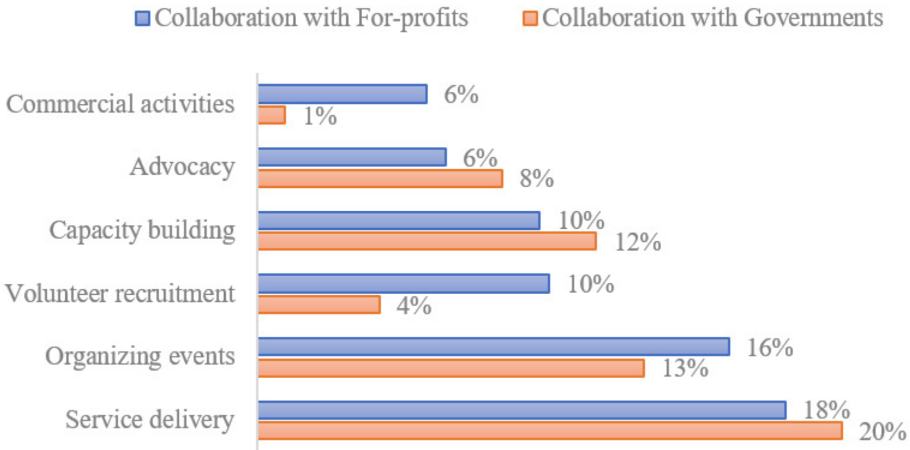

Figure 4. Collaboration with for-profits and government.

gaged in advocacy build relationships with local political leaders (Marwell 2004; Marwell, Marantz, and Baldassarri 2020). Such connections enable contracting out government services to nonprofits and access to public spaces. In line with existing work, we see few Bay Area organizations who pursue such relationships with politicians. Not only is advocacy seldom mentioned in interviews or local media coverage, much of it is grassroots mobilization, trying to get issues into the limelight. That said, over the past three years, nonprofit organizations in the Bay Area have encouraged their staff, members, volunteers, and beneficiaries to engage in a wide array of activities related to advocacy. These activities—ranked by the percentage of organizations indicating their engagement in such activity—include discussing their organizations' cause with family or friends (55 percent), attending public meetings such as town hall or city council meetings (42 percent), contacting government representatives (33 percent), participating in a rally (25 percent), signing petitions (16 percent), organizing a rally (13 percent), and boycotting particular brands or products (7 percent).

In short, even though advocacy is promoted, it is not central. Advocacy-related activities account for only a small proportion of total expenditures. The average percentage of annual budgets spent on advocacy is only 3 percent, and more than 70 percent report no such spending.[8] Advocacy spending varies across nonprofits operating in different areas, with health organizations spending the most (6% percent) and arts and culture the least (2 percent). These differences also reflect the multiple meanings of advocacy, which range from public causes like immigration reform to local concerns to self-interested lobbying. But even by the standard of the topspenders, advocacy does not rise to a priority.

Why, then, are some nonprofits involved in advocacy? Local governmental funding is an important driving factor.

8 When age, size, and operating area are controlled for, organizations receiving more funding from foundations have a larger budget for advocacy. Organizations are also more likely to partner with foundations than governmental agencies and businesses in advocacy-related activities. These findings point to the supporting role of foundations in nonprofit advocacy.

The organizations in our sample participate more in local advocacy, which is positively associated with local funding. And, controlling for age, size, and operating area, we find that nonprofit advocacy at the neighborhood, city, region, and state level increases (statistically significant) with the proportion of the nonprofit's budget that comes from governmental grants or contracts. This effect of governmental funding on local advocacy *only* exists, however, for organizations in human services and education, both categories where involvement in local politics matters. These results suggest that nonprofits consider their involvement in advocacy in tandem with their resources and political needs.

Our qualitative interviews also reveal that nonprofits often have a complicated relationship to advocacy (Walker and Oszkay 2020). In the past, this reluctance was often born out of a misguided legal concern that nonprofits could not engage in advocacy (Suarez 2020), but the current ambivalence expressed by executive directors has more to do with questions about what form of advocacy actually helps their constituents. For example, John from Neighbor2Neighbor told us:

> There are reasons why we get involved. But it's not like we're organizing a big rally to go to Sacramento or downtown Oakland to fight against certain things. We do organize Stop the Violence and truce marches, where we have young Black and Brown, mainly men, but also women who lead in this effort to keep ourselves and our community responsible and accountable. I feel there will come a time where there'll be some issue or a handful of issues where we need to get out there. But when we get out there, I think that folks are really seeing that this is not activism, in terms of all these progressives getting out and just whatever the latest says, we're going to be there to support. It's like, No, these folks feel it, and they've been paying for it. And they're going to go and say something about it.

Such a multifaceted view of advocacy was also expressed by George at College4All, which trains both youth and parents to advocate for their rights:

> Parents who have children in SFUSD—regardless of their citizenship status—can vote in school board elections. We have been educating our community around voting and its importance. We've also been educating our parents about the critical importance of being a part of the census, right? In terms of being recognized and being counted. We support our parents to be leaders in their school community and at the district level, so they are often advocating.
>
> On the college access side, we recognize that there's structural inequality that exists. We think it's important for us to make sure our students see it through that lens so that when they get into college and they're in classes where people have come from suburban school districts where they had many more opportunities or they've come from affluent backgrounds, and they're struggling and they're having a really hard time, that they're not blaming themselves. Which is really common. You know, this is my fault. I'm not smart enough. I'm not really college material. No, you weren't given the same opportunities! You're going to have to work harder to be able to do well, and so recognizing that there is this inequality, so they can advocate for themselves.

Table 1. Nonprofit Leaders by Working Hours and Paid Status

	Unpaid	*Paid*	*Total*
Part-Time	102 (34%)	28 (9%)	130
Full-Time	14 (5%)	155 (52%)	169
Total	116	183	299

Clearly, leaders of Bay Area nonprofits have to be somewhat multivocal (Padgett and Powell 2012), comfortable operating in very different social milieus, able to cajole and mobilize, and capable of explaining the accomplishments of their organizations to different audiences. They need to be flexible (and often less confrontational) in their strategies for representing their beneficiaries in the political and public arena, and instead of fighting for more distant federal-level changes, they often focus on local issues for smaller but more concrete wins (De Graauw 2016). As the head of an early childhood center in San Francisco commented in response to our question on whether his work would be different if they were located somewhere else: "Absolutely, because our funding is very specific. Even though we may get national money, we are part of a local community and have to rely on local resources, city resources, church resources, and all the relationships we have in the neighborhood. So while I think globally, I have to act locally."

It turns out that advocacy begets advocacy. Nonprofits that are more involved in local advocacy also tend to be more active in advocacy beyond the region, suggesting that local and nonlocal advocacy go hand in hand. Concretely, this means they may work for immigration reform or health care access locally, and lobby at the state or national level for legal reform. In order to think and act globally and locally, leaders need divergent skills and expertise. We now turn to discussing their backgrounds, documenting that they are far more varied that one might have expected.

LEADERSHIP

Nonprofit leaders in the Bay Area are both well educated and professional. More than half work full-time, and nearly 60 percent of these positions are paid (see table 1). But the typical contrast between paid professional and volunteer amateur is not evident (Leete 2006). Although more than a third of the leadership positions (N=102) are part-time and unpaid, many of these directors are highly educated and have held positions of stature in business or government. Unpaid positions are common in educational support organizations, such as PTAs, sports clubs, and other avocational activities. These leaders are often business leaders in their "day" jobs, or men and women who have had successful careers and now devote themselves to nonprofit work.

The significant financial challenges faced by nonprofits in the Bay Area also contribute to the combination of well educated and part-time. Some executive directors compensate by making personal sacrifices in terms of salary, working full-time but only paying themselves part-time. Consider Jane, the director of a poetry magazine, who told us: "The way I've kept this going right now is I don't pay myself as much as if I was doing this for somebody else. I can't because if I did, we wouldn't be able to pay the rent on this office. It would be impossible." If her organization were to hire someone else, they would need "to raise enough money to pay someone at the professional level to do the work that I do now."

In terms of prior career experience, almost half (46 percent) of the executives previously worked in the for-profit world, 18 percent came from government positions, and 42 percent have prior experience in the nonprofit sector. A number are sector switchers: more than 20 percent have worked in two or more sectors during their careers. In the first two waves of our study, when we interviewed in 2004 and 2014, we found that leaders had long tenures in their jobs, but this is changing. From 2014 to 2018, more than a third of the organizations in our sample (34% percent) experienced at least one change in executive directors. Respondents attributed this turnover to both a generational transition in leadership and the challenges of affordable housing. This churn at the top was more prevalent in nonprofits with paid, full-time directors than those with voluntary and part-time leaders who had other jobs for support. This turnover further underscores the contrast between the challenges of a paid career versus donative labor.

Educational attainment is a signature of these leaders—nearly 90 percent have a bachelor's or higher degree, 37 percent have a master's degree, and 14 percent have a JD, MD, or PhD. Education is a clear contributor to organizational professionalism, creating and spreading standardized knowledge and credentialed expertise through professional training and development (Hwang and Powell 2009). For advanced degrees, we differentiated three categories: managerial (master of business administration, master of public administration, master of public policy, and nonprofit management), sovereign (JD, MD, PhD, and divinity), and service professionals (advanced degrees in social work, education, counseling psychology, and public health).[9] Using these categories, we contrasted educational backgrounds to see how leaders are shaped by the professional values and frameworks that degrees impart.

Consider the contrast between two executive directors who both lead social service organizations. Ellie, who has led various East Bay organizations working to end homelessness in the Bay Area, explains how her seminary degree shapes her work:

> Seminary was good for me because it really grounded me in the moral core of what I was trying to do. I have always felt very connected to a deep taproot of why I do the work that I do. I didn't choose the jobs I've chosen as work. I chose them to change the world for the better. Being an executive director is hard and lonely and underresourced. I didn't get a nonprofit management or policy degree. I don't have that training. What I am trained in is translating. I'm glad I'm trained as a preacher. I'm good at communicating things and explaining things to people.

Jessie, who leads a North Bay multisite youth afterschool program, explained her career trajectory differently: "I really had never considered I was going to have a career in nonprofits, I just wanted to do something good. I figured I'd do that for a while and then start a career." When it was time to get a "real job," she first went for an MBA and then worked as a brand manager for a clothing company, but found it unfulfilling. She returned to the nonprofit sector, but her business school degree had changed her, so that she now concentrates on "growing" and "fixing" organizations.

Jessie's experience is not atypical among nonprofit leaders in the Bay Area. We do find that, on average, professional managerial leaders place less emphasis on the importance of trust-building goals, although they don't differ in how closely they interact with beneficiaries. Does professionalization further the concern that nonprofits "do for rather than do with" their constituents (Putnam 2000; Skocpol 2003)? Given the influx of directors from the corporate sector, one might expect that business practices have come to dominate nonprofit life (Weisbrod 1998; Dart 2004; Worth 2011). Although nonprofits with leaders who have professional degrees are associated with greater use of more formal management practices, we will see that the picture is more varied than one might expect.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

One of the most striking changes in today's organizational landscape is the formalization of domains, from grassroots social movements to charities, that were once more loosely organized (Walker, McCarthy, and Baumgartner 2011; Bromley and Meyer 2015). For nonprofits, this trend from expressive to instrumental has been accompanied by the development of formal bureaucratic structures and procedures to pursue social missions. Demands by both public and private funders for greater efficiency and impact have ushered market-based practices into a realm long known for charitable intentions and volunteer engagement (Hwang and Powell 2009). Consequently, in recent decades, nonprofits have added a cluster of management practices to their repertoires. Strategic planning and the quantification of performance is aimed at defining and operationalizing goals, as well as assessing how well they are met. These plans and analyses are often turned out with the help of management consultants as a prerequisite for or condition of grants from government agencies and private foundations.

9 We draw this tripartite distinction from prior work. Abbott (1988) highlighted that the older professions have been successful at claiming jurisdictional sovereignty over their work. Hwang and Powell (2009) found notable contrasts in actions between nonprofit managers with professional managerial degrees and those with older traditional degrees. Eyal (2019) emphasizes that expertise is currently under assault, with professional knowledge seen pejoratively by more people. In our sample of leaders, what we label as service professionals reflects a growing sense that social justice professionals are closer to the communities they serve.

Calls for a more business-minded approach have been accompanied by the expansion of nonprofit management programs and nonprofit tracks in traditional business schools. These programs poured newly minted managers into the nonprofit world, along with their accompanying professional norms and styles of operation (Suarez 2010). Today, discussions of whether a nonprofit has a theory of change or a strategic plan and what its administrative overhead expense ratio is can be heard as casual individual donors reflect on their annual donations. The proliferation of nonprofit rating services, such as Charity Navigator and GiveWell, reinforces this message.

Many of the most influential national voices championing these changes in management practice are located in the Bay Area. The Hewlett Foundation was an early promoter of "effective philanthropy," the first nonprofit rating services sprung up here, and the transposition of metrics from Silicon Valley venture capital to philanthropy became a calling card of local tech-wealth philanthropy (Horvath and Powell 2020). We wanted to see how this local institutional landscape that champions impact has influenced Bay Area nonprofits.

We found, however, that many nonprofits define management on their own terms. Recall Lucy, from our opening vignette. She is deeply spiritual yet able to converse with tech leaders and police officers, and she treats those most down on their luck with compassion and dignity. Her local work has echoes of larger work on a global scale by Paul Farmer, of Harvard Medical School, who combined medical provision and liberation theology to tackle infectious disease in resource-poor settings (Kidder 2009; Farmer 2020). They share the idea of accompaniment, that their goal is to help others have a life with less suffering, and that they work in a context of deep political and economic inequalities. Our interviewer asked Lucy a question about venture philanthropy; she replied that "none of those people had come round here [to her soup kitchen], but if we could find one who was willing, I would gladly talk to them."

We see a change in attitudes about management, but not a capitulation to mimic the corporate world, which has also been disrupted by the current pandemic. Back in 2005, when we analyzed the results of our first survey, respondents discussed their efforts to increase internal organizational capacity, improve administrative efficiency, and manage fundraising more effectively. By 2020 managing took on a different valence and involved greater effort to enroll the public in the mission of the organization and to incorporate external voices into decision-making. This change in ideas about how nonprofits should be run offers an ideal context for studying the evolution of management practices.

We begin with simple descriptive data on staff composition and size and then see how these attributes are related to particular management practices. More than 70 percent of the nonprofits in our sample have either full-time or part-time paid staff. The size of paid staff ranges widely from miniscule to quite large, but the great majority (86 percent) have fewer than 50 paid staff (figure 5). Figure 6 provides a breakdown of organizations based on whether they have volunteers or paid staff. A small percentage (12 percent) employ paid staff and do not use volunteers at all, whereas 26 percent rely only on volunteers. The most common arrangement (62 percent) utilizes both. The use of paid staff and volunteers is negatively correlated (statistically significant), suggesting different orientations between these types of nonprofits.

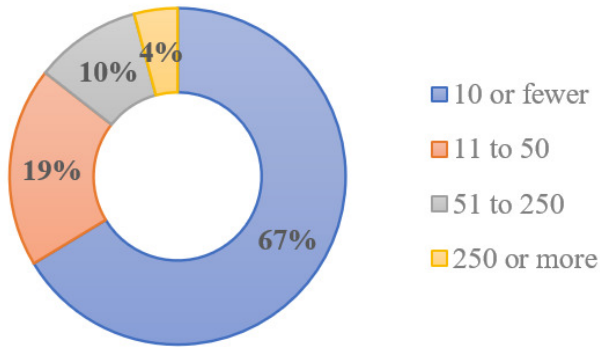

Figure 5. Percentage of nonprofits by staff size.

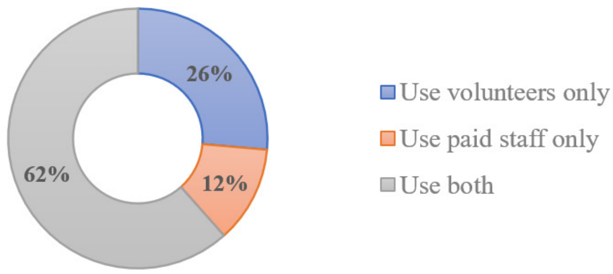

Figure 6. Percentage of nonprofits by use of staff and volunteers.

The presence of paid staff often changes the nature of work, leading to the adoption of formal management practices. Overall, 72 percent of nonprofits in our sample have developed strategic plans, 61 percent have financial audits conducted by independent accountants, 52 percent engage in quantitative program evaluation, and 69 percent turn to consultants for advice and services. All of these practices are more common with a paid staff. Moreover, organizations with paid staff are nearly twice as likely to provide recurrent leadership training (see figure 7).

Of course, management training need not always imply a more businesslike orientation. The director of a senior housing center attended an executive leadership course at Harvard, which had a module on organizational storytelling that opened up her horizons. She created an ambassadors program for outreach, and telling their story to the city became baked into staff incentive systems and featured alongside fundraising efforts on the internal scorecard. We see this kind of management technique in the prevalence of new tools and in the type of training now being provided. Nonprofits frequently host social events, more than three-quarters publish newsletters, and nearly all have crafted mission statements. More than half now emphasize storytelling and have regular retreats. In short, managing has become more discursive and relational. And while training

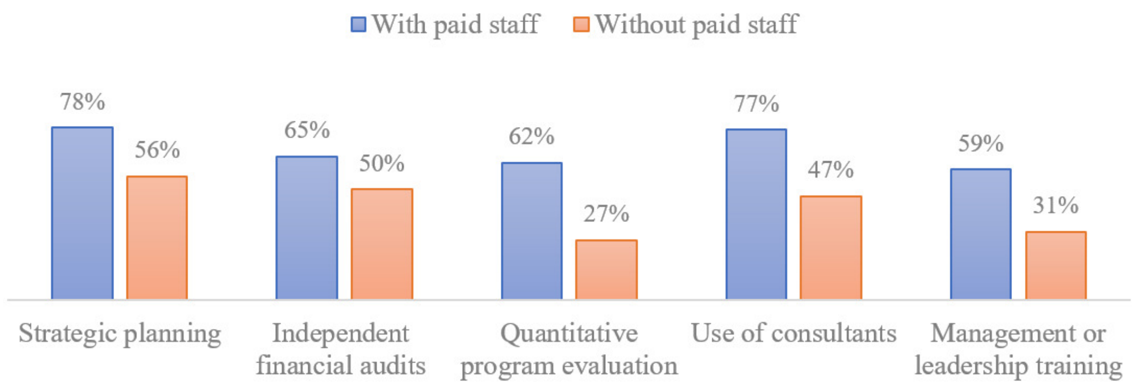

Figure 7. Adoption of management practices by use of paid versus unpaid staff.

for fundraising and legal issues remains common, there are new advanced courses in social media, storytelling, and advocacy that nearly a third of the organizations send staff to attend.

To capture these crosscurrents, let's return to two leaders we mentioned earlier, Jane and Jessie. Whereas Jessie and others embrace a managerial orientation as a much-needed improvement, leaders like Jane push back on the contradictions created by managerial approaches. When we asked Jane about "how she got to" the poetry magazine, she quickly piped up: "I don't know how to answer you. I don't know if you want academic credentials—if that's what you think this is about." She went on to discuss the challenges she faces: "it's a constant dance of fundraising and writing grants, to the detriment of the art part." Further, she feels she cannot be transparent about the challenges because funders want success: "when you write a grant, you're not ever supposed to say anything like this, they would just immediately—I would be crucified. You can't talk like this in a grant."

On the other hand, Jessie told us that compared to others in her field:

> I'm the only one that's got those [managerial] skills, and the kind of mindset, so I use them! It just changes the way you think, right? Once you start to think that way and you understand the frameworks that we go through, you're just always going to think that way. I'm always thinking in terms of business and growth and our financials and long-term investments… I think that's made our organization very strong relative to others, because we have a deeper understanding of how businesses and organizations work.

Jessie went on to explain how she had transformed sites that were having financial problems by cutting expenses while improving quality. She expanded her organization from three sites to seven, at which point they had "saturated the market" for kids in need of free afterschool programming in their city. Interestingly, while Jane sees her approach as countercultural in pushing back against managerialism, Jessie feels like a minority as a nonprofit executive director with an MBA from a "top-tier" school.

This contrast highlights the fact that although the managerial approach of "running a nonprofit like a business" is pervasive, it is not embraced wholeheartedly. Jane resists it, while Jessie sees herself as rare in her embrace of it. We find that there are many kinds of valuable expertise that can enable nonprofits to thrive, but what form of expertise a particular organization needs is conditioned by its aims, current challenges, and life cycle. Jessie and Jane both have strengths and blind spots. Managerial expertise may enable nonprofits to achieve greater systemic integration, accrue more resources, and steward those resources well. On the other hand, a leader with an MBA is less likely to help a nonprofit cultivate community across lines of difference, and there are times when an overly managerial approach can be destructive to an organization and its constituents. Clearly, there is a place for both MBA-led nonprofits and organizations led by passionate amateurs. This is true not only for different organizations but also for different seasons in an organization's life. Effective calculation of impact and balancing the books certainly have their place, but so does moral leadership that can build trust in marginalized communities.

Moreover, we find that some leaders define themselves as "community based" in contrast to a managerial approach, whereas others are comfortable combining the two. Interestingly, we find that managerial practices—especially external audits and evaluation—are positively associated with trust-building goals (statistically significant), which suggests that a managerial approach may not necessarily be at odds with a community orientation. The sharp divide between sacred and profane turns blurrier in practice.

ACCOUNTABILITY

As noted above, managerial practices are deeply linked with the movement toward greater accountability and transparency that extends across the modern organizational landscape. Scholars have traced this transformation using labels such as "the audit society" (Power 1997) and "audit culture" (Strathern 2000). These "engines of anxiety," ranging from demands to decolonize to more stringent environmental stewardship, are experienced by organizations as heightened pressures to display the "proper" attributes of members of society (Espeland and Sauder 2016). The calls for accountability come through formal legal channels, are championed by social movement advocates, and are hawked by professional proselytizers for various causes. The question of accountability to whom looms especially large for nonprofits, who must simultaneously represent themselves not only internally but also to their publics, funders, and government agencies. Although activists and donors often push nonprofits in opposite directions, both urge organizations to be increasingly accountable and transparent.

Consequently, many nonprofits turned to enhanced dialogue with external audiences to build and improve relationships with their constituents (Brandtner, Horvath, and Powell 2021). Through websites, annual reports, social media, and newsletters, they share internal information with their beneficiaries. Some of these representations seek to paint a positive picture of their organization, but others solicit input, discuss failings and lessons learned, and ask for opinions on plans for the future. These efforts go way beyond public relations efforts, as the shared materials have implications for how nonprofits interact and collaborate with constituents, other nonprofits, local governments, and businesses. The ramifications of such open access can even potentially damage an organization's legitimacy.

The internet gives ordinary people the ability to gain information about nonprofits to an unprecedented extent. The proliferation of nonprofit ratings—as well as the credence such ratings are given—is a striking example of this shift. In turn, the web enables nonprofits to represent themselves, mobilize clients, and include stakeholders in decision-making (Powell, Horvath, and Brandtner 2016). Many nonprofits are quick to put information to use as members, volunteers, and clients are called upon to take part in surveys, focus groups, and crowdsourcing and crowdfunding campaigns. Thus, openness and accountability have become a "new method of democratization" and the web a forum for collective participation (Walker, McQuarrie, and Lee 2015, 13).

To explore these trends, we first discuss how nonprofits give voice to their beneficiaries. More than half (53 percent) ask constituents to give feedback upon visits, 45 percent allow participation in meetings, 39 percent request comments on public documents, and 30 percent permit access to meeting minutes. On average, beneficiaries have opportunities to participate in two of these four activities. Yet participation is not uniform: 15 percent offer a chance to do all four, whereas 30 percent do not offer any such opportunities.

Interestingly, organizations with a paid staff have a (statistically significant) higher level of beneficiary involvement in offering feedback but are less likely to share minutes of meetings, suggesting a difference between being responsive and being transparent (see figure 8). Feedback suggests more of a customer orientation by more formal organizations, whereas participation and access seem more the hallmark of voluntary nonprofits.

To our surprise, the "generational divide" runs opposite to our expectations. Figure 9 shows that across the board, digital natives have lower levels of participation in all areas, most notably in "participate in meetings" and "access meeting minutes" (differences are statistically significant). Relative to older organizations, digital natives offer fewer ways for beneficiaries to have voice rights by participating in organizational decision-making. The older twentieth-century social movement orientation is more pronounced than a digital engagement mantra.

Comparing two youth choirs, from the East Bay and the South Bay, highlights the divergent shifts by nonprofits toward greater accountability. In 2005 Alto was much more managerial than Baritone, utilizing many state-of-the-art practices of that period. Subsequently, Baritone surpassed Alto in internal managerial capacity but has not become more transparent about its activities to the public. The director commented, "As an arts organization, we're different beasts. I'm aware that openness gives people the straight odds, which is all fine and good. But it just isn't hugely applicable to us." Alto, in the interim, invested in social media and revamped its website as part of a long-term strategy to better document its impact. Its director commented, "We wanted to make data-based decisions versus informal navel-gazing. It's not enough to just be a warm and fuzzy choir anymore. You have to really be able to prove your impact. You have to be able to document that impact to your funders, families, and community. It's part of being accountable." She described a move from subjective client satisfaction surveys, mostly used as "rubber-stamp approval," to "objective peer feedback" through quality assessment tools and focus groups.

In contrast, Baritone resists the idea of sharing internal information. Although new tools facilitate emails to parents and payment of dues, information is offered on a need-to-know basis:

> We are more transparent than a decade ago, but only because we are using more sophisticated tools to communicate. Are we completely transparent? By no means. Do I want to share with families my formula for figuring out how much it costs for them to send their boy on tour? Well, I could show them the spreadsheet. But there are things I really wouldn't care to share on that spreadsheet.

Nevertheless, documenting impact is now a cry that is heard by many. Almost 75 percent of the organizations provide output metrics, and more than half publicly describe input metrics and discuss their impact. Scientific evidence or clinical trials are not commonplace, but perhaps they are around the corner. Consider an arts organization for incarcerated individuals that is very active in measuring the value of its work. Two empirical studies have shown the benefits of their work to society. A cost-benefit analysis demonstrated that the gains from the program exceeded the costs by reducing the number of disciplinary infractions by inmates. Another study showed that recidivism is halved for inmates who participated in the arts program for six months following incarceration. This organization has been in the forefront of openly evaluating its performance and communicating the results to funders, policymakers, and the public. As we have hinted at throughout this section, the push for transparency and accountability goes hand in hand with advances in technology over the last few decades that allow nonprofits to be not only physically but also virtually visible to their stakeholders. We turn now to addressing how Bay Area nonprofits draw on digital tools and navigate the digital sphere in an area known for its technological advancements.

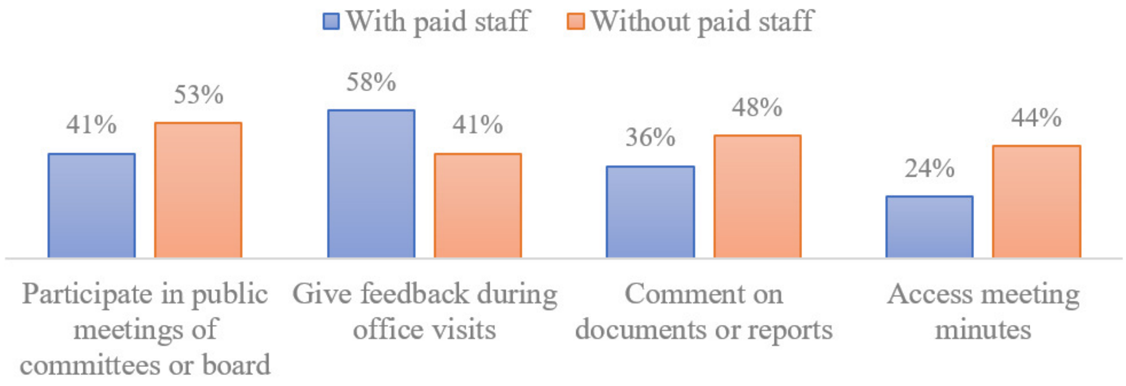

Figure 8. Access for beneficiary participation by use of paid versus unpaid staff.

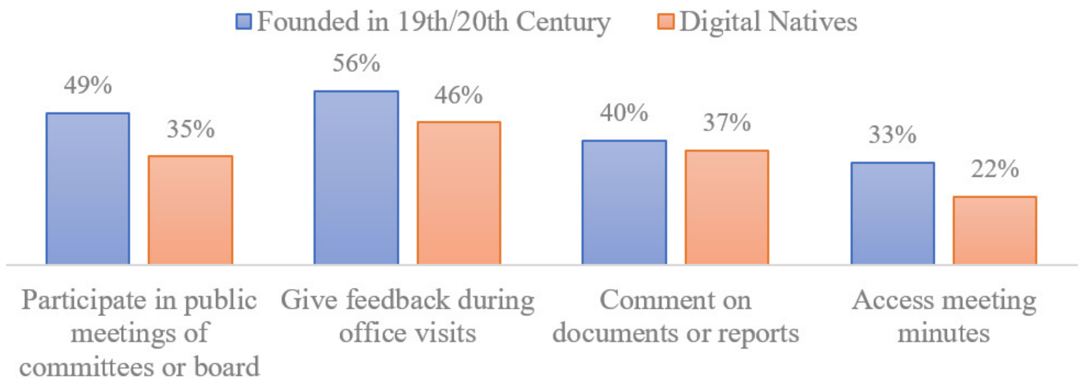

Figure 9. Access for beneficiary participation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century nonprofits versus digital natives.

TECHNOLOGY

In many respects, nonprofits have become digital forms of places for support, sanctuary, and study. Organizations use Skype to arrange the delivery of free meals to elderly shut-ins and make training sessions widely available on the web to women working in blue-collar trades. They share the results of external assessments, whether glowing or critical, on their websites. As members of civil society, nonprofit staff believe they must be responsive to constituents and consider their needs and opinions. They do this through blogs and digital town halls, along with a variety of digital tools that make it possible for organizations to engage directly with their constituents. This movement to become more open and accessible is entangled with the tools owned and offered by powerful tech companies and accountability mandates of government (Tufekci 2017).

We highlight several themes in describing the use of technology, to give a portrait of the ways nonprofits avail themselves of new tools and modes of communication. Again, as the Bay Area is one of the leading centers of the tech industry, along with Seattle and Shenzhen, being knowledgeable about tech tools is in the air here. Nonprofits use technology for different purposes, ranging from broadcasting to external audiences (via tools such as websites or social media) to fostering internal communications. The vast majority have websites (94 percent) and a social media presence (83 percent), but only 35 percent currently use software or a wiki for internal communication. In terms of technology-related internal positions, 58 percent have a designated position of web designer, and 46 percent have a position specifically related to social media outreach, but less than 20 percent have positions of data scientists or analysts. These figures include all organizations, so among those with paid staff, the percentages that have such positions are higher.

The use of technology enables nonprofit organizations to interact with their beneficiaries both online (via a website, email, or phone) and in person (via beneficiaries' visits to offices or staff visits to a service site). Although some rely exclusively on face-to-face interactions, a virtual format is also used. The large majority (80 percent) spend more time on in-person than virtual interactions. Interestingly, contrary to what might be expected, there are no sharp differences between digital natives and those founded earlier in terms of use of tech tools for external and internal communication, tech positions within organizations, and primary mode of interactions with beneficiaries (figure 10). This lack of a difference does suggest how much tech savviness has become a feature of most nonprofits. Overall, we see a general receptiveness to digital tools but also significant variety in how nonprofits engage with technology. Whereas some

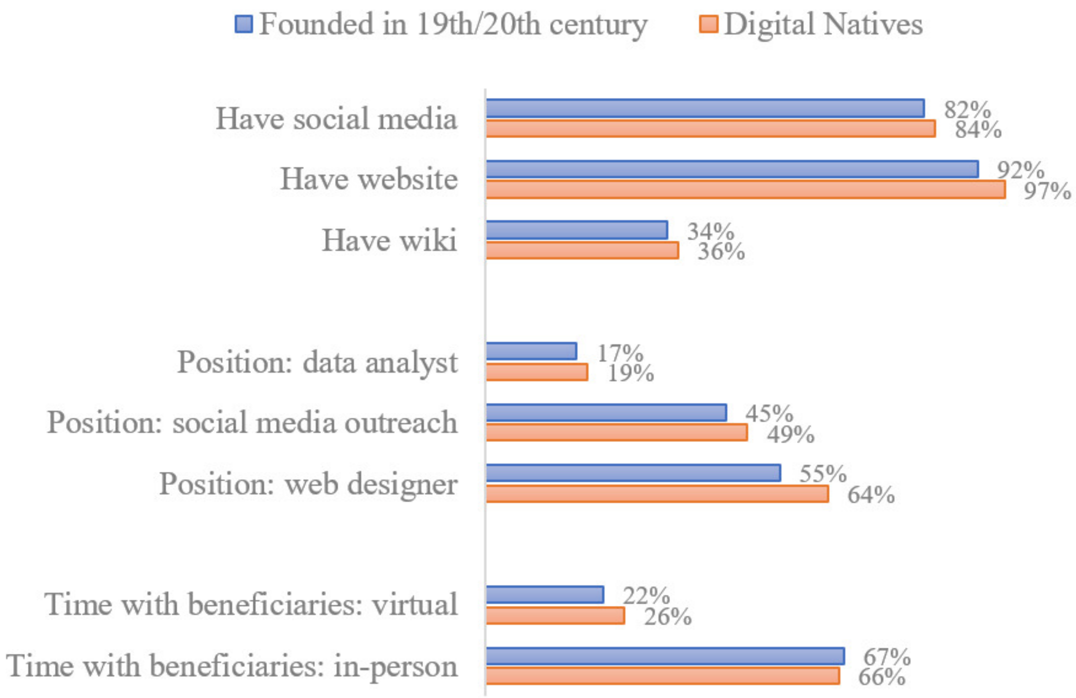

Figure 10. Use of technology in nineteenth- and twentieth-century nonprofits versus digital natives.

embrace new tech tools wholeheartedly, many continue to focus on, and prioritize, in-person relationships over bolstering their digital presence. Perhaps this reflects unequal access to technology by less advantaged communities. But it also seems connected to the resurgence of communal, local orientations discussed above. Overall, in this technocratic sphere, some of our nonprofits continue to rely on face-to-face interactions.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

At the close of our interviews, we asked nonprofit leaders to reflect on the greatest challenges as well as opportunities they face. Their responses shaped the themes we have emphasized throughout this article, but it is worthwhile for us to close with reflections on their comments. Many are worried that social bonds are deteriorating faster than they can be repaired. The San Francisco Bay Area is often under a national political microscope, as a purported outlier from the rest of the country, perhaps inevitably given the region's history and the fact that Vice President Kamala Harris, speaker of the house Nancy Pelosi, and Governor Gavin Newsom are all from the Bay Area. But the problems on the streets of the Bay Area are more paramount than national problems in the minds of local nonprofit leaders, whether they work in social services, the arts, education, or sports, because they, and not political leaders, are on the front lines addressing issues of homelessness, addiction, and housing insecurity. Political leaders and public health officials were indeed responsible for keeping COVID-19 in check locally; but twice as many people in San Francisco died from overdoses than from COVID-19 last year (Fuller 2021). The Bay Area has some real strengths—such as having kept a pandemic relatively at bay—but also real weaknesses in terms of poverty and how we care for those who have the least.

Recruiting and retaining high-quality staff and volunteers when pay is low and work demanding is the most frequently mentioned challenge bedeviling nonprofit leaders. The lack of volunteers is a major issue for PTAs and co-ops, and lack of participation plagues Little Leagues. For example, one Little League director lamented: “Our greatest threat is probably video games.” A softball league director told us: “The general trend is that youth are playing less sports.” The director of a nursery school said: “Parents are busier. They seem to have less time and less money than ever. More families need both parents to work to provide for the family. This makes it harder for them to fulfill their co-op commitments. Also, the stress of local and world news is weighing on people. Parents are sick more often, suffer from more depression, and are more likely to leave the city.” Similarly, an elementary school PTA president told us: “More parents are working longer hours and volunteer hours have suffered and then programs are put on hold until we can recruit volunteers to run programs again.” The common theme is scarcity, though organizations that serve wealthier demographics (such as Little Leagues and PTAs in suburban areas) talk about a scarcity of *time*, whereas other organizations are weighed down by financial scarcity.

The biggest opportunities that leaders mention are new funding streams and how systemic problems in the Bay Area increase the need for their work. As a charter school leader told us, “We see the demand to serve more students, and we know that the services we offer are effective. The opportunity is: How can we reach more students? How can we raise more funding to expand programming? If we had more funds, we can scale further.” A theater director commented on the tensions of increasing audiences amid financial constraints:

> The single largest threat has been increasing cost of living for artists and staff. We have had to cut back on the number of artists we employ for given productions and instead rely on staff to cover production positions. But we have launched new campaigns to draw audiences and donations from new sectors, and the board of directors has worked to expand its contribution levels to better support the organization.

It will come as no surprise that many nonprofits are struggling, especially during a global pandemic. What is perhaps surprising, and certainly compelling, are the murmurs of hope we see in many of the organizations we surveyed and interviewed. Many civic organizations in the Bay Area are steadfast in their efforts to build deep relationships with constituents and to move the needle on tough systemic issues like homelessness. Others see their task as creating what John Keane (2020) calls "a sense of possibility." Indeed, our work suggests that concerns about the loss of community or fears that professionalized nonprofits have become sterile do not give an accurate picture.

The interviews revealed that the technocratic ethos of the region has not silenced local organizations' commitments to the places in which they work. Nonprofit leaders discussed their work to host family-oriented block parties in formerly crime-ridden neighborhoods, teach social-justice-infused dance courses, and take low-income youth and youth with disabilities sea kayaking across the bay. Even though the professional turn of nonprofit leaders may lead to less organizational emphasis on trust-building, there are counterbalancing forces—such as strong reliance on local funding—at work to maintain nonprofits' awareness of the needs of the local community.

In addition, nonprofits' engagement with businesses has a perhaps unexpected bright side. Earned income from commercial activities does not necessarily dampen nonprofits' ties to their local communities; and collaboration with businesses plays an important role in helping nonprofits recruit volunteers. Moreover, collaboration with ostensible competitors—including other nonprofits, for-profits, and government agencies—appears to enhance a community of common fate. The capacity to collaborate is a necessary condition for initiating systemic changes to address enduring problems.

Even while the pandemic has posed formidable challenges, it has also created opportunities for nonprofits to reach constituents in new ways. Bay Area nonprofits have long played an important role in mitigating the effects of many crises, from earthquakes and fires to refugee resettlements to recessions, so we closely monitored how they responded in the face of mounting anxiety and need during the pandemic. We learned that a third of the organizations in our sample pivoted to meet changing needs, becoming critical nodes in the public health information infrastructure, especially for minority communities. Many of the responses showed organizations moving outside their comfort zones.

A Little League website provided public health information about how to stop the spread of COVID-19 as well as direct links to important health resources. They posted that "there is a huge amount of misinformation, so please refrain from using social media unless the source is the CDC, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, or the World Health Organization." A performing arts venue posted that "vaccines are the best intervention in the battle against Covid," and a festival offered free on-site vaccinations. The above-mentioned arts organization that works with incarcerated people and their families turned their website into a portal to resources for health care services, educational opportunities, parole hearings, and religious programs. At a time when there is distrust of government agencies, news media, and medical research in general, a diverse group of nonprofits in our sample are using social media tools to fight the rising tide of misinformation.

CONCLUSION

The refrain that cuts across the many statistics and cases we have shared is that nonprofits play a crucial role in bridging between the haves and have-nots, adapting to the great booms *and* losses of an area marked by prolific progress amid deep inequality. The challenge that today's Bay Area nonprofits face is how to continue to bridge these widening gaps in order to connect their multiple publics to essential resources without losing the relational connections through which resources must flow. In this final section, we briefly consider the broader theoretical implications of our findings.

What is perhaps most surprising about the Bay Area nonprofit sector is its considerable heterogeneity and diversity. Some might expect, both theoretically and practically, that the sector would be imprinted with a clear "left coast" ethos (Stinchcombe 1965). Likewise, one could imagine there was widespread isomorphism in organizational practices—that nonprofits would closely mirror the organizations around them, given demands from funders, philanthropists, board members, and rating services, to name only the most notable sources of influence (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Others might expect nonprofits to have highly transparent orientations with a slick website and social media presence to boot (Caplan and boyd 2018).

But responses to such modern pressures are not uniform. Some of our nonprofits lack the skills or knowledge to implement contemporary tools; others lack the motivation. Still others, while successfully incorporating new tools into their organizational routines, give them their own local twist. In related work, we have shown that it matters greatly which staff members are involved in responding to external pressures (Bromley, Hwang, and Powell 2012; Brandtner, Horvath, and Powell 2021). If changes are introduced by the board or at the top, we see greater isomorphism, whereas when more staff and even beneficiaries are involved, we see local experimentation and variety. This variability in response to similar environmental pressures lends empirical support to recent conceptual efforts to explain the microprocesses of institutionalization, by reference to how organizational members negotiate macro-institutional scripts and translate them into everyday actions (Powell and Rerup 2017).

Across the themes we have addressed—embeddedness, advocacy, collaboration, managerialism, and technology—we observe heterogeneity and contradictions not only *between* but also *within* organizations as they hire both consultants and activists, MBA grads and neighborhood representatives. Classic theories of the nonprofit sector explained the existence of the form in terms of "demand heterogeneity" (James 1987; Weisbrod 1975); accordingly, nonprofits were gap fillers, stepping in to provide public goods and services that were undersupplied by governments. Estelle James (1987) argued that nonprofits try to "maximize" nonpecuniary goals such as faith, commitment, and belief. She suggested that the more religious and ethnic heterogeneity a place has, the greater the size of its nonprofit sector. These classic theories were couched at the level of a sector; however, they did not attend to variation at the organizational level.

The Bay Area is one of the most heterogeneous regions in the United States, widely known for its purported tolerance to newcomers. And although it is one of the more secular cities in the United States, political, social, and spiritual commitments loom large among the nonprofits in our sample. The unifying feature across our organizations is the deep fractures in society we have discussed throughout this article. The existence of these grand challenges and lack of satisfaction with the status quo create a fertile ground for many nonprofits to be creative, march to their own drumbeat, and ultimately do what they can to make their contributions. Ultimately, nonprofits, like the region they are embedded within, are fundamentally marked by paradox. They grapple with present loss and difficulty, even as they work toward a better possible future where a community thrives.

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There are no competing interests with respect to the work and authorship of this research.

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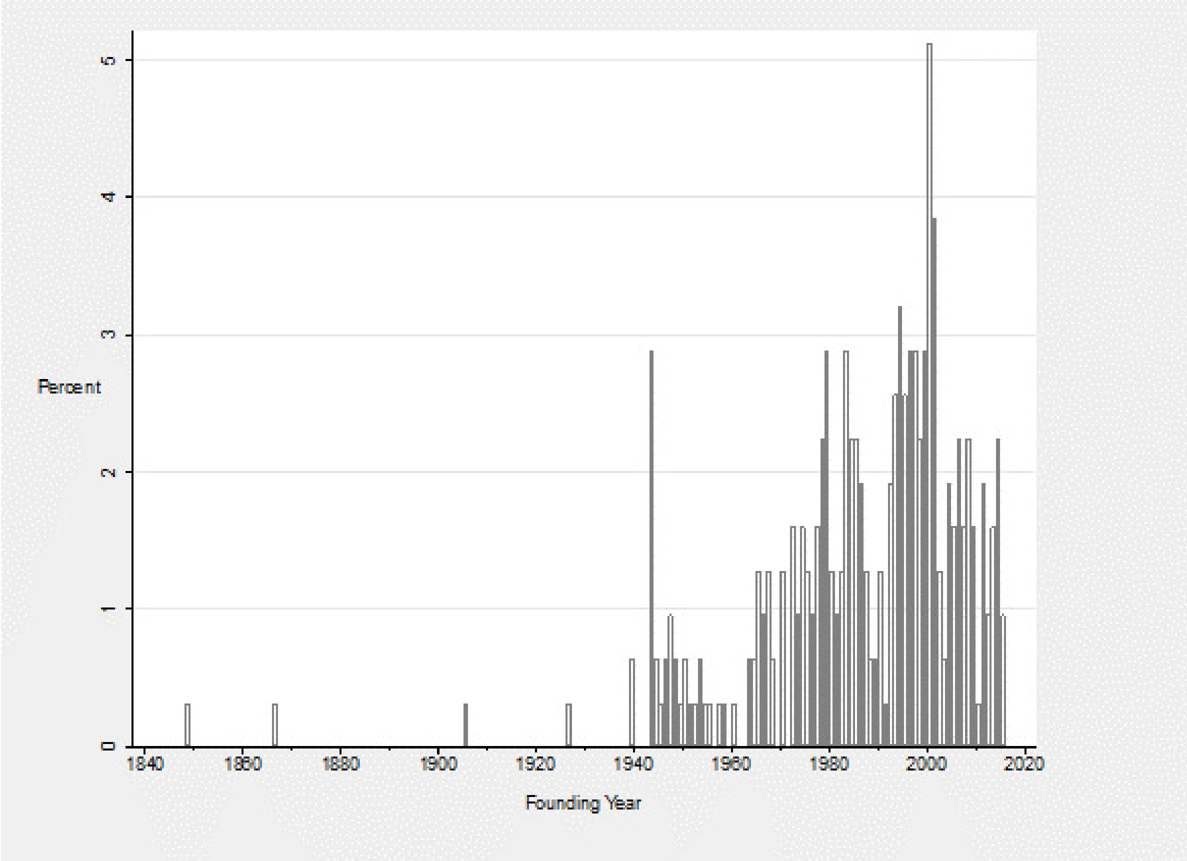

Appendix. Distribution of Founding Years for Nonprofits in the Sample