Course Description
This course provides a critical examination of strategies of change within human service organizations and in networks of organizations in terms of their effects on

- effectiveness,
- efficiency, and
- responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable populations.

Theories and research on organizations, specifically

- organization-environment relations,
- organization-client relations,
- structure,
- organizational change and innovation, and

inter-organizational analysis and change will be applied to the formulation of intervention and change strategies.

The effects of current structuring of service delivery systems on

- accessibility,
- comprehensiveness,
- continuity,
- fairness,
- quality, and
- effectiveness of care,

with special emphasis on populations vulnerable through their gender or ethnicity, will be detailed.

Models and empirical studies of change within organizations and in networks of
organizations aimed at improving the delivery of services will be analyzed and research issues and knowledge gaps will be identified. Relevant ethical and value issues will be examined.

A special emphasis throughout the course will be placed on management, leadership, the purposing of high performing systems, the role of governance and interorganizational and community coalitions in addressing other course purposes.

COURSE QUESTIONS

Questions such as the following will be considered:

1. Organizations
   a. What are models of organizations that we might wish to consider?
   b. How might different models facilitate or resist change?
   c. What are some models of change that we might consider?
   d. If organizations have multiple goals, how might they be harmonized?

2. Systems
   a. What is a system?
   b. What is an organizational system?
   c. What is an inter-organizational system?
   d. What is a community system?
      i. What is the underlying intellectual premise of “Community Organization?”

3. Vulnerable Populations
   a. What is a vulnerable population?
   b. How does the concept of “social exploitation” relate to vulnerable populations?
   c. How does the concept of Social Stratification relate to vulnerable populations?

4. Historical Examples- Some successes some failures
   a. Community Coordination - St Paul Community Study (1952)
   b. System Wide Programmatics - TVA
   c. Poverty - War on Poverty

BOOKS TO BUY/READ

- Jim Collins Good to Great for the Social Sector
- John Tropman, Successful Community Leadership and Organization
  NASW Press

ASSIGNMENTS
Students need - alone or together – prepare a paper on the general topic of Elements of Organizational/Interorganizational response to serving vulnerable populations.

It has 4 components:

1. A Proposal \(^1\) 10 Points Due 1/28
2. An Outline 20 Points Due 2/25

3. Thought piece on 1 of the three readings 5 points Due 3-11

4. A Paper 30 Points Due 4/1 3600-4500 words

5. A Presentation 25 Points
6. Class Participation 10 points

\(^1\) Late submissions will lose points.
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<p>|       |                                          | 4] Change Takes Root in the Desert Ctools                                          |
|       |                                          | 5] Garvin &amp; Tropman. Social Work in Contemporary Society Ch7: Helping Organizations to Change; CTOOLS |
|       | Consider the Interorganizational Theory of Differentiation and the Network Theory of Substantive Differentiation |
|       | Consider the four “big” systems         |
|       | - Formal Organizational Systems (and Informal systems within them)                     |
|       | - Formal and Semiformal Inter-organizational Coalitions, Networks with similar and/or complementary organizations &amp; systems &amp; secondary groups (Communities) |
|       | - Informal Group Systems such as kin, friends, neighbors – the primary group          |
|       | - Formal Self Help System                |</p>
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| 3/18 | Policy | Policy Culture and Policy Agenda  
Kristi Jenkins, PhD - Program Evaluation Specialist, UM Human Resources – Healthy Organization Systems |
| 3/25 | Community | The Community System  
John Tropman, Successful Community Leadership and Organization  
Ms. Pam Smith – CEO – Washtenaw United Way – The Community Social Service System |
| 4/1  | Change | Transformational and Transactional change/Structural Lag/Cultural Lag  
Professor Megan Tompkins-Stange – Philanthropy’s Response to Community Need |
| 4/8  | Reports | Reports |
| 4/15 | Reports | Reports |
Local Forces for Good

The authors of the influential book *Forces for Good* examine how their framework for creating high-impact nonprofits applies to local and smaller organizations.

By Leslie R. Crutchfield & Heather McLeod-Grant | 1 | Summer 2012

Of the more than 1.5 million nonprofits in the United States, the vast majority are local groups striving to achieve maximum results while operating on budgets well under $1 million. Most aim to deepen their impact within the local community, rather than increase their reach by scaling up
nationally. So how do the six practices outlined in our book *Forces for Good* apply to smaller groups, when we originally studied only large national and global nonprofits such as Habitat for Humanity, Teach for America, and the Environmental Defense Fund? Phrased differently, can the six practices of high-impact nonprofits be applied by local and smaller nonprofits as well?

During the five years since our book was published, this was the question we most frequently encountered as we shared our ideas with thousands of organizations, including many smaller, locally focused nonprofits with modest budgets. Although we had a strong intuition—and increasing anecdotal evidence—that nonprofits of all sizes could benefit from the six practices, we hadn’t studied any local organizations until we undertook an updated edition of *Forces for Good* (published this spring by Jossey-Bass/Wiley). Last summer, we conducted new research on 13 high-impact local nonprofits with budgets ranging from $800,000 to just under $5 million that were applying some or all of the six practices we’d uncovered in our original research.

The big insight in our original work was that high-impact nonprofits focus on mobilizing forces beyond their four walls, rather than worrying only about internal management or scaling up their organizations. The most successful nonprofits, we found, spend most of their time trying to change entire systems by advocating for government policies, tapping into the power of free markets, nurturing nonprofit networks, and building movements of evangelists—individual volunteers and supporters who advance their cause. And to be effective at influencing external systems, they share leadership internally and adapt quickly to changing conditions. These then were the six practices that great nonprofits use to have markedly more impact than their peers.

It was a fresh way of defining nonprofit success, and our initial framework seemed to resonate in the field. Subsequently, we’ve observed a shift in the mindset of many social sector leaders—not just because of our work, but because others are writing and talking about similar themes as well. If the 1990s and 2000s were about scaling up organizations and social innovations, more recently attention has shifted to understanding how large-scale social change happens through more collaborative approaches to scaling out impact. Today there is increased focus on how nonprofits tap into larger social and organizational networks and how they operate within the entire ecosystem of actors that influence societal issues. The frame of “Collective Impact,” introduced by John Kania and Mark Kramer of FSG in the winter 2011 issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, captures how key actors from every sector must join together in disciplined collaboration if they want to solve entrenched problems. This has also been a focus of the Monitor Institute’s work on leveraging networks for social change. The onus is now on leaders of all sectors—not just nonprofits—to stop acting in isolation and start systematically employing cross-sector approaches.

These shifts hold significant implications for all nonprofits—local and smaller groups in particular. For although these nonprofits still operate on shoestring budgets, they are now being told they also need to operate “outside their four walls” and create “collective impact” by working across sectors, building peer networks, and influencing local government policies and markets. Yet all the while they must still deliver quality programs, raise funds, and keep the lights on. It’s a tall order—one made even more challenging by the recent recession.
So it’s no surprise that many local and smaller nonprofits questioned the applicability of these external practices. And it’s exactly this question that prompted us to undertake our recent research to understand how local groups can leverage the six practices to do more with less. Because they are smaller and often resource-constrained, local nonprofits have to be creative in how they expand impact beyond their four walls. But successful groups don’t let their modest budgets deter them from achieving outsized impact.

**What’s Different About Local Nonprofits?**

Smaller and local nonprofits clearly face different challenges from those of larger groups operating at national or global scale—but being locally focused has distinct advantages as well. It also influences how these organizations employ the six practices, and means that they often build them out in a different order from nonprofits seeking to scale up as they scale out their impact.

The most obvious challenge is that local nonprofits are often resource-constrained. Because they serve only one community or region, their budgets are smaller than those of national or global nonprofits, and they are less likely to have economies of scale (shared back-office infrastructure, for example). This also means their funding options are more constrained—it’s harder to attract the attention of national funders or corporations, and private philanthropy is often limited to wealth in the local community. Plus, most local service providers receive a majority of their revenue from government grants or contracts (40 percent on average), so many are highly dependent on a single funding source, which puts them at greater risk.

But it’s not just about financial resources. As a consequence of smaller budgets, these nonprofits have more constrained human resources as well, often operating with a small paid staff, whose time must be focused on delivering quality programs, raising funds, managing the organization, and undertaking administrative tasks. In addition, most stand-alone local nonprofits don’t have immediate access to the knowledge or skills of peers, as do local affiliates of larger federated networks. So they don’t have an obvious place to share their successes, failures, and lessons learned.

And yet being local and smaller also has distinct advantages. Local nonprofits can build lasting bonds with community residents and better understand what works on the ground. They intimately know their volunteers, donors, local officials, business leaders, and other stakeholders, and they can foster a sense of ownership and pride among local residents. Consequently, community-based organizations can also more easily build a trusted brand—it’s easier and less costly to reach a smaller market of supporters, and often they are one of a handful of players in town tackling a particular issue. Last, because they are smaller, it’s easier for local nonprofits to adapt quickly and respond to changing circumstances—they don’t have to cascade change throughout a large and distributed organization.

Looking through this lens of local challenges and advantages, we began to see how some of our six practices lend themselves more naturally to adoption by local nonprofits than do others, and how some were more challenging to employ. Yet to a one, we saw how the practices were
applied in creative ways to suit local circumstances. Here are examples of what we found in studying local nonprofits and how they reshaped our understanding of the six practices.

**The Six Practices Applied Locally**

1. **Share Leadership** | The biggest breakthrough in our thinking occurred as we looked at how local nonprofits approach the practice of “sharing leadership.” It stretched our understanding of this practice, extending the notion of leadership to one that blurs internal and external boundaries. Originally, we had defined shared leadership primarily as an internal organizational trait—the ability of the CEOs of the 12 national nonprofits to share responsibility and authority with their COOs, senior management teams, boards, and other critical stakeholders. This makes sense in the context of a larger organization already operating at scale, with many layers of management.

   But as we studied local and smaller nonprofits, we saw clearly that the shared leadership concept extended to groups and individuals outside the organizations’ four walls—blurring the lines between this practice and the practices of “nurturing nonprofit networks” and “inspiring evangelists.” We observed local nonprofits extending extraordinary levels of responsibility to outside volunteers and even leaders of partner organizations within community networks.

   Consider Meet Each Need with Dignity (MEND), a holistic social service organization based in Southern California’s San Fernando Valley—one of the most impressive examples of this trait. MEND was launched in 1971 by a small group of Catholics and Protestants to help residents of their community in need. Today the nonprofit offers an array of programs, including hot meals and showers for the homeless; affordable medical, dental, and vision care; adult job training; and student tutoring. As if that weren’t enough, MEND is a food bank as well, supporting 30 smaller charities in the region.

   In all, MEND serves as many as 32,000 people each month. Since the recession hit in 2008, applications to some MEND programs have increased 400 percent, yet the organization has never had to waitlist a person for food, clothing, or educational services. How does an organization with just 24 paid staff administer this vast offering of services without maxing out on its capacity? The answer is to share leadership—in this case, extending leadership out to its networks of evangelists and other local nonprofits.

   MEND has met increased demand by expanding its volunteer force by nearly 25 percent and its total number of donated hours by 39 percent—the equivalent of adding more than 20 full-time employees. About 3,200 MEND volunteers now donate nearly 13,000 hours to the organization each month. And these volunteers don’t just provide services; they also participate heavily in organizational leadership and in setting strategy. Volunteers write grant proposals, mount public relations campaigns, lead orientations with other community organizations, and manage shifts in the food bank and medical clinic.

   “When I talk about sharing leadership, people say to me, ‘Volunteers can’t do that,’” says MEND CEO Marianne Haver Hill. “But when volunteers are educated about the mission and a performance standard is set, their leadership provides a tremendous advantage.” MEND also
shares leadership within the organization. Haver Hill recently installed Jenny Gutierrez as COO to oversee all programs and facilities, while she focuses more of her time externally on public relations, fundraising, and development. This job split has enabled both women to have more impact and to feel less overwhelmed.

Local nonprofits can build lasting bonds with community residents, and better understand what works on the ground.

Sharing leadership is a nuanced practice that requires nonprofit executives to empower others and learn to let go, because inherent to the practice is relinquishment of some control. It’s hard enough to do within an organization, let alone in a larger distributed network. We concluded that two driving forces seem to enable local nonprofits to do this.

First, sharing leadership is driven by necessity. Because local nonprofits are typically resource-constrained, they don’t have the budget to build large senior teams or have layers of management. These groups face intense pressure to demonstrate that every dollar is spent as efficiently as possible on programs. So having volunteers provide leadership and services “off the balance sheet” is a creative work-around.

Second, high-impact local nonprofits share leadership because they can. Successful groups with a strong local presence build lasting local relationships and have multiple touch points with volunteers, trustees, and partners in the community. This creates a web of informal accountability that reduces much of the risk of extending authority outside the nonprofits’ four walls.

2. Inspire Evangelists | The practice of “inspiring evangelists” is closely related to sharing leadership among local nonprofits. In our original research, we concluded that in order to inspire evangelists, high-impact nonprofits needed to create meaningful experiences and foster strong emotional attachments for volunteers and supporters. Many of the local nonprofits we studied are particularly adept at creating this “sticky” experience.

Why are they able to do this so well? Because inspiring evangelists plays to one of the distinct advantages that local nonprofits have over large national groups. Through neighborhood-based nonprofits, community residents can become more personally and deeply engaged in issues than they typically could with a national or global organization. Volunteers can physically visit the soup kitchen or food bank and bring along their children. They can spend time reading to the elderly who were born, raised, and retired there. They can mobilize their friends and social networks to build playgrounds, houses, or contribute to a cause. (In fact, it’s one reason that many federated networks maintain local chapters—so they can build these local relationships and deliver local services.)

The road to inspiring local evangelists starts with persuasive storytelling—about the organization’s mission, values, and impact—to establish that first strong emotional bond with supporters. One local nonprofit that does this extremely well is Partnership to End Poverty, which strives to eliminate poverty in rural Oregon through economic development.
Two years ago, CEO Scott Cooper had grown weary of his typical PowerPoint presentation and decided to do something different when asked to speak at a local lunch. He titled his talk “What You Don’t Know About Me,” and called on two prominent community members to help deliver his message.

First, Cooper asked the audience to list some stereotypes of people living in poverty. “Dirty,” one audience member volunteered. “Mentally ill.” “Unmotivated.” “Uneducated.” “Minority.” Then he asked a well-known local city manager to approach the microphone. This man talked about how he was raised as a migrant worker with seven siblings, crossing the western United States, attending 22 schools, and at one point being placed in special education because he was academically behind. Yet today he was a well-known civic leader.

A city councilmember spoke next. She shared how she’d been a successful bank vice president in Denver, but lost her job. When she gave birth to a baby who was lactose intolerant, she couldn’t afford the special food the baby needed. The woman says she would lie on the floor and wish to die. “Do you know what it’s like when you can’t feed your own child?” she asked a stunned audience. She was saved by kind neighbors who quietly slipped coupons under her door. “No one knew those stories—and there wasn’t a dry eye in the house,” Cooper says. “There are more people who have those stories than you’d think.”

Once a local nonprofit has captured people’s attention with its story, it then needs to create meaningful experiences for supporters that cement their commitment. For Partnership to End Poverty, that vehicle is Project Connect, a volunteer-driven social service delivery system. “We have 800 people volunteering at our events,” Cooper says. “They are on the ground, getting hands-on experience about what it means to live in poverty. We then provide them with a kit so they can frame a conversation, go run a program, or talk about the subject.” Cooper calls Partnership’s evangelists his “boots on the ground,” relying on them to provide knowledge of what’s happening in the field and to inspire other local evangelists.

3. Nurture Nonprofit Networks | Over and over, as we encountered high-impact local nonprofits, we observed that they intuitively understood the potential for working through peer networks rather than going it alone. And for every one of the groups we studied, investment in networks was not only a strategic choice, it was often a means of survival. Building networks can at first seem altruistic, but ultimately it’s more akin to enlightened self-interest.

As we studied how local nonprofits apply this practice, we also gained new insights into how the practice of nurturing nonprofit networks is closely interwoven with inspiring evangelists and sharing leadership. Attracting and cultivating relationships with individual supporters can be a first step to creating trust with people who lead and work for peer nonprofits. These social ties can form an important building block in the process of creating more formal organizational networks. Ultimately, fostering networks can provide real benefits to a local nonprofit—it helps them to share resources and ideas, learn new approaches, engage others in their cause, capture economies of scale, and coordinate actions across sectors to achieve impact.

That’s not to say working through networks is always easy, nor is it the obvious choice. There is a growing pressure in the social sector for nonprofits to measure and report on the results of their
work. This reinforces organization-centric behavior, rather than collaboration, as well-intentioned donors and government agencies try to pick the very best nonprofits without regard to the larger system in which these groups operate. And when nonprofits do work through networks, it’s harder to measure impact and to assign causality. “It is a little hard to get the credit we perhaps deserve when it comes to articulating our impact,” says Cooper. “But that’s the deal you make. You need the network to have impact. If we worked alone, we’d have a far worse problem.”

Partnership to End Poverty provides an excellent example of a local networked approach. With a small staff and a budget of $650,000, this nonprofit aims to eliminate poverty among 20,000 Oregon residents. Cooper began building a formal network in 2009, when he came across data that he found stunning: Nearly half of all referrals to Partnership’s services came from faith-based groups, and the vast majority—85 percent—were directed to the wrong agency.

“There was a chronic inefficiency in our system,” Cooper says. “The denominations didn’t work together or talk to each other. They didn’t have reason to.” So Cooper convened a series of meetings among local faith-based agencies to lay the groundwork for a more formal network. His goal: enable each organization to improve outcomes for low-income clients through better coordination among all the agencies.

Cooper structured the network into five teams and introduced regular monthly meetings. They quickly identified redundancies in their services and learned how their referrals to social service groups could be expedited. As the network grew and trust was developed among members, they also learned to talk candidly with each other about their challenges or share the learning of groups that were stronger on certain issues. Partnership’s strategy of nurturing a local nonprofit network has paid off already: A group in Madras, Ore., created a coordinated intake system for all clients seeking help from faith-based institutions. “Now we have clothing banks, food banks, and community gardens all working together,” Cooper says.

Because groups like Partnership and MEND are focused on advancing larger causes, they intuitively build peer networks, empower individual supporters, and share leadership. In turn, these practices lend themselves to adoption by successful local nonprofits because they don’t require huge additional investments of financial or human capital. By contrast, the next two practices are harder to employ because they require resources and expertise that many local nonprofits lack.

4. **Serve AND Advocate** | As we learned, this practice presents real challenges for local and smaller nonprofits. It forces them to confront serious resource constraints and to consider trade-offs that many aren’t prepared to make. So it’s not surprising that this practice received the most skepticism from local and smaller nonprofit leaders as we presented our research findings at workshops. We heard local nonprofits protest that they couldn’t afford to hire lobbyists, and even if they did scrape together the resources, some feared risking government grants and contracts or losing donors. We also heard local donors question whether advocacy—in particular, policy lobbying—was even legal for nonprofits. (It is, as long as conducted within specified parameters.)
We observed three main obstacles preventing more widespread adoption of this practice among small and local nonprofits. First is a lack of funding and resources. The vast majority of local nonprofits are service providers. So as some considered venturing into advocacy, a big hurdle was convincing funders—who were often reluctant to underwrite indirect activities that didn’t produce immediate results—to support efforts to change policy. Compounding the problem was that local funding sources could be limited, and tapping into national foundation grants is ambitious for any local nonprofit.

The onus is now on leaders of all sectors to stop acting in isolation and start systematically employing cross-sector approaches.

Second, even if a local nonprofit could find funding, employing an advocate or lobbyist on staff was usually out of the question. The legal parameters around lobbying specify that only a relatively small percentage of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit’s budget can go toward lobbying, and hiring the equivalent of a full-time employee would throw that proportion out of balance. Also, even if it were legally permissible, most local nonprofits could not afford to spend that much on a non-direct service position.

Last, local nonprofits faced another very real constraint to advocacy—overcoming both their own aversion to it and fears among their supporters of becoming too political. As a result, it’s easier to avoid advocacy, rather than take on the dual challenge of raising money while also convincing donors of its worth.

Given these barriers, it’s understandable that local nonprofits shy away from combining service and advocacy. Still, we encountered numerous local nonprofits that had overcome these barriers—demonstrating that this practice is difficult, but has potential for great leverage.

Take Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership (RYASAP), a $3.2 million organization based in Bridgeport, Conn. This nonprofit aspired to improve the lives of local young people involved in the Connecticut court system, which formerly had one of the highest rates of adult incarceration of juveniles in the United States.

RYASAP started out providing mostly counseling services to court-involved youth, but by 2001 executive director Bob Francis realized that if he wanted to help tens of thousands of young people rather than the few hundred served directly by RYASAP’s programs, he would need to venture into advocacy. He joined forces with a broad coalition of local nonprofit service providers, child advocates, judges, law enforcement officers, caseworkers, and other representatives from the juvenile justice system to address the problem collectively. With a seed grant from the Tow Foundation, a local family foundation, the groups formed the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA) to coordinate their actions and lobby for policy change.

Instead of dedicating the time of an internal staff person to lead the lobbying effort, RYASAP offered to house the CTJJA, which in turn hired a lobbyist. That way, the broader coalition shared the resource; no single local nonprofit had to pay—or account for—a full-time advocate.
The CTJJA was ultimately instrumental in achieving significant legislative reforms, including replacing the local juvenile court and detention center, moving youth care out of centralized state facilities and into local residential communities, and raising the age of jurisdiction from 16 to 18 years (this is the age at which a young person could be tried and sentenced as an adult). As a result, recidivism and juvenile incarcerations have decreased, and low-income youths in Connecticut’s system are now receiving much fairer treatment.

It’s a striking example of how one relatively small nonprofit, by working across sectors and advocating in coordination with its peers, can contribute to statewide impact.

5. Make Markets Work | We received slightly lower levels of skepticism around the practice “make markets work.” In our original research on large national nonprofits, we identified three ways high-impact groups harness market forces to drive change. They can change business practices, partner with businesses, or run a business such as a social enterprise. Each of these activities requires an ability either to gain access to, or to manage, for-profit companies—a capability that not all local nonprofits have. Nevertheless, given cutbacks in government funding and philanthropy, the most enterprising local nonprofits have found ways to make markets work on behalf of their cause and provide financial stability to boot.

Take Live Local Alberta, a nonprofit founded in 2007 that helps Canadians in Edmonton eat, dine, and shop locally. It started when the group’s founder, Jessie Radies, a former PepsiCo executive, discovered how challenging it was to source local, sustainable foods for a restaurant she and her husband had opened. So she reached out to form networks with local growers and independent restaurants to try to make the local food system more efficient and effective.

Ultimately, Live Local helped build a local sustainable food market while also contributing to the regional economy. Today the nonprofit offers more than 800 food products from more than 70 Alberta food producers and growers on its website, where the products can then be purchased by individual consumers and restaurants. Live Local runs the supply chain infrastructure as well, from warehousing to delivery.

The nonprofit has built a business model that allows it to thrive without relying heavily on charitable contributions. It generates 75 percent of its $1 million annual budget through various earned income streams. Live Local charges membership dues to its network, takes a small percentage of revenue from food passing through its online and distribution platform, sells gift certificates to local restaurants, and runs a loyalty program. “We operate a lot of our programs like a business—there has to be a revenue stream and a benefit to the community,” says Radies. “We’re always looking for the win-win-win.”

6. Master the Art of Adaptation | The last practice, adaptability, is an elemental trait that enables high-impact organizations of any size—local, national, or global—to employ the other five practices. At its core, adaptability entails the ability to perceive changes in the external environment and respond with innovative solutions. It requires being open to new inputs and putting into place intentional systems that enable organization-wide learning and reflection. Adaptation begins with listening for external cues in the environment and looking for opportunities to increase impact. Then it continues through a cycle that includes three additional
components: experimentation and innovation, evaluation and learning, and modification of programs and plans.

Each of the stories we’ve shared in this article illustrates how local nonprofits have mastered the art of adaptation. When Partnership to End Poverty recognized it couldn’t effectively serve the population of central Oregon alone, it launched a regional network of faith-based and social service nonprofits to create greater impact. RYASAP moved into advocacy when it realized that it could help change tens of thousands of young people’s lives while still directly serving several hundred annually. Live Local Alberta forged networks of independent restaurateurs and food providers to create a new market for locally sourced and prepared food. And when MEND faced rising demands for its social services, it mobilized, trained, and managed a network of more than 3,000 volunteer evangelists—the majority of whom are responsible for directly providing services and helping run the organization. In the process, MEND extended our understanding of what it means for high-impact nonprofits to share leadership beyond its own four walls. In each of these cases, the organization demonstrated an ability to perceive changes in its environment and introduce new programs and approaches—often taking enormous risks.

**Growing More Local Forces for Good**

Studying high-impact local nonprofits has stretched our thinking about how organizations can achieve greater results by applying the six practices—and even prompted us to reframe how we originally conceived some practices, such as shared leadership. The findings are relevant to nonprofits of all sizes, because they imply that national and global organizations stand to learn from their local counterparts, as well as the other way around.

We believe that it is now more important than ever that local and smaller nonprofits embrace these practices. We have seen how they can help local groups achieve greater impact with limited resources—even in these challenging economic times. And as field-wide thinking evolves and more emphasis is placed on fostering networks, understanding ecosystems, and galvanizing collective impact, local nonprofits must be at the forefront of adopting these changes. Local and smaller nonprofits make up the bulk of the social sector, determining how the vast majority of the $300 billion given in the United States each year is spent. They are the vanguard of social change. It is imperative that they maximize impact—and these practices are the best ways we’ve uncovered so far to do this.
I • A Brief Definition of Decision Making

Decision making is a phrase made up of two words, each with a different referent. The "decision" piece refers to coming to a conclusion, achieving closure, a settlement, a judgment. It comes from the Latin, dicidere (to cut down, to bring to a conclusion, settle, reach settlement, agree on, come to terms). The "making" part refers to the process through which, or by which, a person, a group, an organization comes to such a conclusion, judgment, settlement. For purposes here, decision making can be thought to be a process, (with a decision the act) which allocate goods and values in the system. The "system" can be one's own time and assets, family or organizational wherewithal, or community and national resources. For purposes here, the focus is on the business organization, and the manager or executive as a decision maker.

II • History of the Term/Concept

Decision making has a long history, as a concept, stemming, as it does, from the Latin. Choices, among alternatives, have always been a part of life. It has been more recently, however, that sustained research attention to business decision making has developed. Braybrook and Lindblom (1961) give a good summary of early philosophical thinking and the work of economists in this century. More recently much attention has been paid to this field. The graduate library at the University of Michigan lists 2693 entries under the phrase "decision making." Contemporary advances in the field include progress in areas such as the problem context, the processes of legitimation, problem finding and problem solving, as well as procedural and technical aids (Kleindorfer, Kunreuther and Schoemaker, 1993, p.9). All businesspersons recognize "the painful necessity of choice." Further, this choice must be timely, because, as the popular office poster says, "NOT TO DECIDE IS TO DECIDE!" Ultimately, the driver of business success is the quality of decisions (and their implementation, to be mentioned in a moment). Good decisions mean good business.

III • Substantive Explanation

The five elements mentioned by Kleindorfer, Kunreuther and Schoemaker. (1993, p. 9) provide a useful start for more detailed thinking about one needs to consider in thinking about "decision making."

The Problem Context
All decisions are about problems and problem shape a context. The MACROCONTEXT draws attention to the global issues (exchange rates, for example), national concerns (cultural orientations, as between Japan, and the Euro-American orientations toward decision processes (Benedict, 1946, Nakane, 1970, Morita, 1986, Thurow, 1986)), and within nations, provincial and state laws and cultures (Quebec "v" British Columbia in Canada; Main "v" California in the United States.).

The MESOC CONTEXT attends to organizational cultures and structure. How does Ben and Jerry's approach decisions, as opposed to the Federal Reserve Board, for
example? How are Universities different from governments and how are these in turn different from Fortune 500 companies?

The MICROCONTEXT addresses the immediate decision environment - your employees, your Board, your office. Within any of the companies above, decision processes differ. But at least these three levels of context need to be taken into consideration when a decision episode begins. Information from each of these levels is needed; however, economical ways to achieve this information is essential to business, or the costs of preparing for decision would be prohibitive.

**Problem Finding (and Agenda Setting.)**

To be a problem, an issue must be identified as problematic, and "of consequence." One of the important difficulties in decision making is failure to act until one is too close to the decision point, and thus looses information and options. Most of the time, organizations work in a "reactive" mode. Problems are "found" when there is a "whack on the side of the organizational head." However, processes of environmental scanning and strategic planning are designed (though often don not work well) to perform a sore of "problem reconnaissance" and alert the businessperson to elements which will, in due course, need attention. Even if the process of "problem finding" works, a subsequent procedure, "agenda setting" is needed. Less is known about how "potential problems" get "on the action agenda" in companies and firms. Too frequently, potential areas of difficulty are noticed, and even mentioned (recall the O-ring information prior to the Challenger disaster) but are not taken seriously, attended to, are set aside, etc.

Proactivity can be a great strength in the decision field, allowing less fateful experiments, prototypes, research, and so on. However, proactivity requires decision intelligence processes that are missing from many organizations.

As a problem is identified, information about the problem and potential actions to be taken is needed. One kind of information is purely factual - what is the problem, what has happened, etc. A problem, of course, is that the processes and procedures of gathering and packaging information - editing - often leaves business executives at the mercy of the editors. March and Simon (1958, p.165) point to one important aspect of the editing process, one they call "uncertainty absorption." They suggest that since uncertain information may imply the "editors" (other staff in the organization) are inept, there is a tendency to edit out the uncertainty and present information to the top that is more certain than it really "is."

Another kind of data reflects the array and priority of solution preferences. These are the values in the famous "fact and value in decision making" idea (Simon, 1958, Chapter III.). Here, organization and national culture - meso and macro context) can come into play. "We here at J & J always look for victory (or win-win, or whatever)."

A third area of information is the possible scope, and impact, that the problem, and its consequent decision, might have. Knowledge about impact may alter the decision preferences. Knowledge about scope dictates, to some extent, who will need to be involved in the decision process.

**Problem Solving (Decision Making)**

A third area is problem solving, although problem managing might be a better term. Solving sounds too pat, too complete. With that caveat, one can divide problem solving
into two parts. One part deals with the process of problem solving. What system does
the organization actually have for making decisions about problems. Most readers will
give a chuckle at this point, thinking "We have no system; what happens, happens!"
And those readers would be pretty much correct, at least as far as many organizations
are concerned. Second, of course, and in need of special mention, is what might be
called "the decision, or "the choice" or "the pick." It is the moment when selection is
made: someone gets the job, others don't; someone gets promoted; others don't; etc.
This "point" is often elusive, even to all who are in the same room at the same time!

With respect to the process, several approaches have been offered. One is the so
called "optimizing" approach, in which all decisions are possibilities are listed, explored,
and prioritized. Here the rational decision maker proceeds, perhaps one-item-at-a-time,
through the list until the "best" solution is found.(It is also called the "rational-individual
approach. (Daft, 1992, p.347) On the other hand, one can decide on something which is
"good enough" for the matter at hand, though less than optimal. These approaches
reflect the famous the distinction made a number of years ago by March and Simon
(1958, pp. 141-142) between optimizing and "satisficing" in the seeking of solutions for
day-to-day problems in organizations. In their example they talk about the difference
between finding the sharpest needle in the haystack and finding one sharp enough to
sew with. If one were a welfare economist, one would list preferences, and similarly
work one's way through the list. This perspective focuses somewhat on system
optimality, and questions might be raised about whether individual optimality should be
replaced by system optimality (does the hidden hand really work?) Braybrook and
Lindblom (1961) present a good discussion of these problems. They also introduce a
new approach, disjointed incrementalism, something which Lindblom has also called
"muddling through". Here decisions are made "at the margin". Another way of looking at
this process is that decisions are built, element by element (with an element being the
smallest irreducible part of the decision matrix) until the overall decision has been
assembled. In this approach what we often call "decisions" might better be called a
"decision mosaic," a construction made of decisions on the elements.

Timing and order can be crucial in the "D-I" approach. To be effective decisions
must be taken in a timely manner, such that the overall "construction project" can
proceed. One way to think about this approach is as a sort of sort of "just in time" for
processes to proceed (but JIT should not be construed as "at the last possible moment;
rather at the appropriate moment). Sequence is also important. Dominant elements,
those which influence later one's, need to be complete first. While it is clear in
construction that one does the basement first, then adds the other floors, such clarity is
not always observable in decision processes.

Sometimes events take over, in what Daft calls "nonprogrammed" decisions. Here a
process of constraints and tradeoffs dominate, often with lots of simultaneity occurring
(Daft, 1992, p.350)

This part of the decision process points to the "rationales" used. Another component
addresses the settings which are typical. In most cases, business decisions are made in
collective settings called "meetings." Meetings, committees, taskforces have a bad
press. Most "meeting humor" tend to express the ineptitude of the meeting, as in "A
camel is a horse constructed in a meeting", or "A meeting as a group which takes
minutes to waste hours!". Meetings can be improved, and made into effective
information processing systems, which have decisions as their outcome. There has been a good bit of work done in developing more effective meetings. Antony Jay’s famous piece, (1976) "How to Run A Meeting" became, essentially, the script for the well known meeting improvement video starring John Cleese, "Meetings, Bloody Meetings (Video Arts). My work Entrepreneurial Systems for the 1990s (1989) also deals with the issues of executive group decision making. Meetings can be thought of as places where "coalitions" crystallize and ebb. (Daft, 1992. p. 335) coalitions are important in business organizations because of the myth, really, of the individual decision maker. We already leaned that "editors" in the organization assemble information, making subdecisions along the way. Then too, different perspectives are needed. The final "decision mosaic" is a construction of many hands, as often "blessed" as "made" by the "decision maker." Our individualistic culture retains a fiction that individuals "decide"; more often they are components in a decision process.

Finally, there needs to be attention to levels and scope. Problems of large scope need to be dealt with by top levels of the organization. Similarly, problems of smaller scope can be handled by lower levels of the organization. Getting the right problems to the right decision groups is an area where most organizations could improve. Typically, top level groups spend much too much time deciding low level, low impact problems, while, at the same time, avoiding problems of high importance and organizational impact.

What ever the process, there also needs to be an outcome. Many times, there is great uncertainty in business meetings about what, actually, has happened. In exit interviews I have conducted of decision making meetings, participants were unclear about what happened, and in a considerable number of instances, different participants thought different results had been achieved, resolutions to the problem at hand which were mutually contradictory. Stepping away from, or failing to "nail down" a decision is a non-result which occurs for many reasons. One cause has to do with stalling; opposing interest neutralize each other. But there are other explanations. Decision making tears at the fabric of group cohesion, something groups are loath do, especially when the same individuals defeated today are one’s colleagues tomorrow. Too, there is sometime honest confusion about what IS up for decision, and, IF something is up for decision, is this group, (or person), the one to make it. A key point here is that the decision moment is something else that requires careful attention, management, and follow through.

One should be careful not to confuse "results" with "decisions." Keep the following equation in mind: R = D+I. RESULTS equals DECISION plus IMPLEMENTATION. Great decisions can be foiled by lousy implementation; great implementation can "save" awful decisions. Decisions do not equal "results"; there is another step, or, more likely, a set of steps. (There is a story about the researcher who asked members of a multi-level organization: If technology permitted, at what level could this place become automated? Respondents from all 12 levels of the organization gave the same answer: Below ME!"

Legitimation Processes

Once made, or while in the process of being made, decisions need to be legitimated. Legitimation means that decisions are accepted as "ok" by the losers, even if they do not like the outcome. An excellent slant on decision legitimacy has been provided by
Quinn, Rohrbaugh, and McGrath (1985). They speak of four "perspectives" or "orientations" to decision making in organizations — consensual, empirical, rational, and political. Relationships are displayed in the Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

Four Perspectives on Decision Making and Their Central Concerns, Bases, and Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consensual</th>
<th>Empirical</th>
<th>Rational</th>
<th>Political</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportability</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Base</td>
<td>Data Base</td>
<td>Goal Base</td>
<td>Adaptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Feelings</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Logic</td>
<td>Stakeholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>Add Up</td>
<td>is Flawless</td>
<td>needs met</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Readers will doubtless recognize their own "styles" here, and may also sense that their business may approach different kinds of decisions with different perspectives. There may also be conflict over which perspective is appropriate.

Another approach to decision legitimacy is to look at decision rules. Decision rules are defined as "extra-group norms which make decisions ok". There are several decision rules, and they conflict, each with the other (an outcome determined by any one of them would have a different distribution of winners and losers). So far, five rules seem prominent: the extensive rule (one person one vote); the intensive rule (what do people who care or feel deeply about the issue want); the involvement rule (what to those who might have to implement any decision prefer); the expert rule (what do the "lawyers" [and other experts] think); and the power rule (what does the boss want). It appears these rules are brought into decision settings from the culture at large. Since they conflict decisions tend to be sought which will address as many as possible. Three or more seems like the minimum number for a "go." In other words, managers who can frame decision options which can be seen to address at least three of these five at any one time are more likely to make decision progress than managers who can't (Tropman, 1991).

**Procedural and Technical Aids**

In recent years, a number of procedural and technical aids have been developed. One set deals with effective group decision making in meetings. (Tropman, 1985.) Another deals with the use of computers and computer based decision aids. n "chauffeur driven" systems individuals respond over a set of keypads to questions. Overall preferences can be displayed anonymously without regard to race, gender, power, and other social elements. Decision assistance software, called groupware, is helpful. Groupware is a term used for computer based decision support systems, group writing programs, group spreadsheet programs, program which can tally preferences, and so on, that can aid the business team in making high quality decisions. (Johansen, 1988)

**The Quality of Decisions and Decision Making Patterns**
Managers, executives and business people attending to each of these areas, however, still have more elements to take into consideration. One of them is the quality of the decision. In the press for action, groups not only avoid decisions, they make premature decisions (and exhibit other problems to be mentioned in a moment.)

Decisions are a product ... and decision makers need to look at them to ask if they are any good, if they are of high quality. (Daft mentions high quality alternatives too. 1992, p. 350). One method is to sample the group's decisions (or your own, for that matter) and give them a grade: A B C D F. An A decision is one in which all stakeholders come out ahead, though they do not need to come out equally ahead. The B decisions involve winners and losers, but the final result is that the organization is better off. The C decision, a very common one, occurs when there is a shift in the winner/loser mix, but the organization is no better off than it was. The D is the opposite of the B; now there are some losses which mean that the organization is worse off. Finally there is the "nuclear war" decision, the F. In this decision, everyone winds up worse off than before.

This method relies on judgment, as a small group looks at each decision in the sample and gives it a grade. It certainly has no claim to superiority over other methods the business person might develop. The important thing about decision analysis, however, is that SOME system be used so that a review can occur.

What happens after the "grading?" The executive can sit down with a staff group or an operations group and review the results, seeking to find out, in the spirit of constant improvement, what about problem finding, problem context, decision legitimation, or problem solving could be improved. This sort of "decision audit" can be helpful in point to specific problematic areas, and in calling attention to the whole area of decision making in general. Care must be taken to avoid blame and shooting the messenger in these situations.

There is a further step one can take, however. It is the decision autopsy. Here, one takes an A and an F decision, and take them apart. One seeks to find out what went right, and continue it; and find out what went wrong, and stop it. The insight here is that, for most companies, these are not the same things. Because most organizations are doing some things right and some things wrong at the same time (after all we all have lots of processes going on) they tend to assume that if they are doing things right then they are not doing things wrong. This error is a common one, because wrong things and right things are generally in different business behavioral repertoires. Consider the following Figure. It assumes that an organization has a mix of success decisions and failure decisions. Depending upon the mix or ratio of these, the organization can be in any quadrant. True excellence requires that one do lots right, and little wrong (the upper left quadrant). Executives should seek to have a decision pattern that can fit there. Doing lots right and lots wrong at the same time can lead to a shooting star organization, one that can "drop dead" at any moment.(upper right quadrant.) Many organizations don't make many right decisions, or many wrong one... they don't do much at all. These organizations are "lingering", and may move into "organizational death (from the lower right to the lower left quadrant.)

Figure 2
Excellent Firm | 9 | Shooting Star Firm
Decisions
Gone
Wrong | 0 | 9
Lingering Firm | 0 | Dead Firm

Why Do Decisions Go Wrong?

Given the great desire to do the right thing, decisionwise, one might wonder why things seem to go wrong, so badly, so often. The reason is that there are important limitations in each of the five areas mentioned above. Especially important are limitations in the decision process. The following list suggest some of the more common limitations: limited organizational capacity; limited information; the costliness of analysis; interdependencies between fact and value; the openness of the system(s) to be analyzed; the diversity of forms on which business decisions actually arise (adapted from Braybrook and Lindblom, 1963, p.113) Problems of time insufficiency, distraction, low level of decision making skill, conflict over goals (and no way to resolve the conflict) are also important. (Janis and Mann, 1977). While these cannot be completely controlled, executives can be alert for them. They result in some common problems, problems we all recognize.

Major Pitfalls In Business and (other) Decision Making

One important pitfall is "Decision Avoidance Psychosis". It occurs when organizations put off making decisions that need to be made until the very last minute, or even after the last minute. One form of this illness is the "non-decision". It may appear a decision has been made, but it really has not been. Things go along very much as they were, and thus there is no need to act. Over time this pattern of nondecision can lead to the boiled frog phenomenon. As described by Tichy and Devanna (1986) this phenomenon takes its name from the experiment in which one puts a frog in a petri dish filled with water, and slowly heats the water over a burner. The frog boils to death. Why does it not leave? The answer seems to be that the just noticeable difference in the temperature is never enough to cause action. This just noticeable difference phenomenon is an important source of nondecision in organizations. Members see things pretty much as they were, and thus there is no need to act.

A second problem is decision randomness. This process was outlined in the famous paper called "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice" by Cohen, March and Olsen (1971). They argue that organizations have four roles or vectors within them: problem knowers (people who know the difficulties the organization faces); solution providers (people who can provide solutions but do not know the problems); resources controllers (people who don't know problems and don't have solutions but control the allocation of people and money in the organization) and a group of "decision makers looking for work" (or decision opportunities.) They argue that for effective
decision making, all these elements must be in the same room at the same time. In reality, most organizations combine them at random, as if tossing them into a garbage can. No wonder bad decisions result.

**Decision Drift, or The Abilene Paradox** is another famous "bad decision" case. (Harvey, 1974) Here, as the story goes, a group of people were outside of this Texas town, with nothing to do. It was hot. Somehow they wound up going into town (many miles, dusty drive, no air conditioning) to have a very bad meal. On the way back, the "search for guilty parties" begins. The Abilene Paradox has come to refer to group actions where there never really was a decision to take that action. It is, as readers will recognize, very common.

**Decision Coercion**, also known as **Groupthink**, is another very well known decision problem. (Janis, 1983) In groupthink, decisions are actually coerced. It is a false agreement in the face of power. One kind of power is group cohesion. In very cohesive groups, there is a coming together, not "agreement on issues," but rather a strong wish to maintain the cohesion of the group. This commitment to the group sometimes means that alternatives are not really explored and options considered, because such processes might cause differences within the group, potentially harming cohesion. Decisions are thus made too quickly. A second kind of power involves a powerful boss. When such a boss says "Were all agreed then", most at the table say "Aye." Only later, in the hallway, when the real discussion occurs, do the problems surface.

There are others. One is "defensive routines, where certain issues are undiscussable and their undiscussability is undiscussable. Then there is Zeno’s Paradox, where one keeps getting ever closer to the decision, but never gets there.

Consider Barbara Tuchman’s "folly", in which rotten decisions are made, there were choices, and a group was involved (it was not the act of a madman.) Then false certainty, driven by the problem of uncertainty absorption.
Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding

Abstract

In reviewing the attempts to conduct Federal antipoverty programs with "maximum feasible participation" by residents of the communities involved, Daniel Moynihan describes the origin of this provision in sociological theory, then discusses the nature and the internal contradictions of the great national effort at social change conceived under the Kennedy administration and brought to fruition under the Johnson administration. An account is given of the intellectuals' quest for community during the 1950's; the professionalization of reform; the planning and establishment of the Mobilization for Youth (MFY) on Manhattan's Lower East Side; the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency (1961-63) and the resulting plan for community action; the rise of HARYOU-ACT and similar organizations and the decline of MFY; and eventual conflict and disorganization within the community action movement. The author concludes that, to avoid pitfalls similar to those he describes, social scientists must have more reliable data before advocating and insisting on the adaptation of theoretical solutions for social and economic ills. An index and chapter notes are included. (ly)

By ADAM WALINSKY

Sen. Robert Kennedy's Legislative Asst

There is a real and serious study to be made of the war on poverty, and especially of its heart, the community action program. Such a study would trace the roots of the community-action concept against the demonstrated inadequacies of New Deal-style social welfare legislation to the political and economic crises of the 1960's. It would view the current effort as part of the continuing tension between representative and participatory forms of democratic government which Hannah Arendt treats brilliantly in "On Revolution."

Such a book would view community action in the politics of the Johnson years: its place in the Great Society; in the struggles with Robert Kennedy for the allegiance of the American poor, which both men, in vastly different ways took for their special constituency; in the developing group consciousness of blacks, Mexican-Americans and others; and in relation to the politics of the Vietnam war, which crippled the program even as its first appropriation was coming up for renewal.

Lastly, such a book would examine, however cursorily, the history of community action--what it did and did not accomplish, and why, in some of the thousands of cities and counties across the nation where these programs, in less than five years, have become a fixture of government. It would, in short, be a thoughtful study of one of the few real innovations in the structure of American government since the formation of the T.V.A.
This is not that book. What Daniel Patrick Moynihan has given us instead is a slight, selective tour through such parts of community action theory, most of them out of date, as can be blamed upon the "maximum feasible misunderstanding" of "activist social scientists" in general, and "the literary reviews, the salons, the intellectual Élite" of New York in particular. It is his contention, broadly, that the social-work intellectuals, having conceived the community action program on inexact guesses about the roots of human behavior, imposed these theories on a too-willing Government, which in an effort to "effect such outcomes as who thinks what, who acts when, who lives where, who feels how," intensified social conflict among Americans, especially between the poor and nearly everyone else, and thus were largely responsible for the pro-Wallace reaction of 1967-68.

There is the germ of an idea here. But one comes away from the book much as one might from a desultory after-dinner conversation, in which all sharpness and bite of analysis have dissolved in self-contradiction, vague ellipses and archly flattering references to the really important people at the next table; afterwards there is the sense that he was not really talking to us, but for them. (Republican politicians, in this book, get the following adjectives: "flexible and alert," "active and informed," "redoubtable," and "young, gifted.") From his new position as poverty adviser to President Nixon, we may assume that they have overheard.

This is not the slashing, all-out attack on the community-action program that the press and some excerpts have led us to expect. Indeed, Moynihan calls community action "the most notable effort to date to mount a systematic social response" to the problem of national integration of ethnic minorities which do not participate satisfactorily in the process of government: "it must stand," he says, "as a perceptive and timely initiative." The book proposes neither to scrap the program, nor to amend it substantially. His most clear and forceful call is for a better system of social accounting--to be accomplished through an office of legislative evaluation in the General Accounting Office.

I myself would not defend the administration of the community action program, which has been, overall, abominable. But what I and other critics of the O.E.O. must not ignore is that for all its terrible failings, it is the only Federal agency organized and directed exclusively at improving the life and lot of the American poor. To attack it now, unless we also offer serious alternative programs and commitments, is to say that we do not care, that we will O.E.O. die, and the hopes of the poor with it.

That is why what is distressing is the tone of the book: basically anti-intellectual, anti-participatory, quietist, above all flattering of that very political passivity which we may now, I suppose, expect to be the domestic keynote of Mr. Moynihan's new Administration. What he is telling us, most clearly, is that we should study more and do less. Against this tone, against the complacency it encourages, his defenses of community action are small beer indeed; and basically ineffectual, since like so much else in the book, they are pure assertion. (Though Mr. Moynihan speaks ex cathedra, he seems to combine Rome and Avignon in one. Thus, speaking of the civil-rights movement as of the summer of 1963, he assures us on page 24 that "there was almost no economic content to the protest." By page 63 he has remembered that the March on Washington was for "Jobs and Freedom," and we are told that "Negro protest . . . at this time . . . frequently focused on unemployment as an issue.")
Moynihan comes closest to an alternative approach in a suggestion that he would have preferred to build the antipoverty strategy around employment. To this we should give hearty assent. The great failing of the community action program, in my own judgment, was that it never had very much to organize about; and there is no question that the organizing should have been around programs to deal with the depression-level unemployment rates that still prevail among the urban poor. "Unemployment," in the words of Robert Kennedy, "is having nothing to do; which means nothing to do with the rest of us." It was and remains the "master problem."

The real question is why the major effort on jobs was never made. In Moynihan's view, "an immense opportunity to institute more or less permanent social changes--a fixed full-employment program, a measure of income maintenance--was lost while energies were expended in ways that very probably hastened the end of the brief period when such options were open, that is to say the three years from the assassination of [John F.] Kennedy to the election of the Ninety-first Congress." Moynihan's assertion--it comes close to being the prime conclusion of his book--is that the faulty priority of community action, far overshadowing the minor efforts made on employment and income, was the work of social scientists and Government officials who should have known better; that it was their free choice, largely influenced by highly speculative theories of human behavior, that led them to choose the tiger.

The fact is otherwise. The overwhelming priority placed on community action was due only in small part to social theorizing. The real reason was that job programs cost money, and a great deal of it. To undertake the massive public-works programs urged by Gunnar Myrdal and Philip Randolph--which alone could have quickly created the jobs that were lacking--would have required at least an additional $2-billion to start, and perhaps $10-billion a year within a short time. But as early as February, 1964, President Johnson had vetoed a $1.25-billion unemployment plan, to be financed by a special 5-cent tax on cigarettes. "He was," as Moynihan says, "seeking that year to cut taxes, not to raise them."

Nor would there be money thereafter. By July of 1965, when O.E.O.'s funding came up for its first renewal, the war in Vietnam had begun to exact its remorseless toll of American resources and energy, and the annual rate of O.E.O. spending was cut back. A number of the participants in the early poverty-planning sessions had pushed hard for an employment strategy. Now the poverty warriors sought to build up enough political strength to force a major program through--to fulfill Johnson's constant pledges that we could fight the Vietcong and poverty all at the same time.

They knew--at least the best and brightest knew--that the poor were without the political weight to command large shifts in the allocations of Federal resources; the 1964 tax cut, with its benefits directed overwhelmingly to the middle and business classes, was evidence enough. But perhaps, in a year of organization, with $340-million in community action funds, they could seize the nation's swelling current for social justice, bring the message of need fully home to an awakened public, and then capture the major share of the new Federal resources being generated by a booming economy.

But by January of 1966, the battle was already lost. First, the development of manpower and job programs were largely delegated to Mr. Moynihan's Labor Department (Mr. Moynihan was
Assistant Secretary of Labor for Policy Planning and Research under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson), which never came up with more than a few palliatives--new acronyms for the same old programs and bureaucracies. Second was the rivalry that had sprung up between Labor and O.E.O.; a weakening of Government efforts further aggravated by Sargent Shriver's complete inattention to employment problems, while he pursued high-visibility national programs like Legal Services and Headstart.

Third and greatest of all was the spreading war in Vietnam--which would dictate that the total poverty budget could not go significantly above $2-billion a year, a sum grossly insufficient for any major job creation efforts. Those the war would not allow; and Shriver, who had confidently told the Senate in 1966 that American poverty could be eliminated in a decade, would say in 1967 that "the war on poverty is not fought on any single, simple battlefield and it will not be won in a generation."

Where does all this leave Moynihan's argument that the war on poverty was lost by social-science theorists, whose "maximum feasible misunderstanding" threw away this once-in-a-generation opportunity? Without much to stand on, I think.

At all times, the major decisions that crippled community action--the low initial budgets spread thin for maximum publicity, without adequate planning or targeting of goals--these, and above all the Vietnam war, were political--made less by theorists than by politicians, and on wholly political grounds. (Administrative confusion and incompetence, another major handicap, was itself largely a product of these political decisions). The great virtue of community action was that it could be done--they thought--on the cheap.

About the war, and its effects on the poverty program, Moynihan has very little to say. Of course he is opposed to it and recognizes its malign effect, as do all men of intelligence and decent intent. But so intent is he on sticking the social scientists with the responsibility for community action's failures, that he does not anywhere discuss what difference might have been made if funds had been available to couple it with a major employment program.

This is of great relevance today, when the Vietnam war seems at last ready to exhaust itself, and thus to offer us another bite at the apple of 1964. For to turn now to an employment strategy, without the element of community action, would be as great an error as we committed before. It took the community action programs to bring public attention to the needs of the poor in the first place; and there is little likelihood that great sums will be spent on unemployment, much less spent well, without effective political organs for the poor. But more important is the question of whether employment--and on its fundamental importance I have no disagreement with Mr. Moynihan--is or can ever be enough.

For a moment, elsewhere in the book, Moynihan seems to agree. He begins with a chapter on "The Quest for Community," quoting Robert Nisbet, whom he praises lavishly. (Nisbet has reciprocated with a jacket blurb, as has James Q. Wilson, also the object of textual bouquets.) Says Nisbet, of the necessary response to "the profound dislocations," the "growing sense of isolation in society":
"To create the conditions within which autonomous individuals could prosper, could be emancipated from the binding ties of kinship, class, community, was the objective of the older laissez faire. To create conditions within which autonomous groups may prosper must be . . . the prime object of the new laissez faire."

Though there were, as Moynihan correctly points out, lamentable failures of examination and articulation at every stage of the process, still the community action programs were pointed directly at this profound need. And Moynihan later follows with approving citation of the radical community organizer Saul Alinsky, who has always maintained that conflict between organized groups is the only way to serious social change.

In between these sensible and perceptive observations, however, Moynihan spends much of the book decrying militancy in the community action programs. The drive for community control, he says, "took the form of denying the legitimacy of those institutions of electoral representation that had developed over the years--indeed the centuries--and which nominally did provide community control." "The institutions of representative government," he continues, "have the singular virtue of defining who speaks for the community." But "the assumption that established symptoms were somehow not meeting the needs of the people, was certainly much encouraged by the community action era."

But this is the most blatant kind of question-begging. Who is "the community" that "nominally" exercises "control" through the representative process? In the Bedford-Stuyvesant ghetto of New York there are 450,000 people--as many as in the entire city of Cincinnati, more than in the entire state of Vermont. Yet the area has only one high school, and 80 per cent of its teen-agers are dropouts; the infant mortality rate is twice the national average; there are over 800 buildings abandoned by everyone but the rats, yet the area received not one dollar of urban renewal funds during the entire first 15 years of that program's operation; the unemployment rate is known only to God.

Clearly, Bedford-Stuyvesant has some special needs; yet it has always been lost in the midst of the city's eight million. In fact, it took a lawsuit to win for this vast area, in the year 1968, its first Congressman. In what sense can the representative system be said to have "spoken for" this community, during the long years of neglect and decay? Yet Moynihan rejects efforts to develop community control as leading inevitably to community conflict.

Of course this is no new argument. Political thinkers from Jefferson to Hannah Arendt, urban critics like Lewis Mumford and Jane Jacobs, and many others have given sustained and reasoned consideration--and support--to schemes for decentralization and "community control." It was a major element--one which struck deeply responsive chords all over the country--in the Presidential campaign of Robert Kennedy. From Moynihan we have the right to expect that he will at least engage the argument, in the same serious terms that it has been put forward by others. but this we do not get.

Do not get, I am afraid, for not very good reasons. Moynihan seems to believe in the exercise of the critical faculties only when those doing the exercise are people like himself. Thus he criticizes the O.E.O., among other things, for giving its principal benefits to middle-class
professionals, and observes that Shriver's interest in community action "declined" in February, 1964, "when he learned that the time it would take to produce a comprehensive community-action program would preclude any dramatic results for the war on poverty in time, for example, to influence the 1964 election, or even the selection of the President's running mate." Serious criticisms, yet fair comment.

But when representatives of the poor make similar statements, Moynihan is scornful. Describing a 1966 meeting between Shriver and the Citizens' Crusade Against Poverty, he writes of how a militant minority raged at the director of O.E.O. "He hasn't done anything for us,' cried one delegate, 'Where do the poor have an opportunity? It's just a big publicity deal,' shouted another. . . . 'The poverty program is a laugh,' declared a mother of six from Watts. 'When all the money is spent, the rich will get richer and I will still be receiving a welfare check.'" These statements Moynihan characterizes as "the kind of bad manners and arrogance that are more the mark of the rich than the poor, or perhaps more accurately, the too-common attributes of the radical right and left."

It might seem that this "militant minority is only saying somewhat more directly what Moynihan is writing a book about; but for this--for them--he has no tolerance. When attacking the sensitivity of the social scientists he is criticizing, Moynihan says, "Those who with Hobbes would seek a 'quiet corner' from which to observe it all, must deny themselves some of the excitements of the fray, or else not complain when bashed." Unless, apparently, it is poor folk who are doing the bashing.

Which brings us back to the central question of tone. I hope I am wrong, but what this book seems to be is a long exercise in condescension: to Government officials, to social thinkers, above all to the poor themselves. If this should become the domestic hallmark of the Nixon Administration, then we are in for very difficult times, indeed. Moynihan sums up his case by saying that "men of whom the nation had a right to expect better did inexcusably sloppy work," and that "enough snake oil has been sold in this Republic to warrant the expectation that public officials will begin reading labels." True enough. But judging by this book, of which we had a right to expect better, Mr. Moynihan's appointment is evidence that in some high places, snake oil still passes for medicine.