Working at the Intersections:

LGBTQ Nonprofit Staff and the Racial Leadership Gap

By Sean Thomas-Breitfeld and Frances Kunreuther

About the Authors

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The Building Movement Project works at the national level to support and advance the potential of nonprofit organizations as sites for progressive social change. We conduct research and develop tools and training materials that help nonprofit organizations support the voice and power of the people they serve.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The Building Movement Project (BMP) conducted the Nonprofits, Leadership, and Race Survey in 2016 to understand why there are so few people of color leading nonprofit organizations compared to white people, and what strategies could be used to narrow the gap.

The first report on the results—*Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap*—calls into question the underlying assumption that people of color are not prepared or qualified to lead. It showed that people of color have similar backgrounds and qualifications to lead as their white counterparts, and even report more interest in taking on leadership positions. *Race to Lead* suggests that to increase the diversity of nonprofit leadership, the sector should refocus its efforts on addressing bias in the sector, that is, the structures and systems that limit access and opportunity for aspiring leaders of color.

This report examines how the 21% of nonprofit staff who self-identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) responded to this survey, which was primarily about race. The findings here are equally compelling as those explored in *Race to Lead*. LGBTQ staff in nonprofits report similar rates of discrimination based on their sexuality as are reported in surveys on the workforce overall. However, LGBTQ people of color are negotiating an even more treacherous landscape. LGBTQ staff of color reported facing adverse effects of racism in their attempts to advance in the nonprofit sector, which were compounded by barriers related to their sexuality. In fact, LGBTQ people of color respondents reported significantly more challenges in almost every area of their career, as compared to straight people of color and both LGBTQ and straight whites. The findings indicate that the nonprofit sector needs to address the structural barriers to leadership based on race, and must simultaneously consider the additional impact of sexuality.

More specifically, the report details the following areas:

› **The LGBTQ Sample Was Diverse**
The respondents who self-identified as LGBTQ were diverse in race and ethnicity. The LGBTQ sample was somewhat younger than the pool of straight respondents and reflected a diverse range of gender identifications.

› **LGBTQ Respondents Reported Anti-LGBTQ Bias in Nonprofit Spaces**
There were many instances of bias reported by LGBTQ respondents, and due to the patchwork of state laws, many LGBTQ people don't have legal protections against discrimination in nonprofit organizations.

21%

Percentage of nonprofit staff responding to survey who self-identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ)

> ### LGBTQ People of Color Face Compounding Barriers
>
> LGBTQ people of color face the dual effects of their race and sexuality on their career advancement. However, race was the most significant dimension impacting the opportunity to advance into leadership roles.

> ### LGBTQ Respondents Showed Increased Awareness of Racial Issues
>
> LGBTQ respondents had more sensitivity to issues of race and race equity than straight peers of the same race.

> ### LGBTQ Organizations Are Perceived to Have a Race Problem
>
> LGBTQ respondents, especially those not working in LGBTQ organizations, have questions about the ability of mainstream LGBTQ-identified organizations to address race and race equity.

Background

BMP launched the Nonprofits, Leadership, and Race Survey primarily to understand why so few people of color are in nonprofit leadership. In addition, BMP partnered with LGBTQ networks to find out more about leadership concerns among the LGBTQ community, especially at the intersection of sexuality and race.

In comparison to the one-in-five survey respondents who identified as LGBTQ in the Nonprofits, Leadership, and Race survey, a recent Gallup poll estimated that only 4.1% of U.S. adults identified similarly.[1] The sizable over-sample of LGBTQ people who responded to this survey is particularly interesting in light of the fact that less data tends to be collected on the LGBTQ population and workforce, particularly compared to the federal data collected on racial minority groups.[2] Academics have noted that "there is almost nothing in the scholarly literature specifically regarding LGBT leadership issues, particularly in regard to working adults."[3]

Surveys and polls have shown that U.S. society has grown more accepting of LGBTQ rights,[4] a shift that is often attributed in part to the success of LGBTQ nonprofit organizations and their advocacy campaigns to change laws and public opinion. However, there have long been indications that the benefits of greater social acceptance and policy gains have not been evenly spread across the very diverse community of people who identify as LGBTQ. In particular, transgender women (notably women of color) and people who are gender nonconforming face a much greater threat of violence and murder.[5] A wide variety of data sources, including the Centers for Disease Control, show that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth attempt suicide at rates that are dramatically higher than their straight peers.[6] LGBTQ youth are also disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, with research showing that one in five young people in U.S. juvenile justice facilities identify as LGBTQ, and 85% of these individuals are youth of color.[7] Also, research has consistently documented high levels of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people at work, causing a host of negative effects in terms of health, wages, job opportunities, productivity in the workplace, and job satisfaction.[8] Furthermore, research has

4.1%

Percentage of U.S. adults identifying as LGBTQ in recent Gallup poll

Surveys and polls show U.S. society has grown more accepting of LGBTQ rights, a shift attributed in part to LGBTQ advocacy campaigns.

demonstrated that a wide array of legal failures combined with racialized health and wealth disparities result in higher poverty rates and increased economic insecurity for queer and trans people of color.[9]

Within the nonprofit sector, leaders of LGBTQ organizations and LGBTQ people working outside of that movement have expressed concerns that the focus on same-sex marriage was a "double-edged sword" and made the movement less representative of the LGBTQ community's diversity, with particular attention paid to the lack of leadership of people of color.[10] In fact, long-standing concerns about limited financial support for LGBTQ people of color organizations were heightened by fears that the focus on marriage equality actually siphoned funding away from LGBTQ communities of color and other marginalized communities that fall under the broader LGBTQ umbrella.[11]

A landmark 2008 study on "autonomous LGBTQ people of color organizations" by Funders for LGBTQ Issues—a network of more than 75 funding institutions that collectively award approximately $100 million annually to LGBTQ issues—found that only 6% of the total grants and giving awarded to LGBTQ organizations and projects in 2005 explicitly reached LGBTQ communities of color.[12] Further research and advocacy by Funders for LGBTQ Issues and other organizations over the past dozen years helped to significantly increase this funding, although the three most recent analyses of foundation funding for LGBTQ issues have reported slight decreases in funding for LGBTQ communities of color – from $20.2 million in 2013 to $18.6 million in 2015.[13] It is counterintuitive that funding for LGBTQ people of color organizations might be decreasing when a portion of the $8 to $12 million that had been directed to marriage equality efforts annually could now be opened up to organizations advancing LGBTQ rights in other areas.[14] As several LGBTQ organizations that focused on marriage announced their closure in the months after the Supreme Court ruling declaring same-sex marriage legal across the nation, some LGBTQ activists hoped for new opportunities to formulate an agenda for LGBTQ organizations that centers concerns about homelessness, economic inequality, housing and employment discrimination, and other issues that were pushed even further to the margins in the past decade or more.[15] In short, the LGBTQ movement has for years fallen short at equally prioritizing issues that disparately affect LGBTQ communities of color and other marginalized LGBTQ communities, and has been challenged with how to address racism, homophobia, and anti-trans bias simultaneously.

6%

Percentage of grants awarded to LGBTQ organizations that explicitly reached LGBTQ communities of color (in 2005)

Methodology

The Nonprofits, Leadership, and Race survey asked questions about respondents' personal and organizational background, their future career plans, the development and support of their leadership, and their perceptions on leadership and race in the nonprofit sector.[16] In addition to gathering information on race and ethnicity, the survey included questions about gender and sexuality. The gender question included answer options for respondents to self-identify as transgender or to write in some other response. The sexuality question asked all respondents to indicate whether they identified as "straight or as LGBTQ." Those respondents who self-identified as LGBTQ completed an additional page of survey questions about their perceptions of LGBTQ organizations and the movement overall.

The online survey was distributed through the email and social media lists of the Building Movement Project and promoted by several "influencers" on social media, especially those with significant capacity to reach people of color in the nonprofit sector. In addition, 15 distribution partners sent the survey link to their constituents; one of the distribution partners—CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers—was an LGBTQ-identified organization. More than half of the LGBTQ respondents reported receiving the survey link through social media (27%), a colleague/friend (19%), or a general "other organization/network" category (13%).[17]

After three months in the field, the sample was closed with a total of 4,385 respondents connected to U.S.-based nonprofits as full- or part-time staff, or as board members.[18] A total of 921 respondents self-identified as LGBTQ. This report is based on the 847 LGBTQ respondents who were staff (not board members) of nonprofit organizations. In addition, BMP held focus groups with LGBTQ people in four cities and conducted interviews with LGBTQ leaders of a range of nonprofit organizations.[19]

Survey respondents who identified as LGBTQ were asked additional questions about their perceptions of LGBTQ organizations and the movement overall.

59%

Percentage of LGBTQ respondents receiving survey via social media, a colleague or friend, or another organization/ network

Key Findings

The LGBTQ Sample Was Diverse

The respondents who self-identified as LGBTQ were diverse in race and ethnicity. The LGBTQ sample was somewhat younger than the pool of straight respondents and reflected a diverse range of gender identifications.

As the acronym indicates, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer community includes various gender and sexual identities. The gender breakdown of the LGBTQ sample is seen in *Figure 1*. LGBTQ respondents were less likely to identify as female (65%) and more likely to identify as male (24%) compared to the survey's straight respondents (81% female and 19% male). Eleven percent (11%) of LGBTQ respondents indicated that they were transgender or wrote in some other response for their gender, using terms including "nonconforming," "nonbinary," and "genderqueer" to describe their gender identities.
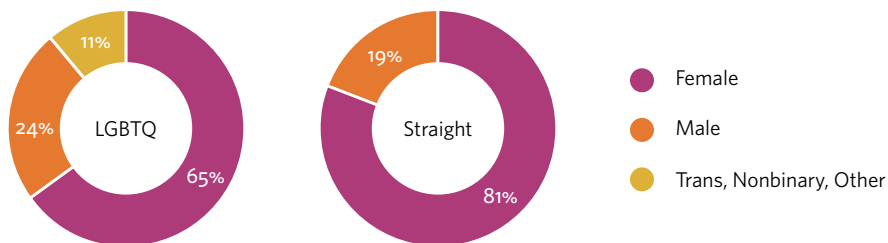
Figure 1: *LGBTQ and Straight Respondents, by Gender*

The LGBTQ sample was also diverse in the ways that respondents identified their sexual orientation. *Figure 2* (on the following page) shows that Queer was selected most often (33%) as the primary sexual orientation of LGBTQ respondents, followed by Bisexual (24%), Lesbian (21%), and Gay (19%); plus, a small portion of respondents selected Asexual or wrote in some other sexual identity (1% and 2%, respectively).[20] It may be surprising to some readers that bisexuals outnumbered gay men and lesbians,
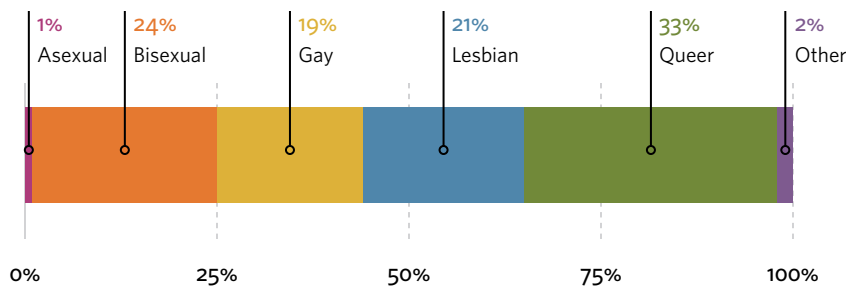
Figure 2: *Primary Sexual Orientation*

but this reflects the findings of a Pew Research Center survey of LGBTQ Americans in 2013.[21] Similar to Pew's findings, the majority of respondents who self-identified as bisexual also identified as female (90%) compared to 8% male and 3% transgender or gender nonconforming. Among the one-third of LGBTQ respondents who selected "Queer" as their primary sexual orientation, 61% identified as female, 28% as trans or gender nonconforming, and 11% as male.

The LGBTQ sample was somewhat younger overall compared to the sample of straight respondents. As seen in *Figure 3*, millennials made up 45% of the LGBTQ sample, compared to 35% of the straight sample.[22] In addition, a racial difference emerged when looking at the generational distribution of LGBTQ respondents; more than half (53%) of LGBTQ people of color are from the millennial generation, compared to two-fifths (40%) of white LGBTQ respondents.
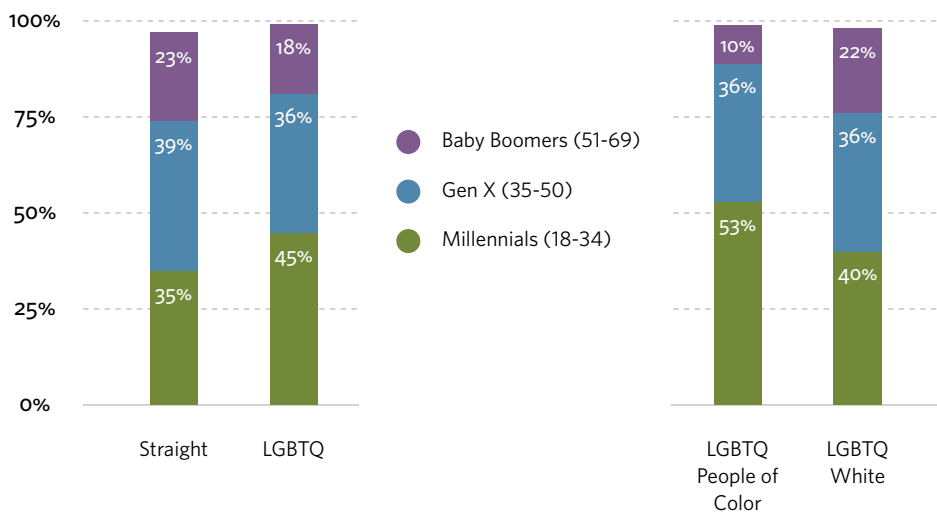
Figure 3: *Respondents by Generation, Race, and Sexuality*

The race/ethnicity of the LGBTQ respondents can be seen in *Figure 4*, which shows that 39% of LGBTQ respondents identified as people of color and 61% as white (compared to 43% straight POC and 57% straight white). The breakdown by race among people of color was similar to the heterosexual sample.
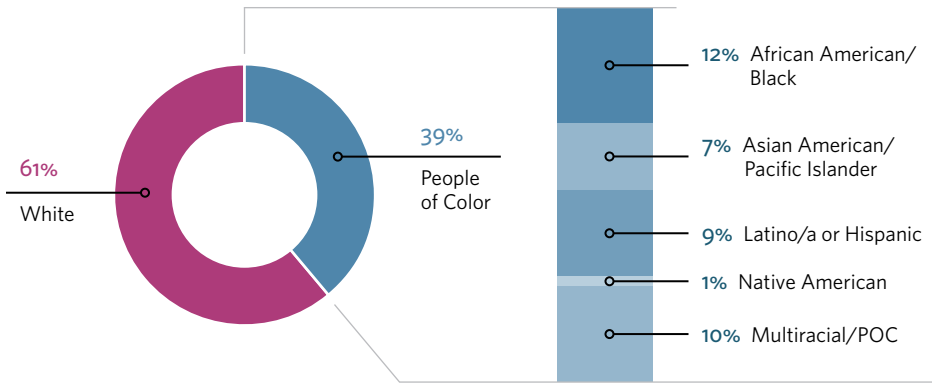
Figure 4: *Race/Ethnicity of LGBTQ Respondents*

The LGBTQ sample mirrored the findings in the *Race to Lead* report that found people of color aspire to be nonprofit leaders more than their white counterparts. As *Figure 5* shows, close to half (48%) of LGBTQ people of color who were not already in an Executive Director/CEO position indicated that they were interested in taking on that role someday, whereas just over one-third (36%) of white LGBTQ respondents expressed this aspiration. As with the *Race to Lead* findings, there were not significant differences between LGBTQ people of color and whites in terms of their education, salaries, current roles, or years in the sector.
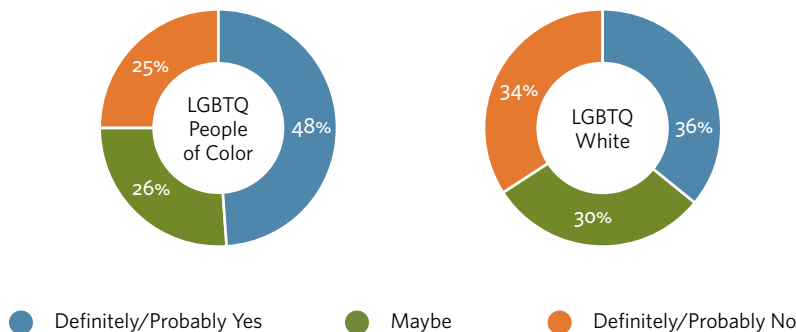
Figure 5: *Level of Interest in Taking a Top Leadership Role (among Non-CEOs)*

Some differences did emerge when examining the types of organizations where LGBTQ respondents work. As shown in *Figure 6*, LGBTQ people were just as likely to report working for advocacy organizations as human services organizations (both were 19%), whereas straight respondents were more likely to work in human services. When looking at LGBTQ respondents by race, LGBTQ people of color were more likely than LGBTQ whites to report working for advocacy organizations (22% POC vs 18% white) and less likely to report working for human services organizations (14% POC vs 22% white). Nonetheless, the survey data generally emphasized that LGBTQ people work throughout the nonprofit sector.

	LGBTQ	Straight	LGBTQ People of Color	LGBTQ White
Human Services (non-healthcare)	19%	23%	14%	22%
Advocacy/Policy Change	19%	13%	22%	18%
Education	12%	15%	12%	12%
Intermediary/Capacity Builder	10%	8%	12%	8%
Health/Mental Health	9%	9%	7%	10%
Community/Economic Development	5%	7%	6%	4%
Arts/Culture	6%	7%	6%	6%
Community Organizing	5%	4%	7%	4%
Foundation/Grantmaking	6%	5%	6%	6%

Figure 6: *Top Nine Nonprofit Types Where Respondents Work, by Race and Sexuality*

Jason McGill, the Co-Executive Director of the Arcus Foundation—the largest private funder of LGBTQ work in the United States—emphasized this distribution of LGBTQ people acros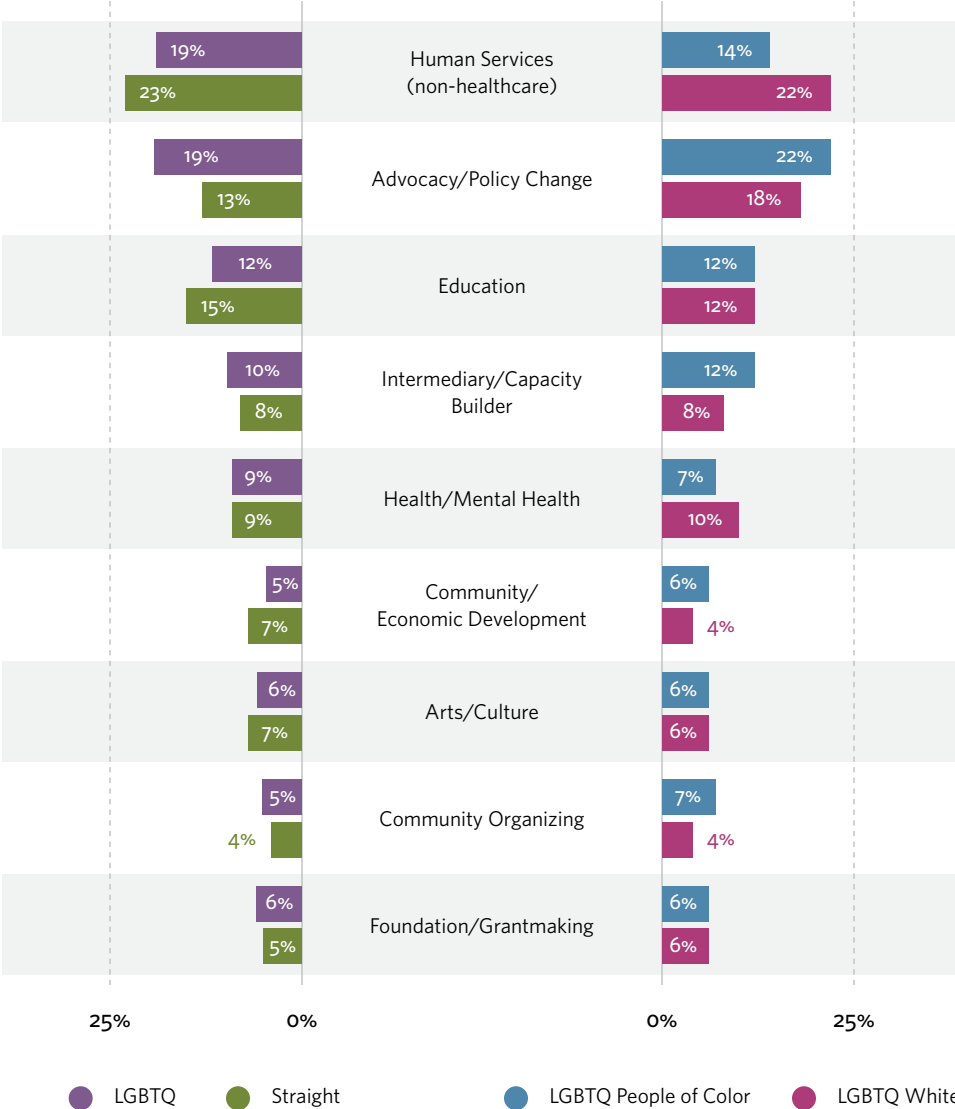s the nonprofit sector, saying: "Queer people are working in pretty much every area and are doing that not because they're prevented from doing LGBTQ-specific work, but because their heart and their personal connections to other movements calls them to do other work... So we've been funding projects that are focused in other areas (such as labor, immigration, etc.) but that are completely LGBTQ inclusive and often LGBTQ led. And it seems to us that acknowledging the connections between movements is an important next step and model for LGBTQ and social justice advancement."

KEY FINDING 2:

LGBTQ Respondents Reported Anti-LGBTQ Bias in Nonprofit Spaces

There were many instances of bias reported by LGBTQ respondents, and due to the patchwork of state laws, many LGBTQ people don't have legal protections against discrimination in nonprofit organizations.

Although most LGBTQ respondents reported that their sexuality had not had any impact on their career advancement, nearly one-fifth indicated a negative impact (as shown in *Figure 7*). This rate is similar to a Pew Research Center survey that found that roughly 21% of LGBTQ people reported being "treated unfairly by an employer because of their sexual orientation or gender identity."[23] In addition, the intensity of the write-in responses about the negative impact of respondents' sexuality on their career—as well as a handful of write-ins about experiences of anti-trans bias in response to a separate question about gender/gender identity—reflected a real problem with biases against LGBTQ people in too many nonprofits.
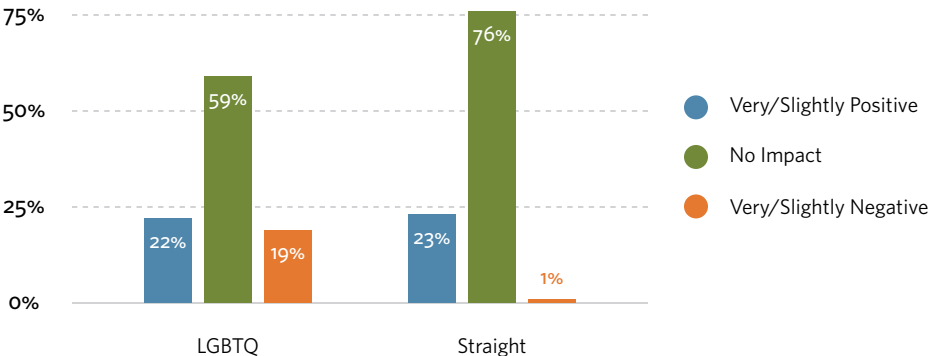

Figure 7: *Impact of Sexual Orientation on Respondents' Career Advancement*

Respondents wrote about comments by coworkers that sent clear signals that it was not safe to come out of the closet, and one person described being outed by a colleague in order to derail their professional advancement. There were also several write-in responses about overt employment discrimination, such as being passed over or fired from nonprofit jobs because of their sexuality. For instance, one white lesbian reported: "I have been fired twice – once early in my career when it was found out I was a lesbian, and then later in my career where I was forced to resign because it was found out."

Many of the write-in responses also emphasized how the local political context can be a factor in the intensity of the homophobia faced by LGBTQ nonprofit staff. For instance, one white gay man wrote that "Living in the Bible Belt, it is incredibly difficult to raise money… it also limits the number of nonprofits to work for, as many require a statement of faith or have uninclusive work environments." Similarly, a bisexual Latina from the South wrote that "Working in a conservative county has been challenging. It affects how I can relate to my Board and donors… As much as I love my organization and our mission, I am taking a demotion to work in a less conservative county nearby." The importance of local geography in the write-in responses reflects the lack of federal nondiscrimination protections, which leave LGBTQ people vulnerable to a patchwork of state laws. More than half of the states do not have an employment nondiscrimination law covering sexual orientation or gender identity, and a handful of states have even enacted laws to preemptively block localities from passing or enforcing laws that would protect LGBTQ people from being unfairly fired, not hired, or discriminated against in the workplace on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.[24]

In contrast to the negative experiences working in organizations that are not LGBTQ-inclusive, a handful of survey respondents shared their thoughts about what a difference it can make to work for an LGBTQ organization. For instance, one white respondent who self-identified as butch and gender nonconforming reported that "prior to working for an LGBTQ organization, I felt like my sexual orientation was a barrier." Similarly, a Black lesbian wrote that "except for the time in my career when I worked at an LGBTQ organization, I have been bypassed for opportunities to engage with funders or national partners." Despite the potential for LGBTQ organizations to be affirming workplaces, only 17% of the LGBTQ sample reported working for an LGBTQ organization, so these organizations can only provide limited refuge against the homophobia and transphobia that is present in the nonprofit sector.

LGBTQ People of Color Face Compounding Barriers

LGBTQ people of color face the dual effects of their race and sexuality on their career advancement. However, race was the most significant dimension of diversity impacting the opportunity to advance into leadership roles.

Survey respondents were asked about the impact of their race—as well as other factors like gender/gender identity, class, and sexuality—on their career advancement. As shown in *Figure 8*, more LGBTQ people of color identified barriers based on their race (38%) gender/gender identity (30%) and class (26%) than on their sexuality (18%).

Race/Ethnicity — 38% / 5%
Gender/Gender Identity — 30% / 29%
Social/Economic Class — 26% / 10%
Sexual Orientation — 18% / 19%

● LGBTQ People of Color   ● LGBTQ White
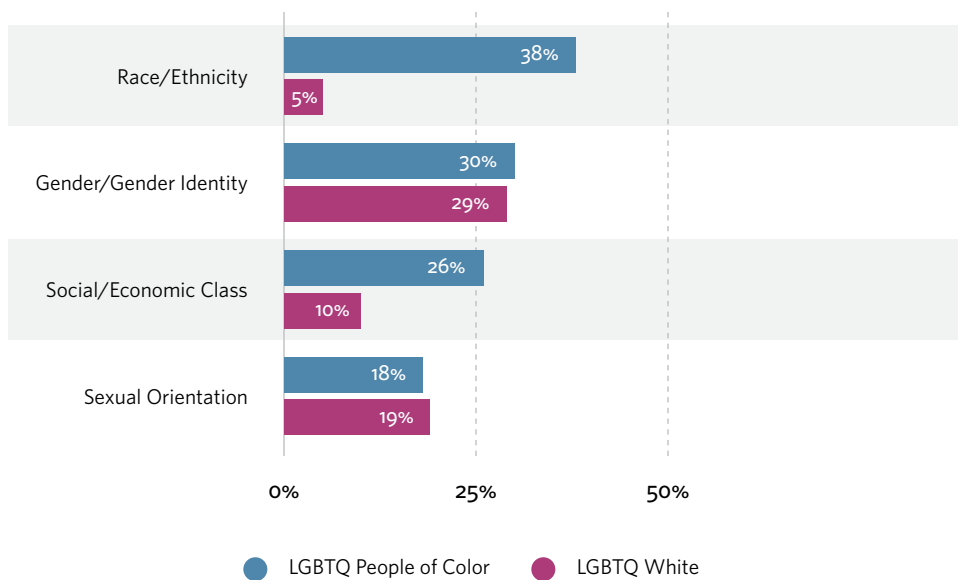
Figure 8: *Factors Negatively Impacting Career Advancement of LGBTQ Respondents, by Race ("Very" or "Slightly")*

Respondents who indicated negative impact based on any of the measures in *Figure 8* were asked to explain or describe experiences where their identity had negatively impacted their career advancement. In writing about the impact of race, a multiracial queer woman explained that she was "dissuaded from applying to managerial positions" even though she had a master's degree in nonprofit management because

of the "assumption that a person of color is supposed to be working in an administrative role." Also, a Black lesbian wrote about the challenges of being a leader who defies expectations based on race: "Some of the people I interact with don't expect to see a Black woman in a senior role, so when I show up or am introduced in meetings it is often a jarring experience for those who are accustomed to being around white men." It is interesting to note that one would not know that these respondents self-identified as LGBTQ based on what they wrote about the impact of their race on their advancement. In contrast, when explaining how their sexual orientation negatively impacted their advancement in the nonprofit sector, several LGBTQ people of color specifically raised the intersection of their race and sexuality. For instance, one man wrote: "Being a queer Latino immigrant in a conservative state is definitely a challenge in terms of the support I am able to secure for our organization, as well as on my professional life." Similarly, another respondent wrote: "As a Black butch lesbian... it's as though I'm not desirable as the 'face' for the organization, except when dealing with clients, impacted communities, or local service providers." This person went on to describe how as her hair grew longer and she dressed less "masculine" she felt more acceptance and opportunity, exemplifying how race, sexuality, and gender norms all intersect and impact the careers of queer people of color.

The combination of race, class, gender/gender identity, and sexuality resulted in LGBTQ respondents of color reporting more challenges than either straight people of color or LGBTQ whites. *Figure 9*, on the following page, shows the challenges and frustrations survey respondents experienced in their nonprofit jobs related to both race and sexuality. Not surprisingly, the "demanding workload" measure was a nearly universal frustration, with nearly three-quarters of LGBTQ respondents (74%) reporting that this was always or often a challenge, which was slightly higher than among straight respondents (70%). Comparing LGBTQ people of color and white LGBTQ respondents, both groups were similarly frustrated by both workloads and salaries, but LGBTQ people of color were more likely to indicate frustrations across the remaining measures shown in *Figure 9*. The differences between LGBTQ people of color and straight people of color were generally slight, with the exception that nearly half (47%) of LGBTQ people of color felt challenged by being called on to represent a community, compared to one-third (34%) of straight people of color. White LGBTQ respondents reported more challenges and frustrations than their straight counterparts of the same racial background. For instance, LGBTQ whites responded similarly to straight whites on the measures of workload, salary, and lack of relationships with funding sources, but the gaps were bigger regarding lack of role models, social capital, and the frustration of representing a community.

It is also notable that the frustration over "lack of relationships with funding sources" largely fell along racial lines. Over two-fifths of respondents of color reported often or always experiencing this challenge (44% of LGBTQ POC and 41% of straight people of color); whereas roughly one-third of white respondents reported this frustration (35% of LGBTQ whites and 32% of straight whites). Many of the write-in responses from LGBTQ people of color related to the challenges of limited access to donors and
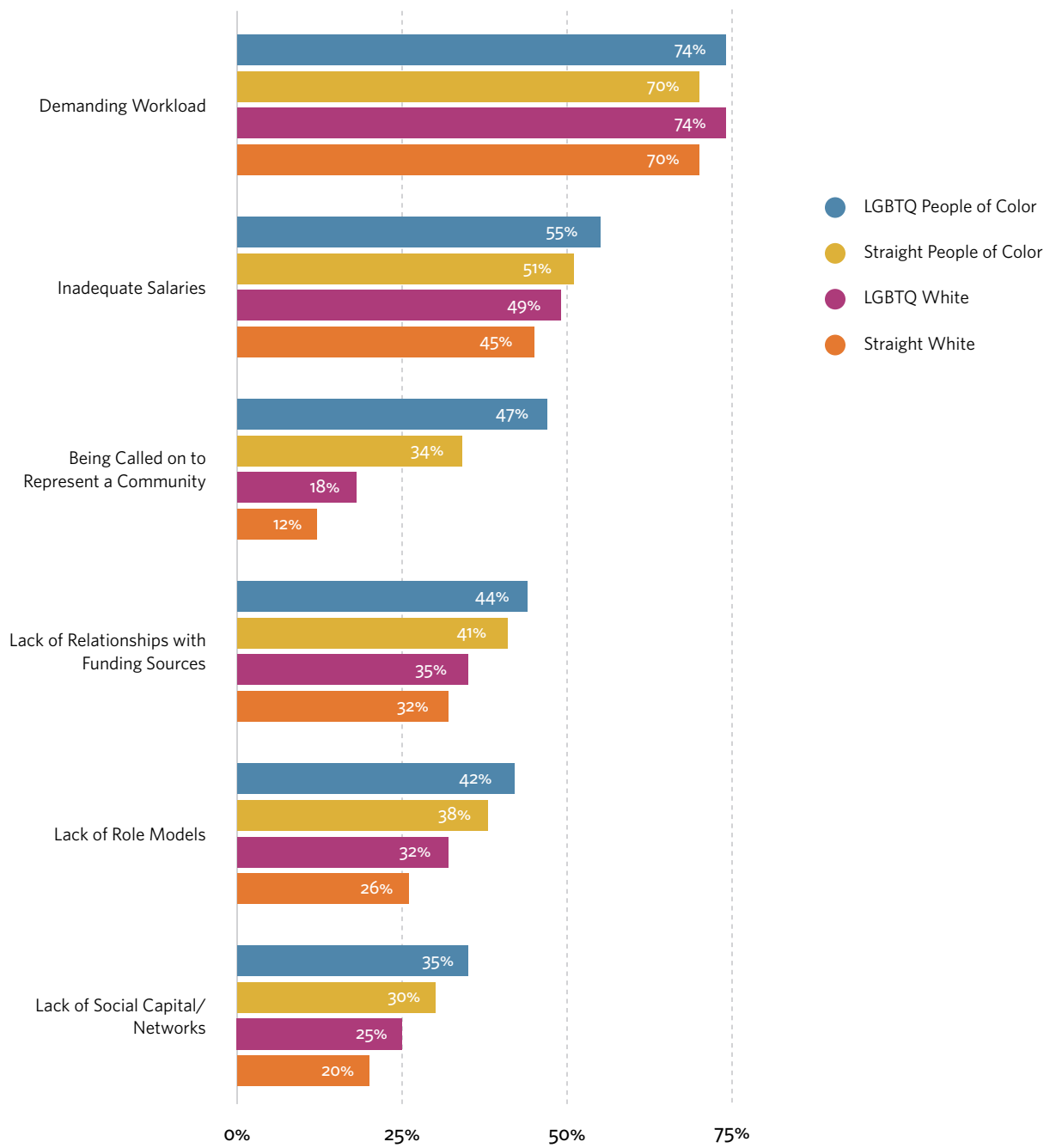
Figure 9: *Challenges and Frustrations Faced on the Job, by Race and Sexuality ("Always" or "Often")*

funding sources, and it surfaced in several interviews as well. For instance, interviewee Wendy Chun-Hoon, Co-Director of Family Values at Work, a network of coalitions working to pass policies that support workers with families and caregiving responsibilities, talked about the challenging dynamics that can emerge between organizations with wide disparities in funding; she observed that underneath the funding issue "it usually is a racial dynamic actually, sometimes it's queer, and sometimes it's multiple things." Another interviewee, Kierra Johnson, Executive Director of Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity (URGE), talked about her initial difficulty navigating philanthropy: "As a new leader, it's like learning another language. We didn't grow up with money or talking about money. So, learning how to navigate the power dynamics in philanthropy and to read between the lines is just a cultural thing. A lot of it is affected by race, sexuality, and gender. Culturally, it's like learning to code switch." Kierra's nuanced reflections on the difficulty of not fitting the dominant culture is often applied in a racialized context, but it was interesting to note that several write-in responses also used this culture metaphor when writing about adapting to the "heteronormative culture" of organizations, or as with the response of a white queer-identified woman who wrote that her "queer identity doesn't often fit well with the good ole boy network and culture" where she works.

As a theoretical framework, intersectionality emphasizes how people with multiple marginalized social identities (race/ethnicity, sexuality, gender, etc.) often experience multiple forms of oppression at the same time (racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-trans bias, etc.), and that the effects of those simultaneous "isms" are compounded.[25] The survey data reflected this intersectional analysis in many ways, and it is worth reiterating that the multiple social identities did not seem to have equal weight and impact in terms of the challenges that LGBTQ respondents navigate. For LGBTQ people of color, race still seems to have the greatest impact on advancement opportunities in the nonprofit sector.

KEY FINDING 4:

LGBTQ Respondents Showed Increased Awareness of Racial Issues

LGBTQ respondents had more sensitivity to issues of race and race equity than straight peers of the same race.

The survey findings showed that LGBTQ people indicated more recognition of issues related to race than their straight peers of the same race. For LGBTQ people of color, navigating racism, homophobia, and/or transphobia seemed to increase their awareness and attention to the possibility that their race was negatively impacting

their career advancement. For example, *Figure 10* shows that 38% of LGBTQ people of color identified their race as having negatively impacted their advancement, which was slightly more than the 34% of straight people of color. On the other hand, LGBTQ whites were much more likely than straight white respondents to reflect an awareness of their race having a positive impact on their career advancement; over two-thirds (69%) of LGBTQ whites reported their race as a positive factor compared to less than half (45%) of their straight counterparts.
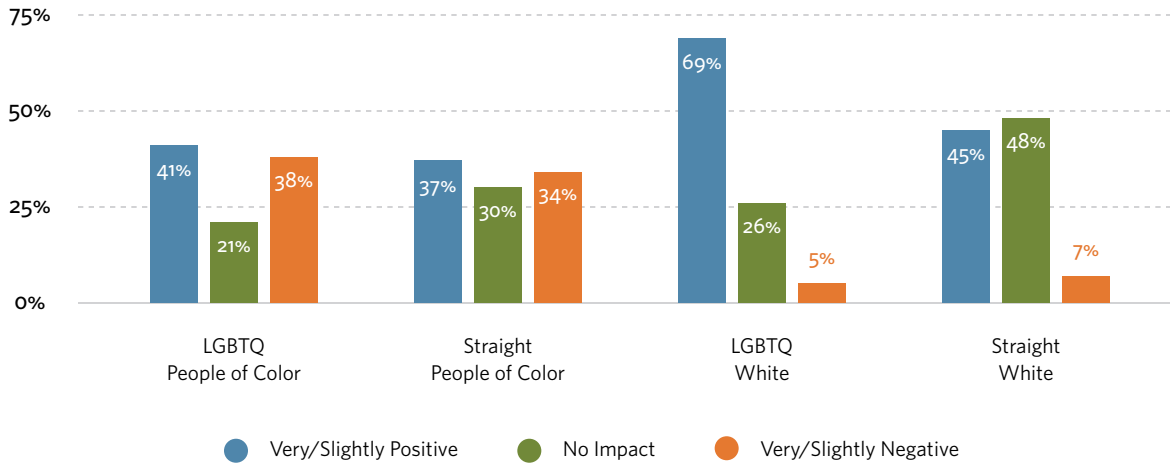
Figure 10: *Perceptions of Race Impacting Career Advancement, by Race and Sexuality*

Figure 11 (on the following page) shows the differing responses based on both race and sexuality to a series of survey questions about racial inequality in the nonprofit sector and the role of structural/systems barriers in perpetuating the racial leadership gap. In response to a prompt about it being a "big problem" that the leadership of nonprofits doesn't represent the diversity of the U.S., LGBTQ people of color, straight people of color, and LGBTQ whites agreed with that statement to similar degrees (89%, 83%, and 86%, respectively), but the rate of agreement among straight white respondents lagged by 10 percentage points (at 73%). Across the remaining questions shown in *Figure 11*, there is some variation in how much the responses differ between LGBTQ people of color, straight people of color, LGBTQ whites, and straight whites, but in general, there were slight differences based on LGBTQ identity between people of color, and larger differences among whites. Across all four identity groups, straight whites were the outliers, being less likely to indicate agreement with statements that were designed to explore the race consciousness of survey respondents.
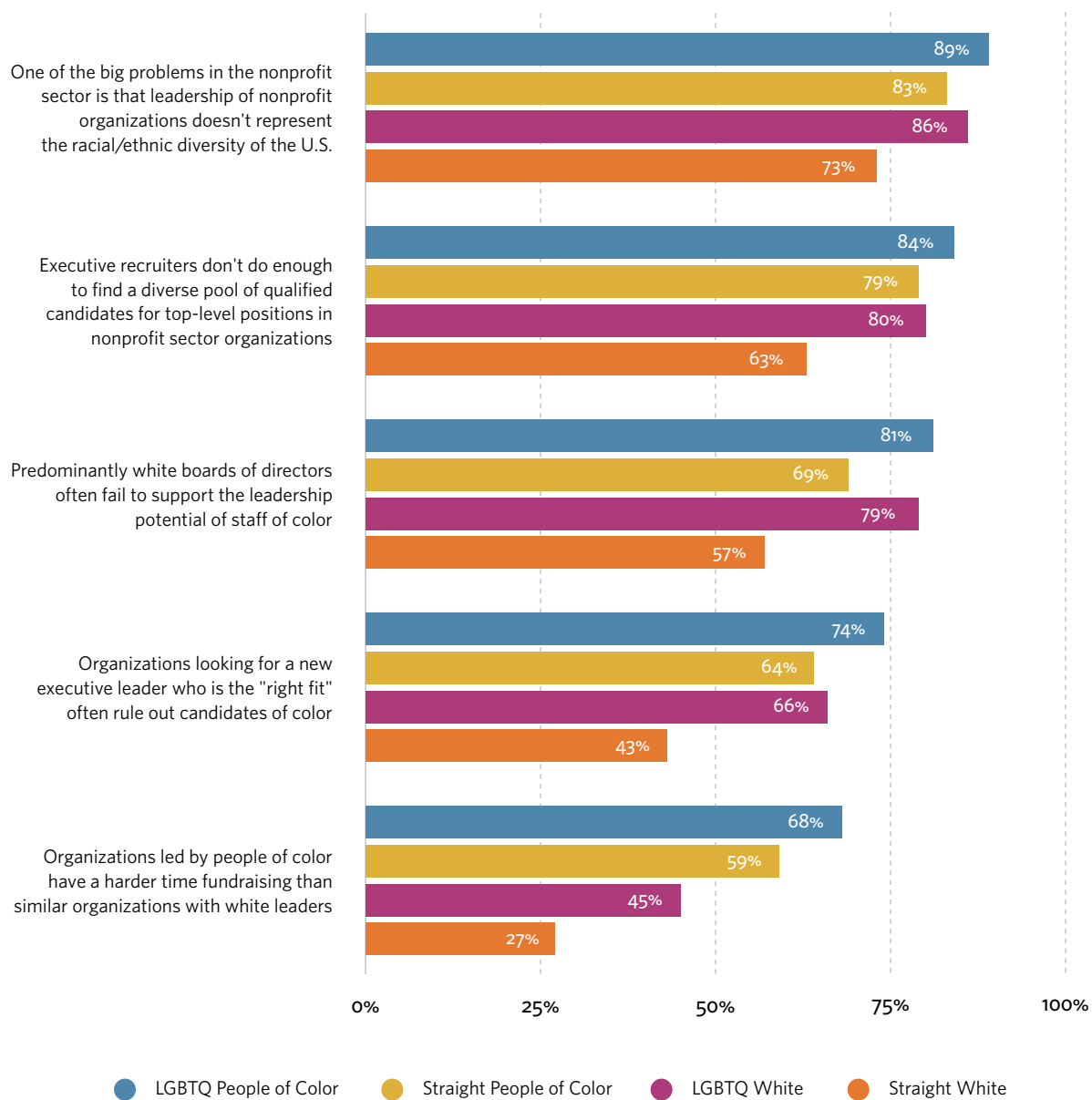
Figure 11: *Agreement with Statements on Racial Inequality, by Race and Sexuality ("Somewhat" or "Strongly")*

This pattern of increased sensitivity to racial injustice among LGBTQ respondents was echoed in the responses of some of the focus group participants and interviewees. For instance, Glenn Magpantay, the Executive Director of the National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA) explained that he was able to develop "an integrated analysis of social justice and societal discrimination because being gay opened up an understanding and level of empathy...not only for the discrimination that I felt as an

effeminate gay Asian man, but also when I saw it happen to African-Americans, women, etc." Several white respondents also provided write-in responses that acknowledged how their race interacted with their sexuality. For instance, one person noted their frustration with being "called upon to represent all LGBTQ folks despite the fact that [they are] a white, educated, upper middle class, privileged lesbian of a certain age – and so therefore can't," thereby acknowledging that the LGBTQ experience is complicated by racial and class diversity. Similarly, Michael Adams, CEO of SAGE (Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders) reflected on his own experience, saying: "I don't know quite how to put this. Somehow, I seemed to come out of the womb a leftist even though I came from a pretty conservative Irish Catholic family… It probably has to do with the fact that being gay as a kid, I always had some sense of being different and marginalized and on the outside."

The experience of being "othered" for one's sexuality may help some white LGBTQ respondents be more attuned than their straight counterparts to the nuance of racial dynamics and tensions within the nonprofit sector. It is also possible that the vibrant— and sometimes contentious—political discussion about racial dynamics in the LGBTQ movement has exposed LGBTQ whites working in the nonprofit sector to critical discussions and consciousness-raising efforts about race and racism. However, the fact that activism by LGBTQ people of color—most recently, to ensure that the particular contributions[26] and policy demands[27] of LGBTQ people of color be included in Pride Month celebrations—is frequently met with controversy and resistance on the part of LGBTQ whites proves that more work is still needed to increase empathy and solidarity toward people of color. And the survey responses—in which LGBTQ people of color reported negative career impact due to their race at a rate that was double the impact of sexuality on career advancement—serve as a reminder not to conflate or equate racism and homophobia.

KEY FINDING 5:

LGBTQ Organizations Are Perceived to Have a Race Problem

LGBTQ respondents, especially those not working in LGBTQ organizations, have questions about the ability of mainstream LGBTQ-identified organizations to address race and race equity.

The additional questions aimed at LGBTQ respondents sought to better understand perceptions of LGBTQ organizations and the LGBTQ movement. These questions were included in the survey on race in the nonprofit sector because of concerns about the lack of diversity of top-level leadership among LGBTQ organizations that do not specifically focus on LGBTQ people of color. For instance, respondents to a 2012 survey

Building Movement Project conducted (targeting senior leaders of LGBTQ policy, advocacy, and organizing groups) identified "training people of color as leaders" as the top leadership need of the LGBTQ movement.[28] However, the Movement Advancement Project conducts annual surveys of LGBTQ community centers and LGBTQ social justice organizations (groups focusing on LGBTQ advocacy, research, and public education) and finds that both sets of LGBTQ organizations have a diversity of paid staff that mirrors the racial breakdown of the general population; although they do not report on executive leadership specifically, they find that slightly fewer senior staff are people of color.[29] So while the perceptions of mainstream LGBTQ organizations may somewhat underestimate the real diversity inside of those institutions, the view that these organizations have a race problem cannot be overlooked.

The survey asked respondents whether they worked for any of a dozen types of identity-based organizations, with respondents free to indicate as many categories—ranging from feminist to poor people's organization, from LGBTQ organization to immigrant group—as applied. A higher rate of LGBTQ respondents overall (42%) worked for identity-based organizations compared to straight respondents (29%), but there were also differences between LGBTQ people of color and whites, as *Figure 12* shows on the following page. Just over one-third (36%) of LGBTQ whites reported working for an identity-based organization, with 16% reporting that their organization solely focused on LGBTQ people, and another 1% indicating that their organization included sexuality among other identities. Among LGBTQ people of color, fully half (51%) reported working for an identity-based organization, with only 10% of LGBTQ respondents of color indicating that their nonprofit was only an LGBTQ organization, and an additional 6% reporting that their organization was both LGBTQ identified and reflected another identity (such as an organization like National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance).

Some LGBTQ people of color reported negative experiences in LGBTQ nonprofits. For instance, explaining the negative impact of their race, a multiracial respondent who self-identified as transgender wrote: "It was tough being one of the couple staff people of color in an LGBTQ organization. I would see things others didn't and I would name it. That was sometimes really difficult for my superiors to hear."

LGBTQ respondents who did not work for LGBTQ organizations—the majority of LGBTQ respondents (84% of LGBTQ POC and 83% of LGBTQ whites)—were asked to indicate their personal level of agreement with a range of ten hypothetical statements about why LGBTQ people may choose NOT to work for LGBTQ-focused nonprofits. Overall, two-thirds of these respondents (65% of LGBTQ people of color and 61% of LGBTQ whites) agreed with the statement "I have never been asked/recruited by an LGBTQ-focused nonprofit" whereas a small proportion indicated a fear or discomfort with "being 'outed' by working for an LGBTQ organization" (17% of LGBTQ POC and 14% of LGBTQ whites agreed). Some of the focus groups and interviews also surfaced other reasons that LGBTQ people may choose to avoid working for LGBTQ

LGBTQ ORGANIZATIONS' RACE PROBLEM

"It was tough being one of a couple staff people of color in an LGBTQ organization. I would see things others didn't and I would name it. That was sometimes really difficult for my superiors to hear."

~ MULTIRACIAL TRANSGENDER RESPONDENT
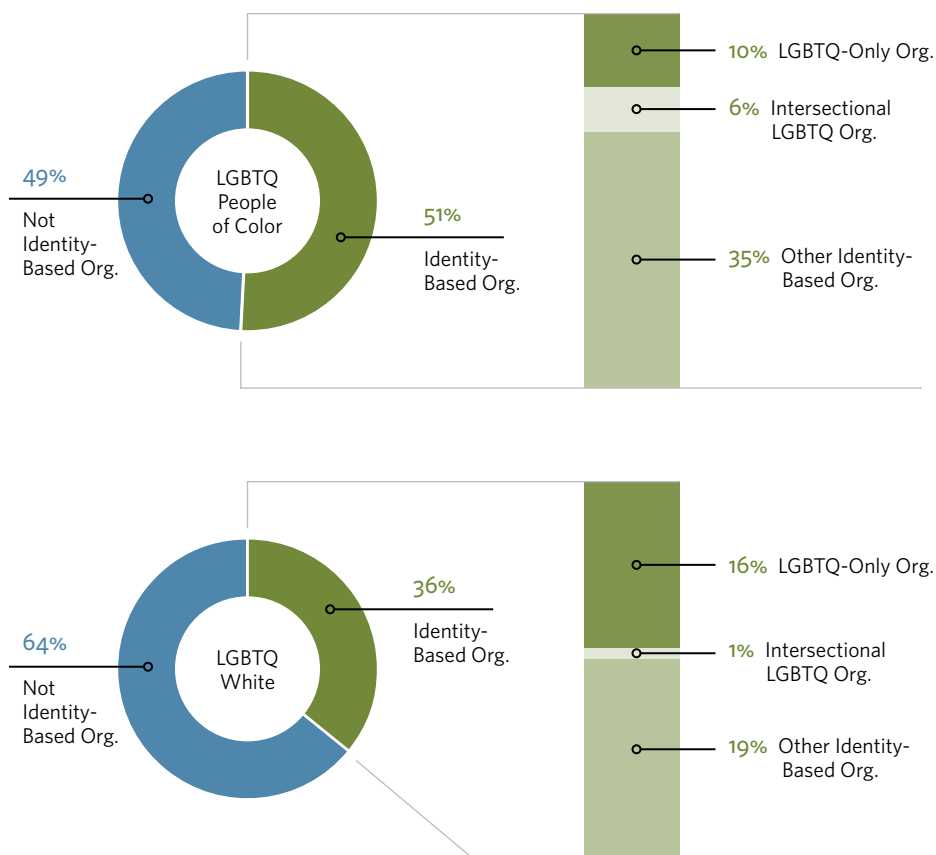
Figure 12: *Types of Organizations Where LGBTQ Respondents Worked, by Race*

organizations. One interviewee—Nancy Haque, who is now the Co-Director of Basic Rights Oregon, an LGBTQ organization, but spent most of her career working in economic justice and worker organizations—explained the reasons that she had previously decided to work for non-LGBTQ organizations, saying: "I think that especially as a woman of color, as the daughter of immigrants, the daughter of working class parents, the thing that most heavily influenced me wasn't that I loved women, it was that my dad worked two jobs when I saw other people working one. I wanted to make the world better for people like him… being queer is how I've always identified, but it was just one part of my identity."

Nancy's reflection that issues related to economics and labor influenced her career decisions more than her sexuality echo the survey respondents who agreed with the statement that "LGBTQ issues are not my top priority, I prefer working on other issues," as shown in *Figure 13* (on the following page). However, the other data points in that figure—highlighting the measures where LGBTQ people of color and LGBTQ whites responded differently—show that there was a general perception that LGBTQ

organizations were not necessarily welcoming of people of color or particularly race conscious. In fact, the survey revealed that LGBTQ people of color who did not work for LGBTQ organizations had a particularly dim view of those nonprofits; roughly three-quarters agreed with statements about LGBTQ organizations failing to reflect the needs and concerns of people of color, low-income people, and the full diversity of the LGBTQ community.
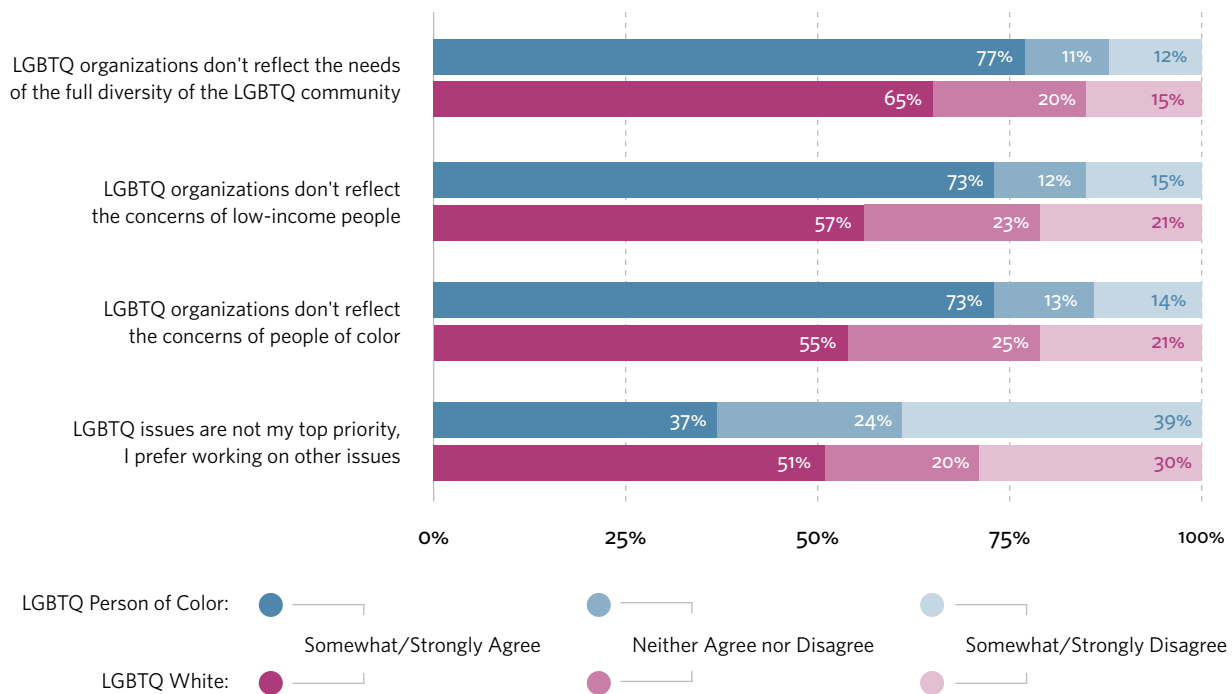
Figure 13: *Level of Agreement with Statements about LGBTQ Organizations, by Race (among LGBTQ respondents who do not work for LGBTQ organizations)*

These critical views of LGBTQ organizations did not surprise several of the LGBTQ leaders of color who were interviewed. Edith Sargon, Executive Director of Wellstone Action, shared that "for those of us who are LGBTQ folks of color, that is a piece of our identity, and it is also not the sole way that we have experienced oppression, discrimination, or challenges in our lives… and because LGBTQ organizations have been pretty steeped in white culture, they haven't always been a great fit for us and the intersectional lives we lead." Another interviewee, Kris Hayashi, Executive Director of the Transgender Law Center, acknowledged that "the broad LGBTQ movement has definitely struggled around race, class, gender, disability, trans and non-binary folks, so I know those organizations have often been hard places for folks of color, in particular." However, he also pointed out that the landscape of LGBTQ organizations has changed

significantly: "Now, compared to say five or ten years ago, there's more people of color leading LGBTQ organizations in significant ways, though nowhere near where we should be."

Kris' observation about more people of color leading LGBTQ organizations may point to some progress on that key need for the LGBTQ movement to diversify its leadership, which was identified in the survey BMP conducted in 2012. In fact, the Nonprofits, Leadership, and Race survey repeated the same question used five years ago, which asked respondents to rank the top four priorities (out of a list of eight) for the LGBTQ movement. Again, training people of color received the most votes overall; however, the results of the rankings in *Figure 14* provide a more nuanced picture of how LGBTQ respondents sorted these various priorities. Among LGBTQ people of color, the two priorities most frequently ranked as the top priority (both chosen by 16% of these respondents) were "leadership within the LGBTQ community needs to be more distributed and/or broadly shared" as well as the "need to train more young leaders to run LGBTQ organizations," while for LGBTQ whites, the priority most frequently ranked as most important was the "need to train more young leaders to run LGBTQ organizations" (18%).
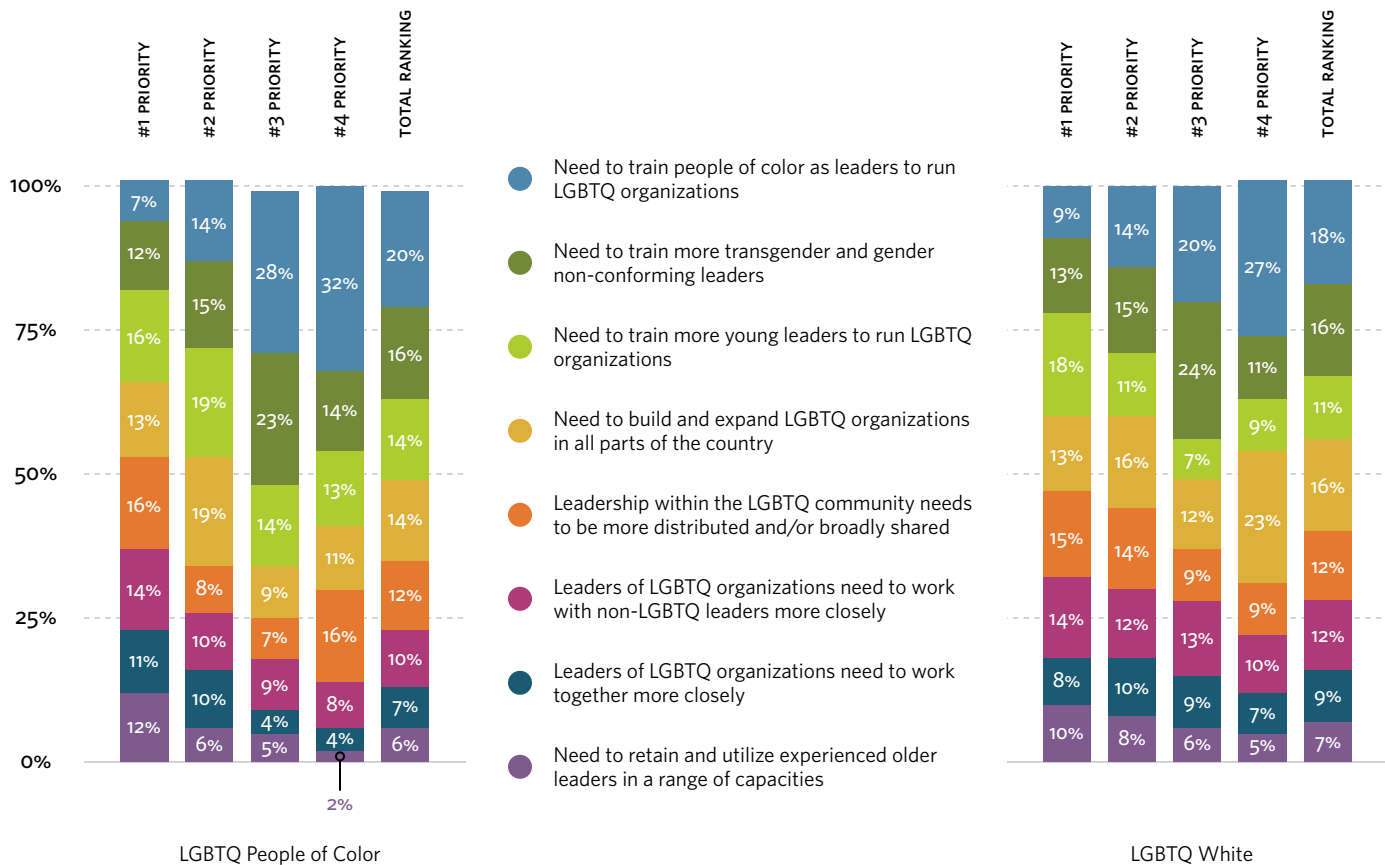
Figure 14: *Ranking of Priorities for the LGBTQ Movement, by Race*

Although the need to diversify the leadership of LGBTQ organizations was not the priority most frequently ranked as most important by survey respondents, it did receive the most votes overall across respondents' top four ranked priorities. One interviewee—Phyllis Harris, Executive Director of the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland—passionately advocates for LGBTQ organizations to do more to embody the full diversity of the LGBTQ community. As one of a small number of people of color leading mainstream LGBTQ organizations, Phyllis said: "When somebody is trying to acknowledge me for my leadership, I say 'I hope you're thinking of other people who look like me; I hope you're thinking about the person who is trans and really wants to get involved; I hope you're thinking about people who don't just look like you.'" She went on to say that diversifying the top-level leadership of organizations in the LGBTQ movement must be a top priority; otherwise "we are failing the movement, because we dare not leave anyone behind."

Call to Action

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people work across the nonprofit sector, and may even be more concentrated in nonprofits compared to the rest of the workforce – given the large over-sample of LGBTQ people who responded to this survey.

Since most LGBTQ people work in non-LGBTQ organizations, the fact that LGBTQ respondents reported negative impacts of their sexuality on their career advancement at rates similar to other surveys of anti-LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace overall indicates that many nonprofits still need to increase acceptance of LGBTQ people and address concerns about anti-LGBTQ bias. The findings from the LGBTQ sample also point out that race is still the marker of difference that has the biggest impact on careers and lives.

Balancing the intersecting factors of race, sexuality, and gender identity, we offer the following recommendations, which we hope will move organizations and the sector toward greater acceptance and affirmation of the full diversity of nonprofit staff.

Address Race First, But Not in Isolation

LGBTQ people of color reported more frustrations and challenges with their jobs and advancement than both straight people of color and LGBTQ whites. They also identified race as having a negative impact on their career advancement far above the impact of sexuality. Therefore, pursuing strategies to address racial bias in nonprofit organizations must be a top priority. As the *Race to Lead* report suggested, these efforts must focus on addressing systems barriers through hiring and promotion practices, training boards of directors, and integrating race equity into all leadership development programs.

The focus on shifting the narrative on race in the sector must not be framed so narrowly as to ignore the intersection with anti-LGBTQ bias. It is both possible and necessary in organizational trainings, leadership development programs, and hiring committees to acknowledge the importance of intersectionality and other markers of difference (like sexuality, gender, and class), while still maintaining a focus on race as the dimension of diversity with the greatest impact on career opportunities and challenges. If organizations find this difficult to balance, they should seek out consultants and trainers with expertise addressing issues of race and race equity with an intersectional framework.

> **!**
>
> Organizations should seek out consultants and trainers with expertise addressing issues of race and race equity with an intersectional framework.

Commit To—and Incentivize—Non-Discrimination Across the Nonprofit Sector

The data and write-in responses highlight that the sector must not ignore the real anti-LGBTQ discrimination that is happening in organizations. On top of the problem of the racial leadership gap, many nonprofits are failing to value and recognize the leadership of LGBTQ people in general. Due to political realities and the patchwork of legal protections, instances of discrimination against LGBTQ people may be lawful in many states and localities. Nonetheless, foundations and nonprofit associations should lead the way in taking a principled stand against discrimination. As institutions with the power to influence and set new directions for nonprofits, funders and national and state associations should push organizations to adopt nondiscrimination policies that include sexuality and gender identity, and establish systems for monitoring and addressing the outright and noxious discrimination that too many LGBTQ people of all races wrote about experiencing in response to this survey.

Foundations and nonprofit associations should lead the way in taking a principled stand against discrimination.

Increase Funding to Support Intersectionality and Inclusion Across the LGBTQ Movement

Funders who previously directed funding to marriage equality efforts could now lead the way in supporting the intersectional capacity of organizations connected to the LGBTQ movement. Funders should pursue a two-pronged strategy of both increasing funding to organizations led by LGBTQ people of color, as well as making targeted investments to help mainstream LGBTQ organizations continue to shift toward diversity and inclusion in both their internal staffing and issue work.

In seeking to expand funding to organizations led by and working on behalf of LGBTQ people of color, it is certainly important to prioritize the autonomous LGBTQ people of color organizations highlighted by Funders for LGBTQ Issues a decade ago.[30] In addition, grantmakers should expand their definition of the LGBTQ movement to include organizations that have LGBTQ people of color in prominent leadership roles, even if the organizations are not primarily focused on LGBTQ issues. The survey results showed that more than one-third (35%) of LGBTQ people of color work for identity-based organizations that do not focus on LGBTQ identity, which should be seen as a strength to build on for cross-movement leadership. Both the movement for black lives and the immigrant rights movement have strong leadership from LGBTQ people of color who are helping to connect these multiple movements. Investing in both LGBTQ people of color groups and organizations that may not be LGBTQ-identified but are led by LGBTQ people of color will support intersections with the LGBTQ movement and strengthen solidarity across progressive movements.

Grantmakers should expand their definition of the LGBTQ movement to include organizations that have LGBTQ people of color in prominent leadership roles.

Mainstream LGBTQ nonprofits may have well-intentioned racial equity or diversity values on paper but often do not have funding or resources to make formal

organizational commitments to align those values with their organizational practices and structures. Funding could be devoted to training, coaching, and consulting for the current leaders, boards of directors, and all staff. As more LGBTQ organizations take steps to address their racial blind spots internally, there should also be funding to document the lessons from these organizational change efforts to share the insights with other organizations in the LGBTQ movement, as well as more broadly throughout the nonprofit sector.

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17 Only one of our 15 survey distribution partners focused on LGBTQ organizations. Interestingly, at least one respondent who reported receiving the survey through communication from each of the 14 other distribution partner organizations self-identified as LGBTQ.

18 The online survey was in the field from March 1 – May 31, 2016.

19 This sample of nearly 900 LGBTQ nonprofit staff is similar to the number of LGBTQ people working in nonprofit organizations who participated in research a decade ago on attitudes toward and experiences working in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) nonprofit organizations.

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20 Due to rounding, some percentages that appear in the figures and text throughout this report may not precisely reflect the absolute numbers or add to 100%.

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24 Although federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rulings offer some protections, legislation to address anti-LGBTQ discrimination has largely been relegated to states and localities.

For more on employment non-discrimination laws, visit the Movement Advancement Project's equality maps at: http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non_discrimination_laws#sthash.HxqOVWKk.dpuf

25 Many of today's LGBTQ social justice activists take their cues from the work of legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw who addressed what she called "intersectionality" in the late 1980s. Crenshaw wrote about the need to understand how people living at the margins on multiple levels cannot fully benefit from gaining rights one issue at a time.

See: Crenshaw, Kimberlé, Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics [1989]. http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf

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Building Movement Project

For more information, please visit
The Building Movement Project at
www.buildingmovement.org

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Photo Credit:

Cover image by Juan David Franco, taken at the Pride Month kick-off event in Philadelphia on June 8, 2017, where the city's Office of LGBT Affairs launched the More Color More Pride campaign and unveiled a redesigned Pride flag to honor LGBTQ people of color and the transformative work of groups like the Black and Brown Workers Collective and The Gran Varones.

For photography inquiries, please contact Juan David Franco at: **www.thatlittlemoment.com**

2017