

## **ISSUE THREE:**

# **THEORY S IN ACTION: VARIETIES OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND HOW SAGE LEADERS LEAD**

In this essay and the following essays in this issue of *Sage* (and the four following issues of *Sage*) we turn to the heart of the matter regarding Theory S: the civic engagements of the Sage 100. There are specific roles that individual sage leaders play, and their involvements take place in a variety of civic organizations. Each sage leader has at least one favored organization in which he or she is most involved and committed, and the essays highlight these cameo appearances through the lens of how sage leaders believe they have mainly helped, the roadblocks they have encountered, and the experiences they have found most personally satisfying and meaningful. We then turn to what emerging and senior sage leaders say motivates them and the extent to which they believe their civic engagements involve personal sacrifice. We conclude this series of essays by focusing on the benefits Sage leaders derive from their civic involvements.

There are a variety of ways in which sage leaders say they help the organizations in which they are primarily involved and committed. In our first issue of *Sage*, we drew on the wisdom of the late iconoclast Maggie Kuhn, founder of the Gray Panthers. She saw sage leaders as risk-takers who heal and humanize society by playing one or more of five key community roles: Mentor, Mediator, Mobilizer, Motivator, and Monitor.

Collectively, the 50 emerging sage leaders play all five of these roles, and each identifies more than one. Their leading civic roles are *mobilizer*, (working to bring about change), followed by *motivator* (urging people to pursue worthy goals), and *mentor* (teaching and engaging others). The civic roles least played by emerging sages are *mediator* (helping to resolve community conflict), and *monitor* (serving as public policy watchdog). The roles of mobilizer and motivator reflect passion and energetic action, both characteristics of emerging sage leaders' relative youth.

Emerging sage leaders pursue their civic roles through nine different types of associations in Grass Valley and Nevada City led by nonprofit, governmental, social services, and educational organizations.

Environmental organizations rank moderately high and arts, faith-based, fraternal, and media organizations even less.

The 50 senior sage leaders report being mentors, motivators, and mobilizers about equally, and a bit less so for the role of mediator. Very few senior sages serve as monitors or as public watchdogs. Of the nine different types of civic associations in Grass Valley and Nevada City, senior sages are mostly involved in social service and nonprofit organizations, followed by fraternal and service clubs and faith-based organizations. They have few civic engagements in educational, environmental, or media organizations.