

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.
REFLECTIONS ON THE DESIGN OF A GRADUATE LEADERSHIP
CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of a masters degree in Transformative Leadership with a specific focus on the role of creativity and self-creation. It uses the design of the degree as a way of address some of the considerable complexities of the field of leadership, but also the larger planetary and personal challenges facing individuals who are committed to contributing to positive social change.

In strange and uncertain times such as those we are living in, sometimes a reasonable person might despair. But hope is unreasonable, and love is greater even than this. May we trust the inexpressible benevolence of the creative impulse. Robert Fripp

Introduction

At the dawn of the 21st century, barely into its first decade, the planet is facing tremendous challenges. As I write this in the Spring of 2009, there is a global economic crisis that is predicted to get considerably worse before it gets better. It is truly planetary in scope in the sense that its effects are not limited to one country. It is felt all over the world. More importantly, it shows in stark relief the extent to which human beings live in an interdependent and interconnected planetary system. Since 1492, the connections between continents and cultures have increased enormously, of course: it is not *that* we are interconnected that is being highlighted as much as *how*, in an information technology driven era, the compression of time and space means we are connected at far greater speeds than ever before—indeed almost instantaneously. And most dramatically, the complex, interdependent and interconnected relationship between humans and Nature is in desperate need of revision.

The crisis is forcing a radical reassessment of established economic models—not just the presently dominant neo-liberal models, but the very foundations of the global economy, and, arguably, the very worldview of Modernity (Bauman, 2001; Ogilvy, 1989). The environmental crisis is deeply connected to this economic crisis, and the calls for sustainability all point to the fundamental un-sustainability of economic growth along its present lines, driven as it is by lifestyles and values that are founded in lack—in the need to always have more but never be satisfied. What we are witnessing is arguably the end of Modernity, and of late capitalism or Post-modernity (Lyotard, 1984). Ironically, the

very engines of progress in Modernity, most notably technology, science, economic growth, and industry have now become sources of the problems we are trying to extricate ourselves from. Tellingly, the talk is of exit-strategies: exit strategies from the environmental crisis, from the war in Iraq, from the economic crisis.

The election of US President Barack Obama on a mandate of hope is tremendously symbolic. In his inaugural address, President Obama pointed out how 60 years earlier, his black father would not even have been allowed to eat in some restaurants in Washington. Obama's election win surprised many, not least civil rights advocates who could not have imagined 40 years earlier that an African-American man would become President of the United States in their lifetime. Obama's achievement is itself a source of hope, showing that, as Edgar Morin has often said, the unexpected nature of life can also be a source of hope (Morin & Kern, 1999).

In his inaugural speech, the President argued for a new era of responsibility. The United States, and indeed humanity as a whole, should leave "childish things" behind. The clear message is that the world is in a tremendous period of transition. This transition is not going to be an easy one, and we should leave childish selfishness, greed, and the ambition to dominate others behind. Many of the industrial bastions of Modernity in the US—such as the auto and banking industries—are in dire straits. The blows dealt to society by the more Post-Modern phenomenon of computer-assisted financial corruption and the Byzantine complexity of derivatives and other ways of making money from the sizzle rather than the steak have also hit home, with dramatic results. The displays of greed, selfishness, and arrogance in industry and government have been colossal. In truth, perhaps no more than in previous ages. But the sums are bigger, the stakes are higher, and the news gets around the globe in seconds.

Any number of other challenges face humanity—from global terrorism to droughts to human rights to education. The list is extensive and deeply troubling. If we are leaving one era behind, if we are witnessing the end of Modernity, where we are going is far less clear. The challenge of responsibility is complex: in this paper I explore how this call for responsibility is also a challenge of leadership for the 21st century, and how it is addressed in an educational context in the online Masters Degree in Transformative Leadership offered at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS).

Overview

The Transformative Leadership MA at CIIS was designed to meet the increasing demand for a program that would support and prepare students interested in taking action and making a positive contribution in a rapidly changing world increasingly overwhelmed by social, political, economic, and environmental crises. We found many individuals wanted an opportunity to reflect on the state of the world and their communities, and on their own possibilities and potentials for contributing to addressing pressing issues. Since the start of the program the students have ranged from individuals transitioning in mid-life from a career in the private sector in order to make a contribution to social or environmental justice, to Millennials a few years out of college who want to explore how to address an issue they are passionate about.

Most if not all of these students do not identify with the traditional model of the heroic leader (Western, 2008). In fact, the majority are women. They are searching for new ways to express their desire to take the initiative and develop a leadership role. The program offers an opportunity to spend two years assessing their motivations and capacities, building skills, and most of all, accessing their creativity so that they can both create themselves as leaders in ways that reflect their own unique backgrounds, potentials, and missions, and to create the changes they want to see. Precisely because our students are mostly what we might call non-traditional leaders, they want to be leaders *in their own way*. They do not resonate with most traditional leadership programs and the discourse of leadership. If anything they are, like most people, sorely disappointed with what generally passes for leadership. The program is designed to prepare individuals who want to lead by mobilizing their own creativity to help shape a more positive future. Students explore their Ways of Being, Doing, Relating, and Knowing, and develop both the conceptual framework and practical skills to engage in a process of self-creation: they create themselves as leaders with a view to contributing to creating a future that goes beyond exit strategies.

The Transformative Leadership MA is designed to address our world in transition (Morin & Kern, 1999; Slater, 2008) through the development of new interpretive frameworks, personal skills, competencies, and practices. The degree also to address the transition that the students themselves face entering the program. Generally our students face two types of personal transition. Students in their mid-twenties to early thirties with relatively little experience are still in a fundamental process of self-creation: they feel they want to make a contribution to an issue they are passionate about, and the program offers them an opportunity to assess their own aspirations, skills, assumptions, and beliefs. They learn about how they need to develop in order to be the kind of leader they want to be in the specific context they have chosen. Mid-career professionals, face the challenge of self-re-creation. They may have successful careers in the corporate world or government behind them, and are finding that they now want to immerse themselves in work they are really passionate about. They know they are capable, they know they can make money, and they now want their mission to become transpersonal. In other words, they seek higher goals, beyond the self. Self-(re-)creation towards these higher goals is a central dimension of Transformative Leadership. Self-creation as a leader offers an opportunity for self-reflection, a deep exploration of our values and goals, at the personal, local, and global level, an awareness and articulation of the context in which we are creating ourselves, and the practices through which we can make this possible.

In an age of transition, one of the key dimensions of leadership education is not just learning but *unlearning*. Many of us were brought up with the images of leadership (implicit theories) of Modernity. Even if we wholeheartedly embrace the new vision, and see ourselves as creative leaders of tribes, our implicit assumptions about leadership may still derive from a past age. For example, Pfeffer and Vega research (Pfeffer & Vega, 1999) show that many organizations are still pervaded by “perverse norms,” most notably the idea that good leaders and managers are mean and tough and that their work consists mainly of detached analysis (formulation) backed up by muscle (implementation and enforcement), with some charisma thrown in to differentiate the leaders from the

managers. Gabriel (2001, p.140) found that organizations are still largely represented as “orderly places where people behave in a rational, business-like way.” Strati (1999) has similarly critiqued the discourse of organization theory and management studies as putting forth an ideal type that is fundamentally rational, logical, mental, and deeply disembodied.

If students who are enthused about Transformative Leadership still have implicit theories of leadership that the leader *ultimately* has to be mean and tough (for instance, “when the chips are down”), that organizations should be orderly and factory-like, then this will clearly be an obstacle for them as they seek to create alternatives. The vision of themselves as Transformative Leaders may then end up seeming like nothing but “happy talk” with little relation to the “real world.” Self-creation therefore involves addressing limiting beliefs about ourselves, about leadership, and about the larger shifts occurring in the world. On a very fundamental level, this means addressing questions about the nature of human nature, about how human beings relate, what motivates us, about what is and is not possible, and the human ability to create and re-create self and world.

The extensive research on creativity offers numerous insights into the process of self-creation. The characteristics of creative individuals can be cultivated (Barron, 1995): independence of judgment, tolerance of ambiguity, and integrative complexity, can be fostered during the coursework, as can an understanding of the nature of the creative process, with its alternating periods of divergence (idea-generation) and convergence (idea-selection) (Montuori, 2006). For instance, intolerance of ambiguity leads to the premature imposition of pre-established solutions to relieve anxiety. The ability to live with that anxiety to produce a potentially more appropriate solution (tolerance of ambiguity) allows for time to explore alternatives. As students work on group projects, it becomes clear when there is a tendency to jump to a decision prematurely to relieve anxiety. This tendency to premature action is particularly common in North American “doing,” action-oriented culture: Don’t just sit there—do something! (Stewart & Bennett, 1991). Leaders are often tempted to make decisions prematurely. But fostering creativity sometimes requires the opposite approach: Don’t just do something—sit there! (and develop a more thoughtful and creative approach). The students’ group projects can offer endless opportunities to reflect on and develop a creative attitude. The process of developing this creative attitude to work and self is a large part of the process of self-creation.

Students also receive a 360 feedback, coupled with a number of leadership and personality assessments. The combination of the assessments and the feedback from 8 or so colleagues about decision-making style, ability to handle stress, team work, and other leadership dimensions, provides a rich picture of areas requiring development. Along with this assessment, students write their autobiography from the perspective of age 80. They are invited to think creatively about what they would like to do with their lives, what contribution they want to make, and specifically how they intend to apply their work in the program. This is a playful step towards exploring possibilities they might otherwise not have considered, engaging their creativity and applying it to their own lives, and beginning the process of aligning their own abilities and contributions with

their desired goals. Students are encouraged to Think Globally *and* Locally, and to Act Globally *and* Locally. The local and the global are inextricably intertwined (Morin & Kern, 1999).

Reinventing Leadership

For our purposes here I will begin my discussion of leadership very simply by asking, Who can be a leader? A brief review of the history of the world's great leaders shows that widely recognized celebrated as well as despised leaders have been overwhelmingly male representatives of the dominant culture, embodying characteristics that can be summarized (but are of course not limited to) the "heroic" model. It is becoming increasingly apparent that leaders are now emerging from traditionally underrepresented groups, such as women and minorities. President Obama is perhaps the most dramatic case in point. In the global "social imaginary" there is now an African-American President of the United States. This does not mean that leadership opportunities have now opened up to everybody. It does signal the beginning of a tremendous shift towards greater openness towards traditionally under-represented groups in leadership roles.

But the shift in the "who" of leadership extends in other areas: it is not confined to the position of arguably the most powerful man in the world. As an example, the Goldman Environmental Prize is handed out every year to individuals described as "grassroots environmentalists" from all over the world who have made a considerable and often courageous contribution to protecting the environment. The winners are not individuals who strike one as "heroic leaders" in the dramatic General Patton mold. They are not great warlike leaders, orchestrating armies of soldiers or engineering corporate take-overs. They are ordinary men and women who prove they are also quite *extra*-ordinary when circumstances require.

These individuals *are* heroic in the sense that they often take on multinationals or governments or both. They are involved in struggles against deforestation, privatization of water supplies and other projects that affect the well-being of their communities or involve the destruction of nature. One of these leaders and Goldman Prize recipients, Ken Saro-Wiwa of Nigeria, was hanged by a corrupt government on trumped up charges because his work put multi-million dollar deals at risk. The Goldman Prize winners are not individuals who had ambitions to be CEOs, generals, or elected officials. They did not see themselves in the traditional mold as "leaders of men." They simply responded passionately and thoughtfully to what they perceived to be an outrage. They felt they had to do something beyond their own personal survival and well-being. They became leaders because they felt they had to develop a coalition of people to fight injustice.

The message is clear. The "who" of leadership has changed: if leadership is about making a contribution to the global transition, making a contribution by taking the initiative, then the field is wide open. And as members of traditionally underrepresented groups become leaders, we can safely say that the concept of leadership will be irrigated by new streams of creativity and culture, new perspectives and potentials. Eventually it will not be the case that now underrepresented groups can also join the leadership club and play the

game. The very definition of leadership, the rules of game themselves, will be changed, and are already changing.

The “who” of leadership also ties in directly with a central concern of the Transformative Leadership program: *self-creation*. The assumption is not that leadership is a fixed characteristic one either has or doesn’t have. In an era of transition, there are few certainties, and great opportunities for creativity. We are not bound by fixed roles or destinies. It is possible to *create* oneself as a person, and as a leader. We can tap into, as President Obama wrote in a 2005 essay, "a larger, fundamental element of American life — the enduring belief that we can constantly remake ourselves to fit our larger dreams" (Obama, 2005). In an era of transition, we need to dream a new world together, and Transformative Leadership requires the creativity both to dream and to make our dreams a reality.

Tribes and Factories

Seth Godin’s little book *Tribes* provides us with two useful images that can orient us to the emerging understanding of leadership (Godin, 2009). His argument is that we are moving out of the age of the Factory and are now in an age of Tribes. “A tribe,” he writes, “is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea” (p.1). The term tribe might strike one as amorphous, as “pre-modern” as the word “factory” seems quintessentially “modern.” The crucial difference now is in the word “connected.” The new social media have connected individuals all across the globe. Whereas in pre-modern times a tribe was a local phenomenon strongly defined by physical proximity, it is now possible to be part of a planetary tribe—whether fans of some obscure indie band, coming together to support earthquake victims in Abruzzo, or, in the shadow side of this phenomenon, a terrorist organization like Al-Qaida . And tribes are not only the most important new form of social organization and social change, they also drastically change the who, what, where, and how of leadership.

Factories are large, hierarchical, unwieldy, inflexible, and generally not prone to innovation. In a factory, leadership is confined to a few. Command and control are the central features of leadership in factories. Factories are like armies. But as we have seen, the US army defeated the Iraqi army in a matter of days, but that was hardly “Mission Accomplished.” A distributed network of terrorists living all over the world cannot be defeated by an army in a head-on battlefield confrontation. It is not a hostile nation in the traditional sense. The 7/7 bombers in London were actually living in England, and the 9/11 bombers were living in the US. They were “a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea.”

Tribes are networked, flexible, and heterarchical, allowing leadership to emerge a plurality of sources (Ogilvy, 1989; Taylor, 2003). In fact, if in the Modern factory world there was only one leader, in the world of Tribes, everybody can be a leader, and that is Godin’s point. It is also the foundation for the Transformative Leadership program. The democratization of leadership is becoming an increasingly mainstream perspective.

Joseph Nye (Nye, 2008) of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard sums it up this way:

Almost anyone can become a leader. Leadership can be learned. It depends on nurture as well as nature. Leadership can exist at any level, with or without formal authority. Most people are both leaders and followers. They “lead from the middle.” (p. 147)

A far cry from the heroic, “great man” leadership picture, the captain of industry, Jack Welch, General Patton, Napoleon, and the classic figures associated with leadership, or even the nerdier but no less commanding figures of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs.

Leadership Jazz

One might compare a factory and a tribe to a symphony orchestra and a jazz ensemble respectively. In the symphony orchestra, the score is already written, and the musicians know their parts. They also know not to deviate from them. When they are featured during a particular passage, such as the flute part in Debussy’s *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*, they still play the written notes. The hierarchy is very clear, and starts with the composer, to the conductor, the soloist, the first violin, and so on.

In a jazz ensemble, the key to the performance is improvisation on a song’s theme/chord progression. It is central to the art of being a good jazz musician (Berliner, 1994). This means that there is a framework, provided by the song and the overall way the song is interpreted by the ensemble (as a ballad, up-tempo, medium swing), and the real challenge is to make the journey from a to b, from beginning to end of the song, interesting.

If the symphony orchestra was a dramatic expression of the creativity of modernity, traceable to the lone genius composer, and isomorphic to the industrial factory, the jazz ensemble is in many ways isomorphic to tribes, virtual teams, and the collaborative, networked creativity of an emerging age (Attali, 1985; Montuori, 2003). In the symphony, the main source of creativity lies outside the orchestra, with the individual composer. In the jazz ensemble creativity is an emergent property of the interaction of the musicians, their environment, and the composition they are performing. The degree of *discretion* accorded the individual jazz musicians is much greater than that of classical musicians, as they each get to improvise and make their own contribution to the piece. This also increases the degree of self-expression that is possible in a jazz context. Particularly interesting is the role of leadership. A jazz group may be led by one, or two or more individuals, and it can also be a collective. During performance, it is typical for the every individual band-member to take one or more solos. During that time, the soloist leads, and guides the band in her or his direction, within the larger context of the leader’s vision. The genius of certain jazz band leaders like Miles Davis or Duke Ellington was precisely that they knew their musicians well, and created an environment in which both individuals and the collective would shine (Crouch, 2007). If in the factory/symphony organization creativity is with the “man at the top,” in the tribe/jazz, creativity is an emergent property of the interaction between the members/players.

The Davis/Ellington style of leadership involves a particularly important feature: the emphasis on creating a system (a band) that allows the musicians to thrive and achieve their highest potential, in function of the band as a whole. The system supports the individuals who support the system in a virtuous cycle, rather than the more typical vicious cycle where the system drains the individual, and the individual's growth and direction are not aligned with the system ("I need to do my solo album to express myself!") Particularly in the Miles Davis quintet of the early sixties, we find Davis putting together a team that, under his mentorship, explored new directions in music (Chambers, 1998). Davis did not know where the band would lead him, but he had parameters and carefully selected the members of his now classic quintet. Tenor sax player Wayne Shorter wrote many compositions that became classics of the jazz repertoire, and gave the band a sound and a direction. This is significant because while Miles was unquestionably the band leader, the band's tremendous innovation emerged because he managed to give the band members a great deal of discretion, and encouraged the spontaneous emergence of new material by insisting that the band practice on stage. In other words, he explicitly wanted the musicians to take enormous risks, to stretch and explore in front of an audience. The band was essentially a self-organizing system (Borgo, 2006). Davis did not tell the band members what to do so much as what *not* to do.

But was Miles Davis simply a facilitator, using "soft power?" A close assessment of his leadership style shows that he did give enormous discretion, but he also had the final say on the band's direction. He did not stand by and let the band go in any direction they wanted. Even though he did not tell the band what to do, he set clear parameters by telling the band what he did *not* like, and that created parameters in the form of an aesthetic sensibility (Chambers, 1998).

The Miles Davis example highlights some important features of transformative leadership: 1) He created a generative environment that allowed the individual band members to blossom; 2) he stressed the importance of the interaction between the individuals, their roles and relations in the band, to create a unique combination; 3) he combined his nurturing, supportive work in "growing" the musicians, but his was no "laissez faire" leadership: he used smart power in a very subtle way, never making a big deal out of it, but at the same time clearly establishing ground rules and criteria for the journey. Not a map with a clear, pre-determined outcome, but guidelines for an improvisational journey.

We can learn from Miles Davis, and his example offers a new set of choices for leaders. But there is no hard and fast rule that these are the "ingredients" of Transformative Leadership. As Nye suggests, a leader must be able to combine "soft power," which is more facilitative, and "hard power," which is more directive. What we can say, though, is the Davis displayed both *emotional intelligence* (Goleman, 2000), through his self-awareness and his understanding of his own role as a leader, and *contextual intelligence* (Nye, 2008), as he understood the dynamics of his group, of the culture of jazz, and the larger societal changes in the shift from the 50s to the 60s, most notably when, in the mid-60s, he incorporated rock and psychedelic elements in his music, starting with

controversial recordings such as *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*. These recordings were very risky because they alienated the hard-core straight-ahead acoustic jazz fans, but also created an entirely new, and younger audience that listened to Jimi Hendrix and the Grateful Dead. Bob Dylan made a similar, and equally controversial transition when he started working with an electric group (The Band), at the Newport Folk Festival on Sunday July 25, 1965. Like Davis, he was initially seen as a traitor to the music. Ultimately his vision prevailed, and folk music took a back seat and became marginalized in popular music.

Traditionally, most of the metaphors for leadership and organization have come from the military and from machines. Transformative Leadership explores the immensely generative potential in metaphors and exemplars from the arts, which often provide a radically different perspective. Particularly since creativity is such a central dimension of Transformative Leadership—in the creation of self, vision, relationships, implementation, and more—metaphors and examples from the arts are instructive and illuminating in ways that machine metaphors simply cannot be, because a machine performs a function, but is not in and of itself creative: the creativity resides in the creator of the machine.

Transdisciplinarity and the Construction of Leadership

Leadership is now an established area of study, with departments and degrees. The literature on leadership is extensive, confusing and often contradictory (Maccoby, 2001; Rost, 1993). Bennis and Nanus (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) wrote that

Literally thousands of empirical investigations of leaders have been conducted in the last seventy-five years alone, but no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from nonleaders, and perhaps more important, what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective leaders. (p.4)

Not very much has changed in the last 25 years (Western, 2008). One of the reasons why there is so much confusion about what constitutes leadership is because, as I have already argued, we are moving out of one era and into a new era (Montuori, 1989; Montuori & Conti, 1993; Morin & Kern, 1999; Slater, 2008). In this transitional period, we see the demise of one form of leadership and the birth of new forms of leadership (Wren, 2007). The underlying transdisciplinary philosophical assumptions of Transformative Leadership draw extensively on process-relational and cybernetic and complexity-based ways of thinking. The four central assumptions are that Leadership is Constructed, Contextual/Relational, Emergent, and Paradoxical.

- 1) *Leadership is Constructed*. An overview of the research and of the history of the concept of leadership shows that it *constructed* (Ospina & Sorenson, 2006). By this I mean that there is no univocal timeless understanding of what constitutes leadership. Different times and cultures have different understandings of what leadership means, and of what constitutes good leadership (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Likewise, we see individuals as capable of constructing their own unique leadership philosophy and style. There is no “essence” of leadership, and

- leadership can indeed be learned (Nye, 2008). Construction is a creative process, and the challenge of leadership in the 21st century is therefore framed essentially as a creative one.
- 2) *Leadership is Contextual-Relational*. Leadership is not merely the function of the characteristics of a lone individual, but occurs in, and in fact arguably can be said to be, a network of interactions in a context. A leader can be a nexus, a systemic attractor, a catalyst, a facilitator, a leader can push and pull, but always in the context of a set of relationships, and these are by no means simply defined in the mode of instrumental transactional, tit-for-tat relations. The relationship between leaders is not just mutually constitutive. The whole frame of leader and follower is problematized. Increasingly, for better or worse, in the age of the opinion poll, the leaders follow the followers—or their perception of the “followers.”
 - 3) *Leadership is an Emergent Process*. Leadership emerges through a process of interactions, with unpredictable, holistic, systemic properties and qualities. The whole that emerges—actions by leaders and followers in context—can be more than the sum of its parts, but it can also be less than the sum of its parts. The role of *organization* is key in this process (Morin, 2008a). The organization of interactions is always confronted with the dialogic of Order and Disorder. Too much order and the system becomes ossified, inflexible and incapable of change. Too much disorder and the system descends into utter chaos. Creativity can emerge as we navigate the edge of chaos. Transformative Leadership involves the ability to recognize, catalyze, and wisely inform this process of navigation. The Transformative Leader organizes the emergent relationships in a specific tribe, and may, like Miles Davis, focus on creating a tribe that is itself not simply a collection of followers but a generative, creative environment.
 - 4) *Leadership is Paradoxical*. Transformative leaders combine “soft” and “hard” power, emotional intelligence and analytical intelligence, “hard” (organizational, task) and “soft” (“people”) skills. They can lead but also follow, inspire but also listen, be decisive but also reflective. In more traditional ways of thinking we are often impaled on the horns of either/or thinking, whether in decision-making or in our self-creation as leaders, choosing either hard or soft, decisive or reflective. Transformative leaders must develop the ability to embrace paradoxically, where paradox refers to going beyond accepted ways and drawing on a wider spectrum of choices which may include combining what has traditionally been viewed as opposed (either/or) (Hampden-Turner, 1999; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2001; Handy, 1994; Low, 2008).

Another reason why leadership is a contested and somewhat confused term is *disciplinary fragmentation*. There are leadership studies grounded in management, political theory, education, psychology, sociology, history among others. But there is little or no consensus, and certainly no grand unifying theory (Goethals & Sorenson, 2006).

The fact that leadership has been studied from the perspective of different disciplines is itself of course not problematic. Leaders have come from the ranks of politicians, businesspersons, social activists, and so on, and it should not surprise us that they are therefore studied in the disciplines that traditionally study politics, business, and social

change. But it does leave the field as a whole, as well as the student and practitioner, in a difficult position because there is a lack of coherence and integration in this proliferation of information.

Leadership has been described as an inherently multidisciplinary (Wren, 2006) precisely because it draws on so many already existing disciplines. The problem with multidisciplinary is that it is essentially a recognition that a plurality of disciplines address and contribute to our understanding of a particular topic. But there is no specific effort to integrate that knowledge, and there are usually no criteria to do so. Transdisciplinarity (Montuori, 2005; Morin, 2008b; Nicolescu, 2002, 2008) offers another approach that may be very useful for practitioners as well as researchers. A transdisciplinary approach to leadership can be summarized as approaching leadership through the following four dimensions (Montuori, 2005).

1) Inquiry-Driven vs. Discipline Driven

Transdisciplinarity is about the relationship between inquiry and action in the world. Action involves the embodiment and enaction of values in a context. It requires pertinent knowledge for those tasks and the assessment of tasks, goals, and for self-assessment. With the enormous quantity of research and literature on leadership and just about any conceivable topic, we are living in an information glut. The real challenges are the organization of knowledge so that it is pertinent to the leader's task (Morin, 2001, 2008a). This does not mean that leadership education should be narrowly defined by a specific task. There should be a balance between general knowledge and specific knowledge. In the Transformative Leadership program an attempt is made to achieve this balance by offering broad overview material in the courses, and also allowing room for students to bring in their own perspectives and issues, drawing on their own leadership context. Specific readings can then be suggested that address the contexts and issues the students are facing. An exclusive focus on specific knowledge can lead to a limited, partial, and limiting education that may not be pertinent if, as is always likely, circumstances change. An excessive focus on general knowledge means the student's experience, aspirations, and context cannot be addressed, in an effort to give an exhaustive overview of the literature without addressing its relevance to the student. We can also not assume that the student is aware of exactly what s/he needs to know now or a few years down the road. And although we cannot assume that the faculty knows exactly what is required, their task is assist students in navigating the specific and the general.

2) Meta-paradigmatic vs. Intra-Paradigmatic

There are many approaches to leading. In the popular literature we find everything from *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun* to *The Leadership Lessons of Jesus*. In academia, there are numerous different schools of thought: trait-based, psychodynamic, behavioral, relational, contingency, transformational, and more (Northouse, 2004; Western, 2008). Each of these schools is informed by an underlying set of assumptions. In the case of popular leadership works on Attila the Hun and Jesus we might have a pretty good idea of what their underlying assumptions might be. In the more academic literature, some schools of thought emphasize the

traits of the leader, others the behaviors, psychological, organizational, and historical dimensions and so on. We do not assume that students should develop an exhaustive knowledge of this literature: they are not leadership *researchers*. They are here to be leaders. The program's focus therefore is on having students understand the underlying assumptions that inform the various theoretical perspectives, as well as their own underlying assumptions about leadership and how they inform their thinking and action.

Whether we are aware of it or not, we all have “implicit theories” of leadership (Betts, Morgan, & Castiglia, 2008; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). These are the theories we hold, often unconsciously, about what a leader is and should “really” be like. Growing up in a world where the vast majority of leaders are men and there are still many increasingly obsolete and dysfunctional assumptions about leaders (the “heroic,” strong man image also promoted by the media), it's essential for aspiring leaders to understand the extent to which the popular images of leadership have shaped their own beliefs and assumptions. Most often we find that the implicit theories of leadership are quite limiting, because there is a certain media-supported mythology about the characteristics of leaders that still draws on a “charismatic” view, where charismatic is understood in the etymological sense of being a gift. In the same way that creativity is often thought of as a gift, we often speak of leaders being born not made, by which we mean that they exhibit the characteristics Modernity has associated with leadership. This view precludes the possibility of self-creation and learning for individuals who do not identify themselves as “born” leaders.

Meta-paradigmatic is therefore an admittedly cumbersome word to indicate that the student is not operating exclusively from within one particular paradigm, one school of thought (intra-paradigmatic), and a particular set of implicit theories of leadership, but understands the plurality of ways in which the topic can be shaped by theory, and the importance of understanding the key assumptions underlying those theories. They can range from assumptions about the nature of human nature, the way humans relate, and human possibilities (Theory X and Theory Y in the management literature are a very clear example) to assumptions about the nature of knowledge, the role of the leader, and so on. Students explore their own assumptions and dialogue with the literature and their own experience to challenge the assumptions, and in the process articulate a more coherent and well thought-out leadership philosophy.

3) Complex/Cybernetic vs. Reductive/Disjunctive Thought

There is little doubt that in the 20th century, the world has become dramatically interconnected and networked. The emergence of systems/cybernetic approach, and later chaos and complexity theories (Capra, 1996), reflects an awareness both in the natural and social sciences that analytic/reductionist ways of thinking must be supplemented with ways to understand processes, interaction, wholes and connect the information that has been generated in different disciplines. A way of knowing that is premised on simplicity and breaking a system down into its component parts cannot effectively address the complexities of 21st century networked society (Castells, 2000). A complex/cybernetic approach also proposes, in brief, that what we call

knowledge is not a mirror of the world, but always a creative construction. The stress is on knowing as a creative process, one that can generate a number of (almost endless) different interpretations of a situation, and recognizes the nature of circular, recursive processes and the process-relational nature of systems. Approaching our very understanding of the world as a creation itself puts creativity center stage in life and leadership.

4) Embedded and Embodied Inquirer vs. External Observer

In recent years the concept of Emotional Intelligence has made substantial inroads into the discourse and practices of leadership (Goleman, 2000; Goleman, McKee, & Boyatzis, 2002). A transdisciplinary approach puts the experience of the leader center stage, and stresses the importance of self-creation as an inquirer and as a leader. Developing Emotional Intelligence is one dimension of this process of self-creation. The leader/inquirer is an active participant in the process of knowledge-creation, and in action in the world. Every aspect of the person's experience plays a part in the processes of leadership and inquiry, and becomes an avenue for self-inquiry, self-understanding, and self-creation: in other words, Transformative Leadership cannot be separated from a journey of personal growth.

Self-Creation: Being/Knowing/Relating/Doing

There are four central dimensions of self-creation in the Transformative Leadership curriculum: Ways of Being, Ways of Knowing, Ways of Relating, and Ways of Doing. These dimensions are used to highlight key areas of potential self-creation, and also learning and unlearning.

1) *Ways of Being*. We begin with the overall view of the person as capable of self-re-creating as a Transformative Leader. Leadership is not viewed as something one either has or not, and in a larger sense human beings are viewed not as things with fixed essences but as ongoing relational creative process (Barron, 1999; Fay, 1996). This recognition of the processual nature of being can be amplified and embodied through the cultivation of a creative attitude. This includes, among other things, overcoming personal limiting beliefs and societal myths about creativity (Montuori & Purser, 1995; Montuori & Purser, 1999), as well as the development of the skills and competencies drawn from creativity research and articulated above for personal self-creation. A central assumption of the Transformative Leadership program is that human beings are fundamentally creative. Indeed, there is mounting research suggesting that the universe itself is an ongoing creative process (Kauffman, 2008). For our purposes, suffice it to say that we see Transformative Leadership as involving creative persons, processes, products and environments. Creativity in the world involves means creating something new, making an original contribution to one's community or society, and taking a leadership role in the articulation, promotion, and implementation of this contribution.

Students come to the program to engage in a 2 year exploration of their values, beliefs, assumptions, of their very identity, and of the way they act in the world. The program offers them an opportunity to self-re-create, to apply their own creativity to themselves,

and create the person and leader they want to be in the context(s) they have chosen. The program's capstone also makes their culminating project a contribution in the world—not a business plan or a case study, not a statement of leadership philosophy, but a leadership project in the world.

2) *Ways of Knowing*. How do we know what we know? It's no mystery that different people see the world differently, depending on such factors as their education, background, interest, gender, age, and so on. A trained musician hears a piece of music differently from a person without training, and this can actually be reflected in the person's brain: the trained musician uses both hemispheres, the lay person only the right or non-dominant hemisphere (Springer & Deutsch, 1985).

The reductive/disjunctive way of thinking is so widely accepted that it has become almost entirely transparent to us: in other words, we don't think of it as "a way of thinking," but just as thinking—or more broadly, "knowing." In order to understand something we break it down into its component parts, and we have a dominant logic of either/or. The key to this way of thinking is simplicity, clarity, and certainty. Unfortunately, life is not like that. Most of the things about life that are interesting are neither simple, certain nor particularly clear. Whether it's an election, a love affair, a ball game, a movie, or leadership in any way, shape, or form, complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty are central.

The Transformative Leadership program focuses on the development of a way of knowing grounded in cybernetics and complex thought. This way of thinking is designed to face the challenges of leadership. These include at times overwhelming complexity, the inescapable uncertainty of life, and the importance of understanding every issue in its context and network of relationships.

Transformative Leaders need to understand complex, interconnected phenomena, and also generate visions of alternative, desirable futures. This means drawing more broadly on the imagination, a sense of what could be as well as an assessment of what is. Education for creativity involves the cultivation of such characteristics as independence of judgment, tolerance of ambiguity, and problem-finding as well as problem-solving (Barron, 1988; Springer & Deutsch, 1985). It also involves "meta-cognition," or the ability to reflect on one's thinking and one's framing of any particular situation.

In their study of Ways of Knowing Transformative Leaders explore systemic/cybernetic epistemology and creative thinking, in the context of leading in a digital, networked society. There are many ways of knowing beyond the traditional rational/analytical style that are typically (and erroneously thought of as exclusively) associated w/academia and with organizational life (Quinn, 1988). At the same time it is important not to polarize between rational and other ways of knowing, or to dismiss traditional approaches and romanticize intuition and creativity (Montuori, 2006). Transformative leaders need to integrate a plurality of ways of knowing and learn how to utilize them synergetically rather than hold them oppositionally.

3) One of the most central and constitutive assumptions informing leaders and leadership choices today is about the fundamental way human beings relate to each other. This is a question with deep philosophical roots, and highly practical implications. As we saw in Pfeffer's research, for instance, "perverse norms" still thrive in many organizations, based on the assumption that one must be tough, and control others. This is what Eisler calls a paradigm of domination (Eisler, 1987; Eisler & Montuori, 2001). Traditionally the underlying assumption of most of humanity's ways of relating is that we live in a world of domination or submission. These represent the two alternatives in any relationship. Leadership has traditionally been viewed through this "dominator" lens. The leader is the dominant (and often domineering) figure, and followers are submissive. Increasingly, leadership is not about domination any more, but about partnership. Not about having power *over* others, but power *with* others, in order to achieve mutually agreed on goals. Leadership these days is very much a process of collaborative creativity. Rather than having centralized, top-down leadership, transformative leadership offers a plurality of possibilities, and information flow that does not only go from the top down. Transformative leadership involves creating contexts in which people can be creative and draw on all their talents, in the context of the task at hand. Google founders Sergey Brin tracked the success rate of ideas that came from them versus ideas that had come up through the ranks, and found that the latter had a higher success rate. Leadership therefore is about fostering this creativity, and aligning the aims of the larger mission and task with the capacities and passions of the individuals.

Eisler's work differentiating between domination and partnership systems provides one useful framework to expand both the discourse and practices of ways of relating (Eisler, 1987; Eisler & Montuori, 2001). It also presents a challenge, because new ways of relating must be *created* to counteract the prevailing ways of relating based on domination. Developing alternatives to domination systems is not easy. If the idea of "partnership" or other approaches that reject the assumption that human relations must be based on domination or submission is appealing, putting it into practice is a very different thing. The tendency is to fall into dualistic, oppositional thinking, much like in the case of the exploration of alternative ways of knowing. Anything associated with domination systems is rejected in favor of its opposite: If domination systems have strong leadership, the assumption is partnership systems will be leaderless, and likewise, free of disagreement, conflict, and competition (Montuori & Conti, 1995). This of course is a recipe for inaction, as well as a profound "error in thinking" that prevents the development of alternatives. This leads us back to the importance of developing capacious—and cybernetic—ways of thinking that can account for processes, and navigation between oppositions. It also shows how Ways of Being, Knowing, and Relating are fundamentally interconnected.

4) Leaders *act*. They do not just reflect or ponder or relate. Integral to the Transformative leadership program is the constant interrelationship between theory and praxis. By this we also mean the exploration of the *implicit* theories in what the students already do and believe. One's actions are a reflections of beliefs, whether explicit or implicit. In a transitional era such as ours, many of the old images of "heroic" leadership are patently out of date. And yet we find in our work with students that in popular culture, in our

imagination and belief systems, in the basic choices and modalities of leadership and in the behaviors displayed that these images of heroic leadership have not died. In these early stages, lacking a wide range of alternative models and constant reinforcement that leadership can be different, it is no surprise that the old images persist. Our students are therefore invited to explore their implicit assumptions about leadership, and these often come out most clearly when they are asked to do a project. The extremes range from the falling back to the heroic model, the “OK, I’m in charge now” boss-model, to the tendency not to be at all directive, assuming that the alternative to the heroic model is the exact opposite, a complete laissez-faire, “non-leadership leadership,” which of course tends to lead to chaos and confusion. The challenge of self-creation is to create not only one’s Way of Being but also a Way of Doing that reflects the Transformative Leader’s values and beliefs. The culminating capstone project is the most obvious way in which the program addresses this “Doing” dimension, but it should be noted that throughout the program students are always “doing”—there’s simply no escaping from it. Whether it’s working in class, collaborating with classmates, applying their learning in the workplace, or developing a new project, the interrelationship between theory and practice is always there. Most obviously when there’s an attempt to implement a new idea or perspective, and most subtly and perhaps imperceptibly when our every action reveals a theoretical foundation which may well be implicit: we may act on beliefs we did not consciously know we had, and the excavation and exposure of these implicit assumptions and beliefs offers a tremendous opportunity for learning about ourselves.

In academic contexts “Doing” is all too often associated exclusively with academic output. As valid as the latter can be, in an educational program designed for leaders, we have felt it essential to incorporate an ongoing process of integrating the students’ learning in the context of their workplace or action site. Central to this is the development of a culminating project, an action capstone where the fundamental requirement is the creation of a project in the world. The first part of the capstone, in the third semester, is a course in which students articulate their leadership philosophy, and then give and take a 360 feedback process. The 360 feedback gives them a reality check and allows them to assess the extent to which others perceive their actions as matching their stated leadership philosophy. In the second part of the capstone, in the final semester, one of the ways the action capstone is judged is by the way the students have taken to heart the feedback from the 360, applied it in a way that is reflect in their handling of the capstone, and also thereby the extent to which they have been true to the leadership philosophy they articulated. It could be argued that the ultimate goal here is to develop wisdom-in-action.

Summary

Today, leadership is not a role confined to a few chosen individuals. Every one of us can be a leader, and increasingly individuals who want to contribute to creating a new world built on the ashes of Modernity feel they must take action. In Modernity many of our students would not have dared to consider themselves leaders, or belonged to a group that was simply not permitted to take leadership roles. Today the very concept of leadership is being transformed by a broader participation, and a wider definition of the who, what, where, and how of leadership. The Transformative Leadership MA at the California

Institute of Integral Studies has accepted the challenge to prepare these leaders as they engage the new world, shedding the prejudices of the old world while incorporating the best of what has come before us. The challenge is considerable, but the power of human collective creativity is even greater.

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Appendix

Sample Transformative Leadership Capstones, 2007

Philip McAdoo

The Road to Shanghai

Philip McAdoo created an opportunity for six students from East Side Community High School in New York City and led them on a China Student Exchange project, traveling to Shanghai for a 10-day trip. Philip, a Broadway actor, raised the funds for the students' trip by enlisting the support of some of his fellow Broadway performers and putting on a benefit in New York that successfully financed the major expenses for the trip.

Jennie Falco

Family Cooperative

Jennie Falco organized a childcare cooperative in Longmont, Colorado, for her Capstone Action Project. She collaborated with five interracial families to create a family-support program that focused on sharing resources and child-care responsibilities, educating parents on topics such as nonviolent communication and positive touch, creating conditions for families to grow their own organic food and become less dependent on petroleum-based products and industry, and initiating activities for children that raised awareness in the areas of foreign language, arts and culture study, body-mind centering, health and nutrition, and the power of play.

Leanne Calandrella

Incarcerated/Formerly Incarcerated Individuals Leading Community Service Projects

Leanne Calandrella, who worked with the BEST (Being Empowered and Safe Together) Reintegration Program on Maui, Hawaii, chose to motivate incarcerated/formerly

incarcerated individuals to lead volunteer service projects within their community. Interest came from her idea that engaging with community and helping people is empowering and creates strength in leadership of both self and others. Her goal was to help others learn how to help others.

Erika Bjune

Action Through Education in Virtual Worlds

Erika Bjune led the creation of a virtual nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness around sustainability issues through classes, interactive displays, discussions, events, and games. The organization, Avatar Action Center, was founded inside a virtual world called Second Life, an immersive 3D environment in which people are represented digitally by “avatars.”

Miguel Chavez

Hispanic Leadership Development

Miguel Chavez, a TLD graduate and current TSD student, designed and implemented a Hispanic Leadership Development Training Program in the Federal Prison System.

Sierra Webb

Apple Valley, Building an Inclusive Community

Through an initiative by the National League of Cities, Sierra Webb, a Town of Apple Valley employee, worked with municipal government staff, the town council, school teachers, students and community leaders to build a coalition and enact the "Inclusive Communities Partnership" in their community.

Eric Matheny

Appreciating What Is: An Appreciative Inquiry in a Large County-Level Government Organization

Eric Matheny led an Appreciative Inquiry to discover the positive core of a 40-member community services department situated in a large, county-level government organization charged with providing a range of services to individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. All members of the department were interviewed with inquiry focused on personal stories of when participants felt best about themselves, the work that they were doing, and the agency that they worked for. The group interviewed brought to the project a combined experience of more than 550 years with the agency. The project's aim was to build collective resonance within the department during a period of anxiety, precipitated by an organizational restructuring. The results of the inquiry were compiled, and the themes, quotable quotes, and great stories will be shared with the organization as a whole.

April Howenstine

Public School Showcase

April Howenstine, at brand new Whitney High School she works at in Rocklin, California, organized an event designed to foster ongoing outreach opportunities and the building of bridges between the school and community. She collaborated with teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community members in order to introduce the

community to the sports, clubs, and programs offered at the school. It was an opportunity for the students to showcase their talents and skills, and raise funds for the following year.

Mark Austin Thomas

TheMiddleWayRadio.com

Mark Austin Thomas created a website titled TheMiddleWayRadio.com. The site contains podcasts that focus on broadening the political conversation by framing discussions of different issues within a Buddhist perspective, but without making explicit references to Buddhism. This was part of an effort to create a novel way to blend politics and spirituality.