THE WILL TO (SHARE) POWER

Privilege, Positionality, and the Servant-Leader
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A s an administrator at a university, I find myself reflecting on the cycles of years that mark the time our students walk the sidewalks of our campus. As one considers the last four years for our traditional graduating seniors, the formational national landscape that emerges is a critical one. As first year students, they watched protests erupt in Ferguson over the shooting of high school graduate Michael Brown (Bosman & Fitzsimmons, 2014) and immigration debates across Europe due to the Syrian refugee crisis (Robins-Early, 2015). As sophomores, they learned of the intended oil pipeline across the indigenous land of the North Dakota Standing Rock Tribe, a hate-inspired shooting in a Charleston black church, and the rising candidacy of the first female presidential contender (Chozich, 2015; Horowitz, Corasaniti & Southall, 2015; Thorbecke, 2016). While juniors, they participated in an election that voted into the Oval Office a white billionaire TV star who bragged about assaulting women, questioned the birthplace of the former president, called Latinos "rapists," and instituted a ban on travel from Muslim nations (Fahrenthold, 2016; Lopez,

2018). And as seniors, our students witnessed a white supremacy rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, the rollback of DACA legislation, the demonizing of kneeling NFL football players who protest police brutality toward African Americans and an unprecedented movement among women to call out male aggression in a united chorus of "#MeToo" (Hoffman & Belson, 2017; Romo, Stewart & Naylor, 2017; Shugerman, 2017; Stohlberg & Rosenthal, 2017). Our students' education has been intensely shaped by a nation conflicted about race, gender, power, and privilege and desperate for leadership to guide it toward equality, health and wholeness (Massingale, 2017).

If effective leadership aims to heal the divides which plague our local, national and global community, then leaders of dominant gender, race and class (including myself) must examine unearned privilege in order to actively lead organizations toward greater justice. Because the range of complicity by leaders in our historical and current societal injustices is vast, leadership models must take seriously the leader's positionality, inviting examination of one's participation in both the shadow and light side of our collective history and one's embodiment of both the "imbedded oppressor" and the "imbedded oppressed" (Ferch, 2017). At the heart of the Servant-Leadership model are values that invite the servant-leader to lean into self-examination and action on behalf of those who are unheard or unrepresented by traditional power structures. If deployed holistically and adopted with an eye toward positionality, servant-leadership has the potential to make a major contribution to healing the injustices that divide

our nation and world. Throughout this paper, I will be referencing both critical race theory and feminist theory as points of intersection with theories of leadership. The term "privilege," composed of the Latin roots for the concepts "private" and "law," describes the conferral of advantages, status, resources, and access to one social group and the denial or ration of these same advantages to those lower in the hierarchy (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997).

An examination of white privilege recognizes racial privilege that is unearned, while male privilege focuses on unearned privilege related to gender. Other privileges that invite examination include ability, sexual orientation, age, and religion, among others. For the purposes of this paper, I adopt the following terms used by Adams et al. (1997): Advantaged," "Privileged," and "Dominant" describe groups with access to social power, while "Disadvantaged," "Marginalized," and "Subordinated" describe groups who are blocked or thwarted from access to social power. No terms will serve to fully elucidate the complexities of our individual and social identities, but these terms focus on the structured roles and impacts of an oppressive system, highlighting the inequalities that are systemic rather than attributes of individual people (Adams & Bell, 2016).

THE PROBLEM OF UNEXAMINED PRIVILEGE

How did this problem of unexamined privilege within leadership arise? A survey of the widely adopted leadership models over many decades reveals that the study of leadership

has historically been undertaken by white males (Rost, 1991; Vetter, 2010). A Google search of "authors of leadership theory" brings up 22 images of leadership theorists, all of whom are white and 17 of whom are male. Due to the fact that leadership is often confused with management, and that white males are prevalent within the demographic of managers and positional leaders in our nation and world (Jones, 2017), it is no surprise that the vast majority of leadership theory has emerged through this dominant lens. However, a leadership theory that ignores the leader's identity and positionality (as well as that of the followers) faces challenges in its viability in practice. Anthropologists Wren and Faier (2006) argue that "bypassing the impact of the multiple, overlapping, and competing levels of leader and follower identities (age, gender, race, nation, community, etc.) ignores the fundamental elements of the human tradition" (p. 8). Many scholars have emphasized the importance of integrating critical race theory into leadership models, especially in the area of education (DeMatthews, 2016; Giles, 2010; Kezar, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2010). However, leadership theory as applied to corporate or organizational contexts has largely ignored the identity of the leader. Northouse's (2013) seminal textbook on *Leadership: Theory and Practice* includes a chapter on "Culture and Leadership," but lacks a leadership theory which includes a critical race perspective. Similarly, this oft-used scholarly compilation of leadership theories confines the topic of "Women and Leadership" to one chapter and fails to make any reference to feminist leadership as a viable model. John

Dugan's (2017) recently published text *Leadership Theory: Cultivating Critical Perspectives* brings a critical lens to traditional leadership theories, and attempts to remedy the lack of leadership scholarship regarding race and gender by fore-fronting critical inquiry and identity awareness for the leader as she/he advances social, political or scientific goals. As lenses of race and gender have only more recently influenced the development of leadership theory, it is unsurprising that the positionality and identity of the leader have been largely absent within dominant theories.

The myth of the archetypal leader as the "Great Man" continues to persist in the commonly held perception of the leader. However, one does not have to look beyond the covers of recent newspapers to realize that many men assumed to be "great" leaders by our society have fallen short of the lofty ideal ascribed to them, having manipulated and even assaulted the women they lead (Almukhtar, Gold, & Buchanan, 2018). The roots of this power-and-control leadership style run deep. Philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche (1966) paved the way for a leadership centered in power and control of others. Nietzsche unabashedly claimed that the will to power frames the human condition. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he described all that lives as striving to "grow, to gain ground, attract to itself and acquire ascendency— not owing to any morality or immorality, but because it lives, and because life is precisely Will to Power. Exploitation… is a consequence of the intrinsic Will to Power…" (section 259). From a feminist and critical race lens, what Nietzsche posits reinforces white male oppression. To

argue that the human condition necessarily centers on a will to power emboldens the dominant in oppressing the marginalized. Nietzsche (2012) wrote in *The Birth of Tragedy* that there is "nothing more terrible than a barbaric slave class who have learned to regard their existence as an injustice, and now prepare to avenge, not only themselves, but all generations" (p. 65). Although troubling, I believe Nietzsche was trying to name honestly the traps that humans, and especially non-marginalized classes of people can fall into: a sense of their own self-righteousness and an utter disregard for marginalized communities.

The legacy of Nietzsche's philosophy influences our current context. Just as Nietzsche (1966) believed sympathy "to be in very bad taste" (section 293), one sees this distaste for sympathy in presentations by popular conservative campus speakers like Ben Shapiro, who convince willing audiences that white privilege is a farce, and that one simply needs to take control of his own life in order to succeed. He proclaimed in a 2017 presentation:

> [White privilege] is an absolute outright lie.... There's another reason some people fail and some people succeed, because some people make better decisions than other people and some values are better than other values.... White privilege isn't a reality. It is a cowardly way to blame someone else for your failures to live up to decent responsible standards. (Shapiro, 2017)

David Cawthon (2002) warns that leaders like Ben Shapiro find support in Nietzsche's philosophy to justify the idea that

the weak are somehow a burden to the strong, whose superiority emerges from the strength of their will. Ben Shapiro, and others like him, argue that history and policy have no relevance, rendering sympathy and historical contextual analysis unnecessary. His cultural shaming toward personal responsibility re-inscribes a colonial mindset that releases from responsibility individuals advantaged by their race, class and gender. He reinforces a false binary between "all white people are to blame" and "the oppressed are entirely to blame" for the realities of racial disparities in our nation, erecting false barriers to mutual understanding. An effective leader collapses paradoxes such as these, understanding both one's complicity and one's possibility for creating solutions and healing through their leadership.

AN ANSWER TO NIETZSCHE

The increasing disparity between rich and poor, the violence perpetrated against African Americans, the erasure of the Native People's from the collective conscious, the rise of white supremacy, and the emerging allegations of rampant sexual assault and exploitation expose the failure of the "will to power" as the driving force for survival. Ferch (2012) stated "the command-and-control leadership of nation states has resulted in the shunted and often malignant personality of dominant cultures" (p. 19). New leadership approaches are warranted for historically privileged leaders. bell hooks (1984, 2000) and Victor Frankl (2000, 2014) each provide powerful answers to Nietzsche. If Nietzsche's (1968) hypothesis is that

the human condition reflects a will to power, hooks and Frankl suggest the alternative: that the human condition is collectively yearning for a loving, meaningful will to *share* power. hooks (2000) invites leaders to reflect on both love and truth, reminding us that "the heart of justice is truth-telling" (p. 33). Ben Shapiro's arguments conceal the fullness of the truth regarding the historical and social contexts that have shaped communities of color and discount the effect of white privilege and racism. A fuller truth is required to move us toward healing.

Bryan Massingale (2010), in his book *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, highlights crucial features of racism in the context of the post-civil rights era. He argues that an understanding of racism that is limited to individual acts of hatred or discrimination is far too narrow. He posits that racism has become a normative, unquestioned part of our culture, "a set of shared beliefs and assumptions that undergirds the economic, social, and political disparities experienced by different racial groups" (p. 24). He outlines the ways that this culture (if unquestioned) makes assumptions about where the burdens and benefits of society belong. His work aligns with other modern cultural theorists who help us navigate unconscious, or tacit transference of cultural expectations. Dean Barnlund (2013) refers to a collective cultural frame of reference that goes unseen or touched but which affects all ways of life. He warns that "as long as people remain blind to the sources of their meaning, they are imprisoned within them" and encourages an

awakening of individual and communal critical awareness (p. 299). Gary Chamberlain (1976) describes racism as "an unconscious, unreflective meaning system resting upon symbols of color and sex which are deeply embedded in the fears and anxieties of white Americans" (p. 353). Racism festers within prisons of unawareness. Feminist Judith Butler (2015) also points to the normativity that blinds individuals from deeper truths, positing "to be a subject at all requires first finding one's way with certain norms that govern recognition—norms we never choose and that found their way to us and enveloped us with their structuring and animating cultural power" (p. 40). Racism or gender discrimination may not be something that leaders consciously choose, but it may be reproduced unconsciously by them in the absence of intentionality or when invoked by insecurity or fear.

hooks' (2000) remedy for managing these embedded fears is to return to love. She suggests that to "return to love, to know perfect love, we surrender the will to power" (p. 221). Although the will to power may provide the illusion of having triumphed over fear, love can truly drive out fear (hooks, 2000). I would argue that in order to love others fully, we even need to love the *fear* in the other and to accompany one another into the shadow places where fear resides. Once we have acknowledged our fears and vulnerabilities together—enough to love the fear in the other—then we can move beyond unjust divisions and structures.

Holocaust survivor, physician and author Victor Frankl (2000, 2014), who suffered immeasurably as a result of an

intentional system of domination, unchecked privilege, control and brutality, also offers a counterpoint to Nietzsche. Frankl (2000) believed that the will to power serves as a substitute for "a frustrated will to meaning" (p. 89). For Frankl (2014), humankind is united by a common will to a common meaning fulfilled by self-transcendence, which he names the "essence of existence" (p. 33). This self-transcendence can bring about a necessary, and Frankl notes, healthy, tension as one examines his/her conscience to notice a responsibility to one another. One of Frankl's (2000) most poignant insights for our day is that as a culture, we have embraced monotheism (the belief in one god), but not monanthropism, the willingness to embrace the reality of one humanity. He echoes Massingale's lament for a culture that breeds racism: "If we only broadened our horizon we would notice that we enjoy our freedom, but we are not yet fully aware of our responsibility" (Frankl, 2014, p. 73). This is especially true for people traditionally privileged by the structures of our culture, in particular those of us who are white. Frankl (2000) believes that education—and I would argue leadership— "must see its assignment as refining the individual's conscience" in an era where values are no longer commonly held (p. 119). Frankl points to the importance of mining one's unconscious spiritual depths as an antidote to the will to power, as these depths are where important existential choices are made. One could argue that the choice for members of advantaged groups to examine privilege is such an existential choice.

Many contemporary leaders inspire our culture to refine its conscience around race and privilege. Feminist scholar Peggy

McIntosh's (2003) seminal work "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" is reflection on and enumeration of the many ways that white people in the United States reap societal benefit simply because of the color of their skin. She lists numerous daily effects of unearned white privilege and invites the reader to note which benefits are afforded them due to their skin color. This kind of examination by a leader is crucial if she sees herself as a healing agent in our divided culture. Ijeoma Oluo (2017), editor-at-large of *The Establishment*, a media platform run and funded by women, speaks and writes to white audiences about whiteness and the importance of examining white privilege: "Every time you go through something, and it's easy for you, look around and say, 'Who is it not easy for? And what can I do to dismantle that system?'" (para. 5). In the area of literary criticism, American novelist Toni Morrison (1992), in her work, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, invites white writers and readers of fiction to notice biases in classical and current works of literature that portray people of color as embodiments of the fears of white authors instead of characters whose own rich and complex personhood was honored. English scholar Eula Biss (2015) invites whites to think about whiteness not only as an identity but as a moral problem. Biss (2015) disagrees with Nietzsche's vilification of guilt as a killjoy, arguing instead for the proper role of guilt in forming the conscience as one considers the harm of unquestioned whiteness. Public thinker and writer Ta-Nehisi Coates (2017) has also written extensively on white privilege and white

supremacy, arguing "the point of white supremacy… is to ensure that that which all others achieve with maximal effort, white people (particularly white men) achieve with minimal qualification" (para. 5). He describes the ways the privileges and care and concern afforded lower-class whites in the recent election cycle belied the fact that African American communities with similar long-standing concerns have consistently been ignored. Coates (2014) and many others recall historical decisions that have led us to our current state—for instance, the government sanctioned practice of "red-lining" in communities of color, which kept minoritized communities from being able to secure stable FHA-backed mortgages, leaving communities of color in cycles of debt for generations, while white communities watched equity accrue in their suburban homes. It is not coincidence that these once red-lined Chicago neighborhoods now suffer from greater poverty and violent crime than other boroughs in my still-segregated hometown Chicago (Semuels, 2018).

Within the realm of religion and Christianity, Jeannine Hill Fletcher (2017) examines the perpetuation of white privilege in our Christian stories and symbols, in her efforts to draw attention to the sin of white supremacy. Bishop Edward Braxton (2017) calls for truth-telling about the "flaw at the foundation" of U.S. history in the enslavement of free African people as well as the recent police shootings of unarmed African Americans. Braxton calls on people of faith to learn the truth of our collective and current history—especially the genocide of Native Peoples and the mass incarceration of

African American males. He emboldens white communities to refuse to remain silent about continued racial injustice. These leaders of thought and word and action can serve to inspire leaders of dominant identities to examine their privilege and to claim their proper positionality as they lead us toward a hopeful future.

THE CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

Positionality theory emerged in the 1980's alongside the important feminist scholarship of Sandra Harding (1991). It posited that multiple identities (such as race, gender, and class) shape and reinforce individual perspectives (Collins, 1986; Haraway, 1991). Since one's identities are complex, fluid, and contextually bound, they vary in their relationship to how power is structured within a culture or society. As Kezar and Lester (2010) argue, leadership beliefs and actions are shaped by one's identity, context, and access to power; therefore, one's subjectivity—or I would argue, one's objectification—is formed through the effects of one's positioning. Shann Ferch (2012) reminds us that unawareness of our personal and communal cultural identity perpetuates unconscious and conscious loathing of those whom we deem "different" from ourselves—a loathing, if when coupled with power, leads to domination and oppression. A leadership theory appropriate to the current national context needs to take seriously the positionality of the leader, not to reinforce the oppressor/oppressed binary but to reconcile it, taking into

account the self-responsibility of the leader for examining his or her role in furthering social and racial justice. Paolo Freire's (1972) crucial work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, shaped the education of marginalized communities and played a crucial role in the emergence of liberation theology worldwide. Our current times beg for a "Pedagogy (or Leadership) of the Oppressor," which would require those aligned with historical oppression to "unlearn" approaches that dominate others and instead to move out of complicity to into true community.

What leadership approach, then can guide the actions of the leader who engages in this critical reflection of privilege and power? Peggy McIntosh (2003) invites a similar natural and vital question in her article about white privilege as she considers, "having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?" (p. 1). It is insufficient for a leader to engage simply in the *examination* of privilege, when ultimately it is the use of their power to transform systems toward racial equality that will make the greatest difference for our society. Mainstream leadership models provide minimal guidance here. In James MacGregor Burns' (1978) Transformational Leadership theory, the leader serves as a strong role model, creates a true connection with followers and raises the level of morality in both leader and follower in order to contribute to the common good. Authentic leadership relies on self-awareness, internalized perspective, balanced processing and relational transparency as its four primary characteristics (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson 2008). Various ethical theories within the discipline of leadership encourage altruism,

utilitarianism, and respect for people (Northouse, 2013). However, no single conception of leadership relies on positionality, critical race and feminist theory as its backbone.

Robert Greenleaf's (1970) model of the "Servant-leader" presents an opportunity for leaders to examine privilege and to employ a set of behaviors that can overturn systems of oppression and dominance. I offer here that the effectiveness in the utilization of the Servant-leadership model within diverse environments depends on two factors: 1) the positionality of the leader and 2) the context of the organization. As this paper attempts to highlight both the opportunities and challenges of utilizing a Servant-leadership model, the Jesuit lens found in the Spiritual Exercises serve as a helpful tool. St. Ignatius of Loyola (1963) proposed that an authentic discernment about how to act (and I propose, how to lead) should invite the discerner or leader to name honestly one's consolations—the places of hope, gratitude, and possibility within an option for consideration—and to name honestly one's desolations—the places of unease, limitation, and un-freedom—within the topic being discerned. As I reflect on Greenleaf's Servant-leadership model regarding its potential to address the problem of unexamined privilege, I experience both consolation and desolation, as described here.

Consolations. First, the very foundational values that undergird the Servant-leadership model lead one to a self-examination on unearned privilege. The values of listening, empathy, healing, awareness, the commitment to the growth of people and building community are especially pertinent in this

regard (Spears, 2002). Second, Robert Greenleaf believed that able leaders could emerge from every segment and strata of society, regardless of their position, education, income, ethnicity, or religion (Frick, 2004). A devout Quaker, Greenleaf's inspiration for his servant-leadership model was the historical Jesus, who befriended those rejected by society, and who called out domination and control tactics on the part of religious leaders. The "best test" of Servant-leadership, according to Greenleaf (1970), is whether those served grow as persons to become healthier, wiser, and more free (p. 6).

Third, Greenleaf (1977) calls leaders to a "legitimate power" that respects the dignity of others, especially those without privilege. Greenleaf writes that a leader has the responsibility to concern oneself with those who are less privileged in society, and to address and remove inequalities. He suggests that the central question in leadership is whether "other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 27). Frick recalled Greenleaf's April 1967 speech to Ohio Fellows, in which Greenleaf asserts, "we all do have the obligation, because we are educated and intelligent, to care for the less fortunate. It is not simply a matter of charity; everybody should be charitable. Obligation is a consequence of privilege…" (as cited in Frick, 2004, p. 233). Greenleaf's commitments reflect the commitments of leaders throughout history who are afforded advantages and have used their power for the good of others, leading by example in the effort to upend systems and policies that obstruct opportunities for those of disadvantaged status. In their book *White Men Challenging Racism*, Thompson,

Schaefer, and Brod (2003) uphold this kind of leadership as they enumerate examples of historically advantaged groups who not only unmask the role they have played in maintaining the status quo, but who articulate the moral and societal cost of an unequal society and invite justice-oriented action. Greenleaf's Servant-leadership model would support this engagement.

Fourth and finally, the servant-leader relies on self-responsibility. Greenleaf believed in leadership that is honest, loving, and responsible (Frick, 2004). Greenleaf (1998) writes: "Responsible people build…. They are moved by the heart; compassion stands ahead of justice. The prime test of whether an act is responsible is to ask, 'How will it affect people? Are lives moved toward nobility?'" (p. 96). Shann Ferch (2012) describes it this way:

> The natural tendency of humanity is to externalize blame for a given communal conflict—but the life of love sustains the truths that heal us and we begin to internalize self-responsibility for system health rather than externalize blame; in this context, the family as well as in work, and even in the course of nations, resilience and moral power, infused by love, breathe life into the system. (p. 48)

Leadership which takes responsibility for the health of the whole serves as a healing corrective as our communities, nation, and world begin to move toward reconciliation for personal and communal pain caused by inequality.

Desolations. The limitations, or desolations, that I notice within this model relate to the positionality of the leader and

the context within which the model is employed. First, depending on the gender, race and social identity of the leader, servant-leadership may or may not be experienced as Greenleaf intended. Several of the characteristics related to servanthood have traditionally been associated with women's roles (listening, empathy, care), which represent a freedom for traditional white males from the hegemonic masculinity that pervades many approaches to leadership, but may reproduce assumptions about women and leaders of color. For men, servant-leadership can provide an antidote to toxic masculinity so often associated with power and control. People of marginalized identities, however, may not experience these same benefits. Fine and Buzzanell (2000) found that Servant-leadership fails to take into consideration the ways in which gender relations may make it a very different process for women and men. Feminist theorist Eicher-Catt (2005) argues that the servant-leadership model can re-inscribe androcentric, patriarchal norms by assuming that the perspective and characteristics of a servant is a *new* standpoint for the (assumed male) leader, as opposed to a set of characteristics already present within leaders of color and women. Although servant-leadership promotes listening and service as primary characteristics of the servant-leader, Bowles and McGinn (2005) found that women are less likely than men to engage in self-promotion or visibility of their hard-earned accomplishments, to the detriment of their career advancement. Babcock and Laschever (2003) found that women are also less likely to negotiate for new opportunities, raises, and

promotions. Adoption of a servant-leadership approach which prioritizes meeting the needs of others over oneself could continue perpetuate the invisibility of women. Further, the white male servant-leader who leads by serving renounces gender expectations in a way that is remarkable and exemplary, while women who enact the same behaviors are unexceptional (Fine & Buzzanell, 2000). Men may feel freed from restrictive conceptions of masculinity or of leadership to embrace more "feminine" aspects of their personality, but women face a double-bind as they both attempt to transgress traditionally "feminine" characteristics, as these are seen as contrary to effective leadership, while trying to embody them as servant-leaders.

Kae Reynolds (2014) submits to the arguments of Eicher-Catt (2005) and others that servant-leadership may not be congruent with feminist objectives because of the danger of perpetuating existing assumptions about gender and power. However, Reynolds (2014) promotes servant-leadership for its potential as a gender-integrative approach that embraces traditionally-conceived feminine traits as part of the leadership theory matrix. She argues that because traits traditionally associated with leadership are often also correlated with masculinity and traits associated with service/servanthood are traditionally associated with the feminine (and I would argue, marginalized racial and gender identities), the ten characteristics of the servant-leader delineate along dominant/non-dominant lines–foresight, conceptualization, awareness, and persuasion being the "leader/masculine" traits

while listening, empathizing, healing, practicing stewardship, exercising commitment to the growth of people, and building community align with feminine or non-dominant identities. Reynolds asserts that these characteristics need not be correlated with oppression and subjugation but rather are commonly desirable traits that most human beings desire in a leader and sees possibilities for a holistic approach.

This is where organizational and communal context matter. If women and people of color are encouraged to employ the servant-leadership model as singular actors within situations of unequal power dynamics, they may become the servant-leaders Greenleaf envisioned but not be perceived by superiors as exercising leadership. Because the qualities associated with servant-leadership (and servanthood itself) have historically been ascribed to women and people of color, their natural ways of leading may not signal to superiors their readiness for advancement. Juana Bordas (2012) notes in her book, *Salsa, Soul and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age,* that Greenleaf might be discouraged today to find many dominant-culture leaders refusing to hand over power to marginalized groups (p. 124). However, he would be uplifted by the presence of many servant-leaders of color working within the context of communities of color, committed to leading with legitimate power for the common good. Bordas describes these leaders as "community servants" and "stewards" (p. 125). Here is where context matters. Because African-American, Native and Latino cultures have historically been rooted in the values consistent with Greenleaf's model (community, public welfare,

and addressing unjust social systems), the contexts of these communities celebrate the qualities of the servant-leader (Bordas, 2012).

I argue that a person of color or woman attempting to embody servant-leadership within a dominant-culture organization may not find that her leadership is promoted in the same way. My own professional witness to this is echoed by Marlene Fine, who wrote about her own experience: "*I tried to lead by serving—and I failed. Failed—not to serve. I think I served well. But I failed to convince those above me that I was exercising leadership. I remained invisible to those above me*" (Fine & Buzzanell, 2000, p. 128). I have observed this dynamic among individuals of non-dominant identities in my own organization, and further scholarship is warranted in this area, to ensure that women and people of color who are solo practitioners of servant-leadership are not risking career stagnation.

TOWARD A LIBERATORY MODEL OF LEADERSHIP

The Dictionary.com "word of the year" for 2017 is "complicit." In their explanation for this choice, Dictionary.com states "*Complicit* means 'choosing to be involved in an illegal or questionable act, especially with others; having partnership or involvement in wrongdoing.' Or, put simply, it means being, at some level, responsible for something . . . even if indirectly." I would argue that the phrase "even if indirectly" is terribly relevant to an examination of leadership in our times. Few leaders are free from complicity in

a global system that continually re-inscribes the domination of a powerful few over the "minoritized" many. At the end of her work, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, bell hooks (1984) encourages a "liberatory ideology" that breaks with the current systems of domination, replaces them with love and dialogue, and sees the interconnectedness of all movements toward liberation. bell hooks argues,

> the world we have most intimately known, the world in which we feel "safe" (even if such feelings are based on illusions) must be radically changed. Perhaps it is the knowledge that everyone must change, not just those we label enemies and oppressors, that has so far served to check our revolutionary impulses. (p. 166)

I propose that a model of "liberatory leadership" is needed in our times to uncover personal and communal complicity in structures, practices, and policies that assume a white male norm and ignore potent yet unquestioned assumptions regarding race and gender. Expounding upon Greenleaf's Servant-Leadership framework and drawing upon bell hooks' insights, a Liberatory Leadership paradigm would liberate people of color and women from unjust systems and welcome them into full participation at all levels of organizations, while also freeing white people from narrowly conceived illusions about whiteness and privilege and inviting men to reconsider narrowly defined hegemonic masculinities. By recognizing and taking seriously the positionality of the leader as well as historical communal contexts, a liberatory leadership paradigm would honor the uniqueness of the capacities of non-dominant

groups and encourage (as Greenleaf did) a genuine sharing of power with those who have historically been disempowered.

This proposed liberatory leadership framework includes three primary components: theoretical underpinnings that serve as the foundation for the framework, a set of principles for effective leaders (throughout all levels of an organization), and a set of organizational policy and practice considerations. Initial considerations for a model are presented here although robust input, particularly from traditionally marginalized populations, would be essential to a more thorough examination of a liberatory leadership model, and methods for assessment will need to be explored in future scholarship.

Theoretical Underpinnings

It is important to begin by naming the theoretical underpinnings for a liberatory leadership framework. Critical leadership studies, post-structural feminism, critical race theory and transdisciplinary theory serve as the scaffolding for the liberatory model. Critical leadership studies is a broad and diverse array of critiques that question the power dynamics and identity constructions through which leadership is received and reproduced and questioned and transformed in the development of leadership theory (Collinson, 2011). Liberatory leadership contributes to this growing body of research as it attempts to confront dominant thinking about leader-follower dynamics and assumed hegemonic perspectives. Post-structural feminist analysis explores the intersectionalities of race, gender, class and sexualities and the ways these identities "mutually

construct one another" (Collins, 1998, p. 63). Post-structural feminism serves an important role because it reveals the subjectivities in organizations, critiques dominant organizational practices, reveals the hidden raced, classed and gendered dynamics therein, and requires from the practitioner a critical awareness of one's social location as the starting point for their contribution to leadership (Holvino, 2010). Organizational practices emerge from post-structural feminism, as outlined below. Critical race theory explores the relationship between race, power and structural inequities where racism becomes imbedded, and questions the cultural assumptions at the foundations of the liberal order (Delgado, Stefancic, & Harris, 2017). It arose after the civil rights era, as scholars, lawyers and activists recognized the stalling of progress toward black liberation and recognized the need for new theories and strategies to uncover and resist racism. Drawing on European philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, critical race theory also emerged from the lived experience of individuals like Sojourner Truth, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others (Delgado et al., 2017). It attempts to rectify what J. King (1991) calls dysconscious racism, "a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges," and suggests that a society reorganized without racial privilege is only possible with a fundamental shift in the way racially advantaged groups think about their status, their self-identities and their conceptions of people of color (p. 135).

Finally, the liberatory paradigm draws upon transdisciplinary theory. The integration of seeming

dichotomies and collapsing of paradoxes is crucial in order for a liberatory model to be successfully employed. The unhelpful binaries of "leader vs. follower," "born vs. made," "masculine vs. feminine," "oppressed vs. oppressor," and "individual rights vs. collective good" lock leaders into contrived either/or decisions. Max-Neef (2005) argues that although contemporary human beings know very much, we *understand* very little, lacking a more comprehensive, deeper way of encountering the world in all its complexity, in order to see the reality of the "unity of all things" (p. 15). Transdisciplinarity invites leadership that is horizontal and inclusive, that takes seriously the impact of decisions for "generations yet to come… the planet as a whole… an economy as if people matter" (p. 8). This holistic, transdisciplinary thinking is core to liberatory approaches. Although Robert Greenleaf lacked the consciousness of critical race and feminist discourse, Greenleaf's approach also advocated the reconciliation of seeming dichotomies. His vision of a "good society" included individualism amidst community, elitism along with populism, both chaos and order. The characteristics of servant-leadership also attempt to reconcile binaries. As Reynolds (2014) posits, they promote traditionally-ascribed "feminine" characteristics as a counterbalance to some of the traditional white-male authored theories of leadership, liberating both men and women from binary categories. A liberatory approach affirms the servant-leadership ideal of the reintegration of the lost feminine and the full embrace by *both* men and women of societally-inscribed "masculine" and "feminine" leadership

characteristics, as they engage the fullest spectrum of human emotion, intellect, and activity, regardless of gender. This integration and freedom from gender-inscribed norms makes a more liberatory leadership possible.

Leadership Principles

Inspired by the works of Robert Greenleaf, Paolo Freire and bell hooks, and distilling core themes from their vast and important works, the liberatory leadership framework offers a set of three guiding principles that inspire the practices of leadership: awareness, a commitment to share power, and love. After extensive study of Greenleaf's original works, Spears (2002) extracted a set of characteristics of the servant-leader, which include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. While each of these servant-leader characteristics could be employed by a leader committed to liberatory practices, awareness becomes a central principle for effective liberatory work. Self-awareness creates conscious space for reflection on one's identity, history, emotional responses, assumptions, and unconscious biases in order for continuous growth and transformation. This level of self-awareness becomes important in resisting what Hofstede (2011) calls "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category from another" and which assumes normativity of the dominant group (p. 3). Greenleaf (1977) recognized that entering into this awareness can produce

disturbance as leaders move "below the level of conscious intellect" to mine both the conscious and unconscious mind, to notice the errors inherited by our culture, the "undigested residue of our experience" and the losses sustained but unexamined (p. 340). Discomfort, guilt or pain arises in distinctive ways for people of dominant positionalities as they become aware of their privilege. Greenleaf (1977) writes, "awareness is not a giver of solace–it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace" (p. 41). Greenleaf recommends leaders remove what blinds them from reality, even to the point of choosing to lose "what must be lost" (p. 340). This is a particularly poignant directive for societally advantaged groups who want to engage in anti-racist or feminist practices that require personal sacrifice. White anti-racist author Robin DiAngelo (2018) suggests that as white people awaken to the realities of white privilege and racial inequality, they must build "capacity to sustain the discomfort of not knowing, the discomfort of being racially unmoored, the discomfort of racial humility" (p. 14). For leaders with non-dominant identities, the pain of recognizing internalized oppression can also arise, spurring leaders to examine their internalized bias, recover their personal power, and seek out communities from which they may have become alienated, in order to resist unknowingly passing on to others what they've tacitly acquired (David, 2014). From a place of deep self-awareness, leaders from non-dominant groups will discern how to harness and claim their

agency. Hofstede (2011) suggests that no matter what our social location might be, critical awareness can re-wire the "software of the mind" which assigns meaning to our cultural and gender identities, with the possibility of liberation for all (p. 13). In this way, leaders come to reconcile and make peace with both the imbedded oppressed and oppressor within themselves (Ferch, 2017).

As the liberatory leader engages in deep and continuous practices of self-awareness, he or she recognizes one's own capacity and responsibility to share power with others, especially those who have historically been denied it. Paolo Freire (1972), whose liberatory lens transformed pedagogical practice for underserved communities, promotes dialogue between oppressed and oppressor, to bring people together towards greater mutual freedom. This dialogue is an avenue for sharing power, as both oppressed and oppressor gain greater critical consciousness as they work to change society for the better. For Greenleaf (1977), too, power was meant to be shared, as "legitimate" power is only exercised through service to others. He advocated that servant-leaders step back to allow the talents and "genius" of others to come to light. Servant-leadership espouses a "nonhierarchical, participative approach to defining organizational objectives and ethics that recognizes and values the subjectivity and situatedness of organizational members" (Reynolds, 2014). Critical leadership studies interrogate the place of power as well, and critiques the persistence within mainstream leadership theory of the distinction between leader and follower (Gronn, 2011).

Hofstede (2011) argues that "power distance," the widespread cultural acceptance of unequal distribution of power, has significant influence within institutions and organizations. Bryson and Crosby (1992) conceive of a shared-power world, where systems of organizational partnerships, coalitions and collaborations work together toward mutual and long-term gain for the common good. A liberatory model proposes to equalize power relations by acknowledging unequal distributions of power and minimizing power distance by all members of a given organization. The concept of subsidiarity is important in this regard—that those people closest to a given decision have the greatest voice in its discernment. Shared power is also a key principle within many Native American communities, as Okanogan leader Jeanette Armstrong (2002) describes, "from our point of view, the minority voice is the most important voice to consider in terms of the things that are going wrong, the things that we're not looking after, the things we're not being responsible toward (9:04)." As decisions are made, the Okanogan call forth the voices of the young, the elders, the artists, and the land, recognizing the wisdom these marginalized perspectives offer and sharing power to ensure the sustainability and survival of the Okanogan people (Armstrong, 2002). Liberatory leadership, too, blurs the lines between leader and follower, trusting that leaders exist throughout an organization, and seeking out unheard voices in order that power is shared.

A centerpiece of the work and writing of Greenleaf, Freire and hooks is the principle of love (hooks, 2000; Miller, Brown

& Hopson, 2011; Patterson, 2010). Liberatory leadership relies on love as its foundation, as liberatory leaders place people at the center of an organization's focus, choosing to lead and act out of love. Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) argue that compassionate love is an antecedent to servant-leadership and that this loving compassion entails considering each individual (or follower) in his or her fullness. Cultural leadership theorists Miller et al. (2011) propose that love was a primary operational tenet of Freire's work as well. bell hooks (2000) gives depth and fullness to the concept of love, defining it as a combination of "care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust," which must be experienced together in order for the receiver to experience love (p. 7). Love in leadership also serves as an important antidote to operating out of fear and scarcity (hooks, 2000; Patterson, 2010). Even mainstream leadership scholarship is surfacing the primacy of love as central to the practice of effective leadership. Lawrence and Pirson (2015) point out that Renewed Darwinian theory is recovering the primacy of the "drive to bond" and the "drive to comprehend" as two primary motives that direct decision-making in leadership and serve as important counterweights to the drive to acquire and to defend, traditionally associated with the survival of the fittest. Their research reveals that if a leader is unable to form true caring relationships or to seek to comprehend the experience of another, individuals and organizations suffer. Love that seeks to understand and to connect with others is central to effective liberatory leadership. Alongside awareness that allows us to honestly name our

personal and communal realities and shared power that entrusts individuals and communities with agency, love that sacrifices for the growth of another and nurtures the fullest development of each human being defines the liberatory leader.

Organizational Practice Considerations

What would organizational practices within a Liberatory Leadership framework look like? Holvino (2010) recommends three specific organizational practices that lend themselves toward examination of privilege and organizational transformation toward racial and gender justice. First, she suggests giving voice to "hidden stories at the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity and nation" (p. 263). This truth-telling through personal narrative allows for the embodiment of collective histories within individuals, creating space for acknowledgement of painful truths and inspiring motivation to resist reproducing them. Chronicling stories from non-dominant perspectives serves as an important counter-narrative to assumed norms and can be vehicle for education about the particularities of the ways discrimination and exclusion is experienced by individuals. It can also serve as fodder for examination of institutional practices that may unknowingly contribute to oppressive experiences. Second, Holvino recommends an analysis of the ways practical, everyday practices within organizations are experienced differently and create advantages or disadvantages based on one's positionality. Honest assessment by diverse constituents about the practical impact of structures and decisions,

specifically on women and people of color, enables institutional policy to shift. Finally, Holvino suggests an honest naming of organizational and individual location with regards to context, history and social context. This includes the exploration of the ways that neo-colonial practices, historical social inequities, and patriarchal discriminatory mindsets or contexts can inhibit liberatory practices.

Additional organizational practices which actualize awareness, shared power and love include: proactive hiring and promotion processes which favor diverse candidates; anti-bias trainings for all stakeholders of the organization (to enable movement beyond fear and into greater love); policies that support work/life balance, family responsibilities, health, and community engagement; facilitated practices for personal and collective reflection to attend to conscience; creating community partnerships across previously uncrossed barriers; a commitment to seeking on-going reconciliation and reparations with individuals and communities impacted by the organization; and a communal engagement in creative imagination about how to envision a future rooted in justice for all human peoples as well as the earth.

As the roots of Robert Greenleaf's theory of Servant-leadership are grounded in a spirituality inspired by the Judeo-Christian context, consideration of spiritual practice within the liberatory framework is also worth exploration here. Howard (2002) argues that the expansion of interest in spirituality and leadership is one of the greatest areas of interest within practice and research. A 2018 Amazon book search for topics related to

spirituality and effective leadership reveals over 8,000 results. Howard connects spirituality and workplace growth, noting that the transformation of people and organizations requires generativity, courage and strength, which can be bolstered by spiritual practice. Ngunjiri (2010), in her study of servant-leaders and tempered radicals among African women, found spirituality to be a crucial component to their effectiveness as leaders. The women she interviewed drew upon spiritual practice in three primary ways: as a source of inspiration and direction, as a source of leadership practice, and as a source of courage and strength amidst adversity. Ngunjiri found that spirituality served as a "divine inspiration to lead for social justice, a source of fulfillment in the face of performing thankless work, and the impetus for action" (p. 203). The spirituality of these women empowered them to develop a profound critique of the status quo and then to reconstruct and move toward more hopeful and potent possibilities for their communities. Although espousal of religious belief is unnecessary for practitioners of liberatory leadership, spirituality can provide inspiration and courage to leaders as they live out liberatory principles and lead organizations toward practices that are liberating for all.

CONCLUSION

Civil, corporate, ecclesial, and educational systems cry out for a liberatory leadership that acknowledges positionality and privilege, operates out of both truth and love, shares power, and turns our societies toward the healing and justice they so

desperately need for the flourishing of all. This model raises up both bell hooks' (1984) vision of "reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires" (p. 26) and Greenleaf's commitment to use power for good, making sure that means determine ends without justification of unjust practices or the exploitation of human beings (Frick, 2004). The health, freedom, wisdom, and autonomy that Greenleaf (1970) envisioned would be at the center of human organizations. This leadership approach would move our society toward something it has never been—the beloved community, as Martin Luther King (1957) called it, or in Ignatian terms, "the Magis," that sacred "more" to which we must strive as we envision a just and humane world for future generations.

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