TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SELF UNDERSTANDING

by

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## Abstract

Transformational leaders change minds. Transformational leaders inspire hearts. Transformational leaders alter lives. In the end, transformational leaders are capable of transfiguring not only individuals, but also organizations, cultures, societies, entire nations, and yes, even our world. The potency, however, of these leaders rests initially upon their self-understanding. The greater the clarity, ownership, perceived value and discerning application of that self-understanding, the greater their effectiveness as leaders. When leaders can confidently answer the question, “Who am I?” and make direct application to their purpose – tremendous influential power is unleashed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Project

“At its root”, says Jane Fryar (2007), Dean of the College of Graduate Studies at Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska, “the word lead means to ‘go, travel, guide’. Leaders start someplace and they go someplace – someplace meaningful. They take others with them along the way” (p. 157). The transformational leader, however, not only takes others on a journey, but also changes them fundamentally, as they travel. Transformational leadership “involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them” (Northouse, 2007, pp. 175-176). The goal of transformational leaders is not merely to reach pre-determined temporal objectives, but to alter the very constitution of those who follow.

These leaders must possess a well-defined sense of self in order to shape others so profoundly. Self-understanding is a bedrock element of effective transformational leadership. Without deep conviction as to who one is, why one exists, and what one values; a leader cannot radically alter others’ lives. This self-awareness is not easily gained. Serious deliberation, questioning, and wrestling with the subsequent application of this understanding are requisite to laying efficacious groundwork. Jesus is a clear example of a leader who gained these key understandings and, as a result, dramatically changed the lives of his followers.

Thesis Statement

Jesus’ transformational leadership skills emerged from his self-understanding.

Subject Overview

“The philosophers”, wrote Karl Marx, “have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it” (Thinkexist.com, n.d., p.1). Transformational leaders are change agents. These types of visionaries have transfigured individuals, organizations, societies, nations and even humankind itself. They are most often charismatic leaders who inspire their followers with a hopeful vision of the future, a sense of mission, and intrinsic values that engender deep commitment by their followers to espoused goals. They work at the character level, intend to create strong relational bonds that produce heightened standards of morality, and determine to mold ethics, values, and motivation in order for their followers to reach their fullest potential (Northouse, 2007, pp. 175-176).

Jesus was such a leader. He converted, revolutionized, and transfigured his world and in doing so, today’s world as well. Charles Edward Jefferson (n.d.) noted 20th century theologian and writer said:

When Jesus says, “Behold I make all things new,” he lays his hand on the heart of man…. here then is Jesus’ own secret for making an old world over: he will introduce golden ages by giving individuals a character like his own. His character is a form of power mightier than the legions of Caesar or the wisdom of the greatest schools. (Laing, 1997, pp. 22-23)

Jesus was a catalyst for transforming lives from the inside out. This power to transform lives radically must first achieve impetus within a leader before significant influence can be affected outside of a leader (Tucker & Russell, 2004, p. 105). The requisite thrust is launched from a person’s self-understanding. Edwin H. Friedman’s (1985) conclusions (as cited by Robinson, 1999):

Friedman discusses the difference between leadership as defined as expertise and leadership understood as self-definition…Instead of urging leaders to be experts, Friedman recommends that leaders develop the capacity for self-definition, the ability ‘to define his or her own goals or values while trying to maintain a nonanxious [*sic*] presence within the system”. (p. 1229)

Anthony B. Robinson (2000) states:

Our greatest strength as leaders lies not in the accumulation of information or technique, but in knowing ourselves and being able to articulate and act upon goals and values that are central to us and which are rooted in our faith. (p. 1229)

Leaders like Jesus, who attain clear self-identities, build strong foundations for possible transformational influence. This self-understanding is not easily gained and therefore is often attained through significant trial and error. It is a process of discovery that is often achieved by a series of breakthroughs in awareness.

When Jesus came to understand that he was, in fact, not only the long-awaited Messiah (Ware, 2010, p. 8) but was himself God, it set the whole trajectory of his life (Keck, 2000, p. 234). Jesus’ goals, relationships, thoughts, behavior, and mission were all tremendously affected by his self-understanding. Transformational leadership derives its power from this clear self-understanding.

Project Description

This project studied the influence that Jesus’ self-understanding had on the efficacy of his leadership.

*Nature of the Project*

The researcher used case study methodology to examine Jesus’ self-understanding and how it related to the character of his overall influence. The researcher examined the birthing, development, maturation, ownership, and application of Jesus’ self-understanding alongside its relative influential strength throughout his life.

The researcher used canonical biblical texts (containing numerous sayings attributed to Jesus), theological treatises, and conclusions drawn by numerous Quest scholars and other New Testament, Old Testament, and extra-biblical scholars to unearth his self-concept. Psychological and sociological studies as well as transformational, charismatic and servant leadership studies were also investigated to explore the foundation of Jesus’ self-understanding. Once his self-concept was mined, it was then examined concurrently with the breadth of his effective influence in order to explore a possible causal relationship.

*Scope of the Project*

The researcher examined the life of Jesus, both as the historical Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

*Goals/Purpose of the Project*

This study may provide motivation for future or aspiring leaders to ascertain and strengthen their self-understanding and thus increase the power of their own transformational leadership. This examination may also provide the basis for programmatic exploration and instruction for those wishing to lead others into more effective and dynamic leadership roles. When a leader recognizes the catalytic power bound to his or her self-understanding, efforts may then be focused to unearth, strengthen, apply, own, and mature that self-understanding towards the application of the leaders influence for good.

If one is to lead, one should lead with as much consequence as possible. The goal of transformational leadership is life-altering influence. Transformational leaders change their world by initiating extraordinary changes to people’s values, character, hopes and ideologies. They help others procure change both personally and globally through innovative solutions. In the end, says Stephen Denning (2007), “They don’t just generate followers; their followers themselves become leaders” (p. 22). By enabling transformational leaders to increase the influence of their own leadership while duplicating themselves as leaders, the concept of self-understanding may serve a more global purpose than simply enhancing personal knowledge.

*Significance of the Project*

Ken Blanchard (2007) says that leadership is “the capacity to influence others by unleashing their power and potential to impact the greater good… [it] is a high calling” (p. xix). The impact of leadership is felt daily in individual lives, families, corporations, religious bodies, societies, and nations; leadership is comprehensive. Because leadership can be so far-reaching, Blanchard (2007) says it “should not be done purely for personal gain or goal accomplishment; it should have a much higher purpose than that” (p. xix). Transformational leadership espouses such a high calling - to transfigure lives.

The researcher examined Jesus, a widely acknowledged transformational leader, and in particular examined the relationship between his self-understanding and the potency of his leadership. This inspection may more clearly illuminate the value of this often-overlooked key to effective leadership – self-understanding. The revealed causal relationship may add to the burgeoning knowledge of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership may thus be enhanced and the transformational leader’s influence bolstered. With this relationship revealed, “leader-makers” may alter their initial programmatic training to include the necessary discovery of self-understanding. This focus may result in more valuable and efficacious leadership – of which the world constantly stands in need.

Plan for Chapter 2: Literature Review

Research studies referenced for this qualitative study concentrated in the following areas; Christological, messianic, eschatological, and apocalyptic studies, both psychological and sociological interpretations of the historical Jesus, studies in self-actualization and transformational or charismatic leadership in general, servant leadership, biblical criticism of both the Old and New Testament scriptures, as well as learning theories – in particular, the Social Cognitive Theory of learning. A number of commentaries and theological dictionaries were referenced as well as numerous Old and New Testament scriptures in prophetic or direct reference to Jesus.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. How did Jesus’ self-understanding shape the character of his transformational leadership?
2. How did Jesus discover and actualize his self-understanding?
3. What are common themes of his self-understanding?
4. Was Jesus a transformational leader before he discovered his self-understanding or did he become a transformational leader because of his acute self-understanding?

Definition of Terms

*Apocalyptic (New Testament)*. “Portions of the New Testament that describe the end of the world. The book of Revelation with its symbolic forms and visions is a major example.” (McKim, 1996, p. 15).

*Apocalyptic (Old Testament).* “Portions of the Old Testament featuring symbolic forms or visions and pointing toward the future, marked especially by the theme of judgment. In the Old Testament, the book of Daniel is an example.” (McKim, 1996, p. 15).

*Apostle*. “(Gr. *Apostolos*, “one who is sent”) One sent to act on the authority of another. Refers to the earliest, closest followers of Jesus (Matt. 10:2-4).” (McKim, 1996, p. 15).

*Biblical Criticism*. “(From Gr. *krinein*, ‘to judge,’ ‘to discern’) The study and the investigation of biblical writings through many means [such as form criticism, historical criticism, narrative criticism, redaction criticism, source criticism, and textual criticism] to understand elements such as their backgrounds, forms, history, authorship, audience, message, language, circumstances, and relation to other biblical writings” (McKim, 1996, p. 67)

*Canon of Scripture*. “The biblical books constituting the Old and New Testaments and considered authoritative by the Christian church.” (McKim, 1996, p. 37).

*Charismatic Leadership*. “Is often described in ways that make it similar to, if not synonymous with, transformational leadership” (Northouse, 2007, p. 177). Charismatic leadership may focus more on verbal talents, the desire for personal power and desire to create “impressions of competence and effectiveness” (Sosik & Dworakivsky, 1998, p.).

*Christ.* “(Gr. *Christos*, Heb. *mashiah*, ‘anointed one’) Old Testament Israel anticipated a coming deliver ‘anointed’ by God to initiate God’s rule of righteousness and peace. Early Christians saw Jesus as fulfilling this hope and designated him as ‘Christ’ (Mark 8:29; Acts 5:42; Rom. 5:6)” (McKim, 1996, p. 45).

*Christ of faith.* “Term used by some to designate the Christ proclaimed by the early Christian Church in distinction from the Jesus of history who is known through historical investigation” (McKim, 1996, p. 46).

*Christology.* “(From Gr. *Christos*, “anointed one,” and *logos*, “study”) The study of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The church’s understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done grew and developed through the centuries. Early church councils produced christological statements.” (McKim, 1996, p. 48).

*Christological*. “Referring to the doctrine of Jesus Christ.” (McKim, 1996, p. 48).

*Eschatology.* “(From Gr. *Eschatos*, “last,” and *logos*, “study) Study of the “last things” or the end of the world. Theological dimensions include the second coming of Jesus Christ and the last judgment.” (McKim, 1996, p. 92).

*Quest of the historical Jesus*. “A term associated with the work of Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) and attempts to write a “life of Jesus” with attention to subjecting the figure of Jesus to the forms of historical inquiry used in the study of other historical characters.” (McKim, 1996, p. 230).

*Jesus Seminar.*  “A Group of biblical scholars that began meeting in 1985. Their purpose has been to examine all the sayings attributed to Jesus in the New Testament and in the documents of early Christianity in order to assess the degree of scholarly consensus about the historical authenticity of each saying.” (McKim, 1996, p. 150).

*Messiah*. “(Heb. *mashiah*, ‘annointed one,’ Gr. *Christos*) The promised deliverer of Israel who would establish God’s rule. Christians see Jesus as the ‘Christ’ and the one in whom God’s promises are fulfilled (Acts 2:31-36) and who will ultimately rule the world and its new divine order (Phil. 2:5-11).” (McKim, 1996, p. 172).

*Messianic*. “Pertaining to the Messiah; particularly used for biblical passages considered to be prophetic in anticipating a coming messiah (Acts 9:1-7; Isa. 11:1-10, etc.).” (McKim, 1996, p. 172).

*Messianic secret*. “A term used to describe the phenomena found especially in the Gospel of Mark when Jesus instructs his followers not to proclaim him as the Messiah (Mark 8:30; 9:9). Other actions of his also point in this direction (Mark 1:25, 34, 43f.; 7:36, etc.).” (McKim, 1996, p. 172).

*New Testament.* “(From Gr. *Diatheke*, “covenant”, Lat. *Testamentum*) The twenty-seven books accepted by the Christian church as Scripture and as God’s revelation, centered in Jesus Christ. They constitute the norm for the church’s life as expressions of the will of God” (McKim, 1996, p. 187).

*Self-understanding* is variously described as self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-insight, self-concept and self-identification. It is an elemental facet of the broader concept of Emotional Intelligence. Psychoanalytic literature has often used the terms self-understanding and insight interchangeably. In psychoanalytic theory, self-understanding refers to “the understanding that clients gain regarding their current maladaptive relational patterns” (Connolly, M.B., Crits-Christoph, P., Shelton, R.C., Hollon, S., Kurtz, J., Barber, J.P., et al., 1999, p. 472), thus, self-understanding includes a person’s cognition of their own relational patterns.

*Torah*. (Heb. “instruction,” “law”) God’s revelation to Moses at Mount Sinai was of God’s torah (“instruction” or “law”) as the expression of God’s will for the nation of Israel. The Pentateuch [first five books of the Old Testament] is known as the Torah. By extension, in Judaism, torah is any expression of God’s will” (McKim, 1996, p. 284).

*Transactional Leadership*. Leadership that involves the exchange of things of value between a leader and subordinate that serve to advance both parties’ agendas (Northouse, 2007, p. 185).

*Transformational Leadership.* Leadership “whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. This type of leader is attentive to the needs and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their fullest potential” (Northouse, 2007, p. 176).

*Trinity*. “(From Lat. *trinitas*, ‘triad’) The Christian church’s belief that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Persons in one Godhead. They share the same essence or substance (Gr. *homoousios*). Yet they are three ‘persons’ (Lat. *personae*). God is this way within the Godhead and as known in Christian experience.” (McKim, 1996, p. 288).

Assumptions

The researcher assumes textual reliability of the New International Version of the Bible which is the primary translation used in this study due to its widespread use and recognizability. Phillip Comfort (1991), in *The Complete Guide to Bible Versions*, states: “The New International Version, sponsored by the [International] Bible Society, ... has become a standard version used for private reading and pulpit reading in many English-speaking countries" (Biblica. com/bibles/translations/, n.d., retrieved June 26, 2010). The researcher therefore deems, for the purpose of this study, that the referencing of biblical texts in their original language (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) is unnecessary.

It is also assumed that the Biblical accounts of the life of Jesus as recorded, particularly, in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, while they may contain some redacted interpretative material inserted by the writers; do contain the actual and accurate thoughts, words, and actions of Jesus. The assumption is that the canonical Biblical account is the most accurate depiction of not only the life of Jesus, but of the most significant writings that Jesus himself would have had accessed.

The researcher also assumes that the Jesus of history as meticulously researched, in what are variously known as the *First Quest*, *New Quest*, and the *Third Quest* by modern scholars, is in fact also the Christ of the Christian faith. The researcher also assumes that the person known as Jesus Christ was both fully human and fully divine; he was and is the immaculate Son of the Christian God.

Limitations

The researcher has limited this case study to Jesus. The researcher initially set out also to study the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul as viable representatives of New Testament era transformational leaders. Time was the greatest restraint for the eventual narrowed, singular case study choice. The researcher does not purport that just *anyone* who creates a clear, applicable, and owned self-understanding will inevitably become a powerful transformational leader; only that powerful transformational leaders *do* possess a clear, applicable, and owned self-understanding.

The researcher limited his “Christian historical literature” research to the canonical scriptures. It was assumed that the most reliable accounts of the life of Jesus is recorded in what is known as the traditional Christian Bible and therefore, primarily due to time constraints, extra-canonical literature (such as the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and other Sacred Writings) was not included in the literature review.

The researcher is aware that there is a plethora of learning theories, the study of which could add significant background, context, and elucidation for the process by which Jesus gained, solidified, and developed his self-understanding. However, due in large to time constraints, the Social Cognitive Theory of learning was the sole learning theory used in significance to ascertain the possible particulars of Jesus’ self-understanding.

Summary

Leadership is a process that influences people to attain pre-determined goals (Northouse, 2007, p. 3). Leaders come in all shapes and sizes and from all walks of life. However, the transformational leader takes leadership to a more profound level of effectiveness. This type of leader is inspirational, long-term focused, relationally oriented, and holds lofty standards of personal morality while maintaining an elevated call of commitment to followers. The transformational leader challenges and molds the values, beliefs and paradigms of followers - not simply the actions and behaviors. In the end, “transformational leadership moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them. They become motivated to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group or organization” (Northouse, 2007, p. 184).

Transformational leaders deeply impress their followers. Examples of the transformational leader abound: Mohandas Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, Victor Frankl, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King Jr., to name a few. This project studied the life of Jesus, the best-known transformational leader of the New Testament era and, arguably, all of history. The study sought to discover the impact that his self-understanding had on the strength of his transformational leadership.

James M. Kouzes (1999) discovered that “*credibility is the foundation of leadership*. People don’t follow your technique. They follow you – your message and your embodiment of that message” (p. 39). Kouzes (1999) in referencing Max DePree (n.d.) states that the prerequisite to leadership is “finding one’s voice in the first place” (p. 39). To be a genuine leader one must speak personal words and act out of personal conviction; not simply mimic the rhetoric and behaviors of those they may respect. Private ownership of values is critical – but preceding that ownership comes self-inspection and a resultant vividly defined, acutely applied self-understanding. This produces powerful transformational leadership.

Kouzes (1999) concludes his remarks on “finding your leadership voice” (pp. 37-42) with the postulation that leaders must know themselves:

Yes, you can learn to lead, but don’t confuse leadership with position and place. Don’t confuse leadership with skills and systems or with tools and techniques. They are not what earn you the respect and commitment of your constituents. What earns you their respect in the end is whether you are you. And whether what you are embodies what they want to become. *So just who are you, anyway*? [*italics added*] (p. 42)

Kouzes, here, emphasizes the value of self-understanding. It is foundational to transformational leadership.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review explores various investigations into the role that self-understanding has as it relates to transformational leadership and uses Jesus as its case study. In particular, the function and impact of a leader’s self-understanding are examined as they pertain to transformational leadership effectiveness. Theological, philosophical and psychological scholarship is reviewed to highlight both historical and current thought regarding the formation and character of a leader’s self-understanding. The researcher also seeks to ascertain what cultural, social, familial, egoistic, or faith-based variables, for instance, might have influenced Jesus in the formation of his self-understanding. The literature review then seeks to uncover postulations concerning what causal relationship, if any, that self-understanding had on the character of Jesus’ transformational leadership.

*Transformational Leadership*

Russell Ackoff (1999) stated:

Leadership consists of guiding, encouraging, and facilitating others in the pursuit of ends by the use of means, both of which they [the leaders] have either selected or approved…leadership requires an ability to bring the will of the followers into consonance with that of the leader so that they follow him or her voluntarily, with enthusiasm and dedication. (p. 21)

Transformational leadership takes this facilitation to a more profound level, deeper in both purpose and affect. This type of leadership, as opposed to transactional leadership, is less dependent upon outside circumstances and organizational context (Popper & Zakkai, 1994, pp. 6-7) and so is left free to create “new pathways in an organization” (Tucker & Russell, 2004, p. 104), spur innovations and transformations, or even revolutions. Transformational leaders “exemplify new ways of thinking” (Price & Price, 2009, p. 51) while pursuing change, both corporately and individually. According to Bass & Avolio (1993) “transformational leaders change their culture” (p. 112) and “take personal responsibility for the development of their followers” (p. 113). The affects are significant on followers. It is more than mere supervisory influence. What many may call leadership is, more accurately, either administration or management. Leadership - especially transformational leadership - arouses energy and commitment from followers; this is not necessarily so with administration or management (Ackoff, 1999, p. 21).

The change that transformational leadership catalyzes hinges upon an inspiring vision that both directs and motivates its followers. This vision is created from lofty ideals, values, and goals that the leader both personally espouses and simultaneously fosters in the lives of followers (Bass & Avolio, 1993 and Tucker & Russell, 2004) and this vision is primarily sustained by the leader’s own sense of purpose (Sosik & Dworakivsky, 1998 and Tucker & Russell, 2004). Transformational leadership is based in forward thought. It is conducted in a provocative environment of expectation because the transformational leader “sees the present as a springboard to achieve future aims” (Popper & Zakkai, 1994, p. 6). Those visionary aims not only help to energize the leader but invoke fresh and invigorating hopes among followers as well.

Transformational leaders have been described as self-confident, honest, full of integrity, critical thinkers, empathetic, moral, respectful, caring, inspiring, humble, mentoring, and motivating (Tucker & Russell, 2004, pp. 104-105). Bass and Avolio (1993) describe them as persistent, creative, energetic, sensitive, trusting, unifying, and purposeful (pp. 112-113). Ultimately, the transformational leader “is associated with the highest levels of individual and unit performance” (Sosik & Dworakivsky, 1998, p. 15).

According to Bass and Avolio (1993):

Transformational leaders have been characterized by four separate components or characteristics denoted as the 4 *Is* [*sic*] of transformational leadership (Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino, 1991). These four factors include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. (p. 112)

Transformational leaders build emotional bonds with their followers that produce more satisfying relationships than do other types of leadership. Transformational leadership is less contractual and more covenantal than, say, transactional leadership, and thus produces greater personal commitment, purpose, and long-term benefits (Bass & Avolio, 1993 and Sosik & Megerian, 1999). According to Bass & Avolio there is “a sense of shared fates and interdependence” (1993, p. 116) inherent in the transformational leader and follower bond. This connection forges enduring effects on both leader and follower.

*Transformational Leadership Begins with the Self*

Peter Senge (1994) as quoted by Dhiman (2007) says that “The core leadership strategy is simple: be a model…There is nothing more powerful you can do to encourage others in their quest for personal mastery than to be serious in your own quest” (p. 34). Once a person so dedicated to personal mastery begins to gain ground in that endeavor, he or she has laid the foundation requisite to transform the lives of others.

Perhaps no greater change can be wrought by the transformational leader - notwithstanding the fact that there are other variables that affect the efficacy of a leader such as “organizational contexts and…varying levels of nearness in their relationships with [followers]” (Popper & Zakkai, 1994, p. 3) - than the significant growth of followers themselves. Transformational leaders desire to change their followers constitutionally; they seek to revolutionize the thinking of followers, shape their values and beliefs, and provide opportunities for followers to better themselves and become transformational leaders themselves (Tucker & Russell, 2004 and Ackoff, 1999).

Intuitively, the transformational power of a leader must first be unleashed on himself or herself before success can be found in transforming others. A leader who exemplifies personal transformation can inspire change in others. Collinson (2008) calls this idea the “logic of attraction”:

To engage this logic of attraction, leaders must first make deep changes in themselves…when deep personal change occurs, leaders then behave differently…and new behaviors in the leaders attract new behaviors from followers. When leaders model personal change, organizational change is more likely to take place. (p. 443)

These constituent changes that a leader forges, illustrates for others the very process of human development which then produces fertile soil for their own transformation. When others witness transmogrified behavior in a leader, they are inspired to adopt the same or similar changes to their own behavior. Not only is this so, but personal changes that a leader embodies also induces a productive attraction between leader and follower simply by advancing themselves a better person in their followers eyes. “The very factors that make a person a great leader” claims Bennis & Thomas (2002) “are the ones that make him or her a successful, healthy human being” (p. xiii). Leaders, then, are simply highly successful human beings. They are extraordinarily personally effective with their own lives and resources. Transformational leadership and self-development are utterly intertwined. Once a leader initiates personal change (emotional, cognitive, and spiritual), not only are they a viable and motivating example for change, but they have are simultaneously building requisite character from which to launch further transformational influence.

*Producers of Transformational Leadership*

In his book, *Failure of Nerve*, Edwin Freidman asserts that “before any technique or data [can] be effective, leaders [have] to be willing to face their own selves” (p. 21) and a leader must be “willing to be continually transformed by one’s experience” and “willing to make a lifetime commitment to their own continual self-regulated growth” (p. 20). Cianciolo, Antonakis, and Sternberg (2004) suggest that one’s experience can actually act as a “mentor” for a leader’s transformative capacity. While other researchers specifically promote childhood and pre-adult experiences as fostering leadership self-identity (Amit, Popper, Gal, Mamane-Levy, & Lisak, 2009, p. 310), especially if those experiences are later systematically reflected upon to facilitate reflective learning (p. 313, 314). Bennis & Thomas (2002) conclude that the most powerful process of self-regulated growth may come from what they call “crucibles”. In fact, in their book, *Geeks and Geezers*, they claim that all of the fifty leaders that they researched had the shared transformational experience of a crucible (p. xiii).

Tichy & McGill (2003) concur that “every one of us has critical life events [crucibles] that have shaped who we are today” in relation to our ethics, morals, and leadership (pp. 6-7). Lee Iacocca affirms that “leaders are made, not born. Leadership is forged in times of crisis [crucibles]” (2007, p. 11). Truman’s crucible was WW II. Sidney Rittenberg’s crucible was years of imprisonment as was John McCain’s and Nelson Mandella’s. Mike Wallace’s crucible was the unexpected, horrifying death of a beloved son. Muriel Siebert’s crucible was years of prejudicial treatment and Nathanial Jones’ was years of struggle against intense racism. The Marine’s understood the value of this idea and in the mid 1990s incorporated “The Crucible” into Marine training to provide a character forming path to leadership (Bennis & Thomas, 2002, pp. xxiv-xxv). For the leaders in Bennis’ and Thomas’ research, the crucible experience was the “common experience…that transformed their behavior and self-understanding” (p. 13).

It is the adaptive capacity of leaders to exploit their crucible experiences to gain new, stronger self-understandings and greater emotional intelligences that allow them to become transformational leaders. Freidman (2007) goes as far as to say that this “self-regulation, adaptation to strength, response to challenge…” (p. 24) fortifies an “immune response, and it often forces the invasive organism [persons or forces trying to abort a leader’s transformative influence] to ‘mutate’, that is, change” (p. 25). Crucibles can catalyze transformational leadership by so vigorously reorienting a person’s self-understanding that they are compelled by their own transmogrified journey to aid others in transformation as well (Bennis & Thomas, 2002, p. 108).

*Leadership as Self-definition*

How is leadership defined? Chairman and CEO of General Electric, Jeffrey Imelt (Tichey & McGill, 2003) defines leadership as “an intensive journey in understanding yourself” (p. 120) and further offers that much of ethical leadership is determined by a person’s self-learning, self-comfort, and personal value-strength (p. 121). Native American historian, educator, writer, and lecturer Joseph M. Marshall III (2009) claims that there is “a difference between the appearance and the reality of being a leader” and that leadership cannot be mandated by job description but is *defined* by character (p. 3). James Hunter (1998) defines leadership in terms of authority as “The skill of getting people to *willingly* do your will because of your personal influence” (Hunter, 1998, p. 30). Former Chrysler CEO, Lee Iacocca (2007) when lamenting a lack of effective political leadership in American, described leadership with his “Nine Cs of Leadership”: curiosity, creative, communicate, character, courage, conviction, charisma, competent, and common sense (pp. 9-10). Popular writer, John C. Maxwell (2002) asserts that he has compiled the requisite skills and maxims for effective leadership in his book, *Leadership 101*. Truly, a singular yet all-encompassing definition of leadership has proven illusive. Shaw (2006) states:

However you look at it, leadership is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Stogdill and Bass’ encyclopedic Handbook of Leadership (Bass, 1990) includes nearly 10,000 references and a multiplicity of definitions. The word does not even exist in some languages, and despite the plethora of material that has been written, no shared understanding of “leadership” has ever been established. (Introduction)

Though corralling the precise meaning of leadership itself is difficult, many scholars point to what defines leaders themselves as an achievable concept, and, perhaps, a more personally potent one. Robinson (1999) in referencing Friedman’s (1985) book, *Generation to Generation: Family Processes in Church and Synagogue*, defines leaders not so much as those who are authoritative but those who discover, define, and live by their own self-defined personhood and goals (p. 1229). The very process of discovering and defining one’s own self-understanding is what builds strength, consistency, and order to a leader’s life and influence. Without a well-defined sense of self, a leader is left without a solid foundation from which to influence.

*Self-understanding*

Gilgnilliat, (2008) in quoting Frei (1975) says that:

Identity is defined as the core of a person’s being. “Like spokes to the centre [*sic*] of a wheel”, one’s identity is the centre [*sic*] toward which everything else is ordered. In short, “Identity is the specific uniqueness of a person, what really counts about him, quite apart from both comparison and contrast to others”. (p. 129)

Self-understanding is a foundational facet of effective leadership and of what has become known as EQ – emotional intelligence (Sosik & Megerian, 1999, p. 367). Emotional intelligence, according to Goleman (1995) is characterized by five primary abilities: knowing one’s emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships (p. 43). He considers knowing one’s emotions to be the keystone of emotional intelligence and defines it as “self-awareness, in the sense of an ongoing attention to one’s internal states” (p. 44). Or, as Sosik & Dworakivsky (1998) describe self-awareness, it is “a psychological state in which one attends to and understands one’s thoughts, motives, feelings, and how self and salient environmental factors may influence each other” (p. 2). Sosik & Megerian (1999) also agree with Goleman (1995) on the import of self-awareness when they contend that it is “the foundation upon which other aspects of EQ are based” (p. 384).

Emotional intelligence, as a component of interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities, is key to successful (normal) human development and may promote leadership in youth (Hindes & Thorne, Schwean, & McKeough, 2008, p. 206). Leader emotional intelligence (again, of which self-awareness or self-understanding is a primary component) has been associated with a leaders ability to motivate and connect with followers (Humphreys, Weyant, & Sprague, 2002, p. 192), by providing clear and invigorating purpose for followers (Sosik & Megerian, 1999, p. 384). Bennis & Thomas (2002) claim that an “authentic version of self” is foundational for a leader to persuasively recruit others to their agenda (p. 137). Moreover, emotional intelligence is vital for effective leadership. Understandably then, Humphreys et al. (2002) report, “much of the academic debate surrounding emotional intelligence, however, has begun to focus on EI [emotional intelligence] and leadership (Luthans, 2002)” (p. 193).

Campbell (1990) argues that a clearly defined self-concept (self-understanding) is vital to self-esteem. She purports that the self is conceptualized by the fraternal concepts of knowledge and evaluation and that the more clearly defined self-knowledge and self-evaluation are, the greater the potential for higher self-esteem (Campbell, 1990). Self-esteem, in turn, is requisite for a leader as self-confidence is constituent to transformational leadership (Northouse, 2007, p. 178). Popper & Zakkai (1994) also found clarity in self-understanding to be primary to a leader exhibiting transformative influence (p. 7).

Nineteenth century educator, philosopher, psychologist William James introduced self-understanding, interestingly, as “partly object and partly subject:” a sort of “duplex” construction of me and I (Emory University, n.d., ¶1). He perceived the me and I to be discriminated aspects of self and not truly separate things; the self is composed of “knower” and “known” (¶2). This simultaneous objective and subjective self-understanding was the outline that Damon and Hart (1988) later framed their understanding of the self as “a consciously systematic conception of self” (Derryberry & Thoma, 2005, p. 69). They saw the self at the height of its development to be best understood by its chosen ideologies, philosophies, and goals that then serve to direct the individual’s life to remain congruent with those chosen values and goals. Later, Hart & Fegley (1995) extended Damon and Hart’s construct of self-understanding to include attributes that may illuminate moral considerations in self-understanding. They see the self as a multifaceted influencer on moral development and behavior (Derryberry & Thoma, 2005, p. 69).

*The Regulatory Role of Self-understanding*

Luke Behncke (n.d.), writing for *Athletic Insight*, *The Online Journal of Sport Psychology*, describes self-regulation as the human ability to “guide behavior along a specific path to a directed aim or goal” (Mechanisms section, ¶ 2). It is this unique capability to “modify ourselves” that sets our species apart from all others. Behncke proposes that self-monitoring, defined by self-awareness as determined by internal and external cues, is key to personal behavior modification. Self-understanding, which includes self-awareness, is a seminal intelligence that brings both structure and purpose to a leader. Self-understanding guides the behavior of a leader because he or she is constrained to act in ways consistent with their self-concept (Sosik and Dworakivsky, 1998). Although it is true that there is a dimension to a leader’s self-identity that can change (mature) over time, there is another primary dimension of ‘self-hood’ that remains unchangeable (Gignilliat, 2008, p. 127). This immalleable aspect of self-understanding provides the basis for influence in a leader’s life.

A leader, who possesses a clear self-understanding, is likely to have clarified his or her own sense of purpose as well. This clarity of purpose is potent for transformational leadership. According to Frankl (1992) when a person realizes meaning in life via the choice to love another, for instance, a power to transform that other human being is unleashed. This transformative power is not coercive in nature but through freedom, releases withinthe other a power to change. “By making him aware of what he can be and of what he should become,” says Frankl (1992) “he makes these potentialities [personal growth possibilities] come true” (p. 112). The quest for meaning in a person’s life – as an aspect of spirituality – has been linked to leadership development in college students (Gehrke, 2008) who sees the development of charismatic and transformational leadership being dependent upon, among other components, “self-awareness, and self-regulation” (p. 352). Leadership and meaning-making with resultant purposeful living has transformative impact.

There is a symbiotic relationship between self-awareness and self-purpose. The more self-aware a person is, the clearer their sense of purpose becomes. The more lucid one’s self-awareness or self-monitoring is, the greater the likelihood of recognizing any gap between where one is and where one desires to be. This recognition is essential to a leader’s personal transformation, for it is the catalyst of that transformation. As Frankl (2006) stated, “…every human being has the freedom to change at any instant” and “Man is capable of changing the world for the better if possible, and of changing himself for the better if necessary” (p. 131). Yet, these changes cannot take place before self-awareness occurs. Then, not only can a leader make this application to himself or herself, but also to those he or she leads (Sosik & Dworakivsky, 1998, p. 3). This collaborative relationship allows the leader to experience personaltransformation and growth that is pre-determinate to leading others through their own personal transformation (Tucker & Russell, 2004, p. 105).

*The Powerful Role of Self-understanding*

Not only does a leader’s self-understanding guide their influence but it greatly determines its strength as well. Robinson (1999) states:

Our greatest strength as leaders lies not in the accumulation of information or technique, but in knowing ourselves and being able to articulate and act upon goals and values that are central to us and which are rooted in our faith. (p. 1229)

The value of self-knowledge and self-understanding, vital for self-mastery, is that it largely determines the effectiveness of leaders. The concept of self-mastery combines the ideas of self-awareness, self-identity, self-control, and purpose, and is necessarily correlated to a leader’s effectiveness because “our leadership style is an extension of who we are” (Dhiman, 2007, p.25). According to Dhiman (and others such as Frankl, 2006 and Maslow, 1988) the sense of purpose inherent to self-mastery can bring meaning in life, vital perseverance to endure difficult times, and self-actualization (2007). Certainly, these qualities add power to a leader’s influence.

Dhiman (2007) tells the story of a rabbi that communicates the necessity of a well-defined sense of self and purpose:

A story is told of a rabbi who was trying to get to the synagogue for morning sermon during the pre-revolution Russia. He was stopped by a soldier at gun point [*sic*], who asked the rabbi: “Who are you and what are you doing here?” The rabbi inquired the soldier: “How much the government pays you for asking these questions?” “Nineteen kopecks a week,” responded the soldier. Said the rabbi, “I will pay you 20 kopecks a week if you stop me here every day and ask me the same two questions!” Here are then the two most fundamental questions one can ask: Who Am I? What am I doing here? These two fundamental questions capture the essence of self-knowledge and personal meaning. (p. 28)

Self-understanding should be sought, clarified, and valued. A clear sense of self is key to effective living – for transformational leadership – for it provides a solid base from which to launch such influence. A crucial ability is the ability to retain a sense of self while living in a world webbed in relationships.

Edwin Friedman (2007) in speaking of the challenges of unity among partnerships, teams, and families – any entity that, inherently, needs a leader – noted that the problem “was not getting closer [to each other]; it was preserving self in a close relationship”: one who does this effectively he defines as a *self-differentiated* leader (p. 8). While self-mastery is requisite to the foundation of transformational leadership, Freidman insists it is the self-differentiated leader who truly transforms. Freidman (2007) asserts this leader is strong enough to thwart destructive forces (p. 25), “matures the system [and] seeks enduring change” (p. 231), and is “an entity [that] can modify surrounding relationships through its presence rather than its forcefulness” (p. 232). The leader who has developed a mature, independent self-definition apart from those around him or her is the one that can provide authentic leadership.

Freidman (2007) goes so far in valuing self-differentiation (a well defined and owned sense of self) that he calls all family counselors and therapists to “help people separate so they do not have to ‘separate’” (p. 68). He claims, “Individuation…is the essential precondition for bold leadership and imaginative thinking” (p. 53). Such audacious, curious thinking can lead not only individual and familial transformation but total societal revolution as well. It was just such imagination, constituent of acute self-differentiated and self-aware pioneers, that released an intellectually shackled medieval Europe from its malaise and ushered in the Renaissance. As Freidman (2007) purports, “Any renaissance…depends primarily…on the capacity of leaders to separate themselves from the surrounding emotional climate so that they can break the barriers that are keeping everyone from ‘going the other way’” (p. 33). It takes leaders, acting from their well-defined sense of self, who embody the necessary character, to bring rebirth to souls and societies alike.

Similarly, Hall (2003) asserts that the leader who is self-defined as opposed to the leader who allows himself or herself to be defined by others – especially during conflict – is the one who will be able to lead needed change (p. 237). Social systems, and so the individuals within them, often times are smothered by an emotionalism that inhibits growth and change. This shroud of emotionalism can lead to creative stagnation and relational impasses when transformation is most needed. The leader with self-clarity and subsequent self-confidence has the necessary foundation from which to respond proactively and creatively rather than with the ineffectual reactive response of other, less self-aware persons. Hall (2003) says:

Differentiation [Richardson states] brings with it a stronger sense of emotional well-being. There is less sense of others being a threat to us, even if they are angry with us. The greater comfort allows us to stay connected to the other because we do not need their acceptance, understanding, affirmation, praise, or agreement to feel okay. (p. 237)

Truly, an individuated leader, one who has formed a strong self-understanding, has differentiated himself or herself enough to stand apart, bid others join, and introduce significant, creative, and lasting change.

*Jesus as a Transformational Leader*

The notion that Jesus was a transformational leader is so well documented and accepted (both to those who accept him as the *Christ of Faith* and those who only accept him as the *Jesus of History*) that the commonly accepted fact will be only briefly noted here. Piovelli (2005) in researching Max Weber’s sociological charismatic model of leadership (Piovelli considers charismatic leadership, though not identical to transformational leadership, still a major component thereof, p. 20) and neo-Weberian adjunct researches concludes, “It is indisputable that Jesus’ authority has many points in common with these newly proposed definitions of charismatic leadership. The existence of such parallels confirms the validity of the charismatic heuristic model for the study of the historical Jesus. (p. 395).

Jane Fryar (2007) states, *“*Jesus*'* predominant leadership practices as described by [the gospel of] Mark dovetail with those of the exemplary leaders Kouzes & Posner [transformational leadership researchers] describe (p.158) while Sendjaya & Sarros (2002) contend that Jesus exhibited Servant Leadership which has been variously equated to and deemed greater than either Charismatic or Transformational leadership (p. 62).

*Jesus’ Self-understanding*

To undertake the task to understand the psyche of Jesus is, necessarily, a daunting one. There has never been a man quite like him. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges in attempting to discover the self-understanding of Jesus is that, as Childs (2002) reveals, Jesus is:

The one person in Western history who has never been seen as an ordinary human being but as “the most perfect being who ever lived” (p. 219). And of course, for most Christian tradition, not just “the most perfect human being” but a divine-human being who is without sin. (p. 460)

How does one conceptualize, how does one simplify, how does one communicate the inner-thoughts of the man, Jesus Christ? He was not only a carpenter from Nazareth but, simultaneously, is the second person of the Trinity (Sanders & Issler, 2007, p. 3). Over the centuries, countless books have been authored in the name of Jesus, yet as Childs (2002) asserts it was not until the late 1800’s that anyone had attempted to unearth a historical understanding of him that included what might be taken for granted; that Jesus had personal goals, strivings, and thoughts of his own (p. 460). These early, and perhaps biased, utopian conceptualizations later gave way in the 19th and 20th centuries to deeper, more critical, inquiries into the self-awareness of the historical man known as Jesus.

Theological scholarship and modern historians through various avenues of biblical criticism have recently heightened the search for the “Jesus of History before he became the Christ of Faith” (Boulton, 2008, pp. xiv-xv). The influential book, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, written in 1906 by Albert Schweitzer, legitimized this search for the *real* Jesus. Following Schweitzer’s Quest, came the New Quest initiated in 1953, the Renewed Quest of 1964, and the Third Quest which began in 1973. The recent Jesus Seminar espouses ideas from both the Renewed Quest and the Third Quest and has popularized such authors as Crossnan, Borg, Sheehan, Vermes, and Wright, among others (Funk, Polebridgepress.com, n.p.).

These quests are more concerned with the Jesus of history, a man who lived and walked the earth in 1st century Palestine, rather than the church’s Christ of Faith; “the human Jesus of history rather than the spirit-Jesus of theology” (Boulton, 2008, p.3). Some possibilities as to the specifics of Jesus’ personality, self-identity, and self-understanding are revealed within this broad search for the historical Jesus.

Jesus of Nazareth, being “God and man” (Sanders & Issler, 2007, p. 8; Ware, 2010, p. 5) can hardly be contained, explained nor defined simply. As Steinfels (2007) supposes, “It is the ancient difficulty of grasping the interior life of a person affirmed to be both human and divine” (p. 8) that makes envisioning Jesus’ self-understanding so trying. It is doubtful that Jesus defined himself simplistically, as do few of us. Descriptions of Jesus have been multitudinous. He has been variously described in literature and conversation as “rabbinical sage, Jewish mystic, apocalyptic prophet, faith healer, revolutionary leader, philosophical provocateur, zen master, and New Age shaman” (Steinfels, 2007, p. 8). These diverse descriptions give hints to the many facets of Jesus’ character, strengths, influence, and, accordingly, self-conceptions.

In scripture Jesus has been named as; the Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, the Word, Lamb of God, the Christ, Savior, Rabbi, Teacher, the Author of Life, the Alpha and Omega, the Lion of Judah, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, Prince of Peace, Immanuel, and Mighty God, among others. Jesus described himself in the Gospel of John as the bread of life, the light of the world, the gate, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, the true-vine, and the great *I Am*.

*Biblical References to Jesus’ Self-understanding*

Biblical passages offer substantive peeks into what might have composed Jesus’ self-understanding. Theologians have thus diversely described Jesus’ self-understanding based upon textual evidence of innumerable scriptures. Crispin & Fletcher-Louis (2006-2007) express Jesus’ self-understanding as “The High Priestly Messiah” (p. 67) based upon an appeal to Psalm 110 and Daniel 7:13. Busch (2006) in referencing the commentator, Joel Marcus (1999), sees Jesus’ self-understanding as the opponent of Satan, i.e. the *strong* man introduced in Mark 3:27. Marcus (1999) posits that Jesus saw his increasingly widespread miracles as evidence that his purpose was apocalyptic, “a momentous alteration in the structure of the universe, the beginning of the longed-for-defeat of cosmic evil” (Busch, 2006, p. 490).

Sumkin Cho (2006) as reviewed by Magee (2009), views part of Jesus’ self-understanding as “*the* Prophet expected in different ways by both Jews and Samaritans….And takes great pains to emphasize that Jesus is depicted by the Gospel as far more than *merely* a prophet” (p. 160). He builds a case, through his study of John’s gospel, for Jesus understanding himself to be the long-awaited prophet, while offering that “such a depiction of Jesus, although not the total of the Gospel’s characterization of him, nevertheless encapsulates a very important dimension of his [self] identity…” (p. 161). Lander (2008) references Flusser (2008), who, in his book, *The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus’ Genius*, views Jesus as “eschatological prophet with a radically ethical message” (p. 601).

Cook (2008) points out Blenkinsopp’s understanding of Jesus’ self-picture; “Blenkinsopp understands Isaiah’s profile of a suffering and dying Servant as a key component of Jesus’ self-identity” (p. 167). Cook claims that he now awaits New Testament scholarship’s reaction to Blenkinsopp’s conclusion that much of Jesus’ self-understanding was induced by Isaiah’s prophesies (p. 167) thus evidencing quite a diversion from popular thought. Gignilliat (2008) sees Isaiah (particularly Isaiah 40-55) as referencing the *Servant* to be Jesus Christ as well. Other historical critical scholars agree and so see Jesus’ identity and subsequently his own self-identity as that of a servant and not a regal messiah (Schwarz, 1998 as referenced by Keck, 2000, Dunn 2003 as referenced by Strange, 2006).

Troxel (2001) reviewed Israel Khohl’s, *The* *Messiah Before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, and reveals that Knohl viewed Jesus’ self-understanding as the promised Messiah. Wright’s influential work (1998), *Jesus and the Victory of God*, reveals similar beliefs about Jesus’ self-understanding being couched in messianic identity. Wright (1996) claims that key messianic acts performed by Jesus reveal his self-understanding as the promised Messiah and special prophet of God. Jesus’ punitive cleansing of the temple, the intentional setting of Palm Sunday, and even his willingness to offer himself as the propitiatory sacrifice on the cross reveal Jesus’ self-awareness as Messiah (Stein, 2001). Wright asserts that Jesus saw himself as “God’s special agent” and even “God [himself] returning to Zion” when he made his final and fateful trip to Jerusalem (Stein, 2001, p. 209).

Though some would disagree with Wright’s overarching conclusions about the historical Jesus - Crossnan, Borg, and Mack, for example – Lee (2005) as reviewed by Grindheim (2006), for instance, would agree with the validity of Jesus’ self-identity centering on his belief that he was, in fact, God (p. 169) and held a special relationship with him as the incarnate son. Grindheim (2006) is in agreement with Lee (2005) when he reveals that Jesus saw himself in a deeply intimate relationship with the Father when he refers to him as *Abba,* “father”, (though some disagree that there is any intrinsic uniqueness in Jesus calling God “my father”, Barr: 1988a, 1988b; Fitzmyer, 1985; & Charlesworth, 1994; as referenced by D’Angelo, 1999, p. 60) and when he spoke of himself as *the* Son of God and even when insinuating himself in the *parable of the wicked tenants* to be the son (p. 169-170).

According to Allen (1998) as referenced by Shaw (2006), it was Jesus’ seminal conviction that he was God’s son that founded his confidence and allowed him to live out his self-understood calling so powerfully. The fact that Jesus’ status, position, and authority – in his mind - were otherworldly and thus completely independent of any human being’s validation, cemented Jesus’ transformational servant leadership (p. 125). Some would consider Jesus a self-differentiated leader (Friedman, 2007). Shaw similarly (2006) states:

Here [in Jesus’ life of service] is painted richly for us the ideal picture of Christian leadership. As with Christ, when we reach the point of confidence in God through our firm relationship with him such that we no longer need the praise and subordination of others – at that point we are free truly to serve in authority and under authority. (p. 126)

Shaw speaks of the surety of Jesus’ self-understanding concerning his relationship with his father, God, and affirms that it was foundational for his powerful leadership.

Sendjaya & Sarros (2002) further illuminate the binary affects of freedom and power in referencing Jesus’ ultimate service to humankind when he offered himself as a propitiatory sacrifice:

A profound example of such secure servant leaders again is Jesus Christ himself, who “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” (NIV Bible, Philippians 2:3-8)…. it was not weakness that compelled Jesus to be a servant in this case. Instead it was Jesus’ strong self-image that moved him to make a deliberate offering of himself; he “operated out of a sense of being deeply secure in his identity” (Ford, 1991:153). (p. 61)

Because Jesus’ self-understanding was, in his mind, clearly defined as God’s son, he was empowered to lead “transformatively”.

*Psychological Perspective of Jesus’ Self-understanding*

Professor Capps of Princeton Theological Seminary has written two thought-provoking psychological examinations of Jesus’ life; *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* and *Jesus the Village Psychiatrist* that, by example, reveal a new direction of modern scholarship into the study of Jesus, the psychobiological path. Capps’ views on the inner psychology of the man from Nazareth reveal a rather speculative end to the continuum of scholarly research into the psyche of Jesus. Capps (2000) as reviewed by Ellens (2002), Childs (2002), and Hutch (2002), reveal Capps’ psychoanalytic picture of Jesus: that of a self-understanding forged from severe psychological trials based upon questions about his father and his own possible illegitimacy, a sense of fatalism and male melancholia, and a probable narcissistic relationship with his mother.

According to Ellens (2002):

The burden of Capps’s book is to demonstrate Jesus’ desperate melancholic and utopian quest for his true self, namely for that personal psychospiritual [*sic*] empowerment that affords one the requisite redemptive interior clarity, identity, and integrity inherent to being a self and to being whole. (p. 402)

Clearly, Capps’ investigation into the self-understanding and personality of Jesus is grounded in a psychological, psychodynamic, approach. Capps is certainly not alone in seeing the need to graduate from purely historical, socio-cultural, and textual venues to unearth the psyche and motivations of Jesus. Childs (2002) in his review of Capps’ (2000) work, resonates with his paradigm and so states that “especially in the light of the realization that the historical Jesus must be a psychological Jesus, [Capps’s work] is a brilliant piece of detective work into the psyche of Jesus…” (p. 459).

Freyne (2009) offers that Jesus’ self-understanding was not static, even during his public ministry (beginning when he was approximately thirty years of age) but was growing and evolving as he moved toward his death. He says, “Jesus begins his reinterpretation of the idea of messiahship [*sic*] in Galilee, where the Synoptics [Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke] tell us he formulated his understanding of the kingdom of God and his role in its arrival” (p. 297). He also proposes that other significant events, crucibles as Bennis & Thomas (2002) call them, such as encounters with the marginalized and his own personal experiences of oppression both deepened and broadened his own values, convictions, and self-understanding (p. 297).

Moreover, in reviewing scholarship pertaining to the psyche of Jesus, it is clear that there are many viable facets and designations to his self-understanding. Surely, as a religious Jewish boy growing up in Galilee, it is highly probable that he came across and studied scriptures at a very early age (ex. the boy Jesus at the temple: Luke 2:41-51) that spoke to him in a personally defining way. Jesus - to which much historical, philosophical, psychological, and religious scholarship has alluded, as previously referenced – sought to discover his own self-understanding by examining Jewish scriptures and must have often wondered to whom these prophecies alluded.

According to Peter, even angels have desires to make sense of prophetic proclamations and “long to look into these things” (I Peter 1:12, New International Version). Jesus, one can be sure, growing up in Galilee, longed also for clarity concerning the prophecies he read and how they might have illumed his own destiny.

*Jesus as Messiah or Christ*

Of all the modern questions relating to the identity of Jesus, perhaps none is as controversial as that of his *messiahship*; furthermore, was Jesus’ own self-understanding congruent with him being the Messiah? As Michael Bird (2009) referenced Julius Welhausen (1905), “among the most important questions is whether and in what sense he [Jesus] believed and claimed himself to be the Messiah” (p. 24). Even though Welhausen raised the question over a century ago, the debate rages on.

Modern skepticism regarding whether Jesus’ could have seen himself as the Messiah is not totally outlandish; indeed, in the gospel records, Jesus never *explicitly* referred to himself as the Messiah. He was, though, often hailed as the Messiah or Son of God by others such as Peter, Bartimeaus, the high priest, Nathanael, Galilean crowds, Passover attendees, Martha, and others. “By itself such data might suggest that Jesus inspired messianic hopes but did not embrace the title himself” (Bird, 2009, p. 26). However, there are numerous passages where Jesus specifically accepts the title from others or where he, in an indirect way, does refer to himself as the Messiah (see John 4:25, 26; Mark 14:61b-62; Mark 9:41, Matthew 23:10, and Mark 12:25-37).

Scholars have handled the messianic question with four main responses:

1. That Jesus never actually claimed to be the Messiah, and that the early church proclaimed Jesus as Messiah because of their post-Easter faith.
2. That Jesus’ disciples believed and proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah during his lifetime and yet Jesus himself rejected the title.
3. That Jesus never actually accepted nor rejected the title of Messiah, particularly at a key moment of his trial, and so the *titulus* on the cross was thus affixed.
4. That Jesus did claim to be the Messiah, albeit with a personal revision of its role (Bird, 2009, pp. 27-28).

Wrede (1990) wrote a detailed treatise on the Gospel of Mark, *The Messianic Secret*, in which he claims “unhistoricity” for the account. He argues that Mark adjusted Jesus’ teachings to include a desire for secrecy about his messiahship so that his version of Jesus could be reconciled with the post-Easter tradition of faith and proclamation that Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah. Wrede (1990) purports that the messianic secret becomes a “positive historical testimony for the idea that Jesus actually did not give himself out as Messiah” (p. 230). Wrede’s conclusion has received serious rebuttal - D. Aune, R.N. Longenecker, J.D. Dunn, among others - and there is even evidence that Wrede, himself, has reconsidered in this matter (Bird, 2009, footnotes, p. 67).

Of the four options above, and in contrast to the Jesus Seminar consensus that Jesus did not see himself as the Messiah, Bird (2009) disagrees. In his excellent diagnosis of the debate over Jesus’ self-understanding as the promised Messiah, Bird does an admirable job of remaining unbiased in his treatment of the question. Still, in conclusion, Bird (2009) states:

I am convinced, based on a careful review of the evidence, that the historical Jesus did in fact engage in a career that was performatively [*sic*] messianic and that he referred to himself as the quasi-messianic figure of the Son of Man. (p. 162)

Jesus’ self-consciousness was in messianic categories. He saw himself as the Messiah (the Christ) and Ware (2005) asserts that Jesus, in choosing to read from Isaiah 61, as recorded in Luke chapter 4, evidences that Jesus saw himself as the “Spirit-anointed Messiah” (p. 8). Zahl (2000), in reviewing Schwartz’s *Christology* (1998), asserts that Schwartz “sees a self-understanding on the part of the historical Jesus that is close to ‘the Christ of Faith.’ …For Schwarz the absolute bottom line is: Jesus is the human face of God” (p. 220). Jesus acted in roles congruent with the prophesied Messiah of Old Testament scripture. This self-understanding guided his thoughts, words, actions, and ultimately his life and death. Jesus’ confident self-understanding is evidenced throughout numerous New Testament passages.

*Gospel References to Jesus’ Self-understanding*

The first three Synoptic Gospels relate the defining moment of Jesus’ baptism. Mark records it this way:

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased”. (Mark 1:10-11, New International Version)

Guelich (1989), in referencing critical scholarship, asks to what Jesus’ baptismal event pointed:

Was it the moment of his calling (*Berufvision*), the birth of his messianic consciousness (e.g, Fuller, *Mission*, 36-39), or the clarification and confirmation of his person and ministry (e.g., Taylor, 162)? Or was it a scene to reveal him to Israel and/or to John (e.g., Lagrange, 11-13) or to give him a sign or impulse to begin his ministry (e.g., Feuillet, *RB* 71 [1964] 321-52)? (p. 30)

Though scholars debate over the exact reason(s) that Mark may have recorded this event, clearly this was a pivotal event in Jesus’ life and his subsequent mission and self-consciousness. Jesus may well have called to mind as he came up out of the water Isaiah’s prophesies (Isaiah 11:2; 42:1; 61:1) referring to the Spirit and the delight of God concerning his chosen servant. Andrew Hodges (1986) portrays a very possible and vivid insight into the mindset of Jesus immediately following his baptism by the prophet John as he, hypothetically, speaks for Jesus:

I heard my Father’s voice for the first time: “This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” I can still hear that rich, majestic voice. Heaven opened. The door was no longer shut. I had heard my own Father’s voice at last. I had waited 30 years…the impact on me was startling. All those years of preparation, of making sure, of waiting, of living on His written words, of keeping the faith, had been validated firsthand. For days afterward, His voice kept coming back to me: “This is My beloved son.” It was all I could think about. (p. xi)

This pivotal event surely secured for Jesus his self-understanding as God’s chosen and special Son; that the God of heaven not only was his Father but that now he had truly gained the overwhelming affection, delight, and pleasure of his Jehovah God. This was a critical juncture in Jesus’ self-consciousness and the launching point for his transformative career.

In John chapter four, Jesus encountered a Samaritan woman and had a pointed conversation with her about her questionable life choices. The discussion turned (perhaps defensively on the woman’s part) to the debate over the coming Messiah. Jesus called an abrupt end to her speculation on the identity of the coming Christ (Messiah) by declaring, “I who speak to you am he” (John 4:24, New International Version). Jesus clearly claimed to be the anointed one, the Messiah.

Tellingly Jesus’ actual words as recorded in this passage are, as translated by Beasley-Murray (1987): “I am (he), I who am speaking to you” (p. 57). According to Beasley-Murray the writer of this fourth gospel (John) supposes that Jesus’ response purposefully implicates Jesus’ self-understanding with Jehovah-God. Jesus is covertly equating himself to the *Great I Am* of Exodus 3:14 as the one with absolute being. His self-understanding was grounded in his conviction that *he was God* – in the flesh. He was Jehovah-God.

In Mark chapter fourteen Jesus was anointed while having dinner with his disciples at the home of a man known as Simon the Leper. Anointing was customary at Jewish feasts but according to Evans (2001), this particular anointing – especially in light of its prominent placement by Mark right before the Passion Week – “was intended to be messianic” (p. 359). Jesus responded to the vehement objections of his disciples to the supposed gratuitous waste of the woman when they witnessed her extravagance, by questioning them, “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me…wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (John 14:6b, 9b). Not only did Jesus not object to this explicitly messianic anointing, he praised the woman for her sacrifice and proclaimed that such faith would serve as an example for ages to come. Here, Jesus accepts the messianic overtures of the woman. He understood himself to be the promised Messiah.

All of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) report the magnanimous confession of Peter that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah). In response to Jesus’ query of his identity beyond what the crowds thought, Peter representatively and resoundingly answered, “You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16, New International Version). Peter’s answer categorically differed from the conclusions of the crowd. They believed Jesus to be a great prophet but, at least at that time, nothing more. Peter’s response distanced himself and the rest of the concurring Apostles by naming in Jesus the divinely appointed Messiah. Jesus did not chide Peter for an incorrect response – he pronounced a blessing on him for a conviction that could only have been delivered from his father in heaven.

Matthew’s account of Peter’s confession is the climactic conclusion to Act One of his two-part play. All of the teachings and actions of Jesus as recorded by Matthew up to this point in his Gospel were to lead to the dramatic close of the First Act. Once the first act ended – with the world-altering truth that Jesus was, in fact, the Christ - only then could Matthew record the vital second act that would lead to the equally crucial and triumphant Passion of the Christ. According to Hagner, (1995) Matthew 16:13-20 “Presents in a paradigmatic form an unequivocal and definitive confession of Jesus as the promised Messiah” (p. 463).

The importance of Peter’s confession is trumped only by Jesus’ validating response. Jesus consequently praised Peter as being in tune with God, declared that his confession was divinely appointed, and revealed that Peter would be given the keys to the coming Kingdom of the Messiah. It was only after this supremely important truth was indelibly written on the hearts of his chosen few, that Jesus could reveal, startlingly, that he, as Messiah, would suffer and die. Jesus, convinced that the Apostles had at least the requisite base of understanding, conviction, and faith in his divinity, could now afford to reveal the rest of his plan. Jesus knew the importance, claims Hagner (1995), that his “identity as Messiah…be firmly fixed in the minds of the disciples before they could be told of [his] death since the death could well seem to rule out such a conclusion” (p. 477). He knew, however convoluted it might seem to his followers, that being the Messiah would necessitate his suffering and ultimate death – all for their ultimate deliverance.

Michael Gleghorn (2005) reviews a number of sayings and deeds of Jesus as recorded in the gospel accounts in order to apprehend Jesus’ self-understanding. He researches Jesus’ relationship with the twelve disciples, his relationship with the Mosaic Law, his relationship with demons, and with God himself. Gleghorn concludes “even when we limit ourselves to [researching] Gospel traditions that are generally considered historically authentic by a majority of [theological] scholars, Jesus still makes impressive claims to be deity” (p. 3).

*Familial Influences to Jesus’ Self-understanding*

Jesus grew up in a typical, if not ordinary, Jewish family. Even the names of his parents (Joseph and Mary) were among the most common Jewish names of his day, as was his own name (Shanks & Witherington III, 2003, p. 55). Jesus was, of course, Jewish and his parents were devout observers of the Torah, which contained the Mosaic law of Israel. Hitchcock (2009) portrays a normal, albeit rather poor and rugged, upbringing of the boy Jesus during his childhood days around Nazareth (pp. 92-95). Growing up with brothers and sisters, a loving mother and – at least for a time – a devoted father, Jesus “must have based his later consciousness of messiahship upon a strong and normal self-consciousness” (Hitchcock, 2009, p. 94).

As illuminated by limited Biblical references to Jesus’ life growing up in Galilee, there are but few events from which to construct the inner-thoughts of Jesus, yet those that are available, can be referenced to offer insight into the familial culture in which he was raised. This, minimally, sheds light on some of the values and beliefs, for instance, that might have framed his self-understanding as a result of growing up in the family in which he did. A *family systems perspective* of behavioral science depicts the family as a social system with inter-influential propensities (Hutchison, 2008, p. 357). In this theory, each member of the family affects the others, thus Jesus’ family must have influenced his personal psychology due to their reciprocal affection and intimacy (Edersheim, 1993, p. 174).

Jesus’ parents were devout observers of their Jewish faith and the aforementioned few Biblical references to them and the boy Jesus reveal such. Joseph and Mary ensured that Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day of his life (following the directive God gave Abraham in Genesis 17:12) and named him Jesus as the angel had commanded her. They dedicated the baby Jesus to Jehovah as their firstborn male in obedience to the Torah dictate. Luke chapter two reveals that Jesus’ parents made annual trips to Jerusalem in observance of the Passover Feast, even though by that time – recent scholarship reveals – this law was not commonly observed (Goodnewsforisrael.com, n.d., n.p.).

That Jesus’ home-life was a pious one, where his self-consciousness could emerge from the fertile, religious soil of his parents tutelage, can scarcely be questioned according to Edersheim (2009, p. 162). The fact should also not be overlooked that it was Jesus’ parents – both of them – who traveled with Jesus to the Passover celebration when Jesus was twelve years old (Luke 2:41), thus Joseph – though strikingly absent from the Biblical record after this event - did, in all probability, have a profound impact on Jesus’ formative years. Scholars such as Edersheim (2009, pp. 161-162) and Hitchock (2009, p. 96) provide that it was not totally foreign for a Jewish household in Nazareth to have copies of portions of the prophets and psalmists writings, the Pentateuch, or even a treasured copy of the Torah in full. It would not be surprising that Jesus’ parents, in the fastidiousness of their faith and fanciful hopes for their unusual son, possessed just such a copy that Jesus would have eagerly studied (Edersheim, 2009, p. 162).

In such a devout home, Hitchcock assumes a positive, nurturing relationship between Jesus and his parents and, tellingly, with his father, Joseph. It was this relationship with Joseph that naturally influenced Jesus’ evolving “self-understanding as one intimately related to the Father” (Schroth, 1993, p.6). Hitchcock (2009) says, “His home life must have taught him the confidence of love, and given him a concept of fatherhood which made the fear of God no terror-stirring sentiment in his breast, for he early learned to call God Father” (p. 95). Joseph had a positive influence on his son, Jesus. In Jewish culture, it was expected that all Jewish fathers take the primary role of teaching the Torah to their children (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7). It was under this fatherly mentorship that Jesus’ psyche was inundated with the Jewish scriptures. The peculiar closeness of 1st century Jewish families (Edersheim, 1993, p. 157) engendered significant influence. Hutchison (2008) advises that according to the *social constructionist perspective* of human development, it is from such close social interactions that people form conceptions of their world – and of themselves. Jesus’ self-understanding was therefore shaped, at least in part, through extensive interactions with his father, mother and siblings.

Hitchcock (2009) further deduces that Jesus and his brother James, later considered a pillar of the fledgling church (Galatians 2:9), were well versed in orthodox Judaism and that it would not be surprising that Jesus “must have been peculiarly attracted to these ancient documents [Torah] of the faith” and would have taken “every occasion to listen or to study” them (pp. 96-97). Barclay (1961), admits that Jesus, by the time of his infamous trip to Jerusalem at the youthful age of twelve, was already “steeped in the prophets; Hosea and Isaiah were his familiar friends. Already he moved familiarly amidst the laws of Deuteronomy” (p. 6). The boyhood learning of Jesus - reading, writing, memorizing from the Torah, etc. - was to greatly affect his sense of self in the years to come.

Further intimating Jesus’ evolving self-understanding was his adolescent statement to his parents once they found him in the temple speaking to the teachers and experts in the Torah. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49, New International Version) was the near-astonished reply Jesus offered his parents after their three-day search for him. Upon spending days asking, answering, discussing, and even confounding some of the brightest minds of his day, Jesus “made answer out of his new world of thought” says Hitchcock (2009) in referencing Jesus’ reply to his parents, “as if in greatest surprise that they did not realize that there was only one place in all the world where they might have known he would be, engrossed in the things of his Father, - in his Father’s house” (p. 102). Jesus’ personal psychology was developing, in particular, his self-understanding.

Hitchcock (2009) says, “Jesus may be styled with justice the typical adolescent” and that due to his harmonious familial culture and simplistic life, “had time to gain a full, well rounded individuation” (p. 104). Schnarch (1991) as referenced by Goff (2010) claims that Jesus’ life “represents one of the superlative acts of self-differentiation from his prevailing culture” (p. 61) and, interestingly, such excellence in individuation led to his crucifixion – the ultimate reward for such individuation (also Tonstad, 2009, p. 391). Jesus’ psychological growth, and with it his sense of self, found fertile ground for fundamental formation during his seemingly “quiet years” of youth.

*Social Cognitive Theory and Self-understanding*

Frank Pajares of Emory University explains Albert Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory as:

A view of human functioning that accords a central role to cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes in human adaptation and change. People are viewed as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating rather than as reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by environmental forces or driven by concealed inner impulses. (¶ 2)

Social cognitive theory stemmed from earlier work on Social Learning Theory that had its roots in the mechanistic stimulus-response postulation of behavioral scientists. Behaviorists propose an *associative learning process* that occurs as a result of rewards and/or punishments. Social learning theorists added various mediating factors such as habit, instinct, and other internal variables in-between the stimulus-response sequence. Early Social learning theorists perceived that learning occurred as a combination of those interacting factors of environment, behavior, and various internal variables (which current Social learning theorists now understand as cognitive variables), which establish individual behavioral control to outside stimuli (Stone, n.d., Circumstances section, ¶ 6). Albert Bandura advanced Social learning theory and relabeled it Social Cognitive Theory in 1986 “both to distance it from prevalent social learning theories of the day and to emphasize that cognition plays a critical role in people’s capability to construct reality, self-regulate, encode information, and perform behaviors” (Pajares, 2002, ¶ 2).

Over time, psychologists’ perspective on the role of the learner shifted from one of being a passive receptor whose mind is a *tabula rasa* waiting to be filled, to a belief that the learner is an active participant in the process whereby he/she assimilates and interprets environmental information in conjunction with prior knowledge in order to construct new understanding (Foster, Angus, & Rahinel, 2008). Bandura (1989) states that, “Social cognitive theory favors a model of causation involving triadic reciprocal determinism. In this model of reciprocal causation, behavior, cognition and other personal factors, and environmental influences all operate as interacting determinants between environmental factors, behavior, and personal factors that influence each other bidirectionally” (p. 2).

Pajares (2002) relates that Social Cognitive Theory is “rooted in a view of human agency in which individuals are agents proactively engaged in their own development and can make things happen by their actions” (¶ 5). Individuals are not simply the result of stimuli and habitual response but are agents that interact with their environment physically, cognitively, and affectively in order to learn. According to Bandura’s (2001) theory, much of this learning hinges upon introspection or self-reflection (p. 269): “The personal identity they [people] create for themselves” says Bandura (1999) “derives in large part, in how they live their life and reflect upon it” (p. 58).

Of all the thoughts clarified by self-reflection that can affect human development and functioning is the social cognitive theory core concept of self-efficacy beliefs. These are personal beliefs that one is capable of learning or performing specific tasks; i.e., succeeding in specific situations. High self-efficacy increases effort, perseverance, and resilience toward tasks (Pajares, 2002, How Self-Efficacy Beliefs Influence Human Functioning section, ¶ 1) while low self-efficacy can lower motivation. Pajares holds “[self-]interpreted results of one’s previous performance, or *mastery experience*” as primary in creating self-efficacy beliefs (How Self-Efficacy Beliefs Are Created section, ¶ 1) along with vicarious experience (modeling) (¶ 2), social persuasions from others (¶ 3), and emotional states (¶ 4). Pajares notes that mastery experiences are the greatest influence on learning behaviors but acknowledges that “a significant model [vicarious experience] in one’s life can help instill self-beliefs that will influence the course and direction that life will take” (¶ 2).

Bandura (1999) understands personality (self-identity) to be multifaceted and dependent upon numerous and variable environmental factors that interact with individual cognitive concepts such as self-beliefs, values, goals, and self-characterizations (p. 58). In understanding the self as a malleable self-concept, Bandura notes that “personal identity is partially construed from one’s social identity” and that therefore “identity formation is an ongoing process, not one characterized by fixedness in time” (p. 59). He stresses that personal identity is an amalgamation of “national, social, political, ethnic, occupational, and familial” facets of their lives (p. 59).

Damon and Hart (1982) earlier concurred with Bandura as they viewed self-understanding as a continually developing and adaptive concept as an individual moves through different life stages (p. 842). In their extensive overview of research concerning human self-understanding, they noted four significant ongoing developmental principles: “(1) The shift from physicalistic to psychological self-conceptions, (2) the emergence of stable social personality characterizations of self, (3) the increasingly volitional and self-reflective nature of self-understanding, and (4) the tendency toward the conceptual integration of diverse aspects of self into a unified self-system” (p. 859). Damon and Hart concluded that previous social cognitive research had not given due credence to the “special features of self-understanding” (p. 859) such as personal volition, self-reflection, self-continuity and the inherent uniqueness of each self’s experience. They claim, in doing so, previous research has failed to capture the full substance and complexity of the concept of the ontogenetic development of self-understanding (p. 862).

Social learning theory and later, social cognitive theory allows for the multifaceted concept of self-understanding to mature over time. Self-understanding is an amalgamation of the interplay between socio-environmental influences, self-conceptions, and behaviors. It is a concept that is largely formulated through self-reflection during which self-awareness and self-identity are formulated. Pajares (2002) says, “For Bandura, a psychology without introspection cannot aspire to explain the complexities of human functioning. It is by looking into their own conscious mind that people make sense of their own psychological processes” (¶ 4).

A construct to accurately measure or quantify individuals’ self-understanding has not been patently successful. Connolly et al. (1999) reported that in the previous fifty years of research in the area of self-understanding, “no reliable and valid measures of self-understanding” (p. 473) were created that could viably be used in psychotherapy research and so they created a self-report measurement called *Self-Understanding of Interpersonal Patterns*. Self-understanding is a multi-faceted, somewhat elusive concept and so is variously described and faintly measured.

*Jesus’ Self-understanding as Revealed in Four Gospel Events*

The apostle John said in his Gospel, “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written than you may believe…” (John 20: 30,31a, New International Version). While John recorded numerous events, thoughts, actions and interactions of Jesus – he simply could not record them all. And, in essence he informed his readers that what he *did* include was quite enough to produce faith “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God…” (John 20:31b, New International Version).

John was a writer of but one of the gospels of the canonical Bible; Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote the three synoptic gospels. John representatively voices that the intent of the gospel writers was to produce faith that Jesus was the Christ; i.e. a correct understanding of Jesus. The question remains, though, as to what their gospels reveal in terms of what Jesus believed about himself – *his* self-understanding.

*The Healing of a Paralytic in Mark 2:1-13*

This study now examines four separate events, each recorded by a different gospel author, in search of Jesus’ own self-understanding. The first of these events is the healing of a paralytic as recorded by Mark. But, in deference to context, it is important to note that Mark’s gospel places significant importance to all miracle accounts. In reflecting upon the sheer number, variety, dispersion, and hefty percentage of space allotted for their description, the miracles possess great import to Mark’s message, particularly a correct understanding of Jesus’ identity (Larsen, 2005, p. 34).

Twelftree (1999) sees Mark’s aim “in relating the miracle tradition is to reflect on Jesus’ identity: the powerful Messiah – indeed, *God himself at work* – who gives himself to die for others” (Larsen, 2005, p. 35). Bultmann (1963) agrees that Mark’s use of the miracle tradition is intended to reveal Jesus’ “Messianic authority [and] divine power” (Larsen, 2005, pp. 35-36). Larsen (2005) himself posits three Christologically important reasons for the miracles that Mark recorded: a) their importance to the overall message of his gospel, but particularly in relation to Jesus’ identity, b) that a major reason for Jesus performing the miracles was to clarify his identity, and c) to prove the extraordinary power intrinsic to Jesus’ identity (pp. 34-35). With this context in mind, the account of the healing of the paralytic is as follows:

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that” He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,” or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins…” He said to the paralytic, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” (Mark 2:1-12, New International Version)

Scholars often see the value of this pericope, along with most of the healing events recorded in the Gospels, as it reveals the divine authority of Jesus (Cole, 1999; Hurtado, 1995; Guelich, 1989). The controversy included here between Jesus and the rulers of the law, induced by his statement “Son, your sins are forgiven” (John 2:5b, New International Version), sheds light on Jesus’ self-understanding. The key is what Jesus meant by this statement. Was he, himself, forgiving the man’s sins or was he simply announcing that *God* had forgiven the paralytic’s sins? Guelich (1989) allows that both are a possibility but the context of the immediate conversation with the rulers of the law lends more credence to the interpretation that Jesus himself was forgiving the man’s sins (p. 87). Cole (pp. 120-122) and Hurtado (pp. 36-37) agree.

Concerning forgiveness, the fact that Jesus pronounces the man forgiven speaks to his self-understanding. To better understand, Weurst (1998) suggests a juxtapositional comparison of Jesus’ meaning of forgiveness with the present day common understanding of the term:

We say that we have forgiven someone who has wronged us. By that we mean that any feeling of animosity we may have had, has changed to one of renewed friendliness and affection. We do not hold the wrong done us against the person anymore. But so far as the act itself is concerned, we cannot do anything about it. It has been done and it cannot be removed from the one who committed the wrong. (pp. 47-48)

When Jesus uses the term, he imbues much greater import. The actual meaning of the Greek word, *aphiemi*, translated in the text as forgiveness “is a present indicative…and states a fact. “Are forgiven” is the correct rendering” (Wuest, 1998, p. 48). Wuest further explains that the word *aphiemi* (forgiven) intends that sins are “put away” in two ways; on a judicial basis – divine justice is satisfied – and also in the sense that guilt is taken away (p. 48).

It makes sense, according to Cole (1999), that Jesus was not simply the “*bringer* [*italics added*] of divine forgiveness” acting “only as God’s representative” but, as Cole continues, “The angry reaction of the scribes [rulers of the law] shows that they understood it as forgiveness given directly in the person of Jesus, and so involving a claim to deity by him” (p. 120). This is what incensed the religious leaders; that Jesus was claiming authority to forgive sins – and “who can forgive sins but God alone?” (John 2:5, New International Version).

Jesus, in response to the indignant question and to reveal his authority to forgive sins, lays hold of the impressive power of a miraculous act to proclaim such authority to forgive sins, and so bids the paralyzed man stand up. Cole (1999) claims that the dismay of the rulers of the law was understandable to Jesus and so he, by healing the paralytic before their very eyes, sought to “help such bewildered people to make the staggering equation between the human Jesus and Godhead” (p. 121). The answer, says Guelich (1989) to the indignant question of the rulers of the law, ““Who except God…?” is clearly, “the Son of man” (2:10)” (p. 87).

Guelich (1989) though, at least not in the pericope here considered, is not convinced that Jesus’ statements of verses five and ten proclaim his self-understanding as God. He sees the controversy between Jesus and the rulers of the law as hinging upon Jesus’ “usurp[ing] for himself God’s prerogative to forgive sins” and that “Jesus was not being accused of claiming to be God but of blaspheming against God by claiming to do what God alone could do” (p. 87). Perhaps Jesus was not claiming to be God (in this interaction) as many scholars (e.g., Cole, 1999; Hurtado, 1995; Dorris; 1964) have claimed but, as Guelich posits, Jesus, here and throughout his ministry, simply claimed to be “one in whom God is at work in history” (p. 95).

*The Transfiguration of Jesus in Luke 9:28-36*

The account of the transfiguration of Jesus is recorded in the three synoptic gospels with the function of communicating “heavenly approval of Christ’s task of suffering” (Scharlemann, 1988, p. 886). The shining garments of the transfiguration, the appearance of Elijah and Moses, and the voice from Heaven all served to communicate approval to Jesus concerning his previously communicated (John 9:21-22) and committed path of suffering as God’s chosen. Of Scharlemann’s seven significances accorded to the composite picture of the transfiguration accounts of the three synoptic writers, Scharlemann grants four of them as *identification* markers for Jesus: a) Jesus is the new Moses, b) Jesus initiated the messianic age, c) Jesus draws all to him as the Prophet rather than priest, and d) Jesus stands between the old and new dispensations attesting to his identity as the Messiah (p. 888).

The account of the transfiguration of Jesus as Luke records it is as follows:

About eight days after Jesus said this; he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)

While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen. (Luke 9:28-36, New International Version)

Morris (1999) comments that the what and why of the transfiguration event for Jesus would have induced confidence in the manifestation of his calling and of the particular avenue he had recently announced that he would take in order to fulfill it (p. 188; also Nolland, 1993, p. 503).

Earlier in Luke’s gospel (chapter 9, verse 9), Herod, tetrarch of Judea, after hearing of the miraculous impact of Jesus and his disciples throughout his jurisdiction, was heard inquiring into Jesus’ identity. Luke’s answer in recording the transfiguration pericope is that he is the Son of God. What was Jesus’ own understanding of the significance of the event? Nolland (1993) sees the event, similar to his baptismal experience, as “a private [infer *telling*] experience of Jesus” (p. 498) between him, his father, and Moses and Elijah. The appearance and the conversation between the three concerned Jesus’ imminent departure and served to validate Jesus’ self-understood destiny, for their dialogue centered around the “exodus” Jesus was soon to embark upon which, for him, would have conjured up images of Moses’ leading the Israelites out of Egypt (Nolland, pp 499 & 503); so too, the presence of the enveloping cloud influenced similar images.

The critical juncture of this event for Jesus, however, was the voice of God proclaiming Jesus to be his son to whom the disciples must listen. Morris (1999) asserts that those words signified an important aspect of Jesus’ “Person, rather like messiahship. God chose and anointed Jesus for his ministry. This clearly and emphatically differentiates him from Moses and Elijah…to him, people must give heed” (p. 189). Similarly, the Father’s declaration that Jesus is “my son, whom I have chosen” intimated the chosen servant of Isaiah 42 (Evans, 1990, p. 151; Nolland, 1993, p. 504; Scharlemann, 1988, p. 887) to Luke’s readers and would have as well to one as scripturally learned as Jesus was. This experience helped solidify in Jesus’ mind, his purpose, his standing among the “greats” of Israel’s past, and his filial and special relationship with Jehovah God as his chosen son.

*Many Disciples Desert Jesus in John 6:60-71*

Vital to understanding John’s portrayal of Jesus is the Father-Son relationship (Beasley-Murray, 1987, Introduction p. Lxxxii & Anderson, 1999). The unity of that relationship was founded “before the world began” (John 17:5, New International Version) and grounded in the Father’s sending of the Son (Beasley-Murray, Introduction p. Lxxxii & Anderson, 1999). In John chapter six in particular, Jesus reveals his self-understanding as the salvific “bread of life” (verse 35) that came down from Heaven (verse 38), who would raise his faithful followers from death (verse 39), who alone had “seen the father” (verse 46), and whose spiritual flesh and blood could singularly provide eternal life (verse 57). Jesus saw himself as not only the giver and sustainer of life but as life itself. The text concerning the disciples who desert Jesus is as follows:

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

From this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

"You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.) (John 9:60-71, New International Version)

Jesus’ questions (verse 61) the disciples who were grumbling about his hard teaching – “not that it is difficult to understand…but that it is difficult to put into practice” (Michaels, 1995, p. 120) – by clearly illuminating the path that he, and therefore any of his followers, must take…the path to death of which his own father had sent him.

During the preceding pericope’s dialogue, from which his followers took offense, Jesus states five times that he had been sent by the Father and claims another five times that he had come down from heaven/God as well (John 6:25-59, New International Version). According to Meyer (1996), in doing so, Jesus clearly identifies himself as “God’s agent” (D’Angelo, 1999, p. 60). These “sent” statements reveal, among other things, the underlying legitimacy that Jesus felt about his mission as the “Mosaic-prophet” who speaks on the Father’s behalf (Anderson, 1999, p. 36).

Though the listeners of Jesus’ discourse (verses 25-59) saw him simply as “Jesus, the son of Joseph” (verse 42), Jesus also reveals his self-understood divinity when he retorts to the shrinking disciples that he would ascend back to his Father in glory after fulfilling his mission of suffering (Beasley-Murray, 1987, p. 96). Furthermore, many disciples abruptly turned away as they understand Jesus to exclaim his Kingdom is not of this world (verse 60). Jesus does not back away from his hard stance but with palpable pathos, questions the twelve disciples concerning their courage and decision to continue following him.

Peter responds that there was no place, realistically, for them to turn because “You have the words of eternal life [and] we believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6: 6-69, New International Version). In so responding, Peter wholeheartedly agrees with Jesus that he has been sent from God, has come down from God, and as such, is “God’s Holy One”. Jesus, in reply, does not repudiate Peter’s exasperated judgment because he knows himself to be “the One who comes from the other world and belongs to God” (Beasley-Murray, 1987, p. 97)

###### *Jesus at the Temple in Matthew 21:12-17*

The thousands who traveled to Jerusalem in preparation for the Passover season welcomed Jesus with shouts of praise and honor as he came riding into town on the “famed” donkey. France (1999) proposes that Jesus’ entry into the city, in purposed fulfillment of the Jewish prophet Zechariah’s proclamation, was “a deliberately staged ‘demonstration’, a sequence of symbolic actions designed to have an unmistakable impact…the ‘triumphal entry’ and the demonstration in the temple together constitute a clear and public challenge [for the crowd] to face up to [Jesus’] Messianic claim” (p. 296). Others, like Hagner (1995), apply the term *Messianic King* to describe Jesus’ intention and identity (p. 594).

It is true that some scholars consider this entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as his “concession to the fevered expectations of His disciples and the multitude” (Plumptre (n.d.), as reported by Edersheim, 1993, p. 725), but most scholars consider this Jesus’ deliberate acceptance and behavioral proclamation of his Kingship (e.g., Hagner, 1995, p. 593; Edersheim, 1993, p. 725; France, 1999, p. 296), however different his definition of King might be from the popular hope.

When Jesus entered the city he was greeted with jubilant shouts of “Hosanna” (which means, “praise be”, Hagner, 1995, p. 595) and praises relating to his messiahship in the lineage of David, inferring that an eschatological salvation was near (Hagner, 1995, p. 596). Jesus did not rebuke the crowds for their proclamations, though most of them were misguided in their expectation of his mission and role as the Messiah King. In a parallel passage of the same event recorded in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus goes as far as to claim that nature itself – stones - would “cry out” his praises if the people were to stop singing them (Luke 19: 40, New International Version). In contradistinction to numerous other times in Jesus’ ministry, here he did not ask, command, nor infer that anyone should remain quiet about his identity – he accepted it. Though his disciples erroneously expected a powerful, glorious, impassioned King who would overthrow the hated Roman authorities, Jesus was yet content to allow his actions to speak of his kingly, Messianic identity.

Zechariah 9:9 says, “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (New International Version). Jesus decision to come into town was deliberate and thoughtful. France (1999) says this act, was Jesus “presenting himself as the King of the Jews” (p. 296). Hagner (1995) says Jesus “accept[ed] this acclaim” (p. 596) and, that “Zech. 9:9 is the deliberate frame of reference Jesus chooses to create by riding into the city on the foal of an ass (p. 595).

Once Jesus enters the city, he moves straight to the temple area (though Mark says it was not until the next day) in order, “as Lord of the temple” (France, 1999, p. 300), to cleanse it. Matthew records the incident this way:

Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’”

The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant. “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, “‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise’?” And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night. (Matthew 21:12-17)

Both France (1999) and Edersheim (1993) see Jesus purposefully inducing Messianic hope by his actions at the temple, and Hagner (1995) perceives that “Jesus meant the action as an eschatological sign rather than [simply] a practical reform of the objectionable practices (p. 600). Jesus was making the statement that, due to his identity as the prophesied Messiah and King, he would usher in a new era where the temple itself would be obsolete because Jesus himself, as “one greater than the temple”, had come (Hagner, 1995, pp. 603). Jesus, though upset about abuses and improper focus at the temple, and though he did, via his actions, address the dishonor present in the temple transactions, was most concerned that the people understand him as the promised Messianic King. By his impassioned, though premeditated (see Mark’s gospel account, France, 1999, p. 301) actions in the temple, Jesus proclaims his authority and identity (Hagner, p. 602; France, 1999, pp. 300-301) as Messiah, as King, as “one greater than the temple” and as one who brings the rule of God. Jesus not only understood his mission here, but his catalytic identity that would propel him to fulfill it.

Summary

Transformational leadership is vital to lasting change. Transformational leaders, such as Jesus, alter the very constitution of their followers; norms, values, expectations, purpose, and character are elevated. Self-understanding is decisive to the strength of that leadership. A well-defined, differentiated, and wholly owned identity both directs and empowers a leader’s influence. Such self-understanding can be learned and solidified through what some call *crucible* life experiences. Such formative events, along with the affective relationships of family, society, and culture, help to shape a leader’s personal psychology that later is catalytic for transformational leadership.

Social Cognitive theorists have shown the determinative influence that self-reflection has on producing self-efficacious beliefs. These beliefs can have a perpetual influence on a budding leader. As confidence grows, an emerging self-identity is linked with corollary success that, in turn, produces greater self-efficacious beliefs leading to even greater success. This arising self-understanding continues to develop, grow, and adapt as the leader continues to self-reflect and interface with his environment. Self-understanding is definitive to a leader’s influence.

Jesus has variously been defined as Messiah, king, sage, cynic philosopher, the Strong Man who opposes Satan, the Prophet, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, God, God’s son, a great moral teacher, Lord, the Holy One of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, and even the desperate, self-questioning illegitimate son of Mary and abandoned son of Joseph, among others. Jesus himself, perhaps, saw himself as all of the above and more. It is to the many facets of Jesus’ self-understanding against the backdrop of his famous transformational leadership that this paper turns.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Leadership is not about position but a process (Kouzes, 1999, p. 37). This process produces influence. Influence is engaged most often in order to reach pre-determined outcomes or goals. Leadership provides the impetus, direction, and agency for change. However, the potency of leadership is magnified when its purpose is transformational in nature. Transformational leadership seeks not only to alter results, but lives as well. The heart of a transformational leader is revolutionary and so the changes are dramatic. It is the values, beliefs, and convictions of followers that are the target of this type of leadership, and so its impact is holistic.

In order for transformational leadership to deliver the power of which it is capable, it must be grounded in self-understanding. This self-concept is gained by internal inquiry and wrestling with personal meaning. Satinder Dhiman (2007) claims that the two most fundamental questions a person can grapple with are; “Who am I?” and “What am I doing here?” (p. 28). When a leader gains clarity of self-understanding and makes subsequent application to the purpose of his or her life, powerful leadership results.

Jesus profoundly exemplifies this truth. The impact of his leadership, though dead for millennium, is felt today. Nations and cultures were astoundingly transformed due to his leadership. By transfiguring the beliefs, values, and paradigms of individuals, Jesus’ powerful leadership created a movement that, in turn, changed the world.

Description of Methodology

Three types of designs may be implemented when conducting research; quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method. Quantitative and qualitative designs, though distinct, are aptly distinguished as gradations of one another rather than polar opposites and, of course, the mixed-method design incorporates facets of both research methodologies.

The signal features most readily used to distinguish between the quantitative and qualitative approaches is that of “using words (qualitative) rather than numbers (quantitative), or using closed-ended questions (quantitative hypotheses) rather than open-ended questions (qualitative interview questions)” (Creswell, 2009, p. 3). Creswell (2009) clarifies that a more complete view of these two research designs is revealed by the “intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods” of the researcher (p. 5).

“Quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). The variables themselves and the differences and-or similarities between them are measured, recorded and statistically analyzed in order to validate or reject a particular hypothesis. Qualitative research is inquiry into the meanings, attitudes, perceptions, motivations, beliefs, and conclusions that people ascribe to human concerns and problems. Qualitative studies do not employ numerical data but rather collect data through avenues such as focus groups, individual interviews, or small representative samples of particular populations.

Creswell (2009) purports vital benefit to an audience that is aware of the philosophical framework that an investigator inherently uses while conducting research. He considers four worldviews: (a) *postpositivism*, which relies on the verifiable law of cause and effect to determine reducible, measurable outcomes, (b) *constructivism*, which views the meaning of life as subjectively variable, complex, and socially constructed by individuals as they seek to understand their world, (c) *advocacy/participatory*, which requires that research be directed towards a political agenda of reform that initiates transformational change within society, and (d) *pragmatism*, which is concerned with solutions to problems that emerge from actions and consequences and that uses pluralistic applications to acquire those solutions (pp. 6-10).

Each type of research design naturally lends itself to normative choices between different strategies of inquiry. These approaches range from surveys, experiments, ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research, narrative research, sequential mixed methods, concurrent mixed methods and transformative mixed methods. These strategies define the *how* of the data collecting experience for the researcher (Creswell, 2009, pp. 12-14).

It is the combination of the three elements; philosophical worldview, strategies of inquiry and specific research method that creates the actual research design and which tends towards a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method focus.

The researcher brings a social constructivist paradigm to ply at the outset of this inquiry into the profound relationship between transformational leadership and self-understanding. This paradigm posits that life’s meanings are best understood historically and socially. Individuals create, to a great extent, their own meaning as they interact with their world; therefore, the researcher engages the chosen subjects in their *own* personal, cultural, and historical environment in order to extract appropriate conclusions. These determinations are garnered through case studies.

The researcher has chosen, in light of the social constructivist worldview, to apply qualitative research toward the goal of revealing the acute link between transformational leadership and self-identity. This method directed the researcher to consider the personal and social milieu that acutely influenced Jesus’ self-awareness. Information for this study was gathered from biblical texts, theological reviews, and existing research concerning the basis of transformational leadership and man’s search for meaning. The researcher has found significant research into the subject’s self-conceptualization but very little in regards to how that self-understanding related to the strength of his transformational leadership. To discover the seminal link between these two concepts is the aim of this inquiry.

Sample and Population

According to William M. K. Trochim, Professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University (2006), “Sampling is the process of selecting units (e.g., people, organizations) from a population of interest so that by studying the sample we may fairly generalize our results back to the population from which they were chosen”. (Socialresearchmethods.net, n.d., n.p.). Population is the whole from which the subset, the sample, is drawn. Trochim makes a distinction between the theoretical population and the study population. The distinction lies in that the study population is that part of the theoretical population that can actually be accessed. The sample is taken from this population. Trochim (2006) asserts that:

The sample is the group of people who you select to be in your study. Notice that I didn't say that the sample was the group of people who are actually in your study. You may not be able to contact or recruit all of the people you actually sample, or some could drop out over the course of the study (Socialresearchmethods.net, n.d., n.p.).

The population of this study includes the major leaders of Christianity referenced in the New Testament such as the Apostles and disciples. The Apostles include Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alpheus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James, Judas Iscariot, and Matthias who was chosen to replace the deceased Judas. Other major leaders are disciples such as James the brother of Jesus, Apollos, Mary, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Phillip, Stephen, Priscilla and Aquila, Lydia, Mark, Barnabas, John the Baptist, and Luke as well as others.

The sample of this study is Jesus. The researcher chose him due to the strength of his leadership impact and the superior availability of significant research centered on his life and leadership as opposed to lesser-known and so lesser researched Christian leaders.

The leader of Christianity is axiomatically Jesus Christ. He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6, New International Version). Peter spoke of Jesus when he said, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, New International Version). In speaking such, Peter claimed that Jesus was to be the focus of anyone seeking to find salvation; the goal of Christianity.

The researcher has chosen to study Jesus because he was the “author and perfecter” (Hebrews 12:2, New International Version) of the Christian faith, purpose, and movement that became the New Testament church that brought widespread impact not only in his day but in centuries since. He was, in terms of transformational leadership, solely responsible for establishing a leadership blueprint from which subsequent New Testament leaders would emulate.

Internal and External Validity

According to Byers (n.d.):

Internal validity refers both to how well a study was run (research design, operational definitions used, how variables were measured, what was/wasn't measured, etc.), and how confidently one can conclude that the observed effect(s) were produced solely by the independent variable and not extraneous ones. (p. 1)

The internal validity of a study answers the questions, “Was it truly the applied intervention that was the determining factor in the variable outcome?” and “Did the study actually measure what it intended to measure?” There are numerous threats to the validity of a proposed study. Creswell compiles a list of ten potential internal validity threats to a study (Creswell, 2009, pp. 163-164). The researcher, in studying the correlative influence of self-understanding and transformative leadership strength, recognizes two perceived risks to validity, the maturation and selection of participants.

Creswell (2009) defines the threat of maturation as; “Participants in an experiment may mature or change during the experiment, thus influencing the results” (p. 163). The researcher directly states that the focus of this study is to report on the effects of maturation (specifically a leader’s conceptualization of self) on transformational leadership. The expectation was that the researcher would find that Jesus evolved psychologically; that is, he matured in his self-concept. However, the variable itself that was to be measured remained his self-understanding.

The subject in this case study was Jesus. This study considered the total breadth of his life, which spanned a prolonged period, popularly estimated at a little over three decades. It was rational to expect to witness a maturation of this transformational leader when following his life from infancy through adulthood. It was also reasonable to expect to see that he matured (physically, socially, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually) at differing rates. In the end, Jesus’ psychological, emotional, and spiritual maturation was, in fact, the crux of this study. Maturation was expected.

The invariable angle in this study, though, was that Jesus’ life was examined posthumously; he no longer possessed any possibility for change or maturation. Perhaps the elucidation of his self-understanding could have been more thoroughly unearthed but no other intrinsic change to his life could have been wrought by the simple act of him living his life. His life was completed and then the study was initiated.

Another recognized threat to the internal validity of this study was the selection of the case study sample. Again, Jesus was the only leader chosen to review to represent New Testament era transformational leaders. Creswell (2009) defines the threat of selection as “Participants can be selected who have certain characteristics that predispose them to have certain outcomes (e.g., they are brighter)” (p. 163). One might presume that the selection of Jesus as the sample for this study inordinately slanted the sampling because it is popularly agreed that he was the de facto founder of Christianity itself. While this is acknowledged, it is also obvious that he was not the only leader in the New Testament era who wielded significant influence upon the populace.

Jesus, notwithstanding as the ultimate and supreme leader of Christianity and set apart as Master (I Peter 3:15, New International Version), had company in terms of contemporary leaders in the first century, many who were mentored by him. James, the physical brother of Jesus, was the first leader of the prolific Jerusalem church and was the most instrumental at sorting out the potentially devastating Jewish-Gentile crisis of the infant church (Shanks and Witherington III, 2003, p. 217). Luke, a physician, was a contemporary of Paul and wrote two of the most influential books of the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. David J. Williams (1995), in stating the importance of the book of Acts says:

Acts is the only authentic record we have of the first years of the church’s history…. if Acts had been lost there is nothing to take its place. Moreover, the rest of the New Testament would lie before us in two disjointed fragments, for Acts is the necessary link between the Gospels and the Epistles. (Introduction)

Surely, Luke’s significance as a New Testament era leader cannot easily be overstated. Other leaders such as the Apostle John, Apollos, Stephen, Phillip, Timothy, and Jesus’ brother Jude all made indelible marks on First Century Christianity.

While the selection threat to validity is genuine, it is also necessary. As noted above in relation to the maturation threat, the very expectation that this study presupposed was that Jesus would, with time, mature and grow in his self-understanding. The researcher expected at the outset of this study that Jesus would not only grow in his self-understanding, but also that his maturity would, perhaps, outpace all of his contemporary leaders in fastidiousness of conviction in terms of that self-understanding. The possibility was considered that he became the extraordinarily powerful leader that he did, even outdistancing other formidable transformational leader contemporaries, preciselybecause of the extreme depth of conviction and personal application of his self-understanding.

Not only must internal threats to validity be considered but external threats as well. Creswell (2009) lists seven types of threats to external validity (pp. 164-165). The researcher considered the possible influence of three types of risks at the outset of this study: (1) interaction of selection and treatment, (2) interaction of setting and treatment, and (3) interaction of history and treatment. Creswell (2009) describes the interaction of selection and treatment: “Because of the narrow characteristics of participants in the experiment, the researcher cannot generalize to individuals who do not have the characteristics of participants” (p. 165). Admittedly, the sample does have constricting characteristics (e.g., being both divine and human, possessing miraculous powers, being at once eternal and finite, etc.) and this distinctiveness narrows the appropriate application of inferences. The researcher recognizes and accepts this threat yet still purports beneficial application to other leaders.

Creswell (2009) describes the second external threat to this study, the interaction of setting and treatment, in this manner: “Because of the characteristics of the setting of participants in an experiment, a researcher cannot generalize to individuals in other settings” (p. 165). The setting of the studied New Testament leaders was socially, culturally, politically, and spiritually unique and if the researcher desired to make application to a larger population, additional research in new settings would have to be conducted.

Creswell (2009) describes the third threat considered, the interaction of history and treatment, as such: “Because results of an experiment are time bound, a researcher cannot generalize results to past or future situations” (p. 165). The researcher purports no definitive application to past or future situations.

The researcher has incorporated a triangulation of informational sources (Creswell, 2009, p. 191) to deduce consistent themes pertaining to the conceptualization, maturation, and application of Jesus’ self-understanding. Themes were also discovered related to the characteristics of Jesus’ self-understanding. The researcher also undertook to sufficiently and accurately portray the cultural, political, and spiritual settings within which Jesus operated. These details and the converging of multiple data sources added validity to the study (Creswell, 2009, pp. 191-192).

Reliability

Creswell (2009) states that qualitative reliability “indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (p. 190). Encompassed in this definition is the question of repeatability and replicability of results (Golafshani, 2000, p. 598). Researchers gain reliability by “document[ing] the procedures of their case studies and…document[ing] as many of the steps of the procedures as possible” (Cresswell, 2009, p. 190) so as to be able to obtain similar results in a test-retest scenario.

Creswell (2009) suggests several reliability procedures to ensure consistency:

1. Check drafts to ensure obvious document errors are absent
2. Ensure there is no drift in the definition of codes during coding.
3. Crosscheck codes developed by different researchers by comparing them to those derived independently. (p. 190)

The researcher analyzed the data concerning the sample and detailed the significant themes. The researcher decided against using pre-determined codes for qualifying the information collected but rather chose to allow the emerging data to determine and define the codes used. In the end, the researcher discovered both expected themes and unusual, surprising themes revealed in Jesus’ life.

Researcher Bias

According to Creswell (2009), “Qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand. Their interpretations cannot be separated from their own backgrounds, history, contexts, and prior understandings” (p. 176). The researcher agrees that the potential for biased interpretations of data exist due to the personal characteristics and context that the researcher inherently brings to the inquiry.

The researcher is an avowed Christian with an active, personal, and vibrant faith. The paradigms, values, and beliefs of the researcher have been largely constructed and strengthened by an adherence to biblical mores. The researcher believes in the inerrancy of the Christian canonical scriptures, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the inherent goodness of Jehovah God.

These convictions helped to produce the paradigm from which the researcher viewed the sample. Many, if not all, Biblical leaders are held in high regard as examples to emulate; however, the researcher holds Jesus Christ in the highest regard as the ultimate example for an appropriate and successful life. The researcher agrees with the Apostle John who stated that, “whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (I John 2:6, New International Version).

Creswell (2009) states, “inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, that may shape their interpretations formed during a study” (p. 177). The researcher grants that the above referenced characteristics did, reflexively, enter into the interpretation process; however, they were openly acknowledged.

Data Collection

The researcher considered three main facets when collecting data for this study: (a) the boundaries of the study, (b) the actual methods used to collect the data, and (c) the protocol for recording and organizing the information (Creswell, 2009, p. 178). The boundaries of this study included the singular sample, Jesus, and the available data revealed by recorded events of his life that exposed his behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. The method of data collection was through the study of public documents, primarily the Bible and theological, psychological, and sociological studies referencing the lives of the chosen sample (i.e. the literature review).

The following protocol was used to record findings: (a) an initial visual literature map (Creswell, 2009, p. 34) that organized the existing research literature reviewed and (b) a journal kept during the literature review process. Notes were taken that detailed the documents themselves (author, date of publication, source, etc.) as well as key ideas from each document. Reflective notes detailing the researcher’s personal thoughts such as feelings, impressions, and reactions were recorded in the journal as well (Creswell, 2009, pp. 181-182).

Data Analysis

By examining existing literature, the goal of the data analysis process throughout the extended period of inquiry was to gain a successively deeper and deeper understanding of the impact that self-understanding had on the transformational leadership of Jesus. While a quantitative project requires statistical analysis of findings, the qualitative method of study in this project required the researcher to affect a sort of “peeling back [of] the layers of an onion” (Creswell, 2009, p. 183) in terms of understanding the data.

Creswell (2009) describes the steps of data analysis in qualitative research: (a) organizing and preparing data for analysis (such as a visual literature map), (b) thoroughly reading through all data, (c) coding the data (as defined above in the definition of terms section) by themes and descriptions, (d) using the coding of data to provide descriptions and themes for analysis, (e) determining how the descriptions and themes will be advanced in the analysis, and (f) interpreting the meanings of those theme and descriptive correlations (p. 185).

The researcher’s analysis began with the following questions:

1. How did Jesus’ self-understanding shape the strength of his transformational leadership?
2. How did Jesus discover, clarify, apply, and own his self-understanding?
3. What were the common themes of Jesus’ self-understanding?
4. Was Jesus a transformational leader before he discovered and defined his self-understanding or did he become a transformational leader because of his self-understanding?

The researcher first considered the cultural and spiritual settings of the sample as revealed in the literature, and then contemplatively analyzed the data for themes and issues. The analysis began broadly but through focused reflection, questioning, and honing, progressed to a greater and greater focus that resulted in sound interpretation of the data.

Pilot Testing

Pilot testing is used in experimental studies to allow a researcher to gain vital clarity of particulars for a proposed experiment such as, how long the experiment will take, how effectively controlled the variable(s) is, how clear the directions were for the subjects, and even whether or not the participants were able to remain objective throughout their participation. Pilot testing illuminates problems in a researcher’s design or implementation to a study prior to the actual research. This allows the researcher time to correct mistakes allowing greater opportunity for a sound experiment (Wadsworth Cenage Learning, 2009, n.p.).

While pilot testing is a necessary part of quantitative research, it is not needed in qualitative case studies such as the present thesis. This case study is solely focused on the effects of the variable (self-understanding) on the power of transformational leadership as evidenced in Jesus’ life within the overall population of New Testament era leaders. A pilot study is unnecessary in this study, as the focus is only on the mentioned sample.

Summary

The researcher posited that a leader’s self-understanding strengthens that very leader’s transformational influence. This qualitative study examined Jesus’ life as a representative sample of New Testament era leaders by reviewing existing transformational leadership studies, theological literature, the Bible, as well as psychological and sociological research. Though the researcher admitted possible bias, through consistent procedures of data collection, recording, and analysis, the researcher sought sound results to describe the relationship of self-understanding and transformational leadership.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Transformational leadership is powerful. Self-understanding is foundational to and determinate of leadership. Jesus was a transformational leader with a sophisticated and controversial self-understanding. Significant research efforts have been directed at revealing the specifics of his self-understanding. In particular, much scholarly debate has centered on the identity and self-identity of the historical Jesus of Galilee and whether or not that self-identity equates with the Christ of faith. Jesus is a world-renowned leader – a phenomenally successful transformational leader – but a precise and singular conception of his self-understanding has not been unanimously forthcoming, although research has revealed specific findings concerning transformational leadership and self-understanding in general while also shedding light on the Jesus’ leadership as well.

*Transformational Leadership*

Transformational leadership produces exponential impact on followers; it alters and heightens followers’ values, buoys self-concepts, reconstructs paradigms, elevates goals, engenders commitment, and fortifies impact. It constitutionally changes followers, not simply altering their behaviors alone. Transformational leadership is undergirded by highly developed self-awareness, self-control, self-differentiation, and self-confidence – all significantly bettered by a clear self-understanding. These character traits are often found in effective charismatic, authentic, servant, and transformational leaders. Acute Emotional Intelligence is also found in such leaders from which they are able to catalyze personal change and so serve as role models for their followers own transmogrification.

Transformational leaders, though self-reflection and a “learner’s attitude”, are able to willfully fashion strong character and purpose from their life experiences, both positive and negative. Transformational leaders often experience crisis-type life experiences that induce and propel their transformational careers. These leaders are able to manipulate such trials into life-altering, personal development, success-boosting events. They are positive, forward thinkers and adept adapters.

*Self-understanding*

Self-understanding encompasses a mosaic of meaning. It entails what is core to a person’s being. It includes identity, “what really counts” about someone “quite apart from both comparison and contrast to others” (Gilgnilliat, 2008, p. 129), self-concept, which is self-knowledge as determined through self-evaluation, and consists of the twin concepts of me and I as well; the knower and the known. It includes self-awareness of a person’s own beliefs, emotions, value constructs, abilities, propensities, and goals. It is “the specific uniqueness of a person” (Gilgnilliat, p. 129).

Self-understanding is seminal to effective transformational leadership. The very process of unearthing, defining, maturing, and actualizing personal self-understanding is primal to self-leadership. It is where leadership begins – with the self. Self-leadership is found to be pre-determinate of effective transformational leadership. Self-understanding is known to be a primary facet of EQ (emotional quotient) which is key to normal human development. High EQ precedes effective transformational leadership with its necessary motivational component. Highly self-aware persons are often viewed as leaders because they are firstly perceived as decidedly effective human beings. They exude confidence and credibility, that is, they “have a leg to stand on” in proffering their message.

Vital for self-confidence, a common trait among transformational leaders, self-understanding guides the behavior of a leader because people are compelled to act in ways consistent with their own self-view. Self-understanding, then, acts as a sort of cornerstone from which leadership direction is both supported and directed. Consistency of behavior congruent with self-understanding, serves to solidify and perpetuate a secure self-identity as it enhances confidence and self-esteem.

Self-understanding tracks well with an acutely defined sense of purpose which is also fundamental to both internal and external transformational leadership. Research shows that leaders with a clear self-understanding cultivate a personal temperament ripe for volitional personal transformation because gaps between the perceived self and the idealized self can be recognized and acted upon with acuity. Self-understanding enhances personal meaning and produces strength of character in pursuit of that significance. Finally, self-understanding allows a leader to appropriately separate and distance himself or herself from “the crowd” – critical to the very definition of leadership and necessary for a leader to be a change agent.

*Jesus*

Jesus is widely accepted as a transformational leader. It is capturing his self-understanding that proves more difficult. Research reveals Jesus’ self-identity with various titles: High Priestly Messiah, the long awaited and often prophesied Prophet, Isaiah’s Servant, Teacher, and King among others. He is deemed to have understood himself to be divine and a part of the Triune Godhead with a special relationship with his heavenly father as the unique son. There is much debate as to Jesus, in particular, viewing himself as the Messiah or Christ. Some researchers postulate that it was his followers that later imbued him with this honorific title in order to satisfy their own theological aspirations of his life and purpose, while most concur that Jesus viewed himself as the promised Messiah.

Jesus processed key events in his life, some of which served to elucidate and strengthen his self-identity while other events allowed him to promulgate that identity. This self-identity grew and matured throughout his life. Events such as his “immaculate conception”, his cousin John The Baptist’s prophetic role and their relationship, angelic support in the wilderness of temptation, the miraculous and affirming voice from heaven at his baptism, the appearing of Moses and Elijah on the mountain where he was transfigured, to name a few, served to establish and clarify Jesus’ self-understanding.

Overwhelmingly, most scholars perceive Jesus to be secure in his self-identity especially as it related to his fatherly relationships. (In contrast, Professor Donald Capps views Jesus as largely insecure and motivated by a deficient self-understanding predicated upon a faulty relationship with his father, Joseph). Jesus felt especially loved and chosen by his heavenly father as he was affirmed in that relationship via the scriptures and personal life experiences. His other familial relationships provided a stout Jewish upbringing which included indoctrination in the Torah and writings of the prophets. He was familiar with the both the messianic and political expectations of his time.

Jesus’ self-understanding, in congruence with Social Cognitive Theory, is seen as malleable and maturing throughout his life. The layering of life’s experiences continually molded and sharpened his self-understanding as he drew conclusions through his own self-reflection and mediation. Jesus’ self-understanding was molded by his boyhood familial relationships as well as cultural and societal expectations of his era. Judea and Palestine, prior and during the time Jesus lived, was rife with messianic hopes. It would not be surprising that many of those prophetic scriptures would be at the forefront of many Jewish young boys at the time of his appearing. The Jewish scriptures in general had a determinative effect upon his self-view when seen in collaboration with the innate desire that people have to understand self and make sense of one’s purpose.

*Learning*

Social Cognitive Theory postulates that people are active participants in gaining and forming their own self-understanding. They are not simply a result of the external forces of stimulus-response but, particularly, their cognitive abilities and choices help to determine self-identity as well. This formulation is structured through self-reflection concentrating on the self along with personal actions and results that produce self-efficacy beliefs. When a person self-interprets their actions as successful (perceived self-mastery) through the introspective process, skills of perseverance and resilience are enhanced. A person’s self-understanding is a learned concept; it is a result of the interplay between environment, behavior, and various cognitive variables and thus has not only the capacity but propensity to change over time. The Social Cognitive Theory of learning views personal identity as an ever-maturing concept. It is a notion informed by constant social interaction and mental assessment, particularly of self-performance. Self-understanding adapts and matures.

Social Cognitive Theory is “rooted in a view of human agency in which individuals are agents proactively engaged in their own development” (Pajares, 2002, ¶ 5). People’s self-identity is largely a concept of their own making, produced by life choices, resultant behaviors and consequences, and their reflection upon those convergences. Yet, in contradistinction, this theory also emphasizes the vital role that modeling and one’s social identity play in the formation of self-understanding. Role models can create and crystallize beliefs and values that significantly influence another’s identity and life direction. Personal identity is created, in part, by self-considering a social identity that can and often changes as a person matures throughout their life. In summary, self-understanding is a conglomeration of environment, behavior, cognitive choices, self-reflection, and the inherent uniqueness of each self’s experiences in which the learner is an active participant.

Summary

The data collected from business, theological, psychological, sociological, and historical scholarship confirms the validity of transformational leadership and the vital role that a well-defined, clarified, and solidified self-understanding plays in a leader’s effectiveness. Scholarship reveals that leaders with a clear sense of self have laid an important bulwark from which to launch transformative leadership. Jesus, as a leader, exerted tremendous life-altering influence during his relatively brief life. Research reveals a multi-faceted and complex self-understanding of Jesus. Nevertheless, research confirms the determinative role that Jesus’ self-understanding had, not only on his own life, but also on the lives of countless millions thereafter.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In response to a jibe that he was unnecessarily and boringly concerned with useless ideas, Thomas Carlyle, eminent Scottish essayist, replied, “There once was a man called Rousseau who wrote a book containing nothing but ideas. The second edition was bound in the skins of those who laughed at the first” (Wiker, 2008, p. 2). Ideas have consequences. This project focused on the consequences of self-understanding on leadership. The relationship between a person’s self-understanding (idea) and their transformational leadership ability not only does exist, but particularly and consequentially, a well-defined and owned self-understanding (idea) increases the skills of a transformational leader. Jesus was the case-in-point exemplar. Ideas are powerful. Ideas are especially powerful when those ideas are constituent of a leader’s self-understanding, for truly, transformational leadership results.

Summary

The study postulated that Jesus’ transformational leadership skills emerged from his self-understanding. Thus, inherently, the study foundationally theorized that self-understanding is pre-determinate of transforming influence; it is the nutrient rich soil from which great leadership grows. Intending to unearth the particulars of the relationship between self-understanding and transformational leadership (if there, in fact, was any), the researcher began by defining and describing transformational leadership itself.

*Transformational Leadership*

Leadership, generally, is concerned with influence. Transformational leadership is acute influence; it is leadership with magnanimous if not audacious intentions. Radical change is its goal. It is “top-rung” leadership, going “above and beyond”. It does not merely influence words or behavior but alters the very make-up of adherents. It has the power to produce widespread change in individuals, organizations, nations, and more. Transformational leadership is a change agent’s *modus operandi*. Transformational leadership is visionary, energetic, revolutionary, and epidemic.

Examples of transformational leaders abound. Mahatma Gandhi, Muhammad, Mother Teresa, Abraham Lincoln, Queen Elizabeth, Martin Luther King Junior, Winston Churchill, and Jesus are all examples of transformational leaders who not only altered individual character but the very societies and eras in which they lived. In fact, their influence is still felt to this day. Such is the impact of transformational leaders. These leaders foment change from within. They themselves are exemplars for self-transformation who then serve as role models for transmogrification. When followers see significant, beneficial, and virtuous change *within* a leader, they are then attracted by the genuine change and thus become devoted followers seeking similar changes themselves.

Transformational leaders have differentiated themselves through the process of learning. By learning, they become exemplary human beings who are perceived, if you will, as highly successful “livers of life”, thus increasing their credibility and influence among followers. They accrue such success through emotionally intelligent self-reflection concerning their life experiences. Often, it is crisis-like events, or crucibles (Bennis & Thomas, 2002), that prove to be the seedbed for their leadership prowess. These experiences, though extremely difficult and painful, are proactively manipulated by the leader and so become constituent and directive for their self-understanding. During purposeful times of self-reflection, these events become the “putty” that such leaders use to reform themselves cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually in congruence with newfound purpose emergent from those experiences. A necessary ingredient clarified and focused during such introspection is their concept of self-understanding.

*Self-understanding*

Self-understanding is crucial to effective leadership. It is the conception that a leader has of himself or herself that provides solid footing from which to lead. A leader who has a clearly defined self-concept is a confident, self-assured leader with high self-esteem (which is requisite for transformational leadership, Northouse, 2007, p. 178, and Popper & Zakkai, 1994, p. 7). With a clear self-concept, a leader is free to move forward with decisiveness, energy, and passion. The self-concept, when fully developed, entails chosen ideologies, philosophies, and goals that serve to guide a leader’s life to remain in congruence with those chosen values; this too bolsters self-esteem as a leader recognizes his/her own internal harmony. Crucial to effective leadership transformational leadership is a solid ethical foundation: Self-understanding serves to both inform one’s own morality and is updated by it as well. The clearer self-understanding is, the clearer one’s ethical stand is.

Self-understanding tends to resist change as it matures, yet it is never wholly static. Similar to Newton’s First Law of Thermodynamics that states objects at rest tend to stay at rest and objects in motion tend to stay in motion, Self-understanding opposes change but will not indefinitely resist it. As a leader’s self-understanding forms, it hardens, but, as Gignilliat (2008) informs, there is a *facet* of self-hood that remains unchangeable (p. 127). The emotionally intelligent, self-aware leader can be at ease with a simultaneously fixed and adapting self-concept.

A leader with a clarified sense of self-understanding also, most often, has clearly defined their sense of purpose and meaning as well. The leader’s mission in life in inextricably bound up with their self-understanding; they interact and inform each other. It is this sense of mission and resultant vision that provides energy and passion for the transformational leader. The leader’s discovery of personal meaning propagates itself in transformative leadership focused on helping others live with meaning and purpose. Self-understanding, emboldened by personal meaning, produces charismatic, transformational leaders.

Self-understanding largely determines the effectiveness of leaders. A leader who can confidently answer the question, “Who am I?” has provided himself or herself with the initial momentum for influence. Dhiman (2007) states that “the two most fundamental questions on can ask [are]: Who am I? [and] What am I doing here?” (p. 28). Without confidence in this regard, a leader will never attain the necessary thrust for radical influence. Vagueness and insecurity over self-identity will be the shackles that hold back transformative influence. Requisite for lucidity, is the ability of a leader to self-differentiate; that is, to separate self from the crowd.

Self-differentiation or individuation allows emotional freedom from constricting paradigms. It frees the mind for creativity. Effective leaders differentiate themselves from others, they are self-accountable, and thus allow their own self-understanding to be formed unhindered by conforming influences. The leader who can separate emotionally and intellectually from prevailing thought, yet remain appropriately connected with followers, provides himself or herself the venue to think and lead both independently and creatively; equally requisite for transformational leadership. Such behavior is critical for leaders who need to enact change, especially during conflict. The self-differentiated leader, who is emotionally independent and self-confident, can be proactive rather than reactive in their leadership and introduce significant, creative and lasting change. This emotional well-being (here, an appropriate independence from society’s pervasive conforming pressures) is what has birthed renaissances and altered entire eras.

*Jesus’ Self-understanding*

Jesus, being fully human (and, yes, fully God), gained his self-understanding as the rest of us do, he learned it. His self-understanding was inevitably informed by his familial relationships, particularly with his earthly father, Joseph. Anyone’s familial culture significantly influences self-concept, and Jesus was no different. He grew up in a devoutly religious home where the Jewish scriptures (including prophesies of the coming Messiah) were probably at hand and who visited local synagogues and the Jewish temple as directed. Hearing and reading scriptures which referenced Israel’s God and the Prophet to come, Isaiah’s Servant, a coming Redeemer and King, assuredly caught the attention of Jesus.

Jesus’ boyhood experiences, conversations with his Mother, Mary and father, Joseph, along with probable time spent with his cousin John the Baptist, were undoubtedly reflected upon by Jesus in times of quiet solitude. When did his mother tell him of his miraculous birth? What did he know of the uniqueness surrounding the birth of his cousin John? What went through Jesus’ mind during his trips to Jerusalem and the temple about which he had read so much of in his study of the Torah? Did Jesus have an extensive conversation with his parents upon his trips home from the temple, especially the trip when he was twelve and on which he debated and confounded the religious leaders while his parents frantically searched for him? Did these astounding events lead to amazing divulgences by Mary about his birth and prophesies concerning his future?

Such questions may not have definitive answers, but they reveal notions and concepts that Jesus undoubtedly must have wrestled with; particularly as they related to his identity and purpose. Hitchcock (2009) asserts that Jesus had a “strong and normal self-consciousness” (p. 94) and that “Jesus may be styled with justice the typical adolescent” (p. 104). Jesus assuredly developed his self-understanding as anyone would; he learned it via the interacting influences of life experiences and crisis, choices and actions he took, familial and societal labels and conceptions, vibrant examples before him, and times of spiritual, prayerful self-reflection. In doing so, Jesus was able to develop an amazingly secure and vibrant – if controversial – self-understanding.

Stephen Nichols (2008) asserts, “Jesus comes to us primarily in complexity. He is the God-man, fully human and fully divine in one person. That’s a statement packed with tension. And the temptation is to release that tension” (p. 226). Understatedly, it is a difficult task to extract the self-understanding of the “God-man” from the historical documents available. Surely it was a difficult task for Jesus himself to proclaim intelligibly, appropriately, and wisely just who he was…and who he knew himself to be. However, it is clear; Jesus did speak and act with a confidence and boldness that insinuates a clear and wholly owned self-understanding and purpose. In the Gospel of John, he proclaimed himself the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Gate, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the True-vine, and the Great I Am. And, he made many of those identifying proclamations within earshot of those whom he knew would later betray him.

Jesus’ self-understanding was multi-faceted. In studying Jesus words and actions recorded in the Biblical text, it is evident that Jesus knew himself in apocalyptic and eschatological terms. He was at once the Prophet, Redeemer, and King come to rectify a world gone awry by introducing an age of Godly ethics and authority. In congruence with prophesies he internalized, he also saw himself to be Isaiah’s suffering Servant and the Lamb of God who would be offered as a propitiatory sacrifice for all of humankind.

Jesus intentionally performed overtly messianic acts as he approached the time of his death. His zealous “cleansing of the temple” within the setting of Palm Sunday, and his willingness to offer himself sacrificially on a Roman cross, reveals his self-understanding as the promised Messiah (Stein, 2001). Though scholars disagree on the truth of Jesus being God, most agree that he saw himself as God or, in the least, divinity. That he self-identified himself as God’s special son and felt an acute affinity and love for his heavenly Father is well attested. It was the affirmation he felt from Jehovah God as his father that produced such a secure self-understanding that allowed Jesus to live an extremely self-differentiated and thus powerfully influential life. He “operated out of a sense of being deeply secure in his identity” (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002, p. 61).

Though there is consensus that Jesus was secure in his identity, obviated by his profoundly differentiated leadership style and impact, there is certainly not consensus about his self-understanding in terms of Messiah. Indeed, in the canonical Gospels, Jesus never *explicitly* names himself the Messiah or Christ. He was often hailed as Messiah, answered in the affirmative when questioned about the Messiah (John 4:26), claimed to be the Son of Man (John 9:37), and admitted to being Israel’s King (John 18:28-38), but he did not specifically call himself the Messiah. Many scholars reason that Jesus was wisely revealing himself and his purpose slowly as his was a politically and religiously tumultuous time in which he could have been ousted (killed?) before fully completing his task of converting others and ushering in the new era in God’s reign.

A “cafeteria-style” review of the canonical Gospel accounts reveal that Jesus understood himself to be, among other concepts God’s beloved Son, chosen and accepted by him, the Anointed One, Jehovah-God himself, the only acceptable sacrifice to satisfy God’s justice, the Son of Man, The Prophet, the new Moses, the Messianic King, the giver and sustainer of life, and life itself. There has never been one quite like Jesus, the God-man. As Stephen Nichols reminds, “In his person [and self-understanding] and his actions, Jesus is complex; reducing him does not help…” (p. 226). Though complicated, Jesus’ self-understanding can be delineated; he did just that, and from that self-understanding came his world-altering transformational influence.

Conclusions

This study attempted to ascertain the relationship between self-understanding and the emergence of transformational leadership skills. Jesus was the case study. In probing this relationship in Jesus’ life, four questions were posed:

1. How did Jesus’ self-understanding shape the character of his transformational leadership?
2. How did Jesus discover and actualize his self-understanding?
3. What are common themes of his self-understanding?
4. Was Jesus a transformational leader before he discovered his self-understanding or did he become a transformational leader because of his acute self-understanding?

It is to these questions that the data now turns.

*How Did Jesus’ Self-understanding Shape the Character of His Transformational Leadership?*

Jesus’ transformational leadership, known the world over; known for centuries, makes its impact to this very day, and undoubtedly will continue to inspire, instigate, and ignite transformation long into the future. Parker J. Palmer (2000) said it well when speaking of the power of living by one’s self-understanding:

The people who plant the seeds of movements make a critical decision: they decide to live “divided no more.” *They decide no longer to act on the outside in a way that contradicts some truth about themselves that they hold deeply on the inside* (author’s italics). They decide to claim authentic selfhood and act it out – and their decisions ripple out to transform the society in which they live… (p. 32)

It is clear that Jesus saw himself uniquely. He recognized his exclusive calling from Jehovah God and was resolute to actualize his self-understood identity. In so doing, the character of his self-understanding focused his intentions, energies, relationships, actions, and will toward transforming those around him, particularly the twelve personally chosen disciples through whom he would eventually achieve worldwide revolution. Though that self-understanding was multifaceted and complex (and disputable as to its exactness), Jesus’ self-understanding shaped his transformational leadership.

Jesus’ conviction that he was the Messiah fostered a forward thinking paradigm from which he lived and led. He lived in the present but focused on his, and the world’s, future. His life was on purpose and focused on the redemption he was sure he would provide. Transformational leaders inspire their followers with an arousing vision of the future; that vision is primarily buttressed by the leader’s own sense of identity and purpose (Sosik & Dworakivsky, 1998 and Tucker & Russell, 2004). Jesus, seeing himself as the prophesied Messiah, was naturally compelled to promulgate a vision of hope. He often spoke of the future; frequently bright and enthusing but sometimes dark and foreboding, nonetheless, he was futuristic in his thinking, his purpose, and his energies. His visionary aims not only fueled his personal stamina and resiliency but also invigorated fresh anticipation among his followers.

Jesus’ premeditated “cleansing of the temple” was later recalled by his disciples as a prophetic act of zeal and helped solidify their understanding of his messianic identity. Jesus, choosing to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, accepting the shouts of praise from the crowds lining the streets, and zealously ending the business of the money-changers, illuminated his self-understanding as the promised deliverer, Messiah, of Israel. He wanted others, by then, to be convinced of his identity. He chose to arouse messianic, revolutionary thoughts. These acts on Jesus’ part not only reveal his self-awareness but purposefully engendered conviction, commitment, and hope in his followers. Jesus’ self-understanding severely directed his plans and actions.

Jesus, “resolutely set[ting] out for Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51, New International Version), revealed that Jesus understood himself as “God’s special agent” (Stein, 2001, p. 209) and so he self-ensured he would reach Jerusalem to fulfill his destiny. As Messiah, he knew he must reach…and die in Jerusalem. The ultimate expression of Jesus’ self-understanding as Messiah was his willingness to offer himself as the propitiatory sacrifice on a cross (Stein, 2001). Not only did Jesus’ self-understanding create a profoundly visionary leadership platform, but a serving and sacrificial one as well. Knowing himself to be the Messiah/Savior/Redeemer, compelled Jesus to servant leadership; ultimately taking up the servant’s towel to the point of freely dying as a perceived criminal.

Jesus’ identity was secure in his relationship with his heavenly father. Jesus was confident that God not only accepted him but also approved of his intentions and actions and was, in fact, proud of him. This security allowed Jesus to live self-differentially. The fact that Jesus understood his status, position, and authority as otherworldly and thus completely independent of any human being’s validation, allowed him to lead from a stance of incredible power and freedom. He could permit himself not only to serve but also to *be* a servant even to the point of sacrificing his very life (Philippians chapter 2:3-8, New International Version; Shaw, 2006, p. 125). Truly, the depth of conviction of Jesus’ self-understanding propelled and sustained the vigor of Jesus’ leadership.

Bennis & Thomas (2002) postulate that *crucible* events have lasting impressions on the character of transformational leadership. Jesus had numerous such events. The probable passing of Joseph in Jesus’ teen years may have instigated a crisis of personal identity (Capps, 2000) from which Jesus never fully recovered. Yet, most scholars (e.g., Freyne, 2009; Hitchcock, 2009; Edersheim, 2009; Schroth, 1993) see Jesus’ relationship with his father as a security-inducing relationship. Two events, the lighting of the Spirit in the form of a dove upon Jesus at his baptism and the booming voice from heaven as Jesus stood on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, serve as crucible events that cemented Jesus’ self-understanding. He knew he was Jehovah’s specially chosen one – the Messiah - if not the Son of God.

Other crucible events that strengthened Jesus’ self-understanding and resultant transformational leadership were the proclamations of his cousin John the Baptist at Jesus’ baptism, the messianic-type anointing in Samaria by the “sinful woman” and resultant conundrum of those standing around, the *Q & A* with his disciples resulting in Peter’s magnanimous proclamation that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16, New International Version), and his ministry-long acrimonious relationship with the religious leaders. These events (and many more) served to deepen Jesus’ convictions of his unique calling and identity as God’s chosen instrument. They allowed him to endure constant criticism and negativity while creatively manipulating it into fodder for his unfolding plans of self-actualization. As Jesus encountered opposition and challenge, it served to punctuate his self-understanding and thus intensify the ardor of his purpose.

Ultimately, the acuity of Jesus’ self-understanding allowed him to operate securely and independently of others. Though the relational context of Jesus’ self-understood calling encouraged him to care deeply about what others thought of him, it did not control his intentions, plans, or actions in the least. Ultimately, the security Jesus felt between his father and himself and the clarity he possessed as God’s beloved and unique agent, produced a profound self-differentiation, a rigorous individuation, that allowed Jesus to lead transformationally. The potency of Jesus’ leadership knew few boundaries; so confident was he in his self-understanding that he went as far as to offer forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:1-12, New International Version) thus equating himself with the ultimate identity – God.

*How Did Jesus Discover and Actualize His Self-understanding?*

Self-understanding is a learned concept. It is partially learned via mentorship by life’s experiences (Cianciolo et al, 2004) both as a child, young adult, and adult, especially if those experiences are analyzed by self-reflection (Amit et al, 2009). Jesus began to clarify and claim his self-understanding much the same as any young child would. It was molded by his familial relationships growing up in Judea at a time ripe with Messianic, politically charged, hopes. Jesus’ mother and father were substantially devout having ensured he make the yearly trip to Jerusalem for the ultra-important Passover celebration even at a time when culturally, it was no longer common practice for those who lived a distance from the city. Jesus, having been home-schooled in the Torah, prophets and psalms, was conversant with the religious leaders at the temple when he was just twelve. Obviously, his religious training was significant. This submergence in the Torah developed not only an eagerness for the “things of God” but initiated his own personal journey of self-understanding. When his parents asked him why he had not joined them in the caravan home from Jerusalem, Jesus responded with surprise at their very question: “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49, New International Version). Jesus’ self-understanding was already significantly clarified; he saw Jehovah God as his Father…even though it was his mother Mary *and his father, Joseph* that sought him at that very moment.

Jesus’ self-understanding continued to gain clarity as he devoted himself to the study of the Jewish scriptures, replete with prophetic announcements of a coming Messiah, Moses, Elijah, and deliverer. The scriptures say that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people (Luke 2:52, New International Version). Assuredly, part of that growth of wisdom and favor with God (and people) was due to his fastidious study of the scriptures. His experience at the temple with the teachers of the law not only confounded them but also helped cement his self-understanding in his own mind.

As Jesus increasingly ruminated on the prophecies and visionary focus of much of the Jewish scriptures, his self-efficacious beliefs were being strengthened. With repeated success at application of scripture, Jesus understood his competence in terms of what Pajares (2002, How Self-Efficacy Beliefs Are Created section, ¶ 1) called, *mastery experiences*. Not only that, but conceding that self-identity is partially a result of the mingling of self-understanding with social-identity (Bandura, 1999, p. 59), Jesus’, in congruence with the astonishment/affirmation of the Jewish teachers of the law, surely saw himself as, minimally, peculiarly adept at correctly handling the scriptures. Therefore, his self-understanding was girded with competence which further energized him to continue down his current road of self-understanding discovery and application.

This type of affirmation via the introspective analysis of personal experience and scripture, along with familial and social confirmations to his uniqueness served continually to clarify Jesus’ self-understanding. His relationship with John the Baptist who proclaimed him to be the “Lamb of God”, his relationship with his twelve disciples who affirmed him “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”, and even the crowds who acclaimed him the kingly Son of David, all further cemented his self-understanding as he purposefully lived it out. Ultimately, his wholehearted internalization of the scriptures and meditative self-reflection combined with his continuous communication with God seminally fortified his self-understanding.

Jesus actualized his self-understanding by claiming the power that was rightfully one who claimed to be God. He healed the sick, raised the dead, and forgave sins. He gathered followers around him who were not simply committed to his purposes but committed to him as Lord and Christ. He called them to begin a worldwide revolution and to be willing to pay for it with their own lives. He commanded absolute obedience yet offered to forgive sins freely – such as could be expected only of one who, himself, “makes the rules”. Jesus understood himself as “The Great I Am” illumed in the book of Exodus and acted with such authority. Part of the complexity of Jesus’ self-understanding and its subsequent actualization, is the bewildering paradox of his absolute power as God incarnate and the self-effacing humility he exuded as a servant and as one ultimately mocked, beaten, crucified and scandalized. Yet, though Jesus is difficult to understand, it takes nothing away from his purposeful, transformative leadership clarified and actualized by his complicated self-understanding.

*What Are Common Themes of His Self-understanding?*

Jesus’ self-understanding, though hard to coral, was certainly confident and secure. Even during perhaps the greatest test of his life in the Garden of Gethsemane just hours before his trial and crucifixion, Jesus was confidently calling upon his heavenly *father* for assistance. He sought another route to fulfill his destiny, but he did not doubt his destiny. He knew, ultimately, and so willingly accepted the heinous treatment that was to befall him due brought on by his steadfast determination to fulfill his life’s purpose, that he was God’s beloved Son, the sacrificial Messiah for the world. These internalized truths gave him the fortitude to face crucifixion and his ultimate darkness, spiritual separation from the one from whom he had never known separation – Jesus’ own personal hell.

Jesus wholly owned and was accountable to his self-understanding. Though the crowds about him and even his closest disciples showed fickle and shortsighted in their comprehension of his identity – he did not. Jesus’ self-understanding was enwrapped in the knowledge of his ultimate identity; God’s special agent and Son. He understood that he had ultimately come from heaven (acknowledging his unique birth) and confidently claimed that he would be returning from where he had been sent. He was his father’s and his father was his.

*Was Jesus a Transformational Leader Before He Discovered His Self-understanding or Did He Become a Transformational Leader Because of His Acute Self-understanding?*

The proof that Jesus was a transformational leader is in the cultural, societal, national, and ultimate worldwide influence that his life has bequeathed. The question of which came first was not *fully* revealed in this study, though it would appear that Jesus’ self-understanding prompted the launch of his transformative career. His familial influences co-mingled with the all-encompassing influence of the scriptures while the mature reality of his relationship with his heavenly father served to launch his transformational intentions. Further, at the beginning of his decisive step into his ministry, the affirmation of his heavenly father’s love and support coupled with the presence of the Spirit and the proven development of his inner disciplines, secured, in his mind, the rightness of his self-understood mission.

Jesus’ self-understanding continued to crystallize as his life experiences mounted alongside his self-reflective practices. Certainly, Jesus’ self-understanding prompted his transformational leadership yet the reciprocal interplay between his transformative behaviors and self-awareness further cemented his authentic leadership. As Jesus himself said, “Wisdom is vindicated by all her children” (Luke 8:35, New International Version). Jesus’ unquestionably transformative leadership skills unveil his powerful self-understanding.

Jesus’ transformational leadership skills emerged from his self-understanding. It can be stated with considerable confidence that Jesus’ self-understanding, formed, clarified and actualized through life experiences and deliberate cognitive choices, as well as social influences, and self-reflection, all combined to produce his estimable transformational leadership. Jesus’ transforming skills as an authentic, charismatic, transformational leader were resultant of his clarified (though multifaceted and complex), owned, and executed self-understanding.

Recommendations

This study was able to lightly dust the surface of but a few events and experiences in Jesus’ life as they relate to his self-understanding and transformational leadership skills. Further and more in depth study should be conducted in light of all available, expertly accepted historical documents to better ascertain the developmental nuances of Jesus’ self-understanding. More exhaustive studies should be undertaken to ascertain the impact that specific relationships such as his heavenly father, the twelve disciples, and the religious opposition had on Jesus’ transformational leadership and self-understanding. In addition, inquiry into the affect that various “crucible” events (Bennis & Thomas, 2002) had is necessary as well.

A more rigorous and complete dissection of the canonical Biblical records in particular should be undertaken for a view toward the development and clarification of Jesus’ self-understanding in order to attain a purely conservatively developed proposal. A study detailing a more precise timeframe for the emergence of Jesus’ self-understanding should be undertaken to determine more accurately the causal effect of Jesus’ self-understanding to his leadership skills. Finally, more research is needed to explore the ramifications of Jesus’ divinity and its influence on his self-understanding.

Final Summary

Transformational leadership is leadership influence multiplied. Transformational leaders alter individuals and groups. Great transformational leaders revolutionize whole cultures, societies, nations, even history. Jesus was such a history-altering leader. In terms of transformational influence, one would be hard pressed to find his equal. Jesus’ self-understanding was seminal to his vision, his charisma, his purpose, tenacity, his choices, his relationships, goals, and his willfully chosen actions. Though Jesus necessarily stands apart from the “common man” if one is to accept his deity, still, as a man, Jesus leaves an important lesson for aspiring leaders. In the immortal words of King Solomon, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7, King James Version). References:

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