Transitions and Transformations in Leadership

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The adaptive demands of our societies require leadership that takes responsibility without waiting for revelation or request. One may lead perhaps with not more than a question in hand. —RONALD HEIFETZ

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM; Higher Education Research Institute [HERI], 1996), on which Leadership for a Better World is based, emerged at a time when numerous researchers and theorists were beginning to think of leadership in different ways. Those who created the model believed that there needed to be a framework for understanding leadership that college and university students could embrace and that would reflect the societal changes that were underway at the time. It is gratifying that so many years later the model remains relevant and is one of the most widely used on college and university campuses throughout the United States and in many other countries around the world (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

The creators of the SCM were uniquely concerned with leadership that started with personal commitment, was transformed through collaboratively sharing the work of leadership with others, and was ultimately intended to serve others and society at large. This focus on individual, organizational, and societal or community transformation was prophetic in anticipating the commitment to social justice and service that we see among many of today’s college and university students.
The authors of the Social Change Model wrote:

a leader is not necessarily a person who holds some formal position of leadership or who is perceived as a leader by others. Rather, we regard a leader as one who is able to effect positive change for the betterment of others, the community, and society. All people, in other words, are potential leaders. Moreover, the process of leadership cannot be described simply in terms of the behavior of an individual; rather, leadership involves collaborative relationships that lead to collective action grounded in the shared values of people who work together to effect positive change. (HERI, 1996, p. 16) (bold in original)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter provides background on how views of leadership have changed over time and how leadership for social change fits in this story. It will also describe how the SCM emerged and how it has now become so important.

As you will see throughout this book, the original team that studied, struggled, and strived together to create the SCM referred to themselves as the ensemble. Members of the group were educators who had studied and taught leadership for many years. Several members of the group were also musicians who offered their observation during our meetings that we behaved much like a group of musicians would behave as they practiced and performed. Classical musicians interpret manuscripts written by composers in order to bring ideas, images, and emotions to life through their combined artistry. Jazz musicians improvise individually and collectively but always with the purpose of giving voice to each other. Whether skilled as classical, jazz, or popular artists, musicians know that any group will only be effective in performance if each seeks perfection on their own instrument while also embracing other musicians and their contribution to the ensemble.

In many ways, the study of leadership that you are undertaking through this book is similar to learning to be a skilled musician. You will explore new ideas, engage in critical thinking, compare your ideas and approaches with peers, and ultimately attempt to create an approach that makes sense to you plus relates in meaningful ways to the views and actions of others. First and foremost, leadership is not an individual act or gift—it is done in concert with others and it is likely to be something that evolves over time and through many trials.
The study of leadership has been a fascination for scholars and for those who practice leadership for a very long time (Kellerman, 2001). It has been the subject of literature, theater, and art, and it has been studied through disciplines as diverse as political science and sociology to anthropology, theology, and physics. A critical turning point in the study of leadership took place when scholars began to look at leadership as a process rather than defined only by specific individuals who exercised influence and authority. The shift in scholars’ views was complemented by leadership educators who worked primarily in extracurricular programs when they began to advocate that leadership potential should be cultivated among broader numbers and types of students (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998; Outcault, Faris, & McMahon, 2001; Roberts, 1981).

The numerous definitions and ideas about leadership that are available in many books can sometimes be confusing. The disconnect reflected in some of these books, especially those prior to the middle of the 1970s, is that they tell only the stories of individuals rather than the organizational and shared leadership stories that are consistent with what most scholars of leadership now believe. Servant Leadership by Greenleaf (1977) played a central role in bridging industrial-era paradigms of leadership to what we now see as postindustrial views. By advocating that leaders should be servants first rather than expecting to be served or followed, Greenleaf contributed to shifting from a focus on leading to the vision, purposes, and values on which leadership was based. The view that leadership should be based on values and ethics blossomed in Burns’s (1978) seminal book, Leadership, which is recognized by many as pivotal in the perceptual shift from leadership as vested in an individual to leadership as a process. Understanding leadership as Burns proposed called for transforming relationships among followers and leaders that would result in achieving greater purpose and developing followers into being leaders themselves. He emphasized that the process of leadership (modal values or ways of working together) was as important as the purposes and outcomes of leadership (end values).

Burns’s ideas were echoed by many subsequent authors, who advocated important and evolving notions about leadership. Rost (1991) was the first to use the language of industrial and postindustrial leadership, although the idea was implicit in Greenleaf’s and Burn’s writing. Rost described a shift from the hierarchy and bureaucracy that was so characteristic of early 20th-century organizations to the flat and
inclusive organizations that are now viewed as the most desirable workplaces of the 21st century. Lipman-Blumen (1996) advocated for connective leadership that took advantage of the networking aspects of any human organization. Connective leadership occurs when the attention shifts “from independence to interdependence, from control to connection, from competition to collaboration, from individual to group, and from tightly linked geopolitical alliances to loosely coupled global networks” (p. 226). In addition to many others, Allen and Cherrey (2000) wrote of the importance of collaboration. Their view was that leadership was a systemic phenomenon in an interconnected world that should be redesigned around new ways of relating, influencing change, learning, and leading. Finally, by focusing on the quality of relationships, Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2013) and Uhl-Bien and Ospina (2012) emphasized that it is through the process of mutual engagement with each other in the relational process of leadership that we can most effectively work for positive change.

Although these descriptions chronicle the shift in the evolution of leadership studies, it is important to acknowledge that for many underrepresented groups, such as women and people of color, the approach to leadership practice had traditionally been relational, inclusive, and focused on values as well as outcomes (Komives & Dugan, 2010). By broadening beyond those who had the social privilege to hold leadership positions, mostly White and male up through the middle of the 20th century, the authors invited more voices into the conversation, including the voices of diverse cultural groups and women. New and innovative perspectives were emerging, and this resulted in the reaffirmation of how many of those who were previously excluded viewed it all along (Komives & Dugan, 2010). One of the greatest benefits of this shift was that it opened the door to a wider spectrum of talent.

The momentum of inclusive leadership is so strong that many now think of followership and leadership as a continuum representing the variety of behaviors we all exhibit in groups as we move through roles as supporters, collaborators, advocates, influencers, and leaders. This more fluid conceptualization of roles is reminiscent of the improvisational jazz ensemble metaphor, in which musicians share turns at playing the lead melody and backup, including allowing room for the occasional solo.

The SCM is an excellent fit for groups whose purpose is to influence positive social change. It is also a great leadership model for groups with other purposes, whose members want to practice socially responsible leadership. The SCM is used successfully to develop leadership for individuals and groups in a variety of contexts: recreational sports teams, for-profit business endeavors, theater groups, and much more. Socially responsible leadership is aimed at creating group processes that are
inclusive and collaborative and pursuing the group’s goals without causing damage to others or to the environment, nor contributing to the decay of community.

Social change leadership and socially responsible leadership are even more important in the 21st century because of the complexity and competing demands of so many different segments of society. Even though the 21st century is often characterized as a complicated and confusing time, the record of history indicates that generations across the millennia also perceived their times to be complicated, difficult, and in some ways treacherous. There is no reason to believe that the current generation will not be able to address the challenges we face. In fact, it may be the condition of the current times that will call the best out of all in leadership and service. As Heifetz and Linsky (2002) propose, the important issues of the day are the ones many of us avoid. They advise that these issues are best tackled using adaptive leadership that gives the work back to those who are most directly responsible for it.

Leadership is needed in so many places today—the environment, social injustice, economic inequality, and cultural and religious conflict are just a few. The good thing is that, although the dynamics of the 21st century are challenging, there are also conditions that help us find solutions. For instance, we have a better and less-biased view of history than we have ever had before. Knowledge is more readily available than any time in history. Scientific advancements are proceeding at lightning speed, offering possible solutions much more quickly than was available to previous generations (Diamond, 2011).

One of the biggest challenges to finding solutions to contemporary dilemmas is sorting through the evidence and discerning those assertions or insights that will help us versus those that are incomplete or flawed. Particularly at a time when special interest groups often assert self-serving and narrow arguments, those aspiring to lead and who are involved in leadership must be very careful to discern the credibility of those to whom they listen. In our shrinking and connected world, one of the most important issues we face is determining how our personal, local, regional, and national interests relate to the emerging international community.

RETHINKING LEADERSHIP

Building on the refinements of authors and theorists of leadership since the early 1990s, the creators of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development were deeply aware of the transitions under way in thinking about leadership: Greenleaf’s
view of humble service in leadership; Burns’s shift to leadership as a process; Rost’s ideas about non-hierarchical organizations; Lipman-Blumen’s shifting attention to connections in leadership; Allen and Cherrey’s new ways of relating, influence, learning, and leading; and the critical issue of enhancing relationships advocated by Komives, Lucas, and McMahon. In conceptualizing the SCM (HERI, 1996) the ensemble took the additional step of raising the question, “Leadership to what end?” These perspectives led to the premises of the Social Change Model.

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development is based on the following premises:

- Leadership is socially responsible; it affects change on behalf of others.
- Leadership is collaborative.
- Leadership is a process, not a position.
- Leadership is inclusive and accessible to all people.
- Leadership is value-based.
- Community involvement and service is a powerful vehicle for leadership.


The opportunity to be involved with the ensemble was orchestrated by Alexander and Helen Astin of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles. The late Helen Astin’s research on women and leadership across generations (Astin & Leland, 1991) and Alexander Astin’s research on university students’ overall experiences (Astin, 1993) and on how approaches to organizational leadership influence campus culture (Astin & Scherrei, 1980) drew them to search for ways to enhance student learning related to leadership. As Alexander Astin noted in the Foreword, the Astins convened a group of diverse educators from around the United States to explore how student learning in leadership could be enhanced. The ensemble participants included some of the scholars in the field and others who were deeply immersed in helping students learning about leadership through their active engagement on campus and the community; this second group came primarily from the ranks of campus student affairs educators. Susan R. Komives and Marguerite Bonous-Hammarath, both involved in this book, were also members of the ensemble.

The ensemble conveners, Alexander and Helen Astin, were revered among the rest of the participants because of their long and productive careers in higher
education research. Imagine the surprise, discomfort, and delight when we witnessed the two of them actively disagreeing with each other with passionate and raised voices only to conclude with new shared perspectives and improved ideas. Observing how the Astins could disagree, challenge, yet complement each other was a revelation that would enable all of us to voice our perspectives while working very hard to hear and affirm each other. We became a group that drew the best individual contribution from each other while creating a transcending idea that was better than any individual could ever have conceived—an ensemble.

This book will guide you through the details of the model that the ensemble ultimately developed. Much of the appeal of the model is the use of Seven C values that fall into three important spheres of leadership—the individual, group, and society/community. The ensemble’s realization was that the research and theory we studied, the experience of students that we observed, and the reflection on our own work as a group included (1) the individual values of Consciousness of Self, Congruence, and Commitment; (2) the group values of Collaboration, Common Purpose, and Controversy With Civility; and (3) the society/community value of Citizenship. As presented in Figure 1.1 and discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, the values

**FIGURE 1.1** The Social Change Model of Leadership Development

Source: Adapted from *A social model of leadership development* (3rd ed., p. 20) by Higher Education Research Institute [HERI]. Copyright © 1996, National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs. Reprinted with permission of the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs.
not only provided a way to think about how leadership is enacted but also offered a critical lens to determine if the work of a group could be enhanced by greater attention to any one of these values. In this way, the Seven Cs is an analytic and heuristic framework by which we can understand effective leadership in the context of social change and social responsibility.

THE IMPACT OF THE SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL

The SCM has been widely distributed since its first publication in 1996. The model serves as the framework for many campus minors, certificate programs, and staff training, and is the focus of many academic courses.

The dimensions of the model and how this form of socially responsible leadership develops have also been extensively researched through the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL). The MSL measures leadership outcomes on the SCM using an instrument called the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale. The MSL was first undertaken in 2006 and is the largest comprehensive measure of college students’ leadership learning available today; it provides a method to research high-impact practices, students’ leadership self-efficacy, and other issues that have been found central to enhancing students’ understanding about and engagement in leadership (Dugan & Correia, 2014). The MSL website (leadershipstudy.net) provides extensive background, resources, published articles, and reports to assist its institutional participants. Select findings from this study are woven throughout this book.

In addition to the documented impact of the SCM in the United States, it has been used in select international locations such as Canada, China, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, the Netherlands, Turkey, and South Africa. People of many cultures and nations can see themselves in the SCM because of the focus on process and the identification of the elements that make understanding one’s own leadership a goal worth pursuing and one that can be done in cooperation and collaboration with others.

INVITATION TO THE ENSEMBLE

We want to invite you into the ensemble by asking that you offer everything you have to the study of leadership for social change. Whether your views of leadership come from what you have seen in popular press and news media, or from your own
experience, we are likely to propose some different perspectives in the chapters that follow. This may require some transition as your thinking is shaped in very different ways.

Because leadership is largely socially constructed, researchers and scholars have undergone major transitions in the way they view leadership since the 1970s. The ideas *Leadership for a Better World* will introduce may represent a potential transition for you, challenging you to decide if you will stay with previous understandings of leadership or broaden your view to adopt different perspectives. We ask you to join the ensemble in the chapters that follow—remaining open to new possibilities while keeping your healthy skepticism alive. That’s the way we learn best—holding openness and skepticism in our thinking at the same time.

Jake Brewer, formerly of change.org and a senior advisor on technology for the White House, died in 2015 at the age of 34 while participating in a bike ride for a cancer charity. His memorial service filled Washington Cathedral. A sticky note found on his desk read “Cultivate the Karass,” a phrase from Kurt Vonnegut’s novel, *Cat’s Cradle* (1963). A karass refers to a group of people who, without being aware of it, are on a shared mission. They “share a cosmic linkage that’s not obvious on the surface” (Contrera, 2015, para. 40). The point of cultivating the karass is that many of us working for social change may not realize we are on the same journey. By reading this book, discussing it deeply with your peers, teachers, and mentors, and acting on its principles, you are joining the ensemble in the shared mission of forwarding socially responsible leadership. You also have the potential to cultivate your karass.

**CONCLUSION**

The idea of leadership continues to evolve. The Social Change Model of Leadership Development is one of the most important contributors to this evolution and offers the potential to transform the way we work together for positive change. Now that you have the background on how our ideas of leadership have changed over time and why the ensemble created the SCM, the authors of the chapters that follow will go into much greater detail as you consider the relevance and application of this model to your own leadership. Enjoy this journey as you seek to understand and cultivate leadership that is dynamic, collaborative, and focused on positive change that benefits others and ourselves.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From what sources or experiences have you come to view leadership as you do now?
2. What are the conditions that we face today that call us to critically examine the way we viewed leadership in the past?
3. How do your peers view leadership and how do their views contrast with yours?
4. What metaphor or analogy makes the most sense to you when you think of a high-functioning team?
5. What person or organization have you experienced that you believe personifies the idea of socially responsible leadership? What do they do that you admire?

ACTION AND REFLECTION

1. What did you used to think leadership was when you were young and what do you think it is now? What experiences changed your views or philosophies of leadership? How are your behaviors in groups different than they were as a result of your changed views?
2. Think about a specific context in which you currently engage in leadership with others. How do that group’s processes fit the assumptions of the Social Change Model? How do they not?

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