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Let the Beauty We Love Be What We Do: A Case Study in Communication-Centered Leadership

Jo Carter

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**LET THE BEAUTY WE LOVE BE WHAT WE DO:
A CASE STUDY IN COMMUNICATION-CENTERED LEADERSHIP**

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Communication

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the women and men of Diana's Grove, those who have served there in the past, those who are active there now, and those who will be touched by its legacy in the future. Their service, hard work, and sheer passion for living have been an inspiration to so many, in so many ways; this dissertation is merely one more manifestation of those ripples of impact.

May this work ring true and carry your songs to new audiences.

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While this dissertation has just one name on the title page, I could not have done this work without the inspiration, advice, and support of a host of other people.

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ongoing academic pursuits); my family (especially my sister Rae, whom I bored with this material endlessly, I am sure); Vic (who has had to deal with the stress and the changes that this work brought); and the many colleagues and friends that were there for me at key moments, encouraging my odd interests, handing me a vital Diet Coke, or insisting that I needed to see a movie to give my brain time to recover and think properly again.

I have come to realize that these Rites of Passage mark not an end to my learning nor the beginning of my next quest, but perhaps simply an acknowledgement that I will continue on this path in some way, regardless of its form. I am humbled and honored by the respect and honesty that I have experienced over and over again throughout this process from those who also journey on that path. Trite as it may sound, it really does take a village to complete a doctorate. Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart.

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ABSTRACT

While leadership research is widespread, much of it represents leadership psychology assumptions that leaders are singular individuals, different from the body that they are leading. This dissertation provides a close reading of a different approach to leadership, one arising from the cultural community around the Diana's Grove retreat center. This philosophy holds cultural norms of the Cornerstones of Community (choice, thinking well of the group, thinking well of one's self, stewardship of self, and sacred wound) as overt rules that are the foundation of sustainable community interactions. It discusses how service to the idea of community is the primary motivating factor behind this form of leadership, and how that is manifested in the hierarchy of commitment and the work of leading others to their own discovery. It claims that leadership is a shared, communal responsibility, and that one cannot avoid having a leadership impact, even through non-action; because of this, awareness of impact and situational awareness are key leadership skills. The emphasis on service and community lead these practitioners to frequently refer to this as "priestessing" rather than leadership, though both terms are used and understood to be roughly comparable.

These findings are not culturally-limited; that is, practitioners describe using these leadership practices in a wide variety of cultural situations, both at Diana's Grove and in other cultural contexts. This implies that this is a leadership attitude that is applied constructively regardless of whether or not one is in a recognized leadership role. While that is true, practitioners also describe that it is most useful and most powerful when it is a shared cultural context, with leadership responsibilities shared among the full group.

This data was collected through a combination of three methods: interviews with graduates of and teachers in the Diana's Grove priestess path, examination of cultural artifacts and texts, and participant observation in the community. All data was collected in 2010-2011.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
Chapter 1: The Situation	1
Organization of this Dissertation.....	15
Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks of Leadership and Review of the Literature	16
Focus on Individual Leaders	16
Focus on Collectivist Practices	19
Theory	21
Social construction.	21
Discursive leadership.....	23
Other Relevant Areas of the Literature	26
Cultural influences on leadership.	26
Gender's effects and feminist responses.	29
Concepts and critiques of power.	33
Spirituality.	38
Alternative organizations.....	40
Chapter 3: Methods.....	43
Research Questions	43
Data Gathering and Analytical Choices	44
Overview of the Research Site	48
Implications of this Research Site.....	53
Practical data gathering.	55
Chapter 4: Findings.....	58
The Cornerstone of choice.	64
The Cornerstone of thinking well of the group.	67
The Cornerstone of thinking well of one's self.	75
The Cornerstone of stewardship of the self.....	80
The Cornerstone of sacred wounds.	85
Leadership as Service.....	92

The hierarchy of commitment	98
Leading to one’s own discovery.....	101
Leadership as Situational Awareness	104
Leadership as a Communal Responsibility	112
Pacing and leading in the “leaderful” culture.....	115
Summary of Findings	120
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	122
Leadership	122
Is this simply servant leadership?.....	124
Social construction	126
Feminist Models of Power	127
Research Questions	131
How is leadership socially constructed here?.....	131
Is this construction of leadership culturally limited?	132
Implications for Future Research	134
Concluding Thoughts	137
Works Cited	140
Appendix 1	159
Interview Protocol	159
Interview Subjects	162

Chapter 1: The Situation

Leadership is a perennial subject of inquiry among researchers, in both the academic and practitioner communities. While the field stretches back into antiquity (Bass, 1990), the social sciences did not truly embrace it as a discipline of its own until the early 1930s (House & Aditya, 1997). Early leadership research seemed to divide into two traditions: political-historical and business-administration (Foster 1989). The political-historical tradition focused on the biographies of “great men,” significant leaders of nations or armies as they shaped the course of history, while the business-administration tradition focused on the managerial requirements to meet financial and operational business goals within a corporate environment. In both cases, leadership has been conceptualized as coming from the authority of a position and as dependent on goal achievement of some sort. Much of it has also been done with the research methods that those institutions are most comfortable with: positivist, quantitative approaches (Bryman, 2004). These political and business contexts are both the most likely ones to fund leadership research and are also often regarded as exemplifying the highest forms of leadership.

This was essentially the state of the discipline until the 1980s, when leadership research seemed to nearly shut down. One researcher even called for an end of the concept of leadership itself (Miner, 1982), arguing that everything had been said and that the remaining unanswered questions were unanswerable. According to the author of a contemporary journal article, “As we all know, the study, and more particularly, the results produced by the study, of leadership, has been a major disappointment for many of us working within organizational behavior” (Cummings, 1981, 366), which implied

that this widespread feeling of disappointment was generally understood and unlikely to be controversial.

But there has been resurgence in leadership research in the last three decades, often fueled by far less traditional approaches, including both qualitative research and postmodern assumptions (Bryman & Stephens, 1996). These postmodern assumptions have led researchers to look at a wider range of leadership situations, including classrooms (Coleman, 1996), churches (Rusaw, 1996), assisted living communities (Cusack, 1994), and online communities (Abdul-Rahman & Hailes, 2000). New research has reached back to develop ideas that were first conceptualized in the 1970s, including a wider understanding of the range of leadership styles. Burns (1978) studied historical leaders and analyzed them on a spectrum of approaches to leadership, concluding that the traditional “command and control” leader is only one end of a spectrum of leadership styles. These traditional, “transactional” leaders develop agreements with their followers, promising rewards or punishments depending on whether or not the followers “do right” and achieve organizational goals. On the other end of the spectrum, “transformational” leaders concentrate on energizing and empowering followers, trusting them to be aware of what the organization needs and often changing the cultural environment as a part of the process (Bass, 1985). This transactional/transformational leadership spectrum is now regarded as common-knowledge within leadership research, and most leaders are assumed to need some combination of transactional and transformational skills. However, Burns’ additional contention that leadership has an inherent moral imperative has been less widely embraced. As Tucker (1995) points out, a leader perceived as evil

(e.g., Hitler) is still a leader; Burns' definition sanctifies leadership by claiming that Hitler merely wields power, rather than leads.

Even with the wider understanding of leadership possibilities, however, the focus still tended to be on fairly mainstream workplace-centered groups, those that tacitly seem to agree with general Western norms. House and Aditya (1997, 409) say that “about 98% of the empirical evidence at hand [is] rather distinctly American in character,” in that it was using individualist rather than collectivist settings, assuming that followers have responsibilities more than rights and are primarily hedonists rather than altruists, and emphasizing rationality over any other potential viewpoint. This may well mean that the theories developed in the literature are culture-bound, not easily translatable to other cultural contexts that do not share these assumptions. One can presume, then, that the audience which reads and uses this body of literature is also working with this “distinctly American” cultural context if they find the literature satisfies their needs.

I have been through a host of leadership training programs and positions over the course of my own distinctly American life – from school programs such as Girls' State and student council, extracurricular programs like the Girl Scouts, an MBA program and a second business Masters with an emphasis on ethical leadership practices, and all within the context of being a military family member as both a daughter and a wife. Through all these programs, I always had the sense of being asked to fit into someone else's paradigm, being asked to become someone else in order to be entrusted with leadership and authority. I was uncomfortable with the expectations of command and obedience, with the practice of under-informed subordinates following the lead of distant, omnipotent leaders, and with power being attached to authority positions that I never

seemed to be qualified for. While “service leadership” courses in business school seemed to offer an alternative way of leadership, they remained largely theoretical, suggesting that we should regard ourselves as “in service” to the organizations and people we led, but not explaining how that would play out in day-to-day practice. Despite my misgivings, it always seemed pointless to challenge the well-established traditions of military or corporate leadership, especially when I had no other counter-example to offer.

I want to discover and represent an alternative practical path toward leadership, one that honors the individual leader and the contexts in which leadership takes place. I want to be able to provide that counter-example to those who explain that the military/corporate model is the way it has always been done and the only way that works. I want to provide an alternative way of leadership for those who also feel that the common path is both uncomfortable and leads perhaps in the wrong direction entirely. In this dissertation, I intend to uncover alternative philosophies and practices of leadership, to uncover what leadership can mean, particularly in nontraditional leadership contexts. To that end, I will be describing and analyzing the leadership practices of one particular community, the Diana’s Grove retreat center, which teaches and practices their own culturally-based form of leadership.

In believing that there can be an alternative approach to leadership, based on different sets of assumptions about life, this research belongs to a sociocultural tradition in communication study, which focuses on how meanings are worked out interactively through communication by the members of a community. This position assumes that much of the world in which we live is not objectively real, distinct from and outside of

human understanding and interpretation. Instead, it is constantly under construction in the various communities and cultures that interact with it.

This tradition privileges the interaction between and among individuals, rather than the meaning-making within any individual mind. While individuals do cognitively process input, those individual mental maps use understandings that have been created through interaction, so that no individual's understanding is completely divorced from the contexts through which they have moved and interacted. Specifically, this research uses the theory of social construction, originally stated by Berger and Luckmann. Here, "reality" is an intersubjective world, in that the world is shared with others and must generally be understood in shared ways in order to create successful social interactions. The actions and objects created and used by those around us each serve as signs and systems of signs, which work together to make a meaningful world. In this theoretical school,

Man [sic] is biologically predestined to construct and to inhabit a world with others. This world becomes for him [sic] the dominant and definite reality. Its limits are set by nature, but, once constructed, this world acts back upon nature. In the dialectic between nature and the socially constructed world the human organism itself is transformed. In this same dialectic man [sic] produces reality and thereby produces himself. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 204)

Vernon Cronen (1995, cited in Pearce, 1995) identified five "commitments" that are common across traditions within the social constructionist theory. The first three of these look directly at communication and its role in the world. First, communication is seen as the primary social process, not a means to an end or just part of a wider and more

important sequence of actions or events. Secondly, the primary units of observation are “persons in conversation” (a term coined by Harre, 1984), wherein two people having a conversation are seen as one unit to be observed, not two separate people plus one exchange. (This is an important distinction, as it separates this theoretical ground from a more constructivist position, which would see the individuals as far more detached from each other.) Third, social actions contain their own rationality, in that there is some series of rules that make them make sense in context and to the actors involved. These three commitments outline the centrality of communication to this view of the world.

Cronen’s fourth and fifth commitments deal with general approaches to the world and knowledge. The fourth states that this is a realistic but not objective position. It assumes that “persons in communication” are material entities existing in a world that does exist outside of human observation, but that that human understanding of those persons and that world is inherently subjective, subject to particular human points of view. And fifth, social constructionists might agree that certainty is possible within the context and rules of a particular situation and time, but that this is not a truly generalizable truth. Social constructionist research is inherently self-reflexive, with recognition that the conclusions discovered by the research are also socially constructed by the research protocol and context, even by the overarching research tradition. Even scientifically obtained knowledge is not an objective reality, outside of the influences that construct the rest of the world (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). This does not discount or dismiss these conclusions, because objective truth is not the goal here; it is not even a potentially obtainable goal.

This research owes a debt to the critical tradition, as its interpretive, sociocultural theories are motivated by a frustration with power and power-use that comes directly from a critical awareness of the world. The socially-constructed world does not arise in a vacuum; it is inevitably the product of the power relationships, privileges, and pre-existing societal contexts that have influenced its members. Power is herein assumed to be an ever-present part of the environment, a product of the way that humans understand the world. While there was a time in which the terms “critical theory” and “leadership” could perhaps not be used together in the same sentence (Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007), I seek to bring them together.

While my ontological position is extremely socially constructed, we all act as if this socially constructed reality is far more hardened, more “real” and unchanging than it is. What we perceive as reality will change over time, turning the valuable and important things in life into trifles and vice versa; these changes simply happen on a large enough time scale that it may not be relevant to individuals. We have a fairly high amount of absolute agency, but we are constrained dramatically in our choices because we take part in hegemonic structures and buy into agreements about what is important, what is good, and what is worth protecting at any costs.

This can seem harsh, even to me, implying that it’s *merely* through acts of self-delusion that immensely powerful and terrible structures like slavery or genocide can happen. It can sound like I am blaming the victims in these tragedies. But that “merely” vastly underestimates the impact and inertial force of hegemonic power, and how thoroughly it can veil agency from us. As Carse (1986) says,

...we must still concede that whoever takes up the commanded role does so by choice. Certainly the price for refusing it is high, but that there is a price at all points to the fact that oppressors themselves acknowledge that even the weakest of their subjects must *agree* to be oppressed. If the subjects were unresisting puppets or automatons, no threat would be necessary and no price would be paid.

(14)

Thus, we are all implicated as actors within oppression, even when we feel as though we are powerless to change the system. My world is an incredibly privileged one, but even as I am aware of that privilege, there is little I can imagine doing to truly level the playing field. I can give away my privilege – choose a lower income bracket, disengage from what positions of choice I have available – but these actions generally concentrate power in the hands of those who already hold it, rather than helping to increase the power of those traditionally underrepresented. While there is probably absolute agency and freedom of choice available, for most of us, real, lived agency is minimal. To exert absolute agency, we would have to step outside the structures of society entirely, which is a price that few are willing to pay, and those that do seem perhaps a bit insane and suspect.

As a way of leveling that playing field, I seek to uncouple leadership research from its traditional management bias, to illustrate that power is widely dispersed and that resistance to power is a leadership position of its own. Pretending that leadership exists only within dominant structures does not help to empower those leading change and resistance against the dominant paradigm, merely to prevent them from having useful

tools and understandings with which to do their critical work and exercise the power and agency they already have.

On a daily basis, we are all – subjects, researchers, reviewers, and others – players on the stage, costumed and veiled in many different ways, constrained by our roles to only certain choices, living within rules of the game that seem to be absolute laws. It is important to me that I maintain awareness of both of these levels of reality in my work, even as I am just as caught up in my play as everyone else. Pearce calls this the “exercise of curiosity,”

An affinity for paradox and irony, a certain playfulness about our own actions that take into consideration the fact that we make the world that we describe, and an orientation toward mutuality, co-construction, and systems rather than toward reductionism or objectivism. From the perspective of positivism, these forms of curiosity appear frivolous, incomprehensible, and often perverse; from the social constructionist perspective, they are the minimal expressions of the reflexivity between what we know about the world and our place in it. (Pearce, 1995, 102)

This curiosity replaces traditional concepts of objectivity or neutrality. It asks the researcher to recognize the need to not become too attached to unmoving concepts, even those which seem to have provided theoretical utility in the past. Cecchin, Lane, & Ray (1992) suggested that this sort of detached engagement with one’s own expertise requires an attitude of “principled irreverence” toward our own theoretical underpinnings (as cited in Pearce, 1995, 105). From the point of view of those intent on building a traditional theory, this potentially promiscuous attitude toward theory would indeed seem perverse, but as one “interested in engaging with the grammars of the persons/groups that I

encounter in a process of co-constructing with them the reality in which we live” (Pearce, 1995, 105), irreverence is part of the habits which allow me to escape some of the traps that my own social construction will lay for my understanding of the situation (Pearce, 1995). This is a form of play, working within Carse’s (1986) concept of “infinite games,” and it makes us players within the hegemonic web of the world.

Pearce (1995), who perhaps gives the fullest investigation of this “exercise of curiosity,” also gives a full account of the problems it causes within the academic community. He points out that it cannot easily be described by a series of methodological steps from a textbook, does not lead to empirical generalizations, and may be considered almost more of an art than a science. However, it is a skilled activity, one that requires “practice, instruction, critique and reflection...the types of activities that distinguish creativity from random actions; that differentiate the innovations of an expert from the flailings of a neophyte” (Pearce, 1995, 106).

It is my agreement with critical assumptions that makes me want to find a way to enact my own power relationships and privileges in a way that seems sustainable within my ethical framework. I am white, affluent, American, over-educated, and a member of the military-industrial complex. I am inherently implicated as an agent of hegemony. And yet, I want to be a “good person,” even as I know how impossible that may be.

It is my position that the common increases in visibility and credibility given to many leadership positions gives more weight to messages coming from leaders. When Pearce says that social constructionists are interested in “the stories we make real in our actions” (Pearce, 1995, 100), I think that leaders have an ability to make their stories real for a larger part of their community, both through the visibility and credibility of a

recognized leadership position and through an intentional awareness of their communication potential. I believe that leadership is inherently a communication activity – that communication is the primary activity at the heart of leadership, rather than communication being something that leaders do along the way. In fact, I believe that self-identification as a leader may essentially make one a social constructionist, in that it is saying that not only can the world be changed, but that I can change it.

I have great sympathy with Pondy's (1989) metaphor of leadership as a language. Rather than claiming that there are a limited number of leadership styles or approaches, this linguistic metaphor links leadership to language's creative adaptability, where "virtually all utterances are novel—never before spoken. And even young children and intellectually subnormal people have the capacity to produce creative sentences" (Pondy, 1989, 226). This makes leadership an instinctive human activity available to every individual, albeit one which is learned and relearned throughout one's life. This also allows leadership to borrow language's ability to affect individual behavior and agency, even if the individuals involved are unaware of the effect.

I have great sympathy for individuals. Even those with privilege are caught in hegemonies and have seemingly limited agency. There are reasons that individuals act the way they do, and few of them involve being inherently evil. All too often, systems and structures make it worthwhile to behave badly, or at least to create a situation in which behaving badly is the only perceptible option. I am interested in empowering the individual as much as possible, providing alternative ways of doing things or seeing the world, giving people the chance to act as Carse's infinite players. If most people play within set rules and boundaries, "infinite players play *with* boundaries" (Carse, 1986, 12,

emphasis mine). That purpose is what ties my work together, no matter the method I use or the approach I take. While the goals of the research are more interpretive than critical, it would be disingenuous to claim this as a purely interpretive study without acknowledging its origins.

One of the boundaries being played with by this research is that of where leadership can be found. Much of the world exists outside of workplace boundaries and mainstream cultural assumptions, the traditional research sites for leadership studies. Something that is at least akin to leadership recurs in almost all organizational situations across a wide swath of cultural contexts, though its exact form and definition vary widely. Leadership is one of the structural pieces that structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) considers a basic building block of how people work together, and thus its existence in some form seems near mandatory when people form social groups.

Given different cultural assumptions and challenges, traditional visions of leadership have been critiqued, centering on issues of power. Along with culture and structure, leadership has often been viewed as a “mechanism of domination” (Hardy & Clegg, 1996). Some communication scholars point to this connotation as one reason why so little non-positivist research on leadership has been published in communication journals. Instead, research by communication scholars has moved to management communication journals, even when the leadership context being studied is not workplace-related (Fairhurst, 2008). Leadership research uses the term “power” as if the relationship between the two concepts – leadership and power – is unquestionable. Leaders are assumed to need power, and effective leaders are assumed to have power.

The term power, however, is one that masks a world of discourse and controversy behind its brief five-letter form.

And yet, sometimes those two terms – leadership and power – seem to belong to different epistemological camps entirely. Critical research, which is centered on issues of producing, maintaining, and resisting systems of power, barely addresses questions of leadership, as if that term is irrelevant, or as if individual leaders are perhaps irrelevant in the face of ideology and hegemonic forces. Management studies, on the other hand, which constantly asks leadership questions, treats power as if it is a given for leaders, not something to be examined or questioned or contemplated. These two paradigms are rarely in conversation with each other, seeking only to ignore the complications of trying to interact across the semantic gap between their positions.

Even when communities seek to create a different culture, they often recreate some form of standard organizational elements, such as leadership (Giddens, 1984). These organizational elements and structures carry their own communicative load, as another form of interaction between persons. They provide individuals with rules to guide their action, and those actions create new rules and can reproduce old ones (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008, 236). If this is not done thoughtfully, with attention paid to the paradigm that the group is trying to live, it is all too easy to simply fully replicate traditional forms of leadership, regardless of the context. Just as Harvey Milk had to find a new way to construct himself rhetorically in order to both be successful as a politician in San Francisco and to not abandon or compromise his own identity as a gay activist (Foss, 1994), other non-mainstream community leaders must find new ways to express leadership structurally if they are to not abandon or compromise their own defining

identities outside of the mainstream. One of those ways may be to create an alternative set of cultural norms that reinforce their identity rather than undercutting it.

If leadership is to fit the alternative community paradigm, it must be an alternative form of leadership, based on local cultural norms and practices and reinforcing the intended culture. This is a social constructionist view of leadership, wherein leaders and leadership are co-constructed within the community, based on community cultures. However, little research has been done that would explain how and how well this process happens on a very practical level. This research sets out to shed light on that question: how is leadership socially constructed in nonmainstream contexts?

This dissertation explicitly seeks to find alternative ways to approach leadership, ways which may be more appealing to groups or individuals that find mainstream, workplace-based framings of leadership unappealing or unusable. In this goal, the work is aligned with the agenda set out by Pearce, who wrote that “From now on, any research that does not link the four “goods”—good theory, good research, good practice, and good in the world—should face strong questions from editors and reviewers about why it does not, and why, not doing so, it should be published” (1998, 273). This interest in “good in the world” is what this dissertation sets out to examine and to provide for further examination by readers.

Rather than attempting to develop a theoretical understanding of leadership independent of practice, this dissertation examines and analyzes a particular instance of alternative leadership practice that has been in place for some time. The context under consideration, which is described in more detail in Chapter Three, will be a community of practice with an intentionally nonmainstream concept of leadership and leadership

teachings. This community, based at a retreat center called “Diana’s Grove,” offers a multi-year leadership training program which will be the focus of this analysis.

Organization of this Dissertation

Chapter Two of this dissertation lays out the foundations for this research, establishing what the leadership canon discusses to date, as well as critiques of that literature. Concepts relevant to both individual and collectivist paradigms of leadership will be examined, and previous social constructionist work on leadership will be reviewed. In addition, five particular tangents will be addressed, as relevant to this particular research site: cultures, gender, power, spirituality, and alternative organizations.

Chapter Three presents the methodology that will be used in this research, along with the methodological considerations that went into this research design. A detailed overview of the Diana’s Grove research site is provided, including its theoretical claims, its concrete form and actions, and implications for this research that arise from the site itself. This chapter also sets out and interrogates some important definitions that this work will be using. Chapter Four presents the findings produced through this methodology, describing the leadership paradigm present at Diana’s Grove in detail. Chapter Five discusses those findings and directly addresses the research questions, summarizing the key findings and relating them back to the existing literature, suggesting ways in which other research could use this study for further purposes and acknowledging questions that this study leaves unresolved or unaddressed.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks of Leadership and Review of the Literature

Before setting out the specifics of this research design, certain assumptions and understandings need to be laid as the foundation of this study. Given the broad nature of the analysis being done – presenting and analyzing whatever the research site provides, rather than analyzing it according to a particular theoretical schema – the foundations laid will intentionally be broad as well.

This chapter will begin by reviewing existing leadership research broadly, looking at both individual and collectivist concepts of leaders and leadership and establishing the foundational understandings of this field. After that, we will address theory, looking at social construction and how it has already been applied to leadership research, particularly in reference to work on discursive leadership. Finally, we will look at five discrete areas that seem to be particularly relevant, given the particular aims and focus of this work: cultures, gender, power, spirituality, and alternative organizations. Each of these will be discussed broadly but with an eye toward understanding leadership.

Focus on Individual Leaders

In their search for the keys to successful leadership, researchers have frequently looked at the personalities and characteristics of successful leaders and the different leadership models, strategies and tactics that can be used by leaders (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Even the definition of leadership itself has undergone considerable editing and revision over time, particularly as differing cultural influences have entered the scholarly conversation. Is leadership about Patton's commands, Machiavelli's political savvy and influence, or Lao-Tsu's selflessness? Are leaders simply born with the skills and abilities necessary, or can leaders be trained to be successful even if they do not have

the innate skills considered necessary? Scholarly answers to these sorts of questions have differed quite a bit over the history of the literature.

In the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, leadership research centered on “great man” theories, where leaders were born with innate leadership qualities, and the “gift” for leadership could not be taught. However, in the years after World War II, when Western class barriers had been destabilized to an unprecedented degree, a meta-analysis of the research done on effective leaders showed no consistent and conclusive evidence that successful leaders were based on a particular set of personal characteristics (Stogdill, 1948). While certain traits (such as intelligence, achievement, status, etc.) recurred frequently, leadership only happened when these traits aligned with the needs of a particular context. Thus, leadership effectiveness in one setting did not necessarily transfer into another setting.

In the past decade, researchers have revisited traits as an important precursor to leadership success, though the traits they have found are not always consistent with earlier research. Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt (2002) found that extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experience were the traits more consistently associated with effective emergent leaders. Emotional intelligence, particularly empathy, was frequently touted as a significant precursor to effective leadership (Goleman, 1998; George, 2000). Even these trait-centered studies still assumed that contextual factors would determine whether or not potential leaders emerged, and this contextual approach was treated as the central leadership problem by many researchers (Fiedler, 1967; House & Mitchell, 1974; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; Chemers, 1995; House, 1996). Thus,

effective leadership becomes a case of someone with the right potential correctly selecting a response to the current situation.

An alternate line in leadership research suggested that the process of leadership was more important than the traits or situational response. Burns' (1978) theory of transactional and transformational leadership suggested that the interaction between leaders and followers was at the heart of successful leadership. While transactional leaders are goal- and rule-oriented and successful at maintaining the status quo, transformational leaders are more relationship-oriented and more successful in situations requiring the group to deal with change. These two interaction types are not to be understood as mutually exclusive; later research (Bass, 1985) suggested that effectiveness was maximized when transformational elements (such as respect and trust) were working alongside of transactional elements (such as clear goals and incentives).

Authenticity, or at least perceived authenticity, seems to be a frequent aesthetic requirement for leaders and a frequent topic of investigation in the post-millennial literature (Ladkin, 2010). Whether researchers are looking into defining the concept (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Chan, Hannah, & Gardner, 2005), discussing authentic followership or developing authentic leaders (Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005; Gardner, et al, 2005), understanding how authenticity is determined by observers (Avolio, Gardner, 2004), or how this concept is linked to other forms of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Iles, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2005), they are reframing well-known leadership psychology concepts into a new paradigm. Authenticity, the apparent embodiment of a "true self," allows followers to feel that the leader is more holistically honest than a more slickly marketed leader might be. A recent example of leader

authenticity points to when Hilary Clinton cried during an interview before the 2008 presidential primaries in New Hampshire; her emotional reaction was read by the media and many voters as a glimpse into her more authentic self, and her poll ratings went up, seemingly as a result (Ladkin, 2010).

All of these “individualist” approaches to leadership accept that a close study of individual leaders – both their innate qualities and their actions – is the way to understand how leadership works. They disagree with each other a great deal about what exactly that close study might reveal and add to the literature, but they share an understanding that leadership is studied at the individual level.

Focus on Collectivist Practices

Despite the predominance of individualist approaches, actual leadership behavior and decision making may not have as large an impact on organization outcomes as many expect (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Meindl, et al, 1985; Meindl, 1995), even in situations with prominent hierarchy and official leaders. Leaders may be just one voice among many (Dachler & Hosking, 1995), making the whole social network in which the leader functions the level at which leadership needs to be examined (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2005).

Collectivist approaches to leadership suggest that good followership is an equally important part of successful leadership (Kelley, 1988; Mans & Sims, 1991; Rost, 1991; Aktouf, 1992; Burns, 2003) and that leadership is co-created among all group members. Yukl (1989) built a conceptual model that described leadership as the relationships among leadership traits, managerial behavior, follower effort, organizational structure, culture, and situational variables. The “servant leadership” model (Greenleaf, 1977) redefined successful leadership as focused on the needs of others, rather than the personal

or professional goals of the leader. This is “leader as steward” (Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997), choosing to serve others and the organization. Avolio & Gardner’s “authentic leadership” (2005) focuses on the well-being of the followers and prioritizes transparency in the relationship between leaders and followers; they do point out that this leadership model works best when organizational success includes ethical, human, social, and psychological capital as bottom-line metrics, as well as more standard metrics of financial capital or production output.

Even approaches that deny the leader innate “star” status within the organization sometimes say that organization members perceive the “star” status to be true, making it effectively work as if it were true. For example, Alvesson & Sveningsson (2003) claim that simple activities such as conversations seem more significant when they come from the perceived group leader. This “romance of the leader” (Meindl, 1995) literature suggests that one leadership function is to be perceived, to be the object of attention. Meindl says that leaders are “a phenomenologically important aspect of how observers and participants understand, interpret, and otherwise give meaning to organizational activities and outcomes” (Meindl, 1995, 78), so that the concept of leadership seemingly had to be socially constructed in order for participants to give useful meaning to their organizational lives. Participants and observers (including the perceived leader) generally credit the leader with a greater degree of control than truly seems supported by the data. Meindl’s contention was that “The greater significance of leadership lies not in the direct impact on substantive matters but in the ability to exert control over the meanings and interpretations important constituencies give to whatever events and occurrences are considered relevant for the organization’s functioning” (Meindl, 1995,

99). Because leaders are often the focus of attention, they potentially do have more control of or impact on the frame that is used to make meaning. Note that this “romance” is only true when leaders are spotlighted and receive more attention than other community members – this is a definition of leadership which requires visibility to work in this way.

These more collectivist approaches to leadership study place equal importance on the larger context within which an individual leader works, or even suggests that leadership is much more widely shared or co-created than is generally understood, potentially making the singular term “leader” somewhat problematic. These leadership paradigms can perhaps be seen as leadership cultures, wherein the entire community becomes an integral part of the leadership process, rather than simply followers along for the ride.

Theory

Social construction.

Most mainstream approaches to leadership tend to take a fairly positivist approach to the subject. They assume a high degree of rational agency for the leader (and sometimes for followers), and leader success can be judged almost entirely on fairly simple criteria of organizational performance (Barker, 2001). A model of the “leader as hero” seems to be common sense for many people in the Western world, so much so that both organization members (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985; Gemmill & Oakley, 1992) and the media (Chen & Meindl, 1991) use it as a common way of making sense of their environment, reinforcing that tendency through echoing each other.

A growing body of academic and practitioner literature, however, claims that modernist leadership paradigms are increasingly problematic as they are applied to an ever-widening variety of contexts (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996; Barker, 2001; Drath, 2001). These problematic paradigms can seem to restrict the options available to organizations and leaders by offering only a narrowly-defined range of possibilities and understandings.

Much of the leadership literature in communication studies looks at specific rhetorical tasks that leaders might want to accomplish: communicating empathy (Shogan, 2009) or a vision (Wendt et al, 1994), decision-making (Eid & Fyfe, 2009), listening (Stillion Southard & Wolvin, 2009), or influencing behavior or attitude (Nicholson, 2010; Mayfield, 2009; Yellin, 2008). Thayer (1988) suggested that traditional approaches to leadership might be unable to see what is important. He asked, “Is it possible that our highly scientized, rational, linear cause-effect world-view actually prevents us from seeing what we might otherwise be able to see, from knowing what we really want to know about leadership?” (237) He suggested that leadership needs to be seen as embedded within and inseparable from communication in specific situations and relationships (Buzzanell, 1997), reducing the seeming disconnect between the concepts of “leadership” and “equality.” Perhaps, suggests Thayer, these two terms are a dialectic, a site of struggle in constant tension, rather than an opposing dualism.

In response to Thayer (1988), other scholars have looked specifically at leadership in nontraditional “alternative” organizations, in which “nontraditional organizing imperatives produced distinctive themes/processes and images of leadership” (Buzzanell, Ellingson, Silvio, Pasch, Dale, Mauro, Smith, Weir, & Martin, 1997, 286). The

organizations studied (a food cooperative and a quilting guild) were alternative organizations in that they were created as an alternative to the way that other organizations would function. They may be intended to be radically democratic, relationship-centered, and/or focused on a particular ideology, depending on the particular organization. Both organizations studied showed evidence that their members were actively negotiating the tension in the leadership/equality dialectic, working both consciously and unconsciously with the problematic pairings of individual/collective, power over/power with, leader/follower, and autonomy/interdependence, trying to find new ways to organize that supported and reflected their values. This research confirms one of the assumptions of this dissertation, that leaders with non-mainstream values or goals are able to find ways to align their leadership role with their non-negotiable values, reinforcing rather than undermining their “alternative” identity and community.

Discursive leadership.

Pondy’s (1978) conceptualization of leadership as a “language game” has gained new attention in recent years. His borrowing of Wittgenstein’s “language game” terminology has become controversial: are others to see leadership as a purely linguistic construction, or as a “form of life” (to borrow another frame from Wittgenstein)? For Pondy, the meaning of leadership is established through practical, concrete action. Globally fluid meanings are temporarily stabilized within a community-of-action, providing a local common knowledge of what constitutes leadership, with a number of language games and competing understandings of leadership in play in any given situation and community. Language, meaning, and action are almost impossible to see as separate concepts, so that it is almost impossible to label something as one of these and

not the other two. What is of interest is how these language games take shape, how they are played, what forms of life they produce, and how they are produced and maintained in turn (Kelly, 2008).

Pondy's work has been used to develop a recent scholarly focus on what has been termed by Fairhurst (2007) as "discursive leadership." Discursive leadership research provides a distinctly different approach to understanding research from the dominant approach of leadership psychology. Where discursive leadership is based on social construction and discourse theory, leadership psychology is based on realism and a positivist approach to psychology. Where discursive leadership sees humans as subjects that work collectively and reflexively to create and be created by what they understand as reality, leadership psychology sees humans as actors that possess essential characteristics to generate and guide their actions in cause-effect relationships. The two approaches to leadership are in tension, in that believing the assumptions of one approach means the other approach should be false. Still, both approaches do exist within contemporary leadership research; they are in conversation with each other even if they are not exactly on speaking terms. The leader that leadership psychology focuses on is but one part of the larger leadership scope that discursive leadership seeks to understand (Chen, 2008). The discursive leadership paradigm was created as an explicit alternative to the leadership psychology paradigm, saying that discursive leadership scholars "represent a constellation of perspectives united by the view that language does not mirror reality, but constitutes it" (Fairhurst, 2009, 1608). In this approach, "those who aspire to lead must figure out what leadership is in the context of what they do and persuade themselves and others that they are doing it" (Fairhurst, 2009, 1609).

This is a socially constructed view of leadership, saying that leadership may mean different things, depending on the context and the communication skill (in reading and responding to that context) of the potential leader. It also means that “the order in organizational life comes just as much from the subtle, the small, the relational, the oral, the particular, and the momentary as it does from the conspicuous, the large, the substantive, the written, the general, and the sustained” (Weick & Fairhurst, 2005, 410). Here, leadership is “a more distributed phenomenon based on a wider distribution of influential acts of organizing, which sequential processes more easily reveal” (Fairhurst, 2008, 512-513). Leadership becomes a culture-wide process, rather than something that is owned by recognized leaders. Almost everyone is an active participant in the process of leadership, even those traditionally understood as followers.

While discursive leadership studies regard the field as primarily a sense-making, management-of-meaning activity, this is not to say that only leaders make the meaning and the frame context within which the community works. While many “neo-charisma” leadership approaches may take that implied stance (Fairhurst, 2007), discursive leadership works on the assumption that top-down imposed visioning and context making is essentially doomed. Adopted meanings “become products of multiple and evolving conversations at all organizational levels that, effectively, weave (sometimes only aspects of) the vision into the very fabric of the organization” (Fairhurst, 2009). Leaders seemingly must be willing to let their vision evolve as it interacts with context and other co-creating communicators.

Discursive leadership also speaks to questions of discourse, both in its talk-in-interaction sense and its Foucaultian systems-of-thought sense. The Foucaultian

approach to discourse allows these researchers to look at discourse as a power-laden interpretive schema for leaders and followers (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, 1998), and to look at how leaders linguistically create a “space of action” (Daudi, 1986) in which they can have more agency than they might otherwise have.

Other Relevant Areas of the Literature

Cultural influences on leadership.

This dissertation works with the assumption that leaders and followers somehow “do leadership” together (Rost, 1991; Osborn, 2002) – that there must be a shared understanding of what various organizational roles are in order for the system to function in any sort of sustainable way. Military orders work because those commanded agree to the system; when the soldiers significantly disagree with the orders or believe them to be invalid, the system can fragment. Thus, based on this assumption, leadership is socially constructed and understood locally within specific and dynamic organizational cultures.

Culture is a word that has been used in many different ways, with many different sets of assumptions behind it. I am primarily in agreement with Geertz, when he writes, “Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (Geertz, 1973, 5).

However, my search for interpretive meanings is informed by a critical sensibility. This finds me also in agreement with the idea that cultures are “temporalized struggles and itineraries” (Collier, Hegde, Lee, Nakayama, & Yep, 2001), always multiple “cultures” in interplay rather than a single monolithic “culture.” From Geertz, I

take the metaphor of that web, both co-spun by members of the culture and yet not apart from them, providing them the context upon and within which they interact with the world. But I differ from Geertz when he sees this as a singular web of “culture,” fairly unified. Any community group, no matter how cohesive or homogenous it seems, contains its own web of cultures. Even individuals contain within themselves the intersection of many cultures, continually renegotiating their relationships and juxtaposition. That understanding of cultures is used throughout this dissertation, though sometimes the cited research that others have done may not align with its assumptions.

Several reports from the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project, a world-wide study of leadership effectiveness, have pointed to the impact that cultural context has on leadership and leaders (Koopman, Den Hartog, Konrad, & et al, 1999; Javidan, Dorfman, Luque, & House, 2006). GLOBE’s results seem to indicate that preferred leadership styles correlate highly with Hofstede’s (1993) dimensions of culture (high/low power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, and low/high uncertainty avoidance) and his cultural assessments. Thus, individuals from cultures traditionally considered more collectivist prefer team-oriented leadership approaches, while their counterparts in traditionally individualist cultures prefer the “leader as hero” model. However, there were some commonalities across these cultural differences; traits such as foresight, inspirational ability, and integrity seem to be generally preferred universally, as well as activities that build community.

Cultures are not static entities, and Wren & Swatez (1995) point out that leadership effectiveness assessments vary in terms of the historical, contemporary, and

immediate contexts as well. Leaders that are judged as effective in one cultural and temporal context may well be judged as ineffective from a different point of view. The definition of what effective leadership looks like is by no means absolute.

Almost all leadership research is based on formally-designated leaders, those people that have some form of title or position that identifies them as a leader within their community. While exceptions to this rule exist (Whyte, 1944), they are few and far between. However, the titles or positions that make a leader can vary widely, depending on context. While “president” or “CEO” are almost universally understood to be leadership roles, niche areas of the research also cover leaders identified by titles such as “teacher” (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002), “community organizer” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) or simply positions such as the oldest woman in a church community (Brown, 1994).

Meindl (1995) directly suggested that the sheer amount of contradictory results within the field of leadership studies arise directly from trying to assign objective metrics and definitions to something that is by definition subjective and fluid. Parry (1998) observed that most of the research done on leadership is quantitative in nature, but that since leadership (however one defines it) is primarily a social influence process, a method more attuned to that process would be better suited for getting at the nuances of the situation.

Theories of appreciative inquiry (AI) suggest that organizations find what they look for, so that organizations that look for problems become problem-centered, whereas organizations that look for what is good in themselves seem to discover more and more positive traits (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Schiller, Holland, & Riley, 2001). One of

the follow-ons to AI theory is a growing understanding of how individual non-leader members of the group affect group development (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2005). Appreciative leaders “can reside within any level of an organization, hold a world view which is holistic, employ practices which empower, challenge, coach and promote dialogue with others in the group, and interact with genuineness, credibility and respectfulness” (Roberts, 2007, 7).

This can suggest that the basic role of a leader is to guide social construction, to help others have a common understanding of the situation and share a frame which allows the group as a whole to move forward. Ludema & Di Virgilio (2007) argue as much, saying that the primary work of leadership is everyday conversations, as those are the ones which have the greatest impact on situational framing at the individual level. Other research (Alvesson, 2003) supports this finding.

Gender’s effects and feminist responses.

American popular culture now holds as common sense that men and women simply communicate differently. Tannen provided the shorthand understanding that women engage in ‘rapport-talk’ (which builds and maintains social connections) while men tend toward ‘report-talk’ (which exchanges information and asserts social status) (Tannen, 1994). While this clear-cut gender distinction in communication can still be controversial inside academic circles (as can the clear-cut divide into two, and only two, genders), the research that does show gendered approaches to communication seems to reinforce the general trend of Tannen’s claims. Male communicators are typically more likely to be status asserting, dominant, and negative, while female communicators are more likely to be collaborative and supportive (Carli, 2001; Carli & Bukatko, 2000).

Women tend to smile more often (LaFrance, Hecht, & Paluck, 2003), self-disclose more often (Dindia & Allen, 1992), and expend greater effort to maintain conversations through encouraging responses (DeFrancisco, 1991; Marche & Peterson, 1993; Mulac & Bradac, 1995; Hall, LeBeau, Reinoso, & Thayer, 2001).

In terms of leadership, the research is equally divided as to whether there is a 'gender effect,' but the research which does show an effect matches up with the stereotypical pattern. Female leaders tend to display a more democratic style, using collaboration and including subordinates in decision-making, in contrast to male leaders' tendency toward autocratic, centralized decision-making (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; van Engen, 2001). Male leaders tend toward transactional leadership (that is, as a series of transactions with subordinates, with rewards for services rendered and punishments for wrongs done), while female leaders tend toward transformational leadership (that is, convincing the group to share a common goal so that all see their self-interest in working together) (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003). In fact, male leaders are more likely to self-describe their work as leaders in transactional terms, while female leaders are more likely to self-describe their work as transformational (Rosener, 1990). Men tend to see their power coming from organizational position and formal superiority, while women tend to ascribe their power to personal characteristics and skills (Rosener, 1990).

The communication move toward "invitational rhetoric" is based on an understanding of these gender differences and the intention to construct an alternative to traditional paradigms of rhetoric, which are seen as embedded in patriarchal notions of behavior control as the rightful end of all communication.

The traditional conception of rhetoric, in summary, is characterized by efforts to change others and thus to gain control over them, self-worth derived from and measured by the power exerted over others, and a devaluation of the life worlds of others. This is a rhetoric of patriarchy, reflecting its values of change, competition and domination. (Foss & Griffin, 1995, 3-4)

Instead, Foss & Griffin propose a rhetorical paradigm based on what they see as three fundamental feminist principles: creation of relationships of equality, immanent value of all living beings, and self-determination. The rhetorical purpose here is to invite the audience to “enter the rhetor’s world and see it as the rhetor does” (Foss & Griffin, 1995, 5), where the hoped for response is that the audience respond by presenting their own perspective with similar intentions. Thus, both rhetor and audience understand the issue more richly, from a wider variety of perspectives, and understand that sharing of perspectives (though not necessarily reconciling them) is the desired end. The audience may end up being persuaded by the rhetor, but that is not the primary intent.

Invitational rhetoric is today being taught in the academy, but this feminist take on communication is still far from institutionalized. A wide variety of studies show the difficulties women have in the workplace, in leadership roles, and in social groups. The research does seem to indicate the frequent presence of a double-standard in evaluating men and women, where women must perform better to be seen as equally competent (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997; Foschi, 1996). Also, female leaders tend to be more critically evaluated than their male counterparts (Eagly, Makhikani, & Klonsky, 1992) and are less likely to be credited with possessing leadership and management skills (Schein, 2001). In mixed-gender groups that start out leaderless, the leaders that do

emerge are more frequently male (Eagly & Karau, 1991). Men also can have more inherent social influence than women; Propp (1995) found that information introduced into a group setting by a male communicator was six times more likely to influence the eventual group decision than the same information introduced by a female communicator.

The demonstrated female tendency toward transformative, collaborative leadership can mean that leadership responsibilities are shared widely throughout the community. In this “leadership culture” individuals voluntarily contribute, rather than waiting for the actions of designated leaders (Madsen & Hammond, 2005; Wheatley, 2005). All members of the group are effectively leaders, whether or not they choose to contribute. These organizations tend to move away from traditional hierarchies, preferring shared decision-making (Martin, et al, 1998). Participants may perceive a “gender difference” as well in these leadership styles (Kaczmarski & Cooperrider, 1999). This shared leadership clearly shows a non-traditional concept of power, in that it is intentionally widely-dispersed and shared among community members, rather than concentrated in the hands of a few.

The bottom line is that there seem to be “female ways” of communicating and leading, although those ways are neither universal among women nor exclusively used by women. This set of alternative practices, which generally value collaboration, relationships, and understanding over centralization and task-accomplishment, is often seen as inefficient and not “real leadership.” However, it is worth noting that the definition of “feminine” traits can vary widely from culture to culture. For example, Chin (2004) found that African-American female leaders enacted an assertive and direct performance of leadership, very different from the indirect, nonassertive style she found

among Asian female leaders. While many studies look at how women lead, one should remember that findings are culturally bounded, whether or not those assumptions and boundaries are clearly stated.

Concepts and critiques of power.

In physics, power is the rate at which work is performed, so that $P=W/t$. Political scientist Dahl, speaking from well within the leadership psychology paradigm, expressed power as a different sort of formula, wherein “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (1957, 202-203). This formulation of power, while often not challenged as incorrect, proves incredibly problematic for many. Uses and (more often) misuses of power are central issues within critical scholarship, which generally see the individual enmeshed in webs of power relations, so that every interaction, no matter how well-meaning, is some form of power-play. Foucault echoes Dahl when he says that “if we speak of the structures or the mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others” (1983, 217), so that power is seemingly used as shorthand for some form of an oppressor/oppressed relationship. That perhaps inherent inequity has been the focus of a great deal of attention and critique.

Within the social sciences and humanities, power is often positioned as an evil thing that oppresses or controls, forces those without it to live and act in ways which they would not otherwise choose, and forces those with it to be oppressors. Even when violence is not used or threatened, power can be considered inherently bad, so that all persuasion becomes framed as manipulation or tricks to fool the unwary. The terms “power” and “dominance” can be used nearly interchangeably (Van Dijk, 2008, 28).

Foucault's career was arguably based on tracing lines of power through social institutions, showing how power twists and dehumanizes those who experience it, and using discipline to produce socially unjust structures (Foucault, 1994, 1995, 2009). If power is conceptualized as a tradable good, something that can be distributed unequally, then it becomes spoken of as a finite resource, which almost automatically makes it subject to battles for control of a scarce resource (Young, 1990). Leaders are then the winners of those resource battles, with enough power to control and oppress. One can simply hope that they are benevolent dictators.

Another line of critique leveled at power and leadership research is leadership takes the personality traits of one particular group – educated white males – and has created a set of rules and practices which work only for them or those who share their worldview. Ford's (2006) study listed four contradictory discourses used by both male and female leaders in one British organization – macho-management, post-heroic, professional career, and social and family -- where the more masculine approaches were seen as more leader-appropriate. Thus, in order to be perceived as “acting like a leader,” one must “talk like a man.”

This patriarchal view of leadership and power maintains a status quo where marginalized groups cannot be accepted or seen as leaders without adopting and acculturating into the cultural norms of the dominant patriarchal culture, even if the immediate group has no educated white males in it. Bureaucratic forms, such as hierarchical authority, create a context that privileges masculinities over femininities and institutionalizes gender discrimination and privileges (Acker, 1990; Britton, 1997; Maier, 1999; Morgan, 1996). Even in situations where a group comes together to reject the

patriarchy, individual members can often end up enacting traditional power relationships, because they have been so thoroughly acculturated into those patriarchal structures. In talking about the disappointments and successes of the feminist movement, bell hooks wrote that:

Ruling male groups have been able to co-opt feminist reforms and make them serve the interests of the white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy because feminist activists naively assumed women were opposed to the status quo, had a different value system from men and would exercise power in the interests of feminists [sic] movement. This assumption led them to pay no significant attention to creating alternative value systems that would include new concepts of power. Even though some feminist activists rejected the idea that women should obtain power on the terms set by the dominant ideology of the culture, they tended to see all power as evil. This reactionary response offered women no new ways to think about power and reinforced the idea that domination and control are the ultimate expressions of power. At the same time, other feminists did attempt to redefine power positively with new organizational strategies: rotating tasks, consensus, and emphasis on internal democracy. (hooks, 2000, 89-90)

Even though research seems to indicate that there is a “female way” of leadership and communication, it was very easy to simply re-enact known and understood power structures, even when the goal was explicitly to reject those structures. Those who tried to avoid this error had no alternative expression of power conceptualized, often leaving the activist movement seeming leaderless and disorganized. Only in the last sentence of this quote does hooks point to those who seemingly managed to make the shift to a

different expression of power, seemingly suggesting that this was not a majority response.

A more radical position claims that the power relations in society are so well entrenched, particularly between men and women, that they are absolute and unchangeable. MacKinnon, for example, claims that female power is “a contradiction in terms, socially speaking,” (1987, 53) because male domination is so pervasive that women are powerless by definition. Even in the absence of men, the cultural expectations of patriarchy are so significant that women cannot have real power at all.

For those who agree with any of these critiques, it can seem that the very idea of leadership is essentially flawed and based on unacceptable premises, so that there is no ethical way forward, no way to be a leader that does not reinforce problematic ways of being or implicate one as socially unjust by the act of leadership. Human ingenuity, however, finds unexpected ways around these obstacles. When groups of individuals find themselves unable to use traditional methods of social organization, either because they are excluded or because they do not wish to replicate the mainstream paradigm, they may develop alternative patterns to allow them potentially to achieve their goals. When they create communities in which they can interact primarily with like-minded individuals, groups may build intentionally-created communities based on nontraditional values and principles, allowing them to organize in ways unusual in mainstream society.

Starhawk (1997) brought a feminist and eco-spiritual lens directly to the discussion of power. She framed the issue so that “power-over” described situations of domination and control, “power-from-within” described personal skill and integrity, and “power-with” described social influence or social capital among equals. This reframing

allowed her to condemn certain types of power (“power-over”) while reclaiming and affirming the importance of other types (“power-from-within” and “power-with”). Note that Starhawk’s definitions position persuasion in different places depending on how it is formed and used. Where misleading persuasion is used from a significantly superior position, it would be considered “power-over”; where persuasion happens between equals with the intent of allowing others to choose better for themselves, it would be “power-with.” This definition of power grants considerable agency to individuals, even as it acknowledges that they live within webs of institutional and cultural constraints that may limit their immediate agency considerably.

This research uses a very Starhawk-influenced concept of power, wherein power is an ever-present part of the world. It has no moral charge on its own, though it can certainly be used for good or for harm, used wisely or used recklessly. It is both a tool and the medium through which we as humans must inevitably navigate the world. This is power as impact, whether positive or negative. I can reduce my carbon footprint, but I cannot completely eliminate it or refuse to have one; that carbon footprint is an unavoidable impact I have on the world. This encompasses the idea of power as an expression of privilege, whether earned or not.

This is not to suggest that ethical uses of power are passive in this context. As an environmental and spiritual activist, Starhawk argues for the active and productive use of power to transform the world. As a self-defined witch, she frequently uses the word “magic,” defined as “the art of changing consciousness at will” (1997, 13). This definition means that her magical action can be both mundane (e.g., distributing leaflets

to make people more politically aware) and mystic (e.g., raising energy through ritual). The point of her magic is change, power used to transform the world.

It is worth briefly noting that leadership has often been regarded, at least metaphorically, as something akin to magic in the popular press. With business article titles such as “Leadership and Magical Thinking,” “The Black Art of Leadership,” “Casting out Organizational Demons: An Exorcise in Leadership,” (Meindl, 1995, 78-9), leadership has occasionally been framed as an almost supernatural skill, hard to access for mere mortals and potentially dangerous. However, in these texts, the relationship between leadership and magic has been using the term “magic” as simply something difficult to understand or explain through scientific approaches, not anything particularly otherworldly.

Spirituality.

In the last two decades, the juxtaposition of spirituality and business has become more legitimized (Neal & Biberman, 2003). The Academy of Management has created a special interest group called “Management, Spirituality, and Religion,” focusing on issues of spirituality in the workplace. Spirituality has been presented as an enhancing factor in organizational learning (Bierly, Kessler, & Christensen, 2000), building community and connecting individuals into a coherent task-focused group (Khanna & Srinivas, 2000; Cavanaugh, Hanson, Hanson, & Hinojoso, 2001), and reducing workplace problems such as absenteeism, turnover, and stress (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Spirituality has been repeatedly suggested as one variable in an integrated leadership development model, based on a transcendent worldview and a perceived interplay between the individual, community, and the environment (Dent, 2005).

What exactly is meant by this interest in “spirituality” in the workplace? It seems to generally point toward meaning found in work, rather than simply working for pay, so that the work done becomes meaningful for personal internal development, rather than simply a financial bottom line. Dent, Higgins, & Wharff’s (2005) meta-analysis of leadership and spirituality literature seemed to show that there was widespread agreement in the literature that spirituality assumes integrity, honesty, goodness, teamwork, and interconnectedness. It means some form of self-managed, conscious adult development, but what form that may take or what actions may be deemed appropriate for it varies widely. The more specific definitions of spirituality used in the literature vary widely, from “beauty” (Khanna & Srinivas, 2000), to a spiritual union with any- and everything (Sperry, 1997), to more traditional images of some god or transcendent power (Strack, Fottler, Wheatley, & Sodomka, 2002). Many of the studies explicitly state that spirituality is pluralistic (Konz & Ryan, 1999; Freshman, 1999; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002), so that a community will likely have many different forms of spirituality represented within its members, and some things that the literature considers “spiritual” may not be labeled with that term by the individuals being studied.

Despite the American-centered context of the majority of management research, the range of spiritualities represented is fairly broad and global in origin. While some work specifically centers on Christian mores (Ali & Gibbs, 1998; Elmes & Smith, 2001), much of the theoretical work done in the field uses spiritual concepts from non-Christian traditions, including Hindu and Native American cultures (Barnett, 1985) and Asian philosophies (Brandt, 1996; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Whether or not religion and spirituality can be separated from each other by either individuals or the field remains

controversial (Dent et al, 2005), though the majority of the field seems to disconnect the two, or at least to suggest that disconnection is possible.

Indeed, some researchers seem to define spirituality in such a way that traditional notions of religion seem entirely removed. Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003) define it as “a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees’ experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy” (13). This non-religious spirituality sounds very much like the definition of a coherent team or cultural group, which may be defining the group in such a way that success measures were guaranteed, in a “coherent groups are coherent” tautology.

There are new leadership challenges as individuals begin looking for personal meaning in new situations, such as the workplace. It means that workplace leaders are now more often functioning as some form of spiritual guides as well as managers (Konz & Ryan, 1999), a role which many may find uncomfortable, especially given the wide variety of ways in which individual spirituality is expressed and understood, even in seemingly homogenous cultures. Given the highly-charged perception of religion and spirituality in some workplace cultures and the negative connotations that can be associated with religion (Mohamed, Hassan, & Wisniewski, 2001), addressing these issues of spirituality can be a minefield.

Alternative organizations.

While most research has been done on fairly traditional workplaces and social organizations, there are other types of organizations in existence. These “alternative organizations” are identified as such by their deeply-felt opposition to dominant ways of

structuring tasks and work relationships, particularly bureaucracy and hierarchy (Buzzanell et al, 1997). Some definitions suggest that worker control of the situation is primary (Cheney, 1995), or that they are formed primarily in opposition to notions of profit (Lont, 1988), or collaborative attitudes toward issues of food, education, and healthcare (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979), but the most basic requirement is that the organization is somehow formed as an intentional alternative to traditional ways of organizing.

These organizations can be subdivided depending on what part of the status quo the organization is primarily opposed to, and each different subdivision offers its own leadership challenges. Some groups are formed to resist bureaucratic structures; leaders in those organizations must be highly democratic and encourage participation in decision-making. Some are formed to highlight the importance of individuals and relationships to the organization; leaders in those organizations must share power, offer flexibility in participation, and consider relationship building as a primary goal of the organization. Others may be formed to center on a particular value or ideology; leaders here must be able to put this value structure over issues of structure or efficiency. Regardless of the type of alternative organization, all of these leaders must be responsive to the concerns and priorities of organization members, leading and organizing in a way which reflects those priorities and values (Buzzanell et al, 1997). While individuals in traditional organizations may hold some of these alternative preferences, they are rarely in a position to require leaders to take on alternative ways of leading in response. Still, these organizations, positioned as they are on the margins of mainstream culture, provide a

glimpse into sites where leadership is being negotiated and re-invented in response to changing cultural trends.

No study has combined these threads – leadership, social construction, and feminism – directly and in combination. This dissertation seeks to do just that: to closely examine how one particular alternative community has socially constructed leadership, proposing a usable alternative approach to leadership for those who might find it either useful or intriguing.

The understandings of the literature provided in this chapter are the foundation on which data-gathering and analysis can now rest. Rather than having this literature directly informing the study, I am taking a more open-ended approach to describe how leadership is constructed under unique cultural circumstances. Leadership is an amorphous thing; like power, its workings are often indirect and environmental, rather than actively well-defined. Thus, the literature discussed in this chapter informs my analysis, rather than directly driving my research questions. The following chapter will outline the intended method for the actual execution of the research plan.

Chapter 3: Methods

Research Questions

The overarching interest here is in how leadership is socially constructed through communication in alternative communities. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study is to provide an alternative view of leadership for those who feel that leadership psychology models are uncomfortable or out of step with their understandings of how the world works. The context for this research is an intentional community of practice, Diana's Grove, which operates a leadership study program as a part of its work. With those goals in mind, this study has more directed research questions:

RQ1: How is leadership socially constructed at Diana's Grove?

RQ1a: How is leadership defined and talked about at Diana's Grove?

RQ1b: How is leadership enacted through norms, codes and rituals at Diana's Grove?

RQ2: In what ways are manifestations of this construction of leadership unique to this intentional community context?

In Research Question 1, how leadership is socially constructed in this context, two sub-questions have been introduced. While community members use language to talk about and describe their experiences, language by itself lacks meaning. It is made intelligible through the norms and codes that contextualize it. Thus, those contextual features must also be examined in the research question, and probably need to be pursued individually, as they may well not be addressed directly by a language-centered question.

Research Question 2, which asks if this construction of leadership manifests itself only within this particular context, raises the issue of portability. Social construction

claims that context is vitally important to the success of concepts, which would seem to imply that this particularized and unique version of leadership would have a hard time being used and being useful outside of the Diana's Grove community, where leaders have a very particular set of common cultural understandings that they can expect others to share. If this limitation is true, then leadership principles learned should be of very limited utility when taken outside of the context of this particular alternative organization; they should be nearly unintelligible as leadership outside of those confines. This question looks for evidence of the utility of this leadership paradigm outside of those cultural confines.

Data Gathering and Analytical Choices

Because this research begins with the assumption that leadership is socially constructed, context becomes extremely important. As Biggart & Hamilton said, Leadership is a relationship among persons embedded in a social setting at a given historical moment. Strategies of leadership must consider the normative basis of the relationship and the setting, and the distinctive performance abilities of the actors involved. Theorists, no less than would-be leaders, must take these factors into account. (Biggart & Hamilton, 1987, 439)

This importance of context pushes the research toward qualitative methods, which are able to approach the situation holistically, using context as a data gathering opportunity.

Bryman (1996) outlines four basic patterns of qualitative approaches that have been applied to leadership research. He begins with a detailed case study of a single organization and leader (e.g. Roberts, 1985; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Alvesson, 1992), using participant observation, semi-structured interviewing, and artifact analysis. Second

is a multiple case study design (e.g., Bryman, Bresnen, Beardsworth, & Kiel, 1988; Pettigrew & Whipp, 1991), where comparisons are made between the cases to try to broaden the theoretical understanding gained. The third pattern interviews a large number of leaders to record what they have to say about their own practices or understanding of leadership (e.g., Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Tierney, 1989). And the final pattern invites other people to describe and comment upon leaders or leadership practices (e.g., Kirby, King, & Paradise, 1992).

This dissertation uses the first of Bryman's methods: a detailed case study of a single organization/leader, using semi-structured interviewing, analysis of textual artifacts, and participant observation as data sources. In this case, since the participant observation takes place within a leadership training program, and because the vast majority of community members have had some training through that program in previous years, many leaders and leaders-in-training are part of the observation and the data.

Bryman (2004) indicates that most qualitative data gathering in leadership research comes from interviews. Interviews seem to minimize the researcher's time investment, while allowing the participants' worldview and voice to dominate. He suggests that participant observation techniques, while a standard research technique in other qualitative research areas, may be less used in leadership research because a) leadership actions may be either hard to observe, b) little of what leaders do actually involves enacting leadership (and so much time may be wasted waiting), c) observation requires far more time expenditure, and d) leaders may be far more concerned about issues of confidentiality in observation situations. Despite these difficulties, participant

observation techniques seem to be both viable and valuable for data gathering in such a contextually-sensitive research question. Fortunately, this study has the ability to use both techniques, plus textual analysis, as Bryman recommends.

Semi-structured interviewing takes a conversational approach to information gathering. Given that these interviews take place as a part of an ongoing relationship, the conversational form works within the constraints and advantages of that relationship, as it is simply a slightly more formalized and intentionally-guided version of common interactions. The unstructured nature of the interaction allows the conversation to cover topics as they arise, rather than limiting questions to those areas which were predetermined as relevant. As Fontana & Frey observe, “to learn about people we must treat them as people, and they will work with us to create accounts of their lives” (2005, 722). An interview protocol (provided as Appendix 1) loosely guided these conversations to ensure that all of the research questions are addressed.

These semi-structured interviews allowed between an hour to 90 minutes each to explore interviewees' understandings of what leadership is and how it works at Diana's Grove, how that understanding may or may not be different from their experience of leadership in other cultural contexts, how well the leadership approach taught at this site may be used in other contexts, and how this approach to leadership connects to feminist philosophies and teachings. These one-on-one interviews were done face-to-face where possible, but two interviews were done via internet chat in order to work within the interviewee's constraints. The interviews were recorded with participant permission.

While the subjects under discussion were not particularly sensitive, the confidentiality of those interviewed was respected. All of the interviewees quoted were

offered the opportunity to use a pseudonym if they so desired; otherwise, their first name and initials were used as identifiers herein. The raw interview transcripts and fieldnotes were viewed only by the researcher and transcriptionists to preserve confidentiality; I was the only Grove-related transcriptionist, again to preserve confidentiality within the community that might most easily recognize people through what they said and the stories they told.

The research technique of participant observation positions the researcher within the community of study, adopting a role that is recognized as appropriate by members of that community. The researcher participates as a member of the community, gaining insight into the lives of community members, the constraints, rewards, obligations, motivations, and emotions that define the community's experience. This is not an objective research position. Instead, the goal is that of "effective participation"—being able to act, feel, and think as a true participant would in the situation – so that quality claims about communication can be made as a result (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In this dissertation, participant observation is used primarily as a method of triangulation and checking the face validity of data gathered through other means, rather than as the primary data gathering technique. Nothing is represented that was found only through participant observation, though often my stories as a participant are used to illustrate principles found in texts or interviews.

Both inductive and deductive patterns of thinking were used in the analysis. When appropriate, existing cultural schema from Diana's Grove were used to structure the coding process in a deductive process, starting from those existing known statements and building up a more complex picture. In other cases, a number of individual events or

data points from the research notes were noted to have a similar pattern or common element, and so inductive reasoning was used to build a generalizable cultural rule from those elements. Deductive coding structures, that is, those which come from recognized community teachings, will be denoted as such; all other coding structures can be assumed to be developed inductively.

Overview of the Research Site

With the research methods outlined, the specifics of the community and facility under investigation can now be detailed. The research site was the small intentional community around the Diana's Grove retreat center in southern Missouri, in the heart of the United States. Diana's Grove is located approximately three hours southwest of St. Louis, in the forests and hills of the Ozarks. The Grove's 102-acre property is primarily woods and meadows, with a handful of buildings, all of which are "dedicated to the magical work of personal and community development" (www.dianasgrove.com/aboutus/aboutus.html). This retreat center is explicitly eco-feminist in orientation, approaching issues of personal and community development through therapeutic engagement with mythic stories, a form of neo-pagan spirituality. The Grove's community provides an example of an "emergent, integrative spiritual movement that offers an alternative to traditional, hierarchical, dogmatic forms of religious expression" (Hill, Simmons & Jones, 2010, 232). This new type of movement promotes a world view that recognizes and values the connections between traditionally discrete realms of mind and body, reason and emotion, nature and humanity. It cultivates and values that which seems magical and mysterious, seeing it as a part of the world rather than something to be "solved" and understood rationally (Hill et al, 2010).

The property owners, Cynthea Jones and Patricia Storm, have managed this community on this site since 1995, building on work they had begun in Springfield, Illinois. Their work and the community grew out of the Reclaiming tradition of neo-paganism, retaining many ties and alliances with that school of thought through the present day. Reclaiming is a school of neo-pagan practice that has grown directly out of the theoretical and activist work of Starhawk, as it arose from the Reclaiming Collective co-founded in 1979 by Starhawk and Diane Baker in California (Starhawk, 1987). However, Diana's Grove has developed its own particular variety of neo-pagan experience and tradition, due to its own consistent interests in personal development and a therapeutic environment.

Only a handful of people live on the site permanently, but the cabins are filled many weekends with community members who ordinarily live elsewhere. The community runs an annual program known as "Mystery School," which offers monthly readings and discussion groups, as well as on-site events for those who subscribe. Mystery School runs for the calendar year, beginning in mid-January and ending in early December. The first Mystery School was held in 1995 with only 22 participants; by 2008, 225 people were enrolled for the annual program (Hill et al, 2010). Most participants are adult white women living in the surrounding states, with enough disposable income to pay the subscription fee and travel expenses. The community is not exclusively women, but it seems to attract a population that is perhaps 95% female. The reasons behind this self-selected demographic are unclear, though commentators have noted that the environment offers an unusually high level of both physical and emotional safety, given the site's remote location and carefully-maintained community norms.

Also, the community frequently assumes female norms, so that “priestess” is used as a gender-neutral term for both male and female participants (Hill et al, 2010).

Mystery School is a therapeutic personal development course, centered on a different myth story each calendar year, usually from the Greco-Roman cultural tradition. The organizers retell these myths in a way that allow each participant to deal with a variety of personal growth and development issues in a self-directed manner, inviting participants to “live a myth as a year-long adventure in personal growth” (<http://www.dianasgrove.com/mystery/faq.html>). Through discussing the situations and viewpoint of various characters in the myth and the insight they may provide into current personal situations, participants are invited to change the patterns in their own lives, should they so desire. Thus, the myth of Atalanta was used to challenge participants to consider the issues preventing growth in their lives, to leave behind the forms that are no longer useful to them, and to protect their own excellence, among a number of other issues. For those who visit the Grove for weekend events, the readings and online discussions are complimented by interactive activities and evening rituals.

It is worth briefly mentioning that Diana’s Grove also functions as a dog rescue, serving as a temporary shelter for dogs seeking new homes. At any given time, more than a hundred dogs are on the property, many of them free to travel the hundred acres at will. This additional site function means that the staff and many of the participants are involved with the rhythms and concerns of canine life. Non-community members will arrive unexpectedly to drop off or pick up a dog, puppies will need to be bathed or given medicine, older dogs will need to be fed or taken for a hike, and lectures will be momentarily interrupted as someone cleans up a canine indiscretion. At the end of an

event weekend, participants will frequently be asked to transport dogs to their new owners in other parts of the region. While no participant is absolutely required to take part in the dog rescue's activities, the amount of work needed and the number of dogs means that it is difficult for participants to avoid the dog rescue experience entirely. This prosaic and messy part of the work is an ever-present part of the Diana's Grove experience; while it may seem an odd fit with the much more conceptual parts of the Grove's mission, it cannot be ignored as a part of the community understanding of life and social organization.

While the community practices an "ecstatic, Earth-based ritual tradition" (Diana's Grove, 2010, 11), participants are not required to self-define as neo-pagans or to believe any particular spiritual tradition. While discussions frequently reference astrological or tarot symbology, the level of knowledge or beliefs about these practices will vary widely among both participants and staff, from devotees to skeptics. Even among participants who self-identify as some variety of neo-pagan, their beliefs and practices vary. The community contains members who self-describe as pagan, Christian, agnostic, Buddhist, and many others who choose not to identify or label their belief structure.

While Diana's Grove is often called an "intentional community," even by members of the community, there is one respect in which it differs from usual definitions of intentional community: residential status. As this article published by the Fellowship for Intentional Community points out,

An 'intentional community' is a group of people who have chosen to live together with a common purpose, working cooperatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values. The people may live together on a piece of rural land, in

a suburban home, or in an urban neighborhood, and they may share a single residence or live in a cluster of dwellings. (Kozeny, 1996)

While the members of the Diana's Grove community often share a common purpose, only a handful of individuals actually have chosen to live together in community. The vast majority of those who act as part of the community regularly live in other parts of the world. Thus, an alternative definition may be needed to accurately express this sort of cultural entity.

Instead, I propose that Diana's Grove and similar entities should be considered "communities of practice." This term is more elastic, is defined as mutual "participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities....a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lack & Wenger, 1991, 98). Wenger recently simplified this technical definition, saying "communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2006). This definition, centered on mutual interest and some form of participation in meaning-making, allows for geographic dispersion of participants and great fluidity in its membership. The term has recently been used to study internet communities (Wasko & Faraj, 2000), both formal and informal workplace and corporate groups (Wenger & Snyder, 2000; Davenport & Prusak, 2000), and in explicitly educational environments (Wubbels, 2007; Chang, Chen & Li, 2008), among other settings.

Participants in the Diana's Grove leadership community approach the situation with varying levels of intention; some come with an explicit intention to improve their understanding of leadership (via participation in either the IPP or Rites programs), while others simply attend to experience the events. Regardless of their level of awareness of the learning environment, all participate in the community of practice. Those who intentionally seek out the learning opportunity might be said to be in a sub-community, or an "intentional community of practice."

Implications of this Research Site

This site is particularly useful for this research because it offers a distinct leadership training track. After participants have been in Mystery School for at least one year, they may participate in the Initiatory Priestess Path (or IPP), and then at least a year in IPP is required to participate in the capstone Rites of Passage (or Rites) program. Participation in both IPP and Rites is voluntary and selective; the Grove staff chooses who is on the IPP and Rites teams. The size of a Rites team ranges from a minimum of three people to a maximum of ten, though most are four or five; the responsibilities of the team and the level of personal attention given to them prevent team sizes outside these norms.

This training offers a slightly different take on leadership, acknowledged from the beginning. Their introductory guide to the community says that "Leadership is the art of being fully present and effective for the intention of serving a group" (Diana's Grove, 2010, 12) and calls their leadership training program "the Priestess Path" (Diana's Grove, 2010, 12). Why?

A Priestess, according to the 1928 Webster's New International Dictionary, is: *One who officiates sacred rites*. This describes one aspect of Priestessing – but what rite does a priestess officiate? A ritual? No. Life. Life is the sacred *rite* that a Priestess is called to officiate. Life, growth, personal interaction, communication, all the intricate exchanges that are required in the journey of becoming. Living, working and creating together – these provide the focus of our Priestess Training. (Diana's Grove, 2010, 12).

This is presented as a distinctly different approach toward what leadership is and what it is meant to do. This model clearly integrates leadership with mind, spirit, emotion, and body, standing in contrast to standard Western paradigms that are based on the fundamental opposition of mind and spirit (Hill et al, 2010). Still, few of the graduates of this leadership program identify themselves as professional priestesses. They are teachers and hospice workers, editors and roadies, university professors and engineers, administrators and salesmen; somehow, this unusual approach to leadership seems to prove meaningful to them.

An examination of the Grove and the leadership tradition they have built over their history provides a possible response to the feminist critiques of leadership—a construction of leadership that changes the problematic assumptions on which many mainstream leadership programs are based. For some people, this may provide a path toward right action, an ethical approach toward living in community and having power. This study is a close reading of leadership at the Grove, based on semi-structured interviews with participants, the analysis of Grove texts, and participant observations while on the Priestess Path and a community member. The analysis examines the

assumptions on which the Priestess Path is based, the basic tenets that it offers and trains its students in, and the impact that this work has on those involved.

The texts analyzed include a wide range of those produced within the community (including “Myth, Magic, and Community,” Mystery School monthly packets, Diana’s Grove websites, etc.). The primary text, “Myth, Magic, and Community,” is a 39-page packet designed as an orientation and introduction to the Grove and Mystery School, sent to all participants at the beginning of each calendar year. It contains both philosophy and practical information about how the community functions and what to do if the community is not functioning properly. While little of it specifically speaks to leadership roles, quite a bit of it deals with interpersonal dynamics in community and what is expected of community members, which has its impact on leaders in the community. In addition, it provides a basic overview of the stages in the official leadership training program, providing some of the few written textual mentions of this work. Lectures and discussions are also used, both through participant notes and through recordings.

Practical data gathering.

Given that this is a retreat center, rather than a permanent community, on-site observation occurred almost entirely during scheduled center events. These events were generally held one weekend per month, plus one 10-day “intensive” session, for an approximate total of 30 days of observation over the course of a year.

Once the basic structure of the data began to be visible, these data-gathering techniques were augmented with semi-structured interviews with community members, particularly those with experience with the leadership programs. These “conversations with a purpose” (Bingham & Moore, 1959) were intentionally open-ended. While they

were intended to channel the interviewee's experience and perspective, the conversations were co-created by the researcher and the interviewees, pursuing the lines of inquiry that seemed useful at the time, tailored toward each interview subject's experiences and community roles.

Particularly given that these interviews were done as a part of a participant observation scenario, traditional concepts of interviewer power may not have applied. These interviews took place within pre-existing relationships, and those pre-existing relationships affected the power dynamics between the researcher and interview subjects. Those relationships, whether of friendship, collegiality, or simple recognition, flavored the conversations. The rapport that is so important to good interview methodology (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) came from those relationships, rather than being built purely in the moment and for the purposes of the research.

Eight members of the Diana's Grove community were interviewed in late 2010 through early 2011 for this project. All of them are long-time community members, with at least three years of participation, and were currently active during the study period. Both female and male subjects were included, with more females interviewed to keep the group proportionate with the community. A brief description of each of these interview subjects is given in Appendix 1.

The Diana's Grove community was aware that I am doing this research while fully participating in the community, and they were supportive of the research intent and process. I tried to minimize any sense that I was "special" as a researcher in the community, setting myself as a privileged judge of community norms. This meshed well with my own positioning as an interpretive, non-privileged observer, and community

members have responded to my research at various points in the process, not only answering questions during interviews, but also reading parts of the dissertation text and verifying that what is produced reflects the community understanding. While fieldnotes and raw interview transcripts were viewed only by the researcher and transcriptionists, in order to maintain confidentiality, all of the interviewees were asked during the interview if they would like to read a draft of the dissertation. Those that indicated an interest were eventually provided with a near-complete draft, and their comments were invited. They offered an occasional minor correction (in one case, challenging my memory of who could have been present for a discussion; in another, suggesting a wording change for greater clarity). While not every community member that had the chance to read the text actually responded, the responses that were received validated the findings included herein. Community members found that these findings, while not attempting to capture the whole of the cultural experience, were an accurate reflection of the service leadership or priestess model taught and practiced at Diana's Grove. Two of them said commented that the tone of the text was accurate enough that they found themselves getting nostalgic for Grove events.

The method described in this chapter was approved by The University of New Mexico's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Chapter 4: Findings

This dissertation sets out to investigate one particular alternative community of practice, Diana's Grove, and how they have socially constructed the concept of leadership. Through interviews with participants, examination of the community's textual artifacts, and participant observation, a picture of what leadership means in this community has been developed and is presented in this chapter. The diverse theoretical threads delineated in Chapter Two, those of leadership, social construction, and feminism, have rarely been brought together to examine an approach to leadership; that is the approach taken here. This research shows that this is a communication-centered model of leadership, one that does not require its practitioners to have a formal or recognized leadership position.

By calling this approach "communication-centered," I mean to say that the essential skills and norms in this approach are those of a skilled communicator, concentrating on receiving and sending messages constantly and well. Receiving is deliberately listed first there, as emphasis is placed on situational awareness, taking in messages, and filtering or interpreting them constructively, rather than focusing primarily on message construction or "spin." This "seek first to understand, then to be understood" approach is rooted in a deep community-wide dedication to service and an ongoing intention to support the community's intentions rather than any individual's agenda.

This is quite close to Fairhurst's (2007) "discursive leadership," which assumes a collaborative model of leadership, with the world being collectively and reflexively created by the community as a whole, and leaders arising from that socially constructed reality. When he writes that "those who aspire to lead must figure out what leadership is

in the context of what they do and persuade themselves and others that they are doing it” (Fairhurst, 2009, 1609), he comes very close to describing the heart of the leadership philosophy delineated here; the primary difference is that in this community, invisible leadership is often highly valued, and so the leadership tasks which are never noticed by the wider, unknowing community are often the ones most highly regarded by other leaders. This transparent leadership is in line with some of Fairhurst’s earlier work, in which he writes that “the order in organizational life comes just as much from the subtle, the small, the relational, the oral, the particular, and the momentary as it does from the conspicuous, the large, the substantive, the written, the general, and the sustained” (Weick & Fairhurst, 2005, 410). Like Weick and Fairhurst, this philosophy puts a great deal of weight on the importance of the “little things” which are the building blocks of organizational life.

This dissertation is based on two basic research questions: first, how leadership is socially constructed at Diana’s Grove, and second, whether this manifestation of leadership is unique to this particular cultural context. As those research questions are addressed here, the communication-centered nature of this paradigm is demonstrated. This chapter will first examine the theory and practice around the Grove’s five Cornerstones of Community, which serve as guidelines for the community’s norms and practices. Secondly, it will discuss the dedication to service and what impact that has on leadership actions. Third, the importance of awareness will be highlighted and examined. Fourth and finally, it will look at this community as one where almost everyone present has had some of this leadership training, and the impact on the community when everyone present sees themselves as having some form of leadership role and

responsibility. Throughout all of these, communication will be highlighted, whether it involves filters set up to understand the world and incoming communication messages, lessons on how and when to communicate, how cultures and communities are constructed through communication, and so on.

One additional note on the communication used within this dissertation is worth mentioning. While formal conventions of academic writing often encourage the use of distancing pronouns such as “one,” that academic norm has not been followed within these findings. In order to accurately represent this community’s practice and ethos, I will generally be using their stated communication preferences. One of these guidelines is that of “I-referencing.” That is, rather than saying that “people react this way” or “everyone thinks that,” the community asks its members to own those thoughts themselves, saying “I react this way” or “I think that,” allowing the listener to agree or disagree with that statement as they choose. Thus, the first person singular pronoun of “I” will be used for many of the examples here, rather than making assumptions about whether or not the readers may agree with those statements. With that in mind, the overall intent here is to represent the theory and praxis of the community that taught me these lessons, not to claim that they are original to me.

The Diana’s Grove priestess path is a leadership training program, but it presents the leader’s role as an approach toward life, a way of living. This is not presented as a job or a position, something that one steps into and out of when one goes to work and puts on the leader’s hat; this is an approach toward life itself. As a number of the introductory texts to the community explain, a priestess is one who officiates sacred rites (“Myth Magic and Community” 12), and the sacred rites here are the daily rituals of

living and interacting with one another, in whatever context one might find one's self. From making someone feel welcomed and valued, to creating a useful context, to doing the thankless tasks necessary for community success, to knowing the right way to navigate a hard conversation or to motivate others – these actions are the work of a priestess, and this is the attitude and the skill set that the priestess path teaches as leadership.

The primary signs that one is a potential leader and is ready for further training are those that signal an inclination toward service and an awareness of one's own impact on the community. Those are the primary skills worked on during the leadership training process as well, so that trained leaders here are those who have a heightened sense of awareness, a deep understanding of the group dynamics going on around them, and a dedication to something more than just their own experience. These are not skills that can be used only part-time, something one can doff when one leaves a designated "leadership context." Once one becomes aware of one's impact, then awareness becomes part of how one interacts. Once one cares about service to others, then one continues to care. Of course mood and exhaustion can cut down on awareness or inclination to serve, but that is a somewhat physical, biochemical barrier, rather than a choice.

In the communication field, it is relatively common to hear that "one cannot *not* communicate," implying that even silence carries a message to those who become aware of it. Messages are sent and received constantly when I am in interaction; while some of them are voluntary and consciously constructed, many others are not. Management and control of all of the messages I send is a futile endeavor, though it is worth acknowledging at least that I cannot *not* communicate. Similarly, Diana's Grove implies

that one cannot *not* be a leader; that even if I have no intention of leading, my example and my presence will exert some form of impact upon the group. As a student in class, my participation or non-participation in group discussions has an impact on other students and on the teacher. As a driver during the morning rush hour, my speed and care will affect the flow of other drivers. As a participant in a democracy, even my disconnection from the political process may affect not just the outcome of elections but the mood of the country. Some of these impacts may be small, subtle ones, but these infinitesimally small impacts connect with other equally small impacts to have larger results. Even when I am just being myself, with no intention of leading, I cannot *not* have an impact, and thus I cannot *not* be a leader.

This makes this training fundamentally different from what many leadership scholars describe, and yet potentially of use to theorists and practitioners outside this context. Perhaps it could more accurately be described as a lifestyle, philosophy, or approach toward life, rather than simply a technique which can be applied now and then. When I tried to explain my dissertation research to my father, he shook his head and said, “Honey, to me, leadership is *Patton*. I don’t know what this is that you’re describing.” This leadership paradigm is only remotely related to *Patton*’s directional, transactional command-based leadership style, certainly not close enough to easily compare the two. What I instead found was a communication-centered transformational leadership paradigm, rooted in service to community ideals and intentions, regardless of the community involved.

The terms “leader” and “priestess” are used almost interchangeably in the Diana’s Grove community. Those who have been there longer and those who are more

comfortable with a spiritual context are perhaps more likely to use “priestess” than “leader,” but almost all community members are likely to use both terms to describe what they do, to some extent. “Priestess” is used by both men and women here, without much acknowledgement that it is usually a term used to refer to women in other contexts. It might be nothing more than a muttered “Time to put on the big priestess britches” before heading into a difficult meeting, but that acknowledgement of the sacred and spiritual aspect of this work was regularly present, even among those who consider themselves agnostic or atheist. When it is living itself that is considered sacred, holy and revered, then the often-religious term “priestess” seems to cut across a number of cultural boundaries. With that in mind, this analysis will use both terms, as the community does: practically interchangeable, but perhaps with “priestess” pointing more toward intentional and deliberate attention being paid to the higher purpose of the work.

This higher purpose is somewhat vague. It is to service, but service to what? It is service to the community, to the communal intention, whatever that communal intention might be. If I choose to be a member of a community, then I have accepted the responsibility to support that community’s intention. This community may be a family, a club, a nation, politically left or politically right. It offers a revolutionary approach toward service that inherently disapproves of revolution from within, because the community itself is to be supported. While in any given situation there may be a task list to be attended to, there is a higher purpose beyond those immediate tasks, a set of values that underlies this service. Those values are the Cornerstones of Community, which lay out fundamental assumptions and attitudes that lead to sustainable communities. These

Cornerstones are the bedrock theory on which this priestessing leadership rests; thus, they are examined in detail.

The Cornerstones are the foundation of any healthy, sustainable community, regardless of situation. When the Cornerstones of choice, thinking well of the group, thinking well of one's self, stewarding one's self, and sacred wounds are in place and maintained, then the community can go on and do other things. When they are not in place or not well-maintained, then the community's energy becomes lost in dysfunctional group dynamics. Thus, these five concepts, described below in some detail, become key elements of priestess awareness; thus, they become key elements of the practice of communication-centered leadership uncovered through this research.

The Cornerstone of choice.

Choice is the first of the Cornerstones, and some argue the most important of them. At a very basic level, one makes a choice to be a part of a community, and one always has the option to leave. This does not imply that one can actually control their reality in totality through these choices. All of the structural constraints of the world--gender, class, race, socioeconomic status--are still present. One cannot choose to live outside of them. One cannot control how others act or react to you. But one can choose how to live in relationship to them, to resist or accept, to hide them or bring them to the forefront. One cannot control these external forces, but (with practice) one can choose how to react to them.

Acknowledging choice means giving up some traditional ways of shifting blame. Systemic factors may make some things difficult for a woman, for example, but choice comes into play when one chooses to play the existing game or step into alternative

power-structures that may be more woman-friendly. A bad relationship may not be salvageable, but the Cornerstone of choice reminds us that one has the choice of whether to stay in that relationship or to leave. The understanding is that “When I say I *choose* this work, this life, even this deadline, my entire relationship to my life changes. I am more powerful. I am less a victim of circumstances” (Bones 37), so that people would rather feel they were in an unsatisfactory situation by choice than that they were forced into it.

If this is a deadline I chose, then I cannot feel oppressed by outside forces; perhaps it suggests that a different deadline should be arranged for future situations, but for now, I got myself into this situation, and I believe I have the resources to get myself out of it. That may mean asking others for help, it may mean asking for an extension, it may mean missing the deadline and dealing with the consequences, or it may mean powering through and getting things done before the deadline. It may mean that I choose not to work with this client again, if I know that this client has aggressive, hard-to-meet deadlines. How I deal with is mine to choose, though I may not particularly like any of the choices available.

In one of the Grove’s key texts, “The Bones of Mystery School, it says, “There is great vulnerability in choice. There is great vulnerability in being powerful or empowered. Neither my honesty about having chosen my life nor the truth that I am a powerful and effective person condemns me to live in a world, alone, without help or need for help. Knowing that I choose, that I do as I will, simply lets me see myself as accountable for the direction of my life” (Bones 37-38). If I am a college student who finds end-of-term deadlines impossible to make, perhaps I do not have the time in my life

to be a college student at this point. The situation I am in now is a result of my choices and my reactions to the world around me; if I do not like my situation, then perhaps I need to learn to make different choices or have different expectations. The community borrows an aphorism from addiction treatment and says that “insanity is doing the same things over and over again but expecting different results.” If I dislike the results I am getting, then perhaps I need to change what I am doing – and I have the freedom, the choice, to do so.

Acknowledging the cornerstone of choice also has implications for admitting that others have this same freedom of choice. For organizations, there becomes a responsibility to provide good decision-making information, to make clear the choices people have and the non-negotiable boundaries of the community. As “The Bones of Mystery School” says, “If we want to build a community based on choice, we need to have greater clarity about what we are; a clearer self-definition. We need to let you know what you are choosing. We have a responsibility to define and communicate our structures, agreements and boundaries” (Bones, 38). At the Grove, these non-negotiables included no drugs or alcohol on the property, for example, and they openly acknowledged that some culturally available options (i.e., operation of a dog rescue) could seem like non-negotiables to other individuals (in that participants just have to deal with dogs running free, even if they have allergies or fears, or are simply bothered by the extra noise and mess). This free access to information so that one can make good choices becomes an important and continual responsibility of sustainable communities.

For individuals, acknowledging the other person’s right to make good, informed choices means that one has a responsibility to make the impact of those choices clear.

Again, the “Bones of Mystery School” explains: “If someone or something hurts me, I will express my discomfort and hear the response. And if something I do causes discomfort, I am willing to hear about my actions as a statement about my actions, rather than about me” (Bones 40). These are not to be taken as personal attacks, simply as different choices that individuals have made, and that other choices may be made based on them. If I am uncomfortable with how fast and recklessly a friend drives, perhaps I need to arrange not to ride in his car while he drives. I cannot force him to drive in a way that would be more pleasing to me, but it is responsible for me to tell him what I am doing and why; not as shaming, not as trying to change him, but as stating my choice and the reason for it.

Some claim that choice is the most important Cornerstone, saying that it underlies all the others. Once I assume that I have some choice in the situation I am in, then the other Cornerstones become things that I can choose to adopt. As one staffer explained to me, “I cannot be forced to think well of myself, to think well of others, to offer myself the things I need and act on my own behalf, or to honor my greatest wounds” (SS, personal communication, January 4, 2011), and so those are choices that each person must make if they are to live by the Cornerstones. Every individual the right to opt out of the work which is the heart of the community’s common cause, though those who regularly opt out rarely stay within the community for long. It all comes down to choice, and the attitude one chooses to bring to lived reality.

The Cornerstone of thinking well of the group.

When choice is the first Cornerstone, thinking well of the group follows on fairly naturally. In “The Bones of Mystery School,” this piece of Grove philosophy is traced.

“If you choose to be in this group or community, you choose it because you think well of it....At times during the year, you may have an experience that is not empowering, that is not healthy and respectful. When that happens, if you think well of the group, you can say, ‘Wow, that was off. What happened there?’ And the person who hurt you or disappointed you can answer you” (Bones 39). When those less-positive moments occur, when an interaction or a decision doesn’t go as I might want it to, then personal interpretation of the situation occurs. My individual filters come into play, and that determines what possible responses are. If I don’t think well of the group, then I may feel rejected, disempowered, and isolated. If I do think well of the group, then I can perhaps see it as an isolated incident, remembering that other people don’t always act as they’d like to, and that not everyone’s needs can be accommodated in every situation. Perhaps the situation could have worked better if different choices had been made.

There is also an assumption here that groups are good, that communities come together for a reason and are worth supporting. Even if I was not in on the decision-making and planning, even if I am just present as an audience member, a student, or a cog in the machine, I should be supporting the intentions of the groups I choose to be a part of. The role of the supportive priestess, a priestess who is not actively recognized as leading in this particular situation, is frequently mentioned as one reason why Grove events do work so well; for all that there are two people in the center of attention “leading” things, there are fifteen trained priestesses on the outskirts of the group, supporting their intention and their work in myriad subtle ways.

Sometimes this can be something as simple as just following directions. Patricia tells a story of three Grove drummers attending a drumming workshop taught by a well-

known instructor, three middle-aged women in a huge room full of “hippie thunder drummers,” as she put it. And yet, when the workshop was over, the instructor came over to the Grove women and said “who are you people?” with many compliments and thanks, because these three women had actually carefully followed his instructions and supported his intentions, as opposed to the more frequent technique in the room of seeing how loud or fast they could drum (PS, personal communication, January 24, 2010).

These women had acted as supportive priestesses by following the leader’s lead, by supporting the intention of the course, as opposed to just having fun or showing off, and their effort was noticed. A simple concept, perhaps, but one that is not exactly common.

Jason was a bit tired of regularly being assigned the chore of dog-poop collection and removal duties during event weekends. When we discussed it, he admitted that it was not an activity he particularly enjoyed, especially when there were upwards of fifty dogs to pick up after. It might have been very plausible for him to see this regular assignment as a sign that he was disliked, at the bottom of the totem pole, not good for anything else. He could have complained or asked to share the distasteful task. Instead, he was philosophical, saying “somebody has to do it, and I know I appreciate being able to walk across the parking lot without looking for organic landmines.” He would regularly recruit other people to help him in this duty, marketing it with enough humor and self-deprecating camaraderie that he would regularly find two or three others willing to join him voluntarily. He thought well of the group and demonstrated that through his attitude toward this chore. This got the task done, as well as strengthened the community by not creating a knot of tension around this subject (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010).

Early in my own leadership training here, I was offered my first big role in ritual, one where I would hold the stage on my own for a time, acting a role in the story and improvising as I went. It was a huge honor, and yet I was torn. The role was that of the clown, Baubo, in Greek mythology, who acts foolishly and outrageously in order to make a grieving goddess laugh. My initial reaction was, “this is what they think of me – that I am ridiculous.” It took hours for me to get over that initial reaction, reminding myself that my mentors did not seem to think of me that way, and that I should think well of the group. Eventually, I was able to see this as the honorable task it was intended to be and to think instead, “this is what they think of me – that I can do ridiculous things in front of the group and still maintain presence, still maintain the sacred and say what needs to be said.” While I had heard the Cornerstone said a number of times, this was when I truly learned it.

A priestess can sometimes usefully keep the Cornerstone in mind, even in situations where others do not seem to be thinking well of them. River tells a story from her workplace: “I had a really angry freelancer come in and just lay into me. I knew it wasn’t about me, but my job was to be a priestess in that moment, to act as healer. All I could do was just hold space, let her have her venting, stay calm, keep breathing. Eventually she calmed down. I was actually pretty proud of being able to defuse the situation....She just needed to be heard. And you know, if I’ve learned anything, it’s that sometimes people need an outlet, sometimes people need to be listened to, be acknowledged” (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010). In that moment, if River had not been grounded in this Cornerstone, she could have reacted differently. She could have taken the venting personally and responded in defensive anger, adding to the

angry energy in the room, rather than defusing the problem. She thought well of the group, of the freelancer, and of their relationship, and that allowed her to let this particular unpleasant interaction flow past her, rather than using it to redefine her world.

When trying to stay grounded in this Cornerstone, it can be helpful to remind myself that reality can be imagined to have four layers. The physical level is what concretely happened, the psychological level adds interpretations and meanings to those actions, the mythic level connects these interpretations to judgment and larger cultural myths, and the essential level reduces it all down to a simple take-away that can be carried forward. In this four-layer paradigm, those layers blend together to create a seemingly-complete big picture of what the world means (Bones 25).

So, for example, the physical level of a situation might simply be, *She sat in a lotus position, her eyes closed*. Most viewers of the situation could agree with this. When psychological level interpretations are added, it might evolve into, *She sat calmly in lotus position, her eyes closed, her face at peace*. At the mythic level, this interpretation might transform into either *She meditated, communing with the divine* or *She sat there, her face blank, gullibly pretending that she was getting something out of this farce*. Both are potentially real mythic interpretations of the situation, albeit coming from very different cultural truths. The essential level takeaway from this might be *openness* or *relaxation* or *peace* or *gullibility*, depending on whose interpretation it is.

So when a priestess is confronted by a situation in which someone seems to be disagreeing with her or him on what is fundamentally true, it can be helpful to use an understanding of these four levels to tease apart exactly where the disagreement lies. Often, even those in bitter disagreement will agree on physical reality facts – how much

money was spent, where the boundaries were laid, what time they were supposed to meet? With that established, participants may be able to see that the real disagreement is between their psychological or mythic filters; then if nothing else, they can agree to disagree while maintaining the Cornerstone of thinking well of others. As one put it, “the most concrete manifestation of thinking well of others is this idea of ask, check your story, be open to the possibility that they had a different outcome in mind and ask the question before you jump to ‘wow, you fucked up,’ or ‘you were such a bitch to me’” (LD, personal communication, January 29, 2011). The four levels of reality provides a tool for picking apart the situation and finding out where the real problem lies, rather than jumping directly to mythic interpretations of what it all means.

When community norms are violated, the four levels of reality are often used as a segue into corrective behavior. Norms are self-policing; their very definition requires that communities enact sanctions to point out transgressions from them. The Grove’s Cornerstone of thinking well of others, however, suggests a certain approach to these sanctions, one that generally takes any direct feedback out of the public eye and one that assumes that there is a reason why the norm was violated. Praise in public, give critical feedback in private seems to be the general rule. When a norm violation is noticed, the responsibility for giving feedback is often passed to particular staff members that have taken on mentorship roles (the Rites team mentor, the IPP mentors) and have more experience in giving feedback. This mentor will take the “offender” aside for a private conversation, saying something like “So I noticed that you *did this concrete action that was a problem*. It made me wonder what was going on.” Frequently, the offender recognizes the norm violation themselves by this point, and the discussion can move to

how the situation might have been handled differently; however, sometimes they must have it pointed out that they violated a norm at all. Thus this feedback becomes part of an ongoing acculturation process, teaching norms that are otherwise assumed to be known.

In the middle of the training year, my teammates and I were complaining that we felt undertrained, as if we were not being given enough opportunities to learn. When we said this in front of Elizabeth, our team mentor, she pointed out that we had not requested any specific opportunities, that we had essentially been waiting for our training to be handed to us, rather than being an active participant in determining our curriculum. Every year's training is different, she said, depending on who the team is, what they want, and what goals they set for themselves. We had not asked, and so the organizers assumed we were satisfied with what was being given. It was a very gentle sanctioning, but quite definitely a lesson. Within the course of that weekend, the team had developed a list of opportunities we wanted to have, techniques we wanted to try, and things we felt we needed to know in order to be ready.

Sometimes, though, there can be real and difficult disagreements between a leader and the group, despite everyone's best intentions to think well of the group and others. What can a priestess do when he or she has a sincere conflict with the actions of the group or its leaders? The "right" answer, according to this Cornerstone, is to address it with the leader as a sincere question or striving for wholeness. Discussing it with others behind the leader's back is seen as being underhanded, trying to fracture the group or topple the leader, which are not the actions of one who thinks well of the group. It is expected that if you have a problem with another person at the Grove, that you will

communicate with them directly about the issue, rather than vent your frustration only to a third party. It is expected that you will do this in a timely fashion, so that you haven't been stewing on it for a week before you speak. And it is expected that you will do this while grounded in the Cornerstones, so firmly believing in their good intentions.

This straightforward approach to interpersonal conflict is known as "direct communication," and is designed to help increase awareness of one's impact. Malcolm Rosenberg's book on the subject, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, has been used as a training manual to teach direct communication in past years, as well as being available on site as a reference. When there is the presumption that one's intentions are good, then not realizing the impact one has becomes a leading cause for doing things which cause interpersonal conflict. The highly-stylized sentence structure that is taught as a way into direct communication is this: "When you do X, I feel Y (mad, sad, glad, and afraid). It would help me if you would do Z in the future. Are you willing to do that?" While this very basic mechanical formula is rarely used as is, experienced community members will often step back toward its simplicity if they feel that a situation is being intensified and complicated by emotions and projections of what other people are feeling.

Direct communication doesn't always happen. Privately, many community members confess that they find this slightly confrontational, and sometimes do not speak up when they feel they should, especially if the person they are confronting is anticipated to react poorly. But the ideal of direct communication is still maintained, and many a whine is countered with something like "Well, has anyone talked to them about it directly yet?" These conversations are more likely to happen when the person to be confronted

has demonstrated a willingness to have these sorts of conversations, which builds the expectation that they will not see this as an aggressive move and will respond in a rewarding way. There are also certain people on the staff that are recognized as particularly good at “hard conversations” like these, and they will sometimes act as community representatives when there needs to be a particularly touchy piece of feedback given.

The hope is that one will stay supportive of the group and the existing leadership as long as one legitimately can think well of the group; if I cannot maintain this Cornerstone any longer, it may be time to leave the community. Leaving the group if I no longer can sincerely support their intentions or actions is a more valid, virtuous priestessing act than pulling apart the group in an attempt to change its direction. It is important for it to be okay for people to leave the community, so that they can leave without being vilified for doing so. If I know that leaving the community will mean that I am spoken of as a “bad person,” then I may stay when I should not out of fear, which does not serve the community well.

The Cornerstone of thinking well of one’s self.

The third Cornerstone, thinking well of yourself, means being as generous and forgiving to yourself as you have just committed to being to others. It means seeing my mistakes and things you could have done differently as isolated incidents, rather than as confirmation that I am lazy, bad, difficult, or any of a host of other global pejoratives. “You are a worthwhile being in the process of becoming whole, and so is everyone else” (Bones 41), promises “The Bones of Mystery School,” suggesting that acknowledging that truth can transform the way you interact with the world. Believe in your own good

intentions and as a person in the process of becoming, rather than someone who should know better, should know how to do better by now.

Leaders are expected to develop a skill set and a persona that embodies their own particular take on leadership, rather than any particular cookie cutter idea of what a leader is. While there are a small number of skills that every staff member is expected to have, they are very basic things, such as speaking in such a way that the whole group can hear and understand you, or being relatively comfortable standing up at the front of the room to present. Other than that, one is expected to develop one's own leadership strengths, to become a highly individualized, authentically-you leader. "It's how can I be better personally [at things I want to work on], and how can my betterness [sic] serve the group as a whole. That's the challenge" (PS, personal communication, January 24, 2010). And so comparing one's self to others is discouraged as not just unhelpful, but as irrelevant. How can you compare two very different things, with very different sets of strengths? While one leader may be useful in this situation here, they may not be useful in that situation. All are valued, for who they are, even though some may get called on more often than others.

This can sometimes disturb those on the priestess path, who want to emulate others that they see as successful. Marilyn Sue was baffled, saying, "I'm always surprised when people compliment me on various and sundry things, especially my one-liners, because I just think that way...and it's not a big damn deal....It's just [me] being [me]" (MSW, personal communication, January 24, 2011). While leaders are expected to be able to fill in for each other as needed, it is understood that they will do so in their own

particular way, supporting the same intention, but bringing unique leadership energy and skills to the situation.

One of the most frequently-claimed benefits of going through the priestess path is a better understanding and appreciation of one's own strengths; "gifts I didn't know I had," several people called them. The longer someone has been on staff, the more likely they are to openly claim specific skill-sets as their own—having one-on-one hard conversations, doing full-group presentations, keeping an overview of the arc of the event, managing the group energy level, providing smooth and artful transitions from one activity to another, gathering, gracing, and so on. While the priestess path training hints at these strengths, it is widely understood that the transition from "being in training" to "being on staff" can be difficult, as one is simply expected to know one's capabilities and to know how to apply them without the assistance and advice that one got during training. Knowing and claiming one's strengths, as well as knowing how best to deploy them, are part of the ongoing evolution of a leader.

Knowing and claiming my own strengths was one of the most difficult things for me to understand as a part of my own training. Every event weekend, Sue and I were assigned to "morning gracing," which meant that we arrived at the communal house before anyone else was up, set up the breakfast buffet, made coffee, and then sat around chatting and greeting people for the two hours before the day's schedule started. Sue would keep the coffee pots filled, but most of what we did was just being welcoming to those who were often in search of an all-important first cup of coffee or some early morning companionship. After doing this for a few months and regularly hearing strongly-worded compliments for the work we were doing, I was baffled. So far as I

could tell, I was being complimented for carrying food upstairs without dropping it, and casually having conversation while I nursed my morning caffeine and toast. “What have other gracers done –driven spikes through peoples’ heads as they walk in the door?” I finally asked. It took me months more to understand that what I found easy to do was actually a strength, actually something that other people might find difficult. That there was a gift to be honored in greeting people cheerfully but not demandingly, in starting and maintaining conversations that a diverse group of people could take part in, in keeping the tone positive at a time of day when many people weren’t at their best. It wasn’t a leadership skill set that I particularly delighted in or had yearned to claim as my own, but I eventually came to see how appreciated it was by others. I never had the opportunity to experience the room while I was not in it, and so I needed to get that positive feedback from others to understand that what I naturally did made a positive impact on the experience of others.

When one goes through the Rites of Passage program, the pinnacle year of the training program, everyone who sticks it out for the full year “graduates” from the program, in that they get to experience Rites weekend. “Nobody flunks” (EW, personal communication, August 22, 2010), in other words. Even at this point, leaders-in-training are asked to judge their own progress, their own willingness to continue. They will get feedback, doubtless, but they determine their work themselves. They will have to provide the impetus to their own curriculum, having to make clear what skills they want to develop, what opportunities they want to have. No one will be winnowed out for not being enough of a leader, or not living by the Cornerstones enough. There are a number of people who have not completed their Rites of Passage year, who have removed

themselves from the program partway through, though that is their choice, rather than a staff decision. Every person on the priestess path is expected to be a leader in their own way, and so I am the only one qualified to judge how well I am living up to that challenge.

This Cornerstone also means not judging yourself for the choices that you have made, for perhaps not being as “green” or as “successful” or “fit” as the person you are sitting next to, or whatever other criteria you or your community might find to value. “What would it be like if our choices were never used to determine our worth? What would it be like if the only criteria for determining our success or our failure were our relationship to our own goals?” (Bones 42). If I offer to cook for the group, then it might be relevant to judge me on my cooking skills; if I offer to drive, then it might be useful to know if I have a driver’s license. If I don’t claim either of these as skill sets as mine, then the fact that I cannot do them is irrelevant to the group. I am to be judged on those things I work on, against criteria that I accept as relevant.

One of the effects of this concept of highly individual leaders is that the exact skill sets available at each event are sometimes hard to predict, since they are based on the staff members who choose to attend that particular weekend. Certain presentation skills have become the bailiwick of particular staff members, and the normal flow of a weekend can be interrupted if there are no drummers or no strong singers in attendance. There may not be singing or drumming, or there may not be slick presentations or elaborate workshops, but while these details change, the intention for the event is maintained and the event goes on, even with a gap in the usual staff roster. The group

present thinks well of themselves, even if they cannot accomplish everything as they normally would.

It is said at the Grove that one of the perils of leadership is that leaders are expected to be both more than human and less than human. More than human, in that they are expected to do remarkable things, to perform and motivate and be visionary -- the visible parts of leadership. Less than human, in that they are expected to be without normal human weaknesses: to not have bad days, or hot-button issues, or the other random irrationalities that seem part of the human condition; to not have normal human worries about money or health or whether they are liked or how they look; to not compare themselves to anyone around them; to not have favorites or secret dislikes in the community; to not snore or sweat or have a bad hair day; to be impeccable every moment, sunrise to sundown and beyond. While this peril is present for anyone who is looked-up-to as a leader, this community recognizes that leaders are, after all, only human. While impeccability is the goal, perfection is not a reasonable expectation. Thinking well of yourself asks each leader to remember that, to acknowledge slips in that impeccability but then to let them go rather than turning them into self-fulfilling prophecies.

The Cornerstone of stewardship of the self.

The fourth Cornerstone, stewardship of the self, asks me to think of myself as a resource that I can and do offer to the community, positing, “What if you don’t own yourself? What if you don’t belong to you?” (Bones 42). If I am a resource to the community, then taking care of that resource becomes relevant to the community as a whole. It becomes my job to use that resource well, to tend it for long-term use, to spend

it wisely. There becomes an implication that I am, in some ways, a social good, and that I am perhaps accountable to some higher power or higher being to do so mindfully.

It becomes my responsibility, as steward, to use my time and resources wisely, for the good of the world and the community. If I am a singer, this means taking care of my voice so that I can use it to serve the group (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010). If I am good at having hard conversations and coming out of them with useful results, this means both that I should step up to that task when needed and that I take care of myself so that I am capable of action when action is required. This suggests that both habitually watching television reruns and burning myself out with overwork are both disapproved of, since both take my gifts out of circulation in the community.

One of the leadership texts says it thusly: “Self-awareness is the first step. Check-in, check in with yourself and then ... communicate. Ask for what you need” (“Playing for the Song” 10). But this is not *carte blanche* to simply satisfy every passing fancy, to sleep in late and skip sessions if one doesn’t feel like attending; the distinction made is between “higher self” needs versus “lower self” needs. The lower self is the one that most of us are familiar with, the self that gets hungry and tired and irritated, that perhaps just wants to watch television and unplug at the end of the day. The higher self, in contrast, is the part that keeps its eye on one’s deepest intentions, one’s larger goals. When I am listening to my higher self, the conversation might go something like this: “I may be hungry, but I can see that there’s an optional class over there with only one lone participant in it. That would be awkward for both the teacher and the student. Why don’t I just grab a granola bar for now and go join that class? Because what I really want – not in just this moment, but the whole point of me being here—is for people to have a good

time and have great experiences. I want to support the efforts of that teacher, who didn't have much of a turnout for the class they volunteered to teach. I can grab a sandwich later." I may have walked past that class tuned into only lower self needs and never noticed that there was any need other than my hoped-for sandwich; my higher self has a broader perspective. Or I might say "My budget is tight right now, but I have an overall intention of supporting small, local businesses, so I will make a point of spending \$50 per month in locally owned shops, replacing purchases I might well have made at slightly less expensive chain stores. That way, the businesses that I'm so glad to have in my community can stay open, even in tough economic times." It is these higher self needs – the need to support the things I believe in, the need to be a part of community, the need to do work that I believe in – that stewardship of self speaks to.

There was an accident at the July event. One of the staff members, Steve, stepped on a copperhead snake while barefoot and got bitten. At the time, he was waiting in the wings to present, not twenty feet away from where the main body of the group had gathered. While he claims to have sworn colorfully and loudly at the moment of the bite, few community members remember hearing this. For most of us, the first sign that something was wrong was seeing him helped into a lawn chair by other staff members. After a little conversation, Patricia began to speak in conversational, calm tones. "Just so all of you know, Steve's had a snake bite. We've caught the snake, we know what it was, and there is no further danger. We're going to take him to the hospital to have the bite taken care of, but while he's being taken care of, we'll continue our work here." The hospital group left to take care of the emergency, and the presentation continued, with a number of other people stepping into Steve's role.

Steve, unsurprisingly, remembers the incident vividly. “What I remember most was this feeling that the show had to go on. I stupidly even tried to insist that I could still do the part, but happily they talked me out of it. It hurt like nothing I had ever experienced, but ... that pain was somehow less important than that I not freak people out” (fieldnotes). He spent that night at a local emergency room but returned to finish out the event weekend on crutches and with a swollen foot, feeling that it was important for people to see that he had survived. His very real lower self needs to make the pain go away and to feel safe and comfortable were subordinated to higher self needs to support the community’s intention, to create a productive atmosphere for the people there for the weekend, and to be a respected member of the staff.

“[Before I was on staff], if ... I happened to know that someone in the community was bitten by a poisonous snake while they were out walking, off-event...I would consider it a great kindness of my heart to warn everybody... about the snakes in the woods. The impact that would have—the one I’d never be able to consider or imagine—would be that the community’s focus would shift to the snakes, rather than the community itself. Every trip outside would be ‘watch out for snakes,’ not, for instance, ‘look how beautiful the land and sky is’” (SS, personal communication, January 4, 2011). Before Grove training, his sense of the “higher good” would be to turn an isolated incident into news, making everyone aware; after his training, his instinct was to keep the community calm and make sure that the incident didn’t get blown out of proportion. The difference comes from his awareness of what his ultimate intention is for the situation.

Stewardship of self is not just a leadership trait, but also a habit that participants are encouraged to join in, for the community’s well-being. When everyone stewards

themselves, then no one has to devote their lives to caretaking anyone else, and everyone can move on to more communal work. Laurie remembers this as one of the first things she was impressed by on an early trip to the Grove.

“I remember sitting in the front room at breakfast. Someone came in and the conversation was something like ‘How did you sleep?’ ‘Oh, I was a little chilly.’ ‘There are extra blankets in the [closet].’ ‘I don’t know where that is.’ ‘It’s just out that door right there.’ ‘Well, I don’t know when I’m going to my cabin.’ ‘Well, you can grab it at any time, after dinner if you want, any time you’re going down the hill you can grab it and take it down.’ Just this really gentle but very firm ‘here is all the information you need to take care of yourself, and I’m not going to take care of you.’ That was really impressive, because it never escalated into anything confrontational. It was really clear that this person was not going to get what she wanted, but there was nothing she could really say to complain, and the patience and the gentleness of the staff person in not getting irritated, not letting anything creep into her tone around ‘oh, for gods sakes, get your own fucking blanket,’ there was none of that. It was just really smooth and really skillful and I was very impressed” (LD, personal communication, January 29, 2011).

Even those who do not themselves know the Cornerstones can be guided into self-care, taking that burden off of the leadership staff and avoiding co-dependency. While this behavior is in many ways a norm violation, in that they are not stewarding themselves, this less-aculturated community member is sanctioned by being guided back into more

appropriate behavior. In the case of someone who “should know better,” the feedback would be more direct, albeit likely taking place out of the public eye.

There is another aspect of stewardship of self, one that speaks about developing new skills and honing existing skills (RR & JF, personal communication, April 11, 2011). Staff members are expected to be willing to push out of their comfort zones, to regularly challenge themselves to be just slightly “more” than they are. This may mean volunteering for a duty that is not one’s forte, simply because it needs to be done. While there are specialized skills and definite, recognized experts on staff, all staff members are expected to be able to fulfill a wide variety of roles depending on who is working any particular event. People are allowed their blind spots, but this continued growth and development is seen as a way of stepping into further leadership possibilities.

The Cornerstone of sacred wounds.

The final cornerstone, sacred wounds, is a way of acknowledging that no one is perfect, no one is without baggage. We all have ways in which we fall short of the ideal community member. We will have hot-button issues on which we have a hard time acting honorably and in true integrity, and interactions that we will have difficulty with. “Long forgotten patterns are acted out in group interactions” (“Playing for the Song” 9), especially when they are not recognized as likely patterns. This can be seen as “those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it,” writ on a personal level. If I do not realize that I have self-esteem issues, then I may never notice that I’m seeing criticism where none is intended. This cornerstone asks that I admit that all of this is true of me as well as of those around me, and that no one is at fault these problems arise. They happen; they are a part of the human condition.

In this context, “sacred” has a perhaps specialized meaning. Things are made sacred when one gives up things of value to tend to them – time, resources, or energy, for example. It is said that we make sacred what we spend our time on; for some of us, this means that television or our commute is made sacred, which may not be what we intend. Or we may make sacred our fears, by pouring energy into proving them right or into structuring our lives so that we are not afraid. The concept of sacred wounds asks us to consider what we are honoring with those tributes and to make sacred only that which we desire to make sacred.

However, they can be dealt with, their effects mitigated and transformed into something positive for both individuals and the community. If these wounds are acknowledged and cared for, then I can say, “I have been wounded, this is what is going on with me, and I’m not going to let this wound drive the car of my life” (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010). With a concrete wound, for example, a missing hand, this would mean finding a way to live as you are, without constantly feeling the need to apologize for not being able to not being able to live exactly as others do. With less tangible, emotional wounds, it means again finding a way to live as you are, without letting your fears and filters determine entirely what life you are able to live. This avoids a sort of post-traumatic stress disorder, moving beyond trauma to new reality, and living with that “wounded” self.

It is in these places of wounding that change and growth can occur, and so the wounds are worthy of being sacred. Without wounding, without breaks in how you see the world, then old patterns are simply repeated, thoughtlessly and unquestioningly. Mystic Jean Houston says “The wounding becomes sacred when we are willing to release

our old stories and to become the vehicles through which the new story may emerge into time. When we fail to do this, we repeat the same old story over and over again” (Bones 44). It is only when there is a problem that I see the need for change; it is only when I am hurt badly that that need for change becomes urgent. That is how wounds can transform into growth, if they are handled thoughtfully.

Sacred wound also acknowledges that people in leadership positions are not beyond the need to do personal work and deal with interior issues. Leaders who are clearly doing their work, though not letting it get in the way of being professional are inspirational and aspirational for others. “This is real leadership, in that the leaders are real. They’re not different from me” (MSW, personal communication, January 24, 2011).

Midway through the pinnacle Rites year, each Rites team member is given their “Rites challenge.” This is what the team mentors see as the single biggest obstacle to that person truly stepping into leadership, into priestessing. The one personality quirk or trait with which they will likely struggle for the rest of their lifetime. This is, in many ways, a sacred wound – both something that hurts them and something that, if addressed, can potentially offer great gifts to the community.

As an example, my own challenge came down to increasing my tolerance for self-respect, to believing that I was respected, without needing more signs to prove it. I tended to believe I was not yet invited to participate, that I was not yet good enough to volunteer or step forward, and I heard criticism as more honest than praise; I acted from all those beliefs, hanging back and not giving myself much credit for the impacts I had. I was challenged to understand that I was already respected, that the service I could offer

now was a gift to the community even if it was not all I thought it should be, even if I wasn't sought out for my input. While these challenges are given privately, others have shared that their challenges included the invitation to connect with others, to do the little things necessary to make their big dreams happen, to have perspective, to step in rather than just observing. Challenges are as individual as the priestesses that receive them, and they point to both known weaknesses and potential strengths. My challenge could become a sacred wound if I used it as a way to understand that everyone has similar needs to feel respected and admired, and use that as a way to tend to that need in others as well as in myself; if I found ways to adjust my filters so that I could get past my need for validation and rightly offer my services to the community.

Some connect this sense of the leader as someone who is still struggling, still working with their own issues with their own experience in various 12-step programs. "Even in twelve-step meetings, people that have been around for a really long time tend to talk about the problems they *had in their past*, and they *have done* these particular steps and they *have done* this kind of work, to get where they are now, but it's almost like they've reached this plateau of nirvana, and they no longer have difficulties" (MSW, personal communication, January 24, 2011); however, this leadership tradition encourages leaders to "own their own limits" (MSW, personal communication, January 24, 2011), to admit some of their own vulnerabilities and struggles as a part of going first where they want others to go. It prevents the illusion of the perfect, iconic leader by insisting that everyone has feet of clay; that is not a disqualification from the work, but simply a part of being human. It is, in fact, the leaders who admit to their flaws and work

with them that are perhaps more successful, less likely to trip over unacknowledged issues.

Communities have sacred wounds, too. These might be issues which are unresolvable, and which cause tension when they are raised. At the Grove, tension exists between the concepts of “service” and “stewardship of self,” one that I found frequently discussed in private conversations but rarely raised in public. There is a sense that this is potentially one of the more controversial issues at the Grove – what level of stepping away from immediate service in order to do one’s own work, to care for one’s self, is appropriate? While most community members acknowledged that this tension existed, and that both ends of the dynamic are important, few wanted to draw that line clearly or could agree on where it might go.

There are differences among the staff as to what community expectations really are for setting those lower self needs aside. Longer-term community members, those who completed Rites more than five years ago, seem to say that “Your gifts are important. Take care of them” (RR & JF, personal communication, April 11, 2011). Newer staff members seem to feel that there are mixed messages, that participants are taught this as “Think well of yourself, take care of yourself, and push yourself sometimes,” while for leaders, the expectation is closer to “Stay up late, get up early, demonstrate your skills flawlessly and whatever you do, don’t let participants see that it’s an effort” (RR & JF, personal communication, April 11, 2011). Community members will talk about the things they do to sustain and tend to themselves, and yet often these feel like they are presented as admissions of weakness rather than a part of the responsibility.

The public face talks about the need to serve quite a bit, and the need to care for one's own needs much less. Stewardship of self is a Cornerstone, and yet it was less-frequently acknowledged in conversation than choice or sacred wound. "We make sacred that which we give offerings to – offerings of our time, our money, our talent, our lives," Cynthea says (fieldnotes). Many of the staff members give huge amounts of time to Grove work, both at event weekends and in the off-site preparation that surrounds them, thus holding this work of leadership sacred. Many of them have also spent years doing their "personal work," dealing with personal issues and learning to be able to set those aside when necessary in the interest of professionalism. The work of the Grove means that leaders are almost required to be personally vulnerable on a regular basis, so that they are role-models of the openness that they want participants to feel and echo. This commitment to personal work is also seen as sacred, though leaders are expected to both be able to set aside personal issues in a way that is not expected of participants and also to be only rarely hampered by personal issues. A leader who is regularly emotional enough so as to negatively impact group dynamics is seen as a problem, and someone who should perhaps step out of leadership roles while dealing with personal stuff (EW, personal communication, August 22, 2010; MSW, personal communication, January 24, 2011; LD, personal communication, January 29, 2011; RR & JF, personal communication, April 11, 2011). While the struggle to deal with personal issues is respected, as it is in participants, the common understanding is that it is difficult to both be a professional, impeccable leader and to deal with major life crises or major personal transformation. Stepping out of official leadership roles for this reason is something that many community members do from time to time. This tension between stewardship and

service is an irresolvable duality, one where each individual seems to find their own personal sense of appropriateness and generally accepts the slightly different boundaries of others.

The Cornerstones are referenced again and again, in a wide variety of situations and by most experienced community members, both collectively and individually. These are indeed the cornerstones they use to understand the world, on which their picture of reality rests. In a sentiment that was echoed by many others, Steve said that, “I don’t consciously think of [the Cornerstones], and I certainly don’t preach them, but I do use them” (SS, personal communication, January 4, 2011). These become cultural touchstones, assumed to be true for anyone who has been in the community for more than a few trial events, and assumed to be good life guidelines for the individual, regardless of the context they find themselves within. Following the Cornerstones in outside contexts simply allows community members to continue interpreting life through this paradigm, where, as one of the community’s teaching texts says, “The dramas and adventures of human interaction remain the same but, built on these cornerstones, a very different play emerges. There are no villains to be easily banished; there are no victims to defend; there are simply humans doing their very best to be whole and grow in a community with others” (Bones 42). Some admit that this somewhat saintly perspective can be hard to maintain at times, but they still see it as aspirational and a worthy reference point.

The Cornerstones set up a way of thinking about the world and about the interactions that happen within it. They provide guidelines and filters for interpretation of both my actions and the actions of others, as well as providing guidance on choosing those actions. They do not require reciprocation to work, so that this set of filters can be

somewhat transferrable to other cultural settings. Their emphasis on mental framings and interpretations lays the groundwork for the communication-centered leadership approach. From just these five Cornerstones, norms of right thinking and right communicating are developed and set at the heart of what is to come; and they point toward the largest community-wide intention, that of service.

Leadership as Service

Community members describe themselves as “junkies for this kind of service” (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010), and say that participation in the priestess path means “to step away from being a consumer and into being a family member” (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010), one that is part of the work, rather than just a consumer of its results. The question that every person who wants to step into leadership training must answer “yes” to is “are you ready to put the group experience ahead of your own?” (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010; LD, personal communication, January 29, 2011). While every individual has a choice about whether to answer yes or no to that question, only the yes answer leads to priestessing. “People have to be [internally] impelled to go to this next level of accountability...because that’s where [their] growth is” (CJ, personal communication, January 24, 2011) in order to have a successful, self-satisfying training program.

Leadership team mentors say that, often, they use demonstrations of a service orientation as a sign that a participant may be ready for the training program. For example, Susan liked houseplants, and noticed that the plants around the common area were in need of water. She asked if she could take on watering the plants, was given that responsibility, did the job well, and the following year was asked to join the leadership

training path, almost as a direct result. Without realizing she was doing it, she demonstrated that she could see beyond her own issues to things that might impact the larger community, saw how she could improve that shared environment, and took the steps to make it all happen, which the mentors felt was proof of her readiness (MSW, personal communication, January 24, 2011; fieldnotes).

Staff members ended up speaking of two sorts of leadership activities. One encompassed all those activities that were traditionally seen as leader-like: presenting before the group, leading discussions, being bright and visible. These are the people who would be identified as community leaders by those who had just walked in. The other sort of leadership consisted of a wealth of other activities, many of which might go unnoticed by those who are not paying attention to key cultural cues (EW, personal communication, August 22, 2010; RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010). These activities would generally be done from within the community, without differentiating one's self from the participant base. As Marilyn Sue explained it, "It's way more important to make sure that the participants are fed dinner than it is to cast a circle" (MSW, personal communication, January 24, 2011).

Colloquially, these different ways of being a leader can be spoken of as "shiny" vs. "stealthy" roles, or as "performers" vs. "priestesses" (though the latter framing sounds unnecessarily pejorative to some). Shiny leadership roles are those where the attention of the group is focused on the leader—giving a presentation, visioning, motivating, and being up in front of the group in some form of performance. Stealthy leadership roles are those that are far less noticeable—managing people, planning and making decisions, doing whatever needs to be done in the moment to serve the greater intention. The sorts

of shiny, performing roles that any particular community needs and values may vary greatly; at the Grove, being able to drum is considered a leadership skill, while that would likely not be true in many workplaces. However, the stealthy skillset, which focuses on communication skills and knowledge, is both far more transferrable and less often taught in leadership coursework. These stealthy skills are what this dissertation research focuses on.

Sometimes, this can mean not particularly looking like a leader to those not in the know. This can be confusing to new people, who are trying to understand the power dynamics at play. As Patricia explained, “Usually, what we do as humans is try to figure out who’s in charge so we can either argue with them or suck up to them, or at least know what to expect and where I should be focusing my attention. It’s very easy to step in and see Cynthea as that person—until late afternoon, when suddenly River’s that person, or maybe it’s Arden, and then there are a lot of people stepping in and taking roles, so I’m not sure who’s leading this” (PS, personal communication, January 24, 2010). All of those roles Patricia mentioned here are shiny ones, and so the unwitting participant may completely end up missing the stealth leadership that keeps the event going.

Susan is an accomplished therapist in her outside life, and a long-time experienced and knowledgeable member of the Grove community. And yet one of her most potent priestessing roles is that of asking the question that the least experienced member of the community might be wondering about.

“[She] has taken it upon herself, on numerous occasions, to be the person within a group that asks the question that [most but not the entire group] knows the answer to. And to do it honestly, very sincerely. And not in the way that...some of us

would ham up the question, [giving a knowing wink to show that we really know the answer]....She manages to do it in an artful way which puts people at ease and reminds the facilitator that not everybody knows what the hell they're talking about and ... does so in a way that if anyone were inclined to think poorly of anyone, they would think poorly of her, for not knowing what the heck they obviously knew. You know? That's taking one for the team in...three different directions." (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010).

Susan rarely needs the information herself, but she sees this as one of the ways in which she can serve – by being sensitive to that least knowledgeable person in the room and standing in for them, accepting some of the reputation for perhaps being a bit dim and in need of extra help. I admit that I tended to think of her as wonderfully kind but not particularly intelligent until this was pointed out; afterward, I was in awe of how often she did this and how seamlessly she integrated these leadership activities into the flow of activity.

There are other ways in which Susan could point out that there was extra instruction needed. She could have stepped into a teaching role, saying something like “I think we need to clarify something here – this is how it works.” She could have identified the person she was trying to help, saying something like “Jo looks confused – let me explain.” Both would have established her as a knowledgeable person, though they may have also had the effect of shaming either the discussion leaders (for not explaining well enough) or the participant (for not understanding what everyone else does). Instead, she takes that slight shame on herself, saying “I don't quite understand; could you explain that again” as a way of signaling her concern to the presenters.

This activity is integrated into her community persona. A warm, motherly person, she often knits during group sessions, and is well-known for using the phrase “Oh, honey” to start a sentence. She completed a Rites year in the past, but has rejoined IPP. While a therapist by training, she rarely brings those credentials into visibility, even when they would be relevant to the discussion. It would perhaps be difficult for her to ask these questions if her public persona in the community was more attached to these qualifications and to her own high levels of competence. Instead, she uses her past experience in Rites and as a therapist to act invisibly and serve the community, without much acknowledgement that what she does is leading. This is the essence of this form of priestessing.

Elizabeth is another example often given of stealth leadership. Arguably, she has the most power in the community other than the actual property owners. However, she rarely presents to the full group, and much of her work is done behind the scenes, in planning and preparation, mentoring the Rites team, and maintaining an overview of the community and some of the touchy, stressed personalities within it. She specializes in difficult conversations. She tells the story of a Rites team member that seemingly refused to believe that she had power in the community, even once she was their direct mentor (EW, personal communication, August 22, 2010). Her role was of a sort that just didn't fit this person's idea of leadership or power, and so it was not only invisible but impossible to acknowledge. Her leadership style is so stealthy that she says most participants do not even know she is on the staff. To those unaware of her behind-the-scenes activities, she may seem like a participant, albeit a fairly quiet one that disappears frequently when there is a staff meeting.

Both of these women are actively engaged in community leadership, and their impact on the community is immense; still, they do not have many of the status markers that traditional leaders in the wider world have, and so it takes a while for some to realize how much work they are doing and how much of a difference they are making.

Almost everyone on staff is expected to do some of this low-key work. That might mean sitting with people you don't know at lunch and accepting some responsibility for keeping the conversation going and drawing out shy newcomers. It might mean going for a walk with someone who wants some company, when you might prefer some down time. It might mean being the person who keeps a meeting on focus and gets the backstage planning finalized just in time. It might mean taking five minutes during a break to clean up dog poop from the common area. All of these things are leadership activities. Few of them are assigned, and many of them may be unexpected. One is simply expected to notice that a positive impact could be made in these situations and to simply and near-invisibly change the world a tiny bit.

It is considered important for known and visible leaders, those who are seen to have power, to do menial tasks, to take their turns at dinner cleanup, to pick up dog poop, to use the outhouses rather than the one flush toilet on the property. Rank comes with more responsibilities than privileges, it seems. If leaders are not going to sit with participants to eat because they need some time alone or for a quiet meeting, then one should wait to let everyone else go through the dinner line before getting any food themselves. Nationally-known figures such as Starhawk or NPR reporter Margot Adler have taken their turn making breakfast for the group or washing up after dinner at the Grove. "With great power comes great responsibility," (fieldnotes) one staff member

quoted to me, consciously echoing Spiderman comics. “It’s a powerful statement of our philosophy,” said another, “to see Cynthia [the community’s co-founder] picking up dog shit. It’s walking our talk” (fieldnotes). It is demonstrating that service is at the heart of leadership, no matter what other duties are also required.

The hierarchy of commitment.

Diana’s Grove may sound very much like this is a non-hierarchical system, but community members would strongly disagree with that idea. In fact, they tend to insist that there is no such thing as a truly non-hierarchical system—that if there is no recognized leader, one (or more) leaders will arise to fill that vacuum, no matter how much wants a non-hierarchical system. If there is no recognized leader, then leadership cannot truly be discussed – it is hard to challenge someone’s use of power in a group if they claim to have none. Thus the Grove tries to make its hierarchy clear and acknowledged, while still highly collaborative and fluid.

This hierarchy rests on a concept of power that insists that power is inherently present and inherently shared; that there is no such thing as truly being powerless, though it acknowledges that sometimes the situation can be structured so that it truly feels as if there is no available agency. Power is a term not often actually used, but it seems to be what the community means when they speak of impact. Being able to have impact is an expression of power, and impact is unavoidable. Power here is a near infinite resource, rather than a scarce commodity to be stewarded carefully. I have impact on the environment around me, which is an expression of my power. That impact may simply be my carbon footprint, or my consumption of goods, or even opportunities that I did not

take, but it is still an impact in that the world is different than it could have been because of choices I made or failed to make.

When this concept of power is brought together with an ideal of mutual service and operationalized, what arose in this community was a “hierarchy of commitment,” a power structure based on how involved one is in a certain project or activity. The more time and work one puts in, the higher one is in this hierarchy. That means the hierarchy does ebb and flow over time, as people become more or less involved, and multiple hierarchies may exist based on different project areas. So, there may be a facility hierarchy, and those who are highly involved with it will have more decision-making power on issues about the property and buildings. Similarly, there is a dog rescue hierarchy, a Mystery School hierarchy, hierarchies for particular events or tasks, and so on. The founders, Cynthea and Patricia, tend to be highly involved in all of these activities—their lives are centered on Grove activities in a way that few who do not live on the property could achieve—and so high in every hierarchy. They built the structure on which the other hierarchies hang, in many ways. However, other top spots on these evolving structures may be taken by very different people.

This is a definition of hierarchy where the more power one has, the more input into decisions one has, the more information one tends to get, and the more work that ends up on one’s plate. Note that those who actually do the work make the decisions about how it is to be accomplished in this plan, rather than a role division between planners and front-line staff. In fact, one of the frequent “valid” complaints that are sometimes made about others in the community is that they propose work they aren’t willing to do. Sometimes people point out mistakes on the website that need to be

corrected without offering to correct them, or add to someone else's to-do list without seeming to notice that they've done so. In a community where one gets more say when one is willing to do more work, this behavior is culturally inappropriate. While there are definitely some areas of expertise and some types of tasks that will be restricted to particular people, the norm is that one is expected to at least offer to help if one wants to complain. If I have food allergies and so need special meals prepared for me, it is culturally appropriate for me to at least offer to bring the right food with me and help with its preparation. The offer may be declined by the kitchen staff, but the offer is appreciated as a sign that I respect the extra effort that is being put forth for my personal needs.

As one demonstrates respect and competence, one builds personal relationships with other leaders in this hierarchy, making one perhaps more likely to be included in new hierarchies as they form. If I have worked with Susan on an event and we all enjoyed the experience, I am more likely to get invited into the early planning stages on her next project and thus have a place in that hierarchy of commitment. In this way, hierarchies do have a hegemonic tendency, where those who have power in one area tend to at least have the opportunity for power in other areas (and, of course, having the right to refuse to be involved with something is a power of its own).

This form of hierarchy is similar to the philosophy behind improvisational theater, where there are no stars, though there may be more visible people in a particular scene. Experienced improviser Stephen Colbert explained it thusly: "You are not the most important person in the scene. Everybody else is. And if everybody else is more important than you are, you will naturally pay attention to them and serve them. But the

good news is, you're in the scene, too. So hopefully to them you're the most important person and they will serve you. No one is leading; you're all following the follower, serving the servant. You cannot win improv." (Colbert). When this philosophy is taken off of the theatrical stage and used in daily life, it comes to resemble the leadership here described. Paying attention to and serving others, with the expectation that they will also be paying attention to and serving you, all in shared service to the larger community and larger intentions.

This is not a truly non-hierarchical approach, because it assumes that hierarchy is inevitably present; it is, however, based on a flexible and fluid hierarchy, one that evolves based on who has the skills, the time, and the inclination to do the work. In this, it is a hierarchy based on service to the community, not accumulating over time, but service to the community in the present moment and present situation.

Leading to one's own discovery.

It may already be clear, but it should be stressed that this is a form of leadership that is rarely about developing an independent vision of what should happen and convincing the rest of the community to follow you—the hallmark of many leadership psychology norms. It is far more about sensing what the community wants and then doing what needs to be done in order to make that collaborative intention happen. It is facilitation or, in the language of the community, “leading to one's own discovery.”

This facilitation begins on the individual level. Over and over again, priestesses stressed their transformational role in the personal development of everyone else in the community, saying, “My job as a leader is to ... to make easy your own discovery of your own beliefs, values, strengths, abilities” (LD, personal communication, January 29,

2011), or that they do this work to help others “become the people that they are growing into and want to become” (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010), or that “It’s all about leading them to their next highest potential, and I never know what that is until I get into relationship with them” (EW, personal communication, August 22, 2010). While this reflects the community ethos that personal development, self-reflection, and skill building is good, it also very much reflects the assumption that what “the next highest potential” is may vary greatly from person to person. It is not a case of trying to lead everyone into a particular type of development, or putting everyone through identical coursework to achieve conformity. This customized facilitation of personal growth is a core responsibility of a leader, and they implement it in the round, toward those officially above them in the power structure as well as those officially below, and even toward those who are not a part of the community.

Frequently, staff members will make distinctions between teaching, preaching, and priestessing. Teaching works from the assumption that the teacher has a higher level of knowledge and is presenting that knowledge to those who currently are less knowledgeable. Preaching also assumes that the preacher is in a superior position over his or her audience or congregation, with a special understanding of the world that needs to be communicated, perhaps more persuasively than in teaching. Priestessing is a fundamentally different approach, in that it assumes that the priestess may have superior facilitation skills, but not a special knowledge with which the student or congregant needs to agree.

Teaching and preaching have their place and their utility. Sometimes people sign up for a class and ask to be taught, and a drum teacher misses the point if she does not

teach how to drum. However, the hierarchy set up in situations of teaching or preaching is fundamentally different from the hierarchy set up in priestessing. In teaching and preaching, the leader is elevated by virtue of what they have to impart. In priestessing, even if the priestess has more relevant knowledge or a highly visible position, the power dynamic is not so straightforwardly different. Laurie is an experienced member of the community, as well as a theater director and teacher in her home community. As she explained, “Even when I am teaching, all I am really doing is offering something you may or may not find valuable, and that’s fine. It’s your wisdom, you do not know less about yourself than I do; in fact, you know more about yourself than I do. I don’t know what test you’re going to face, and so I don’t know how to prepare you, and I don’t know where you come from. I don’t know what your triggers are. I don’t know what you’ve been through” (LD, personal communication, January 29, 2011). This is the difference between a teacher and a priestess who is teaching: a teacher presumes that the students should want the knowledge being imparted, whereas a priestess is more likely to see it as offering an option that students may or may not choose to adopt once the topic is made clear to them. Priestesses are, of course, only human, and so they may well get frustrated if students do not learn what they are being taught, but they have this philosophy to go back to, to explain the world they are experiencing.

Priestessing gives importance and primacy to the individual experience, allowing each individual the right and responsibility to know what is best for themselves. This is what is meant by “leading to one’s own discovery,” where a priestess can facilitate others as they make their own discoveries or decisions, but that each individual must make their own decisions and discoveries if they are to be legitimate. On a larger scale, it follows

that no one priestess can unilaterally make decisions for the group; decisions can be facilitated by individual leaders, but the group as an organic unit must collaborate and decide on their own, if the decisions are to be legitimate. Leaders can vision and propose changes, but if the group does not adopt those changes or visions as their own, then the vision will fail, the changes will not last.

Leadership as Situational Awareness

When the staff is thinking about who might be invited to join the priestess path, one of the primary discussions is whether or not that person already demonstrates an awareness of their impact. Do they already understand that how they behave at breakfast, how much of the conversation they monopolize, and whether they're complaining or cheery, makes an impact on the whole group? While those who don't have this impact are welcome in the community, they are rarely invited into leadership training.

Awareness is something that can be demonstrated by role models, but they believe it cannot be taught to someone who doesn't understand it at all. Awareness of impact was explained as the primary quality that someone who aspires to leadership must have.

While many liberal communities strive to be empowering and to support individual experience, the Grove is seen as different because of how it teaches this awareness of impact as a way to improve everyone's experience. This is a community that strives to achieve something that I heard described as "a five-star experience, albeit with outhouses and where you wash your own dishes" (fieldnotes). A number of community members describe this as the single element that has made the Grove different from other, similar communities. For example, when Laurie discusses her first time visiting the Grove, this welcoming experience is what she focuses on, saying, "My

initial experience was so different from anything I ever encountered from any of the other...communities, just from walking in...I felt very welcome. I felt like I could just sit down anywhere, with any subset of the people that were there, and have a conversation that was real, that was comfortable, that was actually interesting. There was just this overall feeling of good will, of ‘we’re all in this together,’ and an astonishing amount of openness from everyone to everyone else’s experience. I was incredibly impressed with how everything happened on time; there was a schedule and the schedule was maintained” (LD, personal communication, January 29, 2011). This seemingly effortless openness and sense of welcome is actually a carefully planned and maintained environment, with staff members assigned to some specific roles and all of them knowing that it is their responsibility to step in and make visitors feel welcome and at home as needed. Some call this “the art of gracious response,” and it requires staff members to be able to self-assign and prioritize without a clear-cut set of responsibilities.

This level of awareness is not expected to be innately present in any individual; instead, it is an awareness that must be developed with experience and intentional work, both by noting what role-models do and by asking questions. One IPP mentor said that “the biggest challenge that I think will make someone unsuccessful in a leadership position at the Grove is the inability to ask questions about impact before taking an action” (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010). IPP members were praised for things such as checking in with their teams before and after rituals to make sure everyone was happy and felt supported and for taking feedback seriously and implementing it (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010) – things which indicate that they

understand that they have an impact on the world around them and are working to improve the overall community experience.

While this awareness is explicitly taught on the priestess path, most say they picked up the heart of it just from watching the community at work, paying attention, and noticing the people who made a difference. Here, Jason expresses an idea that was echoed by many other leaders: “Sometimes you have lunch with people you don’t like, because you don’t want them to sit alone. That, if there’s an optional session, and there’s just one participant sitting in there, you just walk in there as if you intended to do the session....I don’t think I would have known to do these things if I hadn’t gotten the chance to just watch. I don’t think I’m inherently that selfless. But I got exposure to people for whom that was just part of the job” (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010). And it then becomes an unstated assumption that this is part of the job—not just the job of a staff member, but part of the job of being an aware human being. If there are ways in which one can have a positive impact on the world around them, then these positive impacts are part of the ethos of the job of living, apart from any more concrete structure that requires them.

In daily life, this situational awareness of impact could mean putting a shopping cart into the cart corral, rather than leaving it on the side of the parking lot. It is a small task, perhaps, but one that keeps the parking lot neater for other drivers. It might mean making sure to greet those with whom I interact in a positive way, rather than not meeting their eyes and having minimal interaction. It means role-modeling the traditional “golden rule” and treat others as I would like others to treat me, whether or not

my example is followed; if I do not act the way I want others to act, how can I expect them to do what I am not willing to do first?

Three Grove people plus another friend were attending a large auditorium concert when a nearby audience member had a grand mal seizure. The Grove staff members “went into priestess mode” and did what needed to be done, which included clearing space for him to lie down and recover, tend to audience members that were concerned and having their own emotional reactions, and helping arena staff when they finally arrived. “We could have our reaction later” (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010) one of them told me. They did this without any authority or official responsibility to do so. None of the staff members were particularly qualified with medical or crisis management training. Many other people were nearby, and these other audience members did not step in in the same sort of way. It might have been easy for these three priestesses to stand by helplessly, hoping that everything worked out all right; however, they had been trained to look for ways in which they could find ways to have a positive impact in unexpected situations. In the aftermath of this situation, several of these staff members spoke with some amusement about how no one seemed to realize that they were being priestessed in that moment, knowing that many of those audience members might not have wanted to credit an alternative community with producing such useful skills.

While that priestessing went unnoticed, the more visible a leader is, the more important it becomes that they have positive interactions with those around them. A grumpy interaction with just another individual might be shrugged off, but a grumpy interaction with the boss or with a role-model can easily become a source of concern. Visible leaders are more closely watched, more closely interpreted. Their impact is

greater, because they are often seen as more important to the community. Many people want to be close to them and want to be liked by them as a way of feeling important themselves. This is the motivation behind requesting birthday letters from the Queen or the President, behind expensive fundraising dinners where one gets to meet the candidate. This is the theory behind the boss walking around the office and greeting line workers, and why it is important for these important people to seem to know the names of those they may only have met once. Thus, visible, recognized leaders have to be particularly aware of their impacts on those around them.

This means that staff members are never truly off-duty, whether or not they have an assigned role or even whether or not they are at the Grove. They may be quite pleased when someone else steps in to have the impact that they might have felt obligated to have, so that they can relax, or they may decide that their time is best spent in some other activity, but, as Jason points out, “Once I know my impact, I no longer have an excuse for claiming I don’t know. We always have an opportunity to not do the thing that we know needs to be done. But I think that we see that as an indulgence. And I indulge in a lot of things. As long as I know it’s an indulgence, I can give myself a certain amount of slack, but once I start thinking I have the right to blow it off and be a tool...that doesn’t work for me anymore” (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010). In this way, leadership training becomes something more than a technique used on occasion and becomes something larger, something more life-changing.

This can be a weighty responsibility, even for those with experience in the process. Laurie has been very active on staff for three years and a part of the community for longer than that, but she fought against this idea for a very long time. “The idea that

I'm responsible for my impact, regardless of my intention? I could have done everything right, I could have done it with the best possible intentions, holding the view firmly in line, have not violated any philosophical principles – and still someone has a problem with what I do, out of their own filters and triggers and place in their lives....I think I initially took that as blame, but it's not my fault but my responsibility. I'm responsible for responding to how what I did was perceived. I would like for that to not be true. Would like to say, 'well, I didn't mean that, so screw you, go deal with your own shit, your shit is not my shit but you are projecting, and go project over there,' which I think a lot of people do" (LD, personal communication, January 29, 2011). But instead of feeling like the responsibility for impact ends with one's well-intentioned and skillful action, this is an ethos which teaches that one has a responsibility for helping others deal with the impact of one's actions. If I hit someone with my car, I would stop and help them; now that I have had this training, if I impact them emotionally with my actions, then I know I still have the same responsibility to make sure that they are not left to deal with the consequences on their own. If they are outraged or hurt by something I did that seems harmless and fun to me, it becomes my responsibility to at least help them manage that reaction.

But the Grove community realizes that not all impacts can be predicted or even realized. Jason tells a story of a moment where realized that he had made an unforeseen impact on someone he did not know well. "Someone came up to me at the end of an event and thanked me for showing her that it could be safe to be around a man. Talk about unexpected impact on somebody! I still to this day have no idea what I did other than be a decent human being" (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010). This

awareness—that potentially profound impacts can happen unknowingly despite the best of intentions to be aware of them—is a known risk, though one that many try to mitigate through vigilance and ever-improving awareness of the human psyche. The better I know the people I am dealing with, the better I can predict what their triggers, their issues may be, and thus the better I can be aware of my potential impacts and make good choices. But no situation is entirely known and entirely predictable, and so a constant awareness of the reactions of others and a flexibility to deal with unexpected impacts become critical leadership and priestessing skills. Again, it comes back to the idea that, just as one cannot *not* communicate, one cannot *not* be a leader.

One of the reasons for this awareness of impact is the recognition that, every time they arrive for an event, the priestesses are creating a world for people to interact in. There is much discussion of the need to create a safe space, a good “container for the work.” Especially when there are new people in attendance, they need to be given good role models and a structure that encourages them to be the sort of people that the Grove needs them to be, as well as encouraging them to enjoy themselves and have a positive experience. This is nearly invisible leadership, but it is perhaps the fundamental expectation that must be achieved.

While the Grove has an intention for their events, this idea of creating a container for the work carries over into many situations. If I want my children to do their homework, it helps to create the right sort of environment for that to happen—few distractions, a good place to do the studying, time set aside for the work. Wanting them to do that work despite a myriad of other things they have to do, while being constantly interrupted or distracted, in a dimly-lit room with no good writing surfaces; if they do not

succeed under these circumstances, then the fault may not be primarily theirs, when so many of the environmental factors were perhaps outside their control. If I am a leader, whether recognized or not, I bear a responsibility for creating a container for the work I want to see succeed.

While few leadership programs cover “creating a container for the work” extensively, this is by no means a concept unique to this cultural context. Kerr’s “On the folly of rewarding A, while hoping for B” lays out the need for this work as a frequent failing in business. Kerr wrote that

“Whether dealing with monkeys, rats, or human beings, it is hardly controversial to state that most organisms seek information concerning what activities are rewarded, and then seek to do (or at least pretend to do) those things, often to the virtual exclusion of activities not rewarded. The extent to which this occurs of course will depend on the perceived attractiveness of the rewards offered, but neither operant nor expectancy theorists would quarrel with the essence of this notion. Nevertheless, numerous examples exist of reward systems that are fouled up in that the types of behavior rewarded are those which the rewarder is trying to discourage, while the behavior desired is not being rewarded at all” (Kerr, 1975, 769).

His call in this article to create reward systems which encourage desired behavior is not significantly different than the Grove’s “creating a container for the work,” though the desired behavior in the two situations may be entirely divergent. Here, as in the earlier discussion of shiny vs. stealthy leadership, the visible form changes with the cultural context, while the underlying structural leadership skills appear to be highly transferrable.

Leadership as a Communal Responsibility

By this point in the cultural lifecycle of the Grove, event weekends tend to have only a handful of participants that are not in any way a part of the priestess path, and so don't have any leadership training under their belts. Those who continue to come to events eventually tend to take the leadership training, and over time that has meant a greater and greater proportion of the community have been through the training. In a 30-person event, perhaps four people will be "pure participants" who have had none of this training and thus feel no leadership responsibility. Thus, most of the interactions that leadership team members have on site will be with other leadership team members. Some may be at a lower rung on the hierarchy, but all can be assumed to have the basics of awareness of their impact, an orientation toward service, and the willingness to receive feedback as needed.

Practically speaking, everyone would like to see more new faces in the community, to continue growing the pool of participants as community members drift away for one reason or another. Some feel that events cannot be as rich without an untrained participant base as audience for the work. Some even feel that it may not be worthwhile to continue holding events without this audience to put the events on for, saying things such as, "It's those who are given total freedom who really create the magic. All we leaders can create for each other while we know we're being watched is exactly what we predict to see. The participants create the magic; the leaders help preserve and shape it, leading the song to its destiny" (SS, personal communication, January 4, 2011). To some, knowing how the cultural environment is created, knowing how much work goes into creating this "five star experience" spoils some of the possible

effect, like doing magic tricks for an audience of professional magicians. Those who know how it is done fundamentally experience the work in a different way from those who only marvel that it is done at all.

But because such a high proportion of the community has the same leadership training, leadership becomes a shared responsibility among community members, a community norm, in a way that may not be true in other contexts. Rather than the group having one leader or just a handful, this is a community of leaders, where leadership is an activity in which almost all members of the community are consciously engaging. That community-wide understanding allows many of the cultural norms to shift a bit, to reflect more dramatically those shared leadership values.

Jason pointed out that “a fundamental piece of leadership training at the Grove is that we have agreements to give each other feedback” (JF, personal communication, September 8, 2010), so that as one rises in hierarchies of commitment, one also agrees to receive more and more feedback, much of which may be critical or at least challenging. Things that would never be pointed out to a new participant or an IPP member will be directly addressed with a fellow staff member, and one is expected to take the feedback in and react to it according to the Cornerstones – thinking well of all parties, knowing you have choice, being aware of sacred wounds and the responsibility to steward one’s self. It doesn’t always happen, but that is cultural norm and thus the cultural expectation.

While community members all say that they use this leadership training in their off-site lives, they admit that the practice is distinctly easier when there are other people around who share the same understandings and responsibilities, whose support can simply be assumed. River points out that, “They’ve bought into the philosophy that I’m

espousing, so I don't have to spell it out, I don't have to sell anything. I trust that what they're upholding is the same thing that I'm upholding. And so the way we lead each other is different" (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010). Leadership norms can be assumed, rather than being carefully reviewed and responsibilities for maintaining the structure and the focus can be shared. Laurie says that in any leader-filled group,

"it seems like a staff meeting. We are all leading each other....If you're the first one seeing it, you bring us back to attention if we strayed, bring us back to view if we've fallen away from it, point out where we might've diverged from our philosophy or our values. And generally, people go 'oh, yeah' and fall right back in line. The difference is that in an actual staff context, the reminder can be a little more overt. You can actually say things like 'ok, guys, I think we lost the intention here.' It would not be that directive in a similar conversation with participants." (LD, personal communication, January 29, 2011)

In peer leadership, the expectations are higher for everyone, for both those who might be receiving feedback and those who might be giving it.

Thus, this is a practice of leadership which does not perhaps require a particular cultural context, but it is one that works better when leaders from the same cultural understanding can come together to share the responsibility. Numerous times, I heard community members say that coming back to the Grove and being surrounded again by the familiar team felt immensely comfortable, like slipping into a warm bath or a favorite pair of shoes. It was not that the work was fundamentally different, but it was easier with that shared background and experience with one another. Even in these situations, however, people who want to work together can be in very different states of mind, some

of which are more helpful than others to the current situation. In order to take these problematic situations and make them work better, a technique known as “gathering” is used regularly, often when a group comes together after a break. Gathering is a complicated, nuanced concept, and so it will be explained in detail here.

Pacing and leading in the “leaderful” culture.

Quite often, leaders are in a situation that they would like to change. Abrupt change can be confusing to those impacted by it, and so one of the most frequently taught and cited leadership principles at the Grove is that of “pacing and leading” or “gathering.” To change a group, whether in its energy level or its mood or its attitude, pacing and leading suggests that one must begin where the group is – matching your pace to theirs, mirroring the place where most of the group begins. Only once that matching is established and acknowledged can one begin to lead them somewhere else.

It is frequently said at the Grove that the first five minutes of every session sets the tone for the rest of the session and sets up a temporary set of norms regarding appropriate behavior for the group. If I want people to be interactive, then I need to have them interacting with each other within those first few minutes, rather than simply sitting and listening to me; if I set up the norm that polite listening is all that is required, it may be quite difficult to get them to participate in discussion or interact with each other later on. The first hour of a weekend will do the same for an event that stretches over the course of days. The first meeting will set the tone for a class that might meet periodically over the course of the year. Despite these norms being created, sometimes a leader will need to change the mood or the energy level or the course of action that the group has come to expect.

When one is being a supportive priestess, then the expectation is that one will be responsive to pacing and leading being done by others. This means noticing that someone else is trying to accomplish something and helping them accomplish it by following their lead. I may not feel particularly energetic, but if I notice a discussion leader leading toward a more energetic place, I will do my best to be just a bit more energetic than I feel. The hope here is that when a number of people act a bit more energetic, the group will begin to legitimately feel more energetic, so that the communal mood and tone can shift.

Almost every session at the Grove, whether a lecture, discussion, ritual, or meeting, will begin with some form of gathering. Gathering is a way of getting the whole group onto the same page, in the proper state of mind for whatever activity or intention is to come. It can take many different forms, depending on the situation, from a verbalized impromptu call-and-response, to silent dancing, to stretching and yawning to simply breathing together. It's being "willing to go first where they want others to go" (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010) and "It's not about the leader; it's about acknowledging the people that we're leading" (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010). Whatever the form, it is based on this concept of pacing and leading. The staff member charged with leading the gathering will walk into the room and first notice what the community members are doing: how are they sitting, are they interacting with each other, how is the light level in the room?

Ok, it's the first session of the day. Some of the room lights are on, but not all of them. It's a little cloudy outside, and so it's maybe a little dim in here. I see that some folks still look sleepy, some are finishing up breakfast or sipping their

coffee. Some are yawning. There are a couple of dogs in the room, but they look pretty mellow. I think a few people are still missing, but it's time to start.

Then that current state is mentally compared to the desired state at the end of the gathering:

This is going to be a full group discussion of last night's ritual, so I need to wake people up a bit so that they participate in the discussion. I need to get them interacting with each other, so that they bounce ideas off of each other as we talk, rather than just talking to the presenters. Maybe I need to echo last night's ritual a little bit, to remind them of what happened, and set them up for what's to come.

The leader will then begin where the group is, and gradually move to where she wants the group to end up. This movement is often quite slow, as quicker movement can be counter-productive and off-putting, leaving people feeling jarred or jolted out of their previous state. Sometimes, participants will take up the lead, moving more quickly than the leader would have; these shows of initiative are often echoed by leadership if they seem helpful.

Let me turn the lights on full; brighten up the room a bit. Then I'll walk into the center of the room and dramatically stretch and yawn. Everyone knows what I'm doing, and a few people will join me, over-acting their own tiredness and smiling. I make lots of eye contact with people, smile and nod at them, validating what they're doing, whatever it is, though perhaps concentrating on those who are echoing me. I move around the center of the group, trying to interact just a little bit with everyone. Once I have most of the group at least paying attention, I'll start to snap my fingers rhythmically, maybe trying to echo last night's drumming.

Again, some folks join in – and listen, I think I can hear someone over there starting to hum last night’s chant. Nice! I echo them, as do some others. By now, most people are on their feet with me, humming and singing and snapping, and even the people still seated are mostly smiling and nodding along with us. Lots of eye contact among the group, lots of smiling, lots of milling about with a certain intention. Thanks to the humming and the rhythm, the group has started to breathe almost in rhythm together. We don’t need to build this up to a dramatic place, so maybe it’s time to bring it to a close. I make eye contact with a few people that are watching closely and gesture them to come closer. They do, others follow, and we form a tight-knit core group in the center of the room, our voices hushed, all almost whispering last night’s chant in harmony. Eye contact and nods seem to say ‘yes, I see you,’ and ‘yes, we did this’ and ‘yes, we are here together.’ I stand up, everyone’s eyes upon me, and say, in the silence, “We are gathered.” Some folks will echo me, even in that. Smiles broaden, the moment is broken, and folks return to their seats as the discussion group leader stands to begin the day. Even though some of the group will resume their coffee-drinking, we are gathered, and the energy of the room is changed and focused in some hard-to-define way.

Gathering is probably one of the most common full-group activities at the Grove, occurring before almost every session in the Great Room. While some staff members find it somewhat irritating, it does seem to make a difference in the quality of the session that follows it.

A limited number of staff members lead gatherings, as it is seen as something of a specialty area, though all priestesses are expected to actively support it. It was something that I was specifically asked to work on during my Rites year, as I had been a very active participant in gatherings led by others up until then, and the Rites mentors thought I could develop the necessary skills. What I learned is that it is much harder than it looks. The example above gives some sense of the many factors that might be considered when one is leading a gathering, from body language to environmental factors to the session to come. Every gathering situation will be different, and some groups are significantly more resistant to being gathered than others. Even just noticing where others in the room truly are and what they need in that moment, as opposed to where I am and what I need at any given point, takes skills I did not know I lacked.

While gathering at the Grove often involves drumming and singing, the basic concept of gathering can be found in a number of more mainstream activities. Many school days in the U.S. still begin with the students standing together to recite the pledge of allegiance. Many sporting events begin with a group singing of the national anthem. Even business meetings often have some activity which ritualistically begins every meeting, whether it is an exchange of handshakes or a review of the agenda. When I taught, I would sometimes have all the students take part in a whole-group trivia quiz for the first few minutes of class, just to wake them up and get them participating. All of these activities ask all the participants in them to share in a communal experience, as a way of getting everyone into a similar mental place; many of them are far more directive and uncaring of the participants' existing state than what the Grove does. While the

intent is the same, I would argue that the addition of pacing and leading makes the new state feel far more organic and authentic to many of the participants.

While gathering is seen as a specialty, pacing and leading is expected to be a leadership skill that everyone on staff has at some level. Given the importance of individual experience in this community, when a participant is just not in the right place for what's going on – perhaps weeping over a traumatic email received that morning– staff members are all expected to be able to go interact with that person and pace and lead them back to a place where their experience is not disruptive to the rest of the group. This validates whatever experience they are having, while helping them to move to a more useful state of mind. Some staff members, of course, are better at this than others, but it is seen as one of the core leadership skills that all must work to develop and use when needed; a way of subtly impacting the group to align with ultimate goals while respecting each individual group member's situation and personality.

Summary of Findings

Leadership and priestessing at Diana's Grove is more than just a simple list of techniques to use in order to have more power in the community. Instead, it is an encompassing attitude toward life, one which prioritizes situational awareness and having non-judgmental filters for incoming messages, which sets service as the primary overarching intention in life, and which honors individual experience. By setting the communication issues of awareness, message reception and interpretation, and creation of context as fundamentals, this becomes a communication-centered form of leadership, in which almost all actions are based somehow in the messages they send.

This dissertation set out to record the practice of leadership in one particular alternative community, with the hopes that some of its techniques might be transferrable to other, similar situations. What was actually uncovered was an existing group of priestesses whose reach extends internationally, though often times their work is not recognized as such. While much of the philosophy described herein is not original to the Grove (some of those original sources will be acknowledged in Chapter 5), the combination of them in practice is not something I have found elsewhere. The most visible signs of leadership at the Grove—drumming, singing, speaking charismatically about myth and personal development—are not particularly transferrable to many other cultural contexts; however, the actual cultural norms of leadership, those recognized by those with the community’s leadership training, are far more widely useful. These norms include living by the Cornerstones of Community and demonstrating a dedication to service through a willingness and ability to do whatever needs to be done without seeking transactional rewards for that service. This chapter has been a description of that practice, without much interruption about how it might connect to the theoretical framework or existing literature. Chapter 5 will address those issues.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

What has been described in the previous is a transformational way of approaching the world, redefining both what leadership is and a leader's relationship to the environment. This is leadership as shared service, and service as something other than submission. This is communication-centered leadership, focused on messages, perceptual filters for messages, checks and balances to avoid miscommunication, and deliberate and methodical social construction.

This chapter will begin with a brief restatement of the findings, outlining them and the basic argument for this communication-centered leadership practice. After that, the chapter will go back to the literature, and address the fields—leadership, social construction, and feminism—that feed into this research, taking each of these in turn, and connect the research findings more directly to the existing body of work in each of these areas, clarifying how this research relates to current scholarship. After those areas are covered, I will address possible implications for further research, and then finish with some concluding thoughts.

Leadership

While the philosophy described here is taught by one little-known retreat center in the Ozarks, the potential uses for this approach are wide-ranging. Since it is an approach or attitude toward the world, rather than a specific set of behaviors and techniques, it is highly adaptable to local contexts. Those who have already been trained in its ways describe using it successfully in a number of workplace and personal experiences. It does not require that authority be given or that a position be achieved before it can be implemented. It does not require that anyone agree to be led or know that they are being

priestessed. It simply requires existing in the world and a willingness to take on this responsibility.

Comparisons with more traditional forms of leadership show that it is clearly more transformational than transactional, in that the personal development of those being led is considered of more importance than any particular task at hand. In many ways, this correlates well with Fairclough's (2007) discursive leadership theories, in which leadership is whatever it must be in the context at hand, often consisting of small actions as well as large ones. Likewise, when Pondy said that "leadership is language," an instinctive activity available to every individual, in constant flux, Grove members would widely agree, even if they did not want to enter into a discussion of Wittgenstein's "language games."

To those who would argue that this cannot be leadership, because it lacks the visionary, world-changing role of more traditional command-based leadership, I would point out that the goal here is inherently different, in line with Carse's concept of the infinite game. Carse would see those traditional leaders as playing "finite games," ones with clear rules and boundaries that can eventually be won or lost. Thus, in those games, who wins the war, which company is the market leader, which political party triumphs become relevant metrics. But for infinite players and infinite games (which I argue that this leadership style assumes and produces), the goal is continuing to play, even beyond the individual lifetime of any given player. Winning any particular finite game along the way becomes a trifle in comparison to that infinitely larger goal. Infinite players play with boundaries, not inside them, says Carse; I argue that the Grove's openness to individual experience and reality, to a wide variety of contexts as described in this

dissertation, even the specific awareness of higher/lower self needs aligns with Carse's infinite game, pushing priestesses and infinite players to pay attention to what is really important.

Is this simply servant leadership?

There are a great number of similarities between what priestessing and Robert Greenleaf's servant leadership. Greenleaf's "it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*" (Greenleaf 13) meshes well with the overarching goal of service to the community. Greenleaf's emphasis on listening and understanding (16-17, for example) and awareness and perception (27-29) can be mapped to the importance that the Grove places on awareness, especially when Greenleaf goes on to talk about foresight as "the central ethic of leadership" (24). When Greenleaf says that "the servant-as-leader must constantly ask: How can I use myself to serve best?" (19), it seems a direct correlation to the Cornerstone of Stewardship of Self. The classic stories Greenleaf uses to explain the concept is that of a great monk who acts as a menial servant on an expedition (7) and of the patient in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, both of which resonates with the Grove's habits of leadership from within the community and everyone pitching in on menial tasks. The list of comparisons continues. In fact, I inherited my copy of Greenleaf's *Servant Leadership* from the Grove's library, so they are clearly aware of his work.

Greenleaf himself was, in many ways, synthesizing his concept from a number of other, much older sources. Authors such as John Milton (35) and Herman Hesse (7), theorists such as Paulo Freire (35) and Confucius (43), practitioners such as Machiavelli (24) and John Woolman (29). Greenleaf does not claim to have invented this concept,

but perhaps just to have teased it out from the mass of information and put a name to the concept. So I do not think he would object to use of these concepts and this intention under the name of priestessing, without being frequently cited as a source.

However, there are significant differences between what Greenleaf describes and what this dissertation sets out. The two most evident points of contrast are the attitude toward autocrats and the level of emphasis on individual leaders.

One of Greenleaf's most significant examples of a stellar servant leader is that of Carleton University President Donald Cowling, whom he openly identifies as an autocrat, someone with a strong vision who simply made it happen, often by fiat. Greenleaf believes that Cowling's vision was a service-based one, in that he revitalized Carleton as a service to the university community, and he devotes thirty-six pages of his *Servant Leadership* to a description of Cowling's professional achievements, personal style, and analysis of his leadership. Cowling's style is hard to characterize as priestessing, however; his autocratic style would not mesh well with the ideals of leading to one's own discovery or inclusivity.

While Greenleaf describes servant leadership with two canonical fictional examples which truly have servant leaders disappear into servant roles, his real world examples are of presidents and rabbis, executives and authors, every one of them highly visible, at least among those they serve (if not well known in general). He does not find many real world examples of leadership from within, in the style of Hesse's Leo or Kesey's McMurphy, without position or authority. At the Grove, priestessing is a shared responsibility, a community-wide interest and role, in a way that Greenleaf does not seem to demonstrate. He may anticipate it, as he asks of those being served, "Do they, *while*

being served, become ... more likely themselves to become servants?" (13-14). Perhaps in that way, Diana's Grove is a fuller expression of Greenleaf's servant leadership model than many of the single-leader examples he gives.

It may be that priestessing is best suited for contexts based on teaching and learning, where those are the primary intentions of the community. In that context, experimentation, difference, and mistakes can perhaps more easily be honored and respected, as opposed to environments where there is an expectation that a leader will be decisive and right, rather than inclusive and experimental. I do not want to present these as Boolean either/or contrasts, though; I have heard it said that "good judgment comes from bad experiences," and in that way, all environments have learning built into them, regardless of how much that is acknowledged. These learning opportunities may provide access through which priestessing becomes relevant to many cultural contexts.

Social construction

This is a leadership style that is, at its heart, essentially social constructionist, believing that the world is created through collaborative effort, that communication is the primary social process, that social actions contain their own rationality (no matter how irrational they may seem from outside), and that certainty exists only within specific contexts. While the term "social construction" was never used at the Grove during observation, their practices fulfill all of Cronen's (1995) common strands of social constructionism, taking this ontological position as an unspoken assumption. This leads to a collectivist approach to leadership, assuming that the group as a whole "does leadership," whether or not its members are aware of doing so.

One could also compare this leadership style to the “nurturant parent” model that comes out of George Lakoff’s linguistic work in *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, in that both suggest a model where a role model of some sort provides a safe and nurturing environment for independent exploration and work of those in need of this care. Lakoff claims that the primary metaphor in contemporary American politics is that of the country as a family, and identifies this model as one of two primary models, closely identified with Liberal, progressive stances. Its converse, the “strict father” model, seems to come much closer to more transactional, traditional definitions of leadership; the “strict father” model says that people generally want to behave badly, in not-socially-acceptable ways, and that the role of a leader is to discourage them from doing bad behavior and lead them into good behavior. Lakoff’s model can be essentialized into “facilitation” vs. “command,” or “nurturing” vs. “strict,” though the rhetorical impact of the paradigm is far wider than this implies. If the Grove philosophy is taken as in line with his “nurturant parent” model, then it conceivably could be thought of as potentially useful on a much larger scope than a small retreat center.

Feminist Models of Power

One of the early hypotheses made about what would be found here was that this was a clearly feminist form of leadership, a way of approaching leadership that was in line with feminist ideals and avoided many of the traps that feminist scholars had pointed out in other leadership theories. Surprisingly, there was a reluctance among many of the community members to either self-identify as feminists or to call this a feminist form of leadership; with that in mind, this study has left that label out of the findings. However, I still believe that this leadership philosophy rests firmly on a foundation of feminist

thought and can possibly be of use to feminist scholars and leaders. What follows is speculation and analysis along those lines, rather than an expression of community sentiment.

This way of leadership is, in many ways, a manifestation of Starhawk's concepts of "power-with" and "power-from-within," where the power comes from social capital among equals and demonstrations of personal skill and integrity; with this in mind, it can be considered to at least have an awareness of feminist critiques of power, if not to actually be a feminist form of leadership. While few of those interviewed were interested in calling this feminist leadership or in self-identifying as feminists, its interests in empowering individuals and concentrating on "power-with" and "power-from-within," as well as the invitational rather than commanding nature of things like gathering, all seem to address some of the traditional feminist critiques of leadership.

There is hierarchy, but it is more fluid than is often the norm, and there are multiple hierarchies acknowledged to be in play, rather than one single hierarchy with which one must deal. Power comes from taking on responsibility and being effective; thus, power rests in front-line actors, rather than in a planning team which does not do the work they propose. This all seems in line with feminist critiques of the misuse of power. This is a fairly critical approach to leadership, which builds in ways of speaking to power, checks against the abuse of power, and simply an awareness of the impact that power can have.

The Grove's communication style shares the same intentions as Foss & Griffin's invitational rhetoric, that of respecting each individual's right to choose for themselves whether or not to agree and engage. While invitational rhetoric is not particularly used at

the Grove, direct communication is. Both approaches claim that sharing perspectives is the goal and that this can lead to conflict resolution.

Rosenberg, a psychologist and researcher into conflict resolution, is regarded as providing a central theoretical core for the Grove, particularly in his *Nonviolent Communication* (2003). Rosenberg developed what he calls “nonviolent communication,” a way of speaking and listening that he claims creates a nurturing environment for the natural compassion of the communicators to have an impact on the participants. Rosenberg says that this is a practical technique, in that it leads to the communicators getting what they really want out of the interaction – a “win-win” interaction – rather than any of them being distracted by other issues.

Very simply, nonviolent communication consists of four basic steps: observation of concrete actions that affect us, expression of our feeling around that action, a statement of our needs, and a concrete request that addresses the other steps. Rosenberg gives this very simple example to illustrate the interaction:

For example, a mother might express these three pieces to her teenage son by saying, “Felix, when I see two balls of soiled socks under the coffee table and another three next to the TV, I feel irritated because I am needing more order in the rooms that we share in common. She would immediately follow with the fourth component – a very specific request: “Would you be willing to put your socks in your room or in the washing machine?” This fourth component addresses what we are wanting from the other person that would enrich our lives or make life more wonderful for us. (Rosenberg, 2003, 6).

While this example is very simple and fairly mechanical in its progression between the steps, it demonstrates Rosenberg’s basic theory fairly well; at its heart, it addresses

participants' emotional reactions in a fairly non-charged context, directly addressing root needs that underlie the immediate situation. It is this attentive, vulnerable, independent attitude that is key to Rosenberg's approach, even more than the strict following of four steps in every interaction.

Rosenberg's charge for the listener is to pay attention to and acknowledge these steps in the speaker, so that the speaker feels that their feelings have been recognized. Responses often concentrate on recognizing feeling and needs, rather than just responding to the request, with the assumption that meeting the underlying need is generally more important than simply responding to the request.

In one additional note, Hill's earlier work at Diana's Grove posited that this community represented a movement toward a world view that recognizes and values the connections between the traditionally distinct realms of mind and body, reason and emotion, and nature and humanity, valuing the magical and mysterious as a part of the world, rather than something simply to be understood through a rational lens (Hill et al, 2010). It is difficult to point to specific parts of the leadership paradigm that specifically address that contention, and yet the honoring of individual strengths and the individual experience seems to align with it, in that many of those individual experiences or strengths may be hard to quantify or test for, and many of the ways in which a leader can impact the world are difficult to put into words. Gathering, for example, is an art rather than a science, one that must be improvised every time to suit differing conditions; even with skilled practitioners, sometimes it works and sometimes it does not. It seeks to change something that is also hard to measure specifically—the energy in the room—and treats that energy as an absolutely real thing, rather than simply as a metaphorical

construct. Some practitioners say they can sense it or even see it; others cannot. Hill's contention, that Diana's Grove breaks down traditional boundaries between rationality and mystery, seems to be supported in the leadership work presented here.

There is perhaps another dissertation available in pursuing the question of why a community so clearly feminist from academic points of view is so reluctant to self-identify in those terms; that project is outside the scope of this research, and so will have to be left for another day. I could speculate that it may arise from a cultural wish to be inclusive and so to shy away from potentially-controversial labels that might be off-putting to some of the audience. Or I could speculate that it might be related to larger trends among younger women to not self-identify as feminist, though the interview subjects here were older than that Generation Y group. At this point, these are merely hypotheses available for future study, rather than answers.

Research Questions

With all of this in mind, let me briefly summarize the response to the research questions, based on the background information and the findings.

How is leadership socially constructed here?

Leadership at Diana's Grove is built around the idea of being a priestess, an officiant at the sacred rites of living. This puts service to community and to life at the very heart of why one should want to be a leader, what motivates leaders to do what they do. Community here is not specifically the Diana's Grove community, but is understood to be any community which the leader chooses to join. The code of the Cornerstones of Community also give primacy to the individual experience, requiring the leader to honor

the diversity of experience and understanding present in the group, including their own experience and understanding.

The actions of a leader are incredibly diverse, entirely dependent on the situation. They can range from giving a speech to picking up dog poop, as right action is simply whatever is needed to support the community intention in that moment. The right actions of a leader can even include leaving the community, when staying would ask that leader to either compromise their own judgment or the community's stability.

The norms here are primarily of situational awareness, direct communication, and adaptability. Leaders must be able to read a situation in order to know what is needed and how they can impact the situation at hand. They must be able to communicate directly and in line with the Cornerstones, having hard communications as needed to support higher intentions. They must be able to adapt to changing and unexpected situations, doing all of these things gracefully, with little preparation or advance warning.

The primary ritual actions of this leadership are those of gathering and gracing; in other words, bringing people together and helping them to feel welcomed and empowered. While many other ritual actions take place, many of those are far more context specific. Gathering and gracing happen regularly, inevitably, in a number of different settings and contexts, in a number of different of manifestations, but always toward those same intentions—community unity and individual empowerment.

Is this construction of leadership culturally limited?

This construction of leadership is not culturally limited, in that many examples were given of how it is already being used in a wide variety of cultural circumstances. Those who have graduated from the leadership training program in the past describe

using their training in workplaces, in social events, as teachers and as engineers, to defuse physical confrontations, to defuse emotional breakdowns, and so on.

That said, there are parts of this leadership construction that do not travel well into other cultural settings. Diana's Grove is a very unusual setting, given its mind-body connection and comfort with the non-rational. Most obviously, the term "priestess" rarely gets used when talking in these other settings. While a number of people have put this leadership training on their resume, they have all developed other ways of describing it, rather than saying "priestess training." The common leadership skills at the Grove include drumming, leading chants, and presenting Ericsonian trances, which are not common leadership skills in other settings, as well as more standard elements of presenting information in front of the group and organizing a meeting. Many of these "shiny" skills often seem to be culturally limited, while the "stealthy" skills of community-building and support generally are not.

While gracing and gathering may manifest themselves differently in different cultural settings, they are still widely applicable. Other skills seems directly applicable, with no real need to manifest them differently; direct communication is applicable as is, and the Cornerstones of Community work well regardless of setting (though the concept of the "sacred wound" may have to be reframed in many places). And situational awareness plus the ability to do what needs to be done is a talent regardless of context. None of these is apt to gather great worldly power to the leader acting by their precepts, but they are the actions of a leader nonetheless. They do not require great worldly power or position in order to work as intended.

Implications for Future Research

While this dissertation identifies this particular paradigm as communication-centered, it does not mean to imply that other leadership techniques are not equally communication-centered. Many standard tools used by leaders are core communication concepts: information seeking, perceptual filters, persuasion, networking, and so on. One of the great surprises of this research was simply realizing how little information there is about leadership in communication-specific journals. The background research used herein was primarily from business research, which provides an uneasy fit for non-workplace examples of leadership.

The oratory of leaders has long been a cornerstone of rhetorical studies and public speaking, one of the historical roots of communication departments. However, few leaders use oratory these days as a major communicative mode. This research points to many far smaller, more regular communicative interactions which shed light on what a leader does and the complex relationship between leaders and their communities. Communication is an interdisciplinary field and pulling research from other areas is not unusual, but a disciplined communication focus might provide insight that journals in business, psychology, or sociology could not individually provide.

My hope is that this research may demonstrate an unfilled niche in the communication literature, one that concentrates on the fundamental leadership issues of message creation, message interpretation, and cultural impact. For instance, in my research, this community's widespread cultural attention to perceptual filters (in the Cornerstones and the four levels of reality) allows them to address those filters directly, in a way that scholars have rarely had the opportunity to study. In a mainstream cultural

arena where media framing is a major topic, the way that these leaders are directly addressing each other's perceptual filters and how they are turning into verbalized frames is startling. Likewise, this leadership style's assumption that everyone has impact and thus is a community leader could potentially provide an interesting frame for looking into other situations, where participants are not aware of their own leadership role or impact on the situation. The absence of communication scholars in this work seems to indicate a blind spot which might provide fruitful and enlightening research opportunities, and I hope that this dissertation will potentially open up fruitful avenues of research for other scholars.

This research takes a broad approach to a particular leadership paradigm, introducing it into the academic literature. A much closer reading of leadership cultures might provide intriguing information, such as whether the linguistic tropes of Lakoff's "nurturant parent" model are generally present in transformational, flat leadership cultures, while the linguistic motifs of the "strict father" model are generally present in transactional, hierarchical leadership cultures. Lakoff's strong case for associating these models with political stances could have significant implications for the type of leadership that might be provided or be aligned with various political stances. If transactional leadership is non-consonant with progressive politics, and if many Americans have been trained to associate transactional leadership as the sign of a "real" leader, then progressive politicians have a significant barrier to being taken seriously as showing leadership potential without introducing cognitive dissonance issues.

Can a political leader be invitational and empowering and still receive widespread support? That struggle is possibly what was at the heart of Barack Obama's successful

“Yes we can” 2008 campaign. Obama’s presidency has been charged with not accomplishing enough, at least partially because he has tried to find ways of working with his political opponents; was this essentially an attempt on Obama’s part to “pace and lead,” to meet Republicans where they were and then convince them to move in his desired direction? Communication analyses of contemporary politics tend to focus on messages, because they are captured and studyable; my research points out that an ability to study message reception and interpretation by the leader may be far more difficult but far more rewarding, to understand why the situation developed as it did. This research insists that the leader’s ability to take in and interpret messages from context is far more important than the rhetorical specifics of the message that is given out in response; little work has been done on this, at least partially because it is so much more difficult to do.

If communication scholars would adopt this concept of leadership into their understanding of how the world sometimes works, then it can be usefully applied to a host of other situations. Scholarship is not without a hegemonic force; those with power cite the research to justify that “this is how the world works; it is what all the research says.” Providing counter examples in the literature will not force the powerful to acknowledge them, but it may provide material for those who want to change the world to use. This brings us back to Pearce, who wrote that “From now on, any research that does not link the four “goods”—good theory, good research, good practice, and good in the world—should face strong questions from editors and reviewers about why it does not, and why, not doing so, it should be published” (1998, 273). If good leadership might do good things in the world, then let us study it, let us understand it, and let us bring it to the attention of others.

Concluding Thoughts

Being on staff at the Grove is not a paid position. Staff members pay their travel costs from Chicago or San Antonio or St. Louis, usually pay to attend the events, and frequently have to take time off of work (either using vacation days or going without pay) in order to attend. There is the expectation that staff members will attend as many of the monthly events that they can, and so they travel ten to twelve times a year. While Cynthea and Patricia have the income from events, the cost of putting on the events eats most of that up instantaneously. This is not a lucrative thing to do.

It is not particularly easy, either. Staff members are expected to be “on duty” constantly while at the Grove, and often times off-site when communicating with community members via email or phone. They are to be constantly aware of things that need doing, or people that need tending, to never walk away from a task undone. The additional work of the dog rescue, which many community members help with, is never-ending, physically demanding, and frequently messy.

It does not come with much praise and affirmation. Expectations are extremely high for those on staff, and feedback is more often a “you could have done that better” critique rather than praise and approval. While those still in training will get positive feedback, staff very rarely will. There is simply an expectation that one will know that their work is noticed, respected, and admired, an expectation that is frequently not actually true.

Yet Cynthea and Patricia continued to do it for at least fifteen years, and many staff members have made the monthly trek to the Grove for a decade or more. The level of dedication to the work is ongoing and immense. All of the staff members interviewed

stressed this point, that there was something in this form of leadership and the work that it enabled that feeds them despite the myriad costs. River explained her own decade of active participation, saying, “There has never been a place, a community, a philosophy, a group of people, a way of being, that has changed my life so utterly than the Grove. It sounds so cliché, but I am who I am because of it” (RR, personal communication, August 23, 2010). Elizabeth said, “There’s nowhere else that I’ve experienced in my life where I am so clearly a part of something so much bigger than me” (EW, personal communication, August 22, 2010). For so many of the community members, the chance to be a priestess in this way has made the work worthwhile. I hear echoes here of Khalil Gibran’s “Work is love made visible,” where the work and the responsibility of priestessing becomes an expression of these individuals’ love for something higher than themselves.

In May 2011, Diana’s Grove sold their land and the retreat center on it. Cynthea and Patricia have moved to a small house in a slightly different part of rural southeastern Missouri. They continue to run or sponsor monthly events under the “Diana’s Grove” name in St. Louis, but the new pattern is still unstable and unclear at this point. A variety of plans for continuing the work and community have been put forth in the year surrounding the sale, but many of them have not come to pass. Only time will tell how precisely Grove events will evolve in the future.

One thing that is certain is that whatever officially happens to Diana’s Grove, its legacy will continue through the lives of those who have spent so much time there. Some may explicitly teach Grove philosophy, some may explicitly use Grove techniques, but many others will simply, quietly live the Grove way of leadership, of priestessing, in their

daily lives. This philosophy may evolve in individuals over time, especially those who are remote from contact with other community members. Understandings may diverge and even come into conflict; that is simply to be expected after a diaspora, and perhaps even these disagreements fit into the Grove paradigm.

There is something about this way of approaching the world—as a leader, a priestess, dedicated to service and to the very concept of a community—that seems to provide a lifetime avocation for some. This quiet, persistent philosophy of being aware of one’s own impact, of building the psychological infrastructure and creating a container for the work you want to see happen, and of living by the Cornerstones has had an impact felt far beyond the geographic borders that once were Diana’s Grove. Those who have been through the Grove’s training have become teachers themselves in a variety of different settings, several of them directly teaching leadership. If impact is power, as this dissertation contends, then this is a powerful philosophy.

There is a Rumi quote that has been transformed into a sung chant, one often used during Grove rituals. “Let the beauty we love be what we do,” it says, “There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.” This scrap of ancient Persian poetry may capture the heart of this way of being in the world, as priestesses live out their values and philosophy relentlessly and impeccably, honoring the different choices of those around them and the hundreds of different ways to live this ideal.

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Appendix 1

Interview Protocol

Roughly six interviewees will be approached for in-depth open-ended interviews, expected to last approximately 90 minutes each. Interviews are planned to be uninterrupted face-to-face interactions, solely between the researcher and the interview subject. Unexpected logistical difficulties may make this optimal interaction difficult; if this happens, then phone interviews or email exchanges may be used to thoroughly complete the research protocol. Interviews will be recorded with the permission of the interview subject.

The questions here are designed to be conversation starters, to ensure that the research questions are all addressed. Based on answers given by individual interviewees and each person's particular place in the Grove community, follow up questions will be asked to further pursue research goals.

RQ1: How is leadership socially constructed at Diana's Grove?

RQ1a: How is leadership defined and talked about at Diana's Grove?

Topics expected to be covered for this question include the leadership path, personal and community understandings of leadership, people who want to be leaders but aren't suited for it (why not?), choosing who enters the leadership training path, expectations the community has for leaders, acceptable/unacceptable differences among leaders, etc.

- Tell me a little about what "leadership" means to you.
- Tell me about your own leadership experience here at Diana's Grove.

- What do you find useful about the Grove's way of doing leadership?
- Is this way of leadership different from other forms of leadership you've experienced? If so, how?

RQ1b: How is leadership enacted through norms, codes and rituals at Diana's Grove?

Topics expected to be covered for this question include IPP, Rites, the Rites of Passage “graduation” ritual, the inclusion of rituals at the Grove, choosing who takes visible roles, what happens when norms are violated, people who want to be leaders but aren't suited for it (what happens?), defining misbehavior, what happens when people misbehave, specific community tools, etc.

- Tell me a story about leadership at Diana's Grove, an example of the “Grove way” of leadership.
- Tell me what Rites years mean to you. What do you think the Rites Year program is about, what it does?
- Have there been cases of people that wanted to be in leadership roles here and somehow weren't suited for it?
- Pretend I'm new here. What do you think I'd see or hear or experience that would help me to identify community leaders?

RQ2: In what ways are manifestations of this construction of leadership unique to this intentional community context?

Topics expected to be covered for this question include reasons for going through IPP/Rites, success/failure in using Grove leadership tools outside the Grove context, other leadership experiences and training, etc.

- Have you found yourself using leadership principles or tools from the Grove outside the community, for example in your workplace or family? If so, please tell me about one of those times.
- Do you find that it's either harder or easier to use Grove-style leadership outside of the Grove, with people that don't recognize or aren't used to what you're doing?
- What leadership experiences or training have you had outside of the Grove context?
- Do you think your "outside" leadership experience has had an impact on the way you do leadership at the Grove?

Interview Subjects

Interview subjects were selected as well-aculturated in Grove leadership and cultures, currently active in Grove life, articulate and observant. This interview protocol and plan uses the first names and initials of interviewees as identifiers; interview subjects were asked about their preferences and indicated that they were comfortable with this level of anonymity.

- **CJ:** Female, mid-60s. One of the founders of Diana's Grove, still central to the site's operations and philosophy. Mentor to the Rites leadership program. Full-time resident on-site, spends the majority of her time running the dog rescue and managing the facility. Partnered with Patricia.
- **PS:** Female, mid-60s. One of the founders of Diana's Grove, still central to the site's operations and philosophy. Last year's mentor to the IPP leadership program. Full-time resident on-site, spends the majority of her time managing the facility. Partnered with Cynthea.
- **RR.:** Female, mid-30s. Longtime community participant and staff member, mentor to the IPP leadership program. Completed Rites in 2002. Works in publishing, and teaches Grove and Reclaiming materials around the world as a freelancer. Lives in Chicago.
- **EW:** Female, mid-50s. Longtime community participant and staff member, mentor to the Rites leadership program. Went through Rites in 2003. Works in hospice counseling. Lives in Iowa.
- **SS:** Male, mid-30s. Has been a member of the community for about 5 years, went through Rites in 2008. Works in software development. Partnered with another Rites graduate. Lives in Kansas.

- **JF:** Male, mid-30s. Has been a member of the community for about 4 years, went through Rites in 2009, mentor to the IPP leadership program. Works in corporate training, partnered with another Rites graduate. Lives in Chicago.
- **LD:** Female, mid-40s. Has been a member of the community for about 7 years, is currently very active as a ritual artist at the Grove. Completed Rites in 2007. Works in chaplaincy and theater. Lives in Texas.
- **MSW:** Female, early 60s. Longtime community participant, is currently in her second Rites year. Worked as a nurse, though is now retired. Lives in Missouri.