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PROSOCIAL LEADERSHIP: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF OTHERS DIRECTED LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

This paper seeks to provide an understanding of the prosocial leadership development process as defined by Ewest (2018), and how it facilitates personal flourishing. To this end, this paper will provide an understanding of personal flourishing as discussed by Rogers (1959), positive psychology framed by Mackie, (2017) and then consider the emerging positive theories of leadership as discussed by Ewest (2018b). Finally, the paper will resolve by considering prosocial values, and specifically the prosocial leadership development process as posited by Ewest (2018), including the four steps in the process and possible benefits from becoming a prosocial leader.

Introduction

The Enlightenment provided a new framework for sense-making which had previously been unavailable – the ability to disenchant the world of myth using reason. This era was generally regarded as a time when the preeminence of reason emboldened humanity to make great discoveries, suppressing the subjective mystical world of the ancients and in turn elevating the empirical, which could be known. The prominence in human reason provided the insight and certainty of creating a new, better and enlightened world, but also fostered a Newtonian certainty, a reductionism reducing the world to what is rational. Conversely, Sigmund Freud suggested that for humans, that reason may not be preeminent, or incipient, but rather the ego was subjective, and the ego could be driven by the irrationality of fear or self-preservation (Freud & Freud, 1992). So, while much of the world could be explained with reason, the inner machinations of the human were, and are to be regarded to this day, as an enigma, if not full of psychological discord (Tarnas, 1991). Freud's demotion of reason, championed by the enlightenment, and placement of the human ego as inceptive and a subjective motivational force behind human reasoning and correspondingly action, was broadened and expanded by psychologists in the following era.

The levels of uncertainty regarding the endemic nature of human beings are not lost on leadership theorists, who have provided antidotal evidence with over 50 operationalized definitions of *leadership* (Fleishman, et al.; 1992; Northouse, 2015). And, while leadership theories may be only surveying a broad landscape, they do seek some common ground, that being the betterment or flourishing of individuals, organizations or societies through specific leadership behaviors, traits, and skills (Ciulla, 1995). Ironically, even with a general agreement on the importance of human betterment and flourishing, only a few leadership theories provide a

clear developmental process on how an individual is to transform into the desired leader (Quinn and Velsor, 2010).

Personal Flourishing and Others

Rogers (1959) was one of the first to join Abraham Maslow (1957) in refocusing psychology's incipient portrayal of humans as being driven by psychological discord, an orientation which originated with (Freud, 1992), towards a consideration of the positive capabilities and dimensions of humans, considering what it means for humans to flourish. Thus, Rogers and Maslow shifted considerations away from the Freudian assumption that humans were driven by erratic psyches and ensuing irrational actions, to one where humans were driven by reason and a desire to actualize themselves (Dryden & Mytton, 2005; Nye, 2000).

All humans, according to Rogers (1959), seek self-actualization to preserve and enhance their well-being. Human beings' self-actualizing tendency is not to be understood necessarily as self-centered narcissism. Rodgers describes humans' self-actualizing tendency, both generally and specifically, as the "inherent tendency of all organisms to develop their capacities in ways which serve to maintain or enhance themselves as an organism. Humans seek to behave in those ways which maintain and enhance themselves" (1959, p. 196). Yet, Rogers determined that no one can develop their personal identity in isolation from others, instead, self-actualization is grounded within interactions and reflective responses with other humans. Therefore, humans to fulfill their self-actualizing tendency is dependent on relationships with others (Greene, 2017). Although, by simply including others does not necessitate that an individual seeking self-actualization is acting altruistically, or selflessly in their connection to and dependence on others. In fact, they may be using others simply to actualize themselves.

The reality of this recognized in the field of leadership studies by the delineation of pseudo-transformation leadership (Burns, 2003) who use others to their own ends. Or another example is utility leadership (Ewest, 2018). Utility leadership is defined by (Ewest, 2018) as,

> "Utility leadership occurs when leaders do the right ethical behavior, that is, they follow the right rules to get results or benefits that are considered effective, but doing the right thing is external to the leader, and the ultimate benefit of others is not an internal motivating force that drives them. Instead, they are motivated to do the right thing for the reward of being a good person, and like pseudo-transformational leaders are divorced from personal concern for others, largely vacant of empathy or compassion" (p.13).

The propensity of humans to use others for personal gain and achieving their own goals is observed by countless other scholars (e.g. Martin Buber), and the embracing of selfless, genuinely others directed has become increasingly important in leadership studies (Mackie, 2017).

Emerging Leadership Theories Point to Prosocial Values

Numerous leadership theories have been identified by Ewest (2018) which align with both the new emphasis outlined by Rogers (1959) on positive capabilities of humans which lead to flourishing, and correspondingly genuinely others directed actions. Mackie (2017) draws from the current research on positive psychology, which is sequent of Maslow (1957) and Roger's

theoretical emphasis on human flourishing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Mackie finds three elements important to positive psychology, and these elements act as a rubric for identifying positive leadership theories. The three elements include: 1) A focus on when a leader is at their best, 2) a leader's positive impact on followers demonstrated in value of relationships and 3) goals which are self-transcendent and not in pursuit of personal benefits. See table 1.0

Table 1.0

MacKie's (2017) Positive Leadership Distinctions	
Distinctions	Descriptions
One	Focus on a leader's strengths or when they are their best in both situational and dispositional (Linley, et al, 2010).
Two	Positive leadership must have a positive impact on followers, with those in proximity increased confidence and for those in the leader's realm of influence, three is greater individual and organizational performance.
Three	Positive leadership enables the purpose of self-transcendent goals, beyond the leader's personal interest and thus the pursuit of goals is not reflective of the manipulation of others for one's benefit, as is the case in pseudotransformational leaders.

Table 2.0

Emerging Positive Leadership Theories Connection to Prosocial Behavior	
Leadership Theory	Evidence of others-directed or prosocial behavior
Authentic Leadership	"Service before self; mission and the organization supersede self-interest" (George & Sims, 2003, p.12).
Ethical Leadership	"Treating others fairly, honestly and considerately so followers want to emulate others" (Brown, et al, 2005, p.119).
Social Change Model	"Understanding perspectives other than your own are crucial components to participating in community" (Komives, & Wagner, 2012, p. 165).
Servant Leadership	"Servant leadership emphasizes listening, empathy, stewardship, and awareness to develop followers holistically as an end in itself " (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010).
Spiritual Leadership	"Altruistic love is a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others" (Fry, 2003, p.117).

Prosocial Leadership	"Prosocial Leaders are motivated by and respond to empathy, and without regard to punishment, or reward, act to bring about the welfare of followers and those they are committed to serve" (Ewest, 2018, p. 13).
Positive Global Leadership	"GLS was developed as a vehicle that will help leaders "to turn their limited interactions with their followers into invigorating and elevating experiences" as well as "teachable moments and international, planned trigger events for development, growth and trust-building and intimacy" (Youssef & Luthans, p,543).

Ewest (2018b) used Mackie's (2017) rubric to identify leadership theories that were positive in nature. Positive leadership theories include Authentic leadership (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999), ethical leadership (Brown, et al, 2005), the social change model (Komives & Wagner, 2012), servant leadership (Walumbwa, Hartnell & Oke, 2010), spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003), prosocial leadership (Ewest, 2018) and global positive leadership (Youssef & Luthans, 2012). See Table 2.0. These leadership theories aid in identifying how leaders can flourish, in that, they allow for the personal use of the individual's strengths, but also require leaders as individuals to be others directed – recognizing the interconnection between the individual and others. However, even if positive leadership theories do present the best means to determine the conditions for human flourishing, how one moves from nascent to a mature and others directed leader is still in question (Quinn and Velsor, 2010).

Few Theories have Leadership Developmental Processes

Organizations in America commit more the 14 billion dollars annually on leadership and leadership development training (O'Leonard & Loew, 2012). The investment of leadership development is ironic when one considers Avolio's (2007) belief that leadership development is the least examined of all the leadership research. Moreover, most leadership development within organizations is concerned with trying to enhance leadership effectiveness that pertains to the organizational strategy, which may or may not involve prosocial or others directed actions (McMauley, Kanaga & Lafferty, 2010).

Ewest (2018) divided leadership development into two categories, leadership development methods (e.g. coaching, self-development, 360-feedback, etc.) and leadership development processes. These methods are helpful, but alone do not provide a guide on how a leader is to develop from nascent to mature. Alternatively, leadership development processes, move beyond theories and provide a specific path of development for individuals who want to move from nascent to mature, or highly developed leaders. Ewest' s research found only eight academically oriented, not popular, leadership theories that have a developmental process, and only two are directly connected to positive leadership theories, Spiritual Leadership, and prosocial leadership. And, only one leadership theory, prosocial leadership is theoretically anchored to prosocial theory and research.

Prosocial Values and Prosocial Leadership

Rokeach was one of the first scholars to consider the role of intrapersonal values in human behavior. He posited that human values act as motivators, and these values are expressed in behaviors and attitudes (Rokeach, 1973). Values are "desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance that serves as guiding principles in people's lives" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 21). Human values develop over a person's life through their life experiences. From values theory, other psychologists further isolated specific human values which act as motivators for prosocial behavior (Batson, 2014; Schwartz (1994).

Specifically, Batson (2014) recognized two values that motivated humans to genuine prosocial behavior – empathy and altruism. Batson's theory suggests that empathy plays an instrumental role, in that, empathy is awakened when the individual has empathy aroused when they are confronted by someone in need, and they must choose to respond or ignore their empathetic feelings. If a person chooses to respond to their empathy when aroused, two additional ensuing choices must be made if the act is to truly be altruistic. The first choice the individual must face when empathy is aroused, is to act with the intent to avoid punishment. But in doing so, the person is not acting altruistically, since their actions are no longer motivated by empathic concern, instead, they are now motivated by avoiding punishment. A final decision for the individual when empathy is aroused is the consideration of is any reward that would come from helping the individual. Again, if the person who has empathetic concern aroused and responses to their concern, but does so to gain a reward, their empathetic concern is no longer a motivator for true prosocial behavior, instead, the reward is a motivator.

However, a person who chooses to respond to their empathetic concern and does so without regard to punishment or reward, and aids the other person based solely on their empathetic concern for the other, is acting altruistically. Alternatively, when someone acts, or avoids responding to empathy, or does so out of consideration of reward or to avoid punishment, they are motivated by egotistical concern (Batson, 2014). Altruistic action is essential for human flourishing since the individual's personal development is conditioned on their "developing and maintaining harmonious relationships" (Padilla-Walker & Carlo, 2015, p.4).
 Ewest (2018) using Batson's (2014) criteria for prosocial behavior, broadened the ethical leadership framework, which typically considered only the normative ethical categories which focus on deontological action-oriented ethics, by inculcating normative value ethics, which focus on utilitarian, good outcomes, by defining prosocial leadership in the following:

> *A prosocial leader is someone who leads, lives and acts for the*
> *welfare of others and the world. (Ewest, 2018).*

Numerous of the leadership theories align within this definition of prosocial leadership, but few have a leadership development process.

The Prosocial Leadership Development Process

The initial research conducted by Ewest (2018) was guided by the question,
> "*What are the characteristics and developmental processes*
> *associated with individuals whose leadership behaviors are*

prosocial, being motivated by empathy, resulting in altruistic action?"

The research considered students in a two-year undergraduate leadership development program, who were required to complete a reflective essay on their development as leaders. The reflections contained a special component on their required community service, previous life experiences and personal motivational values. The reflective documents were loaded into AtlasTi, qualitative assessment tools, and grounded theory methodology was used in the analysis. Initial coding was performed on the documents until theoretical saturation was achieved, and then based upon analytic direction, focused coding was performed. Finally, axial coding was performed to determine relationships between code groups (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The research resulted in the emergence of four stages, with two foundational elements appearing in each stage.

Two elements were present through the development process of prosocial leaders. The first was "The Projected Representative" which acted as the individual's goal, or their idealized future self or desired personal identity. The projected representative goes through various iterations, being formed over the various four prosocial leadership development stages, and thus morphs many times. The concept of the formation of personal identity is replete within scholarship. The formation of personal identity is used in personal meaning making (Emmons, 2003), instrumental in goal formation (Weaver & Agle, 2002) and central to the formation of the moral self (Colb & Damon, 1992; Lapsley and Narvaez, 2004; Walker, 2004).

The second foundational theme was "Integration", which was a dialectal thought process wherein the person compares present personal goals that were formed as means to respond to empathy, to their ultimate goals of the projected representative, or the ultimate moral identity or future self the person desires to become. Nucci (2004) traces this effect in his research by observing the existence of the interplay between moral judgment in the individual and the construction of their personal identity. The same sentiment is supported by other scholars to varying degrees, but generally with the same phenomena being noted (Becker, 2013; Hardy & Carlo, 2005; Komives & Wagner, 2009; Munusamy, Ruderman & Eckert, 2010). The prosocial leadership development process depicts the phenomena of personal identity formation, labeled as the "Projected Representative" and the reasoning of the individual who endeavors to seek alignment of present goals with the future self (Projected Representative), labeled here "Integration", but also observed the phenomena within the four distinct stages of the prosocial leadership development process.

Stage One: Awareness and Empathetic Concern

Observed in stage one, was the emerging leader who reflected honestly on their past, including both the positive and negative experiences. From the various experiences, they were able to determine the values which motivated the behaviors of others they admired or deemed as important. The emerging leader then began to form and internalize their future identity, which was derived from reflecting on their past experiences. And, from endeavoring to integrate their forming personal goals and their future ideal self they modified or solidified their f a personal goal. Here the leaders' goal was intrapersonal and may not directly be able to meet people's

direct need(s) (Ewest, 2018). For example, someone cared for them in their past (responding to empathy), and this person represented the leader they wish to become.

Stage Two: "Community and Group Commitment"

In stage two the emerging leader recognized that the person they wish to become (projected representative) and then recognized that their corresponding goals from stage one may be challenged when engaging with a group or a person they are wishing to serve. That is, the group they wish to serve may not honor them as the project representative or future ideal self, that is the person the leader desires to become, may not be what is needed by the group. Thus, when the leader understood that any altruistic action must involve a person or group which is not under their control or may not support their intrapersonal goals, they realized that their intrapersonal goal(s) may need to be modified by the groups' real needs. Because of this, the leader experienced a personal loss or even suffering, since their intrapersonal goals appeared to have been lost. But, the emerging leader, motivated by concern (empathy) then became aware that their intrapersonal goals, maybe sabotaged by the other person or group's needs, are forced to consider their genuine concern for the other person, that is, they are confronted with true altruistic action (Ewest, 2017).
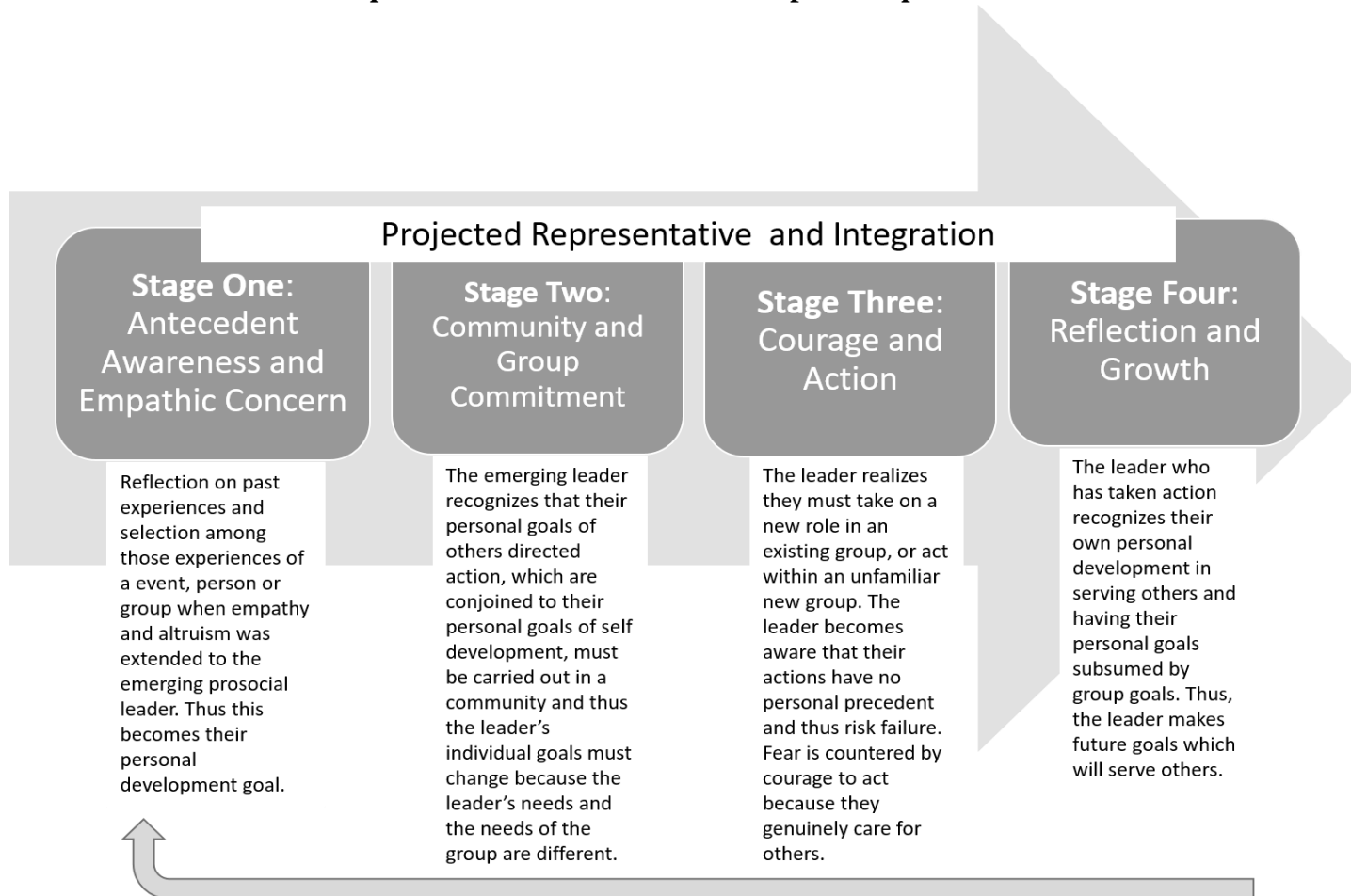
Stage Three: "Courage and Action"

In this stage, the leader recognized that their commitment to care for others may involve taking a new role in order to serve a group or an individual they know, or alternatively an individual or group where they are an outsider - leaving them feeling vulnerable. Thus, the emerging leader question their response to empathetic concern and had to confront their fear generated by their empathetic concern. Their action to help the other person, despite the personal loss of intrapersonal goals, with no guarantee of reward, and experiencing suffering from fear-based vulnerability, actualized their empathic concern and this resulted in acting to help the other displaying courage (Ewest, 2017).

Stage Four: "Reflection and Growth"

Finally, after the emerging prosocial leader has acted, they reflected upon their action and recognized they personally developed and became like the "projected representative" they endeavored to become. The result is the individual set similar goals for service and, recognized that their selfless service of others resulted in their personal flourishing (Ewest, 2017). See Image 1.0

Image 1.0

Description of The Prosocial Leadership Development Process

Projected Representative and Integration

Stage One: Antecedent Awareness and Empathic Concern

Stage Two: Community and Group Commitment

Stage Three: Courage and Action

Stage Four: Reflection and Growth

Reflection on past experiences and selection among those experiences of a event, person or group when empathy and altruism was extended to the emerging prosocial leader. Thus this becomes their personal development goal.

The emerging leader recognizes that their personal goals of others directed action, which are conjoined to their personal goals of self development, must be carried out in a community and thus the leader's individual goals must change because the leader's needs and the needs of the group are different.

The leader realizes they must take on a new role in an existing group, or act within an unfamiliar new group. The leader becomes aware that their actions have no personal precedent and thus risk failure. Fear is countered by courage to act because they genuinely care for others.

The leader who has taken action recognizes their own personal development in serving others and having their personal goals subsumed by group goals. Thus, the leader makes future goals which will serve others.

Adapted from Ewest, 2018

Conclusion, Benefits of Prosocial Leadership

This paper endeavored to provide an understanding of the prosocial leadership development process (Ewest, 2018) to personal flourishing. To this end, this paper provided an understanding of personal flourishing as discussed by Rogers (1959), positive psychology framed by Mackie, (2017) and then considered the emerging positive theories of leadership as discussed by Ewest (2018b). Finally, the paper resolved by considering prosocial values, and specifically the prosocial leadership development process as posited by Ewest (2018), including the four steps in the process.

If Rogers (1959) is correct, "that humans seek to maintain or enhance themselves" (1959, p. 196), and that accomplish these individuals must develop and maintain harmonious relationships (Padilla-Walker & Carlo, 2015), it becomes imperative to provide a process as a guide to personal enhancement. Moreover, if personal values do motivate people to arrive at desired end states, and these ends states are the ideal personal identity people seek, leadership research which commits itself to these discoveries may prove invaluable in not only understanding human behavior but more importantly creating effective theoretical models which are synchronous with how human behavior works.

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