CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Figure 2.1. Selena Alverio, Carlos Mendez in *Eye Music*; the cast of IRT's *Twelfth Night* in NYC; and Carolyn Yu in *Lute Song.* These were Del-Sign theatrical productions that celebrate Deaf community.

Purpose and Focus of the Review of Deaf Leadership

The literature of leadership studies was born in the field of organizational development (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). The notable management theologians who first tried to determine if the phenomenon of leadership could be defined placed their questions on a landscape defined by the shape of their own cultural backgrounds. Every culture evidences leaders who reflect the values and embody the styles that best suit their community. However, since the Deaf community is a minority, it was unsurprising that when I searched the leadership literature to find evidence of leadership in my community, I came up empty-handed. Moreover, when I analyzed the traits and styles of hearing presidents and company owners, I found their approach to the task of being a leader was unlike the approach of leaders I had witnessed in my experiences living and working in the Deaf community (Northouse, 2001).

This lack of recognition of successful Deaf leaders in the leadership literature is not really a surprise because, more often than not, deafness is portrayed in education,

rehabilitation, and society in general as a deficiency, a dysfunction, and a deviance. Historically, the focus of observations about the deaf always began with the question: how can we help them become like us? Consequently, there has been a paucity of research in the leadership literature on successful individuals who are deaf. We had yet to ask: how can the difference of a deaf perspective inform the rest of us? The purpose of this literature review, then, was to try to uncover the reasons for this oversight. I began by examining anecdotal evidence of deaf leadership in historical texts. I then discussed the research that has investigated Deaf leaders in comparison to the standard texts of leadership studies. I also compared research on other minority cultures whose relational leadership styles and use of storytelling appear to be similar to the Deaf cultural leadership style in order to offer suggestions for how to further research devoted to Deaf leaders in the future.

<div align="center">Stories of Deaf Leadership</div>

Historical Perspective from the Mainstream

For the past 4,000 years, deafness has manifested itself in every society with written records. However, it has only been within the last 200 years that the evidence of and concern with deafness has become even slightly more than anecdotal. Most of what we know about leadership in the deaf community comes from historical texts that occasionally mention pivotal moments, which were triggered by deaf influence. One of the first references to deafness in relation to leadership in recorded history was by Herodotus (Scouten, 1984), who portrays this emergence of a deaf leader as a miracle. In the midst of a pivotal battle between Greece and Persia, Croesus' deaf-mute son screams

over the sounds of battle, "Man, do not kill Croesus!" This cry alerted Croesus that his

enemy from Persia was about to kill him. Instead of dying that day, because of his deaf

son's intervention, Croesus overcame his adversary (Herodotus, book I, pp. 47–48).

Despite this very positive action the prevailing attitudes of ancient society toward

deafness and the deaf are revealed in the rest of the story. The child saved his father's life

and yet nowhere in Herodotus' entire story does the name of the deaf son appear.

Additionally, when Croesus is recorded as speaking to his hearing son, Atys, he says,

"For you are the one and only son that I possess; the other whose hearing is destroyed, I

regard as if he were not." (Herotodus, p. 22). The deaf son was in, what would be called

today, a non-person status, which makes his contribution even more striking. He

disregarded how he was perceived by others in his desire to protect his father.

The Greeks had a long established practice of placing handicapped infants on a

hillside to die, and yet this practice did not always apply to deaf children probably

because deafness is not an easily discernable disability. Therefore, some deaf children

may have survived long enough to show their value in physical strength or manual

dexterity (Scouten, 1984, p. 4). However, these skills must not have been enough to

engender respect, a key commodity in Greek society.

> Pericles believed a man clearly above corruption was enabled, by the respect others
> had for him and for his own wise policy, to hold the multitude in voluntary restraint.
> He lead them, not they him; and since he did not win his power on compromising
> terms he could say not only what pleased others, but what displeased them, relying
> on their respect. (Wills, 1994, p. 104)

Since deaf people had no respect and were considered non-persons, there would have been no opportunity for a positional deaf leader to emerge, although it was understood that a leader needed to know his own limitations both as a leader and physically.

> You will certainly not be able to take the lead in all things yourself, for to one man a god has given deeds of war, and to another the dance, to another lyre and song, and in another wide-sounding Zeus puts a good mind. (Homer, *The Iliad*)

Still, the limitation of silence was too large a limitation to overcome. As Aristotle opined, "Those born deaf become senseless and incapable of reason" (as cited in Gannon, 1981, p. iv).

Aristotle and Plato focused on systems of government more than individual qualities and yet both provided history with very strong opinions that leaders needed to be superior beings both physically and ethically. Take, for example, Aristotle's thoughts on rulers and the law:

> They should rule who are able to rule best and a state is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange.... Political society exists for the sake of noble actions, and not of mere companionship. (Aristotle, *Politics*)

In addition, neither of these philosophers was supportive of a democratic form of government. Therefore, they tended more toward exclusivity rather than embracing the entire wealth of diversity and strength in a community. For example, whether or not Plato is being sarcastic in his much-quoted view on democracy (below), this view was not conducive to the encouragement of a deaf leader: "Democracy, which is a charming form of government, is full of variety and disorder and disperses a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike" (Plato, *The Republic*, p. 558C).

When leadership theorists look at the next era in historical texts, they defer to Bennis, who describes the Big Bang Theory (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). This theory conjectures that great people do not make great leaders, but great events make people great leaders. According to this Big Bang Theory of leadership, fate plays a far more important role in leadership development than bloodline or education. Thus, although this theory opens possibilities for deaf leadership to emerge, virtually no examples of it can be found in the research literature. It is not until the Hebraic formulation of a written moral code that the recognition of deaf individuals can be seen. A societal shift occurred opening the majority culture to accepting deaf people as human. This culture's moral code provided protection and concern for individuals who could not orally defend themselves. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf…." (Leviticus 19:14). The deaf are accepted as a part of the community. However, they are still unable to be property-owners and have only the same rights and privileges as children. Again, their societal position placed them outside of conventional leadership possibilities.

From these historical anecdotes it is clear that Deaf people in antiquity were largely disregarded by society in terms of their genuine potential and usefulness (Scouten, 1984). Their predicament was perhaps most clearly outlined in the poetic work of Titus Lucretius Carus (96 – 55 B.C.):

> To instruct the deaf, no art could ever reach
> No care improve, and no wisdom teach.

The next mention of deafness in historical texts appeared in Rome when Emperor Justinian created a code (A.D. 528) which identified deaf people as requiring special

attention and protection due to the perception that "the Deaf and Dumb from birth, without exception and without regard to degree of intelligence, [are] condemned to a perpetual legal infancy" (Peet, 1857, p. 32). Sadly, that Roman law, specifically the Justinian Code, served as the foundation for the legal structure of the whole western world. To a great extent this serves to explain why the focus of research concerning the deaf community has been on "fixing" them. Thus, despite some exceptions, this systemic marginalization of this community has been in evidence from the earliest written memory. As Machiavelli put it, "A man who has no position in society cannot even get a dog to bark at him" (*The Discourses*, *Book I*, chap. 3, pp. 7–8).

However, it is not only because of societal perceptions and because of values that deaf leadership has been overlooked. The other part of the problem of identifying Deaf leadership in history is in recognizing that individual leadership in the Deaf community is not highly valued. The physical experience of being deaf in a hearing society can be isolating. Therefore, from a Deaf perspective, to value individualism is to value isolation. When a Deaf person is in an environment that supports a communication difference that does not rely on sound there are no limits. Naturally, then, it is when the community acts collectively that the outlines of culturally defined Deaf leadership can really be seen. Therefore, allow me to now change the lenses, revisit some historical references, and view them from the perspective of Deaf Studies scholarship and of leadership theory.

Historical Perspective from the Deaf Community

The significance of Deaf leadership starts to become evident when reading Deaf history in the light of Gardner's ideas (1995) of Ordinary, Innovative and Visionary

leadership. Deaf cultural history is rich with ordinary stories that lead to innovative change, with a vision that breaks through invisible barriers and unites the Deaf community with mainstream society. One of the first notable moments in Deaf cultural history, when the community (rather than an individual) evidenced Innovative Leadership acting *en masse* and affecting a breakthrough moment that affected the community at large as well as the deaf community itself, is during the French Revolution (Scouten, 1984, p. 73).

Many teachers of the Deaf throughout history have used a teaching method that had the potential of crushing Sign language by making the gestures used by deaf students punishable. However, the Abbe` de l'Epee, director and principal of the National Institute for the Deaf of France, learned Sign Language from his pupils and then used it to teach. Although his methods were highly criticized by the Abbe` Sicard, his successor, Sicard also encouraged and continued to develop educational use of Sign language. As you can well imagine, these teachers were beloved by their deaf students. However, the revolutionary government of France felt otherwise, thus, in August of 1792 in the name of the Republic of France, Sicard was seized at his Institute for the Deaf and placed in confinement. This set the stage for an event that fits Bennis and Nanus' (1997) Big Bang theory.

In response to this event, deaf students walked publicly in daytime as a community to the National Assembly to plead for their teacher. When I have seen this story told in American Sign Language (ASL), the members of the Tribunal are characterized as startled by the wild gesturing of Deaf teacher Jean Massieu, who placed

a petition on the desk of the Tribunal. Historical texts quote this petition as stating, "…This man [Sicard] is good and just. We ask you his liberty. Restore him to his children, we are his children. Return him to us" (Bender, 1981, p. 78).

This petition was heard and approved. However, some days later Sicard was still led to execution through a bureaucratic oversight. "There are dumb hearts making wail, with signs, with wild gestures; he their miraculous healer and speech-bringer is rapt away" (Carlyle, 1978, p. 484). Mysteriously, as the carriages were approaching the Town hall courtyard, thirty priests were torn from the carriages and massacred. But, the crowd saved Sicard and they delivered him to Morton, a deaf watchmaker (Carlyle, pp. 492 – 493) who hid him.

In the telling of this historical anecdote, it is important to note that although two deaf individuals are mentioned by name, it is the power of the group as a whole that succeeds in saving their mentor. This scenario is redolent of the Innovative Leadership concept put forth by Gardner (1995). Richard Couto has described Gardner's Innovative Leadership as bringing "a new twist to a familiar but ignored story." The values they champion may be familiar, but asserting them in public life requires change (Couto, 2002, pp. 12–13). Innovative Leadership calls for significant change-action in order to increase and improve the forms of investments we make in the social good of a community.

This story also reveals the deaf community's adaptive leadership (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). The deaf students in the story attempt to use the accepted societal structure of appealing to the Tribunal to save their teacher, but when the decision is not carried out,

Sicard is still saved by the community. In that way, the community demonstrates how to reduce the gap between values (trusting the system) and practice (sometimes the system works against you). Heifetz and Laurie say adaptive leadership is distinguished by values based on communal bonds that guide a group's work. Some values are moral and democratic, and others are not. Heifetz and Laurie's work suggests that groups may adopt and express a variety of values in just the way Sicard's loving deaf students did.

Some versions of the Sicard story emphasize the preciousness of Sign language over the Deaf community's action. For example, another well-known story from Deaf history shows how just how the language but also how the connection to the community can save lives. Eighteen-year-old Joshua Davis was squirrel hunting near Atlanta, Georgia. It was a great day for hunting and Joshua was very skilled, intent on a particularly bold squirrel. Joshua forgot time and place in his focus until suddenly he found himself surrounded by Union soldiers shouting something at him. The soldiers believed that Joshua was a Confederate spy and was only playing deaf. Joshua frantically gestured to his ears but the soldiers did not believe him and they began to find a rope and a tree from which to hang the boy. It was an officer with a deaf brother (a member of the community) that came to Joshua's aid. He signed, "Are you deaf?" The boy answered, "Yes." Then the officer asked a typical question asked within the community upon first meeting, "Where were you educated?" The boy was able to tell him that he was from a school known to be for deaf people. The officer let him go. In *Deaf Heritage,* Gannon (1981) makes the point that sign language, as in this story, can save your life. However, I find Padden and Humphries' (1998) analysis of the story more to the point: "Relying on

gestures can get you hanged. Speech is likewise useless. Instead of speech, it is the special knowledge gained from other people in the Deaf community that can save one's life" (p. 33).

Another story told in historical texts that focus on Deaf culture gives a good example of adaptive leadership that influenced mainstream culture. The story begins on a baseball field in Oshkosh in 1886. A young deaf man named William F. Hoy, nicknamed "Dummy," took the field. His ability as a baseball player attracted the press and he enjoyed showing off to them. One story tells of him catching fly balls while balancing on a buggy shaft (Moore & Panara, 1996). He taught his teammates signs and together they devised a gestural code to avoid collisions and to communicate in secret. During a game in 1887, "Dummy" asked the umpire to express balls and strikes with exaggerated arm movements. This developed into the colorful signals we all now know that are used by umpires in baseball games today (Moore & Panara, p. 84). William Hoy granted his hearing teammates the "keys to the kingdom" of signs and initiated them into what George Veditz, a former president of the National Association of the Deaf, would call, "the noblest gift God has given to Deaf people" (Padden & Humphries, 1998, p. 35). William Hoy's ability to take the structure of communication in baseball and adapt that communication style into one that allowed for equal access and a place in the baseball community where he could belong also fits Heifetz's description of adaptive leadership (1983). It should be noted that his adaptive approach involved using his team as a community and so, although Mr. Hoy is remembered as a Deaf individual of influence,

his leadership style still reflects the environment of collaboration, which is a common occurrence in Deaf culture.

A more widely recognized moment in the emergence of Deaf leadership as a community configuration appeared on newspaper front pages and other prime time news sources from March 6 – 13, 1988. Two qualified Deaf candidates for president of Gallaudet College were by-passed in favor of a hearing administrator who did not yet know sign language. Gallaudet is a Liberal Arts University, founded in the 1800's by President Abraham Lincoln, as a post-secondary educational opportunity for the deaf. In 1988, students, faculty, and staff went on strike to protest the Board of Trustees' decision and forced the closing of the Gallaudet University campus. This event has been coined the "Deaf President Now" movement. We can notice here that the Deaf President Now (DPN) leaders did not appoint themselves; instead, they were chosen by the Gallaudet student body. All were student government leaders and all were from Deaf families. The confidence that the deaf community placed in these four young leaders encouraged them to push past barriers that had long been taken for granted. Jerry Covell, Tim Rarus, Greg Hlibok and Brigetta Bourne-Firl led a successful nonviolent strike, which had immediate positive results for the Deaf community and for the majority hearing community as a whole. The first accomplishment was the appointment of the first Deaf Gallaudet University President. Soon after this appointment, the election of a Board of Trustees consisting of a majority of Deaf members occurred. Subsequently, across the nation, schools for the deaf began actively seeking and hiring qualified Deaf candidates as superintendents, administrators, faculty, and staff. Finally, the Americans with

Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 27, 1990. It is generally accepted that DPN helped to provide the impetus for this law's passage (Moore & Panara, 1996, p. 425).

To bring about this kind of dramatic breakthrough, leadership must be embedded in the community (Senge, 2002). Personal mastery and shared vision create a spirit of inquiry, which leads to team support. As Senge suggests, change can happen when there is interplay between "seed" and "soil." If results can be seen, goals, real trust, and intelligent group thought will create a pocket of people willing to support change. However, it is important to break the Industrial Age image that many hold in their thoughts, i.e. the image of leadership as a machine. Through leadership theory, we begin to see that the approach needs to be more systematic. This is especially evidenced in the DPN occurrence. A belief existed among DPN members and others that the conditions were right for the moral and ethical imperative to have a Deaf president and at that time the community rose together to create this change.

<div align="center">Deaf Leaders in Residential Schools</div>

Seventy eight percent of all deaf people are born into hearing families (Lane, 1992). If deaf people had been viewed as different but equal, it is possible that deaf culture might never have been recognized. However, the difference of deafness led us to create a separate educational system that was different and unequal but that helped to form a community. Most cultures put a great deal of faith in the power of education to balance the differences of class, race, and culture but are often unaware of a byproduct, which is the creation of a community which might otherwise never have come into being.

In addition to this, the perception that the special educational needs of a deaf child were all encompassing led to the creation of residential schools, which were originally called "asylums" (Branson & Miller, 2002, p. 132). In addition, although we now view these institutions as repressive, causing children to be separated from their families and segregated from the larger community, initially they were seen as progressive. Ironically, the deaf community saw – and still sees – the advent of this form of education as a blessing. The deaf community was nurtured by having deaf children brought together. Although the environment was often Dickensian and horror stories remain of children knowing each other by number not by name (National Theater of the Deaf, *My Third Eye)*, hands tied to chairs to discourage use of Sign Language, and abuse of children raised in dormitories by their adult supervisors (Branson & Miller, p. 141), the environment also provided for the creation of a community.

Uniquely, though, Deaf culture is the only culture documented as being passed from child to child rather than handed down from generation to generation (Lane, 1992). Instead of crushing deaf individuals, experiences shared from residential school life served to define the value of being part of a unique community. With the establishment of this unintentional community, American Sign Language (ASL) became more standardized, leading to easier communication (Padden & Humphries, 1996). Deaf children learned to rely on each other more than those – even family members – that were now seen as being "outsiders" and from this special situation the cultural norms emerged (Lane, 1984b). With a community behind them, individual leaders among the

children wielded influence with the adults but implemented change by involving everyone (Wrigley, 1996).

A visual image of deaf leadership would show a circle of people who step in as they have something to contribute and step back out when they are done, sharing the leading role while focusing on accomplishing the goal (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). The structure of deaf leadership can be compared to the energy models of the *I Ching* (Fu, 2004) where the individual elements create a sphere of energy spun by the movement created in an environment that holds both cooperative and oppositional elements.

Now, gentle reader, let us consider Deaf cultural studies, an area in which the number of studies done on deafness rose after the advent of residential schooling became the norm for deaf children at the turn of the twentieth century (Gannon, 1981). Most of this work focused on questions of educational "best practices," leaving research on cultural issues, most particularly leadership, untouched. I was able to uncover two dissertations, three empirical studies, and three professional journal articles that mention deaf leaders in residential school settings. However, these writings tend to focus on individual Deaf leaders who are in a hierarchical setting. They tend to compare the Deaf leader in these situations unfavorably to hearing leaders in the same circumstance. I have found no academic leadership literature discussing a Deaf style of leadership that creates change through a group dynamic rather than by the impetus of an individual leader. However, I have found evidence that others have noticed a Deaf leadership tendency to "delegate," which I will cite below as a foundation for my own observations.

Chronologically, Sutcliffe (1986) is credited with the first documentation of a look at cultural habits of deaf leaders and hearing leaders in his dissertation comparing hearing and deaf supervisors' habits. In his dissertation, Sutcliffe outlines a quantitative comparative study of leadership behavior among deaf and hearing supervisors of residential deaf institutes. A survey comparison investigated whether or not communication styles affected leadership effectiveness. Follow-up interviews attempted to illuminate the difference between deaf supervisors' habits and hearing supervisors' habits. It was mentioned in the results that deaf supervisors were more likely to delegate and share responsibility while individual hearing supervisors were more likely to bear full responsibility alone. The standard of leadership behavior used in the study, however, exposed the researcher's bias. In his dissertation, the habits of hearing supervisors to control all aspects of production were seen in a more positive light. Their unwillingness to delegate was viewed as more "responsible" rather than irresponsible. From my perspective, I would have liked to know if the deaf leader's tendency to share responsibility resulted in a more engaged work force or if the hearing leader's shouldering the responsibilities alone led to more efficiency.

There seems to be nothing more written on deaf leadership until a dissertation by Balk (1997) titled *Leadership Practices of Superintendents at Residential Schools for the Deaf*. This quantitative case study compared leadership practices of deaf superintendents of residential schools to hearing superintendents and rated their effectiveness using established leadership literature and using organizational assessment/literature.

The results of this study are suspect, though, because of the assumption that the hearing supervisors are the model that the deaf supervisors should emulate. The assessment tool used in the study was the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (1999). The population used for the study was composed of positional leaders, i.e., either managers or superintendents of schools. The results of the LPI showed no statistical difference between the leadership practices described in the literature, although an "observable difference in the practices of deaf superintendents as opposed to hearing superintendents" was noted:

> Deaf individuals are frequently chosen as administrators because of their particular skill, ability or knowledge, and although job-related competency, such as high oral communication proficiency can be seen as one important characteristic, the most commented-on characteristic is that the Deaf leaders tend to delegate more. (Balk, 1997, p. 37)

I think that this study might have rendered information that is more helpful if the comparison had included a triangulated assessment of the LPI, such as a survey, and generated statistics that illustrated the result of their management in numbers of successful graduating students. In addition, more information might have resulted if a qualitative interview method of research, which might have provided more detail, were used. I would also like to have had the documentation describing what the observable differences were, even if they were not quantifiable. Then we might have been able to get closer to an answer to this important question: did the results that showed a tendency on the part of the Deaf supervisors symbolize laziness, as is implied in the study, or did they simply reflect a more collaborative approach to the work than was used by the hearing supervisors?

Traits and Styles

I did uncover one dissertation case study that focused more on the personality

type and style of leadership offered and less on comparison to hearing leaders. This

dissertation also used administrators as their population base. Singleton and Moos (1989)

titled their study *Leadership Style, Personality Type and Demographic Profiles for Deaf*

Female Administrators. They sought to identify common styles and traits similar to

Northouse's work (2001) on deaf women administrators in educational programs for deaf

students in the United States. This two-part descriptive quantitative study began with a

demographic questionnaire to obtain information on variables in the four categories of

personal information, educational background, job-related background, and hearing

status/communication. A telephone interview followed, using a telecommunication

device for deaf people, at that time called a TTY (teletype-writer). In the interview, the

researchers gathered information on mentors and problems experienced by deaf women

in administrative roles. The assessment tool for identifying personality type and

leadership style was the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Leadership

Effectiveness Adaptability Descriptor (LEAD-Self/Other). The results showed a high

number of deaf female administrators emerged as "Extraverted Sensing with Feeling" on

the MBTI and High Relationship Leadership Style on the LEAD. These results were

promising with respect to the notion of deaf leaders' use of collaborative approaches.

Deaf Leaders in Business

An additional look at characteristics or traits of deaf leaders appears in a study

that uses a quantifiable method applied to questions that specifically deal with detecting a

collaborative style. This study questions whether deaf and hearing males in the same leadership position approach the work in the same way. This quantitative study, entitled *Characteristics of Leaders: Deaf Administrators and Managers in Employment* by Mangrubang (1993), still holds hearing managers as a standard, but it shows interesting results. The researcher's question looked for a correlation between management style and achievement in the workplace by deaf administrators and managers. The results of a questionnaire, which was later correlated to statistics on promotion, suggested that managers who are less controlling do not advance as quickly as their counterparts who make better use of a hierarchical structure. In essence, it said that hearing administrators were promoted more often. However, there seems to be no acknowledgement that those who were doing the hiring and promoting were hearing and may have had a bias toward other hearing people. There also seemed to be no measurement of the controlling approach or non-controlling approach to production. The results of this study left me wanting to know more. Does this mean that deaf leaders who have assimilated more completely into hearing culture's hierarchical approach achieve promotions? What makes a "less controlling" manager less likely to get a promotion? Would those statistics change if the study were done in an all-deaf environment? Finally, this study used assessment tools that were adapted from the hearing culture and they may not have been appropriate for the deaf environment.

This is a similar bias found in a well-known text used for deaf studies, *Meeting the Challenge: Hearing Professionals in the Workplace* by A.B. Crammatte, which judges deaf employee's success in the workplace on their ability and potential to

assimilate and use the more common workplace behaviors found in hearing co-workers. Crammatte studied deaf professionals in a wide range of situations. He found that the majority of deaf professionals expressed themselves orally, i.e., with speech, as opposed to using other methods of expressive communication, including writing, gesture, and sign language. They also used lip-reading as their main form of receptive communication. Two areas of particular concern related to use of the telephone and participation in group discussions. Adler (1970) concluded that the competency of a deaf person in an employment situation is normally determined by oral communication and literacy skills. Again, it was determined that a successful Deaf person who could hold a position of leadership would necessarily be someone who could work in a mainstream setting and function as a hearing person.

Two other qualitative studies in the *American Annals of the Deaf* (1974) — "Administrators Communication Survey" by S. Delk and "The Career Status of Deaf Women: A Comparative Look" by MacLeod-Gallinger — also create statistical proofs that support previous findings. Both statistically prove that deaf people in leadership positions tend to be more willing to work in a team setting, but that hearing leadership traits of top-down structures and the ability to use spoken English will result in better employment opportunities. These two studies do help to create a foundation for understanding Deaf leadership; however, they are still flawed in their focus on Deaf leadership because they fail to include consideration of the kinds of Deaf leadership found within the most cohesive Deaf communities, i.e., deaf educational environments.

Lest it should seem an overstatement that a deaf person in a mainstream world will be successful if they pass as hearing, let me cite several final studies. Winakur's observations (1974) on workplace advancement indicated that oral communication skills were significant determiners of success in working situations. Speech reading and speech interactions were found to be important skills for deaf workers in both federal and non-federal professional positions. Schein and Delk (1974), in a nationwide study of deafness, reported that oral communication was the preferred mode of communication by deaf professionals and managers/administrators. It has also been shown by researchers (Winakur, 1974) that those deaf professionals who had "good speech" earned approximately fifteen percent more than those with lesser skills did.

<div align="center">Storytelling: A Foundation for Deaf Influential Leadership</div>

One of the most obvious theories in the leadership literature that can help correct this view of a Deaf leadership style is Howard Gardner's (1995) on the importance of the use of storytelling. This technique is crucial in developing influential leadership. It is also critical in maintaining and continuously re-building the culture. Many minority cultures maintain their identity through their artistic expression (Kenny, 2002). Often, colonized cultures will acknowledge that even when a way of life has been taken, the road back to their cultural identity is through the arts (Higgins, 1980), especially storytelling.

For deaf people fluent in ASL, skills in storytelling are practiced in everyday language, which brings the storytelling skill to great refinement (Lane, 1984a, p. 5). Being a skilled storyteller becomes an influential leadership trait in the Deaf community as storytelling is embedded in the ASL linguistic base (Larson, 1984, p. 87). A metaphor

for communicating in American Sign Language would be a series of movie shorts. Even everyday language or commonplace communication requires the ability to create a visual story. For example, in English you might say, "I'm going to the store." In ASL, glossed in English, you would begin with, "store I go," adding the visual of walking there, how far it is, what the store looks like when you arrive, what you will buy, and so on. The information conveyed is detailed and in a visual story form. Imagine then, if you wanted to combine this skill with a story that pulls people together or inspires, how much influential force could be yielded. The African-American storytelling style of "preaching" is very similar (Walters, 2004).

<div align="center">Storytelling Provides a Cultural Bridge</div>

Storytelling provides a bridge that allows deaf culture to cross over and influence mainstream hearing culture. Both cultures have a tradition of physical storytelling. In hearing culture it is through theater. Bloom and Jaffe (1964) discuss leadership in the context of theater but only focus on Shakespeare. In their work the idea of the story and the power of the storyteller are suggested. Long before Shakespeare, though, theater historians point out that the roots of theater are in the storytelling and the rituals of so-called primitive peoples and in the richly stylized traditions of the East (Molinari, 1972). The rituals and ceremonies, which are familiar as recognitions of leadership – coronations, inductions onto office, and other public forms of acknowledging positional leadership – are all structures borrowed from these theatrical roots (Brockett, 1968). Using theater as a structure for the storytelling aspect of leadership, then, can be seen as a natural evolution. The fact that it is a linguistic foundation of American Sign Language

(Padden & Humphries, 1998, p. 35) almost insures that theatrical and storytelling elements will be crucial in identifying a deaf leadership style since these are both cultural strengths. The mainstream culture uses theater as a refined storytelling technique as well. Since their understanding of theater, of its process, and of its expressiveness overlap, theater can become a shared space within which to appreciate both cultures' abilities.

<div align="center">Comparison of Minority Leadership and Deaf Leadership</div>

African-American Leadership

Other minority cultures also find shared space within the mainstream culture to be a useful tool for influential leadership. I was able to discover many more examples of leadership studies done on the African-American community than I was able to find on the Deaf community. The first I will mention provides foundational information similar to the historical background I provided on the Deaf community. Walters (2004) *Bibliography of African-American Leadership: An Annotated Guide* begins with a comprehensive assessment of the social science research literature on black leadership. It finds that older studies (1930's to 1960's) dealt with it in relation to the nascent formation of leadership theory, where blacks were located predominantly in the context of southern politics and had to adopt a conservative-to-moderate leadership style. The author also reviews and evaluates research on black leadership from the 1970's to the present and suggests attention be given to studies of leadership that involve community level leadership, female leaders, black mayors, and black conservatives.

In this collection, the African-American leadership studies also focus on the practice of black leadership. They begin with an analysis of the roles of black leadership

and an historical analysis of strategies or "strategy shift." The authors then provide

illustrative case studies of the styles of black leadership. They examine the continued

utilization of mass mobilization in the forms of boycotts, direct action, and mass

demonstrations and marches. The issue of collective black leadership or the framework of

unity, an illusive but necessary form of community organization, is also explored. The

community notably bonds through the churches, implying a relational approach, which is

similar to Deaf leadership. Moreover, the preaching-like style of organizers can be

compared to the use of storytelling as an influential tool also found in the Deaf

community.

The entries in this collection are organized into six sections, which offer a broad

overview of the various aspects of African American leadership. Part I is composed of

critical studies and appraisals focused on politics. Many of these examples are

quantitative and use the more traditional types of leadership examples for the criteria.

Part II is focused on community leaders, and uses leaders who are defined as Innovative,

Emergent, and Influential as often as they are Positional. The examples are narrative and

of a qualitative nature. Part III looks at social movements and ideologies, and it provides

a foundation of historical perspective and literature to support the images of leadership

provided in Part I and II. Part IV analyzes individual leaders and Part V discusses

leadership organizations. The very nature of looking at African-American leadership

from so many angles suggests that minority leadership might be a more complex

assignment requiring an understanding beyond appearance. My own work seeking

evidence of Deaf leadership leads me to believe this is so. By analyzing appearance

alone, one might be fooled into believing Deaf leadership does not exist. However, by using a variety of perspectives in the research, Deaf leadership can be seen in the model of a community working together rather than as an individual.

"Historically, the emphasis in American leadership has been on the individual," Walters explains in his online profile for the web page "Leadership Studies." Walters goes on to point out that, like Deaf leadership styles, leadership in the African-American community has been group-oriented. The focus has been on the interaction between leaders and the people. Interestingly enough, it is not only the majority culture that overlooks the strongest form of African-American leadership; their own community also misunderstands it.

> The need for African-American leaders to influence rather than control has not always been well understood or received by the African-American community. African-Americans have tended to have an unreal set of expectations about the difference their leaders will be able to make and they are very critical when leaders don't deliver what is expected of them. (Walters, 2004, p. 6)

There is a parallel in the deaf community as well. Although community leaders are respected and followed, the community itself will not identify them as "leaders to the outside community" (Higgins, 1980).

Influence is one of the most discussed traits of effective leaders in the traditional leadership literature. White's street-gang studies (1940) dealt with how the street gangs wielded power and status to achieve influence. Reuter (1941) felt that leadership was "…the result of an ability to persuade members without use of power." In 1942, Copland dealt with the use of influence through persuasion rather than "drivership." Rost (1991)

mentions that many of the observers of leadership styles in the 1930's and 1940's were focused on a group approach and looked deeply at influential ways of wielding power.

Minority Leadership Requires a Community Base

The Deaf community wields influence through storytelling; however, if there are no listeners for the story, i.e., no deaf people, deaf leaders fade into the background and can be nearly impossible to observe and study. This phenomenon happens in the African-American community as well, as evidenced by the journal article and qualitative study discussed in the following paragraphs. It is important for the leader to find a community base. This provides an understanding of cultural norms that permits relationships to build. Cultural understanding is needed in the approach to research as well. Not surprisingly, minority leaders are more easily found when looking into qualitative studies that suggest that minority cultures are patterning their leadership style from a different set of values. Many minority cultures determine success by soul satisfaction, community involvement, and inclusion. It is also true that these outcomes are used as validating evidence in qualitative study methods more often than they are used in quantitative studies.

For example, Allen's case study (1985) "Black Student, White Campus: Structural, Interpersonal, and Psychological Correlates of Success," uses an ex post facto survey method to uncover the reasons why Black students were not matching their white peers as leaders on campus. The study focused on groups of Black students who were isolated on college campuses predominately comprised of Caucasian students. The measurements centered on questions that compared the two groups in their choices, their relationships, and their perspectives. The proofs of leadership were recognizable

positions within the campus structure. The results of the study, not surprisingly, showed that when evaluated by the white campus definition and structure of leadership, it appeared that the Black students tended to remain in the background.

This result is challenged by the findings that emerge from a comparison between Black students who live and study within an Afro-American culture base and those who live and study within a majority culture base. Allen returned to his original research question in 1992 with a new study titled "The Color of Success: African-American College Student Outcomes at Predominately White and Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities." In this study, the issues of comfort and confidence in relationship to leadership traits are examined within a cultural context, which changed the results dramatically. In this qualitative study comparing Black college students from two different campuses with different cultural and historical environments, it became more obvious that Black students evidence leadership traits more often when in a culturally supportive environment. Ironically, the definition for evaluating leadership traits was the same, only a change in the environment was noted.

Women's Leadership

A remarkable shift in research perspective on minority leadership began with the women's movement. Considerable literature was found researching women's leadership. Again, parallels were found between relational and influential forms of deaf leadership and women's leadership. It is notable that much of the research that reveals female leadership styles employs qualitative methods. In the groundbreaking book *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Helgesen, 1990), the qualitative approach to exploring female politics

was used, and in-depth interviews with 135 women showed strategies that women have for overcoming the feelings of being silenced in their families and in schools. It encouraged people to think in new ways about what constitutes knowledge and, therefore, about the aims of education. It became a framework for future research on women, knowledge, and identity. It also provided a new lens through which to view and understand Emergent Leadership (Wheatley, 1999), allowing researchers to expand their definitions of leadership beyond traditional understanding. In addition, rather than the hierarchical leadership structure, this book introduced the concept of a web structure for leadership.

Additional studies on leadership from a feminist perspective also used qualitative methods, such as collections of diaries, as in *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership*. Others used analyses of articles on women in political leadership, for example, *A Portrait of Marginality: the Political Behavior of the American Woman*. By using as examples recognizable female leaders who did not follow traditional patterns in their work, this book helped to broaden the definition of "leader" and began to open the door to alternative definitions. This in turn began the process that we are still following today. Many minority cultures do recognize their own leaders, but these leaders take shape in ways that majority culture has difficulty comprehending. By letting alternative styles of leadership emerge in a qualitative, open-ended investigation, minority cultural leaders can be shown to be evident in larger numbers than were first appreciated.

Interestingly, several studies that look at feminist perspectives on deaf leadership tend to focus only on feminist perspectives and use deaf culture as a way to prove that

feminist ethics are an over-riding element across cultures. This would be effective if deaf cultural styles of leadership had already been established in the research literature. Then feminist approaches across hearing and deaf cultures could be verified.

One of the most useful studies of this nature found for this review was Doncaster's dissertation entitled *The Congruence of Social-Psychological Factors and Career Choices of Women in Leadership Positions in U.S. Programs for the Deaf*; however, it also does not distinguish between feminist theory or deaf cultural ethics. Doncaster sought to uncover the socio-psychological factors that contributed to career choices for women in programs for the deaf. Demographic questionnaires compared female educational administrators with female teachers in programs for the deaf. Doncaster examined internal-external locus of control, psychodynamics, and socio-cultural factors by applying feminist theory to her analysis of her comparative study. Although she chose participants that were in the deaf community, not all of them were deaf. In addition, she did not include deaf cultural considerations as tools of assessment in her analysis. She did not group the participants by ethnic or ability identity, and feminist issues colored her views more than cultural issues. Her results showed a higher percentage of relationship and communication building techniques in these leaders, but they also showed a bias in assuming that the overriding element to that stylistic difference in leadership was solely because of feminist influences. She never measured if there was a significant difference between deaf and hearing female leaders.

Also of interest is Benedict's (1934) *Patterns of Culture*. Benedict takes a feminist view of anthropology and insists on the importance of observing the culture in

question by becoming involved in that culture. Due to my background in theater, I am also fascinated by feminist anthropological concepts that deal with the roots of theater and ritual. Catherine Bell's perspectives (1997) are clearly of value in the discussion of the Deaf culture. Her personal background as a member of the Deaf community (as a hard of hearing person) and her interest in how ritual helps to define and encourage a sense of community aided me in my discussion of the emergence of Deaf leaders within the context of community and through the rituals imparted by a theatrical production process.

Native American Leadership

The Native American leadership style can also be compared to Deaf leadership. I discuss two qualitative studies that are accepted as foundational studies on Native American leadership styles. The *Native American Collection*, a publication of the Oklahoma Historical Society in CD-ROM format, focused on community-based relational leadership and influential leadership. It also documented storytelling as a crucial part of the community's identity. This unusual published collection of documents relates Native American history using a wide variety of materials, including the Dawes Final Rolls and the Chilocco Indian School alumni records. The central feature of the collection contains scanned images of valuable books about Native American leaders. Many of the leaders identified are, as expected, positional leaders and are Chiefs; but many also are leaders who were influential and emergent in various Indian movements, protests, and battles. Other leaders are teachers and instructors, while still others are religious or community-based leaders. Impressively, many of the documents are

presented as artifacts. They stand alone for the reader to consider without editorial gloss from a majority cultural perspective.

Further information and documentation about Native American leaders is found in The Oklahoma Historical Society. Its Archives section alone has several million manuscript pages, plus thousands of photographs and taped interviews. Although extensive documentation into Native American events is available from a majority culture perspective, many of those documents, such as the microfilm discussing the massacre at Wounded Knee, show majority military leaders confounded at what appear to be leaderless or unorganized Native American movements. Very often simply letting the culture speak for itself gives a much clearer image of the leaders from the community under discussion.

Another valuable reference done in a qualitative method is *The Pacific Northwest Tribes Missions Collection of the Oregon,* which includes house diaries, manuscripts, personal diaries, and other documents dealing with the Nez Perce, Flathead, Cayuse, Northern Cheyenne, Coeur d'Alene, Blackfoot, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, and Crow. This work is an excellent example of narrative inquiry methods researching a culture and their leaders by letting the culture speak for itself. This compares to historical text documentation in the Deaf community. One of the best descriptions of the deaf community is contained in the work of sociologist Higgins (1980). He discusses deafness from the theoretical perspective of deviance. Higgins points out that "outsiders" often develop a concept of "organization" to cope with what appears to be a lack of leadership in an obviously effective community. "The majority culture develops a coping

mechanism – a way to fit what they can't see into boxes with which they are familiar and the deaf community is an example of such a coping strategy" (Higgins, p. 25). In the historical narratives of the community, leaders are apparent and yet they do not often cross over into the mainstream culture.

Minority Leaders' Need for a Sense of Self

The question of identity is very complex in the deaf community. As Padden and Humphries (1998) have stated, "The experiences of many deaf people, in addition to those born of deaf parents, are quite similar to those of other bilingual minority groups in America" (p. 48). Many researchers have attempted to identify the community. Deaf culture is sometimes identified as a distinct culture (Lane, 1992; Padden & Humphries, 1998). Sometimes it is identified as and located in a bicultural relationship with ethnicity (Parasnis, 1993). At other times, deaf people as a group as well as individuals develop an identity that is necessarily bicultural since they must be able to function in both the deaf community and in the hearing world of work (Padden, 1996). While at still other times, the Deaf community as a whole sees itself as having a hyphenated identity like other minority members of American society, for example, being a Deaf-Italian-American (Parasnis, 2000a). It is clear from this that the Deaf community goes through the same stages of identity development as have been postulated for other minority members of American society (Sue & Sue, 1990). All of these issues come into play when trying to establish a strong self-identity in preparation for leadership.

Despite important strides made during and since the civil rights movement, it is a common experience for minority people within our society to run into some form of

discrimination. How much it affects them varies, depending on many factors, like the individual's intellectual and social skills, socio-economic status, family background, and their own perspective on racism (Steele, 1990). However, the power imbalance and obvious or subtle societal pressures often make it hard for a minority group member to ignore the perceptions of the majority in developing self-identity and self-esteem (Scheurich, 1993, p. 15). Lack of appropriate role models, lack of an easy way to overcome communication barriers, and the perceptions of "deaf and dumb" from the hearing world can make it impossible for some deaf leaders to step outside of their own community (Parasnis, 2000a, p. 12).

The issue of self-esteem in a minority culture can also be a point of distraction when investigating how that culture organizes itself and how the specific goals of leadership in that culture evidence themselves. Inevitably, any deviance from the mainstream model of "successful" leadership will be considered and judged by the criteria of the mainstream. If best leadership practices are determined by organizational standards created by business or management, the goals will be appreciably different than if the leadership practices are determined by cultural standards that differ from these accepted business practices. Crucially, from many perspectives, it all depends on who tells the story. Therefore, validating evidence in case studies may show minority cultures as "lacking," "less efficient," or "less productive," especially when the quantifiers are based on non-cultural markers.

The fact that a minority culture is aware that mainstream culture finds it inferior is no surprise and does not necessarily affect an individual's self-esteem or pride of culture.

It may, however, cause that person to shy away from positions of authority or leadership in the mainstream in favor of taking a more culturally comfortable leadership position. When looking at quantitative studies of minority leadership, it appears that minorities do not aspire to the positions of power that the studies identify, and it is occasionally supposed that self-esteem issues are the cause. Instead, I believe the measurement systems of past research have been off the mark. Mainstream perspective measures efficiency and production, while many minority cultures often determine success by soul satisfaction, community involvement, and inclusion. When quantitative studies begin to measure these outcomes from culturally appropriate standards, they may reveal information that is more useful. For the present, these outcomes are most often limited in use, serving only as validating evidence in qualitative study methods. The formation of data that will help to understand these cultures in upcoming studies should be more detailed and done in qualitative studies.

<div align="center">Leadership Literature on Self-Esteem</div>

Many Deaf leaders have a sense of emotional intelligence, as Goleman (2002) emphasized. Historically, Deaf people have been stigmatized by the commonly held belief that "deaf and dumb" is literal. Although the original intent of labeling people who did not speak as "dumb" or mute was not meant to convey the idea that they were stupid, the literal meaning of unintelligent is still often thought to be true (Gannon, 1981). This perception by mainstream society can affect a deaf person's willingness to interact in the hearing world. Rather than the traditional IQ measurement, a person's ability to manage their feelings, educate others, interact, and communicate are values that have much more

resonance in the Deaf community. When comparing the Deaf community's approach to leadership, all thirteen of Goleman's key relationship skills emerge as competencies that are highly regarded. The twelve personal competencies that Goleman mentions are harder to identify in the deaf community. Although traits such as self-control, initiative, and optimism are in evidence in deaf individuals in the community, it is harder to maintain self-esteem when a deaf person leaves the community. The barriers to communication and the ongoing need to educate co-workers and administrators about how to adjust to a deaf worker often lead to embarrassment, low self-esteem, and a desire to blend in (Higgins, 1980, p. 25). This parallels what Githens and Prestage (1977) state as the problem women from female-centered colleges face when entering the business world.

Despite the majority culture's perspective that the deaf community suffers from a self-esteem problem, which results in a low number of "cross-over leaders, i.e., those who cross over into mainstream positions," Gardner's (1995) concepts of a leader who is a creator, a teller, and a living exponent of a story are easily identified in the Deaf community. Personal values and authenticity are highly valued in the Deaf community as Heifetz and Laurie (1997) state. The low number of deaf positional leaders in the majority culture is not really an unstudied self-esteem phenomenon. Rather, it comes from practicality. Often deaf people in a hearing environment feel that they are missing a part of the communication. They fear that the part they miss may be the most important. Therefore, truthfulness and open communication are valued in the Deaf community. Ironically, for the Deaf leader effective communication with those who are outside of the deaf community or who are, what I call "sign-impaired," is near to impossible. So

although the traits Gardner, Heifetz, and others identify are apparent in Deaf leaders, as soon as they leave their own community their effectiveness is hampered by numerous things, such as a lack of skilled interpreters, impatience on the part of the listener, or other communication issues that act as barriers between the Deaf world and the hearing world.

<center>Deaf Leaders Need to Tell Their Own Stories</center>

The mainstream culture's focus on self-esteem or lack of crossover individual leaders misses the point that, from a deaf perspective, leadership is not an individual project; it is the movement of the entire group. The entire Deaf culture does not suffer from collective low self-esteem. Rather, it waits until the environment is right for a collective movement before it reveals itself. This collective and influential style of leadership is similar to what is described by Ron Walters in his studies of African-American Leadership. Carolyn Kenny (2002) also discusses a more expressive, arts-based influential leadership as evidenced in the Native American community, a concept that has a more comfortable fit with the Deaf community than the standard evaluation found in previous research of the Deaf community.

Many deaf people see themselves in the context of a community, while the mainstream American culture views deaf people as isolated. Many deaf people see themselves as defiant, while mainstream culture sees them as victims (Bragg, 2001). Understandably, self-esteem and the building of leadership traits seem to work better from within the community (Gannon, 1981). Access to popular culture, news, and references is crucial to a minority group's ability to test the waters and know if the time is

right for advocating social change. Without outside influence and access to issues of

national concern, the community becomes isolated. Since the culture is linguistically

isolated and identifies its needs from within the group in relation to the hearing world,

media is vitally important in the connection to outside events, to zeitgeist, and to the

movement of the larger society. Therefore, some of the research on deaf leadership can

be seen in popular culture. However, these portrayals of deaf leadership are limited since

they do not depict images that emerge from the deaf community but rather carry images

of the deaf community often created, for example, by popular often hearing writers. Yet

these images do help to illuminate the potential that properly framed qualitative cultural

studies might have on presenting deaf leadership. Therefore, although it is unusual to

include popular media in a review of this nature, I believe a brief discussion will be

revealing.

<div align="center">Mainstream Culture's Story of Deaf Leadership</div>

Most recently, popular media images of Deaf people provide versions of the

"leader-less deaf community." They evidence a solitary and isolated individual character,

such as those that have surfaced on popular television programs like the series *Pacific*

Blue (Nuss, 1996–2000) and the miniseries *Stephen King's The Stand* (King & Garris,

1994). Over the past 20 years, several television programs have portrayed deaf people as

capable individuals. They have been seen in roles such as diplomat, district attorney,

mayor, and consultant on episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Taylor, 1987–

1994), *Reasonable Doubts* (Singer, 1991–1993), *Picket Fences* (Kelly, 1992), and *The*

West Wing (Wells, 1999–2006). These individuals functioned with spoken and written

English and were surrounded by hearing people. They were also rarely shown in the context of the Deaf community.

An example of portraying an issue and some individuals outside of the context of the community can be seen in the way an early cochlear implant debate appeared on national television. On the CBS newsmagazine program *60 Minutes,* a 1992 segment featured a child with an implant (Hewitt, 1992; Vernon & Alles, 1994). Many culturally Deaf people and their advocates expressed disappointment with the reporting, which they contended overstated the importance of the use of speech and showed only a single child's progress with the implant. This child was not placed in the context of a supportive deaf community. This representation of the issue seemed to further support the idea that a successful deaf person was one who was orally proficient. An update of this story was aired in 1999 on *60 Minutes II* (Kahn, 1999). Again, though, complaints arose that is was reporting from only one perspective. In addition, although the more recent documentary *Sound and Fury* (Aronson, 2000) takes a more balanced approach, we still have yet to see a Deaf leader who is involved in their community and who has traits other than the ability to speak.

The closest examples of a culturally truer Deaf leader in the media to date are Christy Smith and Tara Samuel, the actress who plays the character Sue Thomas on the PAX network show, *Sue Thomas F.B. Eye* (Johnson & Johnson, 2002–2005). Ms Smith is the first and only deaf person to compete in the *Survivor* series. After six episodes, she remained on the program and even carried a very high viewer approval rating, yet she did not use Sign Language or function in a Deaf cultural style. She appears to be a competent

follower and "tribal member" in a majority culture. The character of Sue Thomas rarely signs, she is able to speak with a minimal Deaf accent, and she is rarely seen socializing or working with other deaf people. In both cases, many culturally Deaf people have expressed disappointment that these two public personae are not representing the depth of the community, although they may be representing a believable, albeit one-dimensional individual.

Just as empirical studies show common cultural mistakes in their approach to the research on minority cultures, popular portrayals of deafness and deaf characters in television and movies are similar to the way the entertainment industry has stereotyped women, blacks, American Indians, and other minority groups. Deafness, however, carries an additional stigma. Many people view this disability as pathological. Films and television episodes continually reinforce mistaken beliefs, and the deaf performers who are willing to appear in those roles are seen as "hearing thinking" (the Deaf cultural version of an "Uncle Tom"). By focusing on deaf characters outside of a community, the entertainment industry unintentionally promotes the idea that there are no deaf leaders.

Deaf Culture's Stories of Leadership

Recent qualitative studies on the Deaf community are beginning to show a different image. Two recent studies look at successful deaf people and measure positive aspects of deafness rather than assume negatives and tally them. Rogers, Muir, and Evenson (2003), for example, created a multiple-case exploratory study to describe interpersonal, behavioral, and environmental assets that may build bridges for Deaf adults between the Deaf and hearing worlds. In this study, the traits of successful adults were

looked at not in comparison to hearing cultural standards, but in terms of resiliency, which the authors define as being involved socially in leadership positions in the Deaf community and an ability to work (40 hours a week) in one or more hearing settings. The study was extremely limited with only three participants. However, the study was able to identify 15 assets that may support resilience in Deaf adults, including authenticity and comfort with solitude. The authors used a positive psychology perspective of recognizing and building on human strengths. This study also acknowledged that it was the first of its kind and hoped to provide a beginning for discussions along these lines.

All three participants were white. Two were male; one was female. All were active in both the Deaf and hearing worlds. Leadership roles assumed by the participants in the Deaf world included holding office in community organizations and strong and effective team or organization participation. Participation included involvement in local Deaf clubs, local and state Deaf organizations, Deaf churches, and Deaf sports teams. In this way, the study was able to derive information about Deaf leaders who are not judged simply by hearing academic standards, but by the practical proofs of successful work and active participation in the community. The limited scope of the choice of participants was neither random nor representative. Therefore, all conclusions from this study and ideas generated must be taken as only suggestive, but most are worthy of future testing.

The measures used by this study centered on interview inquiry in descriptive research, on a review of relevant literature, and on teaching or other relevant experiences of faculty. The interviews were held in American Sign Language and a certified interpreter voiced the proceedings for transcription purposes. The interviews were also

videotaped. The interviewer remained open to unexpected ideas or lines of thought even

if they went against the findings or conclusions from the literature review or were

contrary to professional experiences.

Hypotheses generated from the case study showed interpersonal traits that could

be associated with resiliency: humor, caring, commitment to worthy goals, strong social

bonds, emotionally self-perceptive, awareness of strengths, and comfort with solitude. By

allowing the Deaf participants to tell their own stories without judgment, environmental

factors for their resiliency were uncovered revealing that the participants all had quality

time with caring mentors, positive learning partnerships with peers in college, supportive

family environments, and opportunities for participation in the community. Behavioral

assets identified were self-advocacy, self-reliance, goal directed behaviors, and problem

solving ability. Honesty was also a crucial element. Construct validity came from the

protocol questions in the interview, which were developed through the inquiries of the

resilience researchers. External validation came from the faculty who recommended the

participants.

A second recent study gathered information from successful Deaf adults in an

effort to counter the paucity of research on successful individuals who are Deaf. This

study by Luckner and Stewart (2003) aimed at offering a view of deafness different from

the portrayal found in the literature of education and rehabilitation as well as in society in

general. The authors stated that they hope their study, "Self-Assessments and Other

Perceptions of Successful Adults Who are Deaf: An Initial Investigation,*"* would create a

foundation for offering a more positive profile of successful Deaf adults.

Once again, the method used was based on an interview process allowing the Deaf participants to tell their own story. In the first study fourteen deaf adults, who were nominated by their peers as being successful, participated in videotaped semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and clustered according to common themes. The participants were asked 10 interview questions developed specifically for the study. The questions were posed in a comfortable setting by a deaf adult fluent in American Sign Language. The typed transcripts were then used for data analysis. In the second study, twenty-two participants were nominated. The transcribed interviews were coded to place comments in various categories. Meaning units were placed in provisional categories based on content similarities. The mix of an interview-style data collection and a quantitative approach to the analysis gives this study a mixed-methods label.

Deaf Leadership Revealed and Developed Through Arts-Based Practice

Deaf leaders are beginning to explore ways to promote strong cultural identity and encourage the development of leadership traits, including self-esteem. One of the most important steps is self-characterization. Rather than accepting the images and perceptions of deaf people that society promotes and much past research literature finds, many leaders in the Deaf community encourage and support the creation of their own cultural images. In the past, these images were kept within the community. There was suspicion of the mainstream culture and concern that self-created images would be co-opted and changed if shared with the mainstream culture (Gannon, 1981). Although those concerns are still in evidence in the deaf community, there is more acceptance of the idea that sharing aspects of Deaf culture is all right because they can be appreciated by the

mainstream community without being altered (Bragg, 2001). By creating literary, theatrical, television, and movie characters that hold leadership positions while maintaining their identity as Deaf persons, it is hoped that these new community-located role models, together with the already strong foundation of storytelling that matches Gardner's concepts of leadership (1995), will begin to reveal a deaf leadership style that is distinct.

Another method for encouraging Deaf leaders to emerge requires the community to understand the social system well enough to predict how stressful the challenge of facing it will be (Heifez, 1996). Theater can be used as a tool to develop this awareness. Similar to the way an individual will practice for an interview or a presentation, a deaf leader can enact a theatrical representation of a conflict, thereby creating a safe place to practice a necessary conflict, show it to others, get feedback and ideas, and involve the community in their own development.

If, as Senge (2002) suggests, our organizations work the way they work because of how we think and interact, then using cultural means, like literature or theater, can influence an audience and provide a catharsis in thought while role-modeling interactions between deaf culture and mainstream culture. This makes theater an obvious choice for leadership training as well.

Awareness and respect for cultural spirituality is an important aspect in developing leadership skills that can cross over into the majority culture. As Kenny (2002) has pointed out, even after a concerted attempt at destroying Native American culture, the expressive artistic foundations of it remain. These artistic expressions are

often held by the central spiritual core of the culture (Kenny, 2002). This spiritual component is woven deep within the framework of theater. The roots of theater history include the practice of ritual, either in a holy place or in a secular situation (Brockett, 1968). Much of theater history literature outlines how theater began with direct participation in ritual enactments by so-called primitive peoples (Molinari, 1972). Ritualism and spirituality were the essence of Greek drama before it was lost to the theater of Imperial Rome (Molinari, 1972). However, the clear connection of spirituality and theater re-emerged in the Middle Ages with religious drama, which in turn informed the structure and development of the secular stage in Elizabethan London (Brockett, 1968).

A theatrical experience naturally shares the same spiritual concepts that Bell (1997) discusses when explaining how to develop leadership with a spiritual component. For example, during a theatrical production the cast and crew become a community that nurtures one another. There is the development of a shared vision and service to the message of the play. The best theatrical experiences culminate in the growth of skills, of awareness, of appreciation for others, and of humility by those involved in the process.

In conclusion, by using theater to create a shared environment where Deaf and hearing people both share a similar culture and a similar form of expression, deaf leadership skills that have the potential to create influential change can emerge. By listening as the Deaf community tells their own story, a more accurate portrait of Deaf leadership can be studied, providing us all an additional perspective on a topic of global interest.