

## ABSTRACT

### Disruptively Unorthodox: A Qualitative Exploration of the Disruptive Leadership Paradigm of Christ as a Model for Marketplace Organizations

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The purpose of this study was to examine the disruptive leadership style of Jesus as a model of innovation which, if adapted by organizations in the marketplace, can potentially maintain their relevance and influence. By examining four core competencies located in Jesus's leadership—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation—this study explored both the organizational and spiritual implications of *disruption* as a form of leadership praxis. Using an historical, inductive review of the Christian scriptures, it demonstrates that disruptive leadership is as biblical a model as other leadership paradigms, and that it is most effective in democratic organizations where the ethos is not leader-centered but organizational-centered. *Disruptive leadership* depends on leaders who seek to answer the question, “In order to maintain our relevance and position, what do we need to change at any cost?” Therefore, organizations eager to position themselves as relevant and influential in the marketplace, given the ever-changing ethos of our global world, have much to gain using qualitative, case-study methodological research on Jesus's disruptive leadership.

Disruptively Unorthodox:  
A Qualitative Exploration of the Disruptive Leadership  
Paradigm of Christ as a Model for Marketplace Organizations

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Statement of the Problem

#### *Introduction*

“There is surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all.”

—Peter Drucker, *Managing for Business Effectiveness*<sup>1</sup>

Traditional workspaces within our contemporary context must reinvent themselves if they wish to remain relevant and influential. Leadership advocates Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson, for example, understand that old methods do not complement new realities. “We used to be a top-down managed company,” Blanchard and Johnson write, “which worked in its time. But today that structure is slow. It doesn’t inspire people and it stifles innovation”<sup>2</sup> In this project, I turn to Jesus as the kind of leader that *does* inspire people to create and innovate in our contemporary context. Jesus offered a paradigmatic model of “disruptive leadership.” Disruptive leadership is the mode of leading that recognizes and replaces an unsatisfactory status quo with an alternative that better serves the organization and its constituents. This mode of leadership bears the following characteristics: challenging status quo norms and practices; calling into question generally accepted assumptions; and offering radical alternatives on a systematic level.

Through this disruptive approach, Jesus remained and remains relevant, offering

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Ferdinand Drucker, *Managing for Business Effectiveness* (Cambridge: Harvard Business Review, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth H. Blanchard and Spencer Johnson, *The New One Minute Manager* (New York: William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2015), 7.

considerable resources for contemporary leadership and organizational development. Jesus practiced four core competencies—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation—that, practiced in our world, can potentially expand organizational influence within the marketplace.

In the past few decades, organizations have undergone considerable shifts—especially with regard to the structure of the organization and the preferred style of leadership.<sup>3</sup> Previously, organizations operated with a more traditional top-down approach to leadership, taking few risks, and relying on established knowledge to develop plans for moving forward. These organizations emphasized incremental change, in which transformation, relevance, and impact were slowly incorporated within an organizational culture over time.<sup>4</sup> Before the millennial wave of technology-driven and innovation-focused organizational cultures, organizations focused on relevance and social impact by avoiding uncertainty, taking measured risks, working from what has already been done, and managing by multilayered and complex ladders. This older, low-risk model often resulted in a few people wielding the majority of power within the organization, ultimately preventing emerging leaders from challenging norms and practices through radical, disruptive, and high-risk alternatives.<sup>5</sup>

However, at least since the technological boom in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> centuries, this approach has undergone considerable challenge and revision.

Organizational leaders, particularly millennials who are adept at operating within an

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Kristof, “How Established Companies Can Master Disruptive Innovation Like Startups: Achieving Innovation Excellence and Disruptive Ability,” *Cornivus University of Budapest Doctoral Database* (2016): 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey G. Covin & Dennis P. Slevin, “The Influence of Organization Structure on the Utility of an Entrepreneurial Top Management Style,” *Journal of Management Studies* 25, no. 3 (1988): 218.

increasingly globalized and technologized society, are challenging older norms of organizational praxis. In this current age of disruption—in which fast-paced, social media-driven technological advancement encourages companies and individuals to invest in free-agent entrepreneurs seeking to quickly and expansively impact the current cultural context through high-risk innovation—neither age, size, reputation, nor profitability guarantees that established companies will survive cultural transformation.<sup>6</sup> This age of disruption is a time when anyone can create and sustain an organization that is scalable, easily transformative, and ever relevant.

One wonders how Jesus's timeless leadership paradigm might serve to transform, expand, and scale organizations in this disruptive age. Jesus's own historical-yet-contemporary model of leadership was also disruptive. In this study, I explore how the application of Jesus's unique model of *disruptive leadership*—which antedates modern disruptive practices, such as decentralizing leadership structures and encouraging innovation from any member of the organization—may or may not transform contemporary organizations. One such organization is STAR Academy College Preparatory Charter School, which is eager to maintain its relevance and impact in the marketplace through the cultivation of creative and innovative leaders. STAR Academy is the second-oldest charter school in Memphis, Tennessee, and has established a reputation for educating and developing students from underserved socioeconomic backgrounds. In order to keep up with the pace of development—and to further empower its students to be change agents in our increasingly technological and globalist context—STAR underwent a considerable adjustment with regard to leadership structure and

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<sup>6</sup> Shane Cragun & Kate Sweetman, *Reinvention: Accelerating Results in the Age of Disruption* (Austin: Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2016), 18.

culture in the summer of 2016. Although it is still a public school, STAR has adopted a more contemporary leadership structure that relies on a leadership team instead of placing the brunt of duties on the school principal.

In this project, STAR Academy provided the primary site for my research; I worked closely with STAR, focusing particularly on how the leadership changes may or may not have reflected Jesus' disruptive leadership paradigm. Before I discuss STAR more concretely, however, it is important to lay some groundwork regarding how I understand the concept of disruption in relation to Jesus's leadership model.

Two observations suggest that Jesus's unique model of leadership is disruptive. First, Jesus intentionally disrupts the sociopolitical, economic, religious, gender, and cultural systems, offering radical alternatives for leading organized communities. Second, Jesus's model empowers those being led without sanctioned organizational [or, community] authority, i.e. the twelve disciples, to disrupt areas of the organization that leadership deems necessary for transformation. These two observations underscore that the system-level status quo and the concentration of power within sanctioned and "titled" roles are hindrances in the development and expansion of transformative organizations. Furthermore, organizations often have embedded, unwritten, and unspoken cultural and sociopolitical norms that inform, influence, and often impede the organization's ability to transform, thus delaying the organization's ability to be relevant. Jesus's model, as evidenced in the Gospels, removes these barriers and provides organizational leadership through at least four core competencies—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation. Although there could be more competencies, I focus on these four because

they are explicitly and decisively directed toward upsetting the status quo and providing better alternatives that can result in more impact and relevance.<sup>7</sup>

Although leadership paradigms—from servant leadership to moral leadership to transformative leadership—have often been researched and written about through various lenses, these paradigms nevertheless appear to agree upon the understanding of leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what is to be done and how to do it.”<sup>8</sup> However, mere “influence” inadequately describes disruptive leadership as researched in this study. Although influencing the behaviors and dispositions of other *individuals* is often essential in organizational development and expansion, it often comes second to the greater role of influencing the very *fabric and culture* of organizational norms. Disruptive leadership does not simply aim to influence others to do something. Rather, it aims to influence the organization to take radical and often unorthodox approaches that will encourage longstanding transformations of society and culture over time. To disruptively lead is to not simply change individuals; it is to attempt to shift the very fabric of organizational structure in order to produce cultural change.

Defining disruptive leadership as merely “influencing others,” therefore, is inconsistent with the goals, aims, and character of this model, which is to radically respond to and alter the status quo in order to maintain relevance and impact. Disruptive leadership is context-specific, operating in direct relation to the norms and standards the

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<sup>7</sup> I would also note that disruptive leadership entails a disposition toward self-sacrifice, which is echoed through Jesus’s willingness to be crucified. The disruption that comes from Jesus’s style of leadership is not simply difficult for status quo leaders to adopt or understand; it can—and often will—entail a discipline of placing oneself on the line for the greater good.

<sup>8</sup> Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (New York: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006), 8.

disruptive leader seeks to change. Moreover, it is precisely the context-specific character of disruptive leadership that makes it possible for disruptive leaders to develop organizations that are relevant and influential. Jesus's model of disruptive leadership in this study does not fit any of the previously researched categories and paradigms, nor has it been explored in existing literature. Leadership paradigms, such as servant leadership, moral leadership, and transformative leadership can be recognized in the Gospels, and are often invoked to discuss Jesus's impact and relevance in leading both the disciples and the organized communities of faith to follow. However, this study of disruption as leadership praxis of Jesus will suggest a radical alternative worthy of exploration and critical analysis.

Framing the disruptive leadership of Jesus around four core competencies is unique to this study of leadership, particularly the competencies of culture and cultivation. Communication and contribution are often foundational points in leadership theory. Culture—unwritten, unspoken norms—has been researched and discussed more recently as “the most powerful factor in any organization.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the lack of cultivation—the process and pipeline of leaders developing leaders (also known as leadership development)—has been underscored as one of the reasons why organizations fail because organizations confuse “training” and “developing.”<sup>10</sup> Scholars have identified each of these components in various texts; however, little research speaks to how all four competencies are critical—if not absolutely necessary—for increased

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<sup>9</sup> Sam Chand, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 3. For more on this, see Edgar Schein's seminal texts on organizational leadership and culture.

<sup>10</sup> Mike Myatt, “The #1 Reason Leadership Development Fails,” *Forbes Online* (December 19, 2012), accessed July 12, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemyatt/2012/12/19/the-1-reason-leadership-development-fails/#22e459716522>.

organizational relevance and impact. By attending to certain dimensions of Jesus's life, this study proposes that Jesus's leadership operated at the intersection of the four competencies of communication, contribution, culture, and cultivation and by showing how Jesus's leadership style operated at the intersection of four critical leadership competencies, this study highlights a unique proposition for organizational disruption.

To be clear, there are possibly—and, in all truthfulness, probably—more competencies than the four I highlight in this study. Jesus's life and leadership style was dynamic and inestimably effective in its ability to transform cultures. Jesus's life is infinitely complex, and this complexity offers a plethora of resources with which to understand Jesus's style and approach to leadership. To “boil down” Jesus's leadership style to four competencies is a limited and limiting approach to his life. However, I focus on four core competencies for two reasons: first, due to his incredible impact and infinite complexity, an exhaustive exploration of Jesus's leadership style would be next to impossible to undertake; and second, throughout my research on leadership, communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation stood out as the most important factors and indicators of increased relevance and impact. While Jesus's disruptive style of leadership did encompass other dimensions, these four speak to the nature of our contemporary context, wherein leaders are encouraged to take risks and shift status quo realities in order to be more effective. In this regard, disruptive leaders are not leaders who are able solely to communicate, create a space for contribution, develop a healthy culture, or cultivate future leaders; disruptive leaders operate at the intersection between the four competencies, practicing a dynamic, responsive, and high-risk model of



leadership that contributes to the overall displacement necessary for relevance and impact.

This exploration of Jesus's leadership paradigm suggests that any leader who is willing to adopt and implement at least these four competencies would position themselves to be an effective disruptive leader within a marketplace organization. If one of the aims of Christian discipleship is to "be like him [Jesus],"<sup>11</sup> it befits Christian leaders to embrace the paradigm by which he led, thus embracing a paradigm of disrupting the status quo, challenging assumptions, offering radical alternatives, and reimagining organizational community. That would suggest that disruptive leadership is not reserved for Jesus, but, rather it is available for anyone to embody with the intention of aligning one's life, one's leadership, and one's spiritual discipline.

The four core competencies of Jesus's paradigm are not within reach without spiritual discipline, which I define here as a disciplined code of conduct in relation to God. Throughout the Gospels, we find Jesus retreating and consulting with God in order to refresh himself and gain further insights with regard to what to do next. Jesus's praxis of prayer and meditation—placed in concert with his consistent disposition toward loving and caring for others—embodies a spiritual discipline that informs his particular style of disruptive leadership. Although this study does not pay sustained attention to Jesus's spiritual discipline, it is important to underscore that Jesus's paradigm of leadership was both informed and formed by his paradigm of spiritual praxis. This is to say, despite the explicit development of a concept of spiritual discipline, this study nevertheless is grounded in an understanding that Jesus's life and leadership would have been impossible

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<sup>11</sup> 1 John 3:2.

without his continual connection to God, made possible by the perpetual enactment of spiritual discipline. As I turn my attention to the specific charter school context, the significance of Jesus's spiritual discipline cannot be overstated.

To apply Jesus's model of disruptive leadership to a school (organizational) context is to challenge the very essence of the status quo that is often used to describe the nature of school organizations.<sup>12</sup> This study comprehensively and critically analyzes the practice of disruptive leadership in the context of an organizational culture that loathes the "stress of uncertainty."<sup>13</sup> Jesus's model of disruption was never about disrupting one life, but, rather disrupting a system, philosophy, or way of thinking that shaped a community of lives. Using a school organization as the case study for exploring this model provides the ideal platform for measuring disruption as a model for a community of lives versus an individual. The essence of a school organization is to develop systems, methods, and approaches that have wide-reaching impact on hundreds of lives within a given space. As a result, disruptive leaders within school organizations must be prepared for their actions to influence not a single life, but a community of lives.

This study uses a qualitative, case-study theory approach to explore Jesus's leadership model as a way to understand and enact the disruption of the status quo and to implement radical alternatives that better serve an organizational community, particularly an organizational school community. Qualitative data, including structured and semi-structured interviews, field notes, surveys (both printed and online), and written narrative,

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<sup>12</sup> John B. King, "Education Secretary Says Status Quo In Schools Is 'Unacceptable'" NPR Interview (September 3, 2016), accessed July 12, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2016/09/03/492549553/education-secretary-says-status-quo-in-schools-is-unacceptable>.

<sup>13</sup> Robert V. Carlson, *Reframing & Reform: Perspectives on Organization, Leadership, and Social Change* (New York: Longman Publishers, USA, 1996), 324.

are critically probed and analyzed for both spiritual and organizational implications that may advance the paradigm of a unique theory of disruptive leadership.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to explore four competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership paradigm—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation—and how, if applied to marketplace organizations, this paradigm can stimulate organizational transformation through implementing radical alternatives. Ultimately, this study will contribute to the discussion and development of an underdeveloped paradigm of leadership. Disruption as a new paradigm describes a leadership approach that offers and implements radical alternatives to status quo norms and practices on a systematic level, which empowers those in both sanctioned authority and non-titled authority to embody the same radical approach to their particular areas of influence. My work therefore fills a research gap in current leadership models relative to organizational transformation. Furthermore, this study will go beyond the theoretical by grounding itself in a substantive, qualitative, case-study methodology situated within a concrete context. This approach allows potential organizational leaders, particularly school organizational leaders, to learn from, modify, and implement this disruptive model within an existing context.

While both the results and impact of the core competencies explored in this study may be contextually dependent, controlling for a variety of organizational factors, this study will explore whether the paradigm of Jesus is applicable beyond contextual difference. By further understanding the core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership, and by examining these core competencies to a concrete context, I will

investigate how this paradigm allows marketplace organizations to offer radical alternatives that challenge status quo norms and practices that increase their relevance and impact. In so doing, I hope to contribute to discussions of leadership by developing a new theory of leadership that is plastic enough to be applied to multiple contexts while simultaneously consistent enough to be identifiable on its own.

### *Understanding the Problem*

Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher noted, “Since our complex societies are highly susceptible to interferences and accidents, they certainly offer ideal opportunities for a prompt disruption of normal activities.”<sup>14</sup> More than a half century later, Habermas’s observation rings true, particularly since within this age of disruption an intricate complexity of interferences, new developments, cultural advancement, technological innovations, and social progress suffuse our society, it will take disruption to respond to and solve them with a diversity of radical approaches. Stephen Spinelli and Heather McGowan advanced Habermas’s theory when they introduced how disruptive leadership is both directly and intimately connected to a disruption, originally, in “disciplinary thinking.”<sup>15</sup> In essence, disrupting the normative thinking of an organization will entail a shift in the system-level norms and practices on a ground level. As a result, exploring Jesus’s core competencies—communication and cultivation— speak to the disruption in thought that must precede a shift in behavior.

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<sup>14</sup> Jürgen Habermas & Steve Seidman, eds., *Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: A Reader* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 43.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Spinelli and Heather McGowan, *Becoming a Strategic Organization* (Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Group, 2014), 46.

Leadership theories and paradigms, accordingly, have altered in response to the changing values, innovations, and demands of contemporary context. Birthed out of the 1940s, leadership theory was grounded heavily in trait-based theories, which posited that leaders were inherently “born” and could not be developed.<sup>16</sup> As decades advanced, leadership paradigms brought a different approach to the forefront, suggesting that—contrary to the former leadership models based upon inherited traits—leadership can and will be learned over time through experience and mentorship. During this same period, another trend emerged—namely a trend that underscored how leadership is contextually sensitive, as it is constituted by a complex constitution of various environmental and situational elements. In essence, the idea of universal characteristics that provided an overarching definition and framework for defining leadership was declining, laying the groundwork for a new paradigm, called “contingency theory,” which, as the name denotes, highlighted how the intersection of various contingent factors influenced what leadership characteristics were necessary to demonstrate.<sup>17</sup>

The historical development of leadership studies is complex, displaying a considerable amount of change over time. During the Reagan era for example, leadership paradigms emphasized the impact of personality as “the ability to display charisma through growing media streams influenced the attitudes of American citizens.”<sup>18</sup> As the 1990s emerged, concepts of transformational leadership and servant-leadership began to come into prominence, both of which continue to be two of the most in-depth researched

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<sup>16</sup> K. Parry and A. Bryman, “2.1 Leadership in Organizations.” *The SAGE Handbook of Organization Studies* (SAGE Publications Ltd., 2006), 448.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 451.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 452.

leadership paradigms in present literature.<sup>19</sup> As the 2000s dawned, research interest remained steeped in both transformational and servant-leadership. However there has been growing disparities between servant-leadership and the ethos characterizing the age of disruption. And it is here where critical reflection on disruptive leadership models becomes important and necessary.

Parry and Bryman, for example, note that each new leadership paradigm, as they have progressed through the decades, has yielded a shift of focus, rather than disrupting any system-level or social structure, overall.<sup>20</sup> Trait theory placed its focus on the inherent traits of leaders; contingency theory was about the context of what was being led; the 1980s placed its focus on the significance of charisma; and the 1990s focused on leading through service. Because of the shift in foci, the overall body of leadership literature understands the roles of individual traits, context, and personality. Yet, these models prove insufficient in fully describing and addressing a technologically-driven, increasingly globalist culture in which radical alternatives are not only proposed but encouraged. My goal in this project is to build upon these approaches, examining how a disruptive leadership model might address what the trait, contingency, charismatic, and servant-leadership theories did not.

Disruptive leadership extends beyond these approaches by moving from a trait-based approach to a systems-level approach. This move both critiques and expands earlier leadership theories, indicating that the trait-based approach is more effective when it is coupled with a radical and disruptive democratic sensibility that seeks to displace the

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<sup>19</sup> K. Leithwood, D. Jantzi, & R. Steinbach, *Changing Leadership for Changing Times* (London: McGraw-Hill Education, 1999), 9,

<sup>20</sup> Parry and Bryman, 456.

norm of concentrating power in the hands of a few. Moreover, this approach is consistent with contemporary demands for leaders to both risk-taking and group-oriented. As Peter Northouse argues, both organizational employees and the American citizenry are longing for leadership that is willing to be bold and risk-taking. This organizational and cultural yearning is marked by a democratic sensibility that seeks to decentralize power, placing agential emphasis on a collectivity of individual actors.<sup>21</sup>

While servant leadership underscores the practice of humility, conceptual emphases on servant-leadership continually focus on a trait-based approach to leadership, making it possible for followers to lose “respect for leaders” when they no longer exhibit these particular qualities.<sup>22</sup> Disruptive leadership adds to the trait-based servant-leader model by including a systems-level focus that highlights how bold and risk-taking leaders decentralize access to power and authority in order to make space for innovation. In short, the disruptive leader augments the traits of humility and authenticity advocated by the servant-leader model by democratizing and decentralizing power through the disruption of the status quo. Challenging the status quo, making space for non-titled authority, and replacing systems help to create an ethos of boldness and risk-taking. Organizational participants and the American citizenry encourage and seek this ethos, and in so doing, the critical servant-leader traits of humility and authenticity are bolstered through sustained attempts at creating a culture wherein power is shared and everyone participates in the development of the organization.

There must be a prompt disruption of normal activities in order to withstand the

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<sup>21</sup> Jerold R. Thomas and Daney Jackson, “Trends and Issues Impacting Community Leadership at the Start of the 21st Century,” *Paper Presented to the Association of Adult Leadership Educators 2002 Annual Meeting* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Extension, 2002), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

structural dynamics of a constantly changing society, and the traits of humility and authenticity alone are not expansive enough to respond to the growing, complex innovations that impact organizations' relevance. "The simple mental models in our heads (and) the models that guide our daily behavior," Thomas Homer-Dixon writes, "are built around assumptions of regularity, repetition of past patterns, and extrapolation into the future of slow, incremental change."<sup>23</sup> Disruptive leadership, then, builds upon the trait-focused servant-leader approach to provide a launching point for creating and implementing radically innovative models that both attain and keep pace with the rapidly changing global environment. When humility and authenticity are coupled with a consistent eye toward radical equality, structural innovation, and shared power, it becomes possible to increase relevance and impact in our contemporary context.

As a disruptive leader, Jesus did in ancient Jerusalem what leaders must be willing to do today—he radically replaced the simple mental models of the status quo that had informed norms and practices, creating access for non-titled persons to participate in radical transformation. Just as he courageously acknowledged and challenged the norms and practices of the socio-religious system of Jerusalem, disruptive leaders in the modern context must both acknowledge when the status quo is no longer working, and must also possess the courage to propose alternatives and usher them to fulfillment. Just as the ancient religious systems were insufficient to further and expand the reach of the kingdom of heaven on earth,<sup>24</sup> the leadership paradigms that have guided contemporary secular organizations are also insufficient to further innovation and expand relevance in

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Ingenuity Gap: Can We Solve the Problems of the Future?* (Canada: Vintage Canada, a division of Random House of Canada, Ltd., 2000), 17.

<sup>24</sup> Matt. 6:10.



today's environment. This is why it is the disruptive leader's responsibility to abandon and replace the insufficient systems with radical alternatives more appropriate for a changing, complex, and global society.

Essential to the disruptive leadership paradigm is the detail that *new* disruptive leaders must work to bridge gaps between those committed to the status quo and those seeking to disrupt within the organization.<sup>25</sup> This process, which I also frame as reconciliation, requires imagining and creating entirely new norms and practices that honor both those committed to the status quo and those non-titled disruptors within the organization who are ready to embrace radical alternatives. Thus, the context of relationship building becomes an essential concern in the development of a disruptive leadership paradigm, particularly a paradigm built on the praxis of Jesus, who took seriously the role of relationship even within his disruptive leadership.

Jesus's interaction with Nicodemus, for example, is an indication of his value for relationship.<sup>26</sup> Nicodemus represented the status quo that Jesus came to replace; however, unlike his other dogmatic counterparts, Nicodemus's sincerity to embrace the radical alternative of Jesus's disruption yielded a form of transformation premised upon reconciliation and discipleship.<sup>27</sup> While not a pronounced function of "disruptive innovation" or "disruptive technologies," the detail of relationship building—or in some contexts, relationship bridging—produces organizational strength that embraces and

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<sup>25</sup> Dennis S. Reina and Michelle Reina, *Trust & Betrayal in the Workplace: Building Effective Relationships in Your Organization* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006), 3, 13, 135.

<sup>26</sup> John 3:1–21.

<sup>27</sup> Contemporary scholarship notes that Jesus's disruptive activities were complex; with regard to the Pharisees, for example, scholars like Harvey Faulk claim that Jesus was less disturbed with their doctrinal disposition than with their lack of "practicing what they preached." See Faulk, *Jesus the Pharisee: A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003).

flourishes with the replaced norms and practices. How, then, do disruptive leaders create relationships where those being led are willing to embrace proposed radical alternatives? As Michelle Reina notes, “The best thing you can do to help others take responsibility is to authentically practice the behaviors that you want others to practice.”<sup>28</sup> Jesus was willing to courageously practice the disruption he asked of those who followed him, thus becoming a leader who practiced what he preached.

### *A Disruptive Approach*

Disruptive leadership has its scholarly origins in Joseph L. Bower and Clayton M. Christensen’s “Disruptive Technology: Catching the Wave” in the 1995 *Harvard Business Review*. Their study introduced the concepts of disruptive innovation and disruptive technologies. Bower and Christensen write:

One of the most consistent patterns in business is the failure of leading companies to stay at the top of their industries when technologies or markets change. Why is it that established companies invest aggressively—and successfully—in the technologies necessary to retain their current customers but then fail to make the technological investments that customers of the future will demand?<sup>29</sup>

Central to their proposition is that “disruptive technologies” are radical alternatives to the status quo with a particular emphasis on having widespread cultural appeal to a larger community. Bower and Christensen laid the initial groundwork for research and discussion around the concept of “disruption”, but their proposition regarding “disruptive innovation” was (and is) cited as impacting the marketplace.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Reina and Reina, 135.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph L. Bower and Clayton M. Christensen, “Disruptive Technology: Catching the Wave,” *Harvard Business Review* (January-February 1995), accessed July 12, 2017, <https://hbr.org/1995/01/disruptive-technologies-catching-the-wave>.

<sup>30</sup> C. Markides, “Disruptive Innovation: In Need of a Better Theory,” *The Journal of Product Innovation Management* 23, no. 1 (2006): 25.

In the age of disruption, leading innovations like Facebook/Instagram, Uber, Google, Airbnb, Amazon Prime, and Netflix, challenge those approaches that claim disruptive innovation does not influence the larger marketplace. Against these claims, the idea of disruption has completely altered the American organizational, social, and cultural landscape. In addition to the above-listed innovative companies, the book industry stands as one of the clearest examples of having to undergo critical and radical self-reflection in order to maintain relevance and influence. This process of critical self-reflection entailed drastic changes, like displacing the primacy of the brick-and-mortar model in order to maintain pace with an increasingly digitized and technologized culture and society.<sup>31</sup> This process was disruptive, not in the sense of completely destroying old modalities (stores like Barnes and Noble still exist); instead, this self-reflective disruptive process entailed developing radical and unconventional norms and operating procedures that would reflect the increasing technological demands of contemporary society.

The goal of disruptive organizational and leadership models is not change for change's sake; instead, it is to inspire the kind of change that will lead to innovation, to the development of new and sustained forms of change that will push society forward. This is not simply the case in tech and book industries; it also can, and should, be the case in other industries, like education. Christensen and Eyring applied the theory of “disruptive innovation” to [higher] education in one of their most recent works, *The Innovative University—Changing the DNA of Higher Education from the Inside Out*. At the heart of the book is a simple thesis: schools, particularly colleges and universities, will only survive in the age of disruption by breaking with tradition to find less costly,

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<sup>31</sup> Kristof, 47.

and more efficient ways to advance the critical areas of university culture—faculty issues, enrollment, retention, and facility operations.<sup>32</sup>

Christensen and Eyring’s application of “disruptive innovation” to education is an indication that the concept of “disruption” is not limited in application, and thus, not meant to describe a singular innovation or improvement within a given space. Instead, disruptive innovation is a system-level and social structure innovation that completely replaces the original norm or practice with one that serves a larger community of persons until a new innovation comes along to repeat the sequence.<sup>33</sup> Disruptive leadership builds from the concept of disruptive innovation by suggesting that impacting the largest community of users possible requires making high-risk decisions to push communities forward. Disruptive leaders have one singular motivation, *replacing the status quo for the sake of enhancing organizational impact*.

While no formal or universally accepted definition exists for disruptive leadership, it often refers to leaders “who are not simply responding to unsatisfactory societal institutions; they are fundamentally changing them with impassioned vision, inclusiveness, and empowerment of others, as well as innovative creativity.”<sup>34</sup> Hesselbein and Goldsmith capture this when they say, “(Disruptive leaders) have not been content to plow the old furrows; instead they stake out new fields of opportunity, challenge, and

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<sup>32</sup> Clayton M. Christensen and Henry J. Eyring, *The Innovative University—Changing the DNA of Higher Education from the Inside Out* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Clayton M. Christensen, Michael B. Horn, Louis Caldera, and Louis Soares, “Disrupting College: How Disruptive Innovation Can Deliver Quality and Affordability to Postsecondary Education,” *Center for American Progress Innosight Institute Report*, Washington, D.C., (2004).

<sup>34</sup> Shideh Bina, “Profiles in Disruptive Leadership,” *Insigniam Quarterly*, Insigniam Holding, LLC. (2013).

transformation-new messages for a new day.”<sup>35</sup> In this study, I identify four competencies that are consistent with Jesus’s style of disruptive leadership as demonstrated in the Gospels: 1) the courage to take risks within *culture*, against political systems, and with thought and behavioral norms; 2) demonstrating a future-oriented sensibility by *cultivating* leaders who will continue disruption; 3), an open-mindedness to new ways to understand, frame, and address problems—exhibited in how Jesus *communicated* with women, non-titled persons, and “sinners”; and 4) an engagement with collective energy through welcoming the *contribution* of others within the disruptive leadership process.<sup>36</sup> While these competencies are not unique to disruptive leadership in that they can be singularly found in other leadership paradigms, they are unique to disruptive leadership in the intersection of all four competencies synchronously.

### *Definitions*

This study employs various terms that can have different meanings. In what follows, I offer a short glossary to clarify how I understand the technical terms in this study. Clarifying the usage and meaning of these terms will also allow for a streamlined flow of logic throughout the work and provide a foundation for understanding the development of the project.

Consensus on a formal definition of the term **disruptive leadership** does not exist within current research and literature. I therefore describe disruptive leadership as *a modality of leading that has the following characteristics: challenging status quo norms*

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<sup>35</sup> Frances Hesselbein and Marshall Goldsmith, “The Leader of the Future,” *Soundview Executive Summaries* 28, no. 12 (2006).

<sup>36</sup> Shideh Bina, “Profiles in Disruptive Leadership,” *Insigniam Quarterly*, Insigniam Holding, LLC. (2013).

*and practices; calling into question generally accepted assumptions; and offering radical alternatives on a systematic level.* At its core, disruptive leadership recognizes and replaces an unsatisfactory status quo with an alternative that better serves the organization and its constituents.

**Disruptive Innovation** is the development of new technologies, markets, or forms of innovation through the application of a radical set of values and norms. Disruptive innovation often (and either expectedly or unexpectedly) replaces an existing market for mass appeal.<sup>37</sup>

**Innovation** is the process [formally and informally] of discovering, implementing, and assessing new ideas that create, cause, or inspire change in a way of thinking/behaving. **Attitude** is a mental state, or way of processing information, which impacts how one thinks, approaches a circumstance, and behaves within that given circumstance. I define **Status quo** as the present state of doing things, thinking about things, or allowing things, particularly with regards to social structure and value systems.<sup>38</sup>

With these broader contextual definitions in mind, I offer the following definitions regarding the four core competencies of Jesus. **Communication** speaks to the process, style, and strategy by which information is communicated from one party to another. **Culture** is the unwritten, unspoken norms and rules that influence and govern how a given context or place functions, especially for its constituents. I define **Contribution** as a part played and/or performed by another person in bringing about a result, or helping something to advance, and I identify **Cultivation** as the development

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<sup>37</sup> Bower and Christensen, "Disruptive Technology."

<sup>38</sup> C. Michael Botterweck, *Everyday Sociology* (Elmhurst, IL: StarPoint Press, Ltd., 2011), 17.

and teaching of characteristics, including communication, culture-creation, and creating access for contribution, to motivate aspiring, emerging, and future leaders who seek to become like the mentor-leader. With these definitions in mind, I will now turn my attention to my research questions.

### *Research Questions*

The driving objective of this project was to explore whether a concrete application of the core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership paradigm—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation—to secular organizations can stimulate organizational transformation for relevance and impact by disrupting the status quo through radical alternatives. Ultimately, this study leads to the discussion and theoretical-practical development of disruptive leadership as a possible model for institutional and organizational transformation. This project was motivated by a central research question, primary research questions, and secondary research questions, which I delineate below in more detail.

The central question was to provide focus and direction to this study: “How do Jesus's core competencies of disruptive leadership relate to organizational relevance and impact in one charter school organization?”

Unfolding this central research question into primary and secondary questions helps not only to understand the depth of the research but also to translate the theoretical into substantive, qualitative methodology for organizational and spiritual implications. Hence, my central question was organized into three primary questions and three secondary questions.

The primary research questions were:

1. How do leaders who model the core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership affect the relevance and impact of a charter school?
2. How do other employees who model the core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership affect the relevance and impact of a charter school?
3. Are there controlling variables that would inhibit any of Jesus's four core competencies from being applied to a charter school context?
4. Is Jesus's seemingly ancient model of disruptive leadership appropriate as a leadership paradigm for other twenty-first century organizations?

There were also secondary research questions that were explored, as they helped to give context and background for the researcher's primary questions:

1. What, if any, of the four competencies are contextual to Jesus's cultural era, and thus unable to be applied and implemented in an organizational context?
2. Why does there appear to be a demand for disruptive leadership in an age of continued complaint with regards to disruption?
3. Could there be underlying paradigms within disruptive leadership that are being overlooked, which must be developed to holistically understand disruption?
4. What is unique to Jesus's spiritual practice that grounds his ability to be a disruptive leader?
5. Are there certain precursors that can be identified from a historical perspective that are crucial and universal for the successful implementation of disruptive leadership?

### *Rationale for the Study*

The rationale for this research lies in its potential contribution to both the study of leadership and the study of ministry in a way that could help marketplace organizations maintain relevance and impact through the lens of Jesus's disruptive paradigm.

Recognizing that leadership has an indelible impact on the operations, relevance, and influence of an organization, this study will contribute to the body of literature on how



disruptive leadership contributes to or detracts from organizational relevance. Although much has been researched and published about varying leadership paradigms to date, little research has been done on the competencies of disruptive leadership, especially through the lens of Jesus' actions in the Gospels. That is, there does not appear to be any serious work of scholarship exploring the intersection of Jesus, disruption, and marketplace organizations. To fill this void, I used substantive, qualitative methodologies, historical scriptural exegesis, and innovation theory in this study. The results of this research will hopefully be useful to existing and future organizational leaders to help inspire transformation in spaces that desire relevance and impact within and across the organization.

#### *Assumptions of the Study*

The following assumptions were made with regard to this study:

1. Marketplace organizations want to maintain relevance and impact.
2. The attitudes and behaviors of disruptive leaders influence the ability of an organization to maintain relevance and impact.
3. Jesus, though the incarnation of divinity, is a relevant model for leadership, which can be attained and replicated in our humanity.
4. Jesus's life and leadership style are more expansive than the picture I present here—or even the picture presented in the Gospels. The Gospels speak to a narrow timeframe in Jesus's life with the explicit intention of disclosing his messianic character to the world, which means that there was much more to Jesus than what we read or what I present here. The competencies I highlight are not the only competencies Jesus exhibited; instead, they are a critical sampling of leadership characteristics that helped to define Jesus's leadership and ministry style.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

Certain inherent restrictions need to be stated:

The *primary* limitation of this study, and any qualitative social study (which will be further explored in chapter 3) is that the researcher acts as a subjective instrument of design, collection, analysis, and reporting; and while a researcher-centered model is fundamental to substantive, qualitative methodology, “it challenges the traditionally accepted criteria of validity and generalizability.”<sup>39</sup> Controlling for researcher-bias, and by using research support from an additional researcher (approved for ethical reasons), the data collected and analyzed will allow for the development of thematic proposals, which will serve as a foundation for building a practical leadership paradigm that can be used to guide organizational leaders, both now and in the future, and future researchers in the area of organizational leadership.

Second, preconceived notions can sometimes unconsciously inform and form the outcome of a qualitative study, which is often less of a problem with an empirically-based/scientific method. The qualitative study relies heavily, if not solely, on inductive reasoning, looking for common themes, rationalities, and principles that can also be used in a predictive way for further research, and reported implications. However, this is not a social and/or psychological study, so there is no need to control for Hawthorne effects that occur when a “participant’s knowledge about taking part in an experiment affects the outcomes in four ways: demand characteristics, evaluation apprehension, social desirability, and placebo effect.”<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, the researcher’s own subjectivity must be acknowledged wherever they can be identified within the research.

Third, the lack of historical research on disruptive leadership is so that vast and

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<sup>39</sup> Nahid Golafshani, “Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research,” *The Qualitative Report* 8, no. 4 (2003): 598.

<sup>40</sup> Marty Sapp, *Basic Psychological Measurement, Research Designs, and Statistics Without Math* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, Ltd., 2006), 79.

indefinable that many of the propositions made are both original to the research, or built from similar foundations that bridge disruption and another concept, i.e. innovation and technologies. As a result, this study can only look at the impact of disruptive leadership from a forward-focus position, with particular attention on the historical exegesis of Jesus as the biblical model. In other words, this study is marked by the tension between past and future, which could be broken down into the distinction between two questions: “how *will* disruptive leadership impact (organization) in light of Jesus’s disruptive model” vs. “how *has* disruptive leadership impacted (organization)?”

Fourth, this research will be demarcated to a sample of one case study marketplace organization in the urban metropolis of Memphis, Tennessee, namely a school. The nature of the approach taken by school leaders might suggest that a local level exploration of one organization may provide skewed details that would not be generalizable beyond the isolated organization. While a comparative case study approach would have provided a platform to control for single case study partiality, the researcher believes that the organization chosen for the case study is the idyllic model for testing Jesus’s four competencies.

Fifth, using historical biblical exegesis, the researcher is exploring the contemporary possibilities of disruptive leadership through the application of ancient scriptures. Although the researcher is also relying upon the accumulated knowledge that has developed since the publication of the Gospels, this approach can nevertheless at times distort the exegetical process as one sees it and processes it, unless one is aware of one’s potential distortion.

*Outline of the Dissertation*

Chapter 1 addresses the background and statement of problem, purposes of the research, central, primary, and secondary research questions, and introduces the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 addresses the biblical and theological foundations pertaining to disruptive leadership, Jesus as a leadership practitioner, innovation, organizational structure, and the four competencies of Jesus's leadership paradigm—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation. Chapter 3 addresses the qualitative, case study methodology, research design, data collection, analysis, validity, reliability, and generalizability. Chapter 4 reviews the findings of the case study analysis and describes the themes that emerged from the data. Chapter 5 summarizes the results of the research and makes recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Biblical and Theological Foundations

#### *Introduction*

“Believing that the text is God’s written word does not put us in a box as regards the truth God may use it to teach us. ‘The Word of God is not bound.’ The New Testament indicates to us by its use of Scripture that the text can give meaning on several levels and possesses a surplus of meaning potential that transcends the meaning it originally had.”  
—Clark Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle*<sup>1</sup>

As both the ancient prophetic figure and relevant salvific source of humanity, Jesus is arguably the most empathic, effective, and disruptive leader the world has ever known and will ever know. The narratives of the Gospels not only provide a glimpse into his life, teachings, and impact, they also provide a framework for understanding how Jesus’s *communicative* style, *culture* resetting, *contributive* access, and leadership *cultivation* are the core competencies of his disruptive leadership style. In our age of disruption where the menace of an incessant rush for organizational leadership—particularly expressed through free-agent entrepreneurialism—is at an all-time high, an exegetical study of the competencies of Jesus’s leadership will provide an ethically responsible platform for disruptive leadership in marketplace organizations. By coupling unorthodox leadership with impeccable character and upright sensibilities, Jesus models who we are called to be, both in life and in leadership.

Vernon Robbins’s socio-rhetorical model of exegesis examines scriptural passages in light of both ancient integrity and contemporary applicability; as such, this

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<sup>1</sup> Clark Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).

model provides an ideal unfolding of the intended scriptural meaning, anthropological and sociological implications, and inner-societal application.<sup>2</sup> This socio-rhetorical mode of exegesis can be applied to any translation of the scripture, which is useful for this study, since it will employ various textual translations. Robbins's exegetical model combines five elements, providing the ideal structure for this study<sup>3</sup>:

1. intertexture
2. argumentative
3. social/cultural
4. ideological
5. sacred text

The focus of this section is a review the life and teachings of Jesus found in the Gospels, using the socio-rhetorical exegetical model and hermeneutical techniques to demonstrate the applicability of Jesus' life in the Gospels to marketplace organizational leadership. At their core, the Gospels are central to Christian society; and in this context, they are central to understanding Jesus's disruptive leadership in that they document the vital accounts of Jesus's life. Of the Gospels, my exegesis will give particular attention to Jesus's disruptive leadership through a Mark-Luke lens, with—when necessary—applying exegetical analysis to Matthew and John. In light of this, however, this section will give critical attention to Markan texts: Mark is not only the earliest of all the Gospels, thus providing the earliest insights on Jesus's ministry<sup>4</sup>; it is also respected by

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<sup>2</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> I am aware that this claim is disputed by some scholars; however, certain historical-critical scholars, such as Luke Timothy Johnson, assert that Mark is the earliest canonical gospel. See Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

both Matthew and Luke as an authoritative account of Jesus's life, teachings, and leadership style.<sup>5</sup>

Through intertextual analysis, all of the Gospels include the same protagonist and supporting characters—Jesus operates as the leading figure and archetype of disruptive leadership; the disciples are the cultivated leaders who would carry the disruption into “all the world,”<sup>6</sup>; the community of witnesses are often referred to indistinctly as the “crowd”; and the religious status quo is demarcated by the Pharisees and Sadducees. Throughout each of the Gospels, the characters' interactions and encounters are refracted through the impact of the life and teachings of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> Each of these groups participate intricately in the disruptive paradigm of Jesus, ranging from being casualties of the disruption to being “joint heirs”<sup>8</sup> with him in furthering the work of disruption. One cannot apprehend the social/cultural or ideological weight of his disruptive leadership without thoroughly understanding and appreciating the subtleties of the character subcategories he encountered.

Previous historical analyses of culture and religious systems provide the evidence that the religious status quo of Pharisees and Sadducees is the most distinct, and antagonistic, disruption that Jesus's leadership encounters. As both the most elite and revered groups of religious leadership, the religious status quo maintained an

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<sup>5</sup> Craig A. Evans, “Mark,” *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 2003), 1064. It is also important to note that the Gospels do not present an exhaustive or comprehensive portrait of Jesus's life. Instead, the Gospels highlight Jesus's identity as the Messiah. With this in mind, I draw from the Gospels to distill certain leadership characteristics; I do not make the claim that the Gospels present a complete portrait of Jesus's life, and neither do I claim that the four competencies I outline in this project encompass the totality of Jesus's leadership and ministry style.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 28:28

<sup>7</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 42.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 8:17

organizational hegemony on the other characters that often demanded Jesus's disruptive leadership model to radically alter those living under this hegemony.<sup>9</sup> Their influence over cultural and social systems was possible in large part because of their authority over and leadership of Temple worship, one of the sacred assemblies of the community.

Despite their shared influence over communities of persons, distinct groups often stood at theological, political, and socio-cultural odds—particularly around the reading and interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, their difference in ideology was unmatched to their shared anxiety about Jesus's ability to cultivate disciples and followers based on his unique communicative methods and cultural perspectives.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, from the early days of his public ministry<sup>12</sup> to his eventual death—which was instigated by the religious status quo<sup>13</sup>—Jesus makes it his fundamental imperative to disrupt the religious status quo. By challenging their norms, practices, cultural assumptions, and social expectations, Jesus developed a leadership paradigm that had considerable impact and influence that started during the growth of his ministry, initially growing through the courageous efforts of a small, dedicated group of followers and evangelists.<sup>14</sup>

Second to the religious elite, the community of witnesses, i.e. “the crowd,” is ubiquitous in the accounts of Jesus's life throughout the Gospels, serving a unique role within his disruptive model—often finding themselves having to reconcile status quo

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<sup>9</sup> Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 42.

<sup>10</sup> S. Ungerleider and S. Cohen, *A Portrait of Jesus* (2005), accessed November April 21, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/protrait/temple.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Theodore J. Weeden, Sr., *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1971), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Mark 3:6.

<sup>13</sup> Mark 15:1–39.

<sup>14</sup> Weeden, 21.



theological propositions from the religious elite with Jesus's radical alternatives. Some theologians and biblical historians have suggested that the crowds, as mentioned particularly in Mark, Luke, and John, are solely literary devices to underscore the widespread popularity of Jesus with the common masses in order to demonstrate the resentment of the limited religious elite.<sup>15</sup> Of Jesus's core competencies, it is his communicative methods of parables and clarity alongside his cultural resetting of Jewish legalism that serves as the greatest disruptors for the crowd. Although John the Baptist attempted to disrupt some of the status quo through his prophetic proclamations of a coming Messiah, the crowds were still primarily influenced by the ruling religious elite until Jesus's arrival. Accordingly, the crowds were often framed as emotionally impacted and spiritually enlightened after their encounters with Jesus. Most of the recorded narratives of the Gospels underscore the radical transformation Jesus had on the crowd, often concluding stories about the crowd with persons leaving their lives, families, and professions "to follow him."<sup>16</sup>

While both the religious elite and the onlooking witnesses—"the crowd"—were essential to the life and teachings of Jesus, each of the synoptic Gospels makes it remarkably clear that Jesus's disruptive leadership was of particular interest to his disciples. As the prototypical benefactors of his radical alternative for discipleship, the disciples are the result of the embrace and implementation of all four competences of Jesus' paradigm. More than the religious elite and the crowd, Jesus *communicated* with the disciples essentially every day of his life; he invited their *contributions* to the

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<sup>15</sup> Dean B. Deppe, *The Theological Intentions of Mark's Literary Devices* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 12.

<sup>16</sup> Refer to Matt 4:25; 8:1; 12:15; 14:13; 19:2; 20:34; 4:18-20; Mk 3:7; 2:15; 14:51; 5:24; Luke 9:11; 7:9; 5:11; and John 6:2.

transformation of *culture* through their questions, struggles, and moments of failure; and ultimately, he *cultivated* them to apply all of their experiences with his disruptive paradigm and radical alternatives of the kingdom of God with the express intent to spread the paradigm throughout all the world.

Our Western imagination, which is drawn to grouping personalities into fixed identifiers, might want to assume that the religious elite represented the villains, the crowd functioned as the innocent by-standers, the disciples were heroic sidekicks, and Jesus was the disruptive hero. However, these roles, which both impacted, influenced, and informed Jesus's paradigm are more complicated and intricate than our Western categories. This complexity is demonstrated through the lack of understanding the crowd has with his role, as they tried to make sense of his role of a peaceful (and therefore non-militarized) messiah; the religious elite's continued frustration with trying to reconcile his popularity, miraculous signs, and political innocence; and the disciples' need to understand why he would have to both die and depart the earth as part of his radical alternative approach to leadership. Mark demonstrates that the disciples did not clearly understand Jesus's role as Messiah. As a result, Jesus and these groups are found in continuous conflict due to the dilemmas imbedded in making sense of his disruptive arrival, disruptive teachings, disruptive beliefs, and radical alternatives to the core competencies of communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation.

### *Communication*

Jesus was one of the paramount communicators of human history, using a variety of methods, most clearly by way of parables, to transfer knowledge to the multitudes. C. Gene Wilkes writes, "Jesus knew that his followers were trapped in the world's way of

seeing things. Part of his service to them was to lead them into a new view of God's kingdom."<sup>17</sup> Unique to his mastery was his ability to communicate radical alternatives for envisioning and experiencing life with God, both in large contexts, such as the assembled masses<sup>18</sup> and in intimate settings.<sup>19</sup> Beyond prose, poetry, and even sermon diction, his use of parables demonstrated the power of his communication and the disruption it inspired amongst the crowd and especially the disciples.

Simply defined, a parable is an elementary story used to illuminate a lesson.<sup>20</sup> Many of us learned the definition of the parable as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," and although that is partly true, it does not capture the depth of parabolic methodology as used by Jesus in the Gospels. That is to say, often the parables were used not as teaching heavenly meanings, but as furthering spiritual and moral principles, which radically altered how the crowd and the disciples interacted with and moved through society.<sup>21</sup> William Barclay writes, "There are certain stories which are not so much the heritage of the scholar and the material of the theologian as the possession of every [wo]man<sup>22</sup>; and such are the parables of Jesus."<sup>23</sup> Contrary to the assumption that Jesus was the architect of parables, he was using "a method which, long before, the prophets had often most effectively employed."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> C Gene Wilkes, *Jesus On Leadership* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998), 97.

<sup>18</sup> John 6:1–15.

<sup>19</sup> Luke 10:38–42.

<sup>20</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Farmington: Polebridge Press, 1994), 31.

<sup>21</sup> Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981), 18.

<sup>22</sup> Note: [wo] added to the original quote for gender-inclusion.

<sup>23</sup> William Barclay, *The Parables of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1970), 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

Beyond honoring the history of Jewish practice with using them, Jesus's use of parables was a way to establish rapport with first century Jews who were, above all things, practical in their thinking and communicating. Understanding the Jewish thought process, Jesus knew “. . . the parabolic method appeals to far more than the Jew. It has a well-nigh universal appeal for the ordinary [wo]man with the ordinary mind.”<sup>25</sup> In order to communicate his disruptive message, which would challenge the long-held assumptions of Jewish culture and religious systems, Jesus was perceptive enough as a leader to know that if he had primarily used abstract philosophical concepts without a grounded communicative methodology, few might have understood him—diminishing his ability to cultivate more disruptive leaders. Dave Anderson notes, “as the leader, you're expected to see more, to see sooner, and to see farther than followers.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the leading and foundational core competency of his disruptive leadership was the power of parabolic communication.

At the heart of his parabolic communication style was a challenge, which was always in some way an “invitation” for the “crowd” and the disciples to follow him. His disruptive communicative style was never detached from his invitation for the listener to be cultivated as a disruptive thinker, follower, and ultimately, a leader within themselves to lead others to embrace the radical alternative of the “kingdom of God” that Jesus was inaugurating. This radical alternative, proposed through parabolic methodology that yields an invitation for discipleship can be directly observed in Jesus's teaching on the mustard seed.

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<sup>25</sup> Barclay, *The Parables of Jesus*, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Dave Anderson, *How to Run Your Business by the Book: A Biblical Blueprint to Bless Your Business* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 14.

Jesus said, “How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What *story* should I use to illustrate it? It is like a *mustard seed* planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade.”<sup>27</sup>

In order to understand the disruptive nature of this parable, particularly the intellectual disruption of the use of “mustard seed,” a socio-rhetorical model requires Western Christians to detach our reading of the text from Western ideology—primarily as it relates to the concepts of developmental growth. Reading Western understandings of how things grow into the parable will not only distort the disruptive nature of what Jesus is communicating, it will also create a distorted sensibility that the kingdom of God started with Jesus’s arrival in the world. Understandably, much Christian exegesis has been informed by a “Hegelian philosophy that dominated theological as well as all kinds of thinking in the last [20<sup>th</sup>] century, having caused these parables to be interpreted as teaching an evolution growth of the kingdom of God.”<sup>28</sup>

This Hegelian approach tends to construct inessential dichotomies between the start of a reality and the concluding reality—a dichotomy that is often entrenched in Western logic’s desire to see the end display a progressive growth from a thing’s beginning state.<sup>29</sup> This was not the case in the first-century Jewish mind. Read through the first-century lens, the parables are less the synthesis of a new reality on the basis of old constituent parts than they are an attempt to remove this dichotomy by simply showing the distinctive realities between the beginning and the concluding state.

Restoring these parables to their cultural and social context, controlling for contemporary

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<sup>27</sup> Mark 4:30–32.

<sup>28</sup> Stein, 94.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

application and underlying human lessons, Jesus's use of the mustard seed is an attempt to teach something distinct from an evolutionary growth perspective of the kingdom of God. With that in mind, Jesus uses the mustard seed solely to compare the beginning state of the seed, which is used as a literary proverbial device in first century Judaism, and the final product of the seed, a large bush.<sup>30</sup> Absent in Jesus's parabolic use of the mustard seed is a heightened underscoring of the final product versus the seed; instead, Jesus underscores the reality of both the seed's states.

Jesus's clear use of the mustard seed in this parable to teach on the kingdom of God may be a subtle distinction in light of our contemporary Western sensibilities; however, within his historical context, this parable considerably disrupted the disciples' expectation of his response. The expectation of the first-century Jewish mind was that Jesus would make the mustard seed inconsequential, thus accentuating what the Jewish mind would already be in agreement with—the greatness of the kingdom of God. That is to say, almost every Jewish mind that would have heard Jesus say, “. . .it becomes the largest of all garden plants,” would understood that the kingdom of God, in the full manifestation of its reality, would be great and the largest kingdom of all kingdoms.

But there would have been nothing disruptive about that proposition; it would have simply confirmed status quo norms and expectations. In his desire to instantiate a new and more expansive way of thinking about reality and salvation, Jesus poignantly used the mustard seed to highlight that, in its smallness, the mustard seed yielded a bush that could grow six to ten feet tall.<sup>31</sup> The disruption, then, is the fact that Jesus gave significance to the beginning of the state of the mustard bush, thus giving significance to

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<sup>30</sup> Stein, 95.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

the state of the kingdom of God in its earthly state before it grew into the fullness of its prophetic claim. His parabolic methodology was to disrupt their expectation of the coming of the kingdom. Just as they had expected their Messiah to come as a political warrior and liberator whose focus was deconstructing Roman authority, they expected the kingdom of God to arrive in the fullness of its conclusive state. The cognitive dissonance this produced is not simply disruptive; it literally *altered* perceptions of reality, entailing a mode of engagement and interaction that refused to adhere to given claims about the state of existence.

Jesus made it clear that the reason the disciples, the crowd, and the religious status quo were oblivious to the kingdom of God was not because they had small expectations, but rather because they did not appreciate how the salvation and power of the kingdom of God had small and seemingly insignificant origins. To further their confusion, the hearers could not conceive of a kingdom of God that would make space at the table for “disreputable characters [such as] the harlots, the publicans, the poor, the blind.” Yet, Jesus’s radical alternative of the kingdom is that these communities of persons “are already now participating in the blessings of the kingdom.”<sup>32</sup> Though the parable of the mustard seed is only one of many parables within the Gospels, Jesus’s use of parables simultaneously disclosed the disruptive theological and sociopolitical dimensions of his self-understanding as a leader. This is disruptive leadership praxis at its finest.

Knowing that the replacement of status quo thinking—and the concomitant challenge and undermining of the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ influence this kind of replacement would entail—was central to his leadership paradigm, Jesus’s use of

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<sup>32</sup> Stein, 95.

parables as a communicative style made it socio-politically difficult—though not impossible, for they eventually succeeded—for the religious elite to indict him on charges of treason.<sup>33</sup> Imagine the gentle appeal of using a simple mustard seed to communicate a radical alternative for how to see and expect the kingdom of God: it was by all accounts, inoffensive, and even inconsequential. While the religious elite was often confounded by his use of parabolic communication, Jesus was an intentional leader. He knew the community in which he invested, and was invested in cultivating disruptive leaders from this community—namely, the disciples. “When he was alone with his disciples,” Mark’s gospel indicates, “he explained everything to them.”<sup>34</sup> Jesus was not simply invested in his own leadership, he was also invested in the cultivation of other leaders.

Jesus’s disruptive paradigm included the use of parables in order to both conceal the depth of the radical alternative to those who could not appreciate it, while nevertheless cultivating a unique level of relationship and understanding with his followers that protected them and their leader.<sup>35</sup> The spiritual and organizational implications of Jesus’s communicative competency are vast, but they nevertheless share three critical implications: 1) disruptive leaders communicate clearly with their “disciples,” understanding that effective radical alternatives must be clear for implementation; 2) disruptive leaders use their communicative competency to both protect and preserve the integrity of the radical alternative from those within the status quo system who are unable to appreciate the replacement of the system’s norms and

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<sup>33</sup> Stein, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Mark 4:34.

<sup>35</sup> Stein, 34.



practices; and 3) disruptive leaders use their communicative competency to build relationship and understanding with their “disciples” by explaining everything to them.

### *Culture*

Disruptive leaders offer radical alternatives, which not only impact the individual lives of those within their leadership, but more importantly, impact system-level status quo norms and practices that hinder growth, influence, and relevance. Second only to the role of communication as a core competency within disruptive leadership is the core competency of cultural resetting, which is a core function of Jesus’s life and teachings. One of the starkest places we find Jesus resetting the culture is in and through his interactions with women.

Jesus disrupted the laws—written and unwritten—that governed Jewish gender interactions. In first century Palestine, women were considered not only inferior to men, but also the property of men. Women were second-class, second-rate citizens whose identity was directly in relationship to the men in their lives.<sup>36</sup> On a practical level, women were expected to keep distance from men in the public square, avoid eye contact or any form of (even accidental) physical touch, avoid certain areas of the Temple during worship and even eat while standing (in order to always be prepared to serve men).<sup>37</sup> As Allen Verhey notes, women were treated with so much disdain that their status, both legally and spiritually, was that of slaves.<sup>38</sup> Jesus’s connection to and treatment of women was—and is, if we think critically about contemporary Western patriarchy—a radical

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas Zanzig, *Jesus of History, Christ of Faith* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 1999), 90.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>38</sup> Allen Verhey, *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 2002), 173.

alternative, which emphasizes the competency of culture within his disruptive leadership paradigm.

As a disruptive leader, Jesus also called his followers to disruption. Recall, for example, the story of the conversation Jesus had with the woman at the well in Sychar, a story that changed the woman's social status and outlook on reality (it should also be noted that this occurred for others who chose to follow Jesus as well).<sup>39</sup> As the exchange opens between Jesus, a Jewish man, and this unnamed Samaritan woman, readers are attuned to the competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership. During the historical context in which Jesus came, public cross-gendered conversation was considered objectionable to the social practices of a traditional patriarchal system, often only being reserved for the exchange of inappropriate sexual ethics.<sup>40</sup> Jesus altered what was an unacceptable social practice by conversing with the Samaritan woman—and in so doing, he challenged the Jewish-Samaritan norms of acceptable interaction between the genders.

Jesus's decision to speak to the Samaritan woman in public produces such a cultural (and cognitive) dissonance that even his disciples are incredulous to find their leader "communicating with a woman."<sup>41</sup> The astonishment of the disciples accentuates the first dynamic of the intersection between cultural and cultivation competencies; Jesus helps his disciples develop their own modalities of disruptive leadership by exemplifying a perpetual challenge to established norms concerning human relations, social systems, and community. Jesus's activities radically departed from his disciples' assumptions about religion and social culture; in making this departure—in resetting cultural norms

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<sup>39</sup> John 4:1–42.

<sup>40</sup> Gary N. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>41</sup> John 4:27.

through his actions—Jesus encouraged his disciples to do the same. In resetting the *culture*, Jesus also *cultivated* disruptive dispositions in his followers-turned-leaders, demonstrating the potency of disruptive leadership.

In addition to gender, Jesus reset the culture with regard to ethnicity. Jesus was a Jewish man and the unnamed woman was Samaritan. As Gary Knoppers notes, “Explaining why the Samaritan woman is amazed that Jesus is even talking with her, the narrator (or a later scribe) comments: ‘Jews do not share (things) in common with Samaritans’ (John 4:9).”<sup>42</sup> More pointedly, Jewish culture considered Samaritans to be less than themselves, often comparing Samaritans to dogs, most clearly noted in 2 Kings 17.<sup>43</sup> Jesus’s interaction with the woman at the well was not merely unorthodox, and neither was it merely a challenge to the culture for the sake of mere rebellion. Jesus’s decision to speak with the woman at the well instantiated a different set of cultural norms, a different constellation of relational dispositions, that aimed at nothing less than a total transformation and augmentation of society for the better.

Latent within this encounter with the woman at the well is not only his mastery of communication—Jesus courageously yet compassionately confronts the complexity of the woman’s past—but most significant is the effect produced as a result of their dialogue, her being *cultivated* to become a disruptive leader herself. Again, the confluence of competencies—communication, culture, cultivation—are demonstrated through Jesus’s actions. Consider, for example, the effect of their encounter:

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<sup>42</sup> Knoppers, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 3.

The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?” So the people came streaming from the village to see him.<sup>44</sup>

Jesus’s disruption of the woman’s expectations concerning Jewish interaction—especially *male* Jewish interaction—triggered her to “leave her water jar and run back to the village.” The writer’s intentional mention of both the water jar and the woman running generally offers a level of authenticity to the encounter; but more than this, it critically provides hermeneutical clues that Jesus’s communication with her was so transformative that she might have forgotten her initial reasoning for going to the well. It is possible to conclude that her intention was to simply run to the village and return with others, at which point she would retrieve the water jar. But, the resulting reality of her immediate and rapid departure accentuates her *cultivation* as a disciple—one committed to following Jesus—in that her life was so disrupted that she felt it imperative and urgent to disrupt others with an eye toward their salvation.

This woman teaches us that one of the consequences of authentic disruptive leadership is a compelling testimony. When she goes back to the village, which we can assume was a public square full of women *and men*—we cannot miss the mirroring here between how Jesus broke gender norms and how she does the same thing back at the village—she claims to have met a man “who told me all the things that ever I did.” One might suggest that these words produced a cognitive dissonance in the consciousness of the listeners: Jesus’s ability to tell her “all the things” she had ever done was a suggestion of Jesus’s divinity, and as such, raised questions about the nature of the Messiah and the nature of God himself. It is reasonable to assume that the woman’s proposition of Jesus’s

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<sup>44</sup> John 4:28–30.

divinity did not disrupt the theology of *all* those who heard her testimony; nevertheless, it certainly disrupted the theology of those who—unlike the Samaritans—were looking for a political Messiah, coming to overturn Roman-imperialism.<sup>45</sup>

Then, with a brilliant stroke of communicative mastery, just as Jesus (her disruptive leader) exercised with her, she inquired of those whom she testified to, “Could he be the Messiah?” Her question masterfully articulates that she realizes how she disrupts the status quo of their theological system by proposing his divinity in knowing all she has ever done. In the Greek, the interrogative particle *meti*—“could he be”—implies an expected negative response<sup>46</sup>, meaning she asked her question presuming that those who heard her would respond [either verbally or internally] with a resounding, “No, he is not the Messiah.” In this ancient culture, whenever a woman communicated, particularly in a public forum, it was not received as valid testimony. As a result, her asking them this question using *meti* was, assumedly, her *cultivated* way of *communicating* following her encounter with Jesus. Just as Jesus uses a radically gentle interrogative method to communicate his way into her conscience, she uses the same methodology, leaving her audience perfectly at ease with her piercing inquiry and allowing them to construe their own conclusions regarding her disruptive testimony. Subsequently, just as her disruptive encounter with Jesus initiated her leaving her possessions immediately and running to the village, her disruptive encounter with the people of Sychar initiated them departing from their city and running to find him.

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<sup>45</sup> For more on Samaritan messianic theology, see Raymond Brown’s *The Gospel According to John, I-XII* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

<sup>46</sup> Frances Taylor Gench, *Back to the Well: Women’s Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 183.

### *Contribution*

In an age of consumerism, where taking and receiving supersedes giving and contribution, disruptive leaders are leaders who both see and value the practice of contributing value into the lives those led, and the spaces they are called to serve. This ethos of consumerism has insinuated its way into contemporary Christianity where those who profess to be followers of Christ do not always contribute their value to that community. Thus, Jesus provides a radical alternative to consumerist ideals by demonstrating not only his willingness, but also his fulfillment in contributing to the lives of those following after them. While it is most clear that Jesus added value to the lives of his followers through his teachings and his miracles, he disrupted culture when he used the radical praxis of relationship-building to contribute value into lives. He was particularly committed to contributing value to the lives of those persons whom culture deemed undeserving, unworthy, and unsalvageable. Of all those whom were deemed undeserving and unworthy of divine value, first-century Palestine was particularly insensitive to those who were affected by political and financial oppressors. Exclusive to the Lukan gospel is a story of a man known to the community as Zacchaeus the tax collector, which underscores Jesus's paradigm of giving value to the unworthy and undeserving when he encounters a financial oppressor.

The Zacchaeus narrative in Luke 19, is part of a four-chapter collection (chapters 15–19) often identified by theologians as “the Gospel of the Outcast,”<sup>47</sup> which furthers the ethos of Jesus's willingness and fulfillment in thinking about, associating with, and giving value to sinners and outcasts. Luke, in particular, has explicitly identified Jesus's

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<sup>47</sup> Brent Kinman, *Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem: In the Context of Lukan Theology and the Politics of His Day* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1995), 80.

value-giving relationship with outcasts. Jesus called Levi, a tax collector, to be one of his first disciples (Luke 5:29–32); he allowed an “immoral woman” to wipe his feet with the perfume of her alabaster jar (Luke 7:36–42); and in 19:1–10, he encounters Zacchaeus. Being situated within “the Gospel of the Outcast,” the Zacchaeus’s narrative is a small part of a larger Lukan thesis describing Jesus’s relationship to the reviled of society.

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.<sup>48</sup>

The tension found in this narrative between Jesus and Zacchaeus is intensified, particularly by Luke’s use of the Greek word, *architelōnēs*, denoting “chief tax collector,” which in turn was his way of identifying Zacchaeus as “the worst of the worst” because he is not the first tax collector to encounter Jesus.<sup>49</sup> If Luke’s use of *architelōnēs* were not enough, the people’s response to Jesus’s contributing value to Zacchaeus by calling his name and initiating an invitation into his world reinforces the tension within the moment: “But the people were displeased . . . they grumbled (v. 7-9).”

Although the crowd grumbled at their meeting, the religious status quo was confused because Zacchaeus “would be [seen] by Jewish leaders as bearing the responsibility for the dishonesty connected with the activity of all his field workers.”<sup>50</sup> As Bailey describes, “The tax-collector was despised in rabbinic literature . . . and he and his

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<sup>48</sup> Luke 19:1–7.

<sup>49</sup> Kinman, 81.

<sup>50</sup> Robert J. Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary Based on the New American Bible: New Testament* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 970.

family were considered unclean. Lying to him was condoned.”<sup>51</sup> That is to say, the religious elite and the crowds would have struggled to make sense of how Jesus—one whom proclaimed to be the son of God and the fulfillment of prophecy—could contribute value into a man responsible for the reprehensible treatment of God’s people, a man that they would have rather seen stoned than valued.

If Jesus’s communication with Zacchaeus were not enough, his disruptive breach of Jewish decorum and social politics was an even more radical alternative to the status quo practices of the first century. Notice that in the Lukan narrative, Jesus does not call Zacchaeus and wait for Zacchaeus to extend an offer for Jesus to be a guest in his home, which would have been the standard social politic of the culture. Instead, Jesus invites himself because as the shepherd who is seeking a lost sheep, Jesus comprehends that in order to contribute value to Zacchaeus’s life, he had to make the first overture of invitation.<sup>52</sup>

The average citizen would never invite Zacchaeus to their house out of fear of tax collection; they would also never accept an invitation to Zacchaeus’s house because of the reputation that preceded him. Why, then, does Jesus not only desire to build relationship with Zacchaeus, but invite himself into Zacchaeus’s house? With Luke signaling that Jesus had no intentions of staying by using the phrase, “made his way through,” inviting himself into Zacchaeus’ house was radically inconceivable because Palestinian culture was marked by the social politic that “the community selects the form of hospitality, not the guest. No guest selects his [or her] own host, nor does any guest

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<sup>51</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downer Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 176–77.

<sup>52</sup> Karris., 970.



(especially in a situation of oppression) invite himself in public into the house of a despised collaborator!”<sup>53</sup>

As dubious as it may seem, Zacchaeus, even with his flawed reputation and outcast character, still maintains a spirit worthy of being poured into from the mouth of Christ. Captured solely from the Lukan narrative, Zacchaeus demonstrates that he not only retains childlike spontaneity, but even presents an overture of unpretentiousness because “his position does not prevent him from climbing the sycamore tree nor from publicly admitting his guilt and professing his repentance.”<sup>54</sup> One of the underlying characteristics of Jesus’s disruptive leadership paradigm is *humility*; and Zacchaeus in a tree simply attempting to avail himself of an encounter with Jesus is a humbling testament to his readiness for life to have value. Despite the amount of Zaccheus’ possessions, the status of his title, or the impact of his profession, he denied himself and took up his own cross (which we will analyze in the section on cultivation); he broke the status quo expectations of culture for a tax collector; he listened to the word of Jesus; and as a result, was given the values of life, service, and discipleship.

One of the subtle and easily overlooked details of Jesus contributing value to Zacchaeus’ life is wrestling with *why* he had to climb into the sycamore tree at all. Luke records that he was too short to see beyond the crowd, a physical fact in Luke’s first century writing and a spiritually moving detail in our twenty-first century reading. That is, in order for Zacchaeus to experience the contribution of value from Christ, he had to maneuver through the crowd. In essence, his ability to be a disruptive disciple committed

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<sup>53</sup> Bailey, 180.

<sup>54</sup> Karris, 970.

to the core competencies of Jesus necessitated his having to develop a way to see Jesus beyond the crowd.<sup>55</sup>

Were he respected the crowd would naturally have ‘made way’ for such a rich and powerful person. Middle Eastern culture requires such treatment. But Zacchaeus was a collaborator and thereby despised. The collaborator dared not ask the crowd to make way for him and doubtless was afraid to even mix with them.<sup>56</sup>

This radical, disruptive act of Zacchaeus—a socially, financially, and politically established man climbing a tree to see Jesus—might have placed him outside of the realm of cultural acceptability in the first century, but it placed him inside of the realm of possibility to receive value for his life. As a result, the impact of the Lukan narrative is to accentuate for the reader that Jesus’s radically disruptive willingness to give value to all who propel themselves into a place of possibility is as available to us today as it was to Zacchaeus.

How do we know this? Because instead of calling his name with the status quo public mocking that the crowd expected to happen, Jesus called his name with an invitation to commune in his household. Just as Jesus supported the oppressed in teaching and preaching before now, such as he did with the blind man, the crowd expected Jesus to support them since they were the oppressed of Zacchaeus. Bailey brilliantly writes that the crowd expected Jesus to say the following:

Zacchaeus, you are a collaborator! You are an oppressor of these good people. You have drained the economic lifeblood of your people and given it to the imperialists. You have betrayed your country and your God. This community’s hatred of you is fully justified. You must quit your job, repent, journey to Jerusalem for ceremonial purification, return to Jericho and apply yourself to

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<sup>55</sup> Roger E. Van Harn, *The Lectionary Commentary: Theological Exegesis for Sundays’ Texts, The Third Readings—The Gospels* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 436.

<sup>56</sup> Bailey, 177.

keeping the law. If you are willing to do these things, on my next trip to Jericho I will enter your newly purified house and offer my congratulations.<sup>57</sup>

Although Jesus would have secured the applause of the people, the respect of the religious elite, and the backing of his disciples, he chose to contribute life to Zacchaeus in the privacy of his home. That is to say, at the peak of this encounter between disruptive leader and despised collaborator, Zacchaeus receives the contribution of unexpected value, through love and forgiveness. Jesus continues to disrupt the culture of the status quo with a radical alternative, namely, not only to stand with the oppressed but to extend value through love and forgiveness to the oppressor. As a radically disruptive leader, Jesus demonstrates his competency of being able to “neither endorse the oppression nor ostracize the oppressor. Instead he loves.”<sup>58</sup>

### *Cultivation*

Cultivating future leaders is ultimately one of the primary outcomes of effective leadership. With no disciples or followers to continue the work, a leadership paradigm is at risk for disintegration. Cultivating future leadership is the outcome of effectively implementing the previous three. Jesus’s cultivation of future disruptive leaders, namely the disciples, was built on two radical alternatives. Jesus’s final command before leaving this earth was to “go and make disciples,” a command which has at its core the ethos of cultivating others to become [disruptive] leaders who embrace the paradigm of Christ and take the paradigm “into all the world.”<sup>59</sup> However, the question of how to be a cultivated disruptive disciple who continues the radical alternatives of the leader needed to be

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<sup>57</sup> Bailey, 180.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Matthew 28:28–30.

answered; and in the way only he could communicate, Jesus offered the disciples two requirements, found in Luke and Mark, respectively, during the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem.

While Mark describes the journey in one chapter, Luke offers a nine-chapter account of the distinctive features of discipleship cultivation between Jesus and his disciples, both the sanctioned twelve and the crowd that followed. Connecting the cultivation of disruptive disciples to strategic use of communication, the journey to Jerusalem is one of the greatest signals of Jesus's ministry as it marks a shift of his Galilean miracle-working ministry to the beginning of his most intense, and radically alternative (even controversial) teachings.<sup>60</sup> Located in these teachings, Luke organizes the words of Jesus to provide radical alternatives to the status quo that will have earthly and heavenly implications in the lives of his disciples and those whom would come after them; Frank Matera lists them, "the cost of discipleship, the need for prayer and vigilance, the need to humble oneself before God, the proper use of possessions, the nature of the kingdom of God, and the need for repentance."<sup>61</sup>

Critical to being cultivated in the mind and praxis of a disruptive leader like Jesus is to have clarity of the costs. Knowing that those who would want to follow him were committed to the family—and therefore hoarded possessions and failed to think about the weight of followership because of the excitement of the miracles—Jesus had to alter their preoccupations by outlining the demands of discipleship with what Moore calls a

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<sup>60</sup> Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 79.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

“penchant for overstatement.”<sup>62</sup> Yet, when one contemplates Jesus’s commitment to the very demands he is imposing on those he is cultivating, there is no overstatement in his words. Although radical, his words are intended to differentiate between those committing to “letting go of that which was temporal and of lesser important”<sup>63</sup>—the cultivated—and those “reluctant to make the kind of sacrifice necessary to gain thing”<sup>64</sup>—the uncultivated.

Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.”<sup>65</sup>

If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. "But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. They would say, 'There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!'"<sup>66</sup>

Jesus used the cross, a symbol that stands at the center of Christianity and often used to invoke the imagery of suffering by Jesus as the retelling of the crucifixion, as a way to invite his disciples into the process of cultivation. Despite what could be read as Jesus’s alluding to a spiritual crucifixion as part of the process of being a cultivated disruptive leader, there is no single socio-rhetorical exegesis that dominates the complexity of what

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<sup>62</sup> Kevin L. Moore, *Can Any Good Come from Nazareth? Following from a Distance* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2012), 79.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>65</sup> Mark 8:34–35.

<sup>66</sup> Luke 14:26–31.

it means to say, “take up your cross.”<sup>67</sup> It remains important to further understand why, of all the Judaic metaphors he could have used to communicate his cultivation competency for followership, Jesus chose the “cross”; and it matters because the cross “carries not only theological but also social, political, cultural, and ethical implications.”<sup>68</sup> To understand why he uses the cross, one has to understand the esoteric implications of the previous verses, which relate to his own fate. It is therefore not implausible to understand crucifixion as an outcome of disruptive leadership. Jesus’s physical cross and their spiritual (and, in many cases, physical) crosses are connected in the praxis of “self-denial.” Accordingly, in the Markan text, the “cross” language cannot be separated from the first proposition of denying the self.

Notice that Jesus does not suggest that in order to be a disruptive disciple, one has to deny *parts* of the self, meaning possessions, profession, or other externally identifying identity markets. Jesus addresses the human person directly; the object of the denial is not an addendum *of* the person, but the person in his or her entirety.<sup>69</sup>

At the core of this denial is not a clarion call to hunger, homelessness, or poverty as some would assume from Western renderings of self-denial, but rather the disciples’ ceasing to make themselves, their desires, and their luxuries the object of their life, their actions, and their relationships with others. The verb used here in the Greek for “deny,” *aparneomai*, is used to denote that the denier must reject, in totality, the supposed

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<sup>67</sup> Barbara E. Reid, *Taking Up the Cross: New Testament Interpretations through Latina and Feminist Eyes* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1912), 156.

relationship between the denier and the object of their denial.<sup>70</sup> Jesus calls for the disciples to reject the supposed relationship they have with themselves, meaning the parts of their being that feed and fuel the ego. Denying the self, for Jesus, is to deny the relationship between self and self-interest, which often are informed by their ability to feed one's ego.

Jesus is acknowledging that central to the reality of our humanity is discontentment with our current state, thus always looking to desire and want more, assuming that having more will create a threshold of contentment. Hence, Jesus calls us to radical self-denial because “when we deny our egos, and instead we focus on who we are and what we have—when we live in reality—we get a different picture.”<sup>71</sup> Paul robustly opens this idea of Jesus's self-denial:

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names . . . .<sup>72</sup>

Paul underscores that in spite of Jesus's divinity, which permitted him warrant to live into the fullness of himself, he withheld the use of his fullness and, like those whom he wanted to follow him, came from the humble position of a servant. Jesus's disruptive paradigm was birthed out of his laying aside the weight of his self-interest—even in suffering—in order to assume the likeness of those he would challenge to do the same. Although not a pronounced characteristic of disruptive leadership, the humility of Christ

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<sup>70</sup> Gould, 156.

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Fofanoff, *You Are Not Broken: What Jesus Really Said and Why It Still Matters* (Self-published via CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2013), 11.

<sup>72</sup> Phil. 2:6–9.

was necessary to Jesus's leadership style. Manifested through the praxis of self-denial, it is an underlying feature, which reinforced what he communicated, altered the culture he was called to serve, and invited the disciples to contribute their lives to the kingdom in the same way.

With that context of self-denial, the second clause of "take up your cross" makes more sense because the "cross" is the imagery by which the disciples must envision the process of denying the self. Although it is clear that Jesus was indeed speaking of the possibility of literal death on a cross, it is also possible that Jesus was inviting his followers to develop an existential cross within themselves—a cross upon which they nail all of the elements of self-interest—including life itself, if necessary—that would impede them from being able to devote themselves to the radical alternative of disruption through spreading the gospel that he preached. Given the reality that asceticism<sup>73</sup> was not foreign to the disciples, what then was the radical alternative Jesus offered? The radical disruption is captured in the words "take up," in that the discipline of self-denial is not a denial initiated by the disruptive leader, but rather a denial that is initiated by the disruptive follower *even to death*. Just as Jesus, or any ordinary prisoner in first century Palestine carried their own cross to the place of execution, so must the cultivated follower of the disruptive leader take up their *own* cross to the place of executing the ego.

In essence, the denial of the self is a personal responsibility of the one who is being cultivated, in order for that follower to be fully available to the radical disruption of the systematic status quo.<sup>74</sup> That is, Jesus's proposition postulates that the disciples would

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<sup>73</sup> A philosophy defined by extreme self-discipline and denial of personal pleasures and worldly possessions.

<sup>74</sup> Gould, 156.



have never been able to fully embrace and implement the radical alternatives he introduced to culture had they not been willing to deny themselves of their own ego. The spiritual implications of the idea are that in order to be an effective disruptive disciple one must follow the prototype of the disruptive leader who gave up *everything* that had selfish intentions, self-serving purposes, and ego-driven aims. If one can commit to these two realities—self-denial and cross-bearing—then, and only then, does one qualify to be cultivated into a *disruptive disciple*.

Using Mark's gospel as a beginning point, the Lukan demands of discipleship in order to be cultivated followers of Jesus reiterate the taking up of one's cross, but goes a step further. Luke 5 begins with what some theologians describe as the "journey narrative," when Jesus encounters a group of men who will eventually become disciples. Two of them, James and John, volunteer their services to his disruptive paradigm after experiencing the radical work of his hand. One, Levi, is called by Jesus directly to be cultivated into a disciple.<sup>75</sup> Yet, the comforts and culture of their lives hinder them from understanding the weight of being cultivated to be like him, a weight so heavy that it even surpasses the family norms of the first century. When Jesus calls two of his initial disciples to follow him for cultivation, the disciples agree but plead to go bury family and say goodbye. Jesus responds to them with a radical alternative, which is to deny family obligations altogether and even overlook family bonds in order to begin their cultivation *immediately*. In essence, Jesus gives an indication that another underlying feature of his disruptive leadership paradigm is urgency.

As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but

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<sup>75</sup> Luke 5:10–11, 27–28.

the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head.” He said to another person, “Come, follow me.” The man agreed, but he said, “Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead!<sup>[1]</sup> Your duty is to go and preach about the Kingdom of God.” Another said, “Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family.” But Jesus told him, “Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God.”<sup>76</sup>

Jesus issues this radical alternative at the onset of their journey to disrupt the expectations of how status quo discipleship functioned before his arrival. Discipleship, as these initial young men would have known it, was birthed from a person’s desire to develop a particular skillset, or series of techniques that reflected their teachings—this was understood as an “art form” in the New Testament context.<sup>77</sup> As it related to the faith, disciples devoted themselves to learning the life, thinking, and practices of their teacher, but always returning to their home as the first and highest priority of their lives; and the first disciples in the gospel, many of whom chose to follow Jesus, were initially disciples of John the Baptist.<sup>78</sup> Jesus’s call to deny family and forsake household obligations in order to follow him is disruptive because until Jesus arrived, the status quo expectation was to learn the ways of the leader as an apprentice, analogous to a standard workday, always ending one’s day in the home.

Therefore, Jesus’s call for his disciples to abstain from returning home, burying their family, or offering a parting benediction was a radical proposition would stun their consciousness.<sup>79</sup> However, the subtlety between his first proclamation to forsake one’s family and the second proclamation is that presence of the cross. Well into the journey

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<sup>76</sup> Luke 9:57–62.

<sup>77</sup> Robert L. Foster, “Discipleship in the New Testament,” *Teaching the Bible*, a Publication of the Society of Biblical Literature (October 2000), accessed April 22, 2017 [https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/media/TBv2\\_i7.htm](https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/media/TBv2_i7.htm).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Matera, 80.

from the call of the initial disciples in chapter nine, the crowd following him has swelled to the point that Jesus is compelled to reiterate and deepen the weight of being cultivated to be like him. Turning to the crowd, he proclaims to them that not only must they practice self-denial and take up their cross, but “hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life.”<sup>80</sup>

Of greatest concern relative to the idea of being cultivated to being like Jesus is his use of the word, *hate*; this word often makes us cringe because of its emotionalized use in our context as the intense loathing of a thing. Yet, Jesus’s use of *hate* is the Greek verb, *miseo*, which is used on a comparative basis to denote loving something less than another thing.<sup>81</sup> When these first century Jewish disciples heard this disruptive leader’s use of *hate*, the word itself did not shock their system but the ethos in which the word was used. Contrary to this ethos, Jesus was pronouncing that those who understood themselves as his disciples must love their leader more than their family members. Invoking the competency of replacing culture, Jesus once again deconstructs a fundamental assumption of the first-century Jewish logic, which is that the highest honor is always the honor of one’s family. He suggests a radical alternative that one’s family must be willing to be second to the discipleship of the leader. Thus an invitation to forsake all family for him, merely a prophet in their mind, was at its core, nonsensical. Adding what could be seen as insult to injury, Jesus admonishes them to calculate the costs just as someone preparing to initiate construction. Although the prevailing theme was the cost of forsaking one’s family, he added to the costs by saying, “You cannot

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<sup>80</sup> Luke 14:26.

<sup>81</sup> William Victor Blacoe, *Understanding the New Testament: An Interpretive Translation and Exhaustive Commentary of the New Testament Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Springville, UT: CFI, 2011), 242.

become my disciple without giving up everything you own.”<sup>82</sup> At this point in the journey, the disciples and the crowd are faced with both an existential and practical moral choice—do they forsake family and household responsibility, while surrendering money, clothing, and all other possessions to take the journey of cultivation to be like Jesus?<sup>83</sup>

However, one cannot fully understand why Jesus advocated surrendering oneself without reading the Lukan gospel in the context of Luke’s second work, Acts, for it is after the departure of Jesus, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the first assembly of faith-filled disciples that “all the believers met together in one place and *shared* everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.”<sup>84</sup> Matera notes the distinction between Jesus’s time and the early church’s time:

This suggests that Luke sees a distinction between the time of Jesus and the time of the church. Jesus’s radical demands primarily concern the first group, and yet they are not without effect upon the second [group] as well, reminding all disciples that at any moment they may be summoned to an even more generous form of discipleship, as was the rich official.<sup>85</sup>

The decision to live in light of Jesus’s life—by following him with the core competencies as one furthers his radically alternative way of thinking about and doing kingdom—is a “once-for-all act.”<sup>86</sup> Upon making that decision that one’s life belongs to Jesus, one is no longer acting of one’s own accord. Instead, a person is part of the overthrowing of the status quo that replaces self-interest, ego, and desires with the self-sacrificial ethic of

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<sup>82</sup> Luke 14:33.

<sup>83</sup> Matera, 81.

<sup>84</sup> Acts 2:42–25.

<sup>85</sup> Matera, 81–82.

<sup>86</sup> Bruce B. Barton, Philip Comfort, Grant Osborne, Linda K. Taylor, and Dave Veerman, *Life Application New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 183.

Christ. Still, to be cultivated into a follower of Christ is a “moment-by-moment decision, requiring denial of self and daily taking up one’s cross. Following Jesus doesn’t mean walking behind him, but taking the same road of sacrifice and service that he took. The blessing for us is that we can fellowship with him along the way.”<sup>87</sup>

### *Exegetical Implications*

The implications of Jesus’s disruptive leadership paradigm, expressly pronounced through the four core competencies I outlined in the Gospels, are both obvious and germane to relevance and impact of marketplace organizations today. More critically, these implications for organizational leaders are also challenging and stimulating, as they lay the groundwork for radical alternatives to replace status quo systems that are insufficient to keep pace within the marketplace. In addition, these implications should also be able to inform how organizational participants, including employees and constituents, understand the role of disruptively displacing titled and sanctioned leadership. Jesus’s leadership paradigm is marked by a complex balance of the four core competencies. This is in contrast to various other leadership paradigms that tend to invoke one of the competencies, or pairings, in isolated contexts. Because the intersection of these competencies is central to Jesus’s disruption, he models how disruption should not be seen, used, or manipulated as a tool of exploitation—even against the status quo elite regardless of their antagonism—but as an expression of a divine thrust toward relevance and impact for expanding the scope and reach of the kingdom. If we take Jesus’s words in Matt. 28:19 seriously, the expansion in scope and reach of the kingdom of God can—and should—extend beyond the walls of the church into the world.

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<sup>87</sup> Barton, et al, *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, 183.

Another obvious implication from this exegetical analysis discourages the incessant struggle for power at all costs, recognizing that, within Jesus's disruptive paradigm, power to both execute and make use of disruption is distributed across the organization with both titled and non-titled leaders alike. As a result, titled, sanctioned leaders should understand that power to initiate disruption, which impacts not only individual lives but the entire system, should be honored and revered without maltreatment or misappropriation. Moreover, the implication of understanding and patience as fundamental to disruption—both as it is being initiated [by leadership], and as it is being experienced [by various constituents] should not be undermined; Jesus's disruptive paradigm is imbedded with patience and understanding. As noted in Jesus's interaction with the crowd, his disciples, and intimate encounters with particular characters throughout the gospel, patience and understanding within the disruptive paradigm provides a framework for unity and long-term cultivation. Marketplace organizational leaders within the age of disruption should endeavor to not only disrupt organizations for relevance and impact, but also to live an exemplary life of understanding, patience, and commitment to their "crowd."

Through disruptive leadership, leaders can leave positive impressions in the heart of their cultivated followers. It is paramount that organizational leaders should partake in the sufferings of the disruption process and the challenges of those who are most impacted by the disruption. In addition, allowing the people to have a contributive part of the disruption without attaching unnecessary responsibility to its implementation, the people will have increased discipleship in their commitment to the future direction and relevance of the organization.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Description of the Project

#### *Introduction*

“The time will come when diligent research over long periods will bring to light things which now lie hidden. There will come a time when our descendants will be amazed that we did not know things that are so plain to them.”  
—Seneca, *Natural Questions*<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this study was to explore the core competencies of Jesus’s disruptive leadership paradigm—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation—and how if applied to marketplace organizations, can stimulate organizational transformation for relevance and impact by disrupting the status quo through radical alternatives; ultimately, this study will contribute to the discussion and development of an underdeveloped paradigm of leadership—disruption. Disruption as a new paradigm is a leadership approach driven by offering and implementing radical alternatives to status quo norms and practices on a systemic-level, which empowers those in both sanctioned authority and non-titled authority to embody the same radical approach to their particular areas of influence, thus filling a research gap in current leadership models relative to organizational transformation. Furthermore, this study will go beyond the theoretical by grounding itself in a substantive, qualitative, case-study methodology of a charter school organization, allowing potential organizational leaders—particularly, school organizational leaders—to learn from, modify, and implement this disruptive model.

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<sup>1</sup> Lucas Annaeus, Seneca, *Natural Questions: The Complete Works of Lucas Annaeus Seneca* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

While both the results and impact of the core competencies explored in this study may be contextually dependent, the paradigm of Jesus, *overall*, with regards to organizational relevance and impact may be applicable despite contextual differences. Through this study, I have attempted to understand the core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership by which this paradigm allows marketplace organizations to challenge status quo norms and practices and offer radical alternatives systemically in order to both develop a new theory of leadership and transform organizations for relevance and impact.

Assuming that both relevance and impact can be measured through case study methodology, this project postulated that organizational leaders who intentionally or intuitively follow a scripturally-grounded disruptive leadership paradigm supplemented by four core competencies demonstrated by Jesus have the greatest probability—qualitatively speaking—of maintaining organizational relevance and impact in global society. And the evidence of a successful disruptive leadership paradigm should be displayed through continuous disruption of the status quo, replacing norms and practices with radical alternatives as often as necessary for organizational relevance. Leadership enthusiasts Bob Briner and Ray Pritchard contend that the principles that Jesus embodied are applicable in any area, whether an office, a school, a small business, a multi-national corporation, or a volunteer organization.<sup>2</sup>

Organizational decision-makers who follow Jesus's disruptive paradigm, and implement the core competencies identified within that paradigm should repeatedly disrupt the status quo, offer radical alternatives to organizational norms and practices, and

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<sup>2</sup> Bob Briner and Ray Pritchard, *Leadership Lessons of Jesus: A Timeless Model for Today's Leaders* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 3.



maintain both relevance and impact. While it is anticipated that the conclusions and implications of this dissertation will be applicable to marketplace organizations of any size with any length of history within any industry, due to time constraints this research was limited itself to one case study, which offers enough detail for a more generalized application. And because this project's primary research question focuses on "how," the case study has been selected as the qualitative research method of choice.

### *Description of Method*

The research procedure chosen to study the core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership paradigm in the context of marketplace organizations was a qualitative research format rather than a quantitative study. Sharan B. Merriam describes the goal of qualitative research:

[Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting—what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting—and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. The analysis strives for depth of understanding.<sup>3</sup>

Numbers, charts, graphics, and the empirical method drive quantitative approaches in which the focus is, *technically*, on the "what" questions, assuming there is a correct answer to those questions. The *sine qua non* of qualitative research, however, is to wrestle with "why" and "how." The selected qualitative research methodology for this project is the case study. Merriam describes a case study "as an intensive holistic

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<sup>3</sup> Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, rev., exp. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 6.

description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system.”<sup>4</sup> Johnson adds:

In quantitative research, hypotheses are proposed at the beginning and are proved or disproved from the data at the end of the study. In qualitative research, a broad research question and method is proposed at the beginning, but findings emerge bit by bit throughout the study with new insights building a fuller and fuller picture.<sup>5</sup>

Case study methodology in the United States was initially developed in conjunction with the University of Chicago department of sociology in the early 1900s and was first utilized in exploring research regarding immigration. The case study methodology disappeared from the critical academic scene for approximately thirty years, in large part because of a disagreement between scholars at the University of Chicago and those at Columbia University, the latter suggesting that case study methodology lacked scientific value [i.e. quantitative, empirical process], since conclusions could not be validated numerically.<sup>6</sup> However, as the limitations of quantitative methodology became increasingly recognized—namely, its lack of face-to-face fieldwork—around the mid-1960s, researchers and academicians [within the social sciences] returned to the case study approach as a scientific means of examining a particular entity.<sup>7</sup>

A breakthrough in case study methodology was accomplished in 1965 with the publication of Glasser and Strauss’s *Awareness of Dying*, which employed a case study approach and generated a follow up book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*.<sup>8</sup> The benefit of case study research is that it can produce intimate knowledge of an

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<sup>4</sup> Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> William F. Johnson, “Spiritual Formation: A Qualitative Evaluation of a Small Group Course,” D.Min. Dissertation (Chicago: Trinity International University, 2004), 99.

<sup>6</sup> Winston Tellis, “Introduction to Case Study,” in *The Qualitative Report* 3, no. 2 (July 1997): 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Merriam, 17.

understudied or emerging field by means of the personal interactions gained through fieldwork, in large part because of the work of the researcher. Robert Yin writes that using the case study method is most appropriate when (1) “how” or “why” research questions are being posed, versus “what,” which is more than likely a quantitative methodology; (2) the researcher has little control over events, but is aiming to understand the events and identify concepts and themes that emerge out of those; and (3) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context or setting, even if the contemporary phenomenon builds upon historical analysis, or in this case, historical exegesis.<sup>9</sup> Regarding the first criterion, the type of research question under investigation, Yin explains—

‘How’ and ‘why’ questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories, and experiments as the preferred research methods. This is because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence.<sup>10</sup>

How an organization’s leader implements disruption as a praxis to radically replace status quo norms and practices that are insufficient for organizational relevance and impact, is well within the preferred domain for the case study method and is, in fact, the very information desired by this project. The case study method promises to be the most beneficial, yielding the most data. Regarding the second two criteria, the amount of control the investigator has over the behavioral events and the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events, Yin again elaborates:

The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated [as in a laboratory setting]. The case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2009), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events.<sup>11</sup>

Since this investigation has no control either over the design of another organization's leadership paradigm, its leaders' process for challenging status quo, or how it remains both relevant and impactful, this research will not be able to control whatever dependent and/or independent variables may exist, or implications that might becoming existent as a result of study. Nor can the variables that might surface through the case study be isolated and investigated out of their complicated and intertwined context, as with certain other research questions that can be examined in a controlled laboratory. The essence of the research questions and overall assumptions make it unmanageable to interpret the potentially complicated intersection of core competencies, disruption, and Jesus's historical framework within a controlled and isolated context. Then too, while historical biblical exegesis, particularly with emphasis on the Gospels, will shed some understanding on the question of how Jesus's model established itself, had impact, and subsequently cultivated leaders, this research desires to bridge the historical exegesis with contemporary contexts for marketplace organizations. For these reasons, the case study method is selected as the superior and preferred method for researching one marketplace organization.

John Hammond, professor at the Harvard Business School, identifies three primary benefits of using the case study method in regard to organizational leadership studies. First, the case study investigates real life situations that other organizational leaders have faced, which elevates the theoretical to the position of human experiential

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<sup>11</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 11.

and which ultimately builds relationship between the researched area and the reader.<sup>12</sup> In many ways, utilizing the case study method allows the complex nuances of a given context to be given a platform for authentic research. Second, he mentions the breadth of exposure a case study brings to its readers. Hammond writes:

Because case studies cut across a range of organizations and situations, they provide you with an exposure far greater than you are likely to experience in your day-to-day routine. They also permit you to build knowledge in various management subjects by dealing selectively and intensely with problems in each field. You will quickly recognize that the problems you face as a manager are not unique to one organization or industry. From this you will develop a more professional sense of management.<sup>13</sup>

Framed otherwise, looking *behind the curtain* through the case study of a marketplace organization in the process of transforming itself for relevance and impact through a disruptive paradigm built on the four competencies of Jesus's disruptive model will not only be highly instructive for other organizational leaders, but highly interesting and perhaps the chance of a lifetime for a researcher.

Then, third, he suggests that the most important benefit is that the case study methodology helps develop not only a breadth of exposure, but also provides organizational leaders with the tools necessary to "ask the right questions" of their own organizations. He writes,

An able business leader once commented: 'Ninety percent of the task of a top manager is to ask useful questions. Answers are relatively easy to find, but asking good questions is the most critical skill.' You must be able to ask yourself: 'What *really* are the problems which this manager has to resolve?' Too often, in real-life situations manager manipulate facts and figured without the problems having been specifically defined.<sup>14</sup>

Every organizational leader can adopt and implement the disruptive leadership

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<sup>12</sup> John S. Hammond, "Learning by the Case Method," *Harvard Business School Review* (1976): 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

paradigm through the core competencies of communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation, and the case study method allows that learning process to continue without being there in-person or interviewing the key players themselves.

The case study method certainly has its drawbacks. In fact, Yin highlights one of the greatest limitations, even biases, regarding case studies, “perhaps the greatest concern has been over the lack of rigor of case study research.”<sup>15</sup> Similar to the challenges faced in the 1930s when the University of Chicago and Columbia University clashed, the case study method continues to be critiqued on the rigor spectrum. Although this project was designed to explore qualitative themes, developments, implications, and data analysis, rather than quantitative outcome, the researcher gave intentional effort to ensure that pitfalls that diminish any project’s validity and reliability will be both avoided and strategically negotiated.<sup>16</sup> To this end, multiple sources of evidence, such as documents and interviews, were gathered whenever possible. And finally, the “pattern matching” technique, comparing a predicted pattern to an empirical one, was used as the key data analysis strategy.<sup>17</sup> In other words, biblically-derived disruptive competencies from the Gospels were prepared and compared with the outcomes of the case study looking for areas of overlap between the collected data and the theoretical or predicted process.

### *Research Questions*

The driving objective of this project was to explore the core competencies of Jesus’s disruptive leadership paradigm—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation—and how if applied to a contemporary organization, might stimulate

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<sup>15</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 136.

organizational transformation for relevance and impact; ultimately, this study will contribute to the discussion and development of an underdeveloped paradigm of leadership—disruption. This outcome can be achieved by answering a central research question, primary research questions, and secondary research questions.

This central question provided focus and direction to this study: “How do Jesus’s core competencies of disruptive leadership relate to organizational relevance and impact in one charter school organization?”

Dividing this central research question into secondary questions not only helped to understand the depth of the research but also helped to translate the theoretical into substantive, qualitative methodology for organizational and spiritual implications. Hence, my central question was organized into four primary questions.

The primary research questions were:

1. How do leaders who model the core competencies of Jesus’s disruptive leadership affect the relevance and impact of a charter school?
2. How do other employees who model the core competencies of Jesus’s disruptive leadership affect the relevance and impact of a charter school?
3. Are there controlling variables that would inhibit any of Jesus’s four core competencies from being applied to a charter school context?
4. Is Jesus’s seemingly ancient model of disruptive leadership appropriate as a leadership paradigm for other twenty-first century organizations?

The secondary research questions were:

1. What, if any, of the four competencies are contextual to Jesus’s cultural era, and thus unable to be applied and implemented in an organizational context?
2. Why does there appear to be a demand for disruptive leadership in an age of continued complaint with regards to disruption?

3. Could there be underlying paradigms within disruptive leadership that are being overlooked, which must be developed to holistically understand disruption?
4. What is unique to Jesus's spiritual practice that grounds his ability to be a disruptive leader?
5. Are there certain precursors that can be identified from a historical perspective?

### *Role of the Researcher*

Observed, qualitative research within the social sciences is often preferred as the method of collecting data compared to objective, quantitative collection, since the social sciences provide implications for duplicating the research in additional contexts. Central to qualitative research is the role of the researcher, who is the “only instrument that is sufficiently complex to comprehend and learn about human existence [being studied, questioned, researched].”<sup>18</sup> Michael Quinn argues “the researcher is the instrument.”<sup>19</sup> The implication of the researcher is that the questions being researched will benefit from the qualitative researcher's ability to ask the question, why? As noted by Anne Flink regarding the significance of the qualitative researcher,

The research technique which the qualitative researcher uses is then to isolate and define phenomena/categories during the process of research in order to comprehend and learn, whereas the quantitative researcher's ambition is to determine the relationship between phenomena/categories already isolated and defined prior to the research.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Anne Sofia Flink, “The Role of the Researcher in the Qualitative Research Process. A Potential Barrier to Archiving Qualitative Data,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 1, no. 3–4 (2000).

<sup>19</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, “A Conversation with Michael Quinn Patton,” *The Evaluation Exchange: A Periodical on Emerging Strategies in Evaluation* 8, no. 1 (2002), accessed April 21, 2017, <http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/family-support/a-conversation-with-michael-quinn-patton>.

<sup>20</sup> Flink, 8.



Considering the significance of the researcher in qualitative social research, the risk is that the person is sole responsibility for all the qualitative social research processes—designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, thematizing, verifying, and reporting. As a result, “the qualitative researcher must be expected to feel very personally involved in every step of the research process, because every consideration and decision will have to be based on entirely personal grounds.”<sup>21</sup>

The role of the researcher, as noted above, is critical to the effective collecting, analyzing, and reporting of case study data. In this study the researcher was responsible for designing the interviews with the appropriate organizational leaders and employees, controlling for personal identity biases and “forming relationships with respondents, which seems to be rather inevitable.”<sup>22</sup> The researcher was also responsible for collecting and transcribing each interview, which required avoiding the risks of error in transcription, as well as the risk of “protecting data from ‘outsiders’, e.g. other researchers.”<sup>23</sup> Due to the nature of the knowledge of the organization being studied, the research controlled for personal bias by naming the degree of their status (with the organization), which allowed the respondents and subsequent readers to detail the amount of experience, or lack thereof, the researcher has with the population being studied.

### *The Sample*

The sample for this research was specifically selected because of a series of unique attributes. Most organizations, because of their insecurity with disruption, relevance, and innovation, work from a secluded and/or isolated perspective, thus not

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<sup>21</sup> Flink, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

allowing an ample amount of access to explore the leadership-organization interaction, especially in regard to challenging the status quo. STAR Academy College Preparatory Charter School is in a unique position for research, in large part because, in August of 2016, STAR academy underwent a marked change in leadership and culture.

Before this change, STAR Academy operated under the traditional public school context with regard to the leadership team and the organizational culture marking the school. With regard to leadership, STAR had the traditional markings of a public school; its leadership team consisted of a principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor, and the teaching faculty (teachers, TAs, special education teachers and assistants, and social interventionists). Within this model, the bulk of responsibilities—including curriculum design, discipline, marketing, partnership development, and fundraising—resided primarily on the principal's shoulders. This model placed undue stress on the principal, creating a co-dependent culture wherein the leadership team took little to no initiative in student and curriculum development. With regard to culture, STAR was organized around a curricular emphasis on generalist education, wherein students were primarily prepared to merely move into secondary education. Students were effectively prepared within this model, but there were few opportunities for customized learning programs and individual cultivation.

However, upon making the change, STAR academy has considerably shifted its leadership structure and organizational culture. Now, instead of the principal bearing the brunt of the responsibilities, a leadership team—replete with a Head of School, a Chief Academic Officer (CAO), Chief Strategic Officer (CSO), and Dean of Instruction and Culture—now shares the responsibilities of curriculum development, school expansion

and recruitment, partnership development, and fundraising. Attendant to the leadership team for the school, there was a considerable shift in the Board of Directors in August of 2017. This shift entailed recruiting high-level experts from various fields who not only have intimate knowledge in the trends and future of K-12 education; they also have committed to finding and adding financial and cultural capital to enhance and accelerate the school's short- and long-term goals.

The two shifts in leadership—that is, the implementation of a new school leadership team and a comprehensive overhaul in the school's Board of Directors—have resulted in a shared-responsibilities model of engagement, wherein each member of the leadership team has both the time and space to focus on their areas of expertise. The CAO, for example, focuses on the day-to-day operations of the school, while the Dean of Instruction and Culture sets the curricular tone for the school, and the Head of School and CSO shoulder the responsibilities of developing partnerships and constructing a plan for school expansion and recruitment. Moreover, the Board of Directors have already committed to bringing in over \$30,000 to the school in order to increase the capacity, reach, and longevity of STAR Academy.

Attendant to the shift in leadership was a shift in culture; now, instead of a generalist focus on secondary school preparation, STAR implements a focus on developing *scholars* instead of *students*. This organization calls the students “eagles,” and the curriculum is focused on allowing them to “soar” as highly valuable and effective contributors to society. Teachers are also impacted by this shift; instead of merely preparing students for the next phase, they are encouraged and empowered to envision novel, scholar-focused approaches to educational development. STAR Academy is

therefore a unique case study for understanding disruptive leadership because, although it remains under the purview of public schools, it nevertheless operates in ways that extend the possibilities of what education might look like in a forward-looking, twenty-first century context.

This project investigated this change with an eye toward how these radical alternatives may have increased relevance and impact in the charter school context. Focusing particularly on how shifts in leadership and culture changed the identity of the school, this project interrogated these changes in light of the four core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership paradigm. In other words, this study examined how Jesus's disruptive model of leadership—marked by the core competencies of culture, communication, contribution, and cultivation—contributed to the increased relevance and impact STAR academy has had on our contemporary educational context. It is possible to do this because, like Jesus, STAR Academy did not just introduce disruption in the privacy of the school context; it did it both publicly and loudly, exemplifying the outcomes of disruptive leadership cultivation. Moreover, this kind of public disruption also allowed for STAR academy to publicly share its successes and struggles, contributing to contemporary conversations on educational development.

### *Entering the Field*

In order to enter the field, I secured permission from the Head of School, who is the sole-decision maker for overall organizational decisions. By securing the Head of School's permission and making the Head of School my first interviewee, I was able to secure his support in getting the remainder of the leadership team, teachers, as well as Board members involved in the research process. Furthermore, because I had personal

experience serving the organization in the past, I was given a level of trust, access, and knowledge that many researchers do not receive in qualitative research, thus creating organizational trust with the constituents.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

As part of qualitative research methodology, the data collection process was ongoing as the theory developed; however, the basis of data collection was a series of interviews with STAR Academy employees and leaders and collection of relevant documents from the school and other public sources. Data collection sources included:

1. Open-ended interviews.
2. Organizational documents, including records of annual enrollment, number of inquiries, and visits by representatives from other schools.
3. Strategic planning resources.
4. Public sources, e.g. websites, research databases, and social media.

The school organization hosts weekly meetings for teachers and leadership to discuss relevant topics, professional development, and organizational innovations and changes that will impact the school-wide system. These are often led by the school leadership team, which led by a Head of School (synonymous with a Headmaster or system-level superintendent). The organizational Board of Directors meets monthly, which often is focused around long-term innovations and system-level changes that impact finances, governance, and fund development. These two recurring meetings provide opportunities to observe the organizational culture, employees, leaders, and constituents within their contexts interacting with and communicating disruption amongst each other.

Accordingly, each participant, i.e. ten core teachers, three school-level leaders,

and seven board members were either interviewed in-person with open-ended questions or surveyed through questionnaires that intended to provoke comprehensive and in-depth discussion around organizational relevance and impact through and in their efforts to disrupt and to replace the status quo that they consider to be dysfunctional and failing to serve their constituents. For the sake of this study, interviewing is defined and described as “the ability of people to symbolize their experience through language.”<sup>24</sup> As Seidman notes:

The use of language, itself, . . . contains within it the paradigm of cooperative inquiry; and since language is the primary tool whose use enables human construing and intending to occur, it is difficult to see how there can be any more fundamental mode of inquiry for human beings into the human condition.<sup>25</sup>

The interviews and data collection that were central to this project were organized around measuring how Jesus’s four core competencies of disruptive leadership increase the relevance and impact of a charter school organization. With this in mind, the project measured the effectiveness of disruptive leadership in regard to two primary areas: 1) the utility and usefulness of Jesus’s four core competencies; and 2) the effectiveness of these four core competencies on increasing the relevance and impact of the charter school organization.

Regarding the utility and usefulness of the four core competencies, this project analyzed the communication practices, cultural shifts, value added to leaders (contribution), as well as teacher- and student development (cultivation) in light of the new leadership and cultural changes. For example, all members of the leadership team—from the Head of School to the teaching faculty—are directed to communicate with one

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<sup>24</sup> Irving Seidman, “Interviewing as Qualitative Research,” *A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences, Third Edition* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2013), 8.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

another via a singular email server for all STAR-related activities. Moreover, in light of this shift in email communication, all members of the leadership team are also encouraged to be continually responsive in regard to their communication, creating a continuous stream of contact that allows for developments, problems, and innovations to be acknowledged, addressed, and/or celebrated in real-time. This is just one example of the competencies at work; there are others—including subtle-yet-powerful cultural shifts like calling students “eagles” and “scholars” instead of mere students. This study examined and analyzed how and whether these disruptive adjustments are reflective of Jesus’s disruptive leadership paradigm.

Moreover, this project measured the effectiveness of these adjustments in relation to impact and relevance. How might streamlined and real-time communication, for example, increase the leadership teams’ ability to leave a mark on both the scholars and themselves? With regard to relevance, this project examined areas like employee demand, external excitement about STAR academy’s developments, and student test scores as indicators of the school’s importance to both the larger community and the constituents it serves. With regard to impact, the study examined areas like employee morale, scholar enrollment/retention/success, and teacher turnover to determine how the school is impacting its leaders to become change agents within and without the organizational context.

### *Collection Process*

The organizational leaders were interviewed first, with emphasis placed on decision-making leaders at both the school-level and governance-level. The interviews began with formal, titled, and sanctioned leaders because they were the easiest to identify

and access initially, in large part because of the freedom and flexibility of their scheduling, compared to the teachers within the organization. The leaders were interviewed based on the interview protocol provided above, and the research questions. The interviews were also audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis and themes that arise. As the researcher, I also toured the organization and took field notes pre- and post-interview, observing the interviewee(s) within their context in order to control for consistencies and inconsistencies from the interview process.

The questions were organized around the organization's constitution pre- and post- change, and included such inquiries as follows:

Pre-Change:

1. How did school leaders communicate with staff and students during the first ten years of STAR Academy?
2. How would you describe the culture of STAR Academy during the first ten years?
3. What were some of STAR Academy's signal contributions to faculty, staff, and students during its first ten years of existence?
4. In what ways—if any—did STAR Academy cultivate faculty, staff, and students to become change-agents within and without the organization?
5. How was employee morale at STAR Academy in its first ten years?
6. What was STAR Academy's reputation in the larger educational context during its first ten years of existence?

Post-Change:

1. How do school leaders communicate with staff and students since the leadership change?
2. How would you describe the culture of STAR Academy since the leadership change?
3. What are some of STAR Academy's signal contributions to faculty, staff, students, and the community after the leadership change?



4. Since the leadership change, how does STAR Academy cultivate faculty, staff, students, and the community to become change-agents within and without the organization?
5. How has employee morale been at STAR Academy since the leadership change?
6. What is STAR Academy's reputation in the larger educational context after the change in leadership?

It was sometimes necessary, though not preferred or recommended, to have some of interviews take place over the phone or via electronic meeting platform when face-to-face interviews could not be arranged. Because of the nature of discussing disruption—which is a topic that can yield defensive responses—the questions for interviews and focus/small groups will use concepts of *Appreciative Inquiry*, which is based on the utilization of positive questions rather than questions framed from the position of the problem.<sup>26</sup> “Appreciative interview questions have two parts: a positive lead-in and a series of actual questions.”<sup>27</sup>

It is my assumption that by interviewing participants with an intentional focus on positive value versus problematic challenges, the interviewees will be more comfortable, therefore offering more in-depth and authentic responses. Also, the Appreciative Inquiry model of interviewing is intended to focus on human stories, which provides a more relational framework for collecting and analyzing data.<sup>28</sup> While many interview processes within qualitative methodology start from the problem being explored, that methodology is often seen as “deficit based,” while Appreciate Inquiry is seen as “asset-based,”

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<sup>26</sup> James Ludema, Diana Whitney, Bernard J. Mohr, and Thomas J. Griffin, *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit: A Practitioners Guide for Leading Large-Group Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2003), 103.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

because it inquires of the interviewee from the starting point of the strengths of the organization.<sup>29</sup>

After the formal interviews of the leadership, the researcher attempted to conduct focus/small groups comprised of team members/teachers who were not titled leaders. The number of core and supporting teachers was the primary reason the researcher wanted to use a focus/small group method; the researcher hoped it would yield larger data in less time than individual interviews.<sup>30</sup> However, given the series of conflicting schedules, small focus groups were not feasible, and the researcher conducted a series of interviews; although this wasn't ideal, the data set was quite illuminating: the teachers represent a cross-section of genders, races, ages, and years within the organization; as a result, their heterogeneity yielded important themes and implications for the impact and outcome of disruptive practices within the organization. Particular attention was given to the diversity existent within the teachers based on years of experience with the organization, as that can often be a point of conflict when radical alternatives are challenging status quo norms and practices. Furthermore, the focus/small groups will provide the non-titled authority to offer their perspectives and attitudes on the disruptive alternatives introduced within the organization. Similar to the leadership interviews, the teachers were interviewed based on the same interview protocol.

The researcher reviewed several organizational documents, including: organizational charts, strategic planning, master campus planning, curriculum maps, executive leadership summaries, and leadership team meeting notes. These documents

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<sup>29</sup> Ludema, et al, *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit*, 103.

<sup>30</sup> David L. Morgan, "Focus Groups as Qualitative Research: Planning and Research Design for Focus Groups," *SAGE Research Methods* (1997), 8.

were used to supplement, confirm, or challenge findings from interviews. In addition to these documents, public source data was used, including websites, social media sites, research databases, news articles, and video clips.

### *Analysis Process*

The most important element of the data-analysis process was analyzing the interviews, along with comparatively validating the data between the leadership team and teaching staff. Through the transcription and coding process, themes developed, which allowed for critical analysis. After a careful analysis of the interviews, along with a thorough review of documentation supplements, a case study narrative was developed and will be reported in chapter 4. As part of the analysis process, the names and identifying information of interviewees were changed to ensure anonymity; however, all themes, regardless of the nature of the response, are presented and analyzed equally in the reporting. Themes and findings that are present in interviews from the leadership team were analyzed in greater detail, given the leadership team's considerable role in shaping and implementing a disruptive approach.

### *Validity and Generalizability*

It has been said that qualitative research demands a strong “logic of inference,” because it “does not use numbers but gathers a tremendous amount of information from a single case.”<sup>31</sup> The most effective way to validate the findings of case study data, and to ensure the reliability of that data, is by the process of triangulation, which is a “method

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<sup>31</sup> Eddy Wayne Witzel, “Wheel of Innovation: How Leaders’ Attitudes and Behaviors Drive Disruptive Technology in the U.S. Navy,” *Andrews University Dissertation Database* (2014), 66.

used in qualitative research to validate a research question from multiple perspectives.”<sup>32</sup>

While there are multiple forms of triangulation, this analysis utilized three:

1. The researcher triangulated the attitudes and frame of thought of both sanctioned, titled leaders and non-titled leaders from multiple sources of data, namely the interviews and focus/small groups.
2. The researcher also compared the perspectives of the titled leaders, attempting to identify consistencies and inconsistencies between the two.
3. The researcher compared the perspectives of the teachers.

The case study approach provides sufficient detail for the reader to generalize the provided data and analysis through a process called “naturalistic generalization”; furthermore, generalizability “can be viewed as what one learns from the case study in terms of skills, images, and ideas.”<sup>33</sup>

### *Ethical Considerations*

This study, considering that it is a qualitative, case study, which required direct interviews, follows the qualitative ethical considerations as follows:

1. Following the principle of ethical consent, participation was completely voluntary.
2. Each interviewee was informed and provided with a project statement that detailed the project statement.
3. Interviewees were freed from social, psychological, and emotional pressure; this also assures that no interviewee will be coerced.
4. The study does not any damaging information against anyone.
5. Privacy and confidentiality was observed as requested by the interviewees, which includes names, identifying characteristics, and personal data/information *only* being included in the interviewee review and consent form.

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<sup>32</sup> Witzel, “Wheel of Innovation,” 67.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 67.

6. The research process did not involve any vulnerable, or illegal populations.
7. All reporting was directly transcribed from collected data without any edits to modifications from the researcher, other than protecting privacy.

The study was reviewed and approved by the Baylor University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

### *Summary*

A purposeful sample of organizations that have successfully disrupted the organization through challenging the status quo and replacing norms with radical alternatives were explored using qualitative, case study methodology. The human experiences of leaders' attitudes, frames of thinking, and behaviors and their contribution to the disruptive leadership paradigm will provide the reader with skills, images, and ideas that can be generalized to specific situations within multiple organizational contexts. Interviews and program documentation will form the foundation and launching point for the case study narratives. Pseudonyms were used throughout the case study to ensure anonymity.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results and Findings

#### *Introduction*

“It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.”

—Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*<sup>1</sup>

The driving objective of this project was to explore whether a concrete application of the core competencies of Jesus’s disruptive leadership paradigm—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation—to secular organizations can stimulate organizational transformation for relevance and impact by disrupting the status quo through radical alternatives. Ultimately, this study will lead to the discussion and theoretical-practical development of disruptive leadership as a possible model for institutional and organizational transformation. This project was motivated by a central research question, primary research questions, and secondary research questions, which I delineate below in more detail.

The central question is to provide focus and direction to this study: “How do Jesus’s core competencies of disruptive leadership relate to organizational relevance and impact in one charter school organization?”

Breaking this central research question into primary and secondary questions helps not only to understand the depth of the research but also to translate the theoretical into substantive, qualitative methodology for organizational and spiritual implications.

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novel and Stories*, vol. 1 (New York: Bantam Classics, 1986).

Hence, there were four primary questions and five secondary questions. The primary research questions were:

1. How do leaders who model the core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership affect the relevance and impact of a charter school?
2. How do other employees who model the core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership affect the relevance and impact of a charter school?
3. Are there controlling variables that would inhibit any of Jesus's four core competencies from being applied to a charter school context?
4. Is Jesus's seemingly ancient model of disruptive leadership appropriate as a leadership paradigm for other twenty-first century organizations?

There are also secondary research questions worth exploring:

1. What, if any, of the four competencies are contextual to Jesus's cultural era, and thus unable to be applied and implemented in an organizational context?
2. Why does there appear to be a demand for disruptive leadership in an age of continued complaint with regards to disruption?
3. Could there be underlying paradigms within disruptive leadership that are being overlooked, which must be developed to holistically understand disruption?
4. What is unique to Jesus's spiritual practice that grounds his ability to be a disruptive leader?
5. Are there certain precursors that can be identified from a historical perspective that are crucial and universal for the successful implementation of disruptive leadership?

Although the researcher explored these questions in an informal manner, the results of these questions were not used in the explicit analysis of the data. Instead, they served as contextual background that informed the researcher's approach to the primary questions.

### *Research Process*

The research for this project was limited to the leadership team within at STAR Academy College Preparatory Charter School in Memphis, Tennessee. After this

researcher obtained approval for this project from the director of doctoral studies at Baylor University, the researcher requested permission from the Head of School to contact and interview the leadership team. The researcher also requested that the staff be contacted for focus group participation. All three members of the leadership team agreed to interviews; moreover, after contacting ten (10) of the contacted staff persons whom agreed to participate in the focus group, the researcher discovered that it was more feasible to conduct one-on-one interviews either on the phone or in person, given the complexity and incompatibility of the staff members' schedules.

The researcher conducted most of the leadership team interviews in-person and determined that each interview should last no longer than ninety (90) minutes. The researcher conducted the interviews within the same week in order to control for time-bias; each of the leadership team interviews lasted an average of seventy-five (75) minutes, however the Head of School interview extended longer, lasting approximately two (2) hours. Of the three interviews, one had to be conducted over the phone. With regard to the teachers, the researcher sent out initial questions to ten (10) teachers via electronic correspondence, and then engaged in follow-up interviews—three (3) of which were in-person and four (4) of which were on the phone—based upon their questions in order to gain further insights into the nature of their responses.

This researcher originally anticipated that in-person interviews would yield significantly more substantive data than comparable telephone interviews. However, the data demonstrates that there was no measurable difference in quality of the data yielded in telephone interview format.



### *Data Analysis*

Interview questions and narrative responses have the capacity to offer a diversity of data that have to be organized in manageable units for analysis. The analysis process included organizing the data and identifying patterns within the data; the identified patterns within the data provided the foundation for identifying common themes in interviewee's descriptions of disruptions, perspectives, competencies of Jesus, and the context served by identifying statements that relate to the topic, "grouping statements into meaningful units, seeking divergent perspectives, and constructing a composite,"<sup>2</sup> with the purpose of presenting the interviewee data through the perspective of those who experienced the data. At its core, the analysis process attempts to maintain integrity by exclusively analyzing and coding the voice of the interviewee without the researcher's imposed themes. This is done through objective survey data and semi-structured interviews with a series of open-ended questions.

The analysis of the interviews includes extracting perspectives, approaches, personal backgrounds, and professional philosophies from narrative data of the leadership team regarding the disruptions that have informed their work within the organization and the influence of Jesus's core competencies on their leadership approaches. To interpret the narrative data the researcher applied the content analysis process, which "categorizes verbal or behavioral data, for the purpose of classification, summarization and tabulation."<sup>3</sup> Using Hancock's content analysis process, the interviewee data can be

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<sup>2</sup> P. D. Leedy and J. E. Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 9th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> B. Hancock, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, Trent Focus Group (1988), accessed July 12, 2017, [http://faculty.uccb.ns.ca/pmacintyre/course\\_pages/MBA603/MBA603\\_files/IntroQualitativeResearch.pdf](http://faculty.uccb.ns.ca/pmacintyre/course_pages/MBA603/MBA603_files/IntroQualitativeResearch.pdf).

analyzed on two levels: 1) **descriptive**—what was actually said with no additional assumptions attached; and 2) **interpretative**—what was meant by the response, what was inferred, or implied.<sup>4</sup> In practice, the content analysis process is about identifying the raw data that is informative to the identifying of themes, and to identify the hidden messages that helps in identifying the feelings behind the themes. The transcribed interview document was reviewed by not only the researcher of the study, but by an independent analyst for analysis. The researcher and independent analyst discussed and compared narrative interpretations and arrived at consensus where there were differences in interpretations.

Each interviewee was provided with a questionnaire to gather demographic information. With regard to the leadership team, the questionnaire allowed the participants to reflect on their corporate leadership experience, their transition out of the corporate arena, and their daily spiritual experiences. Table 4.1 provided the questionnaire that was used in obtaining this information. Following are the pre-interview questions and a summary of the responses.

Table 4.1. Pre-Interview Questions Summary

<b><i>Preliminary Questions</i></b>	<b>P1</b>	<b>P2</b>	<b>P3</b>
<b>Age</b>			
25-39	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	
40-59			<b>x</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Female			<b>x</b>
Male	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	
<b>Educational Level</b>			
Graduate Degree	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	
Post-Graduate Degree			<b>x</b>
<b>How long in a leadership position?</b>			

<sup>4</sup> Hancock, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 4.

1-5 years		<b>x</b>	
5-10 years	<b>x</b>		
11+ years			<b>x</b>
<b>How long in leadership at STAR Academy?</b>			
< 1 year	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>

The data indicate that two interviewees were between the ages of 25 to 39, and one was between the ages of 40 to 59. Each interviewee had achieved the graduate-level, and one interviewee had a postgraduate degree. Each interviewee held a decision-making leadership position prior to transitioning to STAR, however each was at different stages in their leadership history, ranging from 1 year to 11 or more years; and data indicate based on the intersection of data, the length of years in leadership may correlate to their ages and educational degree achievement. Of the three participants interviewed, two were male and one was female.

Each interviewee on the leadership team was also provided with a Disruptive Leadership Experiences and Perception Scale (DLEPS; Table 4.2) to ascertain his or her experience with and perception of disruptive leadership within their own professional history. The data were analyzed using the Likert scale method of summated ratings; this scale assessed personal perceptions toward a topic by presenting a set of statements about the topic and asking respondents to indicate for each whether they *strongly agree*, *agree*, *is undecided*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree*. The various agree-disagree responses are assigned a numeric value, and the total scale score is found by summing the numeric responses given to each item. In this scaled measurement, the higher the score the stronger their perception of their connection to and experience with disruptive leadership.

Table 4.2. Disruptive Leadership Experiences and Perception Scale

	P1	P2	P3
<b>Decision-making</b>			
1. I make disruptive decisions as a leader.	9	5	6
2. I make disruptive decisions with others in mind.	6	5	7
3. I find strength in making disruptive decisions.	5	3	4
4. I feel anxiety when making disruptive decisions.	3	6	4
<b>Disruption &amp; Faith</b>			
5. Jesus was a disruptive leader/teacher.	9	8	8
6. Jesus's leadership informs my leadership.	8	8	8
7. Jesus's communication style was disruptive.	6	5	5
8. Jesus invited the disciples to contribute to his mission.	6	5	5
9. I am most comfortable in changing environments.	6	3	5
10. I am my best self as a disruptive leader.	5	5	5
11. I accept when others disagree with a disruptive idea.	3	3	3
12. In general, I value the role of disruption.	9	7	7
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.77</b>	<b>5.25</b>	<b>5.58</b>

The Disruptive Leadership Experiences and Perception Scale yielded mean scores of 5.77, 5.25, and 5.58. The overall mean score for the group was 5.53. Collectively, the interviewees possessed an above-average level of experiences with or perceptions of disruption within their own lives and leadership histories. As such, this scale as a validated instrument provided measure of the disruption awareness of the interviewees and provided a basis to engage in an inquiry process regarding their leadership experiences within a marketplace organization to maintain relevance and impact.

With regard to the teaching interviewees, the questions were slightly different, as they were aimed at gauging how disruptive practices affect those who are called upon to implement them within the workspace (in this regard, in the classroom space). Table 4.3 records the demographic breakdown of the teachers who were interviewed.

Table 4.3. Demographics of Interviewees

<b>Preliminary questions</b>	<b>P1</b>	<b>P2</b>	<b>P3</b>	<b>P4</b>	<b>P5</b>	<b>P6</b>	<b>P7</b>	<b>P8</b>	<b>P9</b>	<b>P10</b>
<b>Age</b>										
25-39	x		x			x	x			x
40-59		x		x	x			x	x	
<b>Gender</b>										
Male		x				x		x		x
Female	x		x	x	x		x		x	
<b>Education</b>										
Bachelor	x		x			x				
Graduate		x		x	x		x	x	x	x
<b>Time at STAR</b>										
0-2 years	x		x		x	x		x	x	x
2+ years		x		x			x			

As is shown, the ages of the teachers are relatively even split; the oldest teacher's age was recorded at 60, and the youngest teacher was 26 at the time of the interviews. The teaching staff is about forty percent (40%) male, and the majority of the teaching staff has more than a bachelor's degree. The teaching staff was not given the DLEPS assessment, as the researcher's primary concern with interviewing the teaching staff was twofold: 1) to further understand how the changes at STAR affected their relevance and impact in the classroom; and 2) to determine if the teaching staff felt a considerable change in their ability and autonomy to flex their pedagogical muscles within and outside of the classroom. It is important to note that with the teaching staff, the researcher has chosen to provide and present selected responses that represent larger trends within the data. In other words, while much of the data for the leadership team will be presented in what follows, the researcher found that, for purposes of time and space, it would be more efficacious to present selected representative responses in order to demonstrate larger trends regarding the disposition of the teaching staff.

*Interview Narratives*

The semi-structured interview process conducted by the researcher did not, initially, reveal significance regarding the age of the interviewees relative to disruptive leadership experiences and/or perceptions of disruption within the larger organizational context. However, as the interviews with the leadership team developed and the data continued to be analyzed, the narrative data revealed the significance of age as a context in which individual perceptions of disruption and experiences with disruptive practices occurred. While there was no direct mention of age by any of the interviewees, each implied age in the context of their narrative responses to the open-ended questions, which could suggest that their response or the significance of the disruptive experience [in a given context] was both formed and informed by their age. The following quotes, directly from their interview narratives, provide examples of this contextual factor:

P1: As a millennial who has possessed every iPhone since market inception ... [change of thought] ... think about it this way, the first black president was elected during my time in undergrad; I mean that should tell you my vantage point with the world.

P2: When I was growing up, I always wanted to be a teacher, but I knew my dad didn't always love that. I grew up watching old-school television shows with my dad because he liked them when he was younger, and the men in those were hands-on workers, not elementary school teachers.

P3: Sometimes my child, even though he is 19 years old – which I still can't believe – he will call me in the middle of the day just to talk about nothing because he's still a momma's boy ... and even more than that, he's the only child. Sometimes y'all remind me of him because he knows all of the stuff y'all are talking about.

The above-mentioned narratives highlight a crucial point, which is that age can be a significant factor in how one (especially an organizational leader) processes disruptive experiences, alternatives to the status quo, and perceptions of one's disruptive awareness.

Furthermore, age can be a significant factor in negotiating how the core competencies of Jesus materialize in leadership; that is, communication and contribution between two millennial-generation leaders (within the same organization) will certainly sound and function uniquely compared to the communication and contribution between millennial and baby-boomer leaders (within the same organization).

Although age was a significant factor in the varying responses from the leadership team, this was notably not the case with the teachers. Despite notable diversity in age and gender, the teaching staff responses varied across demographic categories. In many ways, this speaks to the reality of disruption as a catalyst for change. Some teachers favored the pre-leadership changes more, while a larger group of teachers now favor the post-leadership changes in culture. The leadership team's collective approach to changing the culture and cultivating self-motivated and creatively expansive leaders—particularly as it relates to the teaching staff—speaks to the dynamics of a disruptive paradigm. As I noted in earlier chapters with regard to the gospels, Jesus's disruptive form of leadership was not always taken well from certain parts of the society within which he lived his historical life; disrupting the status quo is not always a pleasant process, and this seems to have been the case for some of the members of the teaching staff. With this, I begin my discussion of the responses from leadership and teaching teams.

#### *Pre-Leadership Change—Leadership Team*

The interview protocol contained 6 questions that discussed the organizational relevance, impact, and overall culture pre-leadership change.

1. How did school leaders communicate with staff and students during the first ten years of STAR Academy?

2. How would you describe the culture of STAR Academy during the first ten years?
3. What were some of STAR Academy's signal contributions to faculty, staff, and students during its first ten years of existence?
4. In what ways—if any—did STAR Academy cultivate faculty, staff, and students to become change-agents within and without the organization?
5. How was employee morale at STAR Academy in its first ten years?
6. What was STAR Academy's reputation in the larger educational context during its first ten years of existence?

Despite one of the leaders being new to the organization during the research, and the other two having less than one year of experience with the organization, these questions unified the distinctive perspective of the interviewees, which are seen in the following narratives. In a distinctive way, the demographic differences, which can often serve as points of departure in the interview process, were substantially irrelevant with regards to the overall content of the pre-leadership change questions; this highlights that the underlying shared identity of being “new” to the organization is what unifies a team attempting to negotiate demographic differences.

P1: At best, STAR could be likened to a manufacturing plant [of course, not think of our students as product-pieces or our process as rote] ... but nevertheless, STAR could be likened to a manufacturing plant that produced a high-quality product with above-average performance rates, but nobody knew how they achieved those results. How did we communicate systematically and efficiently for 10 years? I don't know. How would I describe the first ten years of school culture? Disjointed. How did STAR cultivate its stakeholders? I don't know. How was employee morale? Disjointed. What was STAR's reputation? Disjointed.

P2: STAR has always had a great reputation in the city, and is seen one of the leading elementary competitors in the city. But we never quite understood how it could be so competitive, just knowing that it didn't participate in anything with other charter schools. I've heard (P1) say and I agree – STAR has been blessed with great students, like really great students, because from what I can see in my short time here – nothing was strategically unified in the classroom for success. It [kind of] feels like puzzle that's connected, but the pieces are in the wrong place.



P3: I have the longest experience with STAR—I go way back with the former principal and former parents and others who interacted with the school. But to be honest, I don't know what the previous administration was doing. When I got here, the morale was so low that teachers wouldn't even speak to each other, and certainly not speak to administrators. And [well, let me think] ... because of the low morale, culture was much of the same and had its own unspoken way of controlling how people acted.

Question two, more than the others, allowed the interviewees to dialogue openly within a “safe space”<sup>5</sup> about their experiences with the organization. P2 couldn't speak to the culture because his hiring was the most recent, and came after the leadership transition of the two executive roles—P1 and P3. When the researcher inquired about the culture of STAR before the leadership transition, reflections emerged of mutual feelings, as well as more exhaustive responses from the participants, especially when it was reinforced that their responses would be anonymous.

P1: How would I describe the culture? That's a loaded question. Let me start by saying, I think there were interloping cultures, meaning there was a clear teacher-culture, there was a student culture, there was an office culture, and then there was a culture for those who had relationships beyond the school. With that being said, the adult culture in all of its formations was driven by *existing*, coasting if you will. The language, the practices, the attitudes, the non-verbal cues – it was all very much so the evidence of an organization that had found its stride and rested on that stride. To some degree, I would say that from my observation, innovation, or disruption if you will, was paused about five years ago. That's interesting that I would say five years ago, because I'm not completely sure but I believe that's when the last principal was brought into the organization, which could say a lot about the nature of their leadership. But not only was there a culture of *existing*, there was a culture of contentment – teachers seemed content with their styles, modes of communication, attire, and even their knowledge of subject area. Now, this is not to say that they weren't pleasant or kind – and it certainly doesn't mean that they weren't good teachers – but even if you're a good [or should I say, effective?] – even if you're an effective teacher, if you are coasting in your current effectiveness, you always threaten the organization's growth because coasting yields contentment, and contentment can breed complacency. STAR is an indication that the favor of God is real, because even with high-performing students, complacent teaching would inevitably destroy the

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<sup>5</sup> “Safe spaces” is a term popularized by Patricia Hill Collins, who defines them as places where oppressed populations, especially populations of color can “speak freely” and where domination does not exist as a “hegemonic ideology”; she claims these spaces “house a culture of resistance.”

fabric of an organization; in our case, the fabric maintained a form of beauty though the threads are showing.

P3: I think the culture was okay, it wasn't the worst I had seen in my years as a principal or even when I was with the District. The teachers seemed nervous, like they were afraid of administration, which means the previous leadership ruled like a bully; and that's just not me, I try to lead with love – firm, but with love. I can tell that that was different for our teachers, because even talking to them in the hallway or asking, “how are you doing?” was different for them. Our think our culture for students is joyful. The kids love to stop by my office and speak, and they love to tell you about themselves – so I think that shows that our student culture is joyful. The more I think about our teachers, even though they didn't have the best relationship with administration interpersonally, we have a couple of rock star teachers – their data, their scores are through the roof. So that counts for something in our culture. But, let's be clear, we walked into some messes – teachers making administrative decisions, paperwork unfiled, very little professional development, teachers teaching in grades they've never taught or not even comfortable in. So I think considering all of that, we're doing fine; but I think it's clear that the previous principal just gave up, it shows. They stopped caring, and when they stopped caring, the teachers either had to pick up the load or stop caring too, but our data is strong so it shows you that we have been blessed with really good kids. They still performed.

These narratives demonstrate that each interviewee, despite showing the status quo culture of the organization, had care and empathy to see the organizational culture enhanced. Further, each interviewee underscored a crucial point, which is that there were multiple cultural paradigms happening concurrently within the organization, which allowed the organization to sustain but not be as impactful as it could be. Another observation from these narratives was the use of spiritual language; P1 used the phrase, “favor of God” and P2 used, “blessed,” which indicates that latent in their leadership awareness is the practice—or at least the language—of spirituality. “Spirituality is the nexus of inspiration, motivation, and meaning-making in the lives of Black Americans.”<sup>6</sup> As such, spiritual language will serve in all the interviews, including P2, as a precursor

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<sup>6</sup> P. McClellan, *Wearing the Mantle: Spirited Black Male Servant Leaders Reflect on their Leadership Journey*, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Bowling Green, KY: Bowling Green State University, 2006), 95.

for one's life purpose and meaning as a leader; in many ways, while they do not invoke the name or stories of Jesus explicitly, each interviewee will harken to the principles of Jesus throughout their narratives, especially as in answering questions regarding post-leadership changes.

Uniquely, the shortest narratives, universally, were in response to question four, "In what ways—if any—did STAR Academy cultivate faculty, staff, and students to become change-agents within and without the organization"?

P1: [After 30 seconds of thought], I'm not sure that it intentionally cultivated change-agents. While our Eagle Affirmation mentions something about citizenship, I wouldn't be willing to affirm that 'citizenship' and 'change-agents' are synonymous; and considering the laissez-faire appraisal of our teachers, I certainly wouldn't have the confidence to say that they see themselves as 'change-agents' within the organization. Now, of course, I cannot speak to how they take their service here and translate that in their lives outside of the organization; but I can say without hesitation that the organization wasn't nurturing 'change-agents.'

P2: Though I haven't been here long, I don't see anything that says, "we want change-agents" – and that goes for students and teachers, even our parents. Maybe that used to happen, but the evidence has certainly disappeared by now.

P3: I don't think that's what the previous leadership had in mind, though they might say something different. I mean, our teachers certainly acted like change-agents in the sense that they did what they wanted to do – at least that's what I'm told – but that's about it.

#### *Pre-Leadership Change—Teaching Staff*

Upon interviewing the leadership team, the researcher also conducted shorter interviews with members of the teaching staff. As was the case with the leadership team, the teaching staff was asked the same set of six questions to gauge what the culture of the school was like before the changes in leadership were adopted and implemented. Again, it is important to note that unlike the leadership team, demographic differences like age and gender were not indicators of shifts in approach and disposition; instead, the teachers

presented varied responses across demographic positions with regard to pre-leadership changes.

With regard to the first question, certain teachers spoke in candid detail about when and how communication occurred. Consider, for example, the following response:

During [the time of a former school leader], the school leaders communicated through a two-day weekend staff retreat... Before Christmas break, administrative staff would have an end of the year meeting at a restaurant chosen by [the head administrator]. Also, school leaders communicated by means of letters, flyers, parent conferences [*sic*]. During the time of [another pre-leadership change leader]... Parents and teachers met more often. End of the year Christmas dinners ceased.

In this teacher's response, there is an emphasis on when and where communication occurred, with less emphasis on the nature of communication or the way in which communication occurred.

This stands in contrast to another teacher, who *did* focus on these issues:

I feel that the communication was open. The door to the administration and leadership team was always open. This open-door policy created an atmosphere where I was made constantly aware of what was going on. During [the pre-leadership change], I felt that I was an integral part of the team, contributing to conversations about the direction of the school.

Although both teachers found the communication to be open, the second teacher spoke about *access*, whereas the first teacher spoke about *process*.

The second pre-leadership change question also generated varied responses with differing emphases. When asked about the pre-leadership culture of the school, a few similarities emerged across the teaching staff. The following three responses, for example, exemplify three general sensibilities from the teaching staff regarding pre-leadership change culture.

[Teaching staff member 1]: The culture of STAR staff during the first ten years began as a family. Everyone was on one accord, as we knew we were building

something together. Our focus was on the students, parents, and academic EXCELLENCE! [respondent's emphasis]

[Teaching staff member 2]: During the first ten years that I was present, the culture of STAR was directed toward building a strong foundation with a private school feeling while being a public school. The charter school structure provided considerable flexibility as it related to parent-teacher engagement, but our collective focus was on how to make the students the best they could be.

[Teaching staff member 3]: The culture was leaning toward excellence in reading and comprehension, in my opinion. The teaching staff was focused on ensuring that STAR students left STAR with high-level literacy; there was a concerted effort to ensure that the students had a substantive foundation in their abilities to identify and understand texts. This focus on literacy contributed to the reputation STAR academy began to build in the early years.

The three responses speak to different dimensions of the pre-shift culture—community, structure, and content. The varying foci of the different teaching staff members might be understood along these lines.

What might be of utmost importance with regard to the teaching staff, however, is the core competencies of cultivation and contribution. While the earlier responses speak to different perspectives on what appeared to be similar cultural and communicative practices, the response to questions about contribution and cultivation varied at more substantive levels. With regard to contribution, for example, one teacher focused basic employee benefits, citing “paid holidays, insurance, a retirement plan... 12-month payment... and raises” as markers of contribution; another member of the teaching staff cited being “given numerous opportunities to learn and become better with our craft,” signaling that the contributions were at the level of professional development. These divergent responses speak not only to different foci; they also highlight a divergence in what was understood as “contribution” pre-leadership change.

The competency of cultivation was also divergent in the responses pre-leadership

change. Consider, for example, the following response to the question of cultivation:

There were a few opportunities for us to develop professionally, but not many. Although inservice and weekly meetings were spaces where some professional development occurred, I often felt as if there was not as much investment in my growth as I would've liked. This isn't to say that the leadership team wasn't committed to excellence—they were, and STAR's reputation reflects this—but I also felt a bit of stagnation, as if we were starting to rely too heavily on our reputation in the city.

Although this respondent highlights a culture of excellence and signals the school's reputation as evidence of the school's culture, there was a feeling that “stagnation” had occurred. Another respondent put it this way:

Some of the first professional development sessions that I was sent to taught me about culture and how to be a change agent to help school culture improve. These sessions were, no doubt, helpful in instilling a culture of excellence from the leadership team down through the teaching staff; however, more concrete sessions regarding the latest strategies on classroom engagement or the latest information on possible teaching conferences were lacking.

There is, again, an emphasis on “excellence” as part of the culture for the school, but this respondent indicates a lack in teacher-specific resources for continuing to hone their pedagogical craft.

#### *Post-Leadership Change—Leadership Team*

In order to control for consistency of measuring the impact of disruptive leadership practices and principles on the organization, the interview protocol contained 6 questions that discussed the organizational relevance, impact, and overall culture post-leadership change.

7. How do school leaders communicate with staff and students since the leadership change?
8. How would you describe the culture of STAR Academy since the leadership change?

9. What are some of STAR Academy's signal contributions to faculty, staff, students, and the community after the leadership change?
10. Since the leadership change, how does STAR Academy cultivate faculty, staff, students, and the community to become change-agents within and without the organization?
11. How has employee morale been at STAR Academy since the leadership change?
12. What is STAR Academy's reputation in the larger educational context after the change in leadership?

While the pre-leadership changes invoked responses that unified the new leaders, the post-leadership change narratives presented a divergent reality, though common themes surfaced. The direct, descriptive data were divergent, but the assumed, interpretive data were convergent—thus resulting thematic areas, which will be discussed in the next subsection. Notice the tonal shifts of the interviewees, overall.

P1: The leadership changes have not been of ease or without struggle, however I'd have to say that there is a palpable difference around the school. Just our staff seeing and hearing a leadership team that continues to further the principles of innovation, joy, self-leadership, and community has been critical. Think about it like this, during the first weeks of school, my presence in a classroom invoked nervousness, anxiety, and to some degree fear in the minds of staff; and now, just eight or nine months later, while there is still room to grow, they pleasantly welcome me into the classroom as part of the experience without the anxieties of the school year's beginning. As oxymoronic as this may sound, I think they know they we want them to *just teach*—that's it—and be the best *teachers* they can be. That's liberating for someone who has lived and worked and served with confusion about what was expected of them. Either directly or indirectly, we've communicated a common message, teach well and innovate often, and you'll be fine in this organization.

P2: Memphis knows STAR! They might not know a lot about it, or what's happening, but they know the name. One of the things that made me excited about joining the team was that of all the charter schools in the city, STAR is leading the way in people's conversations. That's comforting. Of course, I hope that the teaching-culture, parent-engagement culture, and the student-culture matches the "word on the street." One of the things I notice about STAR that seems drastically different than what I've always heard is the level of leadership involvement with the school; from what STAR was to what it is, this current leadership is driven by a students-first, staff-support, parent-engaged, *and* hands-on philosophy, which

means the leadership is always thinking about how the school serves all three groups in decision-making.

P3: It's totally different already! I mean, *totally* different! Even the way we do our professional development every week is different and our teachers love that. I remember one teacher saying, "We've never had this much professional development during the school year. Never!" That says a lot, because when I met with them in the beginning of the year to understand their strengths and areas for growth, I realized that most of the growth areas were resolvable with professional development. I've seen their confidence in teaching increase, which means our students are getting more in the classroom. I think it's a totally different place for teachers! They get to make recommendations about professional development, they get to do lessons with each other (?), and they even have an opportunity to teach each other – that's foreign for this school.

One of the questions that yielded divergent perspectives, mostly because of the varying roles of the interviewees was question one: "How do school leaders communicate with staff and students since the leadership change?" P1 communicates primarily with the leadership team [and partially with teachers and support staff], P2 communicates primarily with teachers [and partially with students and support staff], and P3 communicates primarily with teachers and support staff [and partially with students]. As a result of the new-shared leadership model of the school, which disrupted traditional reporting structures and pipelines of communication, the interviewees could only speak from the vantage point of their roles.

P1: We communicate regularly with our staff and community stakeholders, especially as we are attempting to shift culture. In the beginning of the year, we – meaning the leadership team, all of us – attended the initial teachers' meetings, which were helpful for setting a new tone. I believe that our parents receive weekly communication from their teachers, which strengthens the home-to-classroom and classroom-to-home culture pipeline for consistency.

P2: One of the things that we absolutely have to do is keep our teachers informed about deadlines, expectations, reporting, grades, assessments, and events. They need over-communication, which might become aggravating – and maybe overwhelming – but they need it! Some teachers don't know how to ask for communication from the leadership, so it is our responsibility to premeditate what they need to know before they think about it. That takes a burden off of them to



not only teach effectively, but to be their own administrator – that’s our responsibility.

P3: I think we have great communication with our teachers, our students, and their families – especially with our Title 1 families and our students who need wraparound services, we talk to their families all of the time. Our teachers have asked for a calendar of dates and events, which I think will strengthen their communicating with leadership, so that’s something we’ll work on. Overall, I don’t think any of them are in the dark about things, because every week at teacher’s meeting, not only do we have professional development, but we always do 15 or 20 minutes of housekeeping items, like announcements, updates, things they need to turn in, and things like that. Many of them take what we discuss in those meetings and if it impacts our students, it shows up in their weekly newsletters, which they are required to send home to families.

### *Post-Leadership Change—Teaching Staff*

If the tonal shifts were consistent with the leadership team regarding the post-leadership change, the teaching staff also expressed a considerable enthusiasm after the new disruptive changes were implemented. Some of these changes—like streamlining electronic communication, holding teaching and leadership staff accountable for responding in real-time to e-mails, introducing a parent portal that keeps parents up to date with regard to what’s happening with their students, incentivizing new and innovative approaches to teaching, and giving daily “shout outs” to teachers who have done something extraordinary during the day—directly affect the teachers, which allowed for the researcher to ask open-ended questions regarding the new changes. As with the leadership team, there is also a noticeable overall tonal shift in the teaching staff’s reception of the new post-leadership changes:

Our new leadership team works hard to keep the staff updated with important information that we need in order to perform our duties. Before the change, my feelings were much different. I felt like I was an outsider that didn’t belong... After the change, I can honestly say that the new leadership committee has worked hard to make sure that our staff is content and want to come to work to do our best. The new leadership is working hard to make sure teachers and staff are

happy to come to work and do our jobs. There are incentives to get our morale up and do the best that we can. I feel as if our support level has improved.

All students are college bound, more culture-oriented, and computer-literate. There is a general emphasis to bring more resources to the school, which has resulted in a great transformation in the school, particularly as it relates to building young male leaders. We also have our first young male principal, who serves as a role model to many of our young male students, and the new positions that were created allow for many of us to focus on what's most important—the classroom... There are many leadership and teacher meetings, a new curriculum, and out of town workshops, that all keep the windows of education open. After the leadership change, I can truly say there has been a considerable shift in culture. The leadership team makes it clear that they are giving considerable effort to helping the teaching staff excel and continue to grow.

I've taught at multiple schools, and STAR feels like a completely different school than it did before the change in leadership. Now, with the new changes like the parent portal, we are able to communicate more consistently with parents and the community. I've also noticed a change in morale, as now teachers work toward trying to get the daily "shout out"! These changes encourage friendly competition, and have resulted in considerable shifts in teacher-student and teacher-parent engagement.

These responses speak to varying perspectives on the post-leadership change, but they signal an overall enthusiasm. The first respondent focused on how the respondent's personal and professional life was improved, highlighting that the team now makes the respondent feel included instead of left out. The second responded highlighted notable shifts in the culture and structure of the school; new resources are coming in, and the changes are improving the students' college readiness and computer literacy, and the third respondent spoke to how some of the new changes encourage more consistent and effective forms of communication while also boosting morale.

### *Themes*

Analysis of the narrative data amongst the leadership team revealed major themes and sub-themes, which contributed to why disruptive leadership both influences and informs

organizational relevance and impact. The three major themes mentioned by the leadership participants were,

1. Identifying core problems as context for disruption
2. Including stakeholders in the envisioning and strategy process
3. Embracing the complexity of changing social systems

The two sub-themes that emerged were: 1) balancing disruption and compassion, and 2) controlling for freedom within disruption. A discussion of each major theme follows.

These attitudes and behaviors were observed in all of the leaders of the organization from the Dean of Instruction and Culture to the Head of School.

#### *Theme 1: Identifying Problems*

The first theme has the context of urgency driven by a need to not only disrupt for the sake of relevancy and impact, but to disrupt also for the sake of problem-solving. The leadership team was clear that the most important actions of their initial 90 days were to listen, learn, and list. When asked, “list what?” The response was unanimous, best captured by P1.

P1: Similar to any other executive or organizational leader, we had to go on a listening and learning tour. We had to listen to all of the stakeholders of the organization, which ranged from the community residents within a 3-to-5 mile radius to our students to our teachers to our parents to our custodians to our donors to our political officials. But it’s not enough to listen and learn, if you aren’t prepared to *list*. List what, I’m sure you’re wondering. List all of the immediate problems that are resolvable – by immediate, I mean able to resolved in less than 30 days and able to resolved with little to no resources involved. Many leaders will listen and learn, but often are afraid to list the problems they identify in what they hear because we falsely assume that problems automatically mean organizational emergencies. That’s not the case. Some problems, which need disrupting, are problems only because nobody in leadership has ever stopped to list them as such and deal with them.

The context of urgency driven by a need to problem-solve, seems both evident and somewhat elementary, because logic would say, “if there’s a problem, fix it.” But latent in this first theme is admitting (and/or “listing”) that there is a problem in need of fixing. As a strategist and management consultant by my professional history, I struggled with this theme of urgency driving problem-solving and disruption because it goes against my development and nurturing as a strategist/consultant; we are informed to solve problems through strategic, thoughtful processes that measures the outcomes of an action against the resources invested for sustainable solutions. So I wondered if the urgency component actually contributed to the nature of being disruptive, or if the disruption occurred because it was urgent. While I struggled with this theme as a strategist and consultant, this theme aligned with my demographic identity as a millennial. There is an old adage that says, “A job worth doing is worth doing well,” which is often used to invoke slowing down, taking your time, weighing the costs, and incrementally doing the work. However, this theme alters that to say, “A job worth doing is worth doing when it’s time to be done.”

While the two millennial interviewees—P1 and P2—embraced the urgency, P3 was slower to see the value in problem-solving urgently, controlling for the shock it might cause the teachers and support staff; however, despite wanting to move slower, P3 knew the urgency and why the need to act required immediacy.

P3: Working with millennials, they think a million miles per minute—and I get that, truly I do ... I mean I have a 19-year old in my life—but I wanted us to slow down because I didn’t want to leave our teachers behind who couldn’t keep the pace of our approach. I wasn’t trying to save them and destroy the school, but I knew that some of our valuable teachers also needed time to learn who we are and trust that we have their best interest in mind before we started changing things too fast. On the other hand, there were some things we just *had to do*—and when I say, *had*, I mean *had*.

This theme materialized as leadership team members discussed how they did whatever they had to do in order to compress their schedules in the beginning days of the year, for the express purpose of problem-solving. Having to learn a school, learn staff members, learn each other, and problem-solve proved to be stressful; but at the same time, the interviewees said that time to reflect was also critical to problem-solving through disruption because without it, they'd never have to ask the hard questions about whether or not the disruptions are producing meaningful results for the organization.

P1: One of the worst feelings in the world is to disrupt a system for the sake of fixing things, only to reflect beyond the reasonable time to apologize and/or modify, and realize that you disrupted by adding additional layers of problems that need to be fixed. Changing culture, which starts with fixing some things, not only requires effective communication with your team, but constant reflection on the actions being made; and I would say that the reflection requires one being able to trust the contributions being made by your team members on things you've said, done, and how to improve.

If you ask a strategist, or a management consultant, what they need to solve a problem, their answer will consistently be: "Time." However, there were certain problems within the organization that necessitated little time and quick action. In fact, some of the disruption of fixing problems came from the lack of time. More than strategist and consultant, the leadership team felt like a group of emergency medicine doctors.

P1: There were times where it felt like an emergency room more than a school—not because there was catastrophic, life or death decisions—but because of the pace at which we had to move in multiple directions at the same time. Our team was the literal definition of "stretched," but we made it work.

Historically, and even the age of technology, innovation has been fast-paced. One of the recurring analogies you heard throughout the leadership team was the idea of Silicon Valley, which we know as the hub of innovation, disruption, and organizational

startups—often startups which have as their nucleus two questions: 1) how do we fix a problem that a marketable contingency has, or 2) how do we improve how something is already being done? As such, the leadership team very much so embodied the idea of Silicon Valley’s urgency.

P2: In my limited time with the school, it’s clear that we are building the Apple, Google, Uber of education—that requires fast-paced decision making in order to keep up. Our future as a relevant school that serves *this* generation to the best of our ability is based on being first, and in order to be first, we must be fast.

P3: Our Head of School always says that we want to bridge the Silicon Valley of the Mid-South, which means we have to become like Silicon Valley—to the best of our southern ability—and the way we do that is by making decisions that we believe fix how things have been done, and position us to remain the leading option for parents and students in our city.

### *Theme 2: Including Stakeholders*

The second theme was that these leaders, as part of their disrupting the status quo of the leadership before them, would listen to all the stakeholders within the organization, especially the teachers, and be open to their contributing ideas for the advancement of the school. These leaders not only encouraged innovation—not only in becoming a better teacher in sharing information—but also in the processes that were used with how students acquired, designed, tested, and learned information. Despite still building trust with each other, these leaders made it clear that stakeholder participation was the only way to remain relevant, because without stakeholder participation, the organization would be at jeopardy.

P1: We are a people organization, period. We educate people—*students*—through people—*teachers*. If we don’t get their buy-in to implement these bright ideas we have, we are going nowhere and fast. The only way for us to have implementable and successful disruption within our context is by having people who believe in the disruption. It won’t work any other way. Now, let’s be clear, understanding why we’re doing it and believing in it—or should I say, trusting it—are

completely different; and while I'd love to have our team both trust it and understand it, if they'd just trust it, we can conquer anything.

P2: Even though I am student-first, and always want to know, “how does this benefit kids?” I have to also be teacher-centered, because I know that without them, we couldn't do any of this. We could try, but it would be a tall feat thinking we could handle the loads that they handle with the grace and patience they handle it with. When I'm thinking about teaching strategies, performance metrics, coaching concepts, and classroom manipulatives, I have to ask, “how does this benefit teachers?” And the best way to get that answer is to *ask them*. What a concept, right? Asking teachers what they want. So often, especially in traditional, district-schools – it's top-down with teachers having to do what they're told to do. So to have a safe space where they can share ideas, challenge recommendations, and test concepts is game-changing in education. It's not a new philosophy, but we certainly don't have many successful examples of it being practiced in this city.

While the leadership team was clear that all the stakeholders will not and should not know every detail of the disruption process—full disclosure would hinder the leadership team's ability to manage the risk of implementation and evaluation—none of the leadership team mentioned or even alluded to excluding them from participating in the organizational strategizing. In a way, the leadership team was not focused on finding a perfect solution in isolation and being “heroes”, but rather finding a solution that served the most persons possible with the highest quality outcome.

P3: Collaboration, collaboration, and collaboration. We have to collaborate with our teachers in order to see our vision as an innovation hub and incubator of ideas come to life. We cannot expect collaboration and teamwork from our teachers if we are not open to their ideas and thoughts. They don't always understand the red tape, policies, protocols, and back-office work that comes with their ideas, but that's okay, they shouldn't have to. They should take every opportunity to think creatively and share their ideas with us.

P1: Sometimes you have to be the ‘bad cop,’ because you encourage innovation and creativity, but you also have to say ‘no’ to innovation and creativity moments later. That's because the real gift is not in seeing your idea come to pass or watching a plan unfold that you envisioned, but in knowing that your voice was welcomed at the table.

What the researcher observed in all of their responses is a multidirectional layer of trust. While the leadership team is certainly responsible for creating an atmosphere where stakeholders—including teachers, students, and parents—feel like their voice is heard, they are not the sole party responsible.

P2: As the student-first, teacher-centered person, I also know that our teachers, and even our students, have to trust us to share what they're thinking about the organization. If the leadership team has to bear all of the responsibility for people sharing their ideas, we'll drop the ball because that's not *always* at forefront of our minds. So we have to be *forced*, literally demanded, to hear what's on their mind. We'll listen, we tell them that all of the time, but they have to speak.

When reflecting on how they communicate with the staff, each of the interviewees discussed how listening to the stakeholders within the organization was outside the norm in the charter school space because of the corporate dimension that charter school management organizations tend to have. They stressed that not only do teachers feel more invested; parents, many of whom bear an unspoken anxiety of not knowing if the school is doing all it can for their children, also express a larger sense of investment in educational development.

P3: Parents, especially parents of elementary-aged children, are nervous about school because it's new. So when they hear about new ideas, new structures, new staff, new, new, new, they have a certain level of anxiety because it can be overwhelming. However, inviting them into the process of the organization to know how the leadership is thinking and how it *benefits their child* eases that anxiety and allows new ideas to happen without as much pushback.

P1: As all of our stakeholders, particularly our parents, share their ideas with us about what makes a great school, it encourages us as a leadership team to expand our frame of reference about what a great school is. I try to think about it this way—without our stakeholders sharing their perspectives, it would literally be *my* ideal school. And while that works for me, imagine that for yourself: you'd be an invisible party because it would be built on the principles and practices that speak to me. With that in mind, listening and learning from those persons who are both most impacted and most crucial to implementation, allows the school context to serve a greater diversity of student and family. Welcoming perspectives,



particularly perspectives that are demographically diverse from your own is a win-win.

P2: Parents are the golden ticket for classroom success, and even for how we do culture. Allowing them to both contribute and inform how culture looks and feels will strengthen seeing that culture at home. If we tell parents, “This is how you do this at home, this is how you do that, say this, say that, use this, use that...” they will quickly isolate themselves under the veil of, “You don’t know how to raise my child.” And to an extent, they’re right! We don’t know how to raise *their* child but we do know how to *develop children*; and if we could partner what we know as a community with what they know as a family-unit, we all could win and see major gains and achievements in the lives of the students we serve.

Imagining the intersection of how these stakeholder perspectives work within the organization, one of the interviewees likened it to a two-cycle engine.

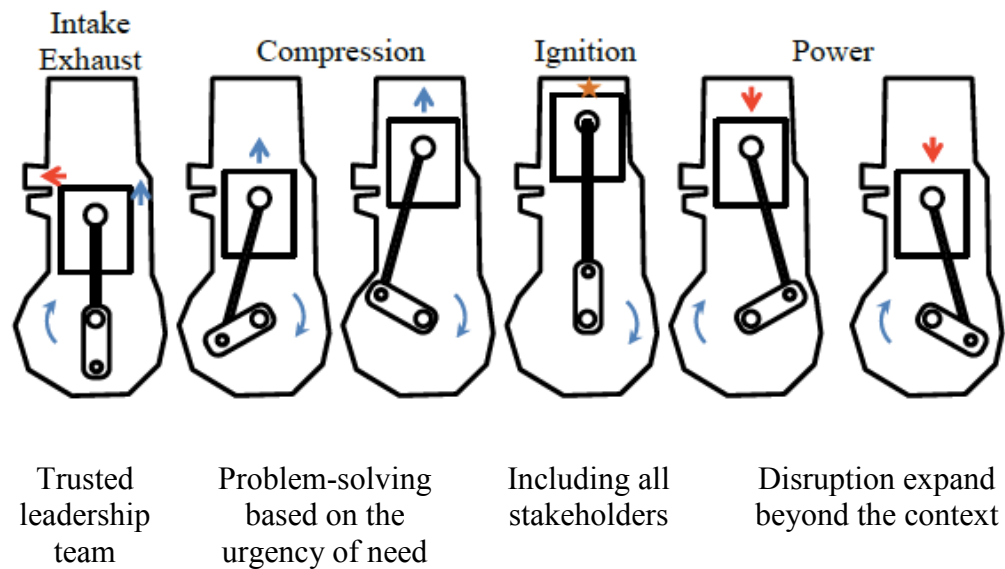
P1: I don’t know if you know anything about a two-cycle engine—and I don’t claim to know a lot, but I used to enjoy reading about these kinds of things—but in brief, the two-cycle has the following: intake, compression, ignition, and power, and exhaust. So in my mind, the intake can be seen as a trusted leadership team with credibility and authenticity. Having those principles, or character traits if you will, will get the engine rolling and create a space for those in the cycle to trust the process.

The compression can be seen as the urgency of problem solving, because it comes with a certain level of tension and pressure. But the ignition stage, which is most important to the effectiveness of the engine, can be seen as stakeholders knowing the process, challenging the process, and trusting the process enough to implement it. As stakeholders—especially our teachers and support staff—ask questions that challenge our ideas, push us on what we’re thinking, and force us to consider alternatives to *our* alternatives, that inclusive participation is creating a spark, which the ignition needs for our advancement as an organization.

Finally, at the power stage, the engine begins to send the used air out of the exhaust pipes into the community, which can be seen as the disruption filtering into the larger community those developed within our contained and compressed context.

Figure 4.4, Four Stages of Engine Combustion on the next page attempts to visualize this process.

Figure 4.4. Four Stages of Engine Combustion



The interviewee continued to explain that the two-cycle engine model can be used to explain additional concepts as part of the disruption process.

P1: Think about this way, the compression cycle could also be the cycle of conflict that inevitably happens within disruption—either as a response to the alternative proposed, or in the process of challenging to understand the process. And instead of seeing that conflict as problematic, we could see it as helpful to discovering a more effective disruptive alternative to complacency. Now, we have to be honest, too much conflict in the middle of disrupting an organization can hurt the process and break the trust established during the intake process, because the intake process could also be called the, “listen, learn, and list” process. The other change is that the exhaust cycle at the end of the process could be thought of as the reflection process before beginning the engine cycle over again to address another problem on the list that needs compression.

The researcher found the two-engine cycle as helpful in understanding how the leadership team thought about their role and responsibility in facilitating the disruptive process by including all the stakeholders. As a result, the researcher mentioned the two-engine cycle to P2 and P3 for their feedback, both agreed with P1. However, P2 expanded the cycle by addressing how the breakdown often occurs in schools between compression and ignition, which the researcher found particularly interesting.

P2: I like the two-engine cycle approach, because often what happens between the compression and ignition processes—based on how P1 is using it—is the “trusted leadership team” never explains the compression to the stakeholders because it’s already been done. So it’s like the leadership team saying, “You can be a part of the ignition of *these* things, but you need to just trust what we’ve already had to do even though you were impacted, either directly or indirectly.” That’s a breakdown, because the trust that was gained during the intake process has now been lost because of failing to explain what occurred after the intake process.

P2 was very passionate about this point, and upon being invited to share more, the interviewee offered a personal story from when he was a teacher:

P2: Let’s just say that being included in both future decisions *and being made to understand past decisions* is helpful because they can often be related. I’ve had one too many times when leadership has invited me to sit at the table for something that has yet to happen, but fail to mention what has already happened and how [this prior decision] impacts the decision being made for what’s about to happen. People just need knowledge. They will respect you as the leader if they feel like you’ll be authentic with including them. I know that firsthand—I’ve witnessed and lived it.

### *Theme 3: Embracing Complexity*

The final theme that emerged from the leadership team was embracing the complexity of changing social systems. As the leadership team discussed their ideas and plans for the school, it was clear that the school culture was not shifting in isolation, but shifting in response to the changing culture of society in which the school has to both function and develop students to succeed in. In order to remain relevant and impactful, leaders must be willing to change with an increasingly complex and dynamic social world. Informally, this theme could be thought of as, “change with the times or get left behind.” This phrase was often used at the initial boom of the personal computer movement, and resurfaced during the boom of the smartphone, implying that one’s personal ability to remain relevant was to stay in synchronization with the times in which one lives and serves. To be clear, embracing the complexity of changing social systems

does not mean that a leader embraces every fad, trend, or craze that impacts social culture; instead embracing the complexity of changing social systems is about embracing the changing dynamics, influences, and cultural paradigms that influence social society. Leaders, especially disruptive leaders, need to know the changing dynamics of the social system better than those who only follow the social system; and even more significant is the disruptive leader who can project the next wave of the social system, which means that they must not only know the rules, but they must know how the people think who create the rules. As such, this leadership team was clear on the fact that organizations “trying to stay afloat in such permanent white water”<sup>7</sup> would be faced with challenges most are ill-prepared to thrive in relevantly.

This theme, at its core, is related to the theme of urgency. Often a formal process of changing culture in response to changes in the social system has timelines, three to five year strategic plans, vision plans, team-building agreements, financial models, operating protocols, and associated delays with all of those steps/routines. In embracing the complexity of changing social systems, disruptive leaders are also forced to embrace the complexity of the *timing* of changing social systems; steps in change and transformation process that were normally scheduled to take three to five years often demand a shift in timeline, compelling completion in a restricted one to two years in order to keep pace with the social system one serves. The interviewees were unanimously saying the same thing—“the more often you do it, the less you have to worry,” a quote taken directly from one of the interviewees.

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<sup>7</sup> P. B. Vaill, *Learning as a Way of Being: Strategies for Survival in a World of Permanent White Water* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 1.

P1: One of my economics and education professors told us, “Survey, study, and strategize for the *next* change in society, so that should you ever miss a change in society, you’re already one change ahead.” I’ve allowed myself to never forget that because I apply that thinking to all macro-level changes. So, what I do in my role? I survey, study, and strategize for the next change in educational technologies; I survey, study, and strategize for the next change in playgrounds; I survey, study, and strategize for the next change in funding mechanisms and so forth, you get it. In order to remain relevant, competitive—which is language I hate to use with educating children and in the minds of parents who have options—we have to know what changes are taking place in the world around us, and then we must respond to those. For as much as I don’t know about global economic policy, the interplay of socio-political terrorism and future markets, etc., I must be prepared to know as much as I can because indirectly [and to some extent, directly], it influences what we do in education. That’s why I tell our team, we must stay ahead of changes by studying them, because the more often you do it, the less you have to worry about it.

P2: In the history of education, it used to be okay to know how to teach letter-recognition *without* knowing how the voucher system might possibly influence school operations and overhead. That’s not the case anymore, and we are at a disadvantage to not having a working knowledge of the rapidly change world, because let’s be honest, our ignorance will end our career.

P3: We have to stop being surprised, or should I say, *acting* surprised! Part of our focus, meaning every school leader, administrator, CMO executive, and the like, needs to be on developing ways within our schools to anticipate future possibilities in our neighborhoods, with our enrollments, etc. so we are not surprised by issues to the point that it cripples us.

As the leadership team discussed and expounded on their ideas for the school’s future—ranging from introducing STREAM [science, technology, research, engineering, arts, and mathematics] to Mandarin as a foreign language to urban farming as a hands-on initiative—it was clear that they weren’t simply “finding a different way to assemble the parts.”<sup>8</sup> When asked if an external force influenced and informed these disruptions to their traditional, core-subject, college-preparatory approach, the Head of School offered critically important insights:

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Martin Dickens, “Facilitating Emergence: Complex, Adaptive Systems Theory and the Shape of Change,” unpublished doctoral dissertation (Culver City, CA: Antioch University, 2012), 6.

P1: As a school, a charter school that has autonomy of its own operation, we are held responsible for remaining a relevant and viable option in the marketplace of education. Let's be very clear, as we thought about responding to the social context in which we live and serve, we had to make some critical decisions that would not only impact how we did education, but how we shaped and informed the minds of kids. Embracing the social systems of the world doesn't mean we *do what they do*, but it does mean that we develop coherent strategies of disruption without hierarchical force, in order to prepare students to thrive in a changing social system. In practice, we create a *social system* [the school] within a *social system* [the zip code] within a *social system* [the city] within a *social system* [the state] within a *social system* [the nation] within a *social system* [the world]. Consequently, we are held responsible for developing students who are confident and knowledgeable to negotiate, successfully, the complex changing dynamics that exist within each of those social systems. That is to say, it's not enough for us to be able disrupt our social system [the school] knowing that our students are underprepared to handle disruption at the national level, or even within their zip code. As such, disruptive leadership requires embracing the complex, interlocking relationship between changing social systems—and I'm stressing the last "s" because there isn't one, there are multiple and we have to embrace the fact that they all change, and it impacts us all.

The leadership team underscored a common point, which is that any organization that projects relevancy in a world driven by interactive systems, technologies, and industries must shift its focus from individuals (as the primary metric) to systems and their relationship to individuals.

P2: School districts are complex, multifaceted, convoluted, status quo protecting, mass industrialization pipeline composed of individuals on a board who are thinking about the data trends of one system—its own. But the world is a complex, multifaceted, convoluted, innovating, decentralization hub of interaction composed of startups, nonprofits, corporations, political networks, faith-based institutions, etc. thinking about disrupting processes, outcomes, metrics, and products in order to impact the whole. If that is indeed the case, and the world, economically and innovatively and politically, outpaces the schools, one could assume that the school district model is limiting because its individualized but it isn't systemic, or systematic.

P1: We are a people organization, I've said this before and I'll keep saying it – we know people, we develop people, we do people. However, being a people organization does not mean that we discount the impact that system-level thinking has on the individual level. In fact, as a leadership team, we have shifted our focus from thinking solely about the people we serve and those whom fulfill our

mission; and we focus on how we respond to the social system that encompasses all of us, and then build people-policies, people-protocols, and people-practices in response to have a clear understanding of the social system we are in. It might be useful to think of what we're doing is first, having a clear understanding of the changing dynamics of society, and secondly, responding to our best understanding with adaptive processes that impact and influence all the stakeholder groups within our organization. To that degree, I would say that the essence of our disruption is our ability to be a responsive organization to social systems, not an overpowered organization. Our disruption is based on and in our resilience.

P1's use of the word, "resilience" emphasized a reality that caused for more questioning, because resilience is often thought of as surviving the traumatic. The researcher asked an open-ended follow-up: "How do you define resilient? And, how would you measure STAR's resilience compared to other schools based on your leadership style, or the leadership style of your team?"

P1: Resilience, that's simple—your ability to live through large amounts of change, trauma, and disruption, without a significant decline in life quality—or in this case, organizational quality. That's my definition of it, which of course has room for tightening. You know what, a more sophisticated definition is from a book I read, *How the World is Changed*, and I vaguely remember resilience being defined as, "experiencing massive change and maintaining the integrity of the original."<sup>9</sup> To be clear on that definition, the focus was on maintaining the *integrity* of the original, not remaining the original after the changes. To your second question, I would say that STAR is immensely resilient—measured in part by our leadership team's style, and measured by the history of our school being twelve years old. On one hand, the amount of change and disruption, which caused in one year, without staff walkout, without academic data decline, without parent dissatisfaction and any other significant decline in school quality is an indication of our resilience. Furthermore, as a twelve-year-old school, the oldest elementary charter school in the city of Memphis, the school has seen the shifts in education at both the district, state, and national levels—surviving all of the transitions with high-performing academic data and successful students.

These themes can be described chronically as the research develops and unfolds to more thoroughly understand how disruptive leadership attitudes and practices synergistically contribute to organizational relevance and impact. Disruption begins with

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<sup>9</sup> Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, and Michael Quinn Patton, *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed* (Toronto, Canada: Vintage Canada, 2007), 65.

a leader, or leadership team, who is credible and has integrity; and the leader, or leadership team, substantiates that credibility through the identifying core problems that must be resolved with a sense of urgency. The disruptive leader, or leadership team, then engages all the stakeholders within the organization to ask questions, challenge alternatives, proposed ideas, and ultimately, trust the disruptive alternatives that will impact the status quo functioning of the organization. Finally, the leader or leadership team embraces the complexity of changing social systems by facilitating a mindset of foresight to build the organization's capacity to maintain its resilience.

### *Summary*

The qualitative, case study project used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions to investigate how Jesus's core competencies of disruptive leadership relate to organizational relevance and impact in one charter school organization. The lived experiences and perceptions, relative to disruption, of three organizational leaders provided detailed accounts of their challenges in disruptive leadership, how it impacts the life of those within the organization, and the changing social system that influences the world of disruptive leaders.

In total, the findings and the results show that the difference between a leader and a disruptive innovator is caused not by the difference between being a leader for a certain of time or being a new leader, but rather more applying an appropriate combination of three (3) theme-intersections. Data revealed three major themes and two sub-themes, with each of the three participants experiencing the three major themes. The three themes discovered and identified in the data contribute to how leaders can be disruptive leaders within their marketplace organization in order to maintain relevancy and impact. The



three themes identified that contribute to effective disruptive leadership, which models Jesus, are: a) responding to an identified problem that ultimately would inhibit the relevancy and impact of the organization if not addressed; b) stakeholder contribution that takes seriously the voice and personality of those within the organization (respecting the vast diversity of those voices and personalities); and c) embracing the complex changing social systems in which the organization is called to function.

Responses to the interview questions depict in-depth reflections of the interviewee's awareness of and lived experiences with God; and formed the basis for decisive analysis of the phenomenon, discussion, conclusions, and implications and significance of the findings to further research. In the following chapter, the researcher provides a discussion of the findings and makes recommendations for additional research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

#### *Introduction*

“Since our complex societies are highly susceptible to interferences and accidents, they certainly offer ideal opportunities for a prompt disruption of normal activities.”

—Jurgen Habermas, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*<sup>1</sup>

Today’s unpredictable environment, particularly as the social landscape continues to shift in America, requires disruptive solutions to organizational leadership. Fluctuations in the threats to relevancy and impact for organizations that serve people at the core level of transformation are evolving so rapidly that the status quo cannot keep up. Leadership disruption through the core competencies of Jesus—communication, culture, contribution and cultivation—can address explicit threats to our relevancy and impact in the world. The competencies of Jesus can have a substantial impact on disruption within a team, especially when those competencies are functional practices (and to some degree, sacred practices) of leadership within a team. Unfortunately, many organizations do not understand the effect of leadership disruption and the core competencies of Jesus on maintaining relevancy and impact. As such, a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between disruption and leadership was needed, thus the nucleus of this research project.

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<sup>1</sup> Giavanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jaques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

### *The Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to explore the core competencies of Jesus's disruptive leadership paradigm—communication, culture, contribution, and cultivation—and how, if applied to marketplace organizations, this paradigm can stimulate organizational transformation for relevance and impact by disrupting the status quo through radical alternatives. Ultimately, this study will contribute to the discussion and development of an underdeveloped paradigm of leadership—disruption.

### *The Value*

The value, and indeed the necessity, of this study became evidence in the following. First, the shifting impact of organizational commitment has diminished longevity with organizations. Secondly, the changing role of innovation and disruption as core leadership practices impact for-profit, marketplace corporations. Third, the changing role of leadership has shifted from being a rule-imposer to being a team-facilitator. Fourth, the element of transition facing organizations, particularly ministry and faith-based organizations, is necessary for maintaining relevance and impact in the marketplace. Consequently, because of the varied challenges associated with organizational leadership, it was crucial to identify the interplay of the core competencies of Jesus as the guiding principles of disruptive leadership.

### *Implications for Ministry*

Disruptive leaders develop within a specific context in response to a particular problem; they do not disrupt for the sake of disrupting, but they disrupt for the sake of improving a context based on an identified problem and/or remaining relevant and

impactful to the called marketplace. Likewise, the implication for ministry is that disruptive leadership, even within the ministry context, should not be disruptive for disruption's sake, but in response to a particular problem of status quo that would inhibit the relevancy and impact of the ministry. An oft-used phrase, "if it's not broken, don't fix it," has been the verbal deterrent to disruptive practices, ideas, and innovations in organizational spaces. If not careful, the previous implication for ministry leaders could be read from the vantage point that disruptive leadership is about fixing what is broken; however, disruptive leaders do not simply exist to fix what is broken by searching for problems to solve. Rather, disruptive leaders respond to a context by questioning hegemonic structures and protocols, unpacking the various components of the organization, and envisioning, strategizing, implementing, and evaluating preferable alternatives to realize sustainable relevancy and impact in the marketplace.

Disruptive leaders engage all of the necessary (and relevant) organizational stakeholders when envisioning and strategizing preferable alternatives to the status quo, the majority of whom are often sidelined in organizational decision making, while also being the most impacted by the alternatives and most needed to implement the alternatives. While engaging all stakeholders in the disruptive process through communication and contribution, the employees within the organization emerge as cultivated leaders and culture agents. As ministry leaders, the interloping character principles of communication and contribution are critical to disruptive leadership process of cultivating culture agents within the organization; this insight has far-reaching implications. The persons who both are most impacted by our alternative disruptions and needed the most to implement those disruptions are often the very persons who tend to

not be at the table when we, as leaders, are envisioning and strategizing how to alter the status quo. Not only is this an implication for ministry, but an implication for personal spiritual formation in that our decisions as persons do not simply impact our own lives [in isolation], but often have implications for the people within our lives. As such, to marginalize, *if not completely ignore*, the contributions of those within our lives as we envision and strategize alternatives to areas of our lives that are status quo is to neglect the principle of disruptive leadership.

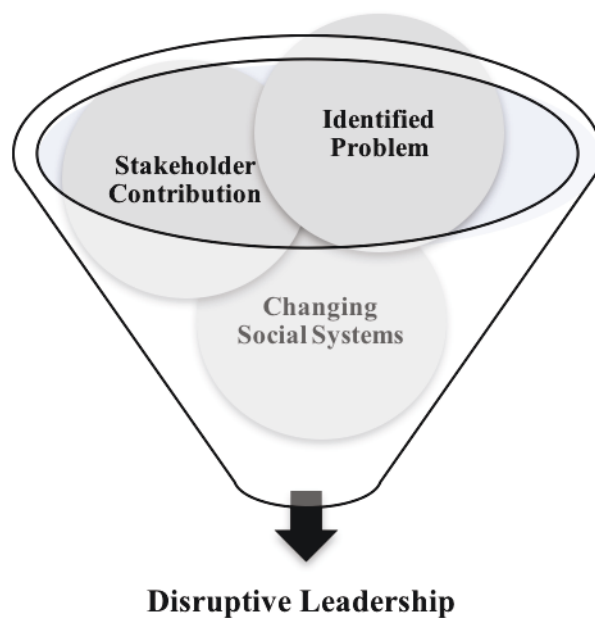
Some of the leading scholarship issues a clarion call for “greater maturity [in leadership] that acknowledges that leadership is played out in complex, dynamic, and changing social systems”.<sup>2</sup> Disruptive leadership is just that, a “greater maturity” in that it both acknowledges, and thrives, on the intersection of complex, dynamic, and changing social systems. This principle of intersecting complexity was revealed through the insights of the leaders in this project; in fact, disruptive leaders do not evade the complexity of changing social systems, but embrace the complexity as the context for innovation to materialize. This understanding of disruptive leadership as embracing the intersecting complexity of changing social systems reveals a new type of leader who is capable of leading in an age where social systems (as evidenced by the socio-political, social media, and global landscapes) will become increasingly complex and require leadership able to negotiate those complexities. This new type of leader is not only needed in the marketplace, but also needed in ministry contexts considering that the same increasing complexity facing social systems underscores the same increasing complexity facing ministries.

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<sup>2</sup> R. Middlehurst, “Not Enough Science or Not Enough Learning: Exploring the Gaps Between Leadership Theory and Practice,” *Higher Education Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2008): 322–39.

Figure 5.1 provides a visual portrayal of these implications and how they interact. The relationship between these three implications—an identified problem that impedes relevance and impact, stakeholder contribution for inclusive decision-making, and managing the complexity of changing social systems—is a cooperative, concurrent process that inspires action over passive observation. Therefore, disruptive leaders are not content with the discovery of alternatives to the status quo without acting on those alternatives.

Figure 5.1. Disruptive Leadership



Giddens proposed structuration theory as a way to conceptualize how participants within a social system create and influence that system while at the same time being influenced and bound by the social systems they inhabit<sup>3</sup>; through the lens of

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<sup>3</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 3.

structuration theory, it becomes clear that a more realistic perspective is that disruptions emerge at the point when the leader defines them as opportunities to advance relevancy within the organization. The results of this study align very closely with the structuration perspective and the intersecting implications. In every case the leaders talked and/or alluded to how they identify an opportunity for disruption and then develop an approach to address it.

### *Limitations of the Project*

The research project focused on one case study – STAR Academy College Preparatory Charter School in Memphis, Tennessee. Consequently, the findings of this study were limited by time and scale, and therefore pertained to a narrow group of organizational leaders and teaching staff, namely four executives and ten teaching staff from a very specific socio-geographic region—the mid-South—and within a very specific organizational industry—education. First, there were personal limitations. This researcher faced time limitations due to the temporal constraints of limiting the research component of the project to two months. The researcher also faced limitations in the overall sample size, due to many of the staff members arriving after the change occurred. This resulted in the total number of interviewees made available to this writer from the organization being limited to thirteen (13) participants. The opportunity to interview a broader group of organizational participants, as well as a longer more longitudinal approach, may have added significant information to the data set, or reinforced the preliminary theory. However, this approach also created the opportunity for significant discussions of subjectivity and the potential for individual bias to be reflected in themes identified through the interview process.

As discussed in the limitations and delimitations section of Chapter III, the secondary limitation of this study was researcher subjectivity. As stated, this is a fundamental element of grounded theory research. The goal was to discover and illuminate emergent themes that support the criterion of disruptive leadership as demonstrated through the core competencies. However, it should be noted that, upon reflection of knowledge gained through this research and particularly the emergent themes that have offered insight into disruptive leadership, the interview questions could have been designed to better serve the study. While this was unknown when the interviews were conducted, the researcher realized that different and additional questions could have been asked of the participants to potentially add to the depth and richness of the study, as well as to further support the emergent themes. Perhaps this is simply the nature of such research; it is a process of continuous exploration through which one continues to gain knowledge and understanding upon which to build a robust theory. Certainly, this study has led to more questions than answers, some of which are discussed in the next section describing suggestions for further research.

#### *Possibilities for Future Research*

Studies of disruptive leadership are limited, and grounded theory studies of disruptive leadership were unable to be found in the published literature. This study revealed four themes that offer compelling possibilities for further study of disruptive leadership and that offer a potential starting point for a theory. It is reasonable to state that the conclusions of this study meet the criteria of “pragmatism, practical adequacy, and plausibility” within the context from which they have been drawn.<sup>4</sup> However, a

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<sup>4</sup> S. Kempster and K. W. Parry, “Grounded Theory and Leadership Research: A critical realist



model of disruptive leadership can be further developed and strengthened only with additional research to determine whether the themes that emerged are purely contextual to educational organizations within the marketplace or can be identified in other contexts of disruptive leadership, e.g. social enterprise, human services, and others.

A future study following this basic design might consider an additional step in the process of identifying disruption in a large and decentralized context like a “mega-church” that has the potential to broaden the pool of potential candidates for the more in-depth interview phase of the research process. The identification of innovation could be initiated with a broader survey of the larger organization, asking survey participants to identify practices and policies they believe align with the researched core competencies. Finally, with a longer research window, or with the assistance of additional researchers, the interview phase could have been extended to allow for additional interviews beyond the leadership team and the teaching staff. In addition to interviews, the data collection process could also include review of program literature, resources and evaluation reports. The research results and preliminary theory may have taken on more complexity and layers with the insight and perspective of additional interviews and document analysis. To build upon this foundation, further research could explore the following:

1. This study was limited to a single geographic location and one context. The identification and study of disruptive leaders in other contexts or geographic locations would help to answer the following questions: (a) Are other disruptive leaders developing and approaching relevancy and impact in the same ways?; and (b) Are they disrupting power structures and practicing emergent leadership to challenge hegemonic structures and changing social systems?
2. This study could also have a comparative case-study approach where multiple contexts are placed in conversation with another to answer the following questions: (a) Do various contexts have unwritten, unspoken cultures that determines the extent to which disruptive leadership can take place?; and (b) Can

organization leaders disrupt at a more effective rate when disrupting using the methods and practices of comparable organizations?

3. Lastly, by controlling for contexts, the following questions could be answered: (a) Can the themes uncovered within one marketplace organization apply to another marketplace organization regardless of mission?; and (b) What nuances are latent within organizational leadership personality that influences buy-in within the disruption process?

### *Conclusion and Discussion*

All the signs are clear—organizational disruption begins with the leaders, but materializes and evolves with those within organization as they interact in a dynamic way with the alternatives and the changing social systems in which they operate. The enthusiasm of the leadership team was mirrored in the enthusiasm from the teaching staff; and although some of the teaching respondents articulated a fondness for the pre-leadership change culture and environment, they nevertheless saw value in the changes. These kinds of narrative indicators highlight that disruptive forms of leadership based upon the four core competencies of Jesus can be effective in marketplace organizations. The leadership team highlighted the expanded reputation STAR has in the city and even further abroad, speaking to relevance and impact; and the teaching staff highlighted how the new changes and innovations in communication and culture created a new environment wherein teachers feel more involved with the future of the school. Moreover, the teaching staff spoke to how they were encouraged to be and do better; they noted how the leadership team is now taking an active investment in their development, which, in turn, boosted morale and encouraged teachers to continue to improve their pedagogical skills. Based upon these responses, it is reasonable to conclude that a disruptive leadership paradigm based upon communication, culture, contribution, and

cultivation can and will yield demonstrable and desired changes in relevancy and impact.

The development of disruption in marketplace organizations through core competencies of Jesus gives foundation for the relationships between identified problems that threaten relevancy, the contribution of stakeholders, and the changing social systems in which the organization has to function and respond. Furthermore, disruption is driven by the prevailing reality that these dynamics are not only interrelated, but they also evolve over time and are dependent on context. The results of this project align very well with Christensen's finding that disruption is more likely to be envisioned, strategized, and implemented if the disruptions are protected from any evidence of the status quo being altered, and fully owned by those within the organization.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, disruptive leaders in marketplace organizations that serve people at the ground level, and in the broader marketplace sector of enterprise, face a difficult challenge—the challenge of balancing the drive for disruption without abandoning the organization's mission and core values of being people-first.

Facing this challenge requires disruptive leaders to remember that despite Jesus's disruptive process, his core competencies of communication and culture were about ensuring that the people most impacted understood the disruption and maintained the focus of the outcomes potentially caused by the disruption. Moreover, the actions needed to create and sustain this balance of disruptive process and human concern within changing social systems often run counters to their current beliefs about what it means to be a disruptive leader in the corporate enterprise—innovate first, ask questions second. Disruptive leadership introduces and substantiates a new leadership paradigm that runs

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<sup>5</sup> Clayton M. Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*, rep. ed. (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2016).

deeper than simply responding to the rapid pace of problems and changes in the world. This new leadership paradigm—disruptive leadership—models the revolutionary discoveries that have happened in the world of physical science that have changed the way we view and interact with the world around us.

Based on the competencies of Jesus, the concept of disruptive alternatives to the status quo—as well as the hegemonic structures and protocols that often protect the status quo—offer inspiration for those leaders unsettled by the organizational problems they observe. The practices of identifying the core problem(s), the inclusivity and organization-wide contribution strategy, and the embrace of the complexity latent within changing social systems yields an element of hope for organizations that wrestled with whether or not they could remain relevant and impactful. While the researcher hopes that this study finds an audience of leadership scholars and organizational influencers who are able to build upon the identified themes to transform their organizations and develop more robust theories of disruptive leadership, the core audience for this study are those ministry leaders who want to maintain their position of ministry relevancy in a world of rapid change. This project will not be lost if even one ministry leader, within a context of social change, finds a tool, tip, or transformative principle to reenergize relevancy within their organization.

While the project's revealed themes specifically addressed the research question presented in this paper, the findings also revealed the intricate and widely varied nature of disruptive leadership within the marketplace. The interviews revealed the passion and sacrifice of people who, because of their commitment to Christ, have invested their life's service to seeing organizations remain relevant and impactful for generations to come.

But perhaps above all else, if anything is to be learned from this study, it is that disruptive leaders do not hoard their strength, shielding it as a super power only to be possessed by the few. Rather, disruptive leaders cultivate others to discover the disruption within, empowering a network of organizational leaders to contribute to the transformation of culture through communicating the power they possess to transform the world. With Jesus as the model they seek to follow, disruptive leaders affirm the words of the hymnist Willie J. Kirkpatrick, who, in 1897, penned the following words: *“O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee!”*

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