

Towards a Theory of Leadership for Human Flourishing in a Global Community: A Hermeneutic, Phenomenological, and Process Theory Exploration of the Leadership of Jesus in the Four Gospels â€” Edward W. Hatch

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Abstract

Leadership as influence is at the root of most understandings of the phenomenon (Northouse, 2013; Yukl, 2006). Yet the myriad targets and means of influence at the individual, group/team, and social/collective levels give rise to competing values and theories of change (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; J. D. Hunter, 2006; Richter, 2011). There is, however, one common denominator of leadership changeâ€”influence that can focus all theories of change and strategies of hope. This one denominator is evident in the leadership of the life of the founder and followers of perhaps the most successful global movement the world has ever seen. Hoksbergen, Curry, and Kuperus (2009) claimed, â€œNo question is more important for our time than what brings about human flourishing in a global communityâ€• (p. 11). Then-United Nations Secretary General Ban (2008) said the real global crisis was not a crisis of intractable problems but a crisis of global leadership. To bridge that gap, this study examined the leadership of Jesus of Nazareth in first-century Palestine with a view to developing a theory of leadership for human flourishing in global community. A comprehensive research methodology was crafted from the fields of phenomenology, process theory, and biblical hermeneutics and applied to the narrative texts of the four Christian Gospels. A three-dimensional leadership theory emerged from this study of the life work of Jesus. Following Ricouerâ€™s (1976) phenomenological approach, three passes were made through the Gospels data set. Over 1,100 initially coded themes and patterns were synthesized through examination of recorded events as the central unit of qualitative analysis. Eleven core themes emerged leading to three macrocategories that, upon further study, became the three major leadership dimensions of the proposed theory. With an eye to theory building from the start, Whettenâ€™s (2002) modeling as theory building methodology and the filtering questions of â€œwhatâ€™s-as-constructsâ€• (p. 51) and â€œhowâ€™s-as-relationshipsâ€• (p. 55) further clarified the three leadership dimensions of people, process, and place as central to Jesusâ€™ leadership and human flourishing in a global community. Pikeâ€™s (1982) tagmemic linguistic theory helped crystalize understanding of how the same things can be understood from different perspectives as particle, wave, and field. This study concluded by presenting and explicating the middle range theory called three-dimensional leadership theory. Support for the proposed theory was found in contemporary organizational leadership and philosophical and scholarly research leading to 11 supporting propositions. This study contributes to the field of leadership research by offering the first-ever leadership theory premised on the life of Jesus, who is generally accepted as one of the worldâ€™s

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greatest leaders (Lowney, 2003; Stark, 1997, 2006; Willard, 1997). This research also bridges a gap in biblical study by offering a blended methodology that allows other tools to combine with traditional hermeneutics of the narrative text to elicit process. Three-dimensional leadership theory is generalizable to contexts in the global community where leadership is required to raise people to new levels of flourishing, wholeness, and fruitfulness for their own good and the good of others.

Reference

[The Research Experience: Planning, Conducting, and Reporting Research](#)

[Contemporary Feminist Research from Theory to Practice](#)