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Exploring Leadership in the Middle: an Application of Schon's Reflective Conversation—a Decision-Making Process for Assemblies of God World Missions Area Directors

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

EXPLORING LEADERSHIP IN THE MIDDLE:
AN APPLICATION OF SCHÖN'S REFLECTIVE CONVERSATION—A
DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR ASSEMBLIES OF GOD WORLD MISSIONS
AREA DIRECTORS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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Portland Seminary
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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DEDICATION

To my dad, a man of wisdom, a seeker of knowledge and keeper of the faith.

To my mom, dedicated to faith, family, and friends.

To my wife Sherry, whose love, courage, strength, and faith inspire me and all who know her. On our journey together, we have embarked upon many voyages. We have stood in awe as the panoramas of life and land unfold before us; they are magnificent to behold.

As with all others, this voyage would not have been possible without you.

For the joy is not in the journeying, but in the journeying together.

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ABSTRACT

Middle leaders are an essential part of every organization. Their position in the organization's structure places them at the center of the organization's operations. From this middle position, the middle leader functions as both follower and leader, having a responsibility both upward and downward in the organization. In these capacities the middle leader becomes a critical link between the vision, goals and mission of the organization and the day-to-day carrying out of the vision, goals and mission. And yet middle leaders often go unnoticed. This dissertation focuses on those who lead in the middle: specifically, the Area Director in the Assemblies of God World Missions.

The Area Director serves in a complex setting, where role, function and purpose overlap. In this setting, decision making can be especially challenging. This dissertation explores the notion that Schön's reflective conversation, guided by the Johns model of reflection, can serve as a viable decision-making process for use by the Area Director.

Section one sets the larger conceptual stage of middle leadership by: (1) introducing Stan the archetypical Area Director, (2) describing an overarching concept of middle leadership, (3) exploring the challenges to that concept, and (4) providing two examples of middle leaders as viewed through the conceptual lens of middle leadership. Section two introduces decision making as a significant challenge to the Area Director and describes others' attempts at addressing both middle leadership and the challenge of decision making in an organizational setting. Section three proposes a decision-making process based on Schön's reflective conversation and the Johns model of reflection. Section four describes the artifact as a website and two blogs with the goals of providing current, and easily applicable information that is targeted at middle leaders. Section five

delineates the artifact's specifications. Section six provides summary and analysis including lessons learned and suggestions for further research.

SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In the panoramic city scape that is leadership, buildings spike across the skyline as far as the eye can see. The shadows cast by the larger buildings bend their way across the shapes and angles of the structures in the path beneath them. The smaller buildings form a series of blocks, angles, and shapes, becoming the environment in which the larger buildings shine. However, as the sun sets, the scene reveals its true nature. The size of the buildings diminish as an abundance of bright pixels populate the scene; each pixel a window lighted from the inside. A step ladder pattern is created by the string of pixels softly glowing across the middle of the scene, as the top floors remain dark. The view quickly turns from the buildings to the people inside—those who are getting the work done—those who are working in the middle. The scene reminds us that the story of leadership is a human story, played out in real time with real people.

People are important enough that we prize leadership as a quality to be admired and even praised. Springing from that sense of importance is the desire to be leaders and to develop great leaders. However, leadership, like stardom remains elusive and sometimes hidden from view until the light shines. This is the case of those who lead in the middle of an organization, often hidden in the shadows cast by larger-than-life leaders and yet responsible for moments and even eras of great leadership that have both changed organizations and moved the organizations forward.

In an effort to shine light on the middle leaders of the world, this dissertation will look through one small window in a city scape of leadership and focus on those who lead in the middle of the Assemblies of God World Missions—the Area Directors. Due to their placement in the middle of the organization and the multiple responsibilities of their office, the Area Directors, like many who lead in the middle of an organization, are faced with unique challenges. It is apparent that much of the current leadership literature focuses on the development and advancement of leaders in the upper-level of an organization, to the exclusion of those who lead in the middle. From this frame of reference, a question arises. What can assist the Area Director to successfully navigate and implement their complex role as a middle leader?

This section will describe the larger conceptual stage for the introduction of the Area Director that follows in Section two. This section will also lay a foundation for the proposed solution in Sections three through six. I will begin with Stan's story. Viewed through the lens of an Area Director, Stan's story will acquaint us with the problems and challenges of a middle leader in the Assemblies of God World Missions. Second, I will present an overarching concept of middle leadership which will provide context for the engagement of leadership by those serving in the middle of an organization. Third, I will introduce some of the challenges to the concept of middle leadership that directly affects leadership engagement from the middle of an organization. Finally, I will offer two examples of middle leaders.

The Middle Leader's Story

Stan is a middle leader. He serves as a Europe Region Area Director in a missions-sending organization. His middle position in the organization's structure

requires that he engages both as a follower and as a leader. As a follower, he receives direction from those who lead the organization, and as a leader he provides direction to those he leads. In this setting, he not only finds himself in the middle of the organization's structure, but in between two engagement points of responsibility. Stan has a responsibility upward to those who lead the organization and downward to those he leads. This leader/follower aspect brings to the position an element of complexity that is often overlooked.

As a follower, his loyalties are to the organization and, therefore, the organization's well-defined and clearly-delineated structure, policies, practices, and procedures present a clear guide for him. Consequently, his role as follower is more straightforward and therefore, less complex in practice. However, Stan's leadership role is not so well-defined and, therefore, he feels his leadership role is quite complex in practice. As a leader, Stan has many hats to wear and he must frequently wear more than one at a time. Stan sometimes pictures himself as the hat vender who balances a stack of hats on his head. Stacked on top of his head are a boss hat, a pastor hat, a counselor hat, a diplomat hat, a missionary hat, and three or four others.

Adding to his hat balancing act are his leadership duties, which include organizing, motivating, inspiring, and decision making, to name a few. With these duties, Stan feels as if he is keeping a dozen white plates spinning on top of as many flexing and wobbling sticks. It is as if he is constantly running from spinning plate to spinning plate trying to keep the plates from falling, all the while working to balance the hats on his head. One glitch in the timing or balance and the whole thing comes crashing down!

Stan is keenly aware that his success or failure affects the organization, the missionaries he leads, and the mission. He has a deep desire to lead with excellence and is, in fact, a gifted Area Director. However, Stan feels inadequate and unprepared for the balancing act he is required to perform. Consequently, he finds himself frequently questioning his ability to lead and sometimes questioning his call. He is becoming more and more frustrated and discouraged.

Stan knows that the hats and the spinning plates will always be part of the equation. They are the constants. Therefore, any solution must focus, not on changing or reducing responsibilities, but on a more effective approach to the balancing of those responsibilities. As Stan reflects on his dilemma, he concludes that balancing the hats are not his most significant challenge. His greatest challenge is the expenditure of energy, time, and focus that comes from running from plate to plate, attempting to keep them spinning. If he could mitigate the causes that generate the perpetual running from plate to plate, he could better balance the rest of his responsibilities.

That being the case, Stan is faced with questions: What plates need the most attention? What causes him to run from plate to plate? What causes the friction that slows the plates down? As he considers these questions, he comes to three conclusions. First, the decision-making plates need the most attention. The friction that slows these plates is caused by problems: many of which are complex and influenced by the fact that people live and serve in cross-cultural settings. Second, he runs from plate to plate because it is his responsibility to solve these complex problems. Third, he keeps spinning the plates because deciding how to solve a problem is as challenging as solving the problem itself.

The more complex the problem the more time Stan must spend spinning a particular plate at the expense of keeping the other plates spinning.

As Stan reflects on the situation further, he recognizes that not all of the decisions that he must make are equal in his expenditure of time and energy. For example, some decisions have been made for him by means of organizational policy and procedure. In these more common situations, there is much less expenditure of time and energy, as Stan simply refers to the predetermined policy and procedure. It is the decisions that are not covered by policy and procedure, that do not fit within the policy and procedure box, or that collide into the lives of other people that require more time and energy. The most complex decisions have a human factor, an organizational factor, a cross-cultural factor, and even a spiritual factor. Decisions in this context are very complicated and have far-reaching impact on the missionary, the organization, and the mission.

Once Stan could state the problem, he began to look for a solution. Stan naturally reviews the available leadership literature for assistance. Regrettably, he finds himself faced with another challenge: much of the leadership literature is focused on the top-tier leader. In fact, after reading the literature, Stan wonders if he is a leader at all. He understands that a hallmark of leadership is decision making and he must make important decisions, but his position in the organization seems to deny him the leadership title, instead replacing it with manager or follower. He also finds the popular leadership material full of quick fixes and three-step systems that do not seem to address the challenges of Stan's position in the organization or the types of decisions he must make. He is a middle leader, and middle leadership calls for a different kind of decision-making process, one that will address the complexity of his position, his duties, and his

responsibilities. The search for an appropriate process and its eventual application is what guides this dissertation.

The Concept of Middle Leadership

The term middle leader is borrowed from the field of education in the United Kingdom and Canada. In the context of an educational setting the middle leader has a responsibility “upward to the state and downward to its schools and communities.”¹ This same distinguishing feature can be applied to other organizational structures. In the context of a non-educational organization, the middle leader is one who, because of their middle position in the organization’s structure, has a responsibility both upward and downward in the organization. In both cases, this defining feature carries with it the added role of follower and leader. Because of their responsibility upward and downward in the organization the middle leader must also be both leader and follower.

One can find middle leaders in the business world, in the educational world, and in the ecclesiastical world. Though there are many leaders who serve in the middle of many types of organizations, I wish to limit the focus of my research to those serving in the church and para-church context. In the church, they are the youth pastors, choir directors, department heads, and worship pastors. In the context of this dissertation they are Area Directors. Combined across the various sectors of the for-profit and the non-profit world these middle leaders make up a significant portion of leaders and, therefore, have a considerable impact on the growth, change, and forward movement of an

¹ Michael Fullan, “Leadership From the Middle,” *Education Canada* 55, no. 4 (2008): 24, <https://michaelfullan.ca/leadership-from-the-middle-a-system-strategy/>.

organization.² Inasmuch as there are middle leaders in almost every organization, it is somewhat surprising that the concept of middle leadership is rarely explored. It seems that much of the leadership literature focuses on the top-tier few, at the exclusion of all others. With that in mind, let us consider organizational structure. Organizational structure provides the answer to a basic and important question for our discussion. In an organization, “who is responsible for what?”³

Organizations and Buildings

Like a building, every organization has a structure or a framework on which and around which it is built. The structure of a building forms a framework that gives rigidity and stability to the building. The structure is also that frame to which the wiring and plumbing and the walls are affixed and on which the floors rest. In addition, the structure of the building dictates the building’s appearance or form. Though it is customarily not seen, the structure plays a critical role in the building’s function and form.

To illustrate, consider the Dancing House in Prague, Czech Republic.⁴ It functions as an office building that stands nine stories tall and can be fully seen when crossing the bridge from Smichov into New Town. What is unique about the building is that its

² Alama Harris and Michelle Jones, “Middle Leaders Matter: Reflections, Recognition, and Renaissance,” *School Leadership & Management* 37, no. 3 (2017): 213, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2017.1323398>.

³ Richard Whittington, “Organizational Structure,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Strategy: A Strategy Overview and Competitive Strategy*, eds. Andrew Campbell and David O. Faulkner (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2, 3, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199275212.003.0027>.

⁴ “Dancing House,” Prague.eu, The Official Tourist Website for Prague, accessed July 1, 2018, <https://www.prague.eu/en/object/places/1643/dancing-house-tancici-dum?back=1>.

structure is formed and stretched in such a way so as to resemble two dancers. This, in turn, is why the building is metaphorically referred to as “Ginger and Fred.”

Another example of a unique structure is the Hundertwasser House in Vienna, Austria.⁵ It is an inhabitable structure where nearly none of the joining angles of the structure’s facade meet at ninety degrees. It is famous for, among other things, its unique, fluid-like form. Both buildings are extraordinary examples of how structure dictates both function and form. What’s more, the function and form directly impact those who occupy the building. Imagine living in the Hundertwasser House and trying to put flower pots on a window sill that is angled outward and down at forty-five degrees.

In like manner, the structure of an organization gives stability, function and form to the organization. Both the function and form affect those who serve in the organization. As in a building, the organization’s structure is the framework on which the organization functions. Not unlike a building’s wiring and plumbing, an organization’s structure provides for and directs the flow of information within the organization. In addition, based on the organization’s purpose, goals, and even personality, the structure brings a unique appearance and form to the organization.⁶ Consider, for example, the McDonald’s Corporation and Apple Inc. They are similar in that they are for-profit organizations and therefore, they both have a general business structure. However, it is evident that both are quite different in appearance and form. Because of the structure’s value to the organization, it can be said that the structure governs the lives of those who

⁵ “Hundertwasser House Vienna,” *Vienna-Now-Forever*, WienTourismus, 2015, <https://www.wien.info/en/sightseeing/sights/hundertwasser-house-vienna>.

⁶ Whittington, 2-5.

serve on every level of the organization.⁷ Like buildings, every organization has a structure.

Buildings and Levels

Not only do buildings and organizations have the common component of structure, they also have levels in common. Levels are where the work gets done, and in many cases, it is the level that determines the work that *is* done. For example, if the Dancing House were the home office of a single corporation, the floor above the ground floor might be where administrators work, the floor above that could be where the accountants work, the next floor up where web designers and the sales team work, and so on. The top floors would be reserved for the upper-level leadership or executive team. Buildings have levels. Likewise, organizations have levels and, though not physical in nature, levels are where the work of the organization gets done.

According to Zaccaro and Klimoski, most organizations have at least three levels in their structure: the foundation level where the work gets completed, the middle level where the coordination of resources takes place, and the upper level where vision, strategy, objectives, and policy are developed.⁸ Because the development of vision, strategy, objectives, and policy are predominantly associated with leadership, the term leader is usually reserved for those who serve in the upper level of the organizational structure. Those serving on the other levels would generally be considered followers,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Stephen J. Zaccaro and Richard J. Klimoski, *The Nature of Organizational Leadership: Understanding the Performance Imperatives Confronting Today's Leaders* (Hoboken, NJ: Pfeiffer, 2001), 47.

even though they may serve as managers or department heads.⁹ Do leaders only exist in the upper levels of an organization? A definition of leadership would help to answer that question.

Levels and Leadership

By and large, there is agreement that leadership escapes definition.¹⁰ Glynn and DeJordy offer their reflection on the difficulties of defining, and therefore researching, leadership. “Leadership,” they state, “is an elusive construct, riddled with so much ambiguity that it is hard to even define let alone study systematically.”¹¹ Barker laments the lack of definition when attempting to train leaders. Without a definition, he states, “We reduce [the study of leadership] to slogans” that merely encapsulate economic success stories, positive thinking, or management techniques.¹² Nye attempts to frame leadership as a relationship with three components: leaders, followers and context.¹³ However, leadership seems to be more than the sum of its component parts.

⁹ Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Power and Leadership,” in *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*, eds. Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, 2010), 306.

¹⁰ Bruce J. Avolio, Fred O. Walumbwa, and Todd J. Weber, “Leadership: Current Theories, Research, and Future Directions,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009): 423, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163621>.

¹¹ Mary Ann Glynn and Rick DeJordy, “Leadership Through an Organization Behavior Lens: A Look at the Last Half-Century of Research,” in *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*, eds. Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana, (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, 2010), 119, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228378790_Leadership_through_an_Organization_Behavior_Lens_A_Look_at_the_Last_Half-century_of_Research.

¹² Richard A Barker, “How Can We Train Leaders if We Do Not Know What Leadership Is?” *Human Relations* 50, no. 4 (1997): 344, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1016950726862>.

¹³ Nye, 306.

In seeking to understand the sum of leadership, early researchers focused on the qualities of the great leaders of the past and present. From their investigations, the “Great Man” theories emerged. These trait-based models attempted to isolate the component traits and characteristics of great leaders with the hope that inculcation of these components into present and future leaders would result in the eventual development of other great leaders.¹⁴

More recently, there has been a move away from a traits-based understanding of leadership toward the consideration of a behavioral and process-oriented leadership.¹⁵ Burns, for example, suggests that leadership is a dynamic process of mobilizing people.¹⁶ Denhardt posits that leadership, like dancing, is an intrinsic natural process—something that people just do.¹⁷ Along the same lines, De Pree regards leadership as an artistic form, that includes process and processes, suggesting that leadership can be developed to and practiced at a high level.¹⁸ Friedman frames leadership as a human emotional and intellectual process that flows between people, with the ability to lead expanding as the person matures and develops emotionally.¹⁹ In these paradigms, leadership is not bound by organizational position, level of education, social status, or dictum. Leadership is a process, and anyone who engages in the process is leading.

¹⁴ Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2015), 19.

¹⁵ Glynn and DeJordy, 122, 123.

¹⁶ James M. Burns, *Leadership* (New York, NY: Open Road Media, 2012), 18.

¹⁷ Janet V. Denhardt, *The Dance of Leadership: The Art of Leading in Business, Government, and Society* (London, UK: Routledge, 2005), 17.

¹⁸ Max De Pree, *Leadership is an Art* (New York, NY: Crown Business, 2004), 3, 11-27.

¹⁹ Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York, NY: Seabury, 2007), 332-335.

One can immediately realize the implications of process-oriented leadership in our discussion on middle leadership. Process-oriented leadership opens the door for anyone to engage in the process of leadership, and therefore, be a leader. What might that process look like?

Defining leadership as a *process* means that it is not a trait or characteristic that resides in the leader, but rather a transactional event that occurs between the leader and the followers. *Process* implies that a leader affects and is affected by followers. It emphasizes that leadership is not a linear, one-way event, but rather an interactive event.²⁰

Northouse's elaboration affords especially clear insight into process-oriented leadership. Namely, leadership is not based on traits or the characteristics of a leader, but on a transactional, interactive event between individuals that brings about reciprocal change and transformation of both the leader and the follower. Its engagement is sparked by a common situation, need, or goal, and initiated when an individual engages with another or others in a way that moves them forward together toward resolve. From this perspective, leadership is not the activity of a single individual toward another individual, i.e. leader to follower, but a joint and interactive process often initiated by one, but ultimately engaged in by all.²¹ It should be noted that though the term transactional is used, process-oriented leadership is not transactional leadership. Process-oriented leadership is event oriented, where both the leader and the follower move forward together toward a common goal. In contrast, transactional leadership is based on a powerful leader rewarding or punishing followers according to their response to a set of

²⁰ Northouse, 6.

²¹ Northouse, 6.

rules or expectations, usually defined by the leader.²² The former is reminiscent of the leader/mentor and the latter of the football coach.

In Section two we will discuss in more detail what engagement in the leadership process looks like for an Area Director. For now, the benefits of process-oriented leadership for middle leadership are three-fold. First, the creation of unique models of leadership are based on process and not position. These include models of transformational leadership,²³ authentic leadership,²⁴ servant leadership,²⁵ and adaptive leadership,²⁶ to name a few. Second, process-orientation effectively moves the responsibility and privilege of leadership from a few elite leaders serving at the upper ranks of an organization to those on every level of an organization.²⁷ Third, and most germane to this dissertation, process-oriented leadership opens the door for those serving in the middle of an organization to not only lead, but to be acknowledged as leaders.

Some might question the notion that anyone can lead. They may argue that those who have the gift of leadership lead and those who do not have the gift do not lead. There

²² Patty Mulder, "Transactional Leadership, a Practical Definition and Advantages," *ToolsHero*, accessed August 11, 2018, <https://www.toolshero.com/leadership/transactional-leadership/>.

²³ Bernard M. Bass, "From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision," *Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations* (1997): 21. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616\(90\)90061-S](https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(90)90061-S).

²⁴ Bill George, *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 11-12.

²⁵ Robert K Greenleaf, "The Servant as Leader," in *Corporate Ethics and Corporate Governance*, eds. Walter Zimmerli, Klaus Richter, and Markus Holzinger (Berlin-Heidelberg, GE: Springer-Verlag, 2007), 83, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-70818-6_6.

²⁶ Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Brighton, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 17.

²⁷ Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices From a 450-Year-old Company That Changed the World* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2005), 5.

is a belief that leadership is not for everyone. However, if leadership is indeed a process, then all things being equal, anyone can lead. Of course, there will always be those who refuse to lead, as there will be those who just do not lead. Why there are those who do not lead is not clear. It may be simply a matter of nerve.²⁸ In any case, those who do not lead should not be considered the norm in the great leadership-gift divide.

On the other hand, some do, in fact, have the gift of leadership. A gifted leader is like the virtuoso piano player; their gift is evident and their work amazing to behold. The gifted will lead and they will lead well, no matter where they are located in the organization. However, I would argue that the good leadership is not predicated on a leadership “gift.” Leadership is a process. Processes can be learned and developed. Therefore, anyone who is willing, can engage in and develop the process of leadership and lead.

Challenges to the Paradigm of Middle Leadership

Though engagement in the process of leadership has the practical challenges of, for example, decision making and problem solving, there are some conceptual challenges as well. We will consider three. First, there is the challenge of position, where one might pose the question: Can a manager be considered a leader? Then there is the challenge of expectations with its accompanying question: Can a follower lead? Finally, there is the challenge of empowerment with its associated question: How can one lead without power? I begin with the challenge of the term “manager.”

²⁸ Friedman, 2.

The Challenge of Terms: The Manager

It is generally accepted that the term “leader” is reserved for those who serve in the upper levels of an organization, while “manager” is reserved for those serving in the middle of an organization.²⁹ In this way, the term manager challenges the concept of a middle leader based on an organizational position.

Tichy and Cohen, themselves strong proponents of leadership on every level of the organization, seem to use leadership terms only for those serving in the upper organizational levels. For instance, when speaking of upper-level leadership, the authors use the term “top leaders.” However, when referring to those who lead in the middle of the organization, they regularly use the term “middle-manager.”³⁰ The authors also differentiate top leaders from middle-managers by emphasizing that a manager manages by organizational structure and policy, while a leader leads by influence and teaching.³¹ In this construct, leaders teach and influence while managers manage. In other words, those at the top lead, and those in the middle manage.

To be sure, leaders and managers have different functions, priorities, roles, and purpose. Rodgers and Reynolds indicate the distinctions by suggesting that leaders aim for organizational movement and change while managers act to produce order and consistency.³² However, it is not the function, priorities, roles, or purpose of a manager

²⁹ Whittington, 26.

³⁰ Noel M. Tichy and Eli B. Cohen, *The Leadership Engine: How Winning Companies Build Leaders At Every Level* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1997), 69, 70.

³¹ Tichy and Cohen, 50-55.

³² Anita Rogers and Jill Reynolds, “Leadership and Vision,” in *Managing Care in Practice*, eds. Jill Reynolds and Janet Seden (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), 61-64.

that are in question. The more relevant question is, can leadership take place in the middle of the organization? If leadership is, in part, that which leads to organizational movement and change, then the answer is yes. In fact, to the notion of leadership and organizational change, research indicates that change initiated in the middle frequently gains more total buy-in than change from the top.³³ This is indicative of leadership as a process and significant for those who serve in the middle, whether they have the title of manager or leader.

The Challenge of Expectations: The Follower

Just as the term manager challenges the concept of a middle leader based on organizational position, the term “follower” challenges the concept of a middle leader based on organizational expectation. Leaders are not expected to be followers and followers are not expected to be leaders. The literature is not immune from the “follower” expectation. Kellerman has observed that the unspoken message of the leadership literature is leader superiority over those they lead.³⁴

In the context of leadership superiority, Brian Tracy states, “Leaders think and talk about solutions. Followers think and talk about problems.”³⁵ Regrettably, leadership quotes of this nature can convey two pejorative messages. The first message is one of

³³ Bas Koene, “Why Middle Managers, Rather Than Senior Leaders, Should Initiate Organizational Change,” *Forbes.com*, November 27, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rsmdiscovery/2017/11/27/why-middle-managers-rather-than-senior-leaders-should-initiate-organisational-change/#1ed129912188>.

³⁴ Barbara Kellerman, *Followership: How Followers Are Creating Change and Changing Leaders* (Harvard, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2008), xviii.

³⁵ “Quote By Brian Tracy,” on Goodreads.com, accessed July 17, 2018, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/7173745-leaders-think-and-talk-about-the-solutions-followers-think-and>.

distinction. That which distinguishes leaders from followers is the fact that the leader can both identify and solve problems, while followers only identify problems. The second more subtle message is one of value. A leader is more valuable to the organization than a follower because leaders solves problems.

To be fair, this is just one quote. But Tracy is not the only one to send that message. For instance, Maxwell states, “All great leaders possess two things: one, they know where they are going and two, they are able to persuade others to follow.”³⁶ Along the same line, Stanley states, “Vision requires visionaries, people who have allowed their minds and hearts to wander outside the artificial boundaries imposed by the world as it is.”³⁷ In other words those with vision will naturally attract followers.³⁸

The first challenge with some followership language is that it reinforces the flawed perception that leadership is reserved for those charismatic visionaries who are able to persuade others to follow them. Doubtless, it is the gifted and charismatic visionaries who often become the face of an organization because people perceive charismatic leaders as being more effective. However, their perceived effectiveness may be a slight misperception. Vergauwe points out that charismatic leaders even perceive themselves as being more effective than they are.³⁹ In fact, researchers have observed that

³⁶ John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 141.

³⁷ Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Personal Vision* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1999), 18.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

³⁹ Jasmine Vergauwe, Bart Wille, Joeri Hofmans, Robert B. Kaiser, and Filip De Fruyt, “Too Much Charisma Can Make Leaders Look Less Effective,” *Harvard Business Review*, September 26, 2017, 3, <https://hbr.org/2017/09/too-much-charisma-can-make-leaders-look-less-effective>.

less charismatic individuals can actually be very effective organizational leaders, especially when they must lead in complex and unpredictable settings.⁴⁰

Second, the followership language can allude to the notion that leadership and followership are static roles. In other words, one is either a leader or a follower. However, based on their study of shared leadership within teams, Sy and McCoy observed that team members freely switch between the roles of follower and leader as necessity dictates.⁴¹ In a team setting, the direction of the switch is horizontal and occurs between team members. In a leader/follower context, the direction of the switch is up and sometimes referred to as “leading up.”⁴²

Finally, the followership language can propagate the fallacious expectation that followers are merely subordinates and therefore less valuable to the organization than leaders.⁴³ However, according to Chaleff, when one considers followers as mere subordinates, one upsets the delicate balance of organizational leadership that requires both followers and leaders to be stewards of the organization’s mission and each other’s trust.⁴⁴ Followers are valuable to the organization.

⁴⁰ Ilya Pozin, “4 Reasons Why Introverts Make Great Leaders,” Inc.com, May 31, 2018, <https://www.inc.com/ilya-pozin/4-reasons-why-introverts-make-great-leaders.html>.

⁴¹ Thomas Sy and Tara McCoy, “Being Both Leaders and Followers: Advancing a Model of Leader and Follower Role Switching,” in *Followership: What Is It and Why Do People Follow*, eds. Laurent Lapiere and Melissa K. Carsten (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group, 2014), 122. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Laurent_Lapierre/publication/262876734_FollowershipWhat_is_it_and_Why_do_People_Follow/links/598070a8a6fdcc324bbe57e4/FollowershipWhat-is-it-and-Why-do-People-Follow.pdf.

⁴² Michael Useem, *Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss So You Both Win* (New York, NY: Crown Business, 2003), 2.

⁴³ Ira Chaleff, *The Courageous Follower: Standing Up To and For Our Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Barrett-Koehler, 2003), 15, 16.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

The Challenge of Powerlessness: The Influencer

Just as terms and language challenge the concept of middle leadership, the notion of empowerment also challenges the concept of middle leadership. If change and transformation are goals of leadership, power is a critical resource in initiating that change and transformation.⁴⁵ This fact makes power a valuable, and therefore an often-well-guarded resource, its access and use reserved for those who are positioned in the upper ranks of the organization: the leaders.⁴⁶

When considering the conceptual side of middle leadership, one might ask: How can one be designated a leader if they have no access to power? When considering the practical side of leadership, one might wonder: How can a middle leader lead without power? I would suggest that in the context of middle leadership, influence is both a designation and instrument of leadership. One definition of influence is, “the power and ability to personally affect others’ actions, decisions, opinions or thinking.”⁴⁷ It is in this way that influence is a powerful force for change and transformation especially when influencing those who, by their position, have the power to make change. I admit, that this may sound like a dangerous game especially in the setting of the church. Nouwen alludes to this when he states, “One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly give in to the temptation of power—political power, military

⁴⁵ Burns, 19.

⁴⁶ Kellerman, 239.

⁴⁷ Harold Scharlatt, “How to Influence When You Don’t Have Authority,” *Forbes.com*, January 3, 2011, <https://www.forbes.com/2011/01/03/influence-persuasion-cooperation-leadership-managing-ccl.html#34a398134b9c>.

power, economic power, or moral and spiritual power.”⁴⁸ There is also a degree of caution necessary when viewing influence as being synonymous with power, especially when attempting to gain political power under the guise of influence.⁴⁹ However, when speaking of influence I am not referring to the abuse of or seeking of power, but a relationship between power and influence that can lead to organizational change and transformation. According to Chaleff, this takes place within trusting relationships. In the context of middle leadership, influence flows by means of the trusting relationships between those the middle leader leads and those who lead the middle leader.⁵⁰

Consider the metaphor of a tapestry. If change and transformation were a beautifully designed and colorful tapestry, power would be the warp, or the long straight strands that run the length of the tapestry, and influence would be the weft, or the strands that are interwoven between the warp. In the finest tapestry, it is the weft that forms the image.⁵¹ So, it is with power and influence. Though power and influence may not be synonymous, influence is intrinsically intertwined with power. Together they make a tapestry of change and transformation. In this way one can lead without access to the resource of power.

⁴⁸ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (Chestnut Ridge, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 76.

⁴⁹ Dominic Erdozain, “New Afflictions: Church Growth in Britain, 1750-1970,” in *Routledge Contemporary Ecclesiology, Towards a Theology of Church Growth*, ed. David Goodhew (London, UK: Routledge, 2015), 233.

⁵⁰ Chaleff, 17-19.

⁵¹ Nancy Harvey, *Tapestry Weaving: A Comprehensive Study Guide* (Loveland, CO: Interweave Press, 1991), 8.

Influence can motivate people to change and it can lead to transformation. Both change and transformation are hallmarks of power and acts of leadership.⁵² Though middle leaders are not often given access to the resource of power; their middle position gives them access to influence on all levels of an organization. From this perspective, the middle leader is a leader. Though position, expectations, and empowerment seem to challenge the concept of middle leadership, these challenges are not insurmountable

That being said, maybe a new approach to the language of leadership, especially in the church, would be beneficial. Jim Collins acknowledges the need for a change in language. Collins attributes the writing of his book on the social sector to the realization that the language of the corporate world cannot meet the needs of the social sector.⁵³ Maybe the church can learn from Collins on this point. When the language of the corporate world enters the ecclesiastical world, it carries with it a worldview and concepts of success, growth, and assigned roles that can be detrimental to the church and those who serve in the church.⁵⁴ An added benefit of a more inclusive leadership language could be the initiation of an expansion of the base of leadership in the church. It seems reasonable to suggest that the more who engage in the process of leadership, the greater the Church's impact on the world.

⁵² Roger Fisher and Alan Sharp, *Getting it Done: How to Lead When You're Not in Charge* (New York, NY: Harper Business, 1999), 7.

⁵³ "Interview With Jim Collins," *Bridgespan.com*, February 1, 2006, <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/organizational-effectiveness/interview-with-jim-collins>.

⁵⁴ Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry From the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 28-30.

Portrait of a Middle Leader

In order to form a conceptual lens through which a typical middle leader can be discerned, this section will summarize examples of middle leaders both from the Bible and from the world of fiction. As we have discussed, the middle leader is one who serves in the middle level of an organization and engages in the process of leadership. Though their position presumes them to be managers, they are more than managers. Though they are expected to be followers, they lead as well, and though they have little or no assigned power, they can cultivate and employ influence to initiate change and transformation. Middle leaders are leaders in their own right. Looking through the lens of the conceptual middle leader, I have chosen two examples of typical middle leaders. The first (Barnabas) was chosen because of his familiarity to the church community. The second (Homer Smith) was chosen because of the unique setting that is applicable to the middle leader in a cross-cultural setting. We begin with Barnabas, the influential middle leader.

Barnabas: The Influential Middle Leader

Paul was without question a great leader and yet much of his leadership activity can be attributed to Barnabas. Paul's arrival in Antioch was made possible by Barnabas and it was Barnabas' influence with the Apostles in Jerusalem that opened the door for Paul's reception. At the time, it seems likely that Barnabas' influence and power in the Jerusalem church was greater than that of the Apostle Paul's. Nevertheless, Barnabas quickly found himself in a middle-leadership position under a man who, at the time had less power and influence than he did. One can imagine this must not have been easy for Barnabas, but his call, dignity and courage prevailed.

At one point, Barnabas and the Apostle Paul were appointed as missionaries by the Antioch church. From this appointment we have the familiar story of Barnabas defending John Mark in a difficult confrontation with Paul. It is here that Barnabas' strength and courage are exemplified in his willingness to confront Paul and ultimately decide to part ways with him. It has been said that "courage is the great balancer of power in relationship."⁵⁵ In the end, he and the Apostle Paul remained friends, colleagues, and brothers.⁵⁶

What makes Barnabas a middle leader is that he was both leader and follower. He, too, engaged in the process of leadership using his influence as a resource to spark transactional interactive events that propelled the Apostle Paul's ministry and the church forward. His example of courage, strength, and humility is a role model for all middle leaders to follow. Barnabas was the influential middle leader.

Homer Smith: The Unintentional Middle Leader

Moving from a biblical example to a fictional character, Homer Smith in the movie *Lilies of the Field* is an example of the unintentional middle leader.⁵⁷ The movie opens with Homer needing water for his overheating car radiator. As Homer drives down a dusty Arizona road, he spots a small well at the end of a long driveway. He veers to the right, turning onto the driveway. As he drives towards the well, plumes of dust waft behind his overheating Ford station wagon. He pulls up next to the well, where he meets

⁵⁵ Chaleff, 20.

⁵⁶ William P. Barker, *Everyone in the Bible* (Ada, MI: Revell Publishing, 1967), 56.

⁵⁷ *Lilies of the Field*, directed by Ralph Nelson (Beverly Hills, CA: United Artists, 1963).

three nuns who introduce themselves as being from Hungary, Germany, and Austria. This begins the story of a 24-year-old African American man who, himself a Baptist, is persuaded by three Catholic nuns to build a chapel for a Mexican community in the Arizona desert.

Though he had no intention of being a leader, as the work on the chapel progresses, Homer learns the lessons of being a middle leader. First is his realization that he must be both leader and follower and therefore has a responsibility upwards and downwards in the relational organization in which he finds himself. His upward responsibility is to the strong and charismatic Mother Maria who has the vision for the chapel but does not have the technical skill or the resources for the chapel. As Smith takes on the responsibilities of building the chapel, he quickly realizes that he is not the boss, Mother Maria is.

Second, he realizes that if he is going to get the chapel completed, though he is not the boss, he has to lead the local residents in helping him to build it. In this way, Smith engages in the process of leadership and begins to develop relationships to the characters who enter and exit the story line.

The third lesson Smith learns takes place in a pivotal scene in the movie. In this scene we find Smith exhausted and discouraged from trying to build the chapel by himself. Others have offered to help, but he refuses their help because he wants to build the chapel himself. In a desperate moment, when Smith is about to quit, one of the local residents convinces him that he could build the chapel, but that he doesn't have to do it alone. If he allowed others to help him, together they could build the chapel.

Convinced by the argument and his exhaustion he agrees to let others help. However, Smith quickly becomes discouraged because there is no single leader and it seems that the project is moving backwards instead of forwards. This is the point of Smith's fourth leadership lesson—the “aha” moment. Smith realizes that if he organizes the workers, giving each a particular job, the chapel could be completed and he would, in fact, be building the chapel. As the building quickly progresses, the volunteer workers dub Smith “The Boss.” He eventually leads the team of workers to finish the chapel, realizing that though the team built the chapel, he did, in fact, build the chapel.

The story is germane to this dissertation because of the underlying leadership themes that run across cultural, racial, political, and religious lines. Homer Smith navigated all of these obstacles to change and transform people and, in the process, was himself changed and transformed by the people he led. Consequently, Homer Smith is not only the archetype of a middle leader, but he is also, in many ways, a type of Area Director who must navigate across cultural, racial, political, and religious lines to lead in the middle of an organization. This makes Smith not only the unintentional middle leader, but it makes his story an excellent bridge that leads to the introduction of the Area Director as a middle leader.

Summary and Conclusion

Section one sets the stage for the entrance of the Area Director on whom the spotlight will shine in Section two. Stan's story helps illuminate the problems and challenges of a leader positioned in the middle of an organization and underscores the research question. Stated in Stan's context, the question is: What can be done to aid Stan in the navigation and performance of his complex role as Area Director?

The overarching concept of middle leadership was presented using buildings as a metaphor for organizations. Buildings have structures, structures have levels, and those levels determine who does what in the organization. The upper level is usually assigned to leadership, the middle level to managers and the lower levels to followers. With this setting in mind, I argued that leadership is not a result of assigned position, character, or trait, but of engagement in a process that is both transactional and interactive. Employing this definition, anyone who engages in a transactional and interactive process is leading, and therefore may be considered a leader regardless of their assigned position or title. This, in effect, provides a lens through which one can locate leadership on every level of an organization.

Finally, some of the challenges to the concept of middle leadership were presented. These challenges both directly and indirectly impact those who attempt to engage in the process of leadership in the middle of an organization. I asserted that the term manager underscores the obstacle of assigned position; the term follower underscores the obstacle of relational expectations within an organization, and the challenge of powerlessness underscores the obstacle of resource. I briefly addressed the dilemma of bringing corporate language into the church and the need for the church to focus less on producing followers and more on producing leaders. These challenges, though conceptual in nature, set the stage for the more concrete challenges to be introduced in Section two and further addressed in Section three.

In order to begin the move from the conceptual to the concrete, along with Stan's story, Barnabas and Homer Smith were introduced as typical middle leaders. These middle leaders are typical in the sense that they serve in the middle of an organizational

structure and find themselves engaged in the process of leadership. Though we have discussed at length the theoretical and conceptual, in as much as the story of middle leadership is a human story, I have included examples of both real and fictional characters.

Section one provides a statement of the problem and the foundational research that will be used to address the challenges of Section two. This research establishes a lens through which one can more clearly view the Area Director's role, function, and purpose, and the challenges associated with the dynamic interaction of those components. It also provides a spotlight that further narrows the view from many characters who play the leadership role, to one main character, that of the Area Director as middle leader.

SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Introduction

In Section one I stated the research problem, delineated the concept of middle leadership, addressed questions that pose a challenge to the concept and practical application of middle leadership, and offered two examples of middle leaders as viewed through the conceptual lens of middle leadership.

Section two, peering through the same conceptual lens, the focus of the research will narrow with the introduction of the Assemblies of God World Missions Area Director as a middle leader who serves in a complex setting. Based on an assessment of an Area Director's seven significant challenges, I propose that decision making, if properly addressed, has the potential for a positive and wide-reaching impact on the organization, on the Area Director, and on those the Area Director serves. This section concludes with examples, arranged topically, of what others have done to address middle leadership development, including addressing the challenges of organizational decision making. From 2004 to the present I have served as an Area Director with the Assemblies of God World Missions. My experience has provided insight to the discussion and research as well as the analysis and development of the proposals presented here.

The Assemblies of God World Missions Area Director as a Middle Leader

The Assemblies of God World Missions was formed by a resolution at a 1914 Chicago gathering of Assemblies of God leaders. The resolution states: "As a Council ...

we commit ourselves and the Movement to Him for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen.”⁵⁸ As of 2017, the Assemblies of God World Missions has over 2000 missionaries serving in 140 countries around the world.⁵⁹

The Area Director and the Hallmarks of a Middle Leader

As outlined in Section one, the hallmarks of a middle leader are (1) a leader who is positioned in the middle of an organization’s structure, (2) a leader who is expected to act as both follower and leader, and (3) a leader who has a responsibility both upward and downward in the organization. The Area Director’s position in the Assemblies of God World Missions has all of the hallmarks of a middle leader.

First, the Area Director is positioned in the middle of the Assemblies of God World Missions organizational structure. The following list summarizes the structure of the organization and illustrates the middle positioning of the Area Director within that organizational structure.⁶⁰

1. Executive Director
2. Regional Directors
- 3. Area Directors**
4. Field Moderators
5. Individual Missionaries

Second, because of their position in the middle of the organization’s structure, an Area Director is expected to act as both a follower and a leader. As a follower, the Area

⁵⁸ “Into All the World: The Assemblies of God Missionary Manual,” (Springfield, MO: 2001), 11.

⁵⁹ Keith Kidwell, “Administrative Report,” in *2017 State of the Mission* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God World Missions, 2017), 10-13.

⁶⁰ “Assemblies of God World Missions Organizational Chart,” *Assemblies of God World Missions* (Springfield, MO: 2018), 2.

Director is, most fundamentally, a commissioned missionary. As a missionary, the Area Director is expected to accept the vision and mission of the organization as their own, respect the structure and authority of the organization, and adhere to the policies and procedures that directly affect them as missionaries. As a leader, the Area Director serves as an agent of the organization and is expected to provide pastoral and administrative oversight to those positioned below them in the organizational structure.⁶¹

Third, the Area Director has an organizational responsibility upward to the organization, and downward to the field and missionary personnel. The Area Director's upward responsibility has to do with carrying out the role of organizational agent who has an eye toward the growth, success, and forward movement of the organization. The Area Director's downward responsibilities has to do with carrying out the role of pastor and member-care specialist with an eye toward the growth, success, and forward movement of the missionary personnel. The tension between the health and success of the organization and the health and success of the missionary is ever present. Like counterweights on a balance scale, the state of tension between these responsibilities moves the indicator needle back and forth. It is the task of the Area Director to maintain a balance within an acceptable tolerance zone.

The Area Director's position in the organizational structure, the expectations of being both follower and leader, and the need to balance responsibilities upward and downward, positions the Area Director as a critical link between the vision, goals and mission of the organization and the day-to-day carrying out of the vision, goals and

⁶¹ "Area Director Ministry Responsibilities," *Assemblies of God World Missions* (Springfield, MO: 2007), 1.

mission. The position and its associated expectations and responsibilities also creates a complex setting in which the Area Director must serve. Let us take a closer look at that complexity.

The Complexity of the Area Director's Ministry Description

One may define complexity as the state of “having many interrelated parts, patterns, or elements that are hard to separate, analyze, or solve.”⁶² According to Snowden and Boone, the following components constitute complexity: (1) a high number of elements, (2) the interrelatedness of the elements, (3) ever-changing circumstances, (4) the influence of past, present and future events and experiences, (5) outside influences, and (6) a narrow prospect of outcome predictability.⁶³

When asked about the complexity of the Area Director's role, one Area Director stated that, “one of the more complex things [about being an Area Director] is that you get a broad job description. You are wearing different hats or functions in those roles.”⁶⁴ He explained that the Area Director must be “part pastor, diplomat, and peace maker,” and he lamented that “sometimes [you are working in] your strength and sometimes not.”⁶⁵

In a June 2018 meeting of Assemblies of God World Missions leaders, the *Area Director's Ministry Description* was highlighted as one of the more significant issues

⁶² “Complex,” *Britannica Academic*, accessed October 13, 2018.

⁶³ David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone, “A Leader's Framework for Decision Making,” *Harvard Business Review*, November 2007, 3, <https://hbr.org/2007/11/a-leaders-framework-for-decision-making>.

⁶⁴ Interview With Area Director 3, via Skype, April 3, 2018.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

contributing to the complexity of the Area Director's role. The leaders regarded the ministry description as creating the condition for a high potential for Area Director overload.⁶⁶ The following selection from the document delineates the ministry requirements and expectations for someone serving as an Area Director.

AGWM [Assemblies of God World Missions] Area Directors serve through providing, in appropriate balance:

1) Member Care - The caregiving component of the ministry to the missionary community that includes understanding individual and family needs, encouraging, guiding, inspiring, and building relationships.

2) Strategic Direction - The leadership component that includes understanding AGWM missiology and working closely with missionaries, missionary fellowships, and national churches in a coordinated effort to reach the area with the gospel.

3) Administrative Oversight - The organizational component of the ministry that includes monitoring, overseeing, and making decisions about the ongoing ministry in the area.⁶⁷

By viewing the statement through Snowden's and Boone's lens, the complexity becomes clear. First, there are a high number of components. Listed are the caregiving component, the leadership component, and the organizational component. However, there are underlying components that are not immediately visible. By locating the verbs, one can find twelve different activities in which the Area Director must engage. They are: serve, provide, understand, encourage, guide, inspire, build, work, reach, mentor, oversee and make decisions. Second, the ministry description highlights diverse and interrelated

⁶⁶ "Review of the Area Director Role," *Assemblies of God World Missions Strat-Op WIN TEAM Session* (Springfield, MO: 2018), 2.

⁶⁷ "Area Director Ministry Responsibilities," 2.

responsibilities. For example, notice that the missionaries to whom the Area Director gives care, encouragement, inspiration, and spiritual guidance, must also report administratively to the Area Director. This amalgamation of pastor and boss presents a very complex setting in which to serve. Third, the circumstances are continually changing, both relationally and administratively. As the missionary experiences changes in family, life, and ministry, the circumstances into which the Area Director provides pastoral care and administration also changes. Fourth, there are influences from the outside that bring complexity. These include the cross-cultural component, the national church component, and relational components to name a few. Finally, due to the complexity of the ministry role, outcome predictability is low.

Research indicates that organizational health is critical to the success of an organization.⁶⁸ One way to achieve organizational health is through the development of leaders who are equipped to address the complexity of middle leadership.⁶⁹ To begin middle leadership development, two undertakings must take place. First, the middle leader's critical challenges must be recognized. Second, a process must be formulated to address these critical areas.⁷⁰ With this in mind, a question presents itself: What are the significant challenges of an Area Director? From interviews with four Area Directors, I have synthesized the following list of seven challenges.

⁶⁸ Patrick M. Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 1-14.

⁶⁹ Lowney, 106.

⁷⁰ "Seven Steps to Effective Leadership Development: An Oracle Whitepaper," (Redwood Shores, CA: Oracle Corporation, 2012), 2, <http://www.oracle.com/us/media/1/steps-effective-leadership-dev-1657106.pdf>.

1. Working across several cultures
2. Wearing many hats
3. Keeping an intense schedule
4. Making difficult decisions
5. Feeling isolated and lonely
6. Raising support along with other responsibilities
7. Resolving inter-missionary conflicts

Because the scope of this dissertation will not permit me to address all seven of the significant challenges, I have chosen to address the challenge of decision making for the following reasons: (1) The problem is significant. (2) The problem can be addressed through available literature and research. (3) The solution can be managed and implemented within the organizational structure. (4) If addressed properly, the solution has the potential for substantial positive organizational impact. (5) Research indicates that good decision making is one of the foundational skills necessary for all leadership.⁷¹ The following section is a description and analysis of what others have done to address middle leadership development, including sources pertaining to organizational decision making.

What Others Have Done

In my attempt to identify, describe and analyze what others have done to address middle leadership development, I identified three topics by which to organize the sources: (1) leadership development, (2) online information, and (3) organizational decision making. It should be noted that the purpose of Section two is not to provide an exhaustive review of the literature but to include relevant examples of what others have

⁷¹ Michael Useem, "Decision Making as Leadership Foundation," in *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*, eds. Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, 2010), 511-515.

done to address the dissertation topic and problem. With that in mind, I begin by offering examples of solutions focused on middle leadership development both in the field of education and in world missions. Second, because my artifact will be web-based and informational in nature, I have included web-based sources of information. Third, because I have identified decision making as the focus of my solution, I have included sources that address organizational decision making. The decision-making solution will be further developed in Section three.

The Middle Leader in Education

As mentioned in Section one, the concept of middle leadership and the term middle leader used in this dissertation came out of the structured education system in the United Kingdom. For this reason, the training and development of middle leaders in the United Kingdom is a well-defined field that is rich in literature and research. Consequently, an authoritative resource for addressing the development of middle leaders is the government of the United Kingdom.⁷² Though the field of pedagogy falls outside of the scope of this dissertation, the information provided by the government of the United Kingdom can inform our discussion.

The website www.gov.uk catalogues the government-level training necessary to become a middle leader in the United Kingdom. The website includes information about length of study and the program outcomes. The outcomes of the training are to provide knowledge, and to assist in helping the middle leader develop skills and key leadership

⁷² “National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership,” Gov.uk, last update October 20, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-professional-qualification-for-middle-leadership-npqml>.

behaviors.⁷³ Note the terms knowledge, skill, and behavior. Combined, these terms present a holistic view of middle leadership development and further contribute to the position that leadership is more than just gift, knowledge, or skill, but it is behavior as well. If leadership is indeed a process, then it seems reasonable to suggest that behavior is the greater part of leadership.

The UK program seeks to develop the following behaviors: (1) commitment, (2) collaboration, (3) personal drive, (4) resilience, (5) awareness, (6) integrity, and (7) respect.⁷⁴ Collectively, these behavioral components adequately reflect some of the necessary behavior components of the Area Director. The components also reflect the importance of the middle leader's role as well as the complexity of the role.

One might suggest that comparing middle leadership in the education world to middle leadership in the world of missions is like comparing apples to oranges. However, there are enough similarities to warrant a connection. Like the middle leader in education, the Area Director is both follower and leader; they must engage with those both above and those below them. Like the middle leader in education, an Area Director functions in a complex mix of organizational expectations while facing the realities of service and the sense of a higher calling. Also, like the middle leader in education, the Area Director's development must progress past the mere acquisition of skills and knowledge, toward the development of specific behavior. It is in behavior, i.e. a process, that leadership is expressed. It is in this way that the skills, knowledge, and behavior that the UK

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership.

government determines are important to the success of the middle leader in education, are also relevant for the Area Director in a missions-sending organization.

The Middle Leader in a Missions Sending Organizations

We now move to examine three sources associated with the specifics of training an Area Director within a missions-sending organization. I am aware that there are many missions-sending organizations, most certainly each with their unique systems of training and leadership development. I have chosen to concentrate on the description and analysis of significant sources within the Assemblies of God World Missions and one source from Campus Crusade for Christ.

Assemblies of God World Missions Area Director Training

Historically there has been no organization-wide training for the Assemblies of God World Missions Area Director.⁷⁵ Any attempt at training has been approached from the regional level.⁷⁶ Though I have located no research or statements as to why this is the case, drawing from my experience, I can offer certain suppositions.

First, there is the on-the-job training aspect of Area Director development. In this paradigm, the Area Director is trained as he/she moves through the ranks of the organization from missionary, to field moderator, to Area Director, and then possibly to the level of Regional Director or Executive Director.⁷⁷ I would argue that because the

⁷⁵ Sandie Cross, Email Message to Author, September 21, 2018.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ron Maddox, notes from Assemblies of God World Missions Strat-Ops Meeting Concerning Role of Area Director, October 12, 2018.

Assemblies of God World Missions has, more or less, a traditional hierarchical organizational structure, this seems to work, to some extent.

The second possible reason for not adopting an organization-wide Area Director training program may be the uniqueness of the individual regions. Each region has its distinctive needs and challenges based in part on the needs of their missionary personnel, their geographical boundaries, and the cultures in which they serve. For example, the missionary personnel in Northern Asia would face different challenges of life and ministry than would the missionaries in Latin American and the Caribbean. Therefore, a leadership style and leadership methods that are in tune with the regional ethos are often sought. These distinctly unique regional circumstances could lessen the impact of or the desire for an organization-wide Area Director development program.

Third, there may be a sincere sense of ownership of a regional vision and direction, that may foster the desire for the training of Area Directors at a regional level. In any case, in the Assemblies of God World Missions there seems to be renewed interest in training Area Directors for the mission.⁷⁸ This renewed interest opens the door for leadership development that could include, not just the knowledge of unique regional requirements and conditions but the inclusion of necessary skills and behavioral components that can help to increase the Area Director's leadership capacity.

⁷⁸ Omar Beiler, notes from Assemblies of God World Missions Strat-Ops Meeting Concerning Role of Area Director, October 12, 2018.

The Assemblies of God World Missions Europe Region

We can look to the Assemblies of God Europe region for one example of a regional attempt at Area Director training. With the addition of two new Area Directors to the Europe Region in 2017, the Europe Regional Director (Paul Tremontozzi) requested that “very specific AD training” should be considered for new Area Directors. In a 2004 presentation, while he was a Europe Area Director, Tremontozzi gave an account of the complexity of the Area Director’s role, stating that, “The urgent necessities of administrative matters have crowded the important issues of our chosen ministry.”⁷⁹ In order to allow the Area Directors to focus more on the ministry aspect of their role, Tremontozzi suggested that individual Area Directors assemble a team of missionaries to help with the administrative load.⁸⁰

More recently, as Regional Director, Tremontozzi expressed his desire for Area Director (AD) training and gave a brief synopsis on the form the training might take. Tremontozzi suggested that training should begin with a “gathering [of] thoughts, history and experience from all former Europe ADs.” In addition, the perspectives of “healthy” veteran missionaries and other Area Directors concerning the role of the Area Director should be collected. These, along with a reading list on “leadership and member care,” could be incorporated into a journal format and used as a training tool and resource for the new Area Directors.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Paul Tremontozzi and Robert Ryals, “What’s the Goal?? Less Pain, More Gain: The Evolving AD Job Description,” *PowerPoint Presentation*, 2014.

⁸⁰ Tremontozzi and Ryals.

⁸¹ Paul Tremontozzi, Email Message to Author, February 16, 2018.

Trementozzi also suggested that the use of the DiSC assessment tool may help the new Area Directors understand their strengths and weaknesses, and how each Area Director might fit into the larger team of Europe leaders.⁸² Finally, Trementozzi cited the need for an “open forum” consisting of past Area Directors and their spouses. The purpose of the forum would be to gain insight into the role of the Area Director and the challenges they face.⁸³ In this way, Trementozzi emphasizes his desire for Area Director development. He further emphasizes the regional preference for Area Director training while acknowledging the benefit of accessing the combined knowledge and experience of Area Directors from other regions as well as the thoughts and experiences from Europe missionaries.

In Trementozzi’s development paradigm, there is preference for information, self-development, and team-building over skills attainment or the behavioral components highlighted in the development of middle leaders in the United Kingdom. Though the application of the DiSC assessment is behavioral in nature, it focuses more on self-awareness than skill or behavioral assessment.

It should be noted, however, that Trementozzi’s communication pieces were not conveyed as completed training initiatives, but as general communication concerning the need for regional Area Director development, in the absence of an organization-wide program. In this light, Trementozzi’s analysis and reflections are in no way lacking. On the contrary, there seems solid foundation that only requires further development and refinement. This is, in part, what encouraged me to begin this research.

⁸² “Disc Profile - What is Disc? The Disc Personality Profile Explained,” accessed October 22, 2018, <https://www.discprofile.com/what-is-disc/overview/>.

⁸³ Trementozzi, Email Message.

The Assemblies of God World Missions Eurasia Region

The Assemblies of God World Missions Eurasia Region has also attempted to address the challenges and development of Area Directors from a regional perspective. But, unlike the Europe Region, instead of approaching the Area Director's challenges from an informational and self-developmental framework, the Eurasia Region approaches the Area Director's challenges from a structural perspective. Kevin Donaldson has written a Doctor of Ministry project that further advances the idea of a structural change and delineates what the Eurasia Region has termed "Tier 4" leadership.⁸⁴

At the core of "Tier 4" leadership, as expressed likewise by Tremontozzi, is the awareness that the Area Director's role is complex and, at times, overwhelming. Donaldson suggests that one of the greater causes of both the complexity in the Area Director's role and a bottleneck in the organizational system is the number of decisions that the Area Director is required to make.⁸⁵ Therefore, Donaldson contends that the bottleneck is indicative of a "need to reduce the level of administrative responsibility carried by the Area Director."⁸⁶ This echoes Tremontozzi's acknowledgement that the administrative role is overshadowing the ministry role of the Area Director.

However, instead of acquiring a team, providing information or working toward self-development as Tremontozzi suggests, Donaldson highlights the Eurasia region's leadership attempts to expand leadership downward, effectively creating a Tier 4

⁸⁴ Kevin Donaldson, "A Strategy for Developing Organizational Capacity Through Tier 4 Leadership Development" (DMin DSL Project, Regent University, 2017), 4.

⁸⁵ Donaldson, 8.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 4.

leadership structure. According to Donaldson, there are presently three tiers of leadership in the Assemblies of God World Missions: 1. Executive Director, 2. Regional Director 3. Area Director. The Eurasia model calls for the institution a fourth tier of leadership structurally below the Area Director. This change would allow decisions normally made by an Area Director to be pushed down to Tier 4 leadership, thus serving two purposes: decision making will be processed closer to the field, and as a consequence, an alleviating of the Area Director of some of those responsibilities.⁸⁷

Some of the challenges to the Tier 4 approach include the need for structural change, which must be approved by the Assemblies of God World Missions Executive Committee and would be labor, time, and relationally intensive. Additionally, though the structural change addresses the number and kind of decisions made by the Area Director, it does not address the challenge of decision making; the structural change, in effect, passes down the challenge of decision making to another level.

Both the information and self-development approach of the Europe Region and the structural change approach of the Eurasia Region have merit. While Tremontozzi's desired outcome is the freeing of the Area Director to have more time for ministry and member care, Eurasia's model focuses on freeing the Area Director to have more time for leading. These different desired outcomes may be indicative of unique regional needs and a differing perception of the Area Director's role, function, and purpose. They also indicate an agreement on the merits of addressing the complexity and challenges via some form of development outside of "on-the-job training."

⁸⁷ Ibid.

In this light, the Europe and Eurasia Regions may benefit from combined training that would include the addition of skills and behavioral development components, including addressing the Area Director's most significant challenges, especially the challenge of complex decision making.

For an additional perspective of leadership development within a missions-sending organization, we will consider a document written by CRU's Vice President of Global Leadership Development, Andrea Buczynski.

CRU-Formally Campus Crusade for Christ

CRU, formally known as Campus Crusade for Christ, was founded in 1951 by Bill and Vonette Bright. CRU began as a missions-sending organization for college students and now has missionaries serving on college campuses around the world.⁸⁸

Analogous to the Assemblies of God World Mission's Area Directors, CRU has nine Area Team Leaders, each assigned to a geographical area in the world. Though CRU provides leadership development material on their website, the material seems to be directed toward developing global leaders rather than the development of leaders within the organization.⁸⁹ However, a document written by CRU's Vice President of Global Leadership Development, Andrea Buczynski, titled, *Makings of a Leader: The Principles and Practice of Spiritual Leadership*, gives an overview of her philosophy of leadership

⁸⁸ "CRU - What We Do," CRU.org, accessed November 12, 2018, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/about/what-we-do.html>.

⁸⁹ "CRU - Leadership Training," CRU.org, accessed November 12, 2018, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/leadership-training.html>.

which is, “Leaders make a difference.”⁹⁰ Due to her position in the organization, one might reasonably consider Buczynski’s philosophy of leadership as a guiding ideology for CRU’s internal leadership development.

To begin, Buczynski’s thesis expresses a distinct Christian leadership model. The model is skills-based and focuses on the leader as a “change-agent” via the process of “calling and motivating people to action in pursuit of something better.”⁹¹ In this context, Christian leaders are “direction setters” who identify the destination and the challenges that lay ahead, and also recruit people to “commit themselves to following [the leader].”⁹² The responsibilities of a leader include vision casting, strategy formulation, aligning oneself and others toward a common goal, and motivating people to move toward that goal.⁹³ Buczynski’s model acknowledges the uniqueness of a Christian leader whose source is not found in culture, character, or giftedness but in a “loving God” modeled in the life of Jesus Christ, as expressed through a “Holy Spirit empowered ministry.”⁹⁴ In light of this, Buczynski stresses the importance of character development and ministry formation as a part of leadership development, with passing attention given to the concepts of power and influence.⁹⁵ Buczynski addresses the concept of leadership and

⁹⁰ Andrea Buczynski, *Makings of a Leader: The Principles and Practice of Spiritual Leadership* (Orlando, FL: CruPress, 2012), 2.

⁹¹ Ibid., 3.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁴ Buczynski, 7, 8.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 8, 9.

leadership development through a skills-acquisition and character-development lens. She mentions decision making only in the context of the use of power to cause change.⁹⁶

In consideration of Buczynski's views, and her focus on vision casting and strategy formation, her leadership development appears to focus on the upper-level leader and not the middle leader. As mentioned in Section one, vision casting and strategy formation are usually reserved for those in the upper level of an organization and not for those who serve in the middle. In parallel with Volkner, who warns against the pitfalls of advancing a biblical leadership model,⁹⁷ one might suggest that a Christian leadership model also has intrinsic challenges. For example, engagement in the process of leadership by a Christian in a Christian organization should not be different than other forms of leadership, simply because the leader is employed within a Christian context. A Christian should act as a Christian wherever they lead, in a sacred setting or in a secular setting, at the top of an organization, or in the middle. To her credit, Buczynski does give counsel concerning the danger of power, especially when seeking after power for one's own agenda.⁹⁸ That said, Buczynski's approach to leadership is both balanced and articulate. Though she focuses on those in the upper levels of an organization, she does cover the critical points of leadership and development which include both a skill-set and the acknowledgement of the importance of the Holy Spirit's empowerment in leadership.

In light of what missions-sending organizations have done to develop their middle leaders, this reflects a desire to better develop and train middle leaders. The Assemblies

⁹⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁷ Volker Kessler, "Pitfalls in 'Biblical' Leadership," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v34i1.721>.

⁹⁸ Buczynski, 7.

of God World Missions demonstrated an awareness of the heavy workload and the complexity that comes with the Area Director's role. In order to address this difficult issue, more is needed than information, structural changes, or even a Christian leadership model. A process for decision making can positively impact the Area Director, the missionaries they serve, and the organization in which they serve.

Middle Leadership Development Online Information

Because I will be producing a blog as my dissertation artifact, I wish to include examples of websites that specifically address middle leadership. Websites dedicated to the topic of leadership are many. A survey of the highest-ranking pages found that most focused on the development and certification of the middle leader in the education sector. Outside of those focusing on education I have located relatively few that are singularly dedicated to the topic of middle leadership. In fact, in Feedspot's list of the *Top 100 Leadership Blogs, Websites & Newsletters to Follow in 2018*, I could locate none that focus specifically on middle leaders or middle leadership.⁹⁹ However, there are two sites that are representative of the middle-leadership informational website genre. The first website focuses on developing middle leaders in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. The second is a blog that focuses on middle leaders, mostly in the education sector.

⁹⁹ Agarwal Anuj, "Top 100 Leadership Blogs, Websites & Newsletters to Follow in 2018," Feedspot.com, last updated Dec 8, 2018, <https://blog.feedspot.com/leadership-blogs/>.

Leading in the Middle Website

The website *Leading in the Middle* is a resource whose purpose is “helping leaders better understand organizations and how to get things done.” Though the site broaches the broader topic of leadership, its emphasis is on helping those who lead in the middle to be “more knowledgeable and successful.” This site is especially germane to my research as it considers not only topics important to the middle leader but decision making as well.¹⁰⁰

The layout is professional with the site divided into six sections. The “Home” section lists the purpose and goals of the site. The “About” page lists the site’s owner and content contributors: David Hoffman, PhD (professor and researcher), Mark McNeilly (executive, author, and professor), and David Roberts (sales consultant and professor).

The “Teaching Resources” section advances the notion that the pathway to getting work done in the middle of an organization is through “building [your] own personal credibility, identifying and influencing various stakeholders, and implementing systems and processes designed to accomplish goals.”¹⁰¹ In this section the site’s authors offer, for purchase, four training components. The training components are based on role playing and team activities. Two of the activities focus on decision making and include role playing for a team of four to five. The other two training components concentrate on how to function within an organizational structure. The content of the “Endorsements,” “Contact,” and, “Buy Teaching Materials” sections are self-explanatory.

¹⁰⁰ David Hofmann, Mark McNeilly, and David Roberts, “Home Page,” *LeadingintheMiddle.com*, accessed November 15, 2018, <http://www.leadinginthemiddle.com/>.

¹⁰¹ David Hofmann, Mark McNeilly, and David Roberts, “Teaching Resources,” *LeadingintheMiddle.com*, accessed November 15, 2018, <http://www.leadinginthemiddle.com/>.

The website is a good resource for middle leaders who are looking to understand how they fit into and function within the organizational structures in which they serve. It is also a good resource for leaders who are interested in developing middle leaders. The team approach of the learning components helps middle leaders discover how to get things done by leveraging the systems, resources, and relationships within the organization. This includes decision making in groups. Research indicates that groups often don't share enough information or use collective information in a manner that produces good decisions.¹⁰² The authors of the site approach middle leadership development from a systems perspective; in other words, they explain how leaders can better function within a given organizational system.

Few would argue concerning the benefit of training middle leaders to function better within an organization's structures and systems. However, there is a potential disconnect when it comes to developing the person and character of the middle leader. For example, a leader in the middle of the organization must know the culture, the organizational connections, and the way to get things done within that structure. However, getting things done is only one aspect of leading in the middle. Two other important aspects are relationship and decision making within the complexities of the organizational setting. Although there is valuable material here, this site would benefit from a more holistic approach that includes organizational and relational awareness, and a process for solving complex problems.

¹⁰² Wendy Van Ginkel, *The Use of Distributed Information in Decision Making Groups: The Role of Shared Task Representations* (Rotterdam, NE: Erasmus Research Institute of Management, 2007), 8, <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/8424>.

Leading in the Middle covers the desired content but was not designed with a holistic approach in mind. The site has helpful resources, however, to include different models and processes of decision making would strengthen the site's impact and effectiveness.

The Middle Leader Blog

In addition to the website *Leading in the Middle*, there is a blog titled *The Middle Leader*.¹⁰³ Though there may be others, it is the only blog that I could locate that specifically focuses on middle leadership, albeit from an educational and not an organizational standpoint. The blogger does not provide his/her name, but states that the purpose of the blog is to provide “tools to lead before [middle leaders] are put in those positions.” There are only four posts, none after July 26, 2017. Of the four posts, the one that is germane to this dissertation is dated July 10, 2017. The July 10 post attempts to address the dilemma that the terms manager and leader create for the middle leader—which I too addressed in Section one. In the author's final analysis, terms like manager and leader are less important than a person's ability to lead.

On a final note, the discussion of decision making that is so critical to the middle leader's role is missing in the blog. Regrettably, the author's posts are limited to four. There is no indication as to why the author has ceased posting or if other posts are forthcoming.

Though there is much information online about middle leadership in the field of education, there seems to be little information concerning middle leadership outside of

¹⁰³ “The Middle Leader,” accessed November 16, 2018, <https://themiddleleader.wordpress.com/>.

the educational context. The website *Leading in the Middle* has resources for developing middle leaders, however, the training components are focused on the middle leader's ability to work and function within the organizational systems to get things done. Though effective in getting things done, in consideration of the Area Director, complex decisions often arise that cannot be solved within the normal organizational systems. A process for making decisions in complex situations would be a welcomed addition to the website. The blog *The Middle Leader*, though sparse in postings, does bring the issue of the terms manager and leader to light.

Middle Leadership and Organizational Decision Making

In the context of organizational decision-making, effective and timely decisions are the hallmark of a good leader.¹⁰⁴ As a result, one could say that decision making is an essential skill for all leaders in all organizations.¹⁰⁵ Effective leadership development should include a model for effective decision making.

Since my solution will focus on a viable process for decision making for Area Directors, I have chosen to include two resources that pertain to decision-making within an organization. Though these examples do not focus specifically on the middle leader's decision-making process, they do represent two distinct and functional models of organizational decision making—the first in a business setting the second in an ecclesiastical setting.

¹⁰⁴ Useem, 507.

¹⁰⁵ Nichodemus O. Ejimabo, "An Approach to Understanding Leadership Decision Making in Organization," *European Scientific Journal* 11, no. 11 (2015): 2, <https://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/5435>.

Decision Making within Organizational Structures

Nicodemus Ejimabo is a professor at Wayland Baptist University in Fairbanks, Alaska. His research focuses on business and organizational management. Ejimabo suggests that decision making is one of the higher-ranking processes for an effective leader and therefore, helping the leaders to overcome even small deficiencies in decision making can make a big impact on the organization.¹⁰⁶ In his article, *The Influence of Decision Making in Organizational Leadership and Management Activities*, he proposes to better understand “the best approaches to leadership decision making.”¹⁰⁷

From a detailed analysis of the responses of two hundred and sixteen organizational leaders concerning their success as leaders, Ejimabo recognized the inclusion of others in the decision-making process as important to leadership success.¹⁰⁸ With this in mind, Ejimabo highlights a decision-making process that he suggests may help leaders learn to make more effective decisions. The steps are as follows: (1) define the problem, (2) develop alternatives, (3) evaluate the alternatives, (4) make the decision, (5) implement the solution, and (6) monitor the solution.¹⁰⁹ Ejimabo highlights the following positive implications of this six-step process: the process helps to determine the impact of the decision; the process helps one consider the factors that impact a decision; and the process aids the leader in choosing the best plan for action.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Ejimabo, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

In addition to the decision-making process, Ejimabo encourages the use of reason, research and the resources of other people's active participation in the process.¹¹¹ This suggested process is not unlike the rational or bounded rational models of decision making, where the decision-making process can be described in four distinct steps: (1) determine alternatives, (2) determine objectives, (3) determine the expectation of the decision outcome, and (4) determine the consequences of a decision.¹¹²

The rational decision-making model is often advocated as a process that provides good decisions for the organization. Why? It is well documented that humans "have trouble when confronted with unfamiliar, non-routine decision situations." The rational models bring a semblance of structure and order to the unfamiliar and non-routine.¹¹³ Though the rational models of decision making may function in organizational settings that tend toward the familiar and the routine, they do have their challenges. Let us consider three challenges.

First, when decisions involve people, such as those decisions made by an Area Director, the rational process may break down because people are not objective data points that can be defined and calculated. In fact, research indicates that the structured rational decision-making process is the least effective process of decision making when having to deal directly and "face-to-face" with people.¹¹⁴ Decision making that involves

¹¹¹ Ibid., 4.

¹¹² Franz Eisenführ, Martin Weber, and Thomas Langer, *Rational Decision Making* (Heidelberg, GE: Springer, 2010), 9.

¹¹³ Ibid., 1.

¹¹⁴ Herbert A. Simon, "Making Management Decisions: The Role of Intuition and Emotion," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 1, no.1 (February 1987): 57, <https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.1987.4275905>.

people must consider more than numbers, alternatives, objectives and outcomes. People have thoughts, reactions, world views, beliefs, values, past and present experiences, future expectations and life dynamics that must be considered, but cannot be measured.¹¹⁵ In consideration of decision making by an Area Director, one must also take into account the spiritual aspect of decision making, these aspects include the mission of the Church, the call of God, and the spiritual impact of a decision on an individual's life. The rational models do not allow for the spiritual components that are critical to decision making in missions sending organizations.

Second, the rational processes do not readily consider the impact of the person making the decision on the decision itself. A rational model tends to consider the decision maker as removed from the process. The decision maker defines the problem, develops the alternatives, evaluates the alternatives, makes the decision, implements the solution, and monitors the solution, all the while being somehow disconnected from the process. However, to assume the possibility of complete detachment may be a tactical fallacy.¹¹⁶ With the multiple influences that are present within any organizational system, Peter Senge concludes that, "Nothing is ever influenced in just one direction."¹¹⁷ There is an interconnectedness in all organizations that impacts most every aspects of organizational

¹¹⁵ Arnaldo Oliveira, "Decision Making Theories and Models: A Discussion of Rational and Psychological Decision-Making Theories and Models: The Search for a Cultural-Ethical Decision-Making Model," *Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies* 12, no. 2 (2007): 12, http://ejbo.jyu.fi/pdf/ejbo_vol12_no2_pages_12-17.pdf.

¹¹⁶ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 13, 14.

¹¹⁷ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2006), 75.

functioning.¹¹⁸ Ejimabo alludes to this connectedness when he states that, “every organization is a systematic network that is both complex and dynamic in nature.”¹¹⁹ He also alludes to a connectedness when he considers the inclusion of “workers in some decision making in the organization.”¹²⁰ Due to the interconnectedness factor, a rational model of decision making may not be the best choice.

Finally, a rational process may limit the outcome of decision making to a logical course of action that may be quite impractical in its application. One only need to consider the mistake that the Coca Cola company made in 1985 when it logically and with much research decided to introduce New Coke. The new formula was slated to save the company fifty million dollars per year in production costs, but it had the unintended consequence of alienating millions of Coca Cola drinkers. The company eventually returned to the original recipe. That rational decision with its impractical application is still considered one of the great organizational decision-making mistakes.¹²¹

Multi-stepped, rational decision-making processes have their place in organizational decision making, but they have their limitations for application by an Area Director in a missions-sending organization. First, the rational models tend to focus on organizational success over people. An Area Director must be concerned with not only the organizational impact, but the people and spiritual impact as well. Second, the rational models often do not consider the person of the decision maker in the decision-

¹¹⁸ Senge, 73.

¹¹⁹ Ejimabo, 2.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹²¹ Ryan Gorman and Sky Gould, “New Coke: The 30th Anniversary of Coca-Cola’s Biggest Mistake,” BusinessInsider.com, accessed November 8, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/new-coke-the-30th-anniversary-of-coca-colas-biggest-mistake-2015-4>.

making process. Omitting this consideration may be detrimental to a decision-making process by the Area Director who serves in a deeply relational and interconnected context that is both people oriented and spiritual in nature. Finally, the rational models can be strong on logic but weak on practical application. Because the Area Director is a middle leader, they must make direct application of their decisions. Therefore, the Area Director may consider practical application over logic and still produce a good decision. With this in mind, Ejimabo's suggested decision-making process may not inform the Area Director's decision-making process as well as other options.

Decision Making and the Religious Society of Friends

In his journal article on organizational decision making, Paul Abderson describes the decision-making process of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) as both decision-making and an act of worship.¹²² Organizational decision making in the tradition of the Manner of the Friends is made in a community setting, which is formally referred to as "a gathered meeting for worship."¹²³ The goal of the meeting is to arrive at a decision on a specific issue, however, there is a sense by those who attend that the process is as important as the decision itself. "Coming together in unity around a common sense of Christ's leading" is at the heart of this community process and the higher reason for the coming together.¹²⁴ There is also an awareness and anticipation by

¹²² Paul Abderson, "The Meeting for Worship in Which Business is Conducted-Quaker Decision-Making Process as a Factor of Spiritual Discernment," *Quaker Religious Thought* 106, no. 4 (2006): 28, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/51116969.pdf>.

¹²³ Ibid., 26.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

the attendees that, in the presence of God, the Holy Spirit inspires unique connections and leads the group to decisions they could not have attained individually or in a less communal setting.¹²⁵

It may seem that making decisions en masse could lead to a rather loosely organized decision-making process. However, there is an underlying structure that is reflective in nature that helps to guide the community. First, each attendee, including the clerk who leads the meeting, is expected to prepare in advance. This preparation includes prayer, contemplation, fact gathering, and investigation.¹²⁶ Second, during the meeting, the issue at hand is fully defined and delineated. No movement toward a decision is permitted until the context and larger issues impacted by the decision have been investigated and discussed. This step sets the boundaries for the discussion, focuses the efforts of those who are a part of the decision-making process, and helps to control the influence of personal interest and “power plays” on the process.¹²⁷ Third, during the discussion, the clerk may introduce specific thoughts and ideas that may help move the discussion forward.¹²⁸ Fourth, at a point of critical mass in the discussion, the clerk may present a sense of where and how the decision making process is going. This “offering a sense of the meeting” is the moment in the decision-making process where context and points of discussion are reflected upon and where all agree that a decision is about to be

¹²⁵ Ibid., 28.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 41.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 42.

reached. When reached, the decision is recorded in an official minute.¹²⁹ Finally, the decision is carried out with a sense of awareness of the effective and efficient leading of Christ throughout the process.¹³⁰ Naturally there are provisions for other scenarios. For example, some common situations are: when a discussion stalls, when unity cannot be achieved, when a single person does not agree, or when no sense of Christ's leading can be discerned. Though one may argue that this type of process cannot work in today's fast paced world, it is a process that has continued to work for the Society of Friends since the mid-17th century.

The positive considerations of the Quaker organizational decision-making model include the formation of a stronger community and a more robust buy-in, leading to quicker and more efficient implementation. Research indicates that participative decision making positively impacts a team by increasing motivation, a sense of empowerment, and overall buy-in.¹³¹

In addition, decision making in community may also help address human bias. Kahneman claims that humans can, in fact, be quite irrational, holding to unconscious biases and influences from many sources. Because of this, quick decisions based on, for example, the swift reactions or intuition of an individual, can be faulty, while slower decision-based processes and methodologies, depending on the circumstance, can result in a more reliable decision.¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹³¹ Ejimabo, 10.

¹³² Kahneman, 24.

Other benefits include the effectiveness of a decision-making process that has well-defined parametric boundaries and yet is not so rigid as to exclude in-depth investigation and the insight of the decision makers, and of course, in the context of this dissertation, there is a positive impact from a process that proposes decision making as an act of worship.

Admittedly, there are some challenges to the Quaker model both for an organization and for an Area Director. First is the consideration of space and time. Gathering all the decision makers in one place may be challenging. However, there are many possibilities for video conferencing, which would mitigate this as a problem. Also, the model seems to lean heavily toward a cultural orientation that is characteristically Quaker. That is to say, the decision-making process occurs in a controlled cultural construct where anyone who is a Quaker brings to the process tacit knowledge, experience, and an historical awareness of the process. This allows the process to work well in that setting. However, without these familiar cultural components, the process may suffer.

Finally, some decisions require swift action. Although no time limits are set on the Quaker decision-making process, the amount of time to come to a decision in community may be prohibitive when swift action is necessary. On the other hand, for decisions that have far reaching impact within the organization, there could be significant benefits from implementing the Quaker model.

The Quaker model of organizational decision making has merit for contextualized application for the Area Director. The process is both reflective and spiritual in nature. The process is dynamic and includes the voices and tacit knowledge of others, which in

the case of the middle leader could be those who are above and/or below in the organizational structure as well as other middle leaders. The process embodies a sense of community and the bigger picture, which is applicable to the missions' community and its leaders. Finally, the Quaker model frames decision making as an act of worship.

Conclusion

As we conclude Section two, I am drawn back to the story of Stan the Area Director. Even though the research has taken us on a journey to the middle of an organization, the story is not about the squares, circles, and lines of a flow chart; the story is about people. As such, at this juncture the spotlight is focused on the Assemblies of God World Missions Area Directors and the complex world and system in which they serve.

It is the complexity, brought about by a ministry description that has many interrelated parts and constantly changing dynamics, that imposes considerable challenge on the Area Directors. However, it is that complexity that can give significance to what might otherwise seem an insignificant role. It is the beauty of complexity that calls attention to the high value of the lilies of the field. In like manner, the significant insights in Section two give evidence to the high value of the middle leader.

The middle leader acts in the zone of tension between the expectations of the organization and the realities of those expectations as they unfold day by day in the lives of those the Area Director serves. Though the Area Director serves one Sovereign, the Area Director intermediates between two kingdoms. That is to say, the Area Director is both follower and leader, and therefore, they have a responsibility both upward and

downward in the organization. Simply put, the Area Director is that middle link between the organization and the missionary: a role of utmost importance.

The second significant insight is that though upper-level leadership instinctively comprehends the importance of a middle leader, middle leadership development is often overlooked in favor of leadership development at a higher level. Considering the importance of the Area Director's role in the Assemblies of God World Missions organization, there has been very little development and training of Area Directors. This role is crucial to the organization and its success.

The final insight is the recognition of the importance of decision-making for the middle leader. An Area Director making a sound decision is not unlike a physician making a sound diagnosis. There should be a viable and rigorous process that leads to a sound decision. Given the importance of the Area Director as the link between the vision goals and mission of the organization and the carrying out of the vision, goals and mission on a day-to-day basis, proficiency in decision making, and having a process that allows for that proficiency is mission critical. Some might consider it at the level of worship. In this context, the Area Director's prayer is, "I pray on this day to realize that I am a link on a chain that bonds us all with God and His will."¹³³

In view of the significance of the Area Director to the organization and the mission-critical need for an applicable decision-making process, Section three will propose a functional and effective decision-making process for use by the Area Director.

¹³³ Richard A. Dixon, *A Prayer as a Poem for Each Day* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 315.

SECTION 3:

THESIS

Introduction

Section one presented an overarching concept of middle leadership by arguing that leadership is a process and anyone who engages in the process of leadership is leading, regardless of title or position. Section two introduced the Area Director as a middle leader who, along with serving within a complex mix of organizational setting and responsibilities, is faced with the significant challenge of complex decision making. In Section three the discussion moves into concrete application, with a proposal for a practical solution to help the Area Director process complex decisions. With this in mind I will restate our core question. What one tool can help the Area Director to process complex decisions?

Donald Schön posits that a reflective conversation can help solve complex problems, which, I will suggest, includes decision making in complex circumstances. Donald Schön was trained in philosophy and was a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In his seminal work, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Schön challenged the notion that “professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique.”¹³⁴ As an alternative, Schön introduced the idea reflection-in-action as a viable and rigorous

¹³⁴ Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983), 21.

method of developing professional knowledge and solving problems. His work continues to be used today in the field of education and other professions.

I will also suggest that since the act of reflection can be misunderstood as simply contemplation, and a reflective conversation misunderstood as merely a meditative dialogue,¹³⁵ a guide for the reflective process can be helpful. The Johns model of reflection, frequently used within the field of nursing, can serve as an effective guide for the reflective conversation.¹³⁶

Christopher Johns is a professor of nursing and pioneer in reflective practice in nursing and healthcare. Building, in part, on Schön's research, Johns' influential book, *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*, introduced reflective practice as a means of developing health care practice in the field of nursing.¹³⁷ Some consider the Johns model of reflection as a standard model for structuring the process of reflection in the practice of nursing and other people-centered professions.¹³⁸

I propose that a decision-making process based on Schön's reflective conversation and guided by the framework of the Johns model of reflection can be an effective tool in aiding the Area Director in making difficult decision in complex settings.

¹³⁵ Ann Shelby Harris, Benita Bruster, Barbara Peterson, and Tammy Shutt, *Examining and Facilitating Reflection to Improve Professional Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 2.

¹³⁶ Christopher Johns, "Nuances of Reflection," *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 3, no. 2 (1994): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.1994.tb00364.x>.

¹³⁷ Christopher Johns, *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), xi-xii.

¹³⁸ Jean Watson, "Forward," in *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*, ed. Christopher Johns (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), ix-x.

Schön's Reflective Conversation

Most credit the early expressions of rigorous and structured reflection to John Dewey's book *How We Think*.¹³⁹ However, Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, is a seminal work in the modern movement of reflective practice. The concepts of reflection-in-action and knowing-in-action, came out of Schön's research on how professionals practice, solve complex problems, and gain knowledge as they practice. To illustrate, Schön uses the example of a physician who, in the process of making a diagnosis, has a "reflective conversation with the situation" by actively engaging his professional medical knowledge, experience in practice, and skill along with the patients' knowledge and experience.¹⁴⁰ The subsequent knowing-in-action transpires when, after becoming aware of the patient's symptoms, the physician refers to his tacit knowledge and skill to eventually shape the diagnosis.¹⁴¹ At the heart of the diagnosis is the reflective conversation. In like manner, an Area Director could harness the effectiveness of engaging in a reflective conversation when required to make a complex decision.

Of course, the illustration is rather straight forward. As one can assume, a level of circumspect is necessary when engaging in a reflective conversation. Thompson and Thompson caution that engaging in reflection is more than just a thought in passing or a moment of reflection while acting. To maintain the rigors of reflection, one must strive to

¹³⁹ John Dewey, *How We Think* (Sunnyvale, CA: Loki's Publishing), 2017.

¹⁴⁰ Schön, 295-296.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 49-51.

make connections to the greater picture of why one does what they do or why one is making a decision in the first place.¹⁴² The Johns model of reflection can assist in maintaining those connections.

The Area Director's Influential Voices

In a reflective conversation with a situation, there are many voices to which an Area Director may refer. One may be a colleague, or a mentor, an organizational leader, or even the policy manual. These are important voices for the Area Director, but these are not the only voices the Area Director may invite into the conversation. Metaphorically, the Area Director could invite the voices of intuition, theory, experience, and core beliefs into the conversation.¹⁴³ Equally important for the Area Director would be the voices of function, role, and purpose. In my experience as an Area Director, these voices often speak without invitation and impact without acknowledgment. The optimal way to include the voices of function, role, and purpose in a reflective conversation, is by using a reflective model that is both rigorous and structured for the context in which the Area Director serves.

With this in mind, I begin with a description and brief analysis of the voices of function, role, and purpose—these are the metaphorical voices of influence with whom the Area Director must converse. Next, I will illustrate what a reflective conversation can look like when the decision maker is not in control of the process. Then, as means of

¹⁴² Neil Thompson and Sue Thompson, *The Critically Reflective Practitioner* (London, UK: Palgrave, 2008), Kindle edition, 10.

¹⁴³ Sebastiao Ferreira, "Reflecting in and on Action," mit.edu, accessed November 19, 2017, 1, 2, [http://web.mit.edu/cil/web_scripts/www/work/Reflecting in and on Action CoLab.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/cil/web_scripts/www/work/Reflecting%20in%20and%20on%20Action%20CoLab.pdf).

introducing the Johns model of reflection, I will briefly compare three reflective models with the recommendation that the Johns model is particularly applicable for use by the Area Director to guide the reflective conversation. I will then illustrate a reflective conversation using the Johns model highlighting the control it gives to the Area Director. Finally, I will briefly argue in defense of a Pentecostal Area Director employing a reflective model for decision making. I begin with a description and brief analysis of the metaphorical and influential voices of function, role and purpose.

“Function” can be defined as a person’s role or calling within an organization:¹⁴⁴ in this context, that which the Area Director has been commissioned to do. An Area Director is commissioned to serve as a leader, administrator, pastor, boss, coach, diplomat, and counselor, to name a few functions, while still maintaining his or her missionary status. The Area Director reports directly to the Regional Director and is an organizational link between the Regional Director and the missionaries on the field.¹⁴⁵ Of the three, “function” is the most closely associated with the Area Director as an agent of the organization; consequently, function wishes to be heard as the voice of reason.

The term “role,” though often used synonymously with “function,” is nonetheless distinct from function. It can be defined as a person’s assigned status and those duties that relate to that status.¹⁴⁶ Inherent in this status is an expectation of allegiance to the organization. This includes carrying out the organization’s policies and procedures as well as acting as a representative of the Assemblies of God World Missions around the

¹⁴⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Function,” accessed November 21, 2018.

¹⁴⁵ “Area Director Ministry Responsibilities” (2007).

¹⁴⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Role,” accessed November 21, 2018.

world. Of the three, “role” is the most closely associated with the Area Director as a representative of the organization. Consequently, role wishes to be heard as the voice of wisdom.

Finally, “purpose” can be defined as something to be attained or, in other words, that which motivates one to do what they do.¹⁴⁷ Among others, those things that motivate the Area Director are the call of God, the desire to serve God, the desire to be a part of fulfilling the Great Commission, compassion for people, and even the challenge of leadership. Of the three, “purpose” is most closely associated with the Area Director as a person of God. Consequently, purpose wishes to be heard as the voice of spiritual insight.

Keeping these voices in mind, at a time of decision-making, one could imagine the voices of the organizational agent, the organizational representative, and the person of God forming a cacophony, adding complexity to the decision-making process. However, one could also imagine these voices lending reason, wisdom and spiritual insight to the decision-making process. Let us first look at how the voices may contribute complexity to the decision-making process. Consider the following example of a request from a missionary to the Area Director and the pursuant conversation without a reflective model.

A Conversation Unguided by A Reflective Model

In this example, a missionary sends an email to an Area Director with a request to return to the United States ahead of the missionary’s scheduled itineration, because the missionary needs more funds. It seems a simple enough decision, the need for funds necessitates permission for them to go home. However, without providing a guide to the

¹⁴⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “purpose,” accessed November 21, 2018.

reflective conversation, the voices of function, role, and purpose compete with each other for the lead role, adding complexity to the decision-making process.

Using the analogy of the theatre, the curtain opens, and we find the Area Director entering stage left, as the lead in the conversation he walks to center stage. The characters of Role, Function, and Purpose enter the stage and find their place around the Area Director, each facing the audience. Other voices wait off stage as the Area Director announces that he has a decision to make and would like to talk to Role, Function and Purpose to get their opinion. With that announcement, we find each voice pushing to gain center stage to deliver their lines, some to the audience, some directly to the Area Director.

Purpose—aspiring to be the voice of spiritual insight—steps to the front of the stage and shouts to the audience: “These are important people, they are people of faith and are doing a great work for God. They must go home to raise funds so their work for God can continue.” (*Purpose* turns to the Area Director) “You know what it’s like; you are a missionary too. You know what they say: “we must reach the lost at any cost!” God will be pleased. Let them go home!”

Function—aspiring to be the voice of reason—pushes his way forward and pushes Purpose aside. He delivers his lines to the audience in a controlled manner: “Yes, I agree they need funds. If they do not have the funds it will not only impact their ministry but their personal lives as well. How will they pay their bills? What will happen to their children?” (*Function* turns to the Area Director and delivers his words of reason) “However, Mr. Rev. Area Director, let’s be reasonable. You are an administrator; you must begin with a lengthy cost analysis and then work from there. You must be able to

show that your decision was based on well-researched data that includes their history of fundraising and spending and the cost of the trip home compared to their ability to raise funds from the field. Don't forget, you're the boss. And by the way, you don't want to look soft. Remember, this decision rests on you."

At that point, *Role*—aspiring to be the voice of wisdom—runs to the front and in an effort to speak over the others yells directly at the Area Director: "Listen, you have a responsibility and a duty to the organization. You know the policy, no one goes home to raise funds in the middle of his or her term. There are many other missionaries who are raising funds. If this missionary goes home to raise funds, they may prevent someone else from going to the field in a timely manner. Why would you permit this family to go home to raise funds when they probably went to the field underfunded in the first place? Do you remember when they pushed you to go back to the field and you allowed it because you listened to *Purpose*? Now look where they are—out of money and *you* having to decide if they are permitted to go home to raise more funds. *Purpose* has no idea what she's saying! Yes, it's hard. Yes, it's tough. But that doesn't cut it. There is no way they can go back!" (All the while the Area Director stands silently as these influential voices try to convince him that their decision is the correct decision—their voice the reasonable voice, the voice of wisdom, the voice of spiritual insight.)

In this scene, one will notice first, that though the Area Director should play the lead role, the characters of Function, Role, and Purpose have seized the spotlight, as each vie for the lead position. Second, one will notice that the Area Director has effectively been silenced throughout the conversation. Finally, one will notice that control of the conversation has been taken from the Area Director who, being too busy with the various

competing voices, is not able to invite others onto the stage. The coup we have just watched has thwarted any attempt to address the decision at hand. What should the Area Director do? One might suggest silencing the voices. But suppressing the voices, though helpful to quiet the cacophony, will silence important perspectives. One should remember that these are not the critical voices of failure, self-doubt, or impending doom that can impede or completely derail decision-making.¹⁴⁸ The competing voices are necessary and should not be silenced.¹⁴⁹ The Johns model of reflection can assist the Area Director to guide the reflective conversation.

The Johns Model of Reflection

Schön's research has informed various models of reflective practice. Three of the more notable are the Gibbs model, the Atkins and Murphy model and the Johns model. Let us briefly compare the three models. To begin the comparison, the Gibbs' model targets the education practitioner and focuses on description and subsequent analysis of that description. Reflection begins by describing an event, usually after the fact, continues with analysis of the event, and ends with a plan of action to address future and similar events.¹⁵⁰ This model characterizes what Schön refers to as *reflection-on-action*,

¹⁴⁸ Sabina Nawaz, "Silence the Critical Voices in Your Head," *Harvard Business Review*, December 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/12/silence-the-critical-voices-in-your-head>.

¹⁴⁹ Ferreira, 1, 2.

¹⁵⁰ Graham Gibbs, *Learning By Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods* (Wheatley, UK: Oxford Brookes University, 1988), 15.

as the reflection takes place after the event.¹⁵¹ The key terms in Gibbs' model are: *describe* and *learn*.

The Atkins and Murphy model targets the nurse practitioner and focuses on the learning that can take place when reflecting on feelings and emotions while practicing.¹⁵² The Atkins and Murphy model begins with an awareness of the practitioner's uncomfortable feelings during an event, continues with analysis of the event, and ends with an awareness of what was both identified and learned. This model characterizes what Schön refers to as *reflection-in-action* as the reflection is taking place during an event.¹⁵³ The key words in the Atkins and Murphy model are: *feelings* and *emotions*.

Like the Atkins and Murphy model, the Johns model targets the nursing profession; however, the Johns model focuses, not only on the awareness and examination of the feelings and emotions of the practitioner, but on a process that brings awareness to the many influences that impact an experience or decision. These influences include what could be considered the influential voices of social norms, experiences, and environment.¹⁵⁴ Like the Gibbs model, the Johns model begins with a description of an experience and continues with analysis and knowing. The Johns model characterizes what Schön refers to as the reframing that takes place during a reflective conversation.¹⁵⁵ The key words in the Johns model are: *process* and *influences*.

¹⁵¹ Schön, 275.

¹⁵² Sue Atkins and Kathy Murphy, "Reflective Practice," *Nursing Standard* 8, no. 39 (1994): 50, <https://doi.org/10.7748/ns.8.39.48.s64>.

¹⁵³ Schön, 49-69.

¹⁵⁴ Christopher Johns, "Framing Learning Through Reflection Within Carper's Fundamental Ways of Knowing in Nursing," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 22 (1995): 226.

¹⁵⁵ Schön, 85.

What makes the Johns model uniquely applicable to the Area Director's decision making? Where the Atkins and Murphy model focuses on emotional awareness, the Johns model stresses the impact of the influential voices. Second, while the Gibbs and the Atkins and Murphy models seem to guide the practitioner from awareness to conversation and then to discovery, the Johns model, with its cue questions, seems to guide the practitioner into a conversation, then ultimately to discovery or solution. Similar to a hiker finding her way on the Appalachian trail by the well-placed signs along the journey, the cue questions in the Johns model lead the practitioner to new heights of experience and knowledge that lead to solutions.¹⁵⁶ Finally, as a result of well-placed cue questions, the Johns model is capable of both considering the many voices that must speak to a decision and then giving them opportunity to speak into the decision. For the Area Director those voices may be role, function, and purpose, and/or they may be the voices of a missionary or the organizational leadership. The ability to include and guide these influential voices makes the Johns model relevant to the environment in which the Area Director leads. For these reasons Johns' model is an appropriate model to be used by the Area Director as a guide for a reflective conversation.

To better illustrate the Johns model of reflection, see the table below. From the table one can see that the Johns model of reflection is a five-phase process. The five top-level headings (description, reflection, determine influencing factors, propose alternative strategies, and learning) indicate the broader points of discussion or the major sign posts leading the discussion. The questions under the headings apply to the main heading and are there to guide the practitioner during the reflective discussion, or in other words, the

¹⁵⁶ Johns, "Framing Learning Through Reflection," 226.

questions guide the practitioner along the trail until they reach the next major sign. One of the more attractive aspects of the Johns model is the ability for the practitioner to exchange the questions under the main headings with applicable questions for their particular environment and circumstance, which I have done in the following table.¹⁵⁷ It should be noted that with a change of the main headings the model would no longer be the Johns model. However, a change of the questions under the headings only customizes the model.

¹⁵⁷ Johns, “Nuances of Reflection,” 71.

The Johns Model of Reflection (Modified)¹⁵⁸	
Describe:	What is the problem? What are the key issues?
Reflect:	What do I want to achieve? What action must I take to achieve my objective? What would be the consequences of my action?
Determine: Influential Factors	What internal factors must or may influence my actions and decision? What external factors must or may influence my actions and decision? What source of knowledge must or should influence my actions and decision?
Propose: Alternative Scenarios	What other choices are available to me? What would be the consequence of these alternative choices? What past experience can I apply to the situation?
Learn: From the Experience	What have I learned that I can apply to future situations? What have I learned that I can share with others facing the same or similar situation? How can I support myself and others in the light of my actions and decision? What insights have I gained that might change the way I make decisions in the future?

With the introduction of the Johns model of reflection, we will, once again consider the example of a request from a missionary to the Area Director and the ensuing reflective conversation that is now guided by the Johns model.

¹⁵⁸ “Guidance on Reflective Writing: Models for Reflection From Tutor/student Handbook,” QMplus.com, accessed November 21, 2018, <https://qmplus.qmul.ac.uk/mod/page/view.php?id=794125>.

A Conversation Guided by A Reflective Model

A missionary sends an email to an Area Director requesting to return to the United States ahead of the missionary's scheduled itineration because the missionary needs more funds. The Area Director enters stage left and walks to the center of the stage. The characters of Role, Function and Purpose enter the stage and find their place around the Area Director, each facing the audience. The Area Director announces that he has a decision to make and will be using the Johns model of reflection to help process the decision. The stage-hand holds up cue card #1.

Cue 1: Describe: What is the problem?

Area Director speaking to the audience: Here is the problem. The missionary wants to go home to raise funds. Policy says no, but I can make an exception. Should I make that exception? (Stage-hand holds up cue card #2)

Cue 2: Reflect: What do I want to achieve?

Area Director speaking to the audience: Here is what I want to achieve with this decision. I want the missionary to be healthy. I want my decision to be both fiscally and organizationally responsible. I want to be reasonable and wise in my decision making. I want to have spiritual insight into the situation. And finally, I want to have new understanding to bring to similar decisions. (Stage-hand holds up cue card #3)

Cue 3: Determine Influential Factors: What are those influences that speak into my decision? What are they saying?

Area Director speaking to the audience: The influences speaking into my decision are: the missionary, my experiences that voice themselves as my role, my function, and

my purpose, other colleagues, organizational leadership, technical rational knowledge which includes policy and procedure and other decision-making knowledge.

Area Director speaking to the audience: The missionary says, “approve!” Role says, “don’t approve!” Function says, “don’t make a move!” While purpose says, “approve!” Experience says, “though approval might solve one problem, approval will create others.” I must investigate what my colleagues and organizational leaders might voice, but policy says, “you must not approve!” (Stage-hand holds up cue card #4)

Cue 4 Propose: Which influences should I consider?

Area Director speaking to the audience: I should consider all voices but not equally. How do I determine the voice I will listen to? I will give thoughtful consideration and I will pray asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (Stage-hand holds up cue card #5)

Cue 5 Learn: What insights have I gained about myself, the influences that speak into the decision making and the process itself that might change the way I make decisions in the future?

Area Director speaking to the audience: I have learned about how my experience and my personness impacts my decision-making. I have learned how the reflective process, and not the competing voices, has helped me to lead the decision-making process. I have learned the importance of a process that gives cues that help along the decision-making journey. I have new insight into myself, my organization, and those I lead. (The curtain closes with applause.)

When one considers the prior conversation without reflection, one will remember that the voices played the lead role in the conversation, each vying for the lead and the

center stage position. Because of that, the Area Director was effectively silenced throughout the conversation. One will also remember that as a result, the control of the conversation was removed from the Area Director, who, being busy with the three voices, was not able to consider other outside voices, influences, or information.

However, in the conversation using the Johns model of reflection, the Area Director speaks! When using the Johns model of reflection, the Area Director takes center stage and has the lead throughout the conversation. Taking his cues from the Johns model, the Area Director describes, the Area Director reflects, the Area Director determines, the Area Director proposes, and the Area Director ultimately learns. The Johns model makes for a more balanced reflective conversation, provides order and purpose to the many voices, and places the Area Director back in leadership where they belong.

The Pentecostal Leader and the Reflective Model of Decision Making

At this point, I wish to take a moment to discuss the importance of the Holy Spirit in the decision-making process of a Pentecostal leader, namely: The Assemblies of God World Missions Area Director. The Holy Spirit is an important person in the Pentecostal leader's life and ministry. There is a decided dependence on the Holy Spirit for comfort, direction, guidance, and wisdom. This is not something that can be rationally explained or learned as one learns a skill, and yet, this is a part of the Pentecostal experience. To be even more specific, a Pentecostal leader considers the gift of knowledge as one of the gifts of the Spirit that are available to guide the leader in life and ministry. The gift of knowledge, in particular, may exhibit itself in knowing that could be considered outside of technical rational knowing (I Corinthians 12:4-11).

Technical rationality asserts that all knowledge, even the knowledge required to solve complex problems, can be derived from rigorous and controlled observation and analysis.¹⁵⁹ However, reflective practice anticipates the development of discovery, learning, and knowledge¹⁶⁰ by a process that some consider to be outside of the scientific method of rigorous and controlled observation and analysis. This, open door in the reflective model may be considered by some, problematic.¹⁶¹ However, for the Pentecostal, it may be an open door for the inclusion of the voice of the Holy Spirit in the reflective decision-making process. In this light, it would seem reasonable to suggest that reflective models of decision making may be a better fit for the Pentecostal Area Director than the more technical-rational models.

As a field research project, I attended the Assemblies of God World Missions Heidelberg Member Care Forum. One session focused on the Holy Spirit in the life of the Pentecostal missionary and leader. One of the more salient points was the significance of allowing the creative power of the Holy Spirit to guide the leader in solving complex problems. William Kay stated: “If we pray in the known language, our mind will be fruitful: so, we should pray in both modes, in tongues, to build ourselves up and speak directly to God, and with our understanding to reach out creatively and insightfully. As we do, we can begin to find answers, answers through our Spirit-inspired prayers”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Schön, 21.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 277, 278.

¹⁶² William Kay, “Three Studies for Heidelberg Member Care Forum,” *Assemblies of God World Missions Member Care Forum* (Hiedelburg, GE: 2017).

In their research on global Pentecostalism, Miller and Yamamori describe what they term the “S” factor, where “‘something more’ than humanly generated activity” is taking place.¹⁶³ In the context of the Pentecostal Area Director’s decision-making via a reflective model, the “something more,” I would argue, can be the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning Kay’s statement, by experience and faith tradition I am a Pentecostal, consequently, praying in tongues is not an unfamiliar practice to me. At the same time, I am aware that to some the notion of praying in tongues for any reason may seem quite unorthodox or even heretical. This is understandable, especially due to the various abuses and heterodox expressions of the Pentecostal experience by some who claim Pentecostal orthodoxy but whose praxis is neither biblically based, theologically sound, nor practically applied. That said, the purpose of this brief inclusion is not to persuade, but to highlight the compatibility that reflective practice has with the way in which Pentecostal leaders often process complex decisions; that is by praying in the Spirit and listening for the voice and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

One might also consider that there are Pentecostal leaders who might not agree with the idea that the “knowing” in reflection-in-action could be in any way associated with the Holy Spirit or Pentecostal praxis. They might see reflection and the search for “knowing” as opening the door to a kind of mindfulness or Eastern Mysticism. This too is understandable, and I concede that one should always be concerned with using the Gifts of the Spirit in a proper way and in a proper context. However, if the Pentecostal leader is reflecting by weighing the process and resulting decision in the light of Scripture, there

¹⁶³ Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 4, 20.

seems no reason not to be thankful and even embrace a decision-making process that leaves room for the work of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Area Directors regularly need to navigate complex situations and make difficult decisions. Because of the relational nature of their position and the context in which they serve the missionary body, making difficult decisions based on only professional knowledge or organizational policy can fall short. As an added level of complexity, the voices of the Area Director's role, function, and purpose can form a confusing dissonance further complicating the decision-making process. In this complex environment, Schön's reflective practice theory and those models informed by Schön, can inform and guide the Area Director in making difficult decisions.

At the heart of Schön's theory is a reflective activity where the decision-maker has a conversation with the situation. This conversation is not unlike the Quaker model of organizational decision making, discussed earlier, where in a public setting many voices speak into a complex decision. In like manner, an Area Director has a conversation with the many voices that speak into a complex decision. As in the Quaker model, these voices may include other people, but most often they include an internal private conversation between the voices of role, function, and purpose, each representing a part of the whole of the Area Director's ministry, experience, and faith.

Among the various models of reflection, the Johns model of reflection is particularly suitable for use by an Area Director. The Johns model offers a five-phase reflective sequence, that, like other models, begins with description and ends with learning. However, the Johns model is both more linear in process and features more

structured cue questions than the Gibbs and the Atkins and Murphy models. The linearity and the structure of the model lends itself to a more organizational setting and yet provides for effective reflection. In addition, the Johns model is open to modification of the questions listed under the five main headings. In this way, the Johns model is open to a wide range of applications, including application for the Area Director.

As a final reflection on the material in Section three, I have been deeply impacted on a personal level by the realization that there is room for the voice of the Holy Spirit in a reflective model of decision making. One of the challenges for a Pentecostal leader is finding a decision-making process that is both rigorous and yet allows for the voice of the Holy Spirit. In the context of a Pentecostal leader, a model that is based solely on the acquisition of data, the processing of those data into various scenarios, and then the choosing of the most logical scenario may be rather sterile against a process that gives room for the empowerment and creativity of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, a model that leans toward complete recklessness in its abandonment of both order and rigor—depending on the feeling of the moment—may be just as, or even more problematic than a purely rational model. The structured reflective process of the Johns model is both orderly and rigorous and yet allows for the voice of the Holy Spirit to speak into the decision.

I would suggest that this is great news for the Pentecostal Area Director as it applies to their day-to-day practice. I would also suggest that using a reflective model has one other important aspect for the Area Director. Because the reflective model allows room for the voice of the Holy Spirit, a reflective model of decision making has the potential to turn a mundane, pressure-filled, energy-draining, middle-leadership

responsibility into an act of worship. Imagine: every decision an act of worship! A reflective process also has the potential to give the leader a unique and anointed voice, in one of the most royal positions: the middle of an organization. In this light, we are reminded of Mordechai's admonition to Esther concerning the importance of her voice in a time of need. "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

A reflective model that allows for the voice of the Holy Spirit is a model that will allow the Pentecostal Area Director to speak into the lives of people in time of need and in time of decision. In fact, it may provide a voice for the Area Director that is uniquely their own. A voice of reason and spiritual discernment emanating from the middle of an organization can turn a middle position into a royal position and a place of great influence for such a time as this.

SECTION 4:

ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

Though early in the process, I considered writing a book for my artifact, I have decided to approach the artifact as a 5-year project, consisting of four phases, the first of which I present with this dissertation.

- Phase 1: One website with two blogs. (years 1-5)
- Phase 2: The addition of a robust social media presence including, Facebook and Twitter feeds. (years 2-5)
- Phase 3: The development of a community of practice for Assemblies of God World Missions Area Directors. (years 2-5)
- Phase 4: Development of seminars for middle leaders that incorporates a book. (years 4-5)

The choice to initiate this four-phase project with a social media platform are several. A social media platform: (1) provides an accessible vehicle for targeted information that is relevant, current, condensed and easily applicable, (2) provides easy access to the aforementioned information, (3) provides a means for almost immediate feedback on the topic in the form of conversations, (4) provides a place for developing community, and (5) will help in generating foundational research and writing for the seminars and the books in Phase four.

Targeted Information

A blog provides a proven platform for the dissemination of targeted information that is current, relevant, and easily applicable. The need to provide current leadership information that is relevant to the middle leader is one of the core outcomes of my research. Early on, I realized that much of the literature on leadership focuses on the

upper tier leader at the expense of the middle leader. There is a need for current and relevant content focused on middle leaders.

An example of the need would be the middle leader who is struggling with the unique pressures that come with a middle-leadership role. This person could access *leadershipinthemiddle.com* and find a concise and meaningful blog post titled: *Don't Panic*. The post is based on Susan David's current research on emotional agility.¹⁶⁴ I have written the post through the lens of middle leadership making the information directly applicable to the middle leader in their unique setting. Of course, the middle leader could access the research directly and make the necessary application on their own. But, part of the mission of my artifact is to provide information to the middle leader that is easily and directly applied to their particular situation and environment.

Easy Accessibility

A blog provides an easily assessable platform. We live in a connected world, where information is available at the type of a key or the tap of a screen. It has been estimated that ninety-five percent of the North American population, and eighty-five percent of the European population have access to the internet.¹⁶⁵ There is a saying in the communications world, "content is king." But as a colleague of mine recently told me, "even great content if not easily accessible is like a billboard in the middle of a desert." Similarly, targeted information that is not accessible to the middle leader will have little

¹⁶⁴ Susan David, *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life* (New York, NY: Avery, 2016), 4.

¹⁶⁵ "World Internet Users Statistics and 2018 World Population Stats," *Miniwatts Marketing Group*, accessed December 5, 2018, <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>.

hope of reaching its intended target audience. A blog provides a platform for easy accessibility to targeted information.

Direct Feedback and Community Development

A blog gives an opportunity for a direct feedback loop to the author and to the community of middle leaders at large. In light of this, in talking with middle leaders, one of the subjects that continues to surface is the need for a community of practice for middle leaders. Though development of a community of practice was not the focus of my dissertation, Christal Jenkins is conducting research on communities of practice. She posits that online communities of practice can help people separated by time and space rediscover community.¹⁶⁶ Further research on middle leadership should include the investigation of how a community of practice might aid middle leaders in their professional and personal development.

To demonstrate how a blog may be the seed for a community of practice, the comment section provided on the blog essentially forms a feedback loop for people who wish to respond to individual posts. One could use the list of responders as a basis for beginning a community of practice for middle leaders that is separate from the blog, but directly linked to the website. In addition, I have proposed the development of a Facebook and Twitter presence as a part of Phase two, further broadening the reach and impact of the project. I anticipate that my artifact will be the foundation for future

¹⁶⁶ In conversation with my colleague Christal Jenkins whose research focuses on online communities of practice.

collaboration and possible incarnation of a community of practice for middle leaders in general and more specifically for Area Directors.

Foundation for Research and Development

There are at least three ways that a blog provides the opportunity for further research and development. First, much thought and research go into the regular and consistent writing of a blog. Combined over time, the individual blog posts can form the framework and seed content for a book. Second, the feedback from blog posts can assist in vetting the material, and also help the writer to identify the needs and challenges of middle leaders. Finally, the discipline of regular research and writing further develops and widens the writer's/researcher's knowledge base of leadership theory and the practical application of that theory to middle leadership. The application then can take on many forms, including the generation of blog posts, book writing, and seminar content. The blogs and the research, along with the associated writing and feedback becomes the foundation on which Phases two, three, and four of my five-year plan are built.

SECTION 5:

ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

The following is a description of the goals, audience, scope, content and post-graduate considerations of my artifact. My description also includes a “standards of publication” and my action plan for the timely completion of my artifact.

Goal, Scope, Content and Standards

In its fully realized form, the artifact leverages a robust social media presence that includes a website, blog, Facebook page, and twitter feed. In addition, I envision the social media presence becoming the foundation for a book and seminars on middle leadership, especially within a missions context. The goal of the artifact is three-fold: the dissemination of targeted information, the development of a community of practice for middle leaders, and the foundation for further research and development. Though the following artifact specifications are for Phase one—a website and two blogs—I have secured both Facebook and Twitter handles for Phase two of the project. I hope this artifact will become an inclusive expression of hope and advocacy for all middle leaders.

Phase one will consist of a website that has four sections: a home page, an about page, and two separate blogs. The first more public blog has a target audience of middle leaders in general. The second blog, though not private is not listed on the home page. The second blog is for middle leaders in mission, with its initial iteration focused specifically on Area Directors. The URLs and handles are as follows.

- Main website: www.leadershipinthemiddle.com
- Missions leader blog: www.leadershipinthemiddle.com/middle-leaders-in-missions

- Facebook: Leadership in the Middle
- Twitter: LeadershipITM

I am developing all of the content for the web site and the blogs, as well as overseeing and participating in the actual website and blog design. I have engaged the assistance of qualified personnel for advice on web design and layout. There will be consistent branding across the blogs and all future platforms. The website itself will be of professional quality and easy to navigate. The content will maintain the high-quality standards consistent with general blog and social media content. General specifications include the following: photos of professional quality, targeted content ranging in word count from 500-800 words, imbedded links to resources and other content, including videos.¹⁶⁷

Strategies and Audience

My target audience is middle leaders in the non-profit sector including the religious sectors with specific attention given to middle leaders in mission. I will base the success of my artifact on three criteria: middle leader engagement, long-term production, and the ability to generate future research and publications. I will measure middle leaders' engagement via the comments section of the blog and, in the future, the Facebook page and the number of followers on Twitter. There is no statistically significant number at which I would consider the engagement a success, except to

¹⁶⁷ "How to Write a Blog Post," NewForums.com, accessed December 20, 2018, <https://newforums.com/title-list/author-guidelines/blog-post-guidelines/how-to-write-a-blog-post-official-guidelines/>.

suggest that a healthy engagement by middle leaders via regular feedback would signal success.

In order to adequately maintain long-term production, I plan to continue my research and maintain a regular weekly and monthly posting on the blogs. In addition, in preparation for Phase two I have set up the Buffer Social Media Management Platform to manage the scheduling of Facebook and Twitter posts and produce analytics of post-performance.

Budget

The budget for the artifact consists of the following line items and is anticipated to be in the range of \$324.00 to \$704.00 per year.

- Yearly URL fees: \$20.00
- Yearly website blog hosting fees: \$144.00
- Fees for internet access, for example while traveling overseas: \$100 per year.
- Fees for yearly access to professional photos for the blog: \$60.00
- Hardware fees, including computer access, are minimal. I have access to computers in my day-to-day ministry. In the brief absence of their availability I would budget \$200 per year for computer expenses.
- Since I will be managing the endeavor, the personnel and administrative fees will be negligible.
- The Buffer Social Media Management Platform is free for up to 3 social accounts. If it is necessary to increase to a larger plan the yearly fee will be \$180 per year.

Promotion

I plan to promote my artifact via an extensive network of colleagues and friends, and my personal social media platforms. My marketing strategy is simple: a growing readership through awareness and engagement and though authentic relationships. Since this venture has a ministry foundation, the purpose is certainly more altruistic than capitalistic in nature.

That said, the artifact must not only be an expression of the highest level of research and professionalism, it must be an expression of who I am as a person of faith and a middle leader in in the Assemblies of God World Missions. I am acutely cognizant of the fact that my life's calling is to be a Christian missionary and I am honored that God has allowed me to be a middle leader in missions. It is out of that context that this artifact is an expression of my faith, my calling, and my heart.

Action Plan for Completion of Artifact

I have completed the branded website that hosts the blog and four months of content for the general blog and six months of content for the Leaders in Missions blog. Also, in preparation of Phase two, I have set up Facebook page, and Twitter accounts. The website/blog is located at www.leadershipinthemiddle.com. Links to Facebook and Twitter are, Facebook: facebook.com/jimsabella, Twitter: twitter.com/leadershipITM. Details and examples of the completed artifact are further delineated in Appendix A: Artifact. I plan to launch the website and both blogs on March 4, 2019.

SECTION 6:

POSTSCRIPT

The artifact leadershipinthemiddle.com focuses on providing relevant and current information that will help those who lead in the middle of an organization to be better leaders. The process of filtering applicable research, theory, and experience through the lens of middle leadership, makes the content of the blog uniquely suited for quick application by middle leaders.

The chosen artifact, though not fully realized, has garnered more than a passing interest when shared with middle leaders. I have been able to share my research, conclusions, and artifact with the leaders of the Assemblies of God World Missions Europe Region. They are excited about the possibilities the research and artifact present for the region. I am also hopeful that my research and artifact will have a significant impact on the Area Directors in other regions and the organization as a whole. I would also add that when I speak to emerging middle leaders, especially in the church, there is affirmation from them of the significance of this research and artifact. One thirty-something middle leader said to me, “finally someone is giving voice to a whole new generation of leaders who serve in the middle.” These responses have strengthened my initial impression not only of the importance of the research topic but that a social media platform was the correct choice for my artifact.

Further research is needed on middle leadership in general. Research is needed on the possible benefits of communities of practice for middle leaders. In addition, there seems to be similarities between the people-centered professions, like nursing and education and the context and ministry of the Area Director—especially when it comes to

complex decision making. These similarities suggest further research may produce interesting applications for middle leaders in people-centered professions. Also, research on the implications of decision fatigue on middle leaders would add to the discussion of complex decision making for middle leaders. Considering the number of people who serve in middle-leadership roles, it seems reasonable that any research that benefits middle leaders will advance the discussion and benefit the organizations in which middle leaders serve as well as the people that they serve.

APPENDIX A:

ARTIFACT

My artifact consists of a website and two blogs located at www.leadershipinthemiddle.com. As described in Section four, I have chosen the website/blog medium because it provides a platform for the distribution of targeted information that is easily assessable. In addition, the medium provides an opportunity for direct feedback, which can become the foundation for further research, development, and publication.

The website comprises the following pages: *Home*, *About*, *Blog*, and *Middle Leaders in Missions Blog* (pages attached below). The purpose of the website and blogs is five-fold:

1. to shine light on those who lead in the middle of an organization,
2. to distribute content that applies leadership principles to the practice of middle-leadership,
3. to encourage and engage middle leaders,
4. to facilitate continued research on middle leadership and the distribution of that research,
5. to provide a resource for the development of future forms of publication on middle leadership.

The “Home” page contains general information about the site, the topic of middle leadership and the author. The “About” page offers information about the author, the author’s research on middle leadership and also delineates the purpose of the website. The two blog pages are the core of the website. The posts published on the general blog

are targeted at a general, as opposed to specific, middle leader audience. The posts published on the Middle Leaders in Missions Blog are targeted specifically at those who serve in missions-sending organizations, with emphasis given to topics applicable to the Area Directors in the Assemblies of God World Missions.

Though the website and blogs will be an ongoing project, for the purpose of this artifact, I have written four months of material (17 posts) for the general Blog. These posts will be published weekly beginning March 4, 2019. In addition, I have written six months of material (6 posts) for the Middle Leaders in Missions Blog. These posts will be published monthly beginning March 4, 2019. The word count for the website and blogs is approximately 15,000 words.

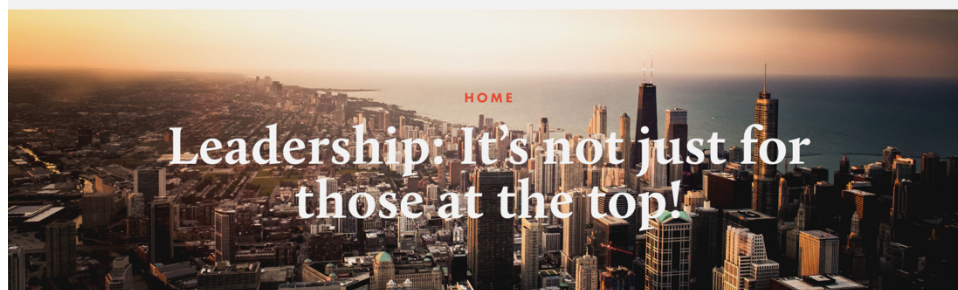
In consideration of the two-blog approach, the design, content, language, and posting schedules of the blogs differ according to the targeted audience. For example, though I approach the research and writing of the content for both blogs with the same academic rigor, the language in the general blog is less “academic” than in the missions blog. Also, the layout is different for each blog. For example, the posts on the general blog have a large photo at the top of each post, as well as photos and graphics imbedded within the content. The missions blog, by contrast, only has photos and graphics imbedded in the text. This is one of several design elements that send a message that the content of the general blog is more mainstream in nature, while the other is more academic.

The posting schedules of the blogs also differ. While I am expecting the more conventional likes, dislikes, and comments in the general blog, I am hoping for more in-depth discussions on issues of practice, and topics dealing specifically with middle

leaders in missions-sending organizations in the missions blog. With this design element, I am attempting to prepare the foundation for Phase four of my project: the development of a community of practice among middle leaders in missions. Thus, I will be posting weekly on the general blog and monthly on the missions blog (posting schedule attached below).

As in with the design elements and the language used in the two blogs, the content is also carefully chosen. Paralleling my dissertation, the scope of the blogs' content ranges from the conceptual to the concrete. For example, "How to Tell If You're a Middle Leader," is a series of three posts, that delineate the three hallmarks of a middle leader. This is a conceptual piece that sets the stage for the concrete application of leadership theory and principles. As an example of the concrete, I have written a three-part series on decision making. In this series, I mirror my dissertation research on decision making by highlighting the voices that can cause complexity to the decision-making process. I then introduce Schön's reflective conversation and the Johns model of reflection as a means for conversing with the voices, to gain insight and new knowledge that can lead toward a solution (see the images below).

In addition to the website and blogs, I have set up a Facebook Page and Twitter feed. Although they are not part of my initial project launch, they will play an added role in Phase two. The following pages are a sampling of screenshots from the website, the blogs and their content, as well as screen shots of the Facebook Page and Twitter feed.



The cityscape that is leadership is dotted with skyscrapers!

The cityscape of leadership is dotted with skyscrapers. Their shadows form angles and shapes as they bend their way across the smaller buildings beneath them. These smaller buildings form a series of blocks from which the skyscrapers rise—like the tall peaks of a bar-graph diminishing the existence of the secondary data.

The focus quickly turns from the buildings to the people inside—those who are getting the work done—those who are leading in the middle. The scene reminds us that the story of leadership is, after all, a human story. It is the story of real people, played out in real time, in all types of settings.

Those who lead in the middle are the great leaders of our day, hidden in the middle, eclipsed by the tall ones—only to be seen when the light shines on them.

[READ THE BLOG](#)

Leadership in the middle: it's not just what I do, it's my passion!

Have you ever thought about the fact that, all totaled, more people are leading in the middle of organizations than there are leading at the top? Have you also noticed that the majority of the leadership literature is focused at those top few? If you're a middle leader, you've probably noticed—I know I have, that's why I started this blog.

I'm proud to say that I'm a middle leader. If you're one who leads in the middle of an organization, welcome! This blog is for you. If you're not a middle leader, welcome! I want you to be aware of one of the greatest resources and gifts any organization can have—those who lead in the middle.



JIM SABELLA

[MORE ABOUT JIM'S WORK](#)


ABOUT

Passion. Experience. Confidence.



The Journey Toward Realization

I've been researching leadership for many years, in part, because I wanted to be a good leader myself. Being a good leader can mean different things to different people. For me, being a good leader means first, being a positive force in the organization in which I serve. Second, being a good leader means having a positive impact on people's lives and in a broader sense, on the world.

In my search for information to help me be a better leader, I came across plenty of three-step processes, quick-fix solutions, and here's-how-I-did-it-and-so-can-you books. Honestly, they weren't much help. At first I thought it was me; then I realized that much of the leadership literature is written for someone who leads at the top of an organization—I lead in the middle. Leading in the middle is a whole different matter.

Looking at leadership through a different Lens

When I began serving in a middle leadership role in my denomination's missions sending organization, my perspective on leadership morphed. When I was a pastor, I was the leader. Now, I am one of many leaders who serve in the middle.

Leading in the middle of an organization is different from leading at the top. Leading in the middle calls for a unique application of leadership principles. A middle leader can't just read the leadership books, take the information at face value and make direct application. A middle leader must process the information through the lens of middle leadership.

Let me give you an example. A common topic in leadership books, blogs, and leadership development best-sellers is the topic of vision. Here's a quote from Jack Welch, former Chairman of General Electric.



"Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion." —Jack Welch

This is an excellent quote. Its principles and activities are essential to leadership—at the top. But applying the principles and activities in this quote while leading in the middle is a different story. A middle leader who tries to create, articulate, own and relentlessly drive vision to completion is going to have problems.

The Challenge of Middle Leadership

I have concluded that the great challenge of middle leadership is not only in the leading but also in the application of leadership principles to the process of leading in the middle. Meeting that challenge is one of the main purposes for this blog.

The Purpose of Leadership In the Middle

The purpose of this blog is three-fold:

1. **To shine light on those who lead in the middle of an organization.** Though leaders at the top are the visible leaders, as it turns out, most leaders are not found at the top of the organization. There are too few positions up there! There are estimates that over 14 million people work in US non-profits alone. Many of them lead in the middle. Knowing that, and seeing the results of excellent middle leaders, I am convinced that the really great leaders of our day are often hidden in the middle of an organization, only to be seen when the light shines on them.
2. **To apply leadership principles to middle leadership.** Leadership principles can work on every level of an organization. However, they must be applied differently at each level. I am convinced that the leadership literature has an application bias. The literature focuses its application on the top few. This blog will focus on applying leadership principles to those who lead in the middle of an organization.
3. **To encourage and engage middle leaders.** As I talk to middle-leaders, I find their story is often one of overwork, limited resources, limited pay and little or no glory. However, the middle leader's story is also one of great hope, change, and transformation. I hope this blog will be a source of encouragement and engagement for those who lead in the middle.

If you're one who leads in the middle of an organization, welcome! I want to celebrate you, all you've done and are going to do. For all of the others, welcome! I want you to be aware of one of the greatest gifts and resources any organization can have—those who engage in the process of leadership in the middle.

Meet the Author



AUTHOR

Jim Sabella

Jim Sabella is serving a middle leader in the Assemblies of God World Missions. While researching for his Doctor of Ministry degree, Jim noticed that most of the leadership literature focused on those leaders who serve at the top of the organization, at the expense of those who lead in the middle. That awareness signaled a window of opportunity not only for research but also to provide needed resources tailored for those who lead in the middle. This blog results from that awareness.

Jim and his wife Sherry have served as missionaries since 1994. They lived almost 20 years in Prague, Czech Republic. Jim is now serving as an Area Director for the Assemblies of God World Missions Southeast Europe area. He and Sherry are also the founding directors of Europe's Heart, a ministry to those who live on the margins of society in the eastern parts of Europe. Before their missionary appointment, Jim served as a youth pastor and senior pastor in the states of New York and Pennsylvania.

Jim and Sherry have two sons and a daughter-in-law. They both travel extensively throughout the southeast parts of Europe and the Balkans. Jim's favorite movies are The Lord of the Rings Trilogy. As a hobby Jim makes bamboo fly rods, ties trout flies, goes fly-fishing, makes pizza and artisan bread and pasta.

Education

Valley Forge University
Phoenixville, Pennsylvania
 B.S. Biblical Studies, 1982

Continental Theological Seminary
Brussels, Belgium
 M.A. Theology 2012

University of Wales
 MTh Theology 2012

Portland Seminary of George Fox University
Portland, Oregon
 DMin Candidate Leadership and Global Perspectives 2018



BLOG

Engaging Leadership in the Middle



When Talking to Yourself is Not
Such a Bad Idea

JUNE 24, 2019

Sometimes you can get the best advice by talking to
yourself.



Middle Leadership: A Lesson from
Homer Smith

JUNE 17, 2019

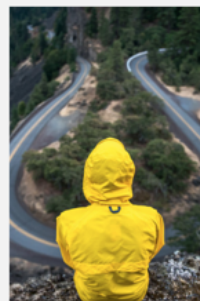
Middle leadership that transforms.



3 Ways that Making Pizza is A Lot
like Middle Leadership

JUNE 10, 2019

Leadership is not just about work.



To Decide or Not to Decide? That is
the Question.

JUNE 3, 2019

Deciding not to get tired of deciding.



Observing Organizational Culture:
The Advantage Goes to the Middle
Leader

MAY 27, 2019

Culture is "almost" everything.



3 Miscalculations That Can Cost
You Your Leadership: #2 and #

MAY 20, 2019

It really is the small things that matter—Part 2 & 3.



3 Miscalculations That Can Cost
You Your Leadership: # 1

MAY 13, 2019

It really is the small things that matter—Part 1.



The Shadow of Power and the Place
of Influence

MAY 6, 2019

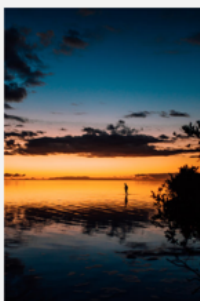
"It's dangerous to live in the shadow of power, and even
more dangerous to sit at his table."



Followership is Not a Pejorative: 3
Things to Consider

APRIL 29, 2019

When it comes to middle leadership, leading and
following go hand in hand.



I'd Rather Be Fishing: 3 Ideas for
Transformational Isolation

APRIL 22, 2019

Here's 3 Ideas that help you find transformational
isolation.



When the Phone Stops Ringing!

APRIL 15, 2019

What will you do when the phone stops ringing?



Decision Time: Don't Panic!

APRIL 8, 2019

No need to panic when you have to make a difficult
decision.

How to Tell If You're a Middle Leader: Hallmark #1

MARCH 11, 2019



This post is the first in a series of three posts on how to tell if you're a middle leader.

When I talk about middle leadership, most people ask, "Don't you mean middle management?" My answer is an immediate "No." It's not management; it's leadership.

Many people who are by practice middle leaders, refer to themselves as managers, middle managers or mid-level managers. Quite frankly, others refer to them as managers too. That's because there is a sense that those who lead can only be found at the top of the organization, those who manage can only be found in the middle of the organization, and those who follow can only be found at the lower levels of the organizational structure.

You may have heard that leadership is only for those who are gifted, or just for those who are charismatic or for those who have specific skills or positions. There is some truth to that, but it's not the whole truth! **The fact is, leadership is a process, and anyone who engages in that process is leading, regardless of skill, position or personality.**

Process leadership is based on two or more people coming together with a common goal and deciding to move together toward that goal. That's it! We're not talking servant leadership, authentic leadership, transformational leadership, or transitional leadership. These are all ways "of" leading. I'm talking about boiled down, purified leadership. In its most basic form, leadership is a process, and anyone who engages in the process is leading.

Noel Tichy was one of the first to explore this dynamic. Tichy not only recognized that the process of leadership takes place on every level of the organization, but he suggests that healthy organizations will take the steps to train leaders on every level of the organization. Take a look at [The Leadership Engine](#) by Noel Tichy with Eli Cohen.

And so here it is. How to know if you're a middle leader Hallmark #1

Hallmark #1: You know you're a middle leader when you have people who look to you for leadership and you are located in the middle of the organization's structure.



leadership!

You might say, "well that's obvious!" It's not always so obvious, especially when you see yourself as only a manager or others see you as the same. Middle leaders are team leaders, department heads, youth leaders, and choir leaders, to name a few. **Just because you are in the middle of an organization doesn't mean you're not a leader.** It seems simple enough, but sometimes we don't take time to reflect on the structure of the organization in which we work or serve. Though few people pour over organizational charts—I don't suggest that anyone pour over organizational charts—a simple diagram can help you see where you fit in.

So, here's a short exercise for today: Take a minute to **draw your organizations structure** as you see it. Do it on a piece of paper, or better yet in your journal so that you can refer back to it later. **Where are you located in the chart?** Circle that spot with a red marker. Then take a look. Is there someone directly above you in the organization? Are there people below you on the organizational chart? **If your circle is located in the middle of the organizational structure, then you have the first hallmark of a middle leader.** Welcome to middle



COMMENTS (0)

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Preview

POST COMMENT...

PREVIOUS

How to Tell If You're A Middle Leader: Hallmark # 2

NEXT

Leadership Beats Pizza 2 to 1!



How to Tell If You're a Middle Leader: Hallmark #1

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Many people who are by practice middle leaders, refer to themselves as managers, middle managers or mid-level managers. Quite frankly, others refer to them as managers too. That's because there is a sense that those who lead can only be found at the top of the organization, those who manage can only be found in the middle of the organization, and those who follow can only be found at the lower levels of the organizational structure.

You may have heard that leadership is only for those who are gifted, or just for those who are charismatic or for those who have specific skills or positions. There is some truth to that, but it's not the whole truth! **The fact is, leadership is a process, and anyone who engages in that process is leading, regardless of skill, position or personality.**

Process leadership is based on two or more people coming together with a common goal and deciding to move together toward that goal. That's it! We're not talking servant leadership, authentic leadership, transformational leadership, or transitional leadership. These are all ways "of" leading. I'm talking about boiled down, purified leadership. In its most basic form, leadership is a process, and anyone who engages in the process is leading.

Noel Tichy was one of the first to explore this dynamic. Tichy not only recognized that the process of leadership takes place on every level of the organization, but he suggests that healthy organizations will take the steps to train leaders on every level of the organization. Take a look at [The Leadership Engine](#) by Noel Tichy with Eli Cohen.

And so here it is. How to tell if you're a middle leader Hallmark #1

Hallmark #1: You know you're a middle leader when you have people who look to you for leadership and you are located in the middle of the organization's structure.

You might say, "well that's obvious!" It's not always so obvious, especially when you see yourself as only a manager or others see you as the same. Middle leaders are team leaders, department heads, youth leaders, and choir leaders, to name a few. **Just because you are in the middle of an organization doesn't mean you're not a leader.** It seems simple enough, but sometimes we don't take time to reflect on the structure of the organization in which we work or serve. Though few people pour over organizational charts—I don't suggest that anyone pour over organizational charts—a simple diagram can help you see where you fit in.

So, here's a short exercise for today. Take a minute to **draw your organizations structure** as you see it. Do it on a piece of paper, or better yet in your journal so that you can refer back to it later. **Where are you located in the chart?** Circle that spot with a red marker. Then take a look. Is there someone directly above you in the organization? Are there people below you on the organizational chart? **If your circle is located in the**

middle of the organizational structure, then you have the first hallmark of a middle leader. Welcome to middle leadership!

How to Tell If You're A Middle Leader: Hallmark # 2

MARCH 18, 2019



This blog post is the second in a three-part series on how to tell if you're a middle leader.

For those who didn't read part one, let me bring you up to speed on how you can tell if you're a middle leader.

Hallmark #1: You know you're a middle leader when you have people who look to you for leadership and you are located in the middle of the organization's structure. If you've read part one of this series, you may have taken the time to draw a chart of your organization's structure and put a red circle around where you are located. Okay, so now on to Hallmark # 2.

Hallmark #2: You know you're a middle leader when your role calls for you to be both follower and leader. In other words, a middle leader is one who is both led and leader. Middle leaders are led by those above them in the organizational structure, and they lead those below them in the organizational structure—back to that big red circle in the middle of the chart!

Of course, at this point, it begins to get a little more complicated than merely looking at a position on an organizational chart. **Middle Leadership is a complex undertaking, and the follower/leader relationships add to the complexity.** In this position, there are a lot of people to please. Find your circle on the chart. Then look up the line, down the line and horizontally across the structure. There are a lot of people to please; some you follow, some are colleagues and some you lead. In all cases, the people aspect of the middle leadership is evident—**relationships are important.**

Speaking of relationships, followership can be a bit of a touchy subject. **The term follower can produce negative feelings.** While the term leader invokes images of strength, power and success, the term follower can conjure up images of weakness, powerlessness and failure. Consequently, some feel that the term follower can be demeaning and even demoralizing. Ian Chaleff disagrees. In his book *The Courageous Follower*, Chaleff writes about the importance of being a follower and how a follower is in position to have significant influence over the whole of the organization. He states:



"Just as a leader is accountable for the actions and performance of followers, so followers are accountable to their leaders. We must support leaders and, when necessary, help them to correct their actions, just as they must support us and help us to correct our actions."

As a middle leader you are both follower and leader, or if you prefer, both leader and follower. In any case, both characteristics of middle leadership are important. It's easy to like the leadership part. I hope you don't struggle with the followership side of middle leadership. When done well, followership can be one of the most rewarding and influential parts of the follower/leader equation. **So just as one can be proud to be a leader, one can be proud to be a follower. Followership is not only one of the hallmarks of a middle leader, the follower has very significant and influential role in the organization.**



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How to Tell If You're A Middle Leader: Hallmark #3

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How to Tell If You're A Middle Leader: Hallmark #1



How to Tell If You're a Middle Leader: Hallmark #2

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How to Tell If You're a Middle Leader: Hallmark #3

MARCH 11, 2019

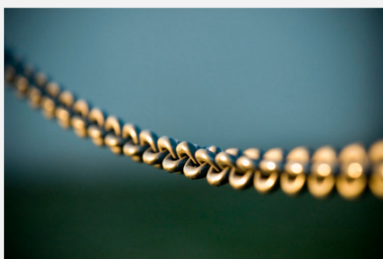


This is the final post in a series of three posts on how to tell if you're a middle leader.

For those who have not read parts one and two, here are the main points. Hallmark #1: You can tell you're a middle leader when you have people who look to you for leadership and you are located in the middle of the organization's structure. Hallmark #2: You can tell you're a middle leader when you find that you have to be both follower and leader. And now to the final hallmark of a middle leader.

Hallmark #3: You can know you're a middle leader if you have a responsibility both upward and downward in the organization.

While being a leader and follower has to do with organizational position and structure, having a responsibility upward and downward has to do with the role of the follower/leader. **It's a balancing act!** On one side of the responsibility-scale is the duty to be an organizational agent with an eye toward the growth and forward movement of the organization. On the other side of the responsibility-scale is the commitment to help the people you lead to grow and develop.



This is where it gets more complicated. The middle leader is the link between the expectations of the organization and the day to day carrying out of those expectations. More specifically, **you are the link between the hopes, dreams, and mission of an organization and the day to day carrying out of those hopes, dreams, and mission.** So, you can either get in the way or get on the way. The middle leader always gets on the way.

Being in the middle is not an easy place to be. There is an expression that describes the discomfort: "It's like being between a rock and a hard place." Or as the inimitable Margaret Thatcher is quoted as saying: "Standing in the middle of the road is very dangerous; you get knocked down by the traffic from both sides." Her message is, "make a choice." I'm saying, as a middle leader you don't have a choice; you're positioned right in the middle of the organization, so be careful. Expectations are high and so are the stakes.

If you're a middle leader, there are a lot of people to please, and that's never an easy thing. Think of it! You are positioned in the center of the organization, which means that you are surrounded not only by people but by the organization's mission and culture. You are both follower and leader—more people to please. You have a responsibility both upward and downward in the organization—more people again. At this point I think you might be getting the point. Leading in the middle is more about being able to navigate relationships than it is managing resources,

following policy and procedure, or even—believe it or not—leading!

Here's the key: anyone whose position is located in the middle of an organization, who is both follower and leader and has a responsibility both upward and downward in the organization, can be considered a middle leader. **But the true middle leader is one who knows how to navigate relationships.** Learn how to navigate relationships better and you become a better middle leader. There it is, that people thing again!

To wrap up this final post in the series, here's how you can tell if you're a middle leader.

- Hallmark #1: You know you're a middle leader when you are positioned in the middle of an organizational structure.
- Hallmark #2: You know you're a middle leader when you must be both leader and follower.
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If this is you, welcome to middle leadership!

In case you still think that middle leaders can't make a difference, in my next post I'm going to tell the story of Dr. Francis Oldham Kelsey, the unexpected middle leader. Talk to you then.



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Dr. Frances Oldham Kelsey: The Unexpected Middle Leader

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How to Tell If You're A Middle Leader: Hallmark # 2



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MIDDLE LEADERS IN MISSIONS

Engaging Middle Leaders in Missions



The Missions Leader and Emotional Agility

AUGUST 5, 2019

By illuminating what is and what isn't important to us, our emotions can be points of helpful data in our decision-making process.



Decision Making—Part 3: A Conversation "With" the Area Director

JULY 1, 2019

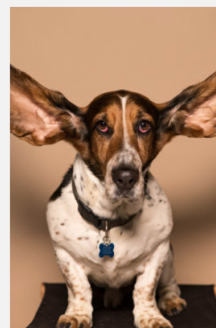
Having a conversation with the situation leads to sound and thoughtful decisions.



Decision Making—Part 2: A Conversation "At" the Area Director

JUNE 3, 2019

When it comes to making a decision, the voices in our heads can speak at us instead of with us.



A Decision Making—Part 1: The Helpful Voices in My Head.

MAY 6, 2019

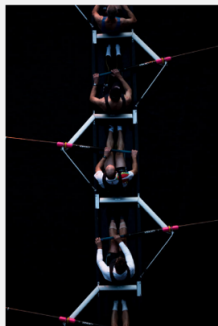
Having a conversation with a situation can help you make difficult decisions.



The Area Director: A Balancing Act

APRIL 1, 2019

Stan is typical middle leader in a missions sending organization. This is his story.



Welcome Middle Leaders in Missions

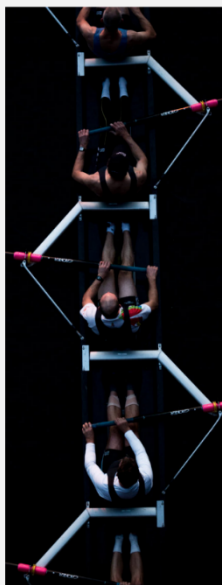
MARCH 4, 2019

If you're one who leads in the middle of a missions sending organization, welcome!



Welcome Middle Leaders in Missions

MARCH 4, 2019



Welcome middle leaders in missions. This blog is the non-public side of the blog Leadership in the Middle. It is written by and for practitioners who engage in middle leadership in missions sending organizations.

The purpose of this blog is to first, address some of the unique leadership challenges faced by middle leaders in missions sending organizations. The second purpose is to help make application of some of the most recent leadership trends and theories. And finally, the purpose of the blog is to encourage engagement with other middle leaders.

Middle leaders can be found in the worlds of education, business, non-profits, and the church. How do you know if you're a middle leader? My research on leadership helped me identify three hallmarks of a middle leader. Allow me to use myself as an example. I am serving as an Area Director in the Assemblies of God World Missions. I am a middle leader because: (1) The position in which I serve is located in the middle of the organization. (2) Within that setting I am expected to be both leader and follower. (3) Because I am both leader and follower, I have a responsibility both upward and downward in the organization.

I've been studying leadership since 1978. I remember the first leadership book that I read. It is titled: Strategy for Leadership, by Edward Dayton and Ted Engstrom. The book, published in 1979, was written to inspire leaders serving in declining churches. Today there is a remarkable amount of leadership literature available. **There are so many leadership theories, models and styles that it's hard to keep up with the trends, let alone have time to integrate them into your daily practice.**

Speaking of trends, have you noticed that the vast majority of the leadership literature focuses on those who lead in the upper levels of an organization. **When it comes to those who lead in the middle, there is a decided gap in the leadership literature.**

As a middle leader, when I read the newest leadership books, blogs, and leadership development best-sellers, I feel like the authors are speaking to those positioned above me in the organization and not to me here in the middle. Take, for example, the notion of vision. No matter how important vision is, a middle leader does not set the vision for the organization—give it a try some time and see how that goes! And yet volumes have been written on vision alone. Who speaks to those who lead in the middle? I hope this blog will be that voice!

If you're one, who leads in the middle of a missions sending organization, I want to welcome you! You are one of the greatest gifts and resources any organization can have—those, like you, who engage in leadership in the middle.



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The Area Director: A Balancing Act



The Area Director: A Balancing Act

APRIL 1, 2019



Stan is a middle leader. He serves as a Europe Region Area Director in a missions-sending organization. His middle position in the organization's structure requires that he engages both as a follower and a leader.

As a follower, he engages with those who lead the organization, and as a leader with those he leads. In this setting, he not only finds himself in the middle of the organization's structure, but he finds himself in between two engagement points of responsibility. Stan has a responsibility upward to those who lead the organization and downward to those he leads. This leader/follower aspect brings to the position an element of complexity that other leadership positions may not have.

As a follower, his loyalties are to the organization and, therefore, the organization's well-defined and clearly-delineated structure, policies, practices, and procedures present a guide for him.

Consequently, **his role as a follower is more straightforward and therefore, less**

complicated in practice; however, Stan's leadership role is not so well-defined. Stan feels that the lack of definition creates ambiguity in the day to day carrying out of his leadership, making his task as a leader more complex.



For example, as an Area Director, **Stan has many hats to wear** and, if truth be told, he must frequently wear more than one at a time. Stan sometimes pictures himself as the hat vendor who balances a stack of hats on his head. Stacked on top of his head are a boss hat, a pastor hat, a counselor hat, a diplomat hat, a missionary hat, and three or four others.

Adding to his hat balancing act are his organizational leadership duties. These duties include organizing, motivating, inspiring, and decision making, to name a few. With these duties, **Stan feels as if he is keeping a dozen white plates spinning on top of as many flexing and wobbling sticks.** It is as if he is continually running from spinning plate to spinning plate trying to keep the plates from falling, all the while working to balance the hats on his head. One glitch in the timing or balance and the whole thing comes crashing down!

Stan is keenly aware that his success or failure impacts the organization, the missionaries he leads, and the mission. He has a sincere desire to lead with excellence and is, in fact, a gifted Area Director. However, Stan feels inadequate and unprepared for the balancing act he is required to perform. Consequently, he finds himself frequently questioning his ability to lead and sometimes questions his call. He is becoming more and more frustrated and discouraged.

Stan knows that the hats and the spinning plates will always be part of the equation. They are the constants. As Stan reflects on his dilemma, he concludes that balancing the hats are not his most significant challenge. His greatest challenge is the expenditure of energy, time and focus that comes from running from plate to plate, attempting to keep the plates spinning. If he could alleviate the causes that produce the need to run perpetually from plate to plate he could better balance the rest.

Friction slows the spinning plates. Thus Stan must run from plate to plate. A reduction in friction may reduce the expenditure of energy, time and focus. Stan considers the question: **What causes the friction?** He concludes: First, that which causes the friction are the complex problems most often having to do with people. Second, that which keeps him running from plate to plate is his responsibility to solve these complex

problems. Third, that which keeps him at a plate is the process of decision making. **The more complex the problem, the more time, energy and focus Stan must give to an individual plate—at the expense of keeping the other plates spinning.**

A process or tool to help Stan make complex decisions, can allow Stan to spend less of his energy, time and focus on keeping the plates spinning, leaving more of his valuable resources for other challenges. Sound decisions are good for the organization, the middle leader and the people they lead.

The next three posts will focus on a decision-making method that can be used by middle leaders to help them process complex decisions.



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Decision Making—Part 1: The Helpful Voices in My Head.

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Welcome Middle Leaders in Missions



LEADERSHIP IN THE MIDDLE BLOG POSTING LIST: MARCH - JUNE 2019

	Date	Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 4	Leadership Beats Pizza 2 to 1
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 11	How to Tell You're a Middle Leader: Hallmark #1
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 18	How to Tell You're a Middle Leader: Hallmark #2
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 25	How to Tell You're a Middle Leader: Hallmark #3
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 1	Dr. Frances Oldham Kelsey: The Unexpected Middle Leader
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 8	Decision Time: Don't Panic!
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 15	When the Phone Stop Ringing!
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 22	I'd Rather Be Fishing: 3 Ways to Find Transformational Isolation
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 29	Followership is not a Pejorative: 3 Things to Consider
<input type="checkbox"/>	May 6	The Shadow of Power and the Place of Influence
<input type="checkbox"/>	May 13	3 Miscalculations That Can Cost You You're Leadership: #1
<input type="checkbox"/>	May 20	3 Miscalculations That Can Cost You You're Leadership: #2 & 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	May 27	4 Things to Remember About Culture and Organizations
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 3	To Decide or Not to Decide? That is the Question
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 10	3 Ways Making Pizza is A Lot Like Middle Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 17	Middle Leadership: A Lesson from Homer Smith
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 24	When Talking to Yourself is Not Such a Bad Thing
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MIDDLE LEADERSHIP IN MISSIONS BLOG POSTING LIST: MARCH-AUGUST 2019

	Date	Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	March 4	Welcome Middle Leaders in Missions
<input type="checkbox"/>	April 1	The Area Director: A Balancing Act
<input type="checkbox"/>	May 6	Decision Making--Part 1: The Helpful Voices in My Head
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 3	Decision Making--Part 2: A Conversation "At" the Area Director
<input type="checkbox"/>	July 1	Decision Making--Part 2: A Conversation "With" the Area Director
<input type="checkbox"/>	August 5	The Missions Leader and Emotional Agility
<input type="checkbox"/>		

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Facebook page for 'Leadership in the Middle'. The browser's address bar shows a search for 'Leadership in the Middle'. The Facebook page header includes the name 'Leadership in the Middle', a search icon, and navigation links for 'Home', 'Create', and notifications. The profile picture is a portrait of a man with a beard. The cover photo is a cityscape at sunset with the text 'Leadership: It's not just for those at the top!'. Below the cover photo are buttons for 'Liked', 'Following', 'Share', 'Learn More', and 'Send Message'. The left sidebar contains navigation links: Home, Reviews, About, Photos, Posts, Community, Info and Ads, and a 'Create a Page' button. The main content area features a 'Create Post' section, 'Recommendations and Reviews' (including a review about advice and research by Jim), and a 'Photos' section with two images of the man. The right sidebar includes 'Education', 'Community' (with 40 likes and 41 followers), 'About' (with a website link), 'Related Pages' (listing 4EverSparkles, Cruise Planners, and Oasis Transformations), and language options. The footer contains privacy and copyright information.

Leadership in the Middle
@jimsabella

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Leadership: It's not just for those at the top!

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Write a post...
Photo/Video Tag Friends Check in ...

Recommendations and Reviews
Recommended by you
Great advice and research by Jim.
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Leadership: It's not just for those at the top!

Jim Sabella
@leadershipITM
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