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Innovation and Leadership Development for the Millennial Generation

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University Honors Program

Southern Illinois University – Carbondale

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Foreward



As an Honors student and double degree candidate for Business Management and Psychology, Savannah McCord has utilized her time within her university experience to cultivate herself as a person, scholar, and leader. Within her four years at Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, Savannah has served the students as a Feature Twirler for the Marching Salukis, Resident Assistant, Founder for Gamma Chi chapter of Delta Phi Epsilon, Founding Chairwoman for the *It's On Us* Student Taskforce, yoga instructor, Vice President of the W.E.L.L. RSO (Women Excelling in Leadership and Learning), founding member for the Women's Resource Center (WRC), and President and Vice President of Psi Chi Honors Society. Through her dedication to scholarship and service to the university, Savannah was the recipient of the 2015 Lincoln Student Laureate Award. In reflecting on how she was able to maximize her opportunities while in college, Savannah aspires to empower other Millennial students to embark consciously on their journey to servant leadership.

Abstract

Millennial college students' leadership development is imperative for the future success of US society. If utilized consciously, the university can serve as a container of self-cultivation for the aspiring Millennial leader. Keys to leadership development are combining theory, practice, and mentoring. By utilizing the work of Joseph Campbell combined with other cutting-edge leadership development theories, this autoethnographic research shows the synthesis of theory and practice for a successful Millennial leader. This research is offered as a service to future Millennial college students and potential leaders.

Keywords: leadership development, Millennials, autoethnography, university students, self-cultivation

Introduction

Leadership Development for the Millennial Generation:

Maximizing Personal Development and Leadership Development as an Undergraduate

Each generation is our hope for a more vital society. The Millennial Generation (or those born between 1982 and 2002) poses certain challenges to the development of the kinds of service-minded and civically engaged leaders that are needed to improve our culture over the next century. One of the major challenges in our high-tech and fast-paced culture is that the demands of the job market and vocational training can overshadow character development and interpersonal maturity in the journey through higher education. It is easy for Millennials to be overly focused on external demands, stimuli, and rewards while in college. However, in the words of renowned scholar Joseph Campbell, when students are distracted in this way, they miss the opportunities to learn about themselves and the “inner life,” (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 1). It is essential for employers, educators, and Millennials alike to understand the critical nature of combining character development and leadership development within a student’s university experience. This is particularly true for the 61% of Millennials who currently attend or have attended a university (The Council of Economic Advisers, 2014). As a soon-to-be Millennial college graduate, I reflect in this Honors Thesis upon the opportunities that I engaged in to grow personally, and to develop as a leader throughout my university experience.

By leaning into the challenge of completing double degrees in Business and Psychology while engaging in an interdisciplinary education from the University Honors Program (UHP) at Southern Illinois University (SIU), I feel as though I have synthesized an innovative and expansive education that has given me a rare blend of perspectives and opportunities for cultivating my potential while in college. The motto of the UHP is *Learn. Lead. Serve*. It is this

holistic approach to education that has made all the difference. I am incredibly grateful for this education that brings multiple disciplines together and has been transformative through the leadership education and theory that my UHP Mentor and professor, Dr. Melinda Yeomans, has named and taught me throughout out this college journey. Yeomans' model "Transformative Leadership from the Inside Out" (TLIO) combines current leadership development texts such as *The Leadership Challenge* by Kouzes and Posner (2012) with the work of Joseph Campbell.

These multiple perspectives and educational opportunities provided by SIU have allowed me to seriously explore a wide range of leadership studies as a Millennial committed to cultivating my journey of personal and professional development. By putting this book knowledge and classroom learning into action, I both enjoyed—and at times endured—a personal and servant leadership journey that profoundly transformed my consciousness, one that Campbell describes as the "hero's journey" in his famous texts *Hero With a Thousand Faces* and *The Power of Myth*. Ultimately, this journey is one that all people can take; however, I was fortunate enough to take it consciously and intentionally as I was introduced to it in Yeomans' Honors Seminar, *Leadership through the Lens of the Hero/Heroine's Journey*, and put it into practice through the Women's Resource Center (WRC), UHP, and other campus engagements. What I learned throughout my college journey is what Campbell stated in the same semester that I was introduced to his ideas: "Our life evokes our character. You find out more about yourself as you go on. That's why it's good to be able to put yourself in situations that will evoke our higher nature rather than your lower," (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 159). The Honors Program and my experiences throughout SIU have helped evoke my "higher self" and greatest potential.

Method

In this self-reflexive autoethnographic thesis, I share my journey of learning to embody and put into practice the *Transformational Leadership from the Inside Out* (TLIO) theory on the SIU campus. This approach combines leadership theory, psychological development, and other interdisciplinary perspectives with personal narratives reflecting upon my journey in campus leadership, activism, and scholarship. I am intentionally sharing this journey in this accessible, first-person style as a way to support the upcoming generation of students who may wish to embark on a similar leadership journey. Autoethnographic approaches to research serve as “autobiographical writing and qualitative research that explores an individual’s unique life experiences in relationship to social and cultural institutions,” states Custer in his article “Autoethnography as a Transformative Research Method” (2014). Beginning in Yeomans’ UHP course, I began to write reflections that combined what I was learning theoretically with my personal experience and leadership positions. Throughout other UHP courses, Psychology, and Business courses, I made it a practice to take detailed notes of my internal and external experiences with a mindful understanding that it might serve as the research for this UHP thesis.

This self-reflexive journey has helped me to realize the necessity of college students coming to understand themselves on a deeper level, and evolving both as people and leaders from the inside out. I took careful note of certain servant leaders, philosophers, sages, and scholars mentioned throughout my UHP courses and other experiences at SIU who have closely emulated similar models of servant leadership, and provided incredibly helpful examples for understanding my own process. It is my hope that this narrative from a successful Millennial undergraduate captures the attention of other Millennials in order to provide them with the inspiration, wisdom, mindset, tools, skills, and insights that I was so very fortunate to receive.

These gifts have helped me courageously develop myself and maximize the opportunities encountered in my college experience.

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During my sophomore year of college, I enrolled in Yeomans' UHP course that *forever* changed my perspective on life. In this course, *Leadership through the Lens of the Hero/Heroine's Journey*, we met twice a week in the Honors Conference Room where the class was presented in a discussion-based setting that allowed us to learn from both the material and each other. We sat in a circle and honored the spaciousness between us where we deeply discussed and explored the timeless wisdom and great traditions of our world. Here, I found the space that allowed me to stretch, grow, dream, and discover the many facets of my being – what Campbell calls the cultivation of a “sacred space,” or the “place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be,” (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 115). For our first assignment, we were tasked to read the first chapter of *The Power of Myth*, recording the dialogue between Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers. The words on the first page resonated with a place inside of me, and permanently altered the way in which I viewed the value of my university experience. On that first page, Campbell powerfully states,

It used to be that the university campus was a kind of hermetically sealed-off area where the news of the day did not impinge upon your attention to the inner life and the magnificent human heritage we have in our great tradition... who speak of the eternal values that have to do with the centering of our lives. When you get to be older, and the concerns of the day have all been attended to, and you turn to the inner life – well, if you don't know where it is or what it is, you'll be sorry (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 1).

Through Campbell's perspective above, I came to realize that the value of the university goes well beyond gaining a vocational education and professional preparation. This quote awakened me to maximize my time within the university. As I was being exposed to timeless wisdom throughout my education, I felt a powerful intuition telling me to listen deeply and to pay attention to opportunities as they came to me. It dawned on me that the paths of business, psychology, and my interdisciplinary UHP education could work together. In fact, through linking them together, I became transformed in unbelievable ways.

The university has the potential to serve students not only through knowledge of a professional discipline, but also through profound personal transformation based in reflection on "the magnificent human heritage" and the process of applying this wisdom to ourselves (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 2). This quote by Campbell has been the most poignant piece of wisdom throughout my development, and powerfully articulates the value that the university setting can hold for its students if they are willing to use this time to understand themselves. Campbell's thoughts on the university campus serve as a foundational perspective that synthesizes my experience in college and my ongoing experience of Yeomans' TLIO.

The university once functioned as a sacred space for students throughout their journey in a similar capacity that the UHP and Women's Resource Center (WRC) has served as a sacred space for me throughout mine. When Campbell mentions the university as a "hermetically sealed-off area where the news on the day did not impinge upon your attention to the inner life," he is referring to the days when students entered into the unknown world of college that supported them to leave behind what they had previously known, and evolve through a coursework in human excellence to help them discover and cultivate their "inner life." Today, however, students are constantly distracted by electronics, mass media, and external rewards and

approval that truly impose upon students' opportunities for personal growth, character development, and cultivation of their "inner life."

"What could Campbell possibly mean when he refers to the inner life?" was the question that lingered in my mind. As I studied Campbell throughout the semester, it became clear that the "inner life" meant learning to trust ourselves, follow our intuition, find what has meaning for us, and, ultimately, "follow your bliss" (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 113). Campbell's reference to the inner life involves discovering what ignites our passionate engagement with life. Some people call it a vocation or a calling. Campbell refers to developing the inner life as "following your bliss," (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 113). Bliss is not sense indulgence; rather, it is Yeomans' interpretation of bliss as the "expanded feeling of connection to life and one's life purpose," (2013). Essentially, both Campbell and Yeomans are saying that the root of our life should be centered on the activities, ideas, and beliefs that truly resonate with us, and to give ourselves permission to follow them. To discover this "inner life" and sense of purpose requires reflection on the journeys that other great people have taken. The realization of the "inner life" is imperative to self-development, self-discovery, and servant leadership – or the devotion to enriching the world to create a better life for all, whether through creating a business, committing acts of service, or providing some kind of environment committed to cultivating a better life for people. Servant leadership and the TLIO model are rooted in habits of excellence that are inspired by this expanded sense of purpose, including:

- *Mindfulness*. This means being present to the *moment*, and the life that is happening now, and dropping the "story" of negative self-talk, past experiences and doubt that we might tell ourselves.

- *Mind, Body, & Heart Connection.* Through engaging in activities such as mindfulness, presence-based exercises, and yoga, we come to realize the connection between our mind, body, and heart and that they work together to help us listen to our “inner life” (*see research on limbic-heart-mind connection*).
- *Intrapersonal Reflection.* In taking the time to understand ourselves, we are able to constantly reflect and refine parts of ourselves to cultivate a better life.
- *Interpersonal Interaction.* Through coming to understand ourselves, we also come to understand how to interact with others in a meaningful and empowering manner. Here, we create an *I-Thou* relationship by being present to ourselves and then present to others.

These habits of excellence are the basis of Yeomans’ *Cycle of Transformative Learning*, as depicted in Figure 1. “Learning is a process of acquiring ideas, applying these ideas, embodying the ideas, reflecting on our experiences, and refining ourselves and our practice,” says Yeomans (2016). Through this transformative learning, we are able to transform ourselves personally and as leaders in our journey.

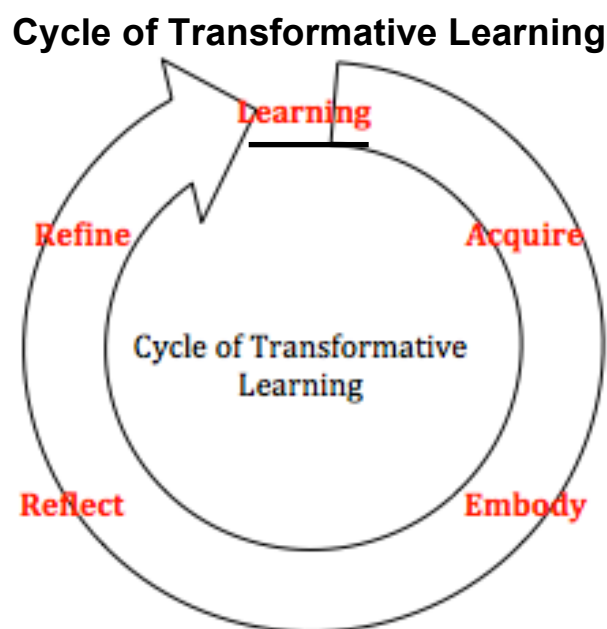


Figure 1 “Cycle of Transformative Learning” shows how learning is divided up into stages of acquisition, embodiment, reflection, refinement, and the repetition of the learning cycle to help guide internal transformation. Image source: Dr. Melinda L. Yeomans (2013).

Through studying the journeys that other great people have taken, we can use their journeys as maps to help guide us to discovering our inner life as part of our personal potential. These magnificent humans in our great tradition of whom Campbell speaks are the thinkers, scholars, sages, and servant-leaders who have helped evolve the world through their influence. The lives of the great sages that Joseph Campbell calls on are many, including those such as Buddha, Goethe, Confucius, Jesus, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Hildegard Von Bingham, and many others who have evolved the world. The great servant-leaders include those like Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Nelson Mandela, Abraham Lincoln, Queen Elizabeth I, and others who have revolutionized the world through learning the teachings of those great thinkers, scholars, and sages. Campbell states that, “When the story [of a great person’s journey] is in your mind, then you see its relevance to something happening in your own life,” (p. 2). Many of the great leaders of our world drew meaningful connections between these lessons from other leaders to their own lives and situations. For example, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., studied Gandhi and Thoreau. These teachings allow us to value and learn from different perspectives. In my journey, I found that the foundation of wisdom is putting these teachings into action, and acting out these teachings are the basis of becoming a servant leader.

Servant leaders do not evolve into leaders overnight; they are cultivated through effort, discipline, education, patience, energy, belief, and the willingness to take the journey of service leadership to which they are called. Through this process of cultivation, they discover the eternal values of which Campbell speaks. These are the humane personal values put into action by the individual – the values that allow them to be in alignment with their “inner life” while staying present to others. Learning to stay present to the “inner life” while in attunement to the world helps an individual align their calling and actions in integrity with one another in order to fulfill

their highest potential through service to others. Through my journey, I discovered that my eternal values are love, justice, family, patience, service, growth, and learning. I learned the deeper value of these while putting them into action as a servant-leader on the SIU campus. As I put these values into practice, I felt a deep sense of fulfillment and peace. The more that I aligned my life to these values, the more strongly centered and awake I became to pursue my purpose and understand the greater meaning of *why* I was in college.

I embarked on this self-reflective journey to find my eternal values due to the last line of Campbell's quote. He states, "...When you get to be older, and the concerns of the day have all been attended to, and you turn to the inner life – well, if you don't know where it is or what it is, you'll be sorry," (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 2). This part echoed loudly within me because as I have grown older, I have heard many adults express their regrets in life. I want to live with meaning, purpose, and through reaching my potential, and the regrets that I heard from some older people contained the theme that they never took the risk to change something in their life, or lived the life that they felt called to live. "Learn from my mistakes," they would say. "Don't live someone else's life, and don't live under someone else's expectations."

Throughout my college experience, I discovered that when we are living under the expectations of an outside force or narrative – be it a parent, friend, sibling, relative, mentor, or whoever has great influence over us – we may not be following the path that feels true to us. If we travel our lives without understanding our "inner life," then we may get to the later stages of life – like the elderly adults I encountered in my growth – feeling unfulfilled and depressed because we never followed our "bliss." By discovering and aligning my life to my calling, I have found that my success and happiness does not come from materialistic rewards, rather, it stems from the internal satisfaction of learning to be present and self-reflective that while serving

others through sharing knowledge, empowering others within my community, and helping young women realize their strength and potential during the summer camp at which I volunteer my time as a mentor. The inner life involves developing the intuition of listening to where to go and what to do, as well as the strength to be present to our thoughts and emotions as a witness who is not carried away in reactivity. To move proactively versus reactively is one of the lessons that I learned throughout my journey.

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The essence of Campbell's quote is to show us that a university education has the potential to provide the space for an enriching and authentic transformative journey. As my friend Meagan Rottmann once said, "A great college experience should be like real-life with training wheels." If they choose, this time can serve as a transformative period for Millennial college students to gather the confidence, tools, and skills that are required to enter into their new reality in while feeling prepared and ready to pursue any and all endeavors they aim to achieve in pursuit of their calling. Millennials must choose what to put their focus on. Yeomans' leadership model helped me find my focus starting first with my development, and then moving through the campus with new presence and purpose.

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Cultivating the Hero Within:

Intuition, Presence, Compassion, and Courage

While taking the course *Leadership through the Lens of the Hero/Heroine's Journey* in my sophomore year, I deeply meditated upon the attributes of a hero. I have always admired President Abraham Lincoln, and contemplating these heroic attributes reminded me of the reasons that I considered him one of my heroes as a child. Prior to his presidency, Lincoln

experienced many personal and professional successes and failures that defined his character and outlook on life. He was a deeply introspective man who dedicated his life towards the betterment and service of others. When Lincoln was elected President, he came in at a time when the country was heavily divided. Even though Lincoln faced glaring opposition from the Confederacy towards his political ideologies, he stayed true to himself and his humanitarian values. As a result, he helped fortify the unity and health of our nation. Lincoln exemplifies a hero, or “someone who dedicates their life to something bigger than oneself,” (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 152).

In discussing various leaders across time and cultures with Yeomans in her UHP course, Yeomans (2013) states that Lincoln’s heroic qualities stem from “his life’s devotion towards serving the ideals of this nation so that the nation could serve the ideals upon which it was founded and safeguard the freedom and wellbeing of all Americans.” Similarly, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. exemplified heroism when he pleaded to the nation for desegregation and advocated for equality and unity for all people, igniting the heart of the Civil Rights Movement. Another example of servant leadership is Malala Yousefzai, a Millennial woman who has taken her love for others and dedicated her life towards advocating for women’s education in Pakistan. Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Malala all represent the idea that Dr. Yeomans calls in her leadership training “Same-Side Leadership,” where they aimed to unify opposing sides of an issue in order to unify them to work towards a common goal, as depicted in Figure 2. This model depicts the process of unification of what was originally opposing people or parties towards common goal that helps unite their purpose and identity.

These great leaders modeled heroism, but were able to do so due to recognizing the importance of self-cultivation and remaining patient in the process of development that happens

when we are willing to answer the call and take the journey proactively. This is what women's leadership coach and COO of Facebook Sheryl Sandberg calls "Leaning In." I saw how Sandberg's encouragement aligned with Campbell's teachings in our WRC weekly workshops. It encouraged me to "lean in" to every endeavor to which I have been called while staying present to my self-cultivation. Within these endeavors, I saw "Same-Side Leadership" harmonize many campus situations in which I found myself. By maintaining a consciously inclusive perspective in every opportunity, I was able to listen to the needs of others amidst their plea to make changes across campus. By witnessing my peers engaging in emotionally reactive behaviors to make differences on campus, I felt a deeper desire to help them address these causes through activism and working together to attain a common goal.

These activism adventures included combatting campus violence and sexual assault through creating the *It's On Us* taskforce, creating a new sorority, and promoting unity in the residence halls by listening to issues from both sides and incorporating compromise and collaboration in our problem-solving process. The great leaders of our world learned to stay present, and took the necessary steps to courageously live a life in alignment to their calling, which ultimately translates into serving others. Yeomans (2013) states:

You must cultivate yourself so that you can be of service to the world. We're all in an ongoing process, but it starts with self-awareness and becoming attuned to your values and creating these habits of excellence (as stated earlier) that help you reflect upon and refine yourself towards your highest ideals. The greatest service that you can give yourself is the knowledge and understanding of yourself/Self. Once you discover what is true for you, you will be able to embark on the journey of truly understanding and serving others. In the helping of others, there is recognition of the reciprocal relationship that

when we are in the service of others, we are also rapidly attuned to the recognition of ourselves.

Same-Side Leadership Model

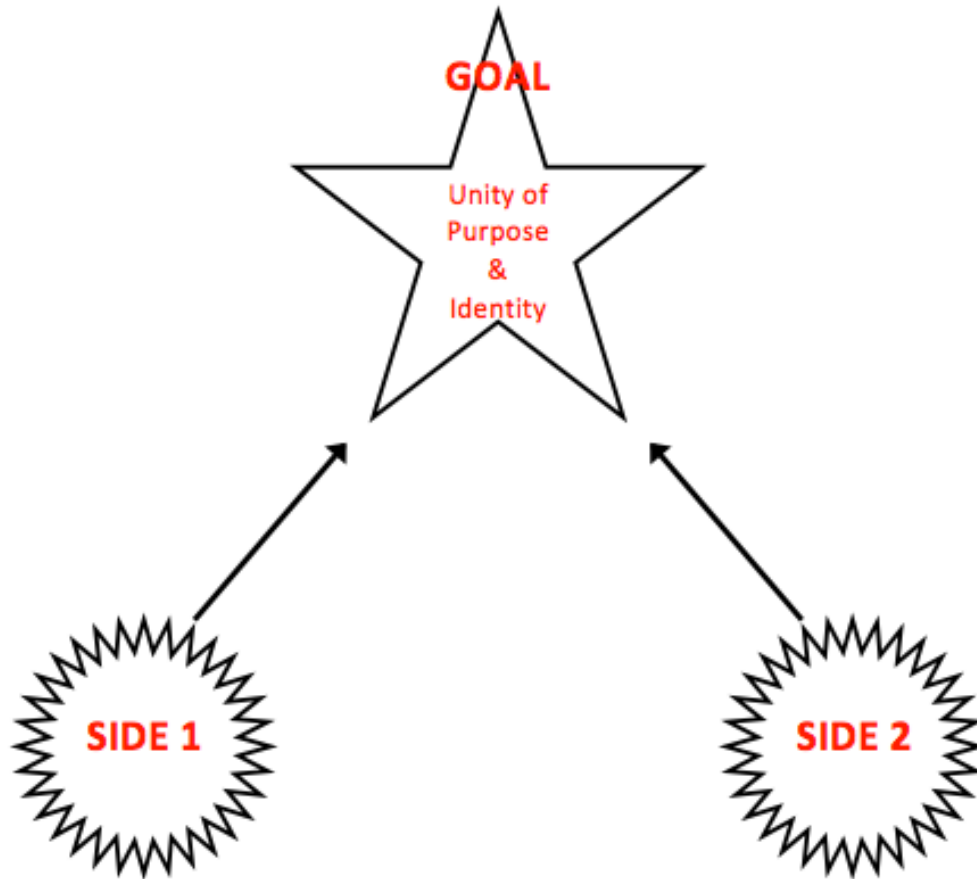


Figure 2 “Same-Side Leadership” is a leadership model that represents the ability of a leader to take two distinctly separate groups on an issue and help them work together towards a common goal. In the process, the two groups unite through purpose and identity. Image source: Dr. Melinda L. Yeomans (2013).

With this enlightening education supporting me intrapersonally and interpersonally, I seized the opportunity to implement Campbell’s ideas into my collegiate experience both internally and externally. Through employing these ideas, engaging in deep introspection, and focusing more attention to the experiences that resonated with my “inner life,” I realized that my greater calling was vested in the endeavor of helping people on a personal level. Inside of me brewed an intense desire, or calling, to work with women in a capacity that helped to build

women stronger and more empowered. I recognized that this desire was coming from my intuition, and found the courage to follow it.

Shortly after my class with Dr. Yeomans ended, an opportunity to fill this call arose. I felt called to work with the WRC, which Dr. Yeomans was founding. Together, we built a team of women and provided a free weekly series of wellness workshops for women campus-wide titled “W.E.L.L. Wednesdays” throughout my junior year of college. W.E.L.L. stood for “Women Excelling in Leadership and Learning.” Through our weekly planning meetings and W.E.L.L. workshops, we dove into deep discussions and activities that supported women’s wellness, health, and leadership. During this time, Dr. Yeomans transitioned into the role as my mentor, and she encouraged me to serve as a facilitator and a yoga instructor for our workshops as way to present this opportunity to others. The regularity of these programs helped improve the lives of women across campus.

By providing this service to others, I grew more than I could have ever imagined. In this weekly process of learning, leading, serving, and sharing, I realized that I was learning what it meant to be in service to others while simultaneously cultivating my leadership development and myself. Subconsciously, through following this calling and serving others, I transitioned into a servant leader. I found that the internal mark of the servant leader is through understanding themselves in relation to the world around them, so that they can listen to the needs of the world and find their place to attend to them. I heard the need for women’s empowerment on the campus of SIU, and I pursued the opportunity to fulfill that need by providing W.E.L.L. workshops to the community. I had discovered my “bliss” – the moments where I felt most attuned to myself in relationship with the world, and I felt on fire. Winston Churchill once said, “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.” Through giving to the women of the SIU campus,

I found an alternative way to “live life to the fullest,” and felt as though I began paving my path towards building a fulfilling living.

When we courageously follow our intuition and live from a place of understanding ourselves in relation to the needs of the world, we engage in an *I-Thou* relationship, a concept coined by Jewish philosopher and sage Martin Buber. The *I-Thou* relationship is the balance of giving in service to others while working from a place of self-awareness, or the “inner life.” In my work with the WRC, I found myself in the center of this *I-Thou* spectrum, as depicted in Figure 3. On one end, there is an overemphasis on the “me,” which is where we find narcissists and egotism that is rooted in self-consumption. On the other end is an imbalanced focus on the “we” which involves giving everything one has to others and neglecting one’s health and wellbeing.

The “I-Thou” Continuum

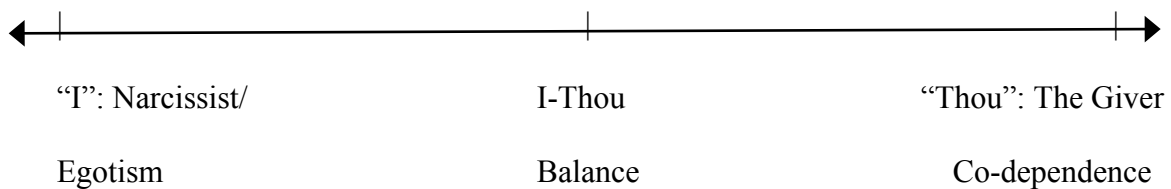


Figure 3 The *I-Thou* relationship coined by Martin Buber can be represented as two ends of narcissism and co-dependence that can be combatted through service in the *I-Thou* center. Image source: Lectures with Dr. Melinda L. Yeomans (2013).

This *I-Thou* relationship is the backbone of TLIO. Yeomans states that, “Service to humanity is the opposite motion of egotism and self-absorption,” (2016). There are some people, however, who focus on others opinions, thoughts, and behaviors as an avoidance mechanism to become self-aware, and thus leaning too far on the *Thou* end of the spectrum. This inadvertently creates a sense of co-dependency with others in order to deflect their own issues with their “self.” “We must evolve from both places, entering the middle ground of the *I-Thou*. When we

are there in the *I-Thou*, we create an alchemy that's very meaningful and cultivates the proper balance for us to empower ourselves, and also empower others," (Yeomans, 2013).

Through striving to gain a central balance in the *I-Thou*, I was able to effectively impact the women of SIU while simultaneously encouraging my own self-growth. Cultivating our "hero within" involves introspective efforts to continuously move towards the *I-Thou* center, and recognize when we have leaned too far into the *I* or too far into the *Thou*. The true secret in the *I-Thou* balance is "that when we are showing up for the service and empowerment of others, we are showing up with the ability to continue to empower ourselves," (Yeomans, 2016).

Essentially, the *I-Thou* is a win-win paradigm. "This means that someone does not have to lose in order for me to win. If I thrive, others thrive. If others thrive, I thrive," says Yeomans.

Servant-leadership is not about getting the attention, but it is about being as empowered as I can be in service to others. When we are engaged in service to others, we ultimately gain humility.

As Caroline McHugh (a life coach and professional influence by Campbell) says in her speech on *The Art of Being Yourself*, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself less," (McHugh, 2013). Not every person that emulates heroic qualities will gain fame from their actions, but every person gains some kind of value from these heroic actions and the gift of living passionately in alignment with their calling.

In using this model of the *I-Thou* structure, students can paint a clearer picture of how to intuitively and courageously cultivate their own inner hero throughout their college experience. It involves taking the necessary steps to ensure that we are mindfully and actively creating the path to help understand ourselves in order to give back to others, so that ultimately the balance between giving to others and giving to the self become a balanced spiral of inner and outer work. Campbell, through his deep analysis of mythological tales from all over the world, has outlined a

path to creating this *I-Thou* balance of leadership through the *Hero's Journey*. He states that, “If you realize that what the ultimate problem is – losing yourself, giving yourself to some higher end, or to another – you realize that this itself is the ultimate trial. When we quit thinking primarily about ourselves and our own self-preservation, we undergo a truly heroic transformation of consciousness...” (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 155). Campbell’s model of the *Hero's Journey* helps us transform our consciousness to find the balance of the *I-Thou* to be in service of others.

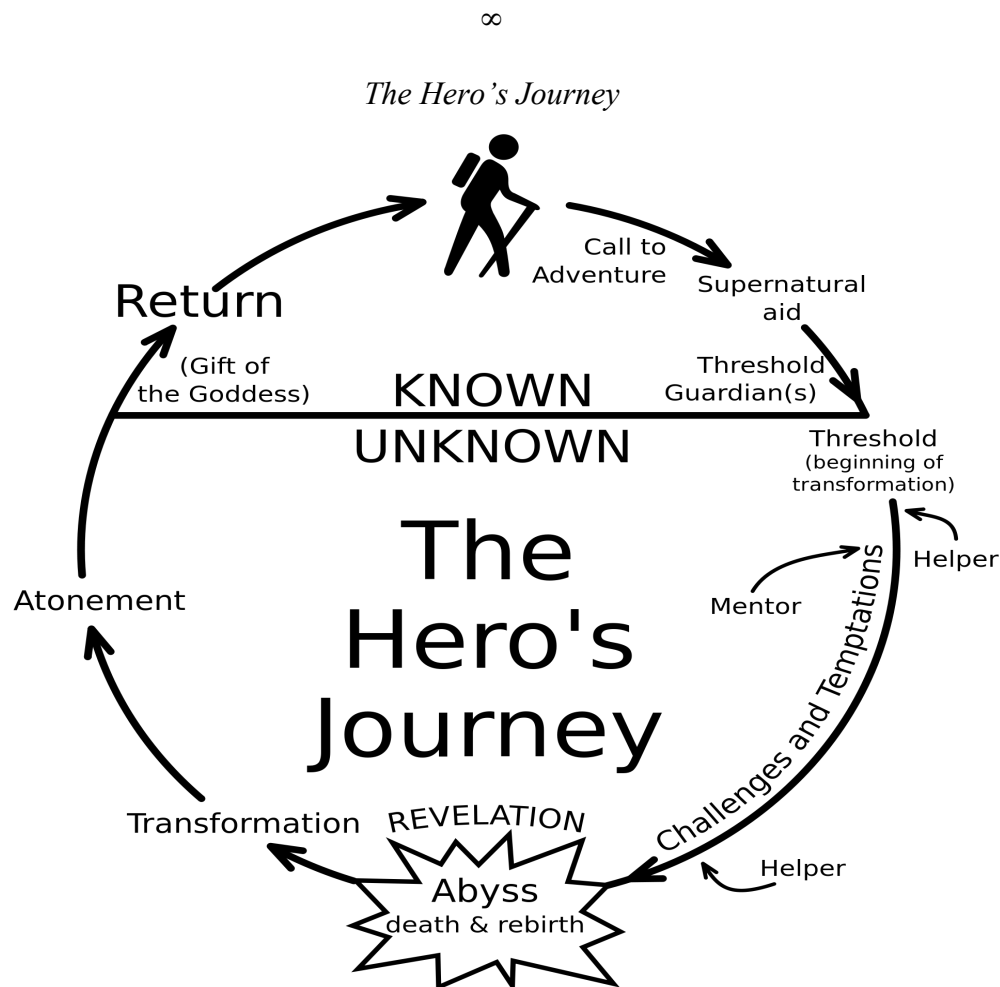


Figure 4 “The Hero’s Journey” by Joseph Campbell is depicted as a cycle that begins in the “known” and ordinary world of the hero that ultimately changes the hero in the “unknown” world. The hero meets challenges that change them internally and externally. Image source: “The Contemporary Hero’s Journey...” by The Unbound Writers (2015).

The storyline behind what we see in our beloved hero and superhero action movies exemplify a superficial outline of the Hero's Journey – the hero is called to fight evil, finds mentors and allies, goes through trials and tests, meets despair and loss, finds their soul mate, and brings back a gift for the world. The true *Hero's Journey* follows a series of stages that ultimately transform the life of the hero both externally and internally, and is a never-ending journey on which we embark throughout our lives. This transformative journey helped me to know my “inner life” so that I could bring the gift of my service and compassion to serve humanity and to reach my potential. As shown in Figure 4, this journey consists of a series of trials and revelations that help transform our thinking towards the balance of the *I-Thou*. Dr. Yeomans states, “When you know the archetypal stages of the hero's journey, it gives you a profound map to your own self-becoming. It gives you a sense that you are not alone, and that, as Campbell states, the ‘heroes before us have tread this path and we simply need to walk in their footsteps,’” (2013).

Stage 1: The Call to Adventure and/or Refusal of the Call.

Every person's story begins with a call to action or adventure. This call to action disrupts a person's ordinary world – but the disruption may be either subtle service or blunt action. Sometimes, the call may appear as a conversation, a letter, or an opportunity while at other times the call may appear as a life-changing event. A person has two options: to accept the call or to refuse the call. Should they refuse the call, they may miss out on a growing opportunity and may suffer in some way. Should they answer the call, or decide to take the adventure, they begin a transformative journey that changes them internally in order to transform the world around them.

Throughout my college experience, I have had a wide variety of calls to action, including the opportunity to become an RA, building the WRC, seeing a need to help begin a grassroots

movement in campus violence prevention, seeing a need to help start a sorority to transform Greek Life, and the overarching theme to serve others. Some of these callings were subtle, and were brought on by the whispering of my intuition, while other callings were grand and were sparked by rather detrimental and life-changing events that lit a fire inside of me to change my life and my campus.

Stage 2: Mentors and Allies

When a person accepts their journey, oftentimes they will encounter someone who serves as a mentor. The mentor is an incredibly important person in the hero's life, for the mentor teaches them the skills and resources to help navigate them through their journey. The mentor may stay with the person as they go through their adventure, or may release them after their training and help guide them intermittently throughout it. The essential function of the mentor is to help dispel any doubts and fears that a person may have on their journey, and to help ground them in confidence to pursue it. In my journey at SIU, Dr. Yeomans has served as my mentor and has helped cultivate my leadership style, has released me into my journey to lead others independently, but is always there for me to call upon her whenever I find myself needing guidance or advice.

In addition to meeting my mentor, I developed mutually supportive relationships with people around me who ended up becoming my allies (and close friends) on my journeys. The *I-Thou* approach to interpersonal relationship creates close bonds with allies. The allies are those who are trustworthy and supportive on our journey, and who help show us our inner potential. It was uncanny to me that as I followed my bliss, the right people showed up at the right times in my journey. Campbell states that when you follow your bliss, "you begin to meet people who are in the field of your bliss, and they open doors for you..." (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 150).

My mentors and allies showed up in my life and opened doors for me that I never knew existed that helped guide me along my journey to servant leadership. In turn, I reciprocated this and helped unlock doors and potential for them in their own journey. I found that my allies came from all walks of life – as professors, friends, coworkers, other campus leaders, and my boyfriend– and each of them influenced and supported me in ways that I will be forever grateful for, and that have greatly transformed me for the better.

Stage 3: The Threshold

Once the person gains their skills and confidence for the journey, they enter from the “known” world to the “unknown” world. They leave their place of comfort and enter into a new and personally undiscovered place. This threshold is where the person begins to use their skills and confidence, and places their commitment in pursuing the journey.

In my journey to become an RA, I crossed the threshold into my “unknown” when I began my job in January of 2013. I was intimidated and nervous, but through training I developed to tools and skills to overcome any doubts. Within the WRC, I crossed the threshold when I stepped foot into the Center of Inclusive Excellence for our first meeting and putting on our first event. With beginning my sorority, I crossed the threshold when I met with the representatives from the International Headquarters, and when I formally accepted my bid when I was invited into the sorority.

Stage 5: Challenges & Temptations

In every journey, challenges and temptations present themselves in various ways. The person may come up against obstacles that seem too difficult to conquer inside themselves or out. They may grow tired and want to quit the journey. They may be tempted to take the “easy

way,” or to stray off of their path on the journey. These tests and trials help guide and strengthen the person so that they can find the confidence and power to persevere through to the end.

Some tests and trials are physical, some are personal, and some are as a result of other people or forces beyond our control. In my journey, I have had all three. Physically, I have come up against illnesses, surgeries, and diagnoses that have impacted me, but not stopped me. Personally, I found internal friction between “following my bliss” and living up to the expectations of others. I have encountered people and forces that tested me, such as difficult superiors, resistance from peers, and issues like the state budget impasse. While these tests may have been challenging, they all strengthened some aspect of myself and taught me a lesson in my journey.

Stage 6: The Abyss or Supreme Ordeal

Throughout our journey, we hit what is called our “abyss” or, commonly called, “rock bottom.” It is when we feel defeated, are at our lowest point, or feel like we are in a situation that we cannot escape. This may be in the form of a physical test or a personal crisis. The only way to escape this involves a form of “death” and “rebirth” to occur. The death may be a physical death, such as the death of the person, or it may be the death of an idea, way of thinking/being, or part of themselves that prevented them from conquering their issues. With this death, a rebirth occurs. The rebirth occurs when the person lets go of the “old ways” of living in order to tap into their “inner life” and follow their path.

My abyss was a yearlong battle that forced me into either adapting the ideas of TLIO, or crumbling. Temporarily, I lost myself due to listening to others around me rather than listening to myself. I ended a relationship with the man I considered my soul mate, went through a series of heartbreak after heartbreak, and experienced immense emotional pain and suffering. During

that time, I was not myself, and every part of me wanted to give up. My family, friends, and loved ones were incredibly concerned for me – the happy, outgoing, and fun-loving person that I was had been overshadowed by doubt, heartbreak, depression, and sadness. Here, I had to let the old ideas, beliefs, and self-expectations die, and give myself the permission and space that allowed for a rebirth of ideas and transformation.

Stage 8: The Transformation

The rebirth comes as the beginning of the transformation. The transformation occurs when the person finds the “reward” of their journey – either as a physical award, a gift for the world, or some form of enlightenment – to help bestow for all of humanity. During this transformation, you see the person undergo a drastic internal metamorphosis that allows them to make it through the journey in order to bring back the reward.

My transformation occurred when I decided that my will to make a difference in others’ lives was greater than my abyss. Through the help and teachings of my mentor, I truly took ahold of TLIO and regained my strength, confidence, and love for life. I came out of my abyss, let the old ways of thinking and living “die,” and brought the gift of empowerment, safety, and strength to the campus of SIU by continuing to engage in and create endeavors that offered the student body a path to achieve these things.

Stage 9: The Atonement

The word “atonement” literally translates to mean “at one with” something. In the typical monomyth, the person usually has moment of atonement with their father or mother. Essentially, this means that they recognize their connection to these figures in their life, but they move on separately from their parents either through a different path, lifestyle, belief, or way of living

altogether. This gives the person the freedom to live their “inner life” free from the constraints of an external force. It is where one asserts their independence to live their life independently.

I had two atonements. The first atonement that I had was with myself. I had to be “at one with” myself in order to understand what I wanted in life. I had to stand up to myself and defeat my internal battles of doubt and sadness. When I stood up to myself and said, “This is not the life that you want. Go out and get it,” I was able to achieve the things that I wanted in life. The second atonement that I had was with my family, and I told them that I cannot live the life that they wished for me – I needed to live the life that I wished for me. While it felt at times like WWII was occurring in my personal life, my family ultimately accepted me and supported me in my endeavors, and could not be more proud of the person and leader that I have become.

Stage 10: The Return

When a person returns from their journey, they bring back an “elixir” to humanity or their community in the prospect of giving them a better world in which to live. Sometimes, the world is not ready for the elixir, and a person may need to go through a subsequent journey in order to bring a different kind of elixir for the world and themselves. Oftentimes, throughout a person’s journey, they may find their soul mate amidst bringing back this newfound knowledge or gift to the world. When they find their archetype of the soul mate, the soul mate typically complements the person and helps “complete” them in some way. They are able to balance each other out with masculine energy and feminine energy. Campbell refers to this from Jung’s psychological concept called the “conjunctio,” or the phenomenon of “two becoming one.” They have completed their journey inwardly, and found their gift to the world and their other half outwardly.

The happy ending to my journey in college is that I had the ability to impact countless amounts of lives through the endeavors on which embarked. Through my dedication to service and working with others, I brought them the gifts of empowerment, compassion, love, and strength – and also received the same gifts by giving them. In my personal life, I gained happiness, confidence, and support from all of my friends and family, and those who did not support me in my journey I wished all of the best, but let them go. In the pursuit of following my bliss, I also embarked on a “hero’s journey” cycle within my romantic life. My personal journey in college paralleled my relationship journey, and my soul mate Anthony and I miraculously reconnected, becoming better partners for one another. By taking my own heroic journey through college, I recognized that life’s series of challenges led me down a path of leadership that I never knew existed, and has changed me from the inside out.

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By understanding the nature of the *Hero’s Journey*, we as Millennial students can engage in a more conscious understanding of this archetypal journey that helps us discover this “inner life,” and follow in the footsteps of great leaders who had archetypal allies and mentors along the way who equipped them with the support, skills, and confidence required to complete the journey. Campbell states, “People say that what we’re all seeking is a meaning for life. I don’t think that’s what we’re really seeking. I think that what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances with our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive,” (p. 4). By knowing the phases of the journey, it opens us up to knowing what to expect and how to push past the temptations, challenges, and abysses we may encounter as we cultivate our life to feel the “rapture of being alive” (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 4). This process is critical in allowing

us to begin and finish our journeys, and recognizing that while some of our journeys may revolutionize our life and the lives around us, we constantly undergo this heroic cycle in our everyday life.

The principle message behind the *Hero's Journey* is that as we go through these external challenges, something internal changes that prompts growth. By taking the risk to answer our calling and embark on our journeys, we become more empowered and bring back a gift to create a better environment for the people of our world. In my journey for the WRC, I underwent a transformative journey that helped me give back the gift of empowerment and knowledge by providing women with a space to grow. They felt cared for and empowered, and many of the women who joined our weekly events felt inspired to follow their own path, and have subsequently given back to their community in different ways. "When there is an environment that's dedicated to care and is trying to build up those for greater empowerment, for peace, for wellbeing, and for service, then people thrive in the environment where they feel cared for, and feel inspired to care for others," (Yeomans, 2016).

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Cultivating the Relationship with the Mentors:

Key to College and Life Success

In our journey towards servant leadership, an important point to keep in mind is that no leader can rise to power alone. One of the most important relationships to have in our journey is a relationship with the mentor. Not only is the mentor an archetype in the *Hero's Journey*, but the mentor also serves as a guiding light for any leader on their journey. Mentors come in many forms, whether as a parent, coach, teacher, professor, religious leader, or role model, and they

bring valuable lessons to our lives that help to enrich our skills, knowledge, abilities, and confidence to successfully complete our journey.

University students have an incredible opportunity to develop relationships with mentors on the university campus. The key to finding the mentor, however, involves finding the courage to follow our “calling” and to initiate a conversation with those whom we desire to seek as mentors. Mentors may come to us as a professor who we came to know better in their office hours and wanted to work more closely with. They may be the advisor of an organization that inspired us to make the organization better. They may be the lead researcher in the research lab in which we felt passionate about working. They could also be unaffiliated with the university and be a leader in a community organization to which we feel drawn. However we may find our mentors, it is important that we recognize the value that they bring to our lives and our leadership journey, and initiate the conversation to connect with them. As the Buddhist proverb states, “When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.” This is incredibly true for the appearance of the mentor in our journey to leadership.

Cultivating a successful relationship with the mentor starts with investing in the relationship on a foundation of honesty and open communication. This means expressing our vision, dreams, and goals with the mentor, and how we think they can help us attain them. It also means that as time goes on, we can become more open to the mentor about our struggles (either personal, academic, or professional) and seek advice on overcoming the obstacles. Once the mentor and mentee establish this trust, the leader is able to move confidently in the direction of their bliss with the security and knowledge that they have someone to help them along their journey. The second element to cultivating a successful relationship with the mentor includes the notion of willingness and hard work. For the mentor and the leader to even begin to set foot on

the journey, both must be willing to work at maintaining the relationship, and the leader must be willing to put in the work set forth by the mentor. Whether we fully understand why we are doing particular tasks, the mentor helps lay a foundation of lessons for us to learn along the way; however, the leader must be willing to put in the good work, the hard work, the grunt work, and the fulfilling work.

I firmly believe that my personal and leadership growth would not have been possible had I not built a relationship with my mentor, Dr. Yeomans. Her charisma, sincerity, attitude, and support encouraged me to work with her outside of the classroom in order to help create grassroots movements all throughout the campus culture of SIU. Each week when we met with our team of leaders in the WRC, we started our meetings off with a personal development piece. This always began with doing a “check-in,” and everyone would share either something of gratitude or something of challenge. Each of us became empowered to tackle our issues head on and grow from them as a result of having a place to express ourselves and grow. Our personal development in these meetings helped us become better servant-leaders throughout the work that we did for Well Wednesdays. We discovered that each of us had our own gifts to bring to the table to help make the workshops run smoothly and successfully. Many of us came to grow into a place where we began to emulate qualities of TLIO.

Specifically, Dr. Yeomans helped me unveil many of my personal trials, and helped me dissect them to help turn them from trials into triumphs. Through working together under the lessons of Campbell, she helped me understand how these trials molded me into a leader. During my sophomore year into my junior year of college, I had fallen into my abyss – and through my mentor’s words of encouragement and our work together in the WRC, I became empowered to use my challenges as strengths and understand my worth. Our work together helped me uncover

the realization that my life's purpose was greater than meeting the material desires of life; my life's purpose is to meet the greater needs of life. This shift in consciousness came when I realized how effortless the effort was to serve the women of the community throughout the WRC.

The relationship with a great mentor helps unfold a realm of internal potential and possibilities that one never knew existed, and the mentor will help integrate these into becoming reality. Through investment, open and honest communication, and the willingness to take on the tasks that the mentor gives us, we have the capacity to create a support system outside of our peer group and family that helps take our dreams and visions and find the tools and techniques to paint the brilliant masterpieces that we call our *life*.

One of my beloved mentors, Dr. Tim Jordan, a Behavioral Pediatrician focused on adolescent empowerment in St. Louis, Missouri, recently published an article related to the value of the university to Millennials. He discusses that it does not matter *where* you go to college; rather, what matters is *how* you go to college (Jordan, 2016). Jordan explains that multiple CEOs of Fortune 500 companies did not obtain degrees from top-tier universities, rather, they used that time to cultivate the life in which they intended to live and were able to develop the skills necessary to reach their goals. It's the *way* in which we choose to utilize our time in college that can determine the path in our lives. According to Jordan, "College is an opportunity to expand yourself in so many ways, so be open to change. Approach the whole college process with excitement vs. anxiety. Let go of the regimented, linear path to success that has been beaten into you since birth and instead create your own story. Trust the process of life, and most importantly, trust yourself," (Jordan, 2016).

Like the *Hero's Journey*, Jordan suggests that success is achieved through the cultivation of intuition and self-trust, which is experienced by meeting the challenges, trials, and opportunities with an openhearted certainty to lean into our life and opportunities. Campbell encourages us to pursue our college education with the intention of understanding our values, our purpose, and learning to listen to ourselves so that we can persevere and expend our energy into following what makes us happy, fulfilled, and become our own definition of successful.

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Applications of Leadership from the Inside Out

The overarching themes of the “I-Thou” relationship and the *Hero's Journey* are the foundation for the leadership model, *Leadership from the Inside Out*. These models synthesize much of the knowledge that I have learned from Campbell and the courses from my psychology and business degrees around the lesson that a person who is called to lead must continuously engage in self-reflection through their development. The development of a servant-leader begins first with the development of a person.

Campbell's ideas on “bliss” and the “inner life” have also manifested throughout my business education. Through his analysis on *How Great Leaders Inspire Action*, Simon Sinek, a leading business-leadership researcher encourages everyone – individuals and businesses alike – to follow their “why” through his idea of the “Golden Circle” (2009), as shown below. Sinek uses the innovative company Apple to exemplify how its great leaders inspire action by following their hearts to inspire their minds. Sinek uses the perspective of neuroscience and leadership theory to point to this “Golden Circle” (Sinek, 2009).

From a neurological and psychological perspective, Sinek explains that the human brain is wired to believe in *why* someone believes in a product or service rather than *what* the product

is. When someone speaks to us regarding their *why*, it navigates the emotion-center of our brain, or our limbic system, that is responsible for our intuition. The *why* is linked to Campbell's call to adventure, and the *why* moves up. It shows us where someone's heart and intentions are. When someone speaks to us regarding *what* they are doing, the decision-making and judgment centers of our brain are activated. We are more inclined to become more engaged in a product or service from a person or company who speaks to us about *why* someone does something and how they do it, rather than *what* they are actually doing. Companies like Apple thrive in their marketing because they advertise their products to their customers by showing their customers the reasons why they love their product and their company, and *why* they believe in what they do. This is business leadership from the inside out. Simon Sinek states that, "People don't buy what you do. They buy why you do it." The same is true for working in service to others. People will not believe *what* you do until they understand *why* you believe in doing it.

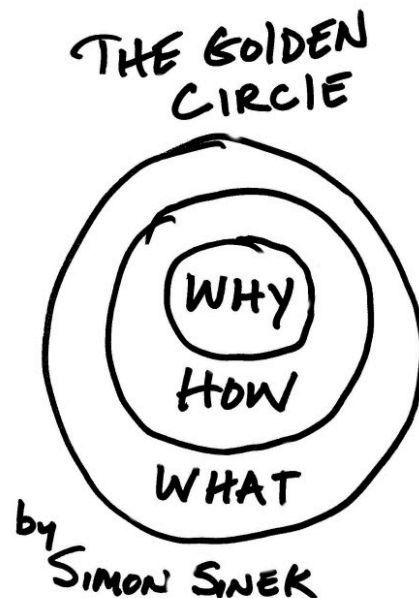


Figure 5 "The Golden Circle" by Simon Sinek shows the layers of consciousness and the associated layers of the brain that are when people move from their *why*. When they are moving from their *why*, and that they strike the center of others. Image source: "Sinek's Golden Circle" from *Make a Powerful Point* written by Gavin (2013).

When great leaders lead, they are moving from their *why*. They move from the place where the mind and the heart connect, from a place of passion, or their “inner life”, and recognize that they can use their mind as a tool in conjunction with their heart and intuition to guide them through their journey. Sinek’s idea of “Finding Your ‘Why’” is the modern version of Campbell’s “Follow your bliss.” When leaders lead from their “why,” they inspire others, and they can change the world, starting with one life at a time. “If you follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. Wherever you are – if you are following your bliss, you are enjoying that refreshment, that life within you, all the time,” (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 113).

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Finding the Energy to Follow our *Why*

While working in the WRC with Yeomans, she presented this token of wisdom to our team in relation to our work, and it deeply resonated with me. This incredibly simple equation by spiritual teacher Din Dayemi helps us cultivate the energy to follow our *why*:

$$\text{Intention} + \text{Attention} = \text{Energy}$$

When we intently focus our attention on our “why,” we find that the energy we have gathered is vaster than our mind can comprehend. I realized that this is something that I, and most people, innately do whenever we feel passionate about something. Our W.E.L.L. workshops were energized through the many conversations that we had regarding this equation. Yeomans told us that this concept is one that we already live every day, but is an incredibly useful tool to remember as we move forward with our dreams and our goals. Everyone in the room felt the impact that this equation had on our work by placing our collective intention and

attention upon creating these workshops. Since learning this in 2014, I have used it within every personal and community-based endeavor. Through this equation, I found the energy and the confidence to follow my bliss.

When I discovered my bliss or my *why*, I was having realizations on all levels: mind, body, heart, intuition, intellectual, and spiritual. Campbell's scholarship is so intercultural and interdisciplinary I found I was fusing western and eastern thought for an expanded sense of myself as the *I-Thou*, as a process, as connected to the rest of life and my peers and community, and a unified understanding of my heart, mind, and body. I took my knowledge from the WRC and pursued the opportunity to start a sorority as another place for women's empowerment. Through listening to women's issues, I also felt called to help combat campus violence and sexual assault, and with a small team of people created the *It's On Us* taskforce to help spread education, awareness, and resources around the issue of sexual assault. By subconsciously using this equation and following my "bliss," I acquired the energy to maintain my position as a Resident Assistant throughout starting all of these endeavors while keeping my studies a priority and maintain a 4.0. This equation helped me realize that as long as I put in 100% effort into anything that I seek to do, the energy to follow these callings will follow as long as I am true to my *why* and focusing my attention on my intention. The same can happen to any Millennial who is willing to focus their efforts and attention on finding and following their *why*.

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Knowing Your Power & the Power to Empower

Throughout the *Hero's Journey* course, we were introduced to the idea of transformative power through the concept of the "power to empower." Through studying various leaders across cultures and time, we found the power to empower exemplified by Nelson Mandela, who used

his presidency to heal a nation's divide. There is a difference between tyrannical power (the power over others) & the heroic use of power as a servant-leader (the power to empower). One of the most important steps to take in cultivating leadership is by recognizing our internal power.

Our internal power is the little nudge that keeps us going when we are in our abyss, and is the same power that guides us to achieve the feeling of pure joy whenever we accomplish our goals. Powerful moving leaders are those exercise power to empower. Empowerment is guided by love and the desire to make a difference for something greater than oneself and provides growth, strength, and support for people in their journey. In the *Hero's Journey*, empowerment occurs when the hero cultivates the relationship with the mentor and is a reciprocal exchange between the hero and their allies. When someone completes their own *Hero's Journey*, they are empowering others through bringing back their gifts to the world and encouraging others to embark on their own journey.

Empowerment occurs when there is an environment that supports the well-being of others. Those who have driven and bullied themselves over others at the expense of people's vulnerability and ignorance are those who exert the power over others, and are disempowered. When people are disempowered or feel broken, they crave power, and quench their thirst for power by overpowering others. They are out for something to attain for themselves with no intention of truly sacrificing anything but their time, and are unwilling to do the inner work to understand their "inner life" or their calling and follow it. Unfortunately, the Millennial Generation has grown up watching leaders who endorse overpowering others rather than empowering them. The greatest way that Millennials today can help others is through choosing to use their power to empower others rather than overpowering them. Deriving our power from the place of our *why* and our "bliss" rather than from the place of negativity is the difference

between empowering others and overpowering them. When we choose to create the chain of empowerment, we are allowing others to understand their power and find and follow their bliss.

When we are attuned to the power within, we come to know that our journeys are meant to lead us down a road of personal empowerment to guide us into empowering others in return.

The Leadership Challenge states that leaders do five things: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Leaders are enabled to lead when they have had their heart ignited through following their calling or their “why,” and healing their heart of any self-doubt. These internal changes and discoveries help us ignite the light of empowerment and happiness inside others. As Buddha once said, “Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.”

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Service Becomes Service-Learning:

Building a Leader from the Inside-Out

There is a point in our journey that we transfer our inward cultivation outward, and where our outward giving reciprocally shapes our “inner life.” This is the connection of the *I-Thou* relationship and TLIO. As we give, so we shall receive. When we engage in service work, we are provided with the opportunity to see life through the eyes of others. Service helps us gauge an understanding of the journey of hard work and self-cultivation, and reminds us that everything is a process. “Service helps normalize the understanding that things don’t come immediately. It helps everyone, and Millennials alike, to see life as a process, and the processes of life,” (Yeomans, 2016).

As we engage in service, we open ourselves up to these processes. In my experience, service work has served as a metaphor for my development process; as I engage in the work (whether by cleaning parks, playing with animals, creating a community program, or hosting a fundraiser), I have seen that I am a part of the processes in place to see the end result. A very similar pattern occurs outside of service work for all people in everyday life, but we are oftentimes too busy to notice the processes that are unfolding in front of us. Service teaches us the value of life as a process; one of the most poignant ways that service becomes service learning.

In listening to the inner voice inside of us, we develop a connection with both ourselves and with all people by recognizing that this connection is fused in service work. By working on ourselves and “following our bliss,” (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 113), we are doing the world a great service by igniting our passions. Our bliss puts us on a path that directly serves all people in some way. “By following our bliss, we tap into the source of unity consciousness. This sources of unity consciousness comes from remembering where they’ve felt at home – where their ‘bliss’ is taking them,” (Yeomans, 2013). I urge every Millennial student to think of a time that brings them back to that place of being at home. Whenever you find yourself in an experience, event, or place that reflects that same feeling – you are following your bliss.

When I feel “at home,” it is when I feel as though I have the comfort and safety that I have when I am around my mother or my partner. This feeling manifests itself each time that I engage in an activity that resonates with my “bliss.” There are multiple instances where this feeling has occurred throughout my college experience. I have mentioned many examples, such as finding peace within the Honors Program, becoming an RA, founding a sorority, working with the WRC, and camp; all of these places have given me the ability to stretch, grow, and learn in a

comfortable environment. Whenever I am in the midst of working within a new group or setting, I mindfully search within myself to come back to these places where I feel at home in order to remain centered and confident in these new settings. Training myself to come back to this mental place of peace has helped me feel at home within myself and overcome any kind of anxiety has allowed me to remain focused on others in the *I-Thou* center rather than listening to the jabbering thoughts in my head. Service work reminds me of this bliss, and it is through this feeling of being “at home” that I am able to remain centered in the *I-Thou* and stay focused on the unity consciousness that puts me on a path towards enriching the lives of others.

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Service Learning Becomes Servant – Leadership

As we engage in service, we experience worlds and people outside of our own personal world. It helps us to see perspectives separate from our own, and can indirectly help us face our own problems. When we are in service to others, we are able to set ourselves aside and be present to improving the wellbeing of others. As we serve others, we are simultaneously serving ourselves. The actual experience of service connected to the process of leading develops an ethos of the *I-Thou*. When we recognize that our purpose involves being in service to others, we begin to seize opportunities as they come to help us cultivate our lifestyle.

In my service work throughout the Southern Illinois University campus and Southern Illinois area, I have come across many people who have incorporated service work into their profession and their passion. As a founder for the *It's On Us Taskforce*, I had the opportunity to present on a panel at a Sexual Assault Summit Series at Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville, hosted by the Attorney General Lisa Madigan. Lisa Madigan not only pursues her profession in law, but also uses her political power in the state of Illinois to address issues

against humanity. In my personal life, my mentor, Dr. Yeomans, has fueled her passion to help others through teaching at both a high school and college level. Not only does she give in service to students in her vocation, but she also volunteers at an organic farm in the Southern Illinois area to serve the earth and humanity. Through service work within my sorority, I see organizations around the area that are devoted to serving the earth, such as Keep Carbondale Beautiful. There is also a restaurant devoted to organic, fresh, and might I add delicious food called the Longbranch that obtains its ingredients from local farms and hosting charity events. Teresa Katubig began the company Hire Level, and developed her business plan based on Simon Sinek's concept of the *why*, and her business is dedicated towards helping companies grow. Countless examples similar to these organizations exist in the Midwest region and nation. The mentioned people and companies emulate the ideals of servant-leaders and servant-leadership organizations. Service learning helps us open our eyes to how we want to see the world, and thus, better serve the world – emulating Gandhi's vision to “Be the change you wish to see.”

Service learning helped me understand that in order to be a servant-leader, I must “model the way,” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012), and that created an internal change inside of me to “walk the walk.” In modeling the change I wanted to see, I helped to empower others through giving them the spaces – through the WRC, *It's On Us*, Delta Phi Epsilon, and being an RA – to express themselves when they needed to be heard, and listening to their needs to help evoke change throughout the campus culture. In the process of all of this, I fulfilled the needs of my purpose – and my calling – to help create a better and safer world for people, beginning with listening to one need and embarking upon one endeavor at a time. Through service learning, I became a servant leader.

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Concluding Thoughts

A transformative leader operates from their calling, or their *why*, and positively changes others' lives in the midst of following their passion. When we move from this place of "following our bliss," we are moving from place of our eternal values in service to others from the inside out. When a leader begins their leadership journey, they assume a path of internal and external conflicts, trials, and rewards that empower them while also gifting the world with some kind of gift and empowerment.

Millennials bring a multitude of gifts to the world. Through their knowledge, ambition, and growing understanding and tolerance to the world around them, they have the opportunity to change the world in mass capacities through multiple mediums of communication and service. I cannot emphasize enough that the mark of success is not external; rather, the mark of success is internal. The more mindful we become of our connections to our thoughts, desires, feelings, and the world around us, the more powerful we become in directing our lives to better the world. It is my firm belief that we are not here on this earth to build a life for ourselves, but to build a life that empowers all people and builds a better world. To do this, however, we must be willing and open to listen to the needs of the world around us, but we need to begin to listen to the needs and calling of ourselves. This is how we become great servant leaders.

The university still serves as "a hermetically sealed-off area" if Millennials are willing to use this time to cultivate themselves and engage in servant leadership endeavors. You must follow the various things that you are drawn to, and be courageous enough to pursue them. Be prepared and willing to embark on a transformative journey that transforms you internally so that you can, in turn, transform the world around you. Leading from the Inside Out and adhering to the *I-Thou* relationship is the model that has changed the world throughout time. Trust the

process of life, the journey of the university, and “follow your bliss” to center your life and listen to the needs of the world around you. As Caroline McHugh says, “...one way to think about [life] is not what your life expectancy is, but what do you expect from life, and what life does expect from you? Those are more interesting questions,” (McHugh, 2014). I found that following my inner life started to answer these questions for me. Since embarking on my transformative journey I feel more at peace and more authentically connected with myself than I have ever been before as a result of understanding the relationship between what I expect from life and what life expects from me. Use these years to selflessly explore the depths of your humanity in order to discover your “inner life” – this will guide you to a place where the expectations that life has for you and the expectations that you have from life are mutual. This mutual place is where servant leaders are cultivated and where they feel the “rapture of being alive” by creating a fulfilling life (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 4).

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