Art has the ability to provoke the unconscious mind revealing the self. Knowing one’s self is the foundation of leadership. This article describes an approach to facilitating intrapersonal leader development through the use of visual art. With this approach, participants selected fine art prints as metaphors to describe leadership, tapping their tacit knowledge. The content of their metaphors were analyzed for leadership themes and connections with Jungian cultural archetypes to foster self-knowledge, awareness of patterns in views of leadership, and growth. The article begins with an explanation of the research question followed by a discussion of the psychodynamic approach to leadership and the merit of using Jungian cultural archetypes to gain insight into views of leadership. The methodology section describes the data collection process and the analytical process using low-inference content analysis, themes identification, and connections to cultural archetypes. The article concludes with a discussion of insights drawn from connecting leadership themes to cultural archetypes to expand developing leaders’ views about leadership.

Research Question and Theoretical Approach

Self-knowledge is a vital component of leader development. Leader development research suggests that individuals have the need to understand and acquire intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies in order to participate in the processes of leadership (Cacioppe, 1998; Pedler, Boydell, Burgoyne, 1989; Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 1991). Leadership abilities must be developed, regardless of whether one is a “natural born” leader, a learned leader, or a latent leader (Maxwell, 1993, p. IX). Palmer (1998) stated, “The most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is insight into what is happening inside us as we do it. The more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more surefooted . . . living becomes” (p. 5). Becoming “more surefooted” is one of the goals for the developing leaders in this study. Call it self-awareness, self-knowledge, or self-insight; it is an essential component in leader development. In his book, Leader Development, London (2001) discussed self-insight as one of the three psychological processes underlying leadership behaviors, and stated that “self-awareness is key to being a responsive and effective leader” (p. xv).

Yet self-awareness is a complex process. Socrates advised, “Know thyself,” but how does one go about knowing oneself? Directed introspection is difficult with a Hawthorne-like effect; the very thing you focus on changes for having...
been the focus of your attention. The self is better approached indirectly. The use of the Rorschach inkblot test is a familiar example of using images to indirectly access the unconscious of the viewer. The Rorschach test was developed to probe the unconscious mind so as to assess personality characteristics and emotional functioning (Exner, 1980). This type of interpretative assessment uses neutral images or a third thing as a vehicle for accessing and analyzing the subject’s perceptions. The use of a third thing allows intuitive, unconscious understandings to emerge into our awareness so that we can attend to what is revealed and then step back to examine our thinking. The arts often serve as a third thing providing access or expression of the self. As T. S. Eliot (1948) said, “[The Arts] may make us . . . a little more aware of our deeper, unnamed feelings which form the substratum of our being, to which we rarely penetrate; for our lives are mostly a constant evasion of ourselves.”

Visual images and references pervade the language of daily life. “A picture is worth a thousand words.” We think in images and use them to represent thoughts and feelings. Visual art offers images that give voice to intuitions and tacit understandings we might never express in response to direct questions. Maxine Greene (1995) discussed the role of the arts,

[T]o summon metaphors of what ought to be . . . to see more in our daily experiences, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines, habits, and conventions have obscured . . . [that] we may experience a sudden sense of new possibilities and thus new beginnings. (p. 379)

Art metaphors are used in this study to break down the barriers that habit and routines create, providing access to the deeper tacit understandings each participant holds about leadership. Spelke, Breinlinger, Macomber, and Jacobson (1992) ascribed value to intuitive knowing and suggested that art offers ways to comprehend our lives; a kind of knowing that opens our mind to possibilities normally limited by rationality. Therefore, exploring the meaning of leadership through fine art metaphors may facilitate conscious awareness of intuitive understandings that allow developing leaders to comprehend their lives and leadership in new ways.

The purpose of this study was

1. to uncover patterns related to tacit knowledge of leadership held by developing leaders,
2. to facilitate developing leaders’ self-knowledge, and
3. to identify areas for growth in the participants’ views of leadership.

The study was grounded in the psychodynamic approach to leadership and employed qualitative methods designed to uncover participants’ tacit knowledge of leadership. The psychodynamic approach to leadership is based on the assessment of the personalities of leaders and followers, of which Jungian archetypal theory is a subset. Archetypal theory can provide a cultural framework for uncovering patterns in tacit knowledge about leadership and insight into areas of growth for developing leaders.

The psychodynamic approach employs personality type classification systems to raise self-awareness of leaders and followers in the hope that they will better understand their own and others’ behavior once they are aware of type-related behavioral patterns. Carl Jung (1923, 1993) was a major contributor to the psychodynamic approach and developed a personality classification system based on the concept that there are patterns of human behavior that are predictable and understandable. The most well-known application of his classification system is the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator. Jung’s explanation for patterns of human behavior expanded beyond the personal unconscious associated with universal personality types, to include the influence of culturally derived universal patterns of thinking and behavior within a collective unconscious, which he called “archetypes.”

The influence of archetypes is integral to Jung’s (1964) conceptualization of the psyche and its structures; the ego, shadow, anima, animus, and self. In Jung’s definition, the ego comprises the “empirical personality . . . [and is] the subject of all personal acts of consciousness” (p. ii). However, the ego revolves around a greater psychic entity, the self, which includes the conscious, the collective unconscious, and the personal unconscious. Jung identified universal cultural patterns of thinking and behavior derived from the collective unconscious as “archetypes.” Archetypes were “a primary source of psychic energy and patterning . . . the ultimate source of psychic symbols, which attract energy, structure it, and lead ultimately to the creation of civilization and culture” (Stein, 1998, p. 85). Archetypal theory posits that although archetypes are universal patterns of influence, they become personalized and provide the foundation for one’s personality type, beliefs, feelings, motives, and actions. Archetypes are the “architects of our lives . . . the energy companions through whom we can learn to understand ourselves . . . and lead us to profound understanding of our purpose in this life” (Myss, 2003, p. 7).

There is a conceptually related body of research labeled implicit leadership theories (ILTs), which suggests that human beings engage in cognitive categorization of universal patterns of behavior to form leadership prototypes (Kenney et al., 1994; Martin & Epitropaki, 2001; Lord, 1985; Lord & Maher, 1991; Lord et al., 1984; Lord et al.,
1986; Lord et al., 2001; Offerman et al., 1994). These prototypes are tacit knowledge posited to derive from social interactions and experiences, framing perceptions of leadership and the categorization of leader behaviors. Research related to ILTs has identified at least five common traits associated with leader prototypes: sensitivity, intelligence, dedication, tyranny, and masculinity (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Offerman et al., 1994). Lord and Maher (1993) found that individuals used ILTs as a foundation for generating their own leadership behavior. Whereas ILTs suggest that conceptualizations of leadership draw on prototypes derived from social interactions, archetypal theory suggests that universal cultural thinking and behavior patterns transmitted through the collective unconscious through archetypes are the sources of tacit knowledge about leadership. Archetypal theory provides a more complex alternative to ILTs' prototypes because archetypes are a composite of strengths and weaknesses, fostering awareness of the complexities of leadership.

Method and Analysis

This study attempted to uncover tacit knowledge at work in developing leaders’ psyches, foster self-knowledge, and expand their views of leadership. An art metaphor activity was used to provoke the participants’ tacit knowledge about leadership. The activity took place during the first meeting in each of eight leadership development seminars conducted over a 2-year period. The facilitator/researcher provided a sampler collection of thirty 5 × 7 fine art prints of famous works found in museums around the world (Art Image Publications, 1990). The art prints were from the Small Reproductions Big Ideas Collection Kit. Although it is possible that providing only a sampling of art prints may have limited or influenced the participants’ responses, the participants were asked to select a print that could serve as a metaphor for whom they are or aspire to be as a leader. Just as with a Rorschach inkblot, each participant could interpret a print in a way that reflected what they wanted to say about leadership.

Each print in the collection was coded with an identifying three-number sequence placed on the back of the print for easy reference. The prints were laid out on tables for display and participants were instructed to walk around so as to view all the prints before making a selection. The directions were to “select an art print that could serve as a metaphor for who you are or aspire to be as a leader.” Each participant selected an art print and wrote a description of how the chosen print represented one’s self or one’s ideal self as a leader. Participants were permitted to select the same print as another classmate, but each had to write his or her own explanation describing how the chosen art print represented his or her view of leadership. Then each participant introduced himself or herself to the group and explained his or her leadership metaphor. The sharing of metaphors was followed by a discussion identifying common themes about leadership expressed in the metaphor explanations. As homework, participants took their metaphor notes home with them and posted their leadership metaphors on the seminar website discussion board and read the posted metaphors of the members in their assigned team. The facilitator/researcher’s notes and the website discussion board postings for each of the eight seminar groups provided a written version of all participants’ metaphors for content analysis.

Each seminar consisted of 18 to 22 participants so analysis was not conducted at the seminar level because of the small size of each class. Instead, metaphors from all participants were analyzed as a group (n = 158). Participants were working adults interested in developing their leadership abilities, and ranged in age from 22 to 62 years, with 42% female and 58% male. Analysis included a frequency count of the selected art prints, content analysis of the metaphors to identify themes and make thematic connections to archetypes. The content analysis process employed “low-inference descriptors” (LeCompte & PREISLE, 1993, p. 338) as a first step in identifying units of meaning within each metaphor. These units of meaning were listed and clustered into categories by affinity. The affinity categories were then grouped into themes. The themes were labeled and thematic connections were made to cultural archetypes. An example of the content analysis process is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1 demonstrates how individual metaphor statements were analyzed for units of meaning using the exact
words of the participant. These units were then categorized by affinity because they describe similar ideas or use similar words. The affinity categories were then clustered by a leadership theme that describes the common idea being expressed. The themes were then connected with Jungian archetypes based on the attributes embodied by each archetype. Most participants’ metaphors included multiple units of meaning representing more than one affinity category and more than one theme and connect with more than one archetype. Thematic connections were made with five identified archetypes encompassing one or more identified leadership theme.

Frequency analysis revealed that each of the 30 art prints was selected by one or more participants from the eight seminar groups. In total, 9 of the 30 available art prints were selected by 7 or more participants; accounting for the selections of 52.5% (83/158) of the participants. Table 1 displays the frequency count for prints selected by seven or more participants. Content analysis of the 158 metaphors revealed 18 affinity categories converging into 12 themes. The categories are displayed in Table 2 and the themes are displayed in Table 3.

When reading the descriptions of the most popular art prints, one might feel able to infer some of the leadership themes in participants’ metaphors. For example Print 1-24 resembles a target or bulls eye, from which one might infer goal setting or a mission theme. Print 3-2 seems to represent a community working together, suggesting shared leadership or teamwork. However, these themes were not always the ideas participants included in their metaphors. In some cases, a consistent theme did emerge that seemed obvious from the print selection, as with Print 2-6, which pictures a mother and child and consistently evoked the themes of teacher and caring.

Although a few categories were specifically associated with one of the more popular prints, in most cases, multiple

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**Table 1. Frequency Count for Top Eight Art Prints**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print Code</th>
<th>Times Selected</th>
<th>Print Image Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Red white and black bulls eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-04</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yosemite river valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-06</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mother sewing with toddler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-01</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Procession being lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-02</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Community gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-04</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Two girls sharing a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-08</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Boats floating under bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lone boat in a stormy sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-01</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sunset on the sea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
themes emerged for each print. However, when archetypal associations were made, participants’ explanations for a given print were seen as connected. For example, the print of the lone boat in a stormy sea (Print 5-16) was used by some participants to express the attribute of calm in the face of crisis and by others to describe how leaders must sometimes take risks. In the analysis process, these two metaphors were reflected in different affinity categories and themes, risk-taker and calm in crisis. However, when archetypal connections were made, the archetype of the Warrior-Knight incorporates calm and courage, remaining calm but taking risks to act in a crisis. One print that consistently evoked the same attributes and themes, caring and teacher, was the mother sewing with a toddler at her knee (Print 2-6). The print of two girls reading (Print 3-4) was used by participants to express caring, teaching, or being a role model. All these themes are manifested in the Teacher-Mentor archetype.

The 12 themes of leadership aligned with the descriptions of one or more of five cultural archetypes (Myss, 2003; Straker, 2009). All five archetypes represent desirable types of leaders who fulfill different roles and leadership needs within organizations and society (Table 4). Archetypal theory also includes a shadow component as part of each cultural archetype. This is the paradox of virtues, that each virtue or strength also contains a weakness associated with a shadow side. This is a particularly important insight into the human condition, offering cautions and directions for growth in developing leaders.

The Teacher-Mentor archetype cares about developing others and works beside others as a role model. The leadership themes connecting with this archetype are role model, teacher, team leader, and caring. A Teacher-Mentor is one in whom you place your trust and look to for guidance in many aspects of life. The shadow side of the Teacher-Mentor is the abuse of power when guiding others. The trust a follower places in a Teacher-Mentor enables manipulation, influencing the follower to become who the Mentor desires rather than who the individual is meant to become. The trustworthy Teacher-Mentor guides the individual to discover his or her authentic self rather than the person the mentor wishes the follower to become. This cultural archetype communicates positive attributes of knowledge, skill, wisdom, patience, compassion, and generosity.

In identifying with this archetype, developing leaders were affirmed in the positive image and leadership role they described. However, the benefit of archetypal analysis was that they were also made aware of the potential of this archetype to abuse their power as a mentor-teacher through manipulation. Reflection and discussion followed examining the dangers inherent in this archetype of leadership, and actions or processes participants could use to guard against such abuses of power.

The Father-Judge provides oversight, control, and moral guidance with caring protectiveness. The Father-Judge is one who creates order and structure to support an environment where members can live productive and relatively happy lives. Ethical and moral standards are upheld by balancing compassion and justice to ensure the fair distribution of power. The danger for the Father-Judge is the inappropriate use of their power and control over others. As a moral authority for followers, the Father-Judge is also in danger of becoming a harsh, unforgiving critic. The benevolent Father-Judge offers guidance and forgiveness rather than abusive condemnation. The connecting leadership themes for this archetype are oversight and control, mediator, and ethical/moral judge. When examining this archetype, developing leaders are able to discuss the potential harm that can be done when enacting the harsh criticism of the Father-Judge and the positive power of compassion and justice.

The Warrior-Knight is willing to take risks and to take action in a crisis. Loyalty, devotion, service, and self-sacrifice are the Warrior-Knight’s virtues. The Warrior-Knight may tilt at windmills rather than choosing their battles wisely. While eager to righteously stand up to
bullies, the Warrior-Knight must avoid being drawn into inappropriate or unwarranted contests of will and strength. This archetype must balance his or her willingness to fight with a prudent assessment of the most effective course of action. This archetype seeks to protect, defend, and fight for one’s rights and to overcome whatever confronts them. The two themes connected with this archetype are risk-taker and handle crisis. Through discussion of this archetype, developing leaders can begin to appreciate the important balance they must strive for between risk taking and prudence.

The Revolutionary-Crusader challenges the status quo and guides adaptation. The Revolutionary-Crusader is a powerful aid to groups needing to break free from old patterns. This archetype is characterized by being driven by a powerful mission. The crusader often targets others to convert them to a way of thinking. The Revolutionary-Crusader risks getting emotionally overwhelmed and imposing his or her passionate beliefs on others who hold a differing point of view. Impatience is a danger for this archetype, in that immediate change is rarely attainable and requires persistence. For this reason, a kind of impatient patience must be cultivated by the Revolutionary-Crusader. Through this archetype we may realize that we can persuade others and change the world. The themes that connect with the Revolutionary-Crusader are challenge and set trends, adapt to change, solve problems, and enact the mission. With this archetype, there is a danger of emotional zealotry where the heart overrules the head. The lesson of passion tempered by reason is an important balance for developing leaders.

The Visionary-Alchemist imagines possibilities that benefit all members and brings into view what could be. This archetype connects with the theme of providing a vision. The Alchemist is able to transform or change something or someone to bring a vision to fruition. Their ultimate goal is to transform themselves and others. The danger for the Visionary-Alchemist is similar to that of the Teacher-Mentor, in that inspiring others to change must not serve one’s own interest. The ability to inspire others can become a heady elixir endangering the Alchemist whose vision is not rooted in a higher moral purpose. The vision inspired by the Visionary-Alchemist must focus on a future for the greater good.

These brief summaries of the five archetypes demonstrate the way in which archetypal theory captures the virtuous and shadow aspects of cultural energies at work within the unconscious self. These cultural archetypes offer life shaping purpose and serve the organization and society. But the course of human history reminds us of the paradox in virtues, every shining bright thing has a shadow side; and so it is with human leaders. Developing leaders in this study were inspired and shaped by the positive energies of the five cultural archetypes identified through content analysis. But as developing leaders, their tacit views of leadership need to be examined and developed to include more complex understandings about leadership. One great benefit of exploring archetypal connections is not only to understand the noble aspirations of developing leaders but to also recognize the parallel cautions or dangers associated with the paradox of strengths embodied in these cultural energies. By introducing the strengths and weaknesses associated with these archetypal leadership energies, developing leaders are prompted to engage in self-reflection and develop self-awareness as an intrapersonal asset.

Rather than identifying common traits of leader prototypes, as in ILTs, this research revealed five archetypes connected with 12 themes reflective of patterns in the participants’ views about leadership. The participants in this study view leaders as: role models, teachers, mediators, judges, risk-takers, team leaders, providers of oversight/control, and handlers of crisis who challenge, adapt, care, and provide a mission/vision. Applying Jungian archetypal theory, these thematic frames of reference connected with five cultural archetypes, describing leadership roles across a spectrum from Guide to Warrior to Visionary. Some might be tempted to view the identified archetypes as evidence of shallow development as leaders. However, archetypes, like the art prints used to evoke them, meet each of us where we are and offer insight at any level depending on the energy and time invested. Insights about one’s personality and behavioral patterns are possible through archetypal inquiry, provoking the very personal process of self-reflection and self-knowledge leading to a more complex understanding of leadership. In addition to identifying the noble attributes and parallel dangers of each archetype, participants expanded their understanding of leadership to include the ways in which multiple archetypes are at work in effective leaders.

Summary

The art print metaphor activity evoked tacit or unconscious knowledge about leadership revealing thematic patterns that connected with five Jungian archetypes: The Mentor, Teacher, Father-Judge, Warrior-Knight, Revolutionary-Crusader, and Visionary-Alchemist. Insights into the noble aspirations of developing leaders were possible through identifying the archetypal energies connected with their views about leadership. The use of art to assist participants in articulating a metaphor for leadership created a pathway for tacit knowledge to be expressed and then incorporated into participants’ conscious awareness of how leadership is manifested and the multiple roles of leaders.

Participation in the art metaphor activity provided developing leaders with the opportunity to articulate tacit knowledge about leadership, to grow in self-knowledge, and to expand their understanding of the complexities of leadership. Their concepts about leadership aligned with five archetypes that represent universal cultural patterns. These archetypes revealed participants’ positive beliefs, feelings,
motes, and actions associated with leading, and alerted them to potential dangers or abuses for each archetype.

The art metaphor activity is an unconventional, indirect approach to developing self-knowledge and holds promise for those seeking to develop leaders. The use of leadership metaphors allows the uncovering of tacit and unconscious knowledge about leadership to foster self-knowledge. Initially shallow or superficial responses to the archetypes can be gently challenged in discussions and deepened through self-reflective inquiry related to the archetypes. The psychodynamic approach to leadership using archetypal analysis could provide substantive content for discussion and offer developing leaders the opportunity to expand their conceptualization of leadership in general and more specifically as it relates to archetypes. It also offers the opportunity to expand one’s identity as a leader, affirm noble aspirations, and offer insight into the paradox of strengths as weaknesses and complexity of leadership.

The use of archetypal theory to uncover tacit knowledge about leadership is an alternative to the trait-related prototypes identified by ILTs. The common link is the desire to examine the unconscious/intuitive forces at work in the human mind that shape our understanding and perceptions of leadership. Further investigation into the relationship between ILTs and Archetypal Theory could prove an interesting follow-on study. Other interesting approaches to future research in this area could include the use of other art mediums—dance, music, or poetry to evoke tacit understandings and archetypal connections. Archetypal forces will always be at work shaping our unconscious beliefs and behaviors, but multiple archetypes are at work in the world, and we do not need to be limited to one understanding of leadership but rather to see these multiple archetypes working together to energize leaders to adapt and respond to differing needs and circumstances.

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References


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