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# A Qualitative Exploration into Larry Wilson's Transformational Leadership

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A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION INTO LARRY WILSON'S  
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

PETER D. ENGSTROM

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Leadership

AUGSBURG COLLEGE  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNEAPOLIS

2017

MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP  
AUGSBURG COLLEGE  
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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I'd like to thank the interviewees for their time and patience in helping me gather information relative to Larry's life and leadership. I also want to offer a special thank you to Hershel and Joey Wilson, who as Larry's sons, provided additional insight.

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### Abstract

Larry Wilson was considered by many to be a transformational leader. This paper explores the intersection of how people associated with Larry experienced him relative to the current research on transformational leadership through an interpretive method of gathering data from former employees, customers, and family. Data was gathered through a series of personal interviews, published text, and a questionnaire. The interviews and questionnaire yielded five main themes. The evidence suggests Larry's style of leadership is consistent with the Full Range of Transformational Leadership, as posited by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio (1994).

**Contents**

Introduction	1
Who Was Larry Wilson?	3
The Researcher's History, Relationship, and Biases	12
Method & Methodology	18
Interpretive Method	19
Methodology	20
Review of the Literature	25
Survey of Leadership Perspectives	25
Larry Wilson Literature	27
Maslow	29
Transactional Leadership	33
Transformational Leadership Theory Development	35
Bass's Transformational Leadership Theory	40
Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model	42
Results	44
Themes	44
Evidence supporting the Full Range of Transformational Leadership	61
Conclusions	88
Additional Research	94
Appendix A: Interview Questions	97
Appendix B: Questionnaire	98
Appendix C: Validation Email	99
References	101

**List of Figures**

1. Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model	43
2. Laissez-Faire Position on the Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model	63
3. Transactional Position on the Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model	65
4. Transformational Position on the Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model	68

## Introduction

Sometimes life's seemingly insignificant events can have profound effects. This was the case for Larry Wilson when he picked up an edited book of psychology research and was introduced to the theories of Abraham Maslow. The introduction of Larry Wilson to Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* (Maslow, 1943) sparked Larry's ambitious personal mission. This mission—helping people become all they can be—consumed Larry for the balance of his life.

Similarly, my journey began with a phone call from my cousin asking to meet with Larry's daughter and him for a beer. By accepting the invitation, the casual reunion of old friends led to an offer to work at Larry's new conference center. This new opportunity introduced me to Larry and changed my future.

Most people exposed to Larry Wilson had known and worked for many leaders and managers. More often than not, leaders motivate us to get our work done, vote a certain way, volunteer for various organizations, or adopt certain lifestyles, but all within the context of the paths we had already chosen. Many people, including this researcher, believed Larry was able to have a deeper effect on them to the point they actually changed. Why was Larry able to have such an effect on people and organizations that they abandoned their existing paths to pursue a new one? What characteristics of leadership did Larry exhibit and what effect did they have on the people who followed him?

As my work with Larry progressed, I learned more about leadership, and observed leaders emerge during our corporate programs. I saw people respond to their teammates'



various leadership styles, but couldn't interpret or verbalize why some people followed some more than others on their team. The more I observed leadership and learned about Larry's leadership and leadership philosophy, the more I wanted to study leadership. Larry believed people follow leaders because they want to, not because they have to. This leads to the question of why anyone would *want* to follow someone. Pursuing the answer to this question ultimately drew me to a graduate level program on leadership. This is when my interest in Larry Wilson's leadership began to intersect with my knowledge of leadership theory and models.

This study is an attempt to begin to capture not only *why* Larry Wilson attempted to accomplish what he did, but what theory or model of leadership best described Larry's leadership, allowing him to achieve so much of which he was driven to achieve. His ultimate goal was to influence everyone on earth toward becoming self-actualized. Maslow acknowledged that psychoanalyzing one person at a time couldn't change the world. Perhaps Larry saw Maslow's mission as one he could grasp and attempt to fulfill through broader training programs with groups and entire companies.

Building an organization to influence everyone on earth would require leadership. Larry had to become a leader to build such an organization. Maslow theorized that moving people to the top of his hierarchy of needs requires transformation from the pursuit of personal needs and wants to the pursuit of higher, collective goals. This type of influence would require Larry to become a *transformational leader*. More specifically, the paper contends Larry's transformational leadership fit the *Full Range of Transformational Leadership* model.

**Who was Larry Wilson?**

According to most people who knew Larry Wilson, he was a visionary, transformative leader. In the 1960's he transformed the sales industry by creating a completely new approach to sales; one in which the salesperson counseled the customer through their purchase leading to a win-win result. He built five successful companies, of which, Wilson Learning Corporation, became the second largest training organization in the United States.

Larry's work with executives and employees alike transformed Fortune 500 companies and organizations worldwide through his consulting and training programs. Many internal and two Harvard case studies show how these programs built teams, engaged employees, reduced levels of fear, developed leaders, encouraged empowerment, and increased productivity.

Larry also authored five books, became a member of the Speakers Hall of Fame, was awarded as a Senior Fellow and Alumnus of the Year at the University of Minnesota and was named as an Ambassador of Free Enterprise by the International Sales and Marketing Executives. Larry's life was dedicated to helping people grow by showing them how to choose growth over fear and apply that knowledge to their lives (Larry Wilson brochure; personal communications; Duhamel, 1998).

In a world where people grow up, go to school, get married and have kids, and work their way up the corporate ladder, Larry Wilson was an enigma. Always one to be rebellious, he had to do things his way. He didn't care about the risks or potential

outcomes. He just did what *he* wanted to do. In the end, despite counsel to the contrary, Larry continued to do things his way—to put his signature on his life's work.

Larry Wilson passed away on April 6, 2013. Over the course of his life, Larry influenced thousands of people and his legacy continues to affect thousands more. Of the five companies Larry built, Wilson Learning Corporation continues to operate successfully to this day after roughly fifty years. As a speaker, many people indicate that at his best, Larry was the best. Larry was also a talent magnet. He attracted intelligent and creative facilitators, consultants, writers, designers, and scholars who helped develop and deliver his programs. Many of his associates continue in the personal development arena, referencing many of his models in their current work.

Larry Wilson had an immense impact on individuals and companies. His Counselor Selling program transformed the entire method sales were conducted in the US. It's important to understand the history, personality, and motivations behind a person who can have such an impact. All 56 of the people interviewed or questioned during this research indicated they learned from Larry; he impacted their way of thinking; and he influenced how they live their life. Almost all of the same people also mentioned his companies as the most fun and fulfilling work experiences they ever had in an organization. We need to look at Larry's leadership to help understand how he created the environment for his customers and associates to flourish.

**The early years.** When children are growing up, there is very little to indicate what they will do or how successful they will become as they grow older. Larry Wilson was little different. He did, however, have an independent and rebellious side. He hated to be told what to do and did what he wanted to do, regardless of what anyone said. He

eventually graduated from Catholic school and attended the University of Minnesota until 1952 with a major in speech. It wasn't long before Larry was teaching drama and English in Iowa and was supporting a wife and a couple of kids.

Larry's teaching salary wasn't enough to make ends meet, so he switched careers from teaching to selling insurance. Selling in late 1950's was not as it is now. Most companies told salesmen to push product. Almost all companies' sales training told salespeople to only discuss the product features, and push hard. This tactic would eventually lead to a sale, but these tactics usually produced single sales and led to little repeat business. Larry's approach was more about getting to know people and fulfilling a need. As he saw it, his job was to help people grow up and make responsible financial decisions. This approach was new. They trusted him and Larry soon became relatively successful. Before he was 30, Larry was the youngest lifetime member of the life insurance Million Dollar Roundtable (personal communication, April 4, 2015).

Larry's success in insurance sales led to speaking engagements for company sales team meetings. After one of his speeches around 1963, Federated Life Insurance of Owatonna approached him. The company loved his content and asked if he would create a customized sales program for the company. As an ambitious young man and father, he accepted without giving much thought to what the sales program might look like. He had no idea what the content would be, but he knew it wouldn't be the same sales training material that was in vogue at the time (Duhamel, 1998).

Creating a training program proved to be harder than it sounded. Training programs of this type were to be taught by internal trainers of Federated Insurance of Owatonna. As Larry explains it in *Minnesota Business & Opportunities*:

The goal was to create something where the teacher could come off the right way, as a leader. Because we couldn't control the profile of who would be doing the teaching, we had to create for a teacher that couldn't lead a group in silent prayer. It had to be good for the teacher in order to be good for the students. (Duhamel, 1998, p.48)

It had to be idiot-proof.

**Maslow meeting.** Inspiration came in the form of a book. One beautiful, fall day in 1964 Larry found himself on the campus of the University of Minnesota with two of his kids. He was walking by the Nicholson book store and saw a table full of discount books the store was dumping. He nonchalantly grabbed a book in the psychology section, which was an edited compilation of scholarly psychology papers. Larry randomly opened the book to an 11-page article. Transfixed, he read the article twice while standing there. The article, written by Abraham Maslow, discussed his famous hierarchy of needs and had the incomprehensible title, "The Hierarchy of Relative Prepotency." Larry wasn't able to fully comprehend the piece, but knew it related to human potential. He handed over his dollar and went home to study those 11 pages more deeply. At the conclusion of his fifth reading, Larry knew he needed to understand the content better. The next morning he picked up the phone and called Maslow at Brandeis University to request a meeting. It wasn't long before Larry was on a train to Boston to meet the famous psychologist (Duhamel, 1998; Wilson and Wilson, 1998).

Abraham Maslow proved to be a warm man and generous with his time. Larry was surprised to find Maslow spoke to him as a peer, rather than an ignorant salesman. The discussions of that day covered many topics, however, it ultimately would turn

toward Maslow's hierarchy of needs and self-actualization. This was fascinating stuff for Larry, but it was the turn in conversation at the end of the day that would change Larry's life. Maslow began talking about Eupsychia. Eupsychia was Maslow's fictitious island where its one thousand inhabitants were self-actualized. What would the world be like if all inhabitants were self-actualized? Maslow handed Larry a paper titled, "Meta-Motivation: Beyond the Pyramid." He then leaned forward and suggested to Larry that he go and find out for himself. According to Larry's sons, this challenge from Maslow was like being handed a mission that would drive Larry's purpose and ambition through his professional life (Duhamel, 1998; Wilson, L. and Wilson, H., 1998; personal communication 2015).

**Building companies.** Larry Wilson had his purpose, but he was still no closer to developing his training program for Federated Insurance Company of Owatonna. He focused his attention on studying almost anything and everything he could find related to growth, leadership, sales, and psychology. He also thought deeply about his own success in sales and how his style contrasted with the sales model of the day. Larry decided his was a style that lent itself more toward counseling people rather than "selling" them (personal communications, 2014).

Larry turned to the work of Carl Rogers, who was a contemporary of Maslow. Like Maslow, Rogers was one of the early adopters of the humanistic approach to psychology, which is considered the third force in psychology. The humanistic approach concentrates on the individual as the center of the behavior. Rather than observing individual's behavior, the behavior is subjective and is discussed with the counselor through the eyes of the subject. The counseling is a process of self-discovery. It's an

empathic approach (McLeod, S.A., 2015). This approach was like a bolt of lightning for Larry. Rogers advocated a content-free method of counseling. It wasn't a prescribed method of steps to take and what to say based on the subject's behavior. It was empathic problem solving that closely fit Larry's style of sales. In essence, the scholar, Rogers, validated Larry's approach. It put words and theory to what he instinctively understood. The knowledge that he was following a well-respected counseling method planted the seed for win-win problem solving (personal communication, March 3, 2016).

Rogers' work helped Larry understand the counseling process and understanding the individual. It was through the understanding of Carl Rogers' work that counselor selling was born and became the backbone of Larry's new company, Wilson Learning Corporation (WLC). The name of the product was a very sixties sounding Sales Sonics and was literally developed in a room over Larry's garage in 1965. Larry stresses, "In counselor selling, you're helping the client through the process and trying to get at what's the best solution for them" (Duhamel, 1998, p. 49).

According to his associates, the sales training program was revolutionary for its time. Author, speaker, envelope salesman, and syndicated columnist, Harvey Mackay calls Counselor Selling, "the groundbreaking training program that transformed a generation of salespeople from the 'find 'em and grind 'em' school of selling to the 'win-win' approach" (Wilson, L. and Wilson, H., 1994, p. x). Larry would later go on to change Sales Sonics moniker to Counselor Selling.

Wilson Learning initially concentrated on working with the banking industry. In the 1970's they expanded into the automotive, telecommunications, heavy equipment, and Hospitality industries. Adding the Social Styles program, also in the 70's, brought

interpersonal skills development to all of the training programs. In the 80's WLC concentrated on expanding the product line to be a full-service provider of human resource development programs and services. During this time the reach of WLC grew to include all corners of the world (Lashbrook, 1990).

Toward the beginning of the 80's, Larry was itching to move on. He believed there was more to training and learning than the Wilson Learning offerings. He saw training as an opportunity for personal growth: intellectually, emotionally, and physically. The Wilson Learning core competencies did not allow expansion into the emotional and physical elements of Larry's vision, which was based on self-actualization through wellness and personal growth (personal communication, May 29, 2015).

Larry sold Wilson Learning in 1982 and bought a 2000-acre ranch outside of Santa Fe, New Mexico. It was a beautiful and spiritual setting in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. He set to work constructing a conference center with 50 rooms, a high-end dining facility, two conference rooms, six break-out rooms, production studio, a swimming pool, hot tubs with gorgeous views, tennis courts, and riding stables, which were all completed around 1985.

The Pecos River Learning Center (Pecos) was to become the center of Larry's newest venture into learning and development. He most likely envisioned the Ranch as his personal Eupsychia—Larry's island for self-actualization in the middle of New Mexico. It was the absolutely perfect setting for Larry's programs. A former associate indicated that Larry was smart enough to realize people needed a decompression space to ease them into the programs. The Ranch was comfortable and spiritual at the same time.



Participants arrived, had several hours to unwind before a gourmet dinner and their first group session.

The Pecos Ranch also included a *ropes*, or *challenge course*. Most participants spent their first full day on the ropes course. Larry had been introduced to the ropes course through hosting a kids' camp. The facilitators had the course built for a high-performance camp for teens. When Larry saw the transformation of the kids on the ropes course, he knew it had to be a component of all his corporate programs. At Pecos, the ropes course wasn't about individuals doing a few events throughout the day. It was about a group of people sharing an emotional experience that ultimately brought them closer together as a group, while discovering the courage and abilities each individual had lying dormant. The design of the ropes course elements placed the focus on the group helping and supporting each other, whether it was emotional support or holding the safety lines. People became reliant on others and became accustomed to asking for support. The process built empathy among the participants.

The whole experience at the Pecos Ranch produced results; results from the participants experiencing what Edgar Schein (2010) calls a cultural island. He states:

The key to initiating dialogic conversation is to create a setting in which participants feel secure enough to suspend their need to win arguments, clarify everything they say, and challenge each other every time they disagree. In a dialogue, if someone has just said something that I disagree with suspension would mean that I would hold back voicing my disagreements and, instead, silently ask myself why I disagree and what assumptions I am making that might explain the disagreement. (p.391)

Pecos created the cultural islands for all participants where they felt safe and built empathy. In this new environment, Larry redefined winning as, "Going as far as you can, using all you've got" (Wilson and Wilson, 1998, p. 25).

Playing to Win was the core program at the Pecos River Learning centers. Other programs were added to this core program that concentrated on differing results. The Let Go program was aimed at middle managers to help them eliminate fear and change from using outdated management techniques to becoming developmental leaders. Changing the Game was a longer program for executives that sought to build the executive team to be more effective in executing strategy and changing the cultures in their respective companies. The Partnering: Creating Customers for Life program took aim at sales forces by showing the advantage of creating partnerships with customers, rather than using traditional selling styles (Pecos sales brochures).

According to the thousands of participant evaluations and feedback, all programs were very successful and almost without exception produced the desired results for the companies. The primary problem with conducting programs at the Ranch was the high cost to bring employees to New Mexico in groups of 80 to 100. Larry decided to take his show on the road. After the executive teams visited the Pecos Ranch, they would have the option for Pecos to come to their location(s) and roll out the program to various levels in the organization.

The new model of going to the customer worked well for organizations, but it was extremely difficult to get more than 20 executives to go to the Ranch at a time. It became evident that the Pecos Ranch fixed costs were eating into the profits. In the early 1990s, Larry began looking for a financial partner to provide operating capital and help increase

annual sales. By 1994 he had such a partner in Aon, an insurance company with a large consulting division. Aon ended up buying the whole company, selling the Ranch, and moving Pecos River Learning Centers to Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The new ownership arrangement ultimately implemented too many constraints on Larry and his style of leadership. Pecos survived for a few years in Minneapolis but finally dissolved into Aon Consulting in 1999. Larry moved on to form Larry Wilson and Associates. He went back to the drawing board and created a new curriculum called The Great Game of Life. The new program was built on many of the same philosophies Larry developed over the years. He also added some of his newer ideas and started to create a partner network for independent consultants to sell and deliver the new product.

Simmons Bedding Company was among the first companies to buy and fully incorporate the programs into their culture. Simmons created a committee to quantify the results of the programs. In three years Simmons saved around \$40 million in waste alone. Fenway Partners, the holding company that owned Simmons, sold their \$513 million investment for \$1.1 billion five years later. Net sales increased from around \$650 million in 2001 to about \$890 million in three years (Casciaro & Edmondson, 2007). These results opened new opportunities, but the global recession coupled with some health issues forced Larry to slow down. In April 2013 Larry Wilson succumbed to cancer and passed away.

### **The Researcher's History, Relationship, and Biases**

Qualitative papers necessarily introduce interpretation and potential bias. The interpretation comes at two levels; first, the interpreting of my relationship and experiences with Larry and second, my interpretation of the responses from people

interviewed and surveyed. It is important for the reader to understand my history and perspective to gain insight into my interpretations of leadership and into my time working under Larry's leadership.

I was born in 1957 in Minneapolis, MN. My father was a board-certified family physician and my mother was a full-time volunteer. Both of my parents were high achievers and were actively involved in their churches and St. Olaf College, where they were both named distinguished alumni. In addition to practicing medicine, my father was the Medical Director of Fairview Southdale Hospital, on church boards, on the Fairview Healthcare Corporate Board, and on the Hennepin County Medical Society Board. My mother volunteered for the church, recorded books on tape for the blind, delivered Meals on Wheels, was the first layperson elected to chair the Luther Theological Seminary Board of Regents, held a seat on the Lutheran Deaconess Hospital Board, and rose to be National President of the American Lutheran Church Women. As my father told those attending his retirement party, both my parents felt a calling to serve. For years I observed my parent's service to medical, educational, and Christian institutions. They would be categorized as Servant Leaders (Greenleaf, 1977).

Having this long-time exposure to servant leaders influenced how I looked at leadership. I had the belief that leaders should be people who worked for their employees, rather than over them. I also thought the best leaders empower their employees and free them up to reach their potential.

When it came to looking for adventure, I was at the front of the line. As long as I was outside and free, I loved life. And, like Larry, I was a bit rebellious. My freedom-

loving nature drew me toward empowering leaders. I needed to do my thing, or work with a team that was free to be productive with no interference.

My propensity for adventure led to a life of late nights and partying. This lifestyle brought me to the restaurant business where I learned how to cook and eventually to the Culinary Institute of America. I tasted my first real leadership role after being elected as group leader. Taking from my background, I sought to be a leader who would serve my group and do what I could to create an environment where we all helped each other learn and grow as a team. After my first year at the CIA, I got the call to have a beer with Larry's daughter and moved to New Mexico.

I didn't meet Larry until a few weeks after I settled into my cooking position. The meeting was quick, and consisted of me driving up to the private airstrip on a small, flat area above the conference center where his pilot landed. He had been traveling and was tired, so the introduction had not been very inspiring. Over the summer, however, I spent time listening to Larry address the various groups that came through the property. I was impressed by what he was saying, but didn't quite understand why he had followers hanging on every word.

Later that fall, I had the opportunity to attend one of the three-day open programs as a staff member. When I had the chance to experience the full breadth of his program, I finally understood how powerful it was. The mixture of experiential learning on the ropes course, combined with the interaction with other clients, the fun, the emotion, and the heart with which Larry delivered the curriculum all blended together to provide a very stirring experience. Larry unleashed a new way of thinking for me. I had been cruising

along in life, following the path of least resistance. I suddenly was not sure what I wanted to do.

My thoughts continued to swirl through the spring until I knew I had to make some changes. Partying was getting in the way of what I wanted out of life. I checked into an outpatient facility for alcohol treatment. In the late spring of 1987, I quit drinking for good and decided to leave the restaurant business.

With no money and no employment prospects in my future, I called Larry's same daughter and asked if there was any work (other than in the restaurant) for which Pecos was willing to hire me. The only spot available was a part-time, \$4.00 per hour job working on the ropes course. I enthusiastically took it. I had no money or place to live, so I brought my tent and sleeping bag to New Mexico and lived on a secluded spot on the Pecos Ranch.

Soon, the clients wanted us to bring the Pecos experience closer to their employees. We began building ropes courses around the country and added local contract staff to work the programs. We had to figure it out as we went. I took on many of the administrative duties as well as delivering the programs and building courses. Every program was a learning experience. Once Larry trusted our department to give him what he wanted, he empowered and challenged us to get better and better by selling programs with more and more participants and in remote locations.

The core of the Adventure Learning Program's (ALPs) responsibility was our obligation to support the program curriculum. Experiential learning was not the ends of the program, but the means. Everything the ALPs staff did programmatically was designed to enhance and accelerate learning and build teams. It provided a safe space for

participants to experiment with new ways of behaving and interacting. The whole framework of the experiential day was designed to reinforce the curriculum and prepare the participants for the balance of the program. The entire staff was well versed in Larry's curriculum and framed the activities to impart the most benefit. By the end of the programs, even the more cynical participants had learned something and found value in attending.

The period of time while Pecos was learning and growing as a company was wonderful. The ALPs staff was traveling around the country and eventually overseas. We were solely responsible for building safe courses, and delivering quality programs while remaining within the budget. It spoke to my freedom-loving nature. We were outdoors most of the time, traveling, and having fun. Working at heights satisfied my propensity for risk-taking. We were challenged by Larry to build bigger and more challenging courses. As long as the work was done, we could do what we wanted when back home.

With Pecos, Larry had created the best possible environment for me to work. I was challenged, empowered, learning and growing, taking leadership roles, and helping to develop our own staff. We were becoming the developmental leaders Larry encouraged our clients to become. The ALPs staff generally felt that the business leaders listened to us and we had input to how we ran the department. It was a wonderful, healthy environment.

While running the Pecos experiential programs, another experience challenged my knowledge of leadership. We were contracted to provide the second session of a yearlong program for the Cargill Leadership Development Program. This was not a normal Pecos program, but one to provide a climbing and rappelling weekend for 48

high-potential employees. As I prepared for the first program, I read as much as I could about leadership. I soon realized that the more I learned, the more I needed to learn. For the Cargill sessions, I settled on helping the participants become more self-aware while encouraging teamwork. The programs were not particularly fulfilling for me, but did accelerate my desire to learn more about leadership.

Eventually, Pecos River dissolved. Larry continued to sell programs under the Larry Wilson and Associates banner and sub-contracted me to provide the experiential component of the new programs. The partnership was a win-win. I was able to continue doing the work I loved, and Larry was able to book programs without having the overhead that comes with supporting the staff needed to run the experiential activities. The partnership never faded, but the poor US economy and Larry's failing health resulted in no booked programs after about 2007.

The change in my situation resulted in my getting a stable job in the financial world. My schedule was 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM every day. I decided to take this time to go back to school and learn more about leadership in a masters program. I had worked with leaders and had seen leadership exhibited in our programs, but the concept of leadership remained intangible. The school curriculum and my research in the leadership program brought theory and nomenclature to what I had observed in our programs for 25 years. My tacit knowledge was made explicit.

Furthermore, I was able to look at Larry Wilson in a new light. I thought I was beginning to understand why Larry, as a leader, had such an impact on people; why people were so willing to follow him. School was the intersection of my practical



experience with Larry and the theoretical knowledge I gained about leadership. This was the point I decided to write this paper on Larry and his leadership style.

My relationship with Larry makes it hard for me to be completely unbiased when writing about him, especially when the topic is transformational leadership. Larry had a big effect my personal transformation. He not only motivated me to change my path but also employed me in a company where I felt challenged and fulfilled. Even after Pecos folded, he kept the working relationship alive by subcontracting me to support his programs. He was my employer and friend for over 20 years.

### **Method & Methodology**

Qualitative research is difficult to define. Barbara Swanson, Karen Watkins, and Victoria Marsick (1997) write:

Qualitative research is often defined most by what it is not—that is, by the absence of *purely* quantitative methods and analysis—than by what it is.

Qualitative research uses methods that speak to quality, that is, nuances, perceptions, viewpoints, meaning, relationships, stories, and dynamic changing perspectives. (p.89)

The qualitative approach is described by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as one in which, “quantity amount, intensity, or frequency”, are not examined. The emphasis is on, “process and meanings” (p.4). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016) explain the differences between quantitative and qualitative research similarly, “Furthermore, in several qualitative research approaches, the collection of data and their analysis are sensitive to the social and cultural context aiming at a holistic understanding of the issues studied” (p.4).

Another difference between quantitative research and qualitative research lies in how the study unfolds. Quantitative research is a *deductive* process where theories of a known phenomenon are explored to deduce a subsequent theory. Qualitative research is more of an *inductive* approach where theories are outcomes of gathering information in pursuit of answering a specific question (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

This chapter describes the methodology and methods I used to conduct the research. Since I rely on interviews and personal experience to answer the main question on the paper, I use the *interpretive* method or paradigm. Methods, or procedures, are discussed which are consistent with those used in qualitative research in general and the interpretive method specifically.

### **Interpretive Method**

As the name of the method implies, interpretive research is based on how people interpret their social interactions. People observing the same phenomenon will each have a different interpretation of that phenomenon. The goal of the researcher is to gather, “an extensive collection of *thick description*... as the basis for inductive generation of an understanding of what is going on or how things work (an *explanatory theory*)” (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2004, p. 150). Since there is a lack of detailed, previous research on many qualitative research subjects, the researcher must gather as many sources of information as possible and interpret the results, pulling themes and evidence common to all sources. “The qualitative researcher who uses montage is like a quilt maker or a jazz improviser. The quilter stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, P.7).

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016) view the interpretive method as one with “subjective and shared meanings” (p.20). They go on to state, “As much of the qualitative research focuses on human action and understanding, interpretation is an important part of any analysis of qualitative materials” (p. 20). The researcher must strive to understand their own and others’ interpretations of a phenomenon in a given setting.

### **Methodology**

There are no hard-and-fast rules guiding interpretive research. “Among the methods commonly used by interpretive researchers are interviews, systematic observation of the setting or events under investigation, and analysis of documentary materials (lesson plans, police reports, hospital records, news stories, and diaries)” (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2004, P.150).

Using multiple methods of obtaining information about Larry provides differing vantage points from which to view Larry and his leadership style. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) write, “... the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p.7). Using multiple methods will provide multiple sources of information that provide a greater understanding of the subject. These various sources should offer a look at the subject from differing vantage points and be mutually supportive of the information about the subject.

Since there has been no previous research on Larry Wilson, this paper must rely on written text, audio CD's, interviews, brochures, and a questionnaire. The written texts come from articles written about Larry and in Larry's own words from the books he wrote. Audio CD's were produced by Larry to share his curriculum. The interviews and

questionnaires were with employees and customers of Larry's through his time at Wilson Learning Corporation and Pecos River Learning Centers (or Pecos River Division of Aon Consulting).

**Interviews.** This paper relies heavily on personal interviews. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016) support this methodology, "A common reason for the use of interviews in business research is that they are an efficient and practical way of collecting information that you cannot find in a published form" (p. 93-94). To understand what type of leader Larry was, those he led must be questioned for their understanding and interpretation of his style. While people outside of Larry's companies and customer base have opinions of Larry, they have not experienced Larry as a leader and cannot provide as accurate of an interpretation.

The interviews were conducted live in an unstructured format over the phone and in person. "This type of interview [unstructured] is useful for exploring the research subject in depth and from the participant's point of view" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p. 94). The interviews were conducted over a period of roughly four months. There was an attempt to interview as many people as possible from the various aspects of Larry's life. Questions were broad and tried to avoid leading the interviewees toward predetermined conclusions. The breakdown of interviewees is as follows: 23-Pecos River only, 4-Wilson Learning only, 9-both Wilson Learning and Pecos River, and 1 did not work for Larry. Five people we found who knew Larry through their relationships as customers. All were customers of Pecos. In most cases, the interviews were single sessions. A few of the interviews were interrupted and a follow-up session was scheduled to complete the interview. There were a total of 37 interviews conducted, for a combined

44 hours and 45 minutes. A few interviewees answered the questions on Word documents and emailed them ahead of the interview, which were then discussed live. A list of questions (Appendix A) provided a framework for the conversations, which were recorded with the participants' permission. One interviewee declined a recorded interview. His conversation was conducted per the normal format with notes taken as the interviewee spoke. The writer personally transcribed all interviews into Word documents. Many of the comments were transferred to a spreadsheet with the interviewee names listed horizontally across the top row, and thesis topics were listed along a vertical column. All digital recordings and transcriptions of the interviews have been retained and are stored on a hard drive and backed up on an external drive.

Once the interviews were transcribed the data was parsed for common words, phrases, sentences, and themes. "Analyzing key words, phrases, sentences and themes focuses on the existence of certain content in the data and thus provides a rather static conception of the content" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p. 122). Germane comments were written in a column on a spreadsheet to which new thoughts were added as they emerged. If a comment was similar to a previously written comment, it was noted on the grid under the interviewee's name. After completing the review of all transcribed interviews, the mentions were tallied for each comment. 45 comments were mentioned more than once.

To further validate the interview results, a questionnaire (Appendix B) was then sent to 60 people who had not participated in the interview process. Again, these people were contacted because of their familial or close working relationship with Larry. 19 people responded by sending a completed questionnaire. The returned questionnaires

were reviewed in a process similar to that of the interviews. There were no new, unique comments. The initial 45 comments remained as the primary comments. Responses were tallied on the same spreadsheet under the respondent's name.

As mentioned, the initial parsing produced 45 individual, notable topics, or mini-themes for which there were multiple responses. These responses were subsequently arranged into five themes, combining topics receiving ten mentions and above. When consolidating the mini-themes into main themes, the similar comments or mini-themes were moved into groups. Once grouped, the very similar comments were consolidated into one, broader comment. At this point, it was easy to identify the five, main theme groupings and give them a group-heading label. Some comments did not fit under any of the main headings. However, these remaining comments received six or fewer mentions out of the 55 respondents.

The next step was to combine comments under each heading into theme statements comprehensive enough to send back to the interviewees and questionnaire respondents for validation. This involved concentrating on the topics that received the most comments under each heading. The concept was to be as concise as possible while retaining the majority opinion; either too much or too little detail might cause confusion. The sub- or mini-themes categorization involved considerable judgment. Many could have gone one way or another. The context of the comment was used to assess the theme under which to group them. Based on the nearly unanimous agreement with the five themes in the validation process, it's not believed any variation would have made a difference. Each of the main themes had well over half of the people mention at least two sub-themes under it.

The five main themes were sent to all participants in an email (Appendix C) for validation. The themes were accompanied by the following three questions: is there anything to add; do I need to change anything; and, did I get it right. The overwhelming response was that the themes were correct, but a number of people responded regarding the choice of words in the themes. Most suggested the use of more neutral, less positive language. These responses were significant enough to prompt changes to the wording of the themes to reflect this concern. Even though there was little to no mention of Larry's fallibility as a human being during the interviews or on the questionnaire, many suggested this aspect of Larry should be mentioned in the paper. All validation response emails were saved for future reference.

**Brochures, books, and CD's.** Brochures and books are included in this methodology. The books included those that are considered some of the most influential scholarly books in leadership research. Books authored by Larry offered insight into his thinking, written in the First Words section of his books. They also provide written documentation of Larry's philosophy and curriculum throughout the chapters. Quotes taken from these sources were added to the spreadsheet in the same manner as the literature and interviews.

Larry Wilson's self-produced audio CD's were provided by family members. The CD's were not transcribed or quoted directly in this paper. Through listening to them, they provided a broader understanding and insight into Larry's thinking and curriculum.

**Research on Leadership.** The literature research followed a more traditional academic research methodology into the models of transformational leadership. Peter Northouse's book, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (2013), served as the springboard to

the research specifically on transformational leadership. This line of research was conducted primarily on scholarly databases. The databases used were primarily Science Direct, ABI/Inform, Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, Business Search Premier, ERIC, and ProQuest. These were filtered for peer review and scholarly journals.

Of the various approaches to transformational leadership, Bass and Avolio's (1994) Full Range of Leadership model seemed to fit Larry Wilson best due to their focus on the transformational leader's ability to move followers beyond their self-interests in pursuit of higher-level goals (Bass, 1985). This approach is consistent with the individual moving up Maslow's hierarchy of needs toward self-actualization. As with the interviews, notes from the research were placed on the spreadsheet. The research source was listed across the horizontal axis across the top, and the research topics were listed down the vertical axis in the left-hand column. Quotes were written into the cell at the intersection of source and topic.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Survey of Leadership Perspectives**

Leadership is a difficult subject, not only to define, but also to create a model of leadership that works at all time and in all cases. There have been a multitude of studies completed on leadership, but none has emerged as the single, agreed upon model, theory, or definition to describe leadership or the way all leaders behave. Perhaps this is because every leader is unique and their situation is unique. That which makes a person a good, or even great, leader in one case may not hold true for the same person in a different setting. Another issue is differentiating between the noun leadership and what it entails, and the act of leading, which is often perceived in the eye of the follower.



In *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (2013), Peter Northouse compiles selected approaches to leadership and explains the various theories by explaining the research behind the processes. Leadership research began around the early twentieth century. The initial theory was *Trait* approach, or the so-called "Great Man" theory, which contends leaders are born with certain traits. All great leaders had certain traits in common that differentiated them from their followers.

Closely related to the Trait Theory was the *Skills Theory*. This approach focused on leadership skills. It suggests that leaders have certain skills that can be learned and developed, rather than personality traits with which people are born. The research attempted to study leaders and compile lists of common skills.

Another theory emerged looking at the behaviors of leaders. *Behavior Theory* was the first time researchers looked at the interaction between leaders and followers, how leaders acted. Leaders often helped followers with task accomplishment, or they developed relationships that encouraged followers to feel better about the work.

*Situational Leadership* took an even broader approach to leadership. This theory posits that leaders must adapt their leadership style to what is appropriate to the situation. To be effective in the situational approach, leaders have to assess their followers' skill level and assess the situation, then modify their style to get the most out of their followers.

The *Contingency Theory* is closely related to the Situational Leadership Theory in that leaders are matched to the situation required by the task and the subordinates involved. They do not assess the situation, as previously. The situation and group are evaluated, and then leaders with the appropriate style are placed with the group.

More recently, *Path–Goal Theory* looks at subordinate motivation. Given a set goal, what can the leader do to motivate the subordinates to accomplish the goal? This motivation often includes removing obstacles from the path. Again, the leader has to decide what style to use they believe will be most effective to help the subordinates reach their goal. It increases the expectation for success. This approach includes the leader supporting subordinates.

*Leader–Member Exchange Theory* places emphasis on the leader and subordinate interactions. It posits leaders will act within their certain style at all times and followers will react differently, depending on their personalities, and is dyadic by nature. Followers are either in the in-group or out-group. Members of the in-group are in sync with the leader and are, therefore, treated better and are rewarded more. The out-group members generally just go to work, get their work done, and go home.

A more recent and popular approach is Transformational Leadership. The focus of transformational leadership is the leader's charisma and vision and a developmental aspect with regards to the subordinates. This type of leadership has a transforming characteristic that leads to increased accomplishment and emotional connection with the leader.

### **Larry Wilson Literature**

Outside of Larry Wilson's own books, which discuss his philosophy on better ways to sell and provide guidance on better ways to live one's life, Larry's life is not chronicled well. There are anecdotal episodes of Larry's life experiences that opened new ways of thinking for him in his books, but there is no body of work from the outside attempting to capture the entirety of his work, or how the many scholarly influences

factored into Larry's philosophy of how to get the most out of living and be better, more self-actualized human beings.

Two magazine articles exist that explore Larry's philosophy and history. The first, *Between Two Trapezes* (Galagan, 1987), explores Larry's Pecos River program from a participant's point of view. The article explores the emotional and physical nature of the LEAP (Leaders Experiential Adventure Program) as Galagan participates in the four-day training. The article explores what happens to a person when they move to the outer edges of their comfort zone; physically, psychologically, or emotionally. It's through the trust and support of the team that enables a person to push through self-imposed boundaries. This pushing through to the outside of one's comfort zone is where the self-awareness and growth can occur. The article is interspersed with quotes of Larry's philosophy. Larry encourages people to boldly move into the future despite the fear. As leaders, people can create the environment where their people will be unafraid to take risks.

The second magazine article, *Destination Eupsychia* (Duhamel, 1998), is a look into the history of Larry Wilson from struggling insurance salesman through to the sale of Pecos River Learning Center to Aon Consulting. It discusses Larry's journey to fulfill his mission to create his own Eupsychia to help people grow and achieve self-actualization.

There is also very little other research or documentation linking Larry's philosophy to Abraham Maslow's (and others') theories. The First Words section of Larry's book, *Play to Win: Choosing Growth over Fear in Work and Life* (1998), discusses his history and his meeting with Maslow. There was no scholarly work on Larry Wilson found in the online databases.

**Maslow**

**Eupsychia.** A conversation about Larry Wilson must include a conversation about Abraham Maslow. It can be argued that Larry's meeting with Maslow is what set off his drive to change the world. One of his sons explained:

Larry boldly called Maslow and asked for some of his time. Larry went to Brandeis University and spent the day with Maslow. The way he tells the story, Maslow famously asked Larry, "What would you think if everyone lived in a world that are self-actualized," and rather than provide an answer, Maslow said, "Why don't you find out?" The way Larry tells the story is like the king touched him on the shoulder with a sword and said go forth to fulfill the mission. He then went on to say, "Today Larry would say Eupsychia was the vision from Maslow but is not achievable. However, from the moment the idea was given to him Larry was infected by it, and spent the rest of his life pursuing it." Another person added, "Maslow was the a-ha moment with Eupsychia and the self-actualization."

The concept of Eupsychia evolved out of Abraham Maslow's work on the theory of relative prepotency, or hierarchy of needs, as they are widely known. In his early seminal work, Maslow lays out a series of human needs wherein each need must be met in order to move toward fulfilling a higher need. The order of the needs climbs from physiological, to safety, then love (belonging), esteem, and finally self-actualization. Maslow theorizes that each level of need elicits an inherent motivation to satisfy the need. The motivation to fulfill needs is what drives most human behavior (Maslow, 1943).

Within the developed Western, peaceful societies, many of the basic levels of needs are relatively easily satisfied. Although there are people who are hungry and are not always safe, generally speaking the vast majority of people in the Western or industrialized world live relatively free from the more basic requirements. Most people can find employment with enough pay to cover the basic needs. As the lower level needs are consistently sated, humans can spend more time in pursuit of the higher level needs.

The ultimate question then, is what happens when or if, all people become self-actualized? It was this question that moved Maslow to the concept of Eupsychia. In Maslow's words, "I've coined the word Eupsychia and defined it as the culture that would be generated by 1,000 self-actualized people on some sheltered island where they would not be interfered with" (Maslow, 1965, p. xi). He would later state; in thinking about this island, it was easier to imagine the relationships and mentally experiment with how those relationships would play out when all the self-actualized people lived in one contained community, free from the influences of the outside world (Maslow, 1965).

Maslow wrote *Eupsychian Management* with the above thoughts in mind, after reading the then-current batch of management books. Eupsychia, as previously discussed, is looked at as an end-state. In *Eupsychian Management*, Maslow (1965) goes farther:

But the word, Eupsychia, can also be taken in other ways. It can mean 'moving toward psychological health' or 'healthward.' It can imply the actions taken to foster and encourage such a movement, whether by a psychotherapist or a teacher. It can refer to the mental or social conditions, which make health more likely. Or it can be taken as an ideal limit; i.e. the far goals of therapy, education, or work.  
(p.xi)

In this book, Maslow (1965) discusses his views of how Eupsychia would apply to a business, leadership, and work environment. Initially, the discussion focuses on human interactions, such as between employees and other employees or between management and employees. However, these relationships cannot be optimal if the people in the relationships are not aligned with the group or organizational purpose. Purpose in life and work must align if people are to be happy and fulfilled. "The only happy people I know are the ones who are working well at something they consider important" (p.6).

Maslow also discusses synergy at great length. Selfish pursuits also help out others in a Eupsychian organization, "Self-actualization work is simultaneously a seeking and fulfilling of the self *and* also an achieving of the selflessness which is the ultimate expression of *real* self. It resolves the dichotomy between selfish and unselfish" (Maslow, 1965, p.7). These selfish actions taken by individuals in an organization help create the synergy that leads to better relationships, more productivity, and healthier profits. He sees it as a nest of boxes, "The better the product, the better the workers, the better the managers, the better the enterprise, the better the community, the better the state, the better the country, the better the world" (Maslow, 1965, p.111).

**Transformational Leadership.** In its essence, transformational leadership necessarily includes growth up the hierarchy of needs toward self-actualization. Transformational leadership is about helping people grow and work towards higher level needs. Ultimately, leaders encourage followers to move beyond their personal needs and aim at working toward the goals of a group or organization, whose mission is best carried out through the combined efforts of the employees. Bass thought, compared to

transactional leadership, transformational leadership arouses the higher level needs for self-actualization, rather than immediate self-interest. "Increased awareness and the arousal of higher-level which transcend self-interests can produce extraordinary effort" (Bass, 1985, p.15). As one moves up the hierarchy of needs, higher levels emerge prior to satisfying the lower level needs. Bass believed that it is in the upper levels where the opportunities for transformational leadership lie.

Burns (2003) also connected Maslow's hierarchy with transformational leadership. He believes a leader's self-actualizing qualities are what turns the leader outward to supporting others and helping in their growth. The self-actualizing or transforming leader senses the needs and desires of those he/she leads. The leader transforms those needs and desires into a vision in which people can see themselves providing a contribution to achieving. In Burns's (2003) words,

What appealed to me most, though, was the potential link between Maslow's drive for self-actualization and the motivation for leadership. The qualities that motivate and characterize self-actualization—creativity, the capacity for growth and learning, flexibility, openness, and what psychologists Robert White called 'effectance' skills in dealing with others or with the environment—are near to those of leadership. (p. 143)

The relationship between leader and follower is reciprocal in Burns's (2003) eyes. The leader is typically one step ahead of followers and stays closely tuned to the needs of the followers. The followers, in turn, are pushed to grow to a higher level, which forces the leader to again learn from followers and grow as well. The followers effectively lead the leader and together they pursue self-actualization. Burns (1978) states, "I suggest that

the most marked characteristic of self-actualizers as potential leaders goes beyond Maslow's self-actualization; it is their capacity to *learn* from others and from the environment—to be *taught*” (p.117).

This reciprocity between leaders and followers is where Burns believes there is an ethical responsibility for leaders to move followers up the hierarchy of needs. According to Bass (1985) leaders can just as easily move followers down the hierarchy to basic needs and toward the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum. This may result in criminal activity and violence. Hitler and Stalin were prime examples of how a leader can lead people down a rather dark path.

Absolutely, there is a relationship between Maslow's hierarchy of needs and transformational leadership. Moving up the hierarchy of needs mandates growth and movement toward self-actualization. The characteristics of transformational leadership also involve moving toward a higher ideal or vision. This movement toward a collective vision requires satisfied basic needs and the pursuit of higher needs. Transformational leadership is inspirational, helps people grow, and stimulates change in individuals and the organization, which fulfills those higher level needs.

### **Transactional Leadership**

Transactional leadership occurs when leaders and followers arrive at an agreement as to what it will take for the follower to comply with the leader's wishes. The arrangement is essentially a transaction, “You do something for me, and I'll do something for you.” It is up to the transactional leader to define and clarify the role the follower will play and the expectations of results. The better leaders understand the followers' needs and adjust the rewards accordingly (Bass, 1985a). Politics are a prime



example of transactional relationships. Politicians, if elected, promise to accomplish something for the constituents in exchange for votes.

There are several issues with the transactional leadership model. First, is that it requires a leader who is able to identify the needs of each of their followers, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. They might not get the “carrot” right relative to the individual, so the incentive will not produce results across the board. Also, what happens if the leader is unable to deliver the reward once the task has been accomplished? This can lead to follower apathy, thus mandating a new or larger reward for the same effort on the followers' part. Finally, assuming this method produces results, those results will be limited by the calculation the followers make for the effort they expend in order to seek the requisite reward. Transactional leadership allows the leader to move followers only so far. To achieve higher productivity the leader must arouse something inside of the follower, which is usually emotionally based (Bass, 1985a).

Transactional leadership can be broken down further into three styles. The first, and most effective of these is *contingent reward* (CR). Contingent reward or contingent reinforcement is typified by positive rewards for achieving specified goals. CR is not as effective at producing results as transformational leadership, but it is the best method used in transactional leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Rewards given in CR include promotions, pay increases, bonuses, good performance appraisals, recognition, and better job assignments (Avolio, Waldman, & Yammarino, 1991).

Management by exception takes two forms. In the first form, the manager *actively* monitors the process and intervenes only when there is a breakdown in the process (MBE-A). At this point, the manager can either reinforce positively (rewards) or

negatively (punishment) to encourage employees to adjust the process to where it is back on track. The leader, who only intervenes after the process has failed, practices the passive form of management by exception (MBE-P). This form of leadership rarely produces positive results and is looked upon unfavorably by the subordinates (Bass, 1985a; Bass and Avolio, 1994).

### **Transformational Leadership Theory Development**

The study of leadership goes back more than a century. Theories and models explaining leaders and leadership have taken many forms and will continue to take shape. As with the various views on leadership, the comments on Larry's leadership that emerged from the interviews and questionnaires also vary. Many of the views expressed focus on inspiration, vision, charisma, transformation, and motivation. The terms all point to the transformational leadership models that have been researched and presented in research papers and books.

In the mid-twentieth century, employees were hired by, and stayed with one company for most of their careers. Loyalty was to the organization and little thought was given to individual needs. Toward the end of the century, people became more interested in furthering their careers than with positively contributing to any given organization. Jumping companies to move up the ladder became the norm and the older leadership models did not suffice (Vicere and Fulmer, 1996; Bass, 1999). Leadership was not as important as it is today for attracting and keeping talented individuals.

Further, training was also not viewed to be as important as it is today. As one moved up into the organization, he or she was trained or mentored by their direct manager. Effective management was the goal and people learned what they could in a

specific role until there was an opening up the ladder into which they were promoted. This is also no longer the case. The global economy requires that businesses become faster at adapting to the current markets and people need to be better at networking, communicating, adapting, and leading.

As the name implies, transformational leaders transform or change people and organizations. Transformational leadership involves an emotional connection between leader and followers. The emotional element is what resonates with people and helps them work toward a goal or ideal larger than themselves. True transformational leadership raises a person's, "level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualization, and the well being of others, the organization, and society" (Bass, 1999, p. 11). Burns (1978) believes transformational leadership requires an ethical component as well. Only companies with transformational leaders are capable of innovating quickly enough to meet the demands of today's economy to gain or maintain a position at the top of their industry.

James MacGregor Burns is the writer generally considered to be the first to name and define *transformational* leadership. Until then, leadership was seen as a coercive relationship in which the leader provides either positive or negative incentive to induce the desired response. Burns termed this typical leadership style as *transactional*. In his words, "Such leadership occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with the other for the purpose of an exchange of valued things" (Burns, 1978, p.19). The relationship is simply a transaction and is complete when both parties receive the desired results. Again, in Burns's (1978) words, "But beyond this the relationship does not go.

The bargainers have no enduring purpose that holds them together; hence they may go their separate ways" (p.20).

Burns (1978) contrasts transactional leadership with transformational leadership by stating, "Such a leadership occurs when one or more persons *engage* with others in such a way that leader and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p.20). He describes this leader and follower relationship as having a common purpose. It's this common purpose that elevates the relationship to one in which both leader and follower are elevated to higher levels of achievement (Burns, 1978).

Burns's concept of transformational leadership was an inspiration to Bernard Bass. In his seminal book, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, Bass (1985) looks more closely at the relationships between leaders and followers in the context of transformation. Transformational leaders are better able to influence followers to transcend personal motivations and work toward the benefit of the organization, which increases the performance of all followers. He identifies inspirational leadership, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation as the foundations of transformational leadership. In contrast to Burns's belief that transformational leaders are always transformational, Bass believed transformational leaders lead on a spectrum that combines elements of transactional leadership with elements of transformational leadership, depending on the situation and requisite outcome. "*Most leaders do both, but in different amounts* [italics in the original]" (Bass, 1985, p.22).

Bass and Avolio (1994) refined Bass's earlier works by changing one of the transformational characteristics, inspirational leadership, to inspirational motivation and adding a fourth characteristic, idealized influence. In addition to the move toward four

characteristics of transformational leadership, Bass and Avolio define the *Full Range of Leadership* model. This range progresses from the rather hands-off approach to leadership, called *laissez-faire* leadership, to the slightly more active transactional leadership, to the fully engaged transformational leadership. While most leaders exhibit all of these leadership tendencies, the most effective and transformational leaders spend most of their time leading from the transformational end of the spectrum (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

The 1980's saw two other lines of research into transformational leadership develop (Northouse, 2013). Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (2007) conducted in-depth interviews with ninety successful or outstanding leaders in the public and private sectors. They developed what they called the four strategies or themes that leaders embodied comprising, what they refer to as, *transformative* leadership:

Strategy I: attention through vision.

Strategy II: meaning through communication.

Strategy III: trust through positioning.

Strategy IV: the deployment of self through (1) positive self-regard and (2) the

Wallenda factor. (P. 25)

The above themes drive the organizational effectiveness. Leader effectiveness emerges through five primary skills,

1. The ability to accept people as they are, not as you would like them to be.
2. The capacity to approach relationships and problems in terms of the present rather than the past.

3. The ability to treat those who are close to you with the same courteous attention that you extend to strangers and casual acquaintances.
4. The ability to trust others, even when the risk seems great.
5. The ability to do without constant approval and recognition from others.

(Bennis and Nanus, 2007, p. 61-63)

The authors don't necessarily prescribe a theory of transformational leadership. They present ideas, which if followed, should lead to more effective leadership of organizations and enable the leaders to draw more from their employees than they would normally have drawn.

Kouzes and Posner (2012) gathered their data in interviews with 1300 middle and senior level leaders in both the public and private sectors. They found when leaders were at their best; their behaviors had similar paths. As with Bennis and Nanus's (2007) approach, the authors don't call it transformational leadership per se, but describe it as, "making extraordinary things happen in organizations" (Kouzes and Posner, 2012, p.14). Kouzes and Posner (2012) identify five practices that contribute to the extraordinary outcomes. The practices are as follows:

1. Model the way
2. Inspire a shared vision
3. Challenge the process
4. Enable others to act
5. Encourage the heart (p. 3)

While the semantics are different, the result in following their practices has a transformational effect on organizations.

The aspect of the Full Range of Transformational Leadership model that set it apart was the development of the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (MLQ). Developed by Bass in 1985, the MLQ became the most widely used tool relative to transformational leadership. Although the MLQ had seen some revisions over the years, there was still conversation as to its validity. Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam (2003) confirmed the tool's validity relative to the full range of leadership model. They also believe that a leadership theory containing more than a couple components better helps define the complexities of the leadership role.

### **Bass's Transformational Leadership Theory**

Specific to Bass's (1985a) transformational leadership theory are the factors or characteristics of leaders that tend to elevate the individual goals of followers to a higher set of goals. These higher-level goals can be goals of a unit, organization, or society. The key is that the individual transcends the personal goals in favor of something that is bigger than the individual. According to Bass (1985a), "The transformational leader induces additional effort by directly increasing the follower's confidence as well as by elevating the value of outcomes through expanding his or her transcendental interests and level or breadth of needs in Maslow's hierarchy" (p.31). There tends to be an inspirational or emotional component to transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass, 1985a; Bass and Avolio 1994).

The first of Bass's transformational leadership characteristics is idealized influence. Here the transformational leaders behave in ways that situate them as role models. Followers observe the behaviors of their leaders and, in turn, try to emulate them. These leaders are honest, consistent, and trustworthy, and almost always put their

follower's needs ahead of their own. They see more in their followers than the followers see in themselves and help build the confidence to achieve their potential. Charisma is often an attribute of the leader exhibiting idealized influence, but not a necessary one (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Avolio et. al., 1991).

Closely associated with idealized influence is inspirational motivation. Leaders with a clear vision of the future and who can communicate an image of their vision are inspirational. They give meaning to the work, which helps build enthusiasm and motivation. As a result of the commitment and enthusiasm, team spirit is enhanced and these followers tend to work better together. People are inspired by what they can envision in their future. (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Avolio et. al., 1991).

Transformational leaders also challenge their followers. Intellectual stimulation is the third of the transformational characteristics in Bass's (1985) transformational leadership theory. These leaders challenge the status quo and challenge followers to develop creative solutions to difficult problems. They encourage people to look at the situations differently by reframing the issue or asking questions that open up a new line of thinking. Creativity is encouraged. Mistakes are welcomed and discussed. Mistakes bring new and different information to the group, and are not to be covered up. People are not punished for making mistakes as long as they are covering new territory. People are pushed while being supported, and growth is the result (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

While individualized consideration often contains elements of contingent reinforcement, the transformational leader considers the follower's needs in the process. In the fourth aspect of transformational leadership, the relationship is far more mentor-protégé' than manager-subordinate. The leader takes the time to get to know the



individual and his or her needs. Communication between the two is informal and personalized. Even negative reinforcement is ultimately geared to helping the followers grow as people. The focus is on the development of potential. Differences in follower personalities and needs require the leader to approach each follower's situation differently. Delegating responsibility, support, and empowerment are hallmarks of individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1994). In sum, "transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they ordinarily intended and often even more than they thought possible. They set more challenging expectations and typically achieve higher performances" (Bass, 1994, p. 3).

### **Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model**

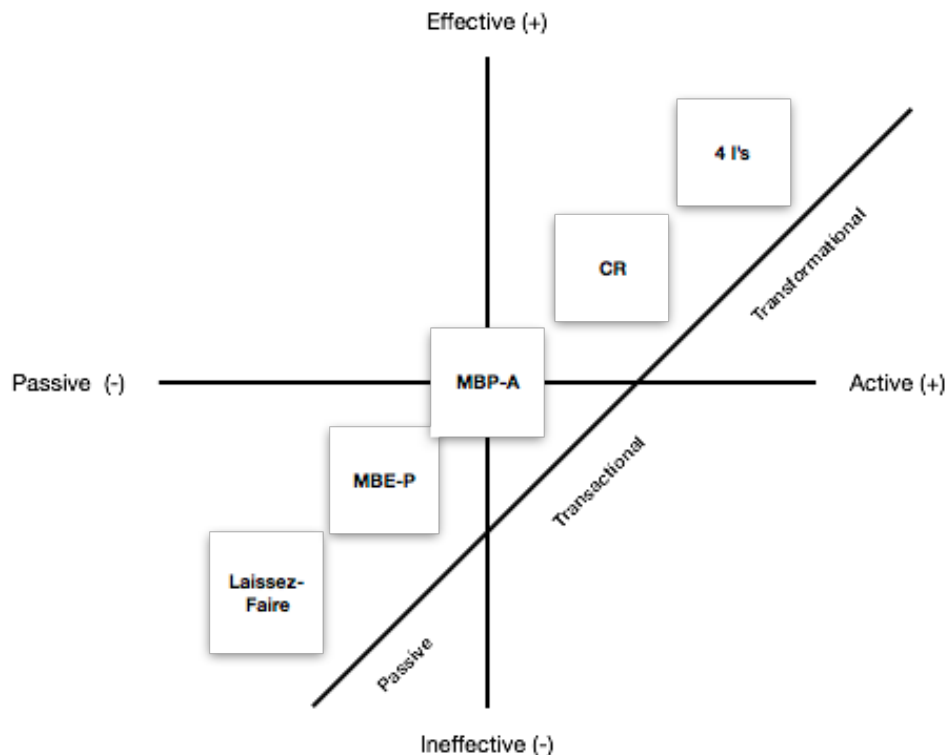
As previously indicated, the full range transformational leadership theory or model has evolved over time. The model has stabilized in its current form. The model has eight factors that cover the range of leadership. The transformational leadership element contains four factors: *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualized consideration*, which are often referred to as the 4 I's (Avolio et. al., 1991). The three transactional factors are: *contingent reward leadership*, *management-by-exception (active)*, and *management-by-exception (passive)*. The final factor is *laissez-faire leadership* that avoids taking action of any sort (Bass and Avolio, 1994). More recently, some researchers separate idealized influence into attributed and behavioral factors (Antonakis et. al., 2003).

Not all leaders can be transformational or transactional all the time. Since all leaders are different, Bass and Avolio (1994) posit that leaders will display varying degrees of the above factors in the full range of leadership, some more toward the

transformational end and some more toward the laissez-faire end. “Those leaders who are more satisfying to their followers and who are more effective as leaders are more transformational and less transactional” (Bass, 1999, p.11).

Bass and Avolio (1994) overlay their Full Range of Transformational Leadership model on top of a grid where the range of effective (+) to non-effective (-) is on the x-axis, and the range from passive (-) to active (+) is on the y-axis (Figure 1.). Those who exhibit transformational leadership with greater frequency will be active and effective leaders, while those toward the transactional or laissez-faire end of the range will be passive and ineffective. The authors go on to cite a multitude of studies completed in many different forms of organizations as measured by the MLQ. Leaders who lead across the full range of transformational leadership are good leaders, while those frequently leading from the transformational (4 I's) quadrant are the best leaders.

Figure 1. Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model



## Results

The following section will first apply the results from the interviews and questionnaires toward looking for themes that emerged. The second section is devoted to providing evidence of how Larry Wilson could be characterized as a leader who most led from the transformational end of the Full Range of Transformational Leadership.

### Themes

This section discusses the themes that arose from the interviews, questionnaires, and validation feedback received. Since people offered so many words, phrases, statements, and themes used to describe Larry, it was best to reduce the themes to one or two words. There was considerable variation between how people experienced Larry. These experiences spanned close to 40 years and a variety of roles. Responses expressed from those in Larry's early years at Wilson Learning differed from those who knew Larry after selling Pecos River to Aon. Because the majority of interviewees and questionnaire respondents knew Larry more recently, more responses are from the era later in his life.

The five themes derived from the group of friends, family and employees' comments were *Idea Generation*, *Accessible Curriculum*, *Connecting with People*, *Enjoying the Spotlight*, and *Leadership Approach*. Each theme is explored throughout the chapter through the words of the interviewees and questionnaire respondents. Comments are generally characteristic of those most often specified. However, when appropriate, dissenting opinions are shared.

**Idea Generation.** Larry was obsessed with generating new ideas. As one person put it, "Larry's ideas were the genesis." In the words of another, "Larry was the thought leader. The body of work speaks for itself. Larry was open to input. He ran awake,

always aware... read, watched movies, etc.” Another agreed, “[Larry] always talked business, always, always, always. Larry had a million ideas and just didn't want to waste time.” Ideas didn't always come from the traditional sources. Another added, “The key to what he did was have a sense for new ideas and find someone with ideas.”

Larry was always out front with his ideas to the extent that following them became a business risk. He didn't really care what others thought, if he believed in it. One of the WLC people indicated, in Larry's mind, “Cool ideas were cool ideas and the money would follow.” As another put it, “When led by someone willing to risk it all, it helped us keep moving ahead.”

Under the concept of Idea Generation were many comments about learning and searching for ideas, synthesizing learning, and understanding the psychology behind what he learned. This theme was most prevalent from people who had worked with Larry in the earlier days at WLC. While a few people were concerned that Larry “stole” ideas from other people, most concentrated on Larry's ability to take good concepts, spin them, and improve upon them.

Larry advocated lifelong learning. He was exceptionally talented at storing concepts he picked up through various sources. He read a lot. People who had seen his library noticed how worn his books were. His favorite books were highlighted, bookmarked, and full of Larry's own notes. As one person put it, “Larry read a ton.... [He] was unbelievably good at making connections. Reading something here and connecting to something over there and seeing something new. He was the ultimate intellectual innovator.”

It's difficult to separate the reading from the synthesizing. No one mentioned Larry reading as a leisure activity. The reading always seemed to have an end goal of finding something he could add to the curriculum. One person summarized:

Larry was always reading. He wanted the latest and greatest. Constantly reading HBR articles, the latest books on leadership or psychology, people in quandaries.... He read last weeks books and also from 30 or 40 years ago. Re-read books many times, or ten years later.

Larry's inspiration for ideas didn't always come from books. A few people mentioned the following story, which exemplifies his ability to make connections:

Another story is about the time Larry was reading the USA Today newspaper. On the front page, there was an article about the crisis in education. Deeper in the newspaper there was another article telling how people spend more money on video game playing than they do attending live sporting events. The video arcades had just emerged as a phenomenon, and sports have been around for decades. Larry saw the connection, and theorized that playing video games would be a good way to engage kids or people in education.

Making the connections was important to Larry. One longtime employee had this to say:

His passion about ideas drove him. He'd get upset when people didn't see the light very quickly. He was always talking about the next thing; making life better, or making life easier... and be the only ones doing it. He took great pride in being in front. He was unconscious competent in creating ideas.

While Larry typically came up with the ideas, it was the people with whom he surrounded himself that turned the ideas into a usable curriculum:

“You guys figure it out.” He saw what they didn't but couldn't make it happen, turn it into a product, a course, a learning whatever. Others could work on making it happen, but would never have made the connections Larry did. He made connections other people couldn't see. He found others to create out of his ideas.

Larry was very knowledgeable, but didn't have the academic credentials to back up all of his knowledge. A person who knew him well commented, “He had an inherent distrust of authority; government, corporations, academia. But he loved the intellectual aspects of academia... Deeply intellectual, deeply anti-authoritarian.” Another person added:

He seemed to know how to do it better. May have had an inferiority complex about his academic credentials and was always trying to surround himself with academics. He wanted them to prove what he already intuitively knew. Prove what I know. Insightful about how things work. It was probably innate.

Understanding the psychology behind the ideas and behaviors was important to Larry. As one person shared, “He needed the psychology of it and to know why it works. Never satisfied with doing a how to.” He went on to add, “Larry was first to look at how people think, and why they think that way.” If Larry needed a deeper explanation, he went to the source. He had success with Abraham Maslow, why not go directly to other sources? In addressing this, one person states, “He was smart enough to talk to experts in psychology and sociology to figure out why.” Examples of these experts are Maxie Maultsby and George Ainsworth Land with whom Larry developed lasting relationships.

These relationships were beneficial in the future. A consultant relayed the following story, “We were talking about something, and Larry said, ‘We need to see Maxie about this.’ We went to O’Hare to talk with Maxie. The sense is Larry got what he needed from the relationships he cultivated.” To sum up, “Larry tried to understand the psychology behind the concept to see why it works. Larry made normal stuff come alive and made it applicable to everyone.”

His drive to continue learning and produce ideas led Larry to become a pioneer and innovator with the WLC and Pecos technologies. In many cases, the technology was typical electronic technology, but the employees of these companies looked at their methods of teaching to also be a technology. Many people commented on Larry’s drive to be out front. As one person put it, “Larry thrived on being bleeding edge. And bleeding edge is more than leading edge when it’s a brilliant idea, and how are you going to make money at that? Larry didn’t care.” Another person was a little more specific:

At Wilson learning it was video... the design of the workshop was also a technology. At Pecos it was experiential learning and group processes. Showing a video the morning after a ropes course was a huge step. No one was doing that. A full episode with tailored video the next day was a great tool for teaching the outcomes and helping to anchor the learning and in some cases revisit the experience to further debrief the event.

Larry understood how valuable technology could be, but he was never a student of how it worked. In talking about technology a typical response was,

Larry loved it, but could never really figure it out. He had to have the first. On the leading edge of tech. Video disks for movies. Had to have the latest computer... He knew tech was the way of the future, but couldn't quite figure it out. Someone on the technical side affirmed, "Larry was an early adopter of technology even though he did not understand the specifics. I understood the capabilities and the engagement aspect."

**Accessible Curriculum.** Dovetailing into the Idea Generation theme is the *Accessible Curriculum* theme. After Larry was able to develop an idea, he or his staff would go to work simplifying it. The goal was to have a curriculum easy enough to remember that it would stick with people. Several people from Wilson Learning mentioned a goal of, "Looking for a model that you can write down on a napkin, can explain it in 5 minutes, and it speaks to them for a lifetime." They called these *Mind Hooks*. Play to Win, Stop-Challenge-Choose, Four Fatal Fears, and more were all simplified models with catchy names people could easily learn and remember. Someone currently with WLC acknowledged, "To this day some of our most powerful models and concepts have a 'simple elegance' about them—that came from Larry."

Larry believed the concepts were so easy to understand that everyone should be able to grasp the concepts. At times his enthusiasm got the better of him. A long-time facilitator noted, "One of Larry's not so good attributes was when someone did not understand the curriculum. Larry would work with them until they understood it. Sometimes he stepped over the line."

One of the differences between Wilson Learning and Pecos River was the addition of emotion into the Pecos curriculum. A person who straddled both companies



indicated, they were, “not selling emotion out loud at WLC.” He went on to say, “Pecos was a natural next step. All the models that were born at WLC were core at Pecos.”

Another added, “...simplifying often very complex concepts to allow better understanding and application...adding emotion to make them memorable...lasting.”

The ropes course was added as the tool with which to inject an emotional element. A person stated, “Ropes course made a big difference in introducing emotion into the program.” Another explained the difference between the two companies:

Until Pecos, you come in, they told you what you were going to learn, you learn it, and then they told you what you learned. No de-icing. The ropes course was the deicer. There was a lot of stuff going on when people first came in. Larry was smart enough to realize people need a decompression space to ease them into the programs. Really the breakthrough to get stuff done.

Another person elaborated:

It's not about the ropes course. It's about what happens *on* the ropes course. The ropes course becomes the venue to create the opportunity. When we say ropes course, people just think ropes course, and not what could be done on it.

Yet another saw it slightly differently, “The ropes course was the Trojan horse. Ropes course engaged people and brought in personal growth without the new age stuff and gestalt. It was a gentle and fun transition. It eased them into classroom learning.” These differences contributed to the different views expressed by the WLC staff versus the Pecos staff.

A client who sent people through the Pecos programs related, "Ropes course was great. It was a significant emotional event for most people. You change how you do and think about things to get different results."

Many people mentioned the addition of technology to the programs as a way to enhance results. One common sentiment was, "Larry was intuitive about the value of using technology in training." At Wilson Learning, "Floppy disks were used for follow up and action guides. Computer disks, then interactive video disks, before DVD or CD ROM." The use of computers was sparked through an experience with a son in the Cayman Islands. Larry had sent an early version of an Apple computer down. It wasn't until the weather turned poor that the son decided to open the boxes and put it together. In his words, "It was magical. He had never experienced anything like it. Larry didn't spend much time with the computer. However, he did see how engaged [his son] was and how technology could be a way to engage people and help them learn."

Almost all of his employees commented on Larry's use of technology. One such comment was, "He was an experimenter with technology. He was willing to put experiences and technologies together, games, simulations." Another summed it like this, "Larry was ahead of the game. Utilized computers and other tech. Learning could be fun. It was a big shift for some folks. Tech made it more fun and more effective."

**Connecting with People.** The majority of respondents believed Larry loved and connected with people. Typical responses include, "Loved and cared about people." Or, "Larry loved everyone." And, "He loved people." In the broader sense, one person stated, "Larry had ability to connect with people and to love mankind." On the other hand there were a couple people who believed, "There were people Larry did not love, and I

experienced Larry as holding grudges.” However, in the balance, most people thought Larry loved people, or at least liked people. Larry was, after all, a fallible human being, as he would say, so in the breadth of experiences represented, there is bound to be a difference of experiences.

One aspect of Larry that was consistent among those queried was the belief that Larry wanted the best for people. One former WLC employee said, “He touched people very deeply and sent them off into the world to do good things.” Another indicated, “People, because of their interaction with Larry, believe they can do more than they had previously believed, so they believe more in their own potential. Had this guy not existed on the planet there would be a lot fewer people trying to live up to their potential.” A former customer indicated, “Larry intuitively knew how to adapt his curriculum to meet people's' needs and expectations. He was a master at communicating concepts and inspiring people as they learned.”

Larry was not only good at connecting with his customers; he wanted his employees to succeed, whether it was with him, or at another business. He encouraged people to continue their education. One person indicated Larry pushed him to complete his dissertation. Another added, Larry was the, “Most spontaneously generous person. He thinks of the other person, his interest in others, their growth, health, and happiness... not thinking about how it affected him, but the person on the other end.” Another, similar response was, “Larry sees something in us that we don't always see in ourselves. Big source of pride in seeing former staff move onto great things. Larry loved it when his people succeeded.”

Also in the connecting with people theme was Larry's ability to connect with individuals as people. He had a way with people, whether one-on-one or addressing an audience. A WLC researcher described a concept called *adding 9*:

Larry Never spoke in complete sentences, ever. Not in his formal speaking. Not in your meetings with him. Not ever.... Harry Woodward had a concept about giving people 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and then you go to 10. The listener adds 9. We'd refer to it as adding 9. Larry's speeches were all about adding 9. And, he used to talk all the time about people who would run up to him after a speech and launch into a long thing about something he said... that he never said. It wasn't in the speech. It was a unique style of his. Because he bounced around with all of these related, but incomplete thoughts, people added 9. It was immensely rewarding for them. So, part of the secret of Larry's success was people gaining all kinds of insights, none of which he said anything about. It was a gift. He was naturally like that.

Sometimes the connections with people Larry made through the use of humor:

We were seated at a banquet style table, about 15 people in all. The intros were made, and we all placed our dinner order and appetizers. When the appetizers were served, our guest of honor looked down smilingly at the escargot bubbling away in the serving dish. All of sudden, one exploded sending pieces everywhere, along with hot oil. Our guest of honor, stood up trying to wipe off his Italian made suit, at which time Larry exclaimed, "How do like us so far?" With that our guest laughed along with all the others. The dinner was a great success and later become one of our bedrock long-term clients.

As with many people, personalities and styles don't always mesh. One person indicated:

While it is true Larry loved people and connected and engaged with many types of people—he did not connect with everyone. Larry used to say “we're not for everyone—and that's OK.” I think that was true for him also. But man when he connected, he really connected.

Someone else also acknowledged the reality, “Larry was good at connecting with people, but had some detractors. Pecos was a little soft for some people. The content stuck, though.” A third saw it slightly differently, “Organizations often didn't connect because Larry was so far ahead.”

**Enjoying the Spotlight.** One of the many reasons Larry connected with people evolved around his desire to be the center of attention. A person who knew him well stated, “Larry had dreams of acting and entertaining.” Another interviewee told me he was one of the most talented men she'd ever met. “He had a gift. He was an entertainer.” Another typical response was, “Larry was always entertaining.... When Larry got in front of the group, he was spot on. It didn't matter what was going on. When he was at his best, he was the best.” Finally, “He was born with the ability to entertain, and that helped his success with teaching the content. He could laugh at himself and make others laugh.”

The spotlight wasn't the ends, but the means to spread his philosophy to help people. One protégé summed Larry up thusly:

Larry was so complex, like trying to pin down Jell-O, just too complex. His asset is his brilliance in front of people, whatever medium it was, was his spirit. He just had this wonderful egoless spirit where he wanted to help people. He was

friendly. He was fun. He was entertaining, just a great entertainer. He really wanted people to get it. It was real, not just that he was there to do a job. He really wanted people to see his philosophy and to use it to make their lives better. And, he really, really wanted it for them. It was not just for himself, or for his ego gratification, look at me, give me applause, and all that. Most speakers want the love and admiration, and all that kind of stuff. You have to really want the audience to get it. You have to care that they get it. That really sweeps across his life. I've never met, and I don't think I'll ever meet, anyone like that again. He was uncategorizable. Just his spirit... I don't think we're ever going to see it again.

Many other interviewees commented on Larry's use of humor. A typical response was, "Had a genius for connecting with people. Speaking, teaching, storytelling. Not many are as captivating. Larry's comedic timing was impeccable." Another participant noted, "Sparkling energy, and had the capacity to connect with people with great humor and with enthusiasm."

Humor was a large part of Larry's likeability, but there were many other aspects that endeared him to people. "People like to work with someone they like and trust. With Larry, you felt like you got both. His style was very approachable." Another described Larry as, "Energy, relevant, incredibly inspirational, funny, approachable, concepts were timely and relevant, and something you could understand, not academic." A former Pecos facilitator shared, "He was perhaps the most engaging person I've ever seen with a group, but many times I saw him try to present something and just got carried away with a story, sometimes leaving the content unclear or unfinished."

Telling stories was part of Larry's strategy for connecting and engaging with participants. One had this to say, "And he was a great story-teller. Success came from analogies and stories where people get the a-ha. Larry was brilliant at telling the stories."

Another maintained:

He figured out early on that people remember stories. Counselor selling programs were built on stories. Music man. Marc Antony and Brutus.... It was brilliant how he did that and had the stories. He had about 20 regular stories. He had a drama and English background. Synthesizing and turning stories into memorable things.... Take a story and make it funny with a learning. Part of the curriculum was to get people telling their own stories. They see how the content fits them personally. Stories as illustrations and tools at the core of what he did.

And a third added, "Larry could engage the audience like no one. He could say anything to them. Larry knew all the stories. He had a book of stories in it. He'd pick and choose the stories. His book was his gold mine." More often people used just two words like, "great storyteller" or "master storyteller."

Quite a few people also discussed Larry's fearlessness and risk-taking. As one person put it, "Fears hold us back and Larry helped us realize we need to do things in spite of fears." Another added, "Fearlessness in creating/pursuing his vision of what to do." A third put it differently, "Larry was willing to try anything once.... He was willing to try things and get out there and be authentic, and not worry about how he looked to people.... If it doesn't kill me, I'll try it."

Larry took risks when speaking or teaching. "He broke a lot of speaking rules." Another person who knew Larry in the early years indicated, "Larry violates all the rules

of speeches, even though he was a speech major at the U of M. He doesn't complete sentences. He lets you finish the sentence in your head."

Larry's willingness to risk cut across all areas. One of the Pecos consultants stated, "He would take the risk or take the chance. That's the way he led his life." Another of the WLC people agreed, "When led by someone willing to risk it all, it helped us keep moving ahead." Someone else added, "It reduced the fear of failure when Larry had the high-risk attitude. People don't want to let him down."

Larry was rarely wrong when it came to big risks, especially in the area of technology. One insider recalled, "Larry risked the organization on video and he was right. WLC was the only company using video at the time." Even toward the end of his life when attempting to create a new curriculum, someone confided Larry told him, "I cannot not do this. I have to figure this out myself. I have to take the risk, to risk it all." After Larry's passing, another person lamented, "There are people like us who get it and know it, but they are not out there taking the risk in a big way to take it to the world. No one driving it like a Larry."

Larry seemed to know that taking fearless risks is what kept him out front in learning and development and in the spotlight. One person said, "Even when old, he was out front." At Wilson Learning they called it the *bleeding edge*. "Bleeding edge is almost too far out. Other companies learned off WLC mistakes at the bleeding edge. Larry was comfortable with that."

**Leadership Approach.** The fact that Larry's leadership is the theme of this paper, almost all of the interviewees and questionnaire respondents mentioned leadership when talking about Larry. Very few people referred to his leadership in academic terms.



The discussion generally included Larry's leadership from a personal point of view; how they experienced him.

One of the differences between the comments on leadership related to when people were exposed to Larry or what their job role included. The Wilson Learning generation saw a different side of Larry than those who worked for him at Pecos. By the time Larry had sold WLC and moved to New Mexico, his focus had changed. During the years at Wilson Learning, his focus was on creating or synthesizing ideas that could be turned into curriculum. One person indicated, "... he was a great leader but not in all aspects. He was visionary, cared deeply for people, but his nature is what is referred to as an 'antecedent' leader. He loved to start things and then basically move on." He then went on to add, "He was a leader of ideas more than a leader of people."

A few people believed Larry moved too quickly to be categorized as a great leader. Another former WLC person stated:

I am not so sure Larry was a GREAT leader. He certainly had visions that he communicated well and got others to follow. Perhaps that's all that a great leader has to be. But, a GREAT leader also has to be able to stick to the knitting and execute at some level.

A third person echoed that sentiment, "I would not call him a great leader. Leadership involves a great deal more than this." Leadership comments from his earlier years were more about creating ideas and attracting bright, creative people.

There were also a couple people from Pecos who did not see Larry as a strong leader. One comment was, "I think he had a number of faults or challenges that limited his leadership."

By the time Pecos River was up and running smoothly, Larry had added emotional, wellness, and empowerment components to the curriculum and began facilitating programs. He worked more on a day-to-day basis with many of the staff as part of a delivery team. Larry also spent more time at the Pecos Ranch with the local employees. He strongly encouraged employees to attend a Play to Win program at the Ranch, which helped them get to know each other better. It makes sense that people from Pecos experienced Larry differently than many of the WLC employees.

One person characterized Larry this way, "Larry was certainly an inspirational leader, motivational leader. He was more the type of leader that evoked inspiration, not necessarily great at leading teams. Getting down into Team Dynamics wasn't really his deal." Another agreed, "Larry was the inspirational leader." Others thought, "Larry was a visionary leader." One called him the, "Epitome of a visionary leader."

Other characteristics were added to describe Larry's leadership. Several said he had, "Charismatic leadership." One went farther in saying:

More than charismatic. He had a genuine humility to a certain degree. He knew about some limitations. There was a strong leadership capability. Anyone who says Larry was not a leader is wrong. He was very much in terms of innovation and energy. Rare that people are complete leaders. There was another who indicated, "Larry would transcend one leadership definition."

One former customer spoke from the point of what Larry did for his company, "[I] love to chat about the influence of Pecos on Kodak and its business units, Larry's special leadership, and what I did after being part of the Pecos Organization which affected many lives." Larry's leadership from the client perspective wasn't discussed

much. One person indicated," Larry was interesting because he really understood what it was like to run a company, and could empathize with other leaders." He could relate to their situation and had their respect because he had built successful companies.

One person did characterize Larry as a transformational leader, but said this was a, "Double edge sword. He tended not to be a detail guy." Another expressed, "He was very transformational, but as a leader, it was hard to separate leadership style from his day to day style."

One person didn't really think of Larry as a leader of people, "He was a thought leader. His genius and contribution was what he was thinking about at any given time. Vision."

Another person didn't provide much detail, saying, "Larry was a leader and good human being... Genuine and authentic... Very visionary."

There are many different perspectives when evaluating Larry's leadership. As with most people, Larry's skills as a leader would have changed the longer he led. People would also have experienced Larry differently, depending on the situation. Those in his programs at the Pecos Ranch would have a different experience of Larry than a company conducting business with Wilson learning in the late 60's.

The comments relative to each of the five themes do support the Full Range of Transformational Leadership model. Additionally, the breadth of comments specifically regarding Larry's leadership lends themselves to the Full Range of Transformational Leadership model. Larry led from all points on the full range model (Figure 1.). The evidence shows he led more from the transformational end than either the laissez-faire end or the transactional middle of the range.

**Evidence supporting the Full Range of Transformational Leadership**

This section will explore the original contention that the Full Range of Transformational Leadership (full range) model is the leadership model most applicable to Larry Wilson. Each factor in the full range model is discussed from the theoretical side and compare how people's actual experience with Larry lines up with the theoretical explanation under each factor.

The five themes mentioned previously do not directly line up with the four I's, but many of the comments across the five themes do, however, pertain to the model. Since this paper is focused on supporting the claim that Larry was a transformational leader who fit the Full Range of Transformational Leadership model, the leadership theme was the primary theme for seeking supporting data. Only three people did not comment on Larry's leadership.

The themes of Connecting with People and Leadership Approach can be applied to all of the four I's. All four are about touching people in some way that a leader inspires, motivates, challenges, and knows the people they are leading. Comments under the Enjoying the Spotlight theme generally lend themselves to the inspirational and motivation factors. Larry enjoyed the spotlight because it was his platform where he could motivate people through engaging, entertaining, and teaching them. Idea Generation and Accessible Curriculum are similar to intellectual stimulation. The ideas Larry developed challenged his staff to make sense of them and create curricula for programs. The ideas also challenged the people participating in his programs, although his ability to simplify ideas made the concepts less challenging to understand. The challenge came in trying to live them.

The support for Larry being a good, if not great, leader was universal. However, many people questioned the consistency of Larry's leadership and his fallibility as a human being as mitigating elements preventing him from attaining the ranks of great leaders. It is because he was fallible, and didn't always lead from the transformational end of the range, that the full range model suited him best.

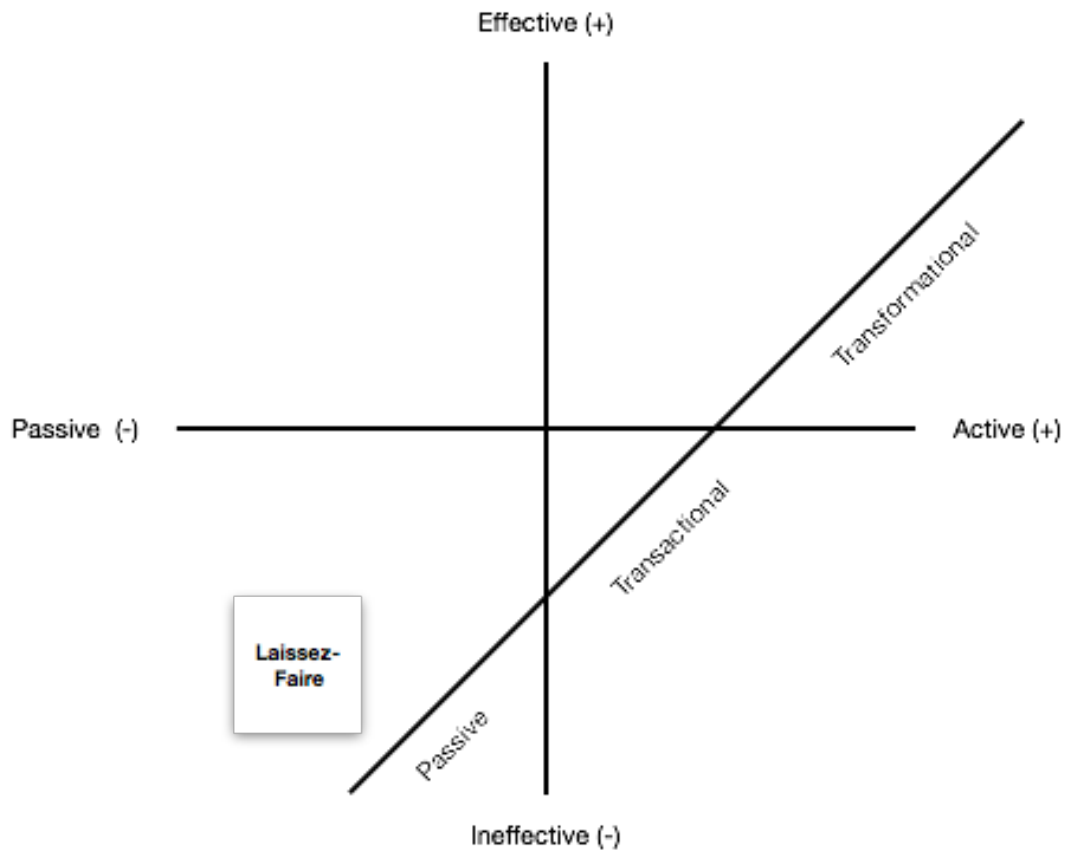
The Full Range Transformational Leadership model developed out of Bass's (1985) theory of transformational leadership. After researching the phenomenon of transformational leaders, Bass and Avolio (1994) recognized transformational leaders did not always lead in transformational ways. Occasionally, their positions required simple transactional and even laissez-faire leading. This led to the development of the Full Range of Transformational Leadership model where the truly transformational leaders led by exhibiting their transformational characteristics most of the time, and also led by the less transformational characteristics when the transformational characteristics were not needed.

**Laissez-faire** (Figure 2.). According to Bass (1997), "Such leaders [laissez-faire] are mostly inactive, avoid making decisions, abdicate responsibility, and are absent when needed" (p.21). The time Larry spent on this end of the range depends largely on the timeframe of people's experience with Larry, or what a person worked on. This is essentially non-leadership and has proven to be the least effective leadership style (Bass and Avolio, 1994). One of the interviewees indicated, "He was a 'chase the next bright shiny object type of person' and often times got quickly bored with one idea and moved on to another, leaving those who followed him for the first somewhat out in the cold." Another person added, "I don't think he had a 'detail' gene in his body and often had

minimal participation in the development of ideas. At times his input was sorely missed.”

A third explained it this way, “Effective leadership is not heroic management. Larry would say ‘Here’s what I want, this is what it could be, go off and figure it out.’”

Figure 2. Laissez-Faire Position on the Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model.



Most people did agree that Larry knew he didn't have the discipline for details. He was smart enough to know this and brought people in to be the yin to his yang. “He would be the first to say being a manager was not his strong suit... no patience for detail... but smart enough to recognize this.” Another said, “Other folks acted as a governor to his manic behavior.”

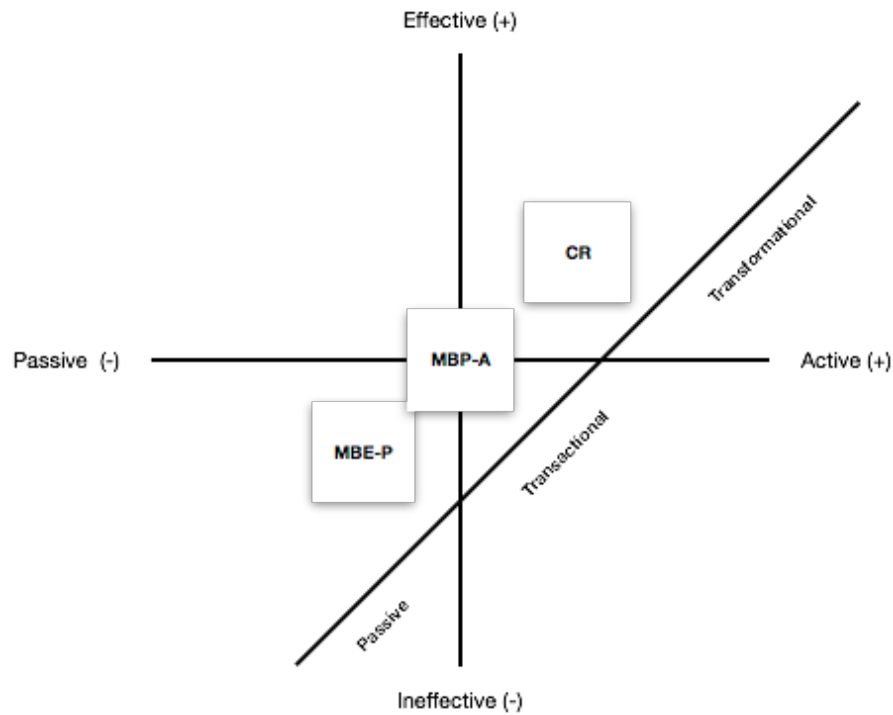
Later, people saw Larry's propensity to move on as perhaps a positive aspect. As one person who worked at both WLC and Pecos saw it:

It was the same with development of the company. It was worry about details later. Didn't want to hear about why things can't work. How can we make it work? If it's a good idea it needs to be figured out. If you caught on with this modus operandi, you could do well at WLC. Be a problem solver. Make Larry's dreams come true.

One area Larry generally left alone was the Pecos River Adventure Learning Program. Perhaps he left it alone is because he didn't understand the technical, safety, and construction side of the department. He was interested in what the department was doing and had a hand in guiding staff to produce the results he wanted, but he knew his limitations. He didn't venture into the technical side of it. He left it alone and trusted the staff to deliver a quality product. One other person offered this metaphor, "Larry didn't know what happens on the warehouse floor, but knew they have communications needs."

**Transactional leadership** (Figure 3.). Larry did venture into the transactional leadership realm at times. Transactional leadership usually involves an exchange. The leader promises something in return for the performance of duties or ideas. Growth is limited and once the goal is achieved, the transaction is complete. Transactional leadership happens on three levels: contingent reward, manage-by-exception actively (MBE-A), and manage-by-exception passively (MBE-P) (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

Figure 3. Transactional Position on the Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model.



Larry was good at allowing people to complete their jobs as needed. He would observe the processes from a distance and only intervene when there was a breakdown in the details (MBE-P). In most cases, he would not directly confront the offender but would address the mishap with a manager, or discuss it with the whole team in the debrief sessions concluding every program. There were cases when Larry got angry and his tongue-lashing would be the resulting negative reinforcement. One facilitator shrugged it off:

He got angry occasionally. It's typical of [an] expressive. They tend to get angry, but it doesn't last. Go for the jugular and go for where it hurts. He was highly assertive. If things didn't go the way he wanted you would hear about it.



All the interviewees who had seen Larry angry also stated he was equally quick to forget about it and move on. One expressed:

When they were together as facilitators you would learn very quickly not to push back on Larry. He would get angry very quickly. The good part of Larry's angry side was, when he got mad at someone, the anger would not last. He would get over it and move on quickly, and there would be no animosity.

There were occasionally times when Larry would notice a participant's attention drifting off during a classroom session. He had such passion and believed so deeply about the program content, he wanted everyone to get as much as possible from the programs. If someone was drifting during a classroom session, it was not uncommon for Larry to call on that person for an answer or an example. Normally, this negative reinforcement was all it took to refocus the participant. The transaction in these cases was Larry providing an opportunity to learn and grow in exchange for someone's attention.

One particularly transactional aspect of Larry was when he was speaking. A long-time employee said, "In old days Larry gave a speech and others collected business cards. Larry hated to do that work. Larry moved on and gave accounts away after getting them started. He got bored with it." Larry gave a speech, and in return, he received more business.

The most common form of transactional leadership with Larry was when he brought people with new ideas into Wilson Learning. Larry liked to go directly to the source when he learned of a new idea or found ideas that fit with his philosophy. He would spend time with these people to learn as much as he could about the ideas. One person affirmed, "Larry didn't believe that he had to think it up. He saw the connections

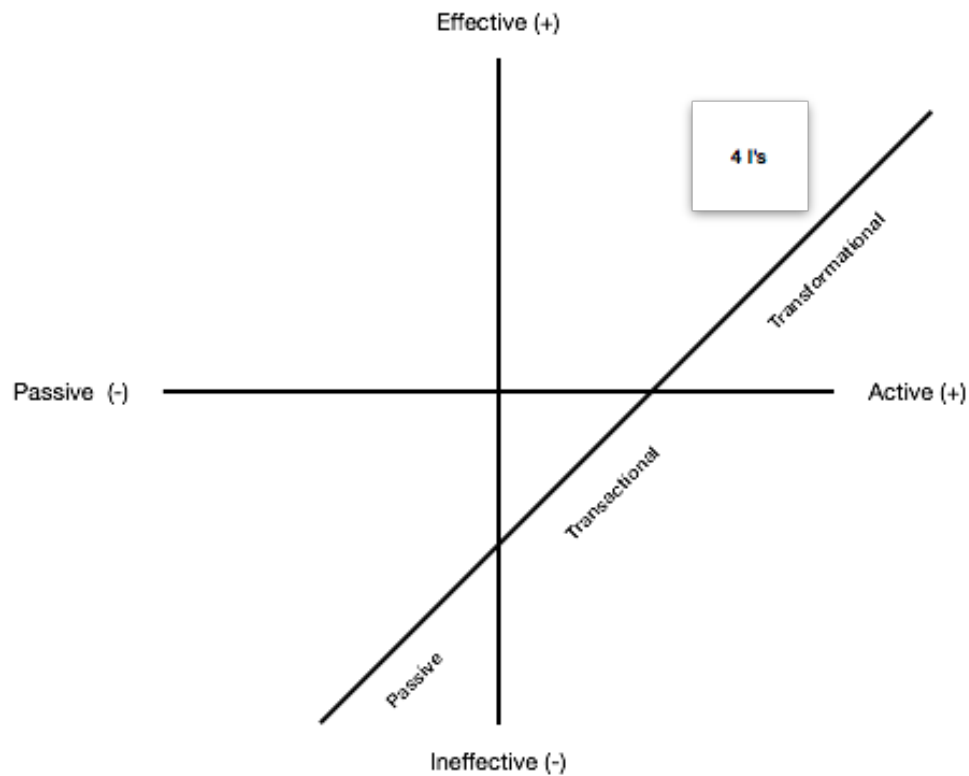
and there was something in there people could take and WLC could make money.” More often than not the ideas and/or the people did not fit well with either Larry or the WLC culture. A WLC facilitator claimed, “[He had a] tendency to pick someone’s brain and then spit them out [MBE-A]. People never stayed the special person for long. They got discarded as Larry’s pet.”

There were cases when Larry liked an idea and would make some sort of transaction to obtain permission to use part or all of an idea and incorporate it into the curriculum. A couple of these idea people remained a part of Larry’s life for decades to come, such as George Land and Maxie Maultsby Jr. In the Wilson Learning days many of these transactional people came and went, however, this was outside of the traditional WLC circle where Larry tended to be much more transformational (personal communication, February 1 and February 20, 2015).

**Transformational leadership** (Figure 4.). Larry Wilson’s leadership was not only transformational with his own companies; he helped transform other companies and indeed, the whole sales process. How was he able to do this? The evidence suggests Larry had to be a transformational leader. His motivation was to personally become self-actualized and then take on the task of helping others realize their need to self-actualize. Maslow’s hierarchy was based on satisfying ever-increasing needs levels. When looked at closely, transformational leaders’ goals run parallel to the hierarchy of needs and are often about filling said needs. According to Maslow (1969), “Self-actualizing individuals (more matured, more fully human), by definition, already suitable gratified in their basic needs, are now motivated in other higher ways, to be called metamotivation” (p. 93). It should be the goal of any leader, and particularly transformational leaders, to tap into the

meta-motivations of individuals. This thought is supported by Payne (2000), “It was Maslow's belief that organizing in accordance with these assumptions was not just good for improving people's health and well-being, but good for the financial success of the organization, and for society as a whole” (p. 220).

Figure 4. Transformational Position on the Full Range of Transformational Leadership Model.



Bass (1985) recognized that Maslow's hierarchy and transformational leadership go hand-in-hand, “Transformational leaders can attempt and succeed in elevating those influenced from a lower to a higher level of need according to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs” (p. 14). He goes on to say, “While both transactional and transformational leadership involve sensing followers' felt needs, it is the transformational leader who raises consciousness about higher considerations through articulation and role modeling”

(p.15). Therefore, Larry's goal—to help as many people as possible reach self-actualization—mandated he become a transformational leader.

**Idealized influence.** Idealized influence involves the leader's ability to influence follower ideals. The leader appeals to the followers' higher needs, a brighter vision. The leader behaves in ways followers want to emulate. Leaders with idealized influence are role models. This leads to followers wanting to emulate their transformational leader. These leaders have high standards of ethical actions. It is the ethical and moral considerations that differentiate the leaders with idealized influence with those who use their influence to a criminal or nefarious end, such as Hitler or Mussolini (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Bass, 1999):

Charismatic leaders, or leaders with idealized influence, are role models for their followers. They are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers want to identify with them. Such leaders are self-confident, determined, persistent, highly competent, and willing to take risks. Charisma can be the attributed idealized influence of the leaders by their followers. (Bass, 1997, p. 21)

During the interviews, there were a large number of people who indicated Larry displayed idealized influence. One said there was “reduced fear of failure when Larry had the high-risk attitude. People didn't want to let him down.” Larry was always there for the staff. The businesses had their ups and downs, but Larry would always do something to find new business. At the time he would not share with many of the staff how close to closing they really were. He always found a way to keep the company solvent, and people came to have complete faith that Larry would always bring in new business. In the

midst of a downturn, he would continue on as if there was nothing wrong. It built a deep bond of trust and loyalty.

Larry also set the tone of the culture at his companies. He set out to create the companies for which he would want to work, while simultaneously, as Larry said, “create the company, which if it existed, would put your company out of business.” He encouraged having fun and celebrating achievements. And these were not just for the normal celebrations. These happened virtually every day year after year. At Wilson Learning he instituted the tradition of giving Mickey Mouse watches to every employee who reached the six-month mark of employment. It was a reminder to have fun at work. One person reminisced, “We all got Mickey Mouse Watches. We learned that from Disney, that work should be fun. People wearing watches should be able to look down at their watch and know that they should be having fun at work.” To this day a less fun WLC continues to give out the Mickey Mouse watches. However, one person said, “Mickey is not dead, but needs an MBA.”

Leaders practicing idealized influence also don't abuse their power (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Larry believed leaders, who used their power over their employees to serve themselves, were driven by their ego needs rather than authenticity. He believed leaders should give power to the followers. Larry was great at empowering staff. He loved to outline a project and turn people loose. He seemed to always trust that they would complete the job, and often it would be better than he expected. One interviewee described him as, “hands off, but not tolerant.”

The Adventure Learning Program (ALPs) quickly picked up on Larry's ideals and incorporated them into the way the department ran itself. A facilitator who got his start in the ALPs department indicated:

It was evident in ALPs. It was a PTW [Play to Win] place. It influenced the rest of the organization. Larry set out the philosophical framework. ALPs operationalized the content and built a great department. Most live our lives to this day.

ALPs was a flat, team-based department. The ALPs teams were scheduled to run the experiential aspect of the Pecos programs. The department decided very early to model the Pecos philosophy when out on the ropes courses. Participants were observant. If the department wasn't walking the talk, participants would see through this and question the validity of the curriculum. The people in the department supported each other's growth, provided constant feedback to each other (positive and negative), and did not punish mistakes, but communicated them widely to enhance the group learning. Leadership was rotated from project to project and everyone supported the designated leader for a specific project.

Further, Bass (1999) indicates, "transformational teams are high performing" (p. 11). This is to say that given the ideals of a transformational leader, a team operating under that leader will tend to develop each other, care about each other, intellectually stimulate each other, and motivate each other. This too was evident in the ALPs department. The adoption of Larry's ideals led to the incorporation of those values in the department. Subsequently, the department became transforming as a unit.

A former Pecos president indicated that the ALPs team was trusted to keep both the Pecos and client company's best interest in mind, "I trusted many of the staff to just do it. Ropes people were excellent.... ALPs were good about saving money. Others gave away tons of stuff. ALPs never gave away anything." They were often sent out on the road with five- and six-figure budgets and sometimes came in under budget. The department continually challenged themselves and each other to deliver programs or builds at higher quality and safety for less cost. There were times when circumstances required going over budget. However, there was never any question as to why. The trust level was such that it was assumed any cost overruns were necessary. The trust placed in the ALPs department was reciprocated in the loyalty the department staff had toward Pecos.

One attribute most of the interviewees agree upon was that Larry had charisma. Bass (1985a) states, "Charisma is the most important component in the larger concept of transformational leadership" (p.34). Avolio, Waldman, & Yammarino (1991) later write "Idealized influence is, to a large degree, a culmination of the other three I's coupled with a strong emotional attachment to and identification with the leader. Such leaders are emulated by followers and often labeled charismatic" (p.15).

Comments about Larry's charisma include, "High charisma." "A charismatic Leader." "He was a bundle of energy with an unmatched charisma." "A quick thinker, outstanding communicator with charisma to boot." "Larry had charisma!" Just under half of all respondents mentioned either charisma or words describing charismatic behavior.

Larry was not one to sit back and have others do everything for him. He was constantly working on new ideas and ways to improve the curriculum. He led programs,

sold programs, wrote books, and produced audio and videotapes. He was always working. A family member shared:

He was never able to really sit and talk about things, other than business and ideas, even with his kids. He was in awe of other people being able to talk about other topics. Hard for Larry to take the business hat off and just relax. Rarely able to just hang out and talk like guys. Even with houseguests, it was hard to turn it off.

It was always about business and ideas. To add to his strong work ethic, Larry was always welcoming and approachable. He wore a permanent smile when around the staff. Add to this his intuition about human nature and what spoke to people; he got results.

Larry was at times larger than life, but always authentic. People admired him for his brashness and seeming lack of fear. In fact, he believed that fear was the biggest factor holding people back from becoming all they could be. Again, this fed into Maslow's theory of becoming self-actualized. In Maslow's (1960) words, "It is fear that puts blinders on our eyes and that puts shackles on us... it is the main psychological block to a Eupsychia—a society of psychologically healthy people" (p. 3). Fearlessness is one area Larry seemed to overcome. The many comments in the Enjoying the Spotlight theme indicate how willing he was to fearlessly move ahead, or at least move ahead in spite of fear. A questionnaire respondent wrote, "[He was] fearless in trying new things."

Continuing this line of thinking Maslow (1960) states, "I might then go on and describe the second most important characteristic of healthy people—and the second basic foundation of Eupsychia—as spontaneity, or the capacity to function fully, to live with a certain naturalness, simplicity, lack of artificiality or guile" (p. 3). This statement



relates to Larry's authenticity and approachability. An interviewee offered these words, "The authentic part of Larry was brilliant. The longer people knew Larry, the more they knew the good side of Larry." Another person added, "Being authentic, he was totally authentic." He was open to talking to anyone at any time. One of the ALPs staff noted, "He put on no airs. It was not like that at all. People could get a good grasp of Larry's authenticity." The big joke at both Wilson Learning and Pecos was, when new people joined the companies, asking the new person on which airplane they met Larry.

Indeed, Larry was very charismatic and influenced the ideals of not only the staff, but also thousands of people across the country and around the world. He set the standard for facilitation; people wanted to emulate him. His skill entertaining a room full of people was a skill other facilitators desired. He was the storyteller people tried to emulate. What mattered most to many was that he influenced their approach to life and living. A facilitator expressed, "For me, my life is a legacy to Larry. When I teach or mentor, I try first to make people feel safe and to make people feel trusted and valuable. (That is how he treated me.)" Another was equally as grateful, "He made me a believer in the mission of PRLC. Incorporating many of the principals of Play to Win in my personal and professional life. Helped me grow as a person along the way."

**Inspirational motivation.** Given all that was written above, it's no surprise that Larry was inspirational. According to Bass (1988), "Inspiring leaders have the ability to influence subordinates to exert themselves beyond their own expectations and self-interest" (p.22). Inspirational motivation is more about getting more out of subordinates than other leaders might. They motivate and inspire. People become more optimistic and enthusiastic. Idealized influence is more about the leader, and inspirational motivation is

more about what the leader draws out of the follower. Inspired followers work better in teams, know what is expected, and are more committed to the clearly communicated vision of the leader (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

One of the best quotes to come out of the interviews was from one of Larry's sons:

The only other person that I felt I knew who was like my dad was Captain James T. Kirk of the starship Enterprise. "To boldly go where no man has gone before." That just sounds like my dad, doesn't it? Those little Star Trek speeches when the music would swell and Captain Kirk would inspire his team to overcome some obstacle by reminding them of a higher purpose, that just felt like my dad in so many ways. It was comforting. In the magical world of kid logic, I didn't know if my father knew Captain Kirk, but I was sure that they could be friends.

This was Larry. He could paint a picture in people's minds that they could see and want to walk into. He kept the work and mission at the forefront—helping individuals and organizations everywhere rediscover their courage and creativity and use them in the service of creating a better world (Wilson and Wilson, 1998, p. xxi). The interviewees indicated Larry first wanted the individuals to become better people. He wanted people to work on themselves first. His confidence in himself and his curriculum motivated people to work on themselves. One employee passed on his learning from Larry, "Rather than power, a leader should empower. Instead of having power over people, leadership should be trying to free people up, so that they can be all they can be within their organization." Personal growth can be a hard thing. People don't often know where to begin. Larry gave them a few tools to start their journey and challenged them to continue.

One of Larry's favorite stories was about the hero's journey. Comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell developed the concept of the hero's journey in 1968 (Warm, 2011). There are three stages in the hero's journey. It begins with *separation* or a pull to change. The next stage is *initiation*. Initiation involves moving into the unknown. The hero must pass through the challenges to be tested. The *return* is the final coming home stage to share the new person or learning with a community. The journey is a never-ending cycle of separation-initiation-return followed by a new separation. "While every voyage begins with a new *pull*, the hero's journey does not end with each *return*" (Warm, 2011, p. 94). Larry challenged people to begin their own hero's journey. In essence, he started the cycle, asking people to begin the separation phase where they would begin the path toward self-actualization. He was the pull to change.

On the personal side, Larry was the pull to change for me. The one training mandated for Pecos River employees was the Play to Win program. As an employee, I was eventually slated to take my turn. Larry facilitated the program and indeed woke me up to the possibilities about what I could become; I could take control of my life. I didn't begin my journey right away, but after thinking about all the ideas Larry taught, they eventually took hold.

Larry wanted people to do well and continue to grow. One former employee decided to get a PhD at Harvard. She was concerned about Larry's reaction when she was to tell him about her decision. Many leaders would be disappointed to lose a valued associate. Larry said, "I'm not losing an Amy, I'm gaining a Harvard." In another case, one of the executives at Wilson Learning had already started his PhD when he went to work for Larry. Larry continued to push him until the dissertation was finished (personal

communication, February 2, 2015). He inspired not only employees to become more, but also the program participants were also inspired to continue to learn and grow with their organizations after the programs had concluded.

When discussing the ability of transformational leaders to inspire people to exert extra effort, Bass (1988) says, "That extra effort can be inspired by the persuasive appeal of the leaders' language, symbols, images, and vision of a better state of affairs" (p. 22). A point often mentioned by the interviewees was Larry's ability to create what they called "mind hooks." He took complex concepts and simplified them into easy to understand models, but he wouldn't stop there. His mind hooks were words or acronyms that symbolized the models, which referred to the larger, more complex concepts. Simple sayings, such as play to win, stop-challenge-choose, and results model, immediately conjured up the concept and helped staff and participants remember and anchor them. Typical comments are, "The genius is with those who can take complex ideas and repackage and market to make sense. That was Larry's wheelhouse. He may have been the best. The creativity involved and energy were seductive." Or:

The genius was how he made everything easy. Occam's razor, simplistic approach is the best. That was the genius. Really just taking complex processes, and make it sound easy. Academics make them complicated to help them sound smart. Larry took the ideas and made them easy.

The adage of a good model as something that could be written on a napkin, explained in five minutes, and speaks to them for a lifetime was not only a saying, but also a skill Larry maximized and around which he built programs.

Perhaps motivating people through inspiration was Larry's best attribute. One person recalled, "He helped me to see life differently by doing things differently and be the change I want to create." Another stated, "He inspired me to reach higher, to be the best I could be." A third added, "I attribute him to the reason I broke out of my own self-defined boxes and limiting beliefs and became more than I thought possible." A former Pecos salesperson sums him up well, "Larry had charisma! He was a visionary who sparked action in others, and inspired people to go above and beyond their perceived potential."

**Intellectual stimulation.** Small groups in a quaint, natural setting are what typified outdoor experiential learning. Fairly early in the Pecos River Ranch history, Larry sold a program for close to 2400 people. It was actually two programs of 1200 people—one on the east coast and one on the west coast. He pulled his adventure learning staff together and asked if they could produce an outdoor program for 1200 at one location. Several of the staff that had the traditional mindset thought it was crazy, but a couple people believed it was possible. Larry, however, said they needed to figure it out, since he'd already sold the programs and there really was no option. In the end, the staff figured out how to pull it off, and the programs were successful.

Transformational leaders have the ability to stimulate their people intellectually in order to help the associates grow and also produce better results. Bass (1985) states, "The intellectual stimulation of the transformational leader is seen in the discreet jump in the followers' conceptualization, comprehension, and discernment of the nature of the problems they face and their solutions" (p. 99). He indicates the intellectual stimulation is not necessarily scholarly, but invokes a cerebral application to problems that require

considerable thought. In more specific terms Bass and Avolio (1994) write, “Transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Creativity is encouraged” (p.3).

In the example above, the staff initially looked at the situation from an old paradigm. Larry challenged the group to think of new ways to approach the problem. They had produced programs for 100 people; why not build 12 of these 100-person courses in one location? When the problem was reframed, the solution became relatively obvious. It was just a matter of scale. Larry sold the programs knowing that his staff had the ingenuity and skills to pull it off. They had to realize they were up to it. Rather than manage the planning process, Larry empowered and trusted them to go ahead and do it, then stayed out of their way.

There are also many stories at Wilson Learning relative to the construct of intellectual stimulation. One former executive said:

Effective leadership is not heroic management. Larry would say, “Here’s what I want. This is what it could be. Go off and figure it out.” He allowed others, empowered others, to create. He’d then provide the feedback to narrow it down. The same person also pointed out that Larry didn’t quite have the know-how to create program content out of his ideas. He hired very intelligent, creative people to complete the development aspect. By the same token, these same people could not have made the same connections Larry made relative to the creation of the idea. This is why Wilson Learning staff called it the “Creative Greenhouse.” Larry was always challenging the staff to come up with something better and easier for participants to understand.

Another former WLC executive stated:

Larry was an antecedent leader, they who start things. Gave people an idea and they ran with it. He laid the foundation. He had great writers. Let them go. Larry would check in on things, but he was usually onto something else.”

During this time at WLC, Larry was constantly coming up with ideas he wanted to try.

There were so many he could not have possibly micro-managed all of the projects. There were so many ideas the staff had to figure out which ones to pursue. Eventually, they noticed a pattern. As a former writer puts it:

Unless you hear it three times, don't take any action. At the time, it seemed like the most important thing ever. If you only hear it once or twice, don't do anything, because Larry presented all ideas with the same level of enthusiasm. If you heard it mentioned a third time, you'd better start moving on it.

This pattern held up right until the last time many of these folks saw Larry.

Larry also loved technology, but he couldn't really figure it out all the time. He had an instinct for technology that had the potential to make the programs better and more impactful. One telling comment was:

A gift he gave to me, and there were probably four or five significant ones, was where he would sort of toss me a problem to solve, but he didn't know how to do it himself. Figure this out, and if you do, it's great, but he didn't know how to do it himself.

When given these challenges, people delivered. It often took quite a bit of thought, some time, and maybe bringing in a couple other folks to work on the problem, but the problem would almost always be solved.

To Larry everything was possible. A learning one person gained from his association with Larry was, "Before you say something is impossible based on your past, stop and think about your definition of impossible." Problems were not insurmountable. They were simply inconveniences that could be overcome given enough thought and time. Another discussed the impact Larry had on her, "Larry challenged my thinking and kept me open to possibilities."

Those who delivered the programs for Pecos had time between programs to review and think about applying their learning to the next program to make it better. One facilitator mentioned there were often a couple weeks between programs and the expectation was to continue to improve upon what had been done in the past. This constant desire to improve and communicate with each other ways to make the programs better became part of the culture. Before long, the cumulative number of hours spent in programs reach hundreds of thousands. Many of those opportunities to learn were captured and communicated throughout the organization.

One of Larry's former researchers at Wilson Learning explained how great it was that Larry wanted to capture the results of their programs. At the time there was not a lot of quantitative research being conducted in training programs. Larry hired several staff with PhD's to develop measurement tools:

The research department became about 12 people. Research capability had three parts: develop measurement systems and validating them (inventories and profiles) and client related research (needs assessment and client evaluation).... third part was program evaluation; the relationship between measurement and feedback, relate to bottom line. It showed the training mattered. Research related



to sales, customer satisfaction, defects in manufacture, independent measures related to leadership behavior.

The research results drove the direction of product development. The research told Larry what customers need to do, what to improve, and what to develop next. Again, Larry drove the research department to challenge themselves when developing the tools, so more could be learned. He also needed to have complete trust in the department, since he knew nothing of research methodology. His trust in the department inspired them to keep improving.

**Individualized consideration.** Contingent reward as a transactional leader construct involves the leader figuring out what the follower's needs are and implementing the rewards or punishments accordingly. While these interactions tend to be dyadic, they remain transactional by nature and do not lead to any transformation of the individual (Avolio and Bass, 1995). Indeed, it is, "recognizing individual differences in needs, elevating them, and developing potential to achieve increasingly higher levels of performance" (Avolio and Bass, 1995, p. 202), that distinguishes the individual consideration for the transformational leader.

Transformational leaders who are individually considerate act as mentors or coaches. They respond to individual needs and actively monitor the performance of the follower to continually develop the person. They listen carefully, delegate, and support the followers on their path toward contributing more and more to the organization (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

Larry was generally not individually considerate in the way defined by Bass and Avolio (1994). One of his sons thought:

Personal interest or developing individuals was not high on his list. Larry fought coaching. The idea of one-to-one was not a strength. He validated it and understood it. He did not want to be that guy. He was uncomfortable. Not his strength.

Larry's preference was to provide tools for people to develop themselves. This son added, "He would say personal development is important and it's your responsibility."

Larry did, however, choose to mentor more than a few people. No less than five of the people I contacted considered Larry to be their mentor. Perhaps this was because Larry always wanted to help. One of Larry's consultants indicated, "He was never on the meter when helping out other people. He always answered his phone, even though he may not think he had time, but would always be present for the person. He never put anyone off." He went on to say, "It was all about helping someone." Even though Larry never saw himself as a mentor, he didn't say no when someone asked for help. At Pecos, Larry helped the people on his delivery teams. Those who worked with him more often, and were willing to ask questions, received the help. One of Larry's co-facilitators wrote:

Though I had other teachers, including people at Pecos that came in and out of my life, he was the first person who I considered a mentor.... I never wanted to disappoint Larry, to make a mistake or to ruin his brand. All of my fears were certainly self-imposed as Larry always made me "feel safe" as a co-facilitator, and it is this safety that allowed me to rise up and perform at my best. I will never forget the way he helped me learn to Master the curriculum at Pecos.

Another said:

I can truly say that I owe almost everything about my current life to Larry Wilson, in one way or another. My entire professional career is based on what he taught me, and the professional experiences that he allowed me to have. I mean, 100% of it. Just like the “best leader I’ve ever had” exercise that he taught others, he saw something in me that I didn’t even know that I had, myself. He noticed it, he nurtured it, he challenged it, he mentored it.

Larry was a people person. He loved people in general and was curious about everyone. One of the Pecos facilitators related a story from when he was first at the Pecos Ranch to learn the program. He interviewed many of the local staff about what they thought of Larry and the Ranch. One hourly worker responded, “He knows my children’s names. He knows my grandchildren’s names. He doesn’t treat me like I’m inferior. He treats me like man to man, like he’s the same as I am.” Another person talked about Larry donating turkeys to the local village one Thanksgiving. He bought the turkeys, but had local staff deliver them. He didn’t need the recognition. In finishing the thought this person said, “They understood what we were doing and why. It helped break down barriers. The community really respected him and appreciated him. They trusted his actions were genuine, and not buying favor.”

No one interviewed could remember Larry excluding someone from a conversation. There were numerous times when Larry was having a discussion with a very high-level, executive client and one of the staff would walk up to them to deliver information to Larry. Larry would motion them over, introduce them, and include them in the conversation until he was ready to hear the message (personal communication, February 1, 2015). One person commented, “Another attribute was his ability to

contribute to you feeling unique, important, and special.” Another comment was, “Larry was great at making everyone feel included and feel valued.... He had a willingness to learn from anyone, not just the authors or experts he knew.”

Another aspect of Individualized Consideration is developing potential. This aspect was mentioned many times in my interactions with people. One customer stated, “Larry wanted to make a difference and did so by helping people grow beyond their self-imposed limitations to reach their full potential”. Another commented, “What he taught and believed was human potential...and that we had an opportunity to choose to be better...be our best selves.” A third echoed this thought, “That is his mark. I truly believe that he helped people live up to their potential and do what they are capable of and that has to make the planet a better place.” And a fourth, “Later I became a facilitator and Larry’s confidence on my potential helped me greatly to achieve that goal.” A fifth person agreed, “Help others learn about and realize their highest potential.” This type of comment is repeated throughout the interviews and questionnaires.

At Wilson Learning one of the hallmarks was that you could try anything outside of your normal skillset. If you were a cameraman, you could try writing. If you were a writer, you could try facilitating. They didn’t discourage it. Occasionally, things wouldn’t work out, but they often did. Larry created a culture where trying new things was all right. A common theme from the interviewees was that people could do what they could do. In other words, no one told someone else they couldn’t do something because it wasn’t part of the job description.

The individual consideration also spilled over into cultural consideration. WLC expanded their services overseas and Larry knew they had to be culturally sensitive for

the products and programs to be relevant. The products were reworked and adapted and used effectively in twenty different languages and cultures (personal communication, December 13, 2014). This level of attention was welcomed and added to the success of WLC. At Pecos, the facilitation team learned about the client company and were considerate of the company's culture. "Program delivery was much more of a team approach. Program design changed from client to client, depending on needs."

For a well-known guy who had met thousands of people, Larry was also very accessible. One person who had spent considerable time with Larry told me Larry could not let a phone ring without answering it. Quite often it was an executive who needed help working through a problem. No matter how busy he was Larry would make time and really listen to the caller. He would be patient, but push hard because he knew the result would be worthwhile. During these times, Larry was never on the meter. Many consultants would track the time and send a bill. Larry never did that. He was generous with his time if it would help someone.

Larry's attitude toward other people was contagious. When others in his companies adopted his attitude, it spread throughout the organization. Avolio and Bass (1995) call individualized consideration, "the linchpin between the transactional models of leadership developed between 1950 and 1975, and the more recent models dealing with charismatic and transformational leadership" (p. 201). Further, they go on to explain, "Individual consideration can be conceived as a characteristic of the leader's behavior toward individuals, as a normative characteristic of an organization's culture, or as an *expectation* [authors' emphasis] of the leader, group and culture" (p. 204). This

explains why Larry didn't necessarily have to coach or manage each individual for them to feel he was being individually considerate toward them.

Rousseau and House (1994) explored what they called the "meso" level of organizational behavior. In their words, "Meso research occurs in an organizational context where processes at two or more levels are investigated simultaneously" (p.14). Avolio and Bass (1995) took this approach when conducting their multiple levels of analysis relative to individualized consideration. They were curious as to whether an individual or group can have a transformational impact on individuals throughout the organization relative to individualized consideration. Rousseau and House (1994) called this a "cascading" effect in that individuals could be affected across multiple levels or at multiple levels above or below the transformational leader; i.e. the effects could skip levels in between. The results of the Avolio and Bass (1995) study were not complete at the time of publication. However, based on their previous research they expected the theory to prove valid. Information gleaned from Wilson Learning and Pecos River employees would definitely support the notion that the propositions submitted by Avolio and Bass (1995) are accurate.

Larry loved to be with people and learn from them. Everyone felt valued by him, because he did, in fact, value other people. He showed tremendous respect for all people he led and with whom he came in contact outside of his companies. Larry was forever in search of new thoughts and ideas. He never knew from where they could come, so he engaged all people in conversation to learn all he could. As a result, almost everyone who came in contact with him left feeling validated. When someone with Larry's charisma validates another, they are inspired to do more and do it better. As one person put it, " He

thinks of the other person. His interest is in others, their growth, health, and happiness. It didn't matter how it affected him.”

### **Conclusions**

The objective of this research was to find evidence supporting the theory that Larry Wilson was a transformational leader, and that the Full Range of Transformational Leadership model suited him better than other models or theories. Based on the comments during 37 interviews and from 19 questionnaire responses, there is evidence that supports this theory.

Interpretive research is difficult to undertake and remain objective. By definition, it includes the writer's experience with the topic and interpretation thereof. It is impossible to divorce oneself from the people, actions, and thoughts of those in the experience. This is why it is necessary for the reader to understand my history and the transformational effect Larry had on me. It makes the situation difficult to remain objective, and I appreciate those who kept me on task.

The impact Larry had on me is immeasurable. At a time I was headed down a dark path, he acted as the “pull to change” in my own Hero's Journey. Like many people who are called, I was resistant to changing for many years. It was Larry's pull to change that finally had enough effect on me to make those changes and stick with them for 30 years. My new path helped improve my life, gave me purpose, and brought my family closer to me. This impact cannot be denied and cannot be discounted in my interpretation of my views on Larry.

There were comments that did not necessarily agree with some of the conclusions. One person wrote back, “In my experience with any human, and specifically with Larry,

there were some 'strengths overplayed' aspects of each theme." And, to revisit an earlier quote, "a GREAT leader also has to be able to stick to the knitting and execute at some level." Indeed, so many people added the "great" label during interactions with them; the word was included in the initial validation check. These comments were reminders to stick to the original question about whether Larry fit the full range model and the great leader label was removed in the final five themes.

There are other aspects of Larry's leadership that people challenged. The primary challenge was the constant reminder from people that Larry knew what it meant to be a fallible human being, or FHB as he called all people. He was not perfect and did not always walk the talk. He would probably be the first to agree. However, this paper is not about looking for evidence of Larry's fallibility. It's a search for evidence as to whether the full range model is an appropriate model to apply to Larry. How does history judge great leaders? Great leaders are often labeled as such in spite of their fallibility. Whether or not Larry will join their ranks has yet to be determined.

Another issue a person had was included in this statement, "He was magnetic in personality, but not good at all at truly developing others." No inquiry was conducted into the context of this thought, but the research by Rousseau and House (1994) points to the cascading effect of transformational leadership. Even though transformational leaders develop their people, the development doesn't have to be specifically by them. Larry (Wilson & Wilson, 1998) addressed this himself by comparing leaders to farmers. Farmers till and prepare the soil to create conditions favorable for growth. There is considerable agreement among people that Larry did create conditions for development. Multiple people from Wilson Learning said they could try anything. At Pecos, entire



departments were set up to “get people done through work”. Many employees were not developed directly by Larry, but that did not diminish the fact that many people did find developmental opportunities.

One aspect of Idealized Influence is the leader's actions as a role model. An argument could be made that Larry wasn't a great role model. One person made the comment to which a few others agreed, “He was very clear that that his priorities were his work, his family, his marriage in that order.” The question is whether he was a role model at work. Larry's life priorities are not in the same order as most people. However, do you discount him as a leader at work because his personal choices aren't consistent with the norm?

Another question for discussion is whether or not Larry was self-actualized or self-actualizing. Both Burns (2003) and Bass (1985) agree that self-actualization is a necessary attribute for transformational leaders. One can argue that Larry wasn't self-actualized, so couldn't bring others to the same level. As mentioned earlier, Burns (1978) believes it isn't necessary for a leader to be self-actualized to increase performance of subordinates, only that the leader the leader and follower engage with each other to raise one another to higher levels of motivation and achievement toward a common purpose.

When evaluating any leader, it's difficult to keep the 30,000 foot view, and easy to get pulled into looking at the details. Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991) write:

Forty years of research shows that transactional leadership is an effective means of maintaining and/or achieving acceptable standards of performance... when participants were asked to describe their “ideal” leader, they tended not to describe the characteristics of a transactional leader; rather, characteristics of

transformational leadership were *most often* [author's emphasis] mentioned. (p. 10)

The authors also posit that certain antecedent conditions must be met in order for the transformational aspects to develop in a person. One can assume that all the conditions were ripe for Larry as he was growing up. He was rebellious and distrusted authority. He reportedly had an enormous dose of Irish self-confidence and belief in himself. One of his sons commented, "He never took other people's opinions of himself seriously, and never compromised doing what he wanted to do." He wanted to do the right thing. He was very successful selling insurance his way. He loved to entertain. When someone interested him, Larry was sure to talk to him or her face-to-face. Several people mentored him and he was extremely loyal to them. There is no one set of developmental circumstances that determine who will become a transformational leader (Avolio et. al., 1991), but it can be assumed that Larry's conditions were right for him.

Maslow realized he could not change the world one psychoanalytical session at a time, "...we must turn our attention more and more to mass techniques of helping the person to discover this precious human nature deep within himself—this nature that he is afraid of expressing" (Maslow, 1960, P. 8). In essence, Maslow figured out that he could reach more people through psychologically healthy, or self-actualized, managers and leaders. The key was to develop the managers in a Eupsychian company. Larry built his companies to reach masses of people. He recognized the need to work with as many people as he could. Ideally, he would work with managers, who could, in turn, develop their followers. This concept is in line with Maslow's (1965) nest of boxes concept mentioned earlier.

The meeting with Abraham Maslow shaped Larry's life. A spark was ignited inside Larry that would shape his existence. One of Larry's sons stated:

One of the driving forces for Larry, within the Maslow visit story there are some stories that are relevant, I believe, that Maslow gave Larry something bigger than himself to pursue and Larry was curious. He had a vast amount of curiosity for himself. He would love to spend time discussing those things that he was curious about; he largely created companies around the answer to questions of which he was curious. It wasn't that he had mastered these things at all. These were the very things he struggled with. He found the notion of self-actualization and personal development was something that he himself was pursuing.

In other words, at Wilson Learning sales and other training was on Larry's mind and was what he thought about. As he learned more and grew personally, his attention migrated more into personal growth. A WLC executive commented, "Programs emerged geared toward leadership and managing people. That grew into personal growth and wellness." The personal growth sphere was not consistent with the WLC brand, so he decided to sell it and create Pecos River Learning Centers where he could create an environment conducive to helping people with personal growth. An interviewee concluded, "They [Wilson Learning] had a wellness program in the early 80's. So far ahead of its time, but it wasn't commercially viable." Another added, "Larry decided that physical and mental wellness was the missing link in the product offering."

Larry's desire to bring his family back into his life was additional motivation to sell WLC and found Pecos River. A person close to the family had this to say, "Pecos was a new beginning. It gave him a chance to bring the kids back into his life as he tries

to fix the family.” Adding credence to the statement, one of his children said, “Larry felt guilty about breaking the family. Pecos was a response to breaking the family and the Catholic guilt to try and rebuild it.”

Larry understood the connection between Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the need to help people everywhere fulfill those needs; not just those on the lower levels of the pyramid, but the higher levels that led to people living better lives. In his sales career, Larry's focus was on addressing insurance needs that many people never realized they had. Later at Pecos, the focus changed to helping people find a purpose and a higher level need to help them self-actualize. In Maslow's (1965) words, "...the good boss or the good leader in most situations must have as a psychological prerequisite the ability to take pleasure in the growth or self-actualization of other people" (p.131). As time went on the goal to help people self-actualize became Larry's greater purpose. He believed so strongly in his mission, and his vision was so clear, the only way Larry could fulfill that mission was to become a transformational leader.

Specifically, Larry Wilson fit the full range of the transformational leader. At times he was laissez-faire about some aspects of his business. At other times he managed by exception, both passively and actively. Occasionally, he reinforced contingently. Most often, Larry lived in the four I's that comprise the transformational leader in the full range model. As a charismatic, entertaining, and teaching role model, Larry's leadership had an idealized influence on people. As a leader with a strong sense of purpose and a vision that showed people there were larger goals in life, such that he was able to get them to rise above personal needs, he was inspirationally motivating. As an idea person who kept moving on to the next big thing, he challenged followers to create and deliver

the programs spawned from his ideas, providing intellectual stimulation. As a person who enjoyed being with people, welcomed and respected others, listened to others, and challenged everyone to be better, Larry was individually considerate. He didn't go to a leaders' school to learn and practice these factors of transformational leadership. These were his traits—a natural part of him—that made Larry a transformational leader, and many believe a great leader.

### **Additional Research**

The research presented in this paper concentrates on whether there is evidence to support the theory that Larry Wilson was a transformational leader who is best characterized by the Full Range of Transformational Leadership model as presented by Bass and Avolio (1994). While the evidence supports this theory, there were a number of questions that could be the subject of further research.

The people who worked with Larry over the years generally had differing views on his leadership. Those who worked with him earlier in his training career seemed to believe Larry's leadership was more visionary and charismatic, rather than more fully transformational. Leadership development takes time and practice. Did Larry develop over the years into a more complete or transformational leader? His years at Pecos River seemed to add an element of individual attention to his employees that he had not demonstrated earlier. Future research could look more deeply into Larry's development as a leader over time.

Rather than researching Larry's development as a leader over time, a second question suggests a different sample of interviewees. Interviews were scheduled and questionnaires sent to as many people as possible from the time Wilson Learning was

founded in 1965 until the later years of Larry's professional life about 40 years later. Would it have been better to focus on obtaining information from a broad sample of people at a specific time, rather than over time? A study could be conducted specifically with the people who worked for Larry in 1992 or 1993, which was just before Pecos River Learning Centers was sold to Aon.

Continuing on the theme of the timing aspect of the research, the research study began shortly after Larry passed. Many of the people contacted had not interacted with Larry for many years. Did his passing have something to do with how people remembered him? People generally remember positive experiences more than negative ones. Were people more nostalgic, and therefore more positive when recalling their experiences with Larry? Similar research could be undertaken a few more years into the future to see how, or if, people's perceptions of Larry's leadership change over time.

Based on the results in Larry Wilson's case, there appears to be a strong correlation between finding a strong purpose and becoming a transformational leader. Further research could explore whether this correlation is consistent with other known transformational leaders. A correlate study could look into how early these leaders found their purpose and how strongly it affected their development as leaders.

This study did not look specifically into whether or not self-actualized people develop into strong leaders, or whether Larry reached a level of self-actualization or not. Self-actualization was a strong theme. Maslow implies that self-actualized individuals will make good leaders due to their courage and willingness to take risks, their creativity, and their psychological health. Additional research could look at current leaders and identify correlations between their level of self-actualization and their effectiveness as

leaders. An offshoot of this approach would look at potential correlations between the level of self-actualization and the strength of purpose driving an individual. Do highly self-actualized people have a strong sense of purpose and are they effective leaders?

Finally, as this is the first attempt at conducting research into Larry's leadership, there is little to which it can be compared. The fact that it's an interpretive paper opens the door to many questions. It is difficult to divorce myself from almost 30 years of knowing and working with Larry. It's recommended that someone in the future pick up on this research that did not have a relationship with Larry and look at his leadership from an approach that has less potential bias.

Having the privilege of writing the first academic paper about Larry Wilson has been an honor and a rewarding experience. The transformation of Larry over the years is an interesting story and one that we should continue to research. In the writing of Burns, Bass, and others, Maslow's concept of self-actualization figures prominently into the transformational leader's make-up. Larry undertook a conscious effort to grow as a person and help others become all they can be. It is my hope that this beginning will lead to more research, so we can understand this phenomenon better and understand Larry Wilson better.

## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

- 1) What was your relationship with Larry Wilson?
- 2) For those who worked with Larry: what was your role in his business? Customers:  
How did your relationship with Larry begin and why were you drawn to him and his products? Friends: How did your friendship begin? Family: The relationship is understood.
- 3) What was unique about Larry?
- 4) What made Larry unique? What were his greatest personal attributes?
- 5) What did you learn from Larry?
- 6) What differentiated Larry from others in the same business?
- 7) How did Larry learn and research?
- 8) Where did Larry get his ideas?
- 9) What drove Larry?
- 10) How did Larry develop ideas and products?
- 11) What technologies did Larry use or develop that contributed to his uniqueness?
- 12) What was Larry greatest gift to the world?
- 13) How will Larry be remembered?
- 14) How was Larry as a leader? What type of leader was he?



**Appendix B****Questionnaire**Survey about Larry Wilson for Peter Engstrom's Thesis

- 1) How did you know Larry: (please underline the appropriate responses)  
    Professionally?  
        Wilson Learning  
        Pecos River  
        Both WLC and Pecos  
        Customer  
        Associate  
    Personally?  
        Family  
        Friend
- 2) How would you describe Larry?
- 3) What were his greatest personal attributes?
- 4) What adjectives would you use to describe Larry?
- 5) What impact did Larry Have on you personally?
- 6) What did you learn from Larry?
- 7) Your impression of Larry as a manager?
- 8) Your impression of Larry as a leader?
- 9) Explain Larry's leadership style as you observed him?
- 10) What do you believe to be Larry's legacy?

## Appendix C

### Validation Email

Good Day,

I hope this finds you all well.

My thesis is finally getting close to completion . To do so, I need a little more help from you.

I have consolidated themes from 36 interviews and 19 questionnaires, and would like to have you verify my results. 45 mini-themes emerged through the process. Virtually everyone mentioned at least one one mini-theme in each of the five major themes. Would you please evaluate at the themes with the following questions in mind:

Is there anything to add?

Do I need to change anything?

Did I get it right?

The five main themes are (in no particular order):

- 1) Larry loved generating ideas. He looked everywhere for inspiration and knowledge. In researching ideas he was brilliant in synthesizing his learning.
- 2) Larry loved people. He was great at connecting and engaging with all people. He wanted to make a difference by influencing those with whom he made contact.
- 3) Larry intuitively knew what people needed in order to make his curriculum accessible and memorable. He was a master at simplifying concepts and adding emotion to his programming.

4) Larry loved attention and was great in presenting. He was funny, entertaining, energetic, and fearless. He used these attributes to become a great teacher, speaker and storyteller.

5) Larry was a great leader. He was inspirational, motivational, charismatic, passionate and a visionary. He attracted smart, talented, creative people who helped make his vision a reality.

Please provide some sort of response to me. Your response can be as simple as you wish. If you disagree, or believe something needs to change, please provide a little explanation. Without responses (agreeing or disagreeing), the validity of my research is diminished.

I also ask that you respond as soon as possible. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you very much.

Peter Engstrom

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