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Cross–Cultural Vincentian Leadership: The Challenge of Developing Culturally Intelligent Leaders

By

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Courtesy of The Hay-Vincentian Leadership Project

Cultural diversity is a fundamental challenge to leadership theory, practices and research. Culture is also a central component for leaders inspired by St. Vincent de Paul and his followers. Cultures, both for individuals and organizations, shape and contextualize people's interpretation of leadership values, effectiveness and development. The Hay–Vincentian Leadership Project offers its leadership development services to culturally diverse organizations and leaders constantly engaged in cross-cultural communications and intercultural relations. As the project expands its services to the international level, Vincentian Leadership needs to be studied in light of cultural diversity, cultural competency and cultural intelligence. What lesson can we learn from Vincent de Paul and the worldwide Vincentian family for discerning Vincentian orientations and identifying leadership competencies?

Like other institutions inspired by the charisma of St. Vincent de Paul, DePaul University is increasingly becoming global. As the University expands its global networks, international programs, and the cultural diversity of its students, staff and faculty, the institution is challenged to promote cross-cultural competency both at the interpersonal and organizational levels. Hence, cultural diversity awareness and cross-cultural communication effectiveness ought to be assessed, implemented and coached among Vincentian leaders. What qualities describe those who work well cross-culturally, either in a culture different from their own or in a diverse organization? The following reflections function as groundwork for conducting comparative international research on Vincentian leadership practices. Vincentian cross-cultural leadership competency is identified as a capacity to understand others' motives, behaviors and needs. Effective Vincentian leaders are invited and challenged to become competent cross-cultural communicators, innovators, risk-takers, adaptable people who are open to new experiences.

Vincent and Culture

St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) is a worldwide example of charity, service and love for the poor. In spite of the fact that Vincent conducted most of his missionary work in France, his example of leadership is acknowledged by people of many cultures. Also the services, institutions and associations of the Vincentian family are well known and appreciated by many people of American, African,

European and Asian cultures. The work of the worldwide Vincentian family would not have been possible without Vincent de Paul's awareness of cultural diversity, and his constant support for his foreign missionaries. In general, Vincent, unlike some of his followers, is not directly associated with mission *ad gentes*, and with how cultural diversity challenges evangelization, service and leadership. Vincent is often described as a faithful champion of charity and God's servant to the poor people of 17th century France. Yet, Vincent's letters are testimony to his attentive concern for people's spiritual, material and cultural needs.

For example, Vincent's missionaries had to be experts in cross-cultural communication able to speak local languages. He wrote, "How can missionaries go throughout the world announcing the Gospel if they only know their own language?"[1] Languages are obviously important for cross-cultural communication. Vincent was proficient in the languages and dialects of 17th century France and its already multicultural Paris. He understood that in order to effectively evangelize and provide service to the poor, knowledge of cultural traditions, customs and beliefs was needed. The three thousand surviving letters (of the estimated 30,000 that Vincent wrote) document his incredible skill as a cross-cultural leader. He had a unique ability to illustrate his message using regional customs and local expressions. His knowledge of several French dialects, his fluency in Spanish and Italian and his understanding of the Arab world demonstrates not only his intelligence and effective communication skills, but also his exposure to culturally diverse societies. Vincent's sensitivity to this matter was based on his experience of cultural diversity in Europe, and driven by concern for effective communication in foreign countries.

> I think we would do well today to ask God to give us the grace to learn foreign languages well, for the sake of those to be sent in foreign lands... Now the variety of languages is very great, not only in Europe, Africa, and Asia, but even in Canada, for we see in the reports of the Jesuit Fathers that there are as many languages as there are tribes...[2]

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[1] Pierre Coste, C.M., ed., *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents*, 14 vols. (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre J. Gabalda, 1920-1925), 12:26–7. Hereinafter cited as *CED*.
[2] *CED*, 12:26.

Many followed Vincent's exhortation to learn languages, and they produced very important linguistic and anthropological works in the Malagasy grammar, the Chinese vocabulary, and numerous pioneering documents in the Turkish, Tigrai, Quichua and Neo-Aramaic languages.[3] Today, knowledge of languages and awareness of cultural diversity are essential components in the education, training and development of leaders as effective cross-cultural communicators.

Vincent, *père de la patrie*, is father of his country and son of his culture. However, it would be more appropriate to speak of him as son of multiple cultures. The geographical and historical context of France illustrates how Vincent became comfortable with very diverse regions, cultures and people during his travel and ministry. Colonial activity and intensified business travel across Europe contributed to the coexistence of culturally diverse groups in 17th century France. Vincent was born in 1581 in the southwest Basque region of France. This area was strongly influenced by Basque culture and tradition. Even today, in Spain the Basque population is a vivid example of resistance against political and cultural impositions. Vincent grew up in a cultural setting characterized by a strong sense of identity closer to that of Spain than Paris.

Vincent's call to ministry and mission among the poor led him to frequently travel and encounter quite diverse regions and cultures. If we exclude his few trips to Italy, and the probably inaccurate account of a two-year captivity in North Africa, Vincent did not travel much outside of his *patrie*, France. Yet, during his more than 60 years of active ministry, Vincent learned how to recognize cultural diversity in the context of diverse political, economic and social situations.

Vincent lived and worked in almost all regions of France. At age fourteen Vincent moved out of his family home to study in Dax. Two years later he began his theological studies in Saragossa and Toulose. In 1601, after his ordination, he traveled to Rome and in 1605, after receiving his Bachelor of Theology, he traveled to Bordeaux, Casters, Toulouse and Marseilles. Twelve years later, after serving as parish priest in Clichy and chaplain for the Gondi's family in Folleville, he moved to Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne, in the Southeast

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[3] "Congregation of the Priests of the Mission (Lazarists)," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume X. Online version available at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10357a. htm [accessed 20 February 2004].

of France. Here he worked as a pastor and founded the first Charity Confraternities. In 1618, after preaching in various missions across France, he met St. Francis de Sales in Paris. Vincent and Francis shared a common interest: their missions and the poor.

Vincent's vision for effective service and ministry among the poor was not confined by national boundaries. His letters and conferences reflect a growing appreciation for the foreign missions. Although he never traveled to visit his missionaries in Madagascar, he offered all the necessary moral and material support for such an important endeavor. He admired the faith, courage and cultural challenges associated with the missionary life. On numerous occasions he reminded the Congregation of the Mission as to the significance of foreign missions. Their ministry needed a global perspective and could not be limited by language barriers or national borders.

"How happy is the missionary who has no limits in this world on where he can go to preach the Gospel. Why then do we hesitate and set limits, since God has given us the whole world to satisfy our zeal?"[4] It is clear to Vincent that the vocation to serve the poor and preach them the good news applies to the whole world. "What does the word missionary mean? It means one who is sent, sent by God. God has said to you: 'Go out to the whole world to preach the Gospel to every creature.'"[5] As a common missionary practice, foreign missionaries often worked in foreign lands accompanying people of their own culture, often colonizers, soldiers and businessmen. Yet, for Vincent the call to serve the poor in the model of Jesus was an imperative for both national and foreign missions. As he told the first members of the Congregation of the Mission in 1626: "In this vocation, we live in conformity with Our Lord Jesus Christ who, it seems, when he came to this world, chose as his principal task that of assisting and caring for the poor."[6]

Vincent's most significant cross-cultural experience is with the poor. To be with them, to step down from his privileged place as an ordained and educated person, and to decisively commit to serving the poor was equivalent to entering into another culture.

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[4] Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God. Vincent de Paul, Founder and First Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission*, trans. William Quinn, F.S.C., ed. John E. Rybolt, C.M., 3 vols. (New Rochelle, N.Y.: 1993), 2:84.
[5] *CED*, 12:27.
[6] *CED*, 11:108.

Various transformations occurred in Vincent during his cross-cultural journey from rural boy to urban missionary, and from a chaplain to the rich Gondi family to a champion of charity and organizational inventiveness. His experience of immersion with the poor reflects Jesus' experience of incarnation and what Rev. Robert Maloney, C.M., defines as inculturation. The missionary call for inculturation goes hand-in-hand with the missionary call to teach, witness, liberate and dialogue with diverse cultural and social realities.[7]

These inspiring trends in missionary work started with Vincent's exhortations to move beyond Paris. Following his visionary leadership, a pioneering group of clergy extended their understanding of mission and went beyond Paris to preach popular missions in the French countryside. A few years later they traveled beyond their French borders, cultures and mentality to serve local churches in Italy, Ireland, Scotland and Poland. But for Vincent that was not enough. Inspired by other missionary leaders, such as Francis de Sales, Pierre de Bérulle and André Duval, Vincent de Paul encouraged expanding this missionary service for the poor into other cultural contexts. A few years before his death, Vincent asked his followers this question:

> Are we ready to go to Poland, to Barbary, to the Indies, to sacrifice our lives and our satisfaction to him? If that it is so, let us pray God... Let us give ourselves to God to go throughout the whole world to spread his holy gospel and wherever he may lead us, let us stay at our post, faithful to our commitment until we are recalled at his good pleasure. May difficulties not deter us... It matters not if we die in the fight. But let us die with our weapons in our hands, and happy too, for by our death the company will not be the poorer, because "the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians." For every missionary who gives his life for charity, God will raise up others who will do the work he left behind.[8]

Indeed, these words of faith were inspirational for those missionary leaders who knew that death was not a possibility but a

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[7] Robert P. Maloney, C.M., *He Hears the Cry of the Poor: On the Spirituality of Vincent de Paul* (New York: New City Press, 1995).

[8] Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:194-195.

common outcome of missionary activity. Deadly infections, incidents during travel, and martyrdom were the most common cause of death described in missionary accounts of the time. Francis Regis Clet (1748-1820) and Jean Gabriel Perboyre (1802-1840) are two of the more renowned followers of Vincent, both of whom died as martyrs during their missionary work in China. Nothing can disparage their courage, faith, and ultimate sacrifice, recognized by the Catholic Church with their beatification. Missionaries, however, have been known for misinterpreting local customs, traditions and beliefs, labeling them as "satanic expressions." Early Catholic missions to China considered ancient cultural practices and religious beliefs such as Feng Shui obstacles to Christian conversion.[9] The cross and the sword, a symbol of the association between the missionary works of the church and the colonizing power of the state, often dissolved in violence due to cultural miscommunication.

Miscommunication, along with a lack of cultural awareness and rising nationalistic sentiments were at the root of Italian-French antagonism that emerged among members of the Congregation of the Mission between 1685 and 1705. An account in the history of the Congregation reads:

> One factor which greatly hurt not only the internal
> life of the Congregation of the Mission, but also its
> apostolate was a deep-seated nationalistic rivalry
> between its French and Italian members. This began in
> the late seventeenth century, reached crisis proportions
> during the eighteenth century and resulted in a full-
> scale schism in the period of the French Revolution.
> Generally, the Italians seemed to resent the French
> monopoly on community government, the attempt
> to impose what they considered French institutions
> on the Community, and a feeling on either side that
> the other had fallen away from the true spirit of Saint
> Vincent.[10]

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[9] See: D.E. Mungello, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Steyler Verlag, 1994).
[10] Stafford Poole, C.M., *A History of the Congregation of the Mission, 1625-1843* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Vincentian Fathers and Brothers, 1973), 161.

Aside from doctrinal differences and historical circumstances that may explain this crisis, there are clearly cultural differences at the roots of the debate that fueled miscommunication. As scholars in cultural studies have observed, the French were known to consider themselves superior to the Italians, who knew it and wanted to outsmart the French.[11] If Vincentian leaders better understood this cultural friction, they might have better addressed this interplay of religious, political and economic circumstances.

Vincent, and many of his followers, undoubtedly viewed understanding other cultures as essential for the effectiveness of their evangelizing and service initiatives for the world's poor. The great Vincentian missionary leader Justin de Jacobis (1800-1860) recognized at the beginning of his work in Abyssinia (present day Ethiopia) that missionary messages must take root and blossom within the deepest values of each culture. Authentic and lasting cultural change occurs in respecting local culture, when external elements arrive with an understanding and respect for diversity. Similar to missionaries, leaders perform effectively when their relation to culturally diverse people and organizations is based on awareness and respect. Cultural awareness is crucial to both effective missionary communication and the practice of leadership.

Culture and Leadership

Culture is for leadership as water is for fish. You may not be aware of it, but it is the element that defines your existence, your self-awareness and your relationship to others. Culture is crucial to understanding leadership in its personal, collective and organizational dimensions. It is therefore essential to recognize and be aware of the intrinsic relationship between culture and leadership. For a growing number of managers working in a cross-cultural environment, it is a fact of daily life. A recent survey in global leadership established that 85 percent of the Fortune 500 companies did not think they had enough global leaders, and 76 percent of their existing leaders needed

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[11] See: Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide. Managing Successfully Across Cultures* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999).

adequate cross-cultural communication skills.[12] Yet the relationship between culture and management is not clearly understood.[13]

But what do we mean by culture? Culture is a captivating reality. But it is also quite difficult to define, understand and interpret. This is particularly true when we attempt to identify the culture of nations, organizations or people. Culture, like leadership, does not have a common definition. There are more than 300 definitions of culture. Anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists and organizational theorists often have different definitions of culture. For our purposes, consider this working definition: culture is a shared system of meanings, ideas and thoughts. Culture is what best describes our identity. It is the operating system of our individual and collective identities and behaviors.[14] Culture is like the "software of the mind" as it provides us with codes by which we make sense of the world. Culture gives people and organizations a sense of identity.

There are many approaches to culture. We can study cultures as kinship, educational, economic, political or religious systems. We can observe culture in the way people associate, manage health, and approach recreation. Edward Hall, a major scholar in cultural studies, conceives culture as a means of communication which takes place through symbols, "silent languages."[15] Hall focuses his study on five major 'languages': time, space, material goods, friendship and agreement. The language of time, for instance, is visible in how some cultures consider it important to be on-time, while others view time as circularly adapted to relationships and less linearly defined by tasks and agendas. When I was leading meetings for Mexican-American groups on the south side of Chicago, it was understood that our 7:00 P.M. meeting would probably start much later. The language of space is visible, for example, in the physical distance that people keep during conversations. Latino and southern European cultures tend to maintain a distance that may be uncomfortable, or even misinterpreted, among people of north European or North American cultures. Then there is

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[12] H.B. Gregersen, A.J. Morrison and J.S. Black, "Developing Leaders for the Global Frontiers," *Sloan Management Review* 40 (1998).
[13] Philip M. Rosenzweig, "National Culture and Management," *Harvard Business School* 9: 394-177 (1994).
[14] Geert Hofstede, *Culture and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (London: McGraw-Hill Book Company [Ltd.], 1991).
[15] Edward Hall, *Beyond Cultures* (Anchor Books, 1971). See also his, *The Silent Language* (Anchor, 1973) and *The Hidden Dimensions* (Anchor, 1990).

the language of material goods. In the United States salary, along with your title, is what characterizes your position in society. Yet asking a question such as "how much money do make?" would be considered inappropriate and intrusive. When my American-born wife met my Italian family for the first time, she did not know that this question is naturally asked in friendly conversations. The way people stipulate an agreement also varies culturally. Written documents countersigned by lawyers may be the best agreement in certain cultures, while verbal agreements relying upon the testimony of the community may be more significant in others. Hall describes how people use these five silent languages in a high or low context:

1. **High context cultures**: Members place great emphasis on friends and networks and are less formalistic in negotiations (Japanese, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and Latino culture).

2. **Low context cultures**: people tend to be more precise, detailed and require more specific information to communicate (German, Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon cultures – the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, etc).

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch management scholar, is probably the most influential researcher on systematic cultural differences. His work shows that people carry "mental programs" initially developed in their families, reinforced in schools and organizations, reflected in national cultures and clearly expressed in different values. By studying employees of IBM in more than forty countries he identifies five cultural dimensions of work-related values:[16]

1. **Power distance:** This dimension has a particular relationship with leadership and its balance with fellowship. It is the degree to which a particular culture accepts or does not accept the uneven distribution of power. Not every culture appreciates participative styles of leadership. Many cultures (e.g. Middle

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[16] To know more about the work of Geert Hofstede see his popular text, *Culture and Organizations*. For a more scholarly approach see his, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations* (London: SAGE, 2001).

Eastern and Asian culture) prefer a hierarchical type of leadership wherein the leader takes full responsibility for all major decisions. They expect leaders to be all knowing and in charge. Meanwhile, there are other cultures that expect their leaders to be participative, preferring a team facilitator rather than a leader.

2. **Uncertainty avoidance:** This dimension measures the extent to which people and organizations feel either comfortable or uncomfortable in unstructured situations. Certain leaders perform better in novel, unknown, surprising situations while others avoid uncertain and undefined roles. This duality is often interpreted in a distinction between leaders and managers. However, this characteristic has to be considered within a cultural context. In other words, risk-taking is not a virtue in every culture. In certain cultures risk-avoidance is more a value of leadership than is risk-taking.

3. **Individualism / collectivism:** This dimension recognizes the degree to which individuals act and identify themselves in relation to collectivities. In some cultures individualism is viewed as an important value, while others view it as alienation from society and ultimately their true identity. Generally speaking, collective cultures define individual identities in their relation to the group (We are, therefore I am), while others define individual identities on their individual power and affirmation in society (I shop therefore I am). Sociologists distinguish various levels of individualism such as *gemeinschaft* (low-individualism, visible in traditional practices and a personal sense of belonging to community) and *gesellschaft* (high-individualism, visible in the more individualistic, competitive, and impersonal organization of society).[17] Obviously, the degree of individualism or collectivism prevalent

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[17] To know more about this distinction see Ferdinand Tonnies, *Community and Society* (Transaction, 1988) and Larry Lyon, *The Community in Urban Society* (Waveland, 1999).

in a given culture will strongly affect the nature of the relationship between a leader, the team and the organization.

4.   **Masculinity / femininity:** This dimension refers to the distribution of emotional roles between genders. The distinction is not clearly defined by gender, but shifts in relation to "tough" masculine or "tender" feminine societies. In masculine societies, cultures tend to value leadership characteristics traditionally associated with males such as achievement, competition, assertiveness, heroism and material success. Feminine cultures, on the other hand, value leadership characteristics such as relationships, caring for the weak, modesty and quality of life issues. Masculine cultures value leaders that challenge the system and encourage competition while feminine cultures value leaders that cooperate and invest in relationships within teams and organizations.

5.   **Long-term / short-term orientation:** Hofstede recently added this dimension to measure the extent to which a culture programs its members to accept delayed gratification for their material, social and emotional needs. This dimension did not emerge in his study of IBM but in a value survey for Chinese students. The long / short-term orientation is quite visible in Eastern cultures, reminiscent of the teaching of Confucius: persistence and thrift of personal stability while respecting tradition. This dimension is important in relation to leadership development programs and organizational appraisals. While some cultures value short-term planning, profits and immediate concrete reward (usually associated with an increase in salary), other cultures value personal sacrifice, recognizing it as a long-term benefit for their families, their organizations or their national economies.

Following the Hofstede study, other scholars in global leadership studies identified additional cultural dimensions. They include: Activeness/Reflection and Doing/Being. Activeness/ Reflection distinguishes active cultures who value practical leadership

and learning by doing. This is contrasted by reflective cultures who value intellectual leadership and learning by theory. The Doing/Being dimension distinguishes cultures that value doing and consider continuous progress and improvement to be indicative of good leadership. In contrast, the value of being is reflected in leadership that stresses harmony and acceptance of the current state.[18]

Cultural contexts and characteristic dimensions define cultural difference. But when we face cultural diversity our thoughts may be really cultural stereotypes. We are all ethnocentric, some just do not know it. Ethnocentrism becomes a problem only when associated with conscious refusal of cultural diversity. People who do not want to be classified as ethnocentric often refuse to face cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is something we experience in our international travels. It is also visible in the ever growing diversity of global cities. American urban spaces are becoming even more diverse. New immigrant groups distinguish themselves in refusing assimilation into the melting pot of American society. Rather, they find inspiration in those cultural expressions that promote the distinctive nature of their cultural identities. Cultural diversity is not just a global carnival of people with customs, languages and worldviews. The importance of cultural identity for new immigrants is similar to that of brand names for corporations. You need to distinguish yourself to survive in the globalization of cultures. The significance of culture is differently interpreted by people, often depending upon their position in a global society. Likewise, depending upon their level of power within organizations, people may interpret organizational culture quite differently. This explains why globalization cannot be interpreted only as a unification of cultures. The other side of globalization as multiculturalism can be cultural fragmentation and fundamentalism.

Culture is a major challenge for today's global leaders and organizations. Globalization and the growing number of international organizations have necessarily heightened the attention given to cross-cultural situations. A growing number of studies demonstrate the effects of transporting organizations, ideas and leadership across cultural boundaries. They confirm how culture is an integral part of leadership. Yet, not many organizations are currently investing

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[18] Michael Hoppe, "Cross-Cultural Issues in the Development of Leaders," in *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook for Leadership Development*, eds. Cynthia D. Canley and Ellen Van Velson (Denver, CO: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

the necessary resources for developing cross-culturally competent leaders.[19] Very few corporate and higher education leadership programs include issues pertaining to cross-cultural leadership competency. This is probably explained by leaders and organizations that still do not recognize the culture-leadership relationship. But this is also a sign that many still do not consider leadership to be a socially constructed reality. Evidenced by the common phrase "business is business everywhere," many managers are still convinced that culture does not affect the practice of leadership. This simplistic view is not only naïve, but it fails to recognize that fundamental differences exist among people around the world. Culture is a crucial component in leadership, but it does not explain everything. We should not use "culture" to explain away all conflicts among people and organizations with diverse styles of power, personality or management.

Twenty-first century organizations need to seriously commit themselves to train, educate and develop cross-culturally competent leaders. Managing cultural differences by only learning survival skills, basic communication or respecting cultural etiquette is not enough. Developing cross-culturally competent leaders is an essential challenge for effective leadership practices in our ever changing work environments and globalizing societies.

Cross-Cultural Competency

The William and Mary Pat Gannon Hay-Vincent de Paul Leadership Project (H.L.P.) explores this area of research. Its purpose is to identify Vincentian oriented leadership practices at DePaul University and other institutions, organizations and groups connected to the worldwide Vincentian family. As the project prepares to expand its leadership research and services internationally, similar questions to the ones that Vincent asked arise. "Are we ready to move our assessment tools and services to other countries and cultures?" "Are we ready to recognize the influence that culture has in the practices, assessments and interpretation of leadership?"

The methodology that inspires the Hay-Vincentian Leadership Project could be best described as a "bottoms-up" approach geared

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[19] Marshall Goldsmith, et. al. *Global Leadership: The Next Generation* (Financial Times: Prentice Hall, 2003). Philip R. Harris and Robert T. Morran, *Managing Cultural Differences: Leadership Strategies for a New World Business* [5th Ed.] (Woburn, MA: Gulf Professional Publishing, 1999). C. Goman, *Managing on a Global Organization* (Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Publications, 1994).

toward empowerment for the participants. Thanks to the generous support of DePaul University's trustee Bill Hay and his wife, the project has been conducting interviews, focus groups and surveys to assess and identify Vincentian leadership oriented competencies and practices. The risk of presenting a pre-fabricated model of Vincentian leadership based on documents and expectations rather than actual practices and shared values has been present from the beginning. Our desire to listen to our participant's stories of leadership, rather than superimposing corporate values and abstract mission statements, continues to be at the foundation of our interview practices, assessment tools, and coaching services. Our team agrees that this very same approach needs to be continued as we move the project into its international stage. This is a fine statement of intentions, but cultural diversity requires more than "good intentions." It requires us to become cross-culturally competent. If we overlook culture, we will surely fail to capture and properly interpret the culturally diverse experiences of Vincentian leadership.

All cross-cultural relations are filtered by the degree of power represented or exerted by the interlocutors. Power is an issue to be attentively considered when an American and western-based leadership model is applied to culturally diverse and non-western contexts. The Hay-Vincentian Leadership Project, although originally funded and launched in the United States, needs to maintain a creative model and be aware of new contexts, experiences and interpretations of Vincentian values. By stepping into other cultures, the project and our participants will learn from other leadership practices and interpretations of Vincent de Paul and his vision. Along with an international comparative analysis of Vincentian leadership practices, new leadership competencies and experiences could be beneficial to the reevaluation and possible resolution of personal and organizational leadership dilemmas. By fostering international comparison and cross-cultural dialogues, the project will ultimately enable leaders to recognize and appreciate diversity in their workplace, in their families and within themselves.

The Hay-Vincentian Leadership Project is committed to facilitate the development of value-oriented leadership practices. The service and leadership development itinerary includes: assessments, action plans, coaching and education. The Vincentian Leadership Assessments (VLAs) are specifically designed instruments for assessing Vincentian leadership oriented practices and competencies. Videos,

training workbooks and other resources are offered for personal and organizational leadership development. The project emphasis is on leadership development more than leader development. That is to say, it is attentive to the needs of a leader in the context of his/her team, organization and society. This emphasis is expressed in the four levels of assessment: individual, collective, organizational and cross-cultural. In the formats of self (VLA-SELF), observed (VLA-OBS), organizational (VLA-ORG) and cross-cultural competency (VLA-CCC), the Vincentian Leadership Assessment reflects upon these levels and their connection to the values represented by the founder and the mission of the organization. Our suggested multi-level Vincentian leadership development tools should foster leadership practices that are both values-based and mission-oriented. These tools include assessments, planning, coaching, and educational training. The Hay-Vincentian Leadership Project's goal is to help leaders discover their strengths, improve their weaknesses, and identify with Vincentian values in synergy with the mission of their organizations.
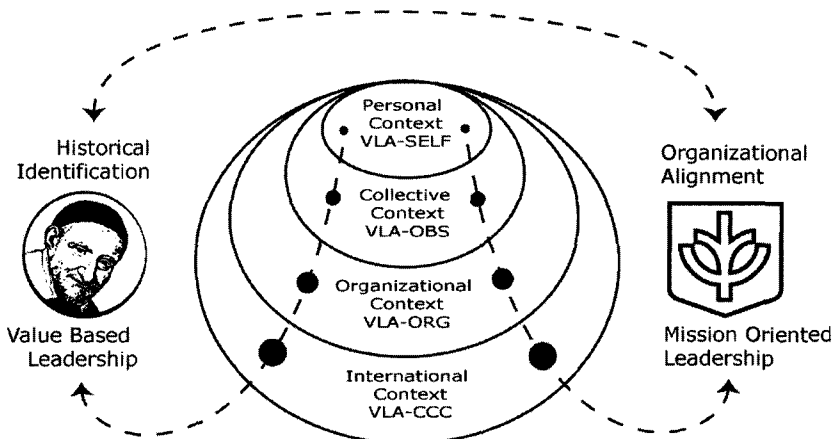

Figure One.

Figure 1: Contexts and Vincentian leadership development

The Hay-Vincentian Leadership Project is a comprehensive and inclusive leadership model. Rather than exclusively focusing on servant characteristics of leadership, Vincentian leaders sustain an integrated balance between accomplishment of tasks and attention to relationships. They stress mission and values in their statements,

but they put them into practice through service and dedication to the improvement of society. This integrated balance of mission, tasks, people and service is often interpreted and practiced differently to situationally respond to the needs of people, organizations and circumstances. This situational approach, originally developed by leadership scholar Ken Blanchard, suggests that today's changing people, organizations and societies need both strong and flexible leaders.[20]

Effective Vincentian leaders should demonstrate ability to apply leadership competencies within cultural contexts and organizational situations. Those Vincentian leadership competencies that define mission, tasks, people, and service orientations are illustrated in *Figure 2*. The Vincentian leadership model emerging from this research suggests how effective leaders need to integrate both a masculine and feminine approach. The mission-tasks at the top of the pyramid form a harmonious leadership paradigm integrated with the people-service base. The two-pyramid model exemplifies Geert Hofstede's duality of cultural dimensions such as masculinity-femininity, individualism-collectivism and inequality-equality. Although similar to androgynous leadership approaches aimed at fostering female leadership, the Vincentian leadership model is not gender blind but gender inclusive. Vincentian leaders are androgynous leaders in the sense that they include both masculine and feminine characteristics of leadership.[21] As in the example of the collaborative and integrating leadership of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, Vincentian leadership calls for gender inclusiveness. Masculine and feminine characteristics of leadership, however, are not defined by gender differences but in cultural dimensions.[22] This model suggests a development of leadership competencies based not on masculinized domination and feminized submission, but rather a perspective in which all actors are leaders and followers, champions and servants, initiators and supporters.

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[20] Among Ken Blanchard's many books on situational leadership, see: Ken Blanchard, Drea Zigarmi, Pat Zigarmi, *Leadership and The One Minute Manager: Increasing Effectiveness through Situational Leadership* (Morrow,William & Co, 1985).

[21] Cf. Kirkpatrick, S.A. and E.A. Locke, "Androgyny and leadership: do traits matter?", *Academy of Business Ethics* 9 (1991): 283-92.

[22] For relevant studies on feminine and inclusive leadership, see: Deborah Rhode, *The Difference "Difference" Makes: Women and Leadership* (Stanford University Press, 2003).
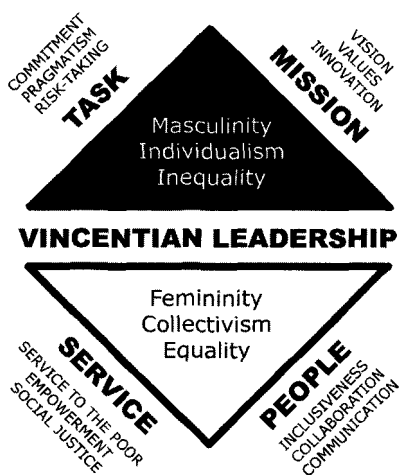
Figure Two.

Figure 2: Vincentian Leadership Competencies and Cultural Orientations

The Vincentian leadership model reflects cultural dimensions recognizable in the qualities and values of cross-cultural leaders. Cultural differences are important learning opportunities for individuals and organizations. But recognizing and appreciating cultural differences requires a series of cross-cultural predispositions. Leaders are more or less predisposed to being effective cross-culturally, but they all can improve upon appropriate cross-cultural abilities, factors and skills. Cross-cultural competency refers to the ability to effectively communicate and interact in other cultures. Cultural empathy, communication skills, the ability to form and maintain relationships, the ability to be patient, flexible and adaptable to culturally diverse situations are among the most important competencies in determining cross-cultural effectiveness.[23]

In its Cross-Cultural Competency format (VLA-CCC), the Vincentian Leadership Assessment measures five major competencies: openness, identity, flexibility, empathy and respect. Effective

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[23] For an introduction to cross-cultural competencies and global management, see: Marshall Goldsmith et. al., *Global Leadership: The Next Generation* (Financial Times and Prentice Hall, 2003); C. Brooklyn Derr, Sylvie Roussillon, Frank Bournois, eds., *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Leadership Development* (Quorum Books, 2002); Phillip R. Harris and Robert T. Moran, *Managing Cultural Differences*, 5th edition (Gulf Professional Publishing, 2000).

cross-cultural leaders are open to cultural diversity in its various manifestations. They express a nonjudgmental attitude toward culturally diverse values, behaviors and attitudes. They embody attitudes of curiosity and natural respect for others. They are willing to listen to and understand others' cultural perspectives. Effective cross-cultural competency is, however, integrated by a healthy sense of identity. Because leaders performing in culturally diverse contexts do not get the same reactions, feedback and reinforcement to their identity as they might in their own context, they need to possess a strong sense of who they are. They need to have clear personal values. They need to respect themselves, and the history and uniqueness of others.

Leaders who do not have a clearly defined cultural identity, and are unable to maintain personal autonomy, will probably be unable to effectively interact with other cultures. Cultural resistance is therefore considered a necessary element in cross-cultural adaptation and acculturation. Identity is counter-balanced by flexibility and cultural adaptation. Cultural empathy is another essential element in cross-cultural competency. It is the ability to view the world with the eyes of those whom we serve. It is the willingness and capacity to place ourselves in other people's shoes. A leader who receives high scores in these characteristics and competencies will most likely be successful in cross-cultural contexts.

Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between cross-cultural competencies and Vincentian Leadership orientations. Following the symbolism of Leonardo da Vinci, expressed in the Vitruvian man, we observe how openness, identity, flexibility, empathy and respect fit in relation to mission, tasks, people and service.
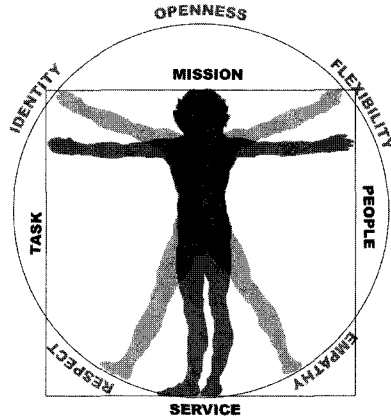
OPENNESS

MISSION

IDENTITY

FLEXIBILITY

TASK

PEOPLE

RESPECT

EMPATHY

SERVICE

Figure Three.

Figure 3: Cross-Cultural Leadership Competencies

The major challenge in developing effective cross-cultural Vincentian leaders is translating and reinterpreting leadership competencies and values into diverse cultural contexts. How applicable is the content of these instruments beyond the cultural sphere of their origin? This question represents the ever-present issue of *generalizability*. The ethnographic methods used to identify these competencies, and the numerous studies which reflect similar findings, suggest that U.S. leadership development instruments are reasonably applicable to other countries. The globalization of Vincentian values promoted and articulated by the worldwide work of the Vincentian family undergoes local interpretations and adaptations that need to be seriously considered. The interaction between universality and locality is both a challenge and an opportunity for all Vincentian practices to learn from one another. This global/local complexity of societal expressions, leadership behaviors and different value systems suggests that effective cross-cultural leaders need more than skills and strategies. They need to become intelligent leaders, capable of understanding and discerning appropriate behaviors in diverse enterprises, relations, organizations and cultures.

Cultural Intelligence

Leaders are, or should be, intelligent people. Obviously, there are various kinds of intelligence. An intellect geared toward

leadership is comprised of cognitive, emotional, cultural and spiritual intelligence. Cognitive intelligence refers to both abstract and concrete types of intelligence. Abstract intelligence is the ability to understand and manipulate verbal and mathematic symbols. Concrete intelligence is the ability to understand and manipulate objects. Effective Vincentian leaders, those able to do good and do it well, also need to effectively manage interpersonal relationships. This competency is called social intelligence. Social intelligence is the ability to understand and relate to people. Recently, numerous leadership studies have underscored the importance of developing emotionally intelligent leaders. Emotional intelligence, generally classified and measured as EQ, is rooted in the concept of social intelligence.[24] Like social intelligence, emotional intelligence has an intra-personal (self-awareness) and inter-personal (relational awareness) component. For the past fifteen years, studies on emotional intelligence produced by John Mayer, Peter Salovey, Daniel Goleman and others have radically transformed leadership development. Leadership effectiveness, and ultimately success, cannot be evaluated solely on the basis of profits, prestige and decision making for the organization.[25] How the leader deals with emotional stress, interpersonal relations, and conflict in the workplace is crucial as well. Emotional intelligence is a strong counterpart to cognitive intelligence, but it is not enough to explain intelligent leadership. Two important dimensions relative to this equation are spiritual and cultural intelligence.

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[24] Ester Goody, ed., *Social Intelligence and Interaction* (Cambridge, 1995).

[25] To know more about emotional intelligence, see: Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, Richard E. Boyatzis, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business School Press, 2002). See also: Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (Bantam: 1997); and Daniel A. Feldman, *The Handbook of Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: Inspiring Others to Achieve Results* (Leadership Performance Solutions, 1999).
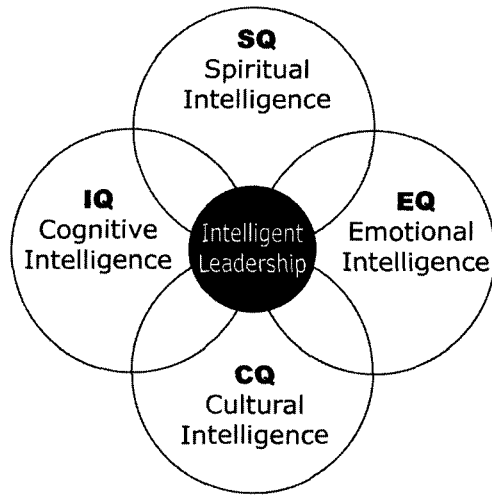
Figure Four.

Figure 4: Intelligent leadership

Effective leadership performance does not only depend on the ability to manage professional skills, interpersonal relations and organizational climates. It also requires the ability to interact effectively across cultures. Generally cross-cultural training provides participants with a list of cultural dos and don'ts. Culturally intelligent leaders move beyond lists of appropriate behaviors. Appropriate training and cross-cultural experience should cultivate cultural awareness, social discernment, and relationship bridge building. Culturally intelligent leaders become effective bridge builders between culturally diverse people and organizations. Leaders of today's global societies must become competent in building bridges of dialogue and collaboration among culturally different worlds. Scholars in cross-cultural management suggest that effective culturally intelligent leaders should be able "to disable the cultural cruise control that makes them unaware of how their own culture affects their perceptions, and instead learn to pay careful attention, in a reflective and creative way, to cues in cross-cultural situations."[26]

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[26] To know more about cultural intelligence, see: David Thomas and Kerr Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence: People's Skills for Global Business* (Berrett-Koehler, 2004). See also: P. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang, *Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions Across Cultures* (Stanford University Press, 2003).

It takes time and effort to develop cultural intelligence. Effective training and initiatives in educational development should involve three steps: (1) Understanding cultural differences and how they affect leadership performance; (2) Developing awareness of cultural cues for discerning personal and organizational contexts; (3) Acquiring a repertoire of interpersonal skills that can be adapted to different situations. Cultural intelligence benefits leaders who make decisions, communicate and negotiate across cultures. It is an essential element in leading and motivating people within culturally diverse workplaces and organizations.

Vincentian cross-cultural leaders are culturally competent people who are also in touch with their spiritual side. Spirituality is not just a personal accessory for devoted value-centered leaders. Rather, it is the ability to recognize the "Otherness" within people and situations. Therefore, spiritual intelligence is another fundamental dimension of leadership intelligence.[27] Moreover, spiritual intelligence, or SQ, is a necessary foundation and it ultimately gives meaning to IQ, EQ, CQ and leadership itself. Spiritual intelligence is the ability to illuminate and read the conscious and unconscious dimensions of ourselves, our organizations and our global society. SQ is the intelligence that gives meaning, vision and value to our thinking, decisions and leadership practices.

Emotional intelligence is an essential element in leadership development. Yet, as Danah Zohar and Dr. Ian Mitchell observe "computers have high IQ, animals often have high EQ, but only humans have SQ."[28] Spiritual intelligence gives both wisdom and prophecy to leaders. It is identifiable in leaders who are capable of listening to the signs of the times, who have a sense of the numinous, and project inner-peace even when surrounded by turmoil and chaos. Spiritually intelligent leaders reflect decisiveness because of their commitment to faith. Vincent de Paul and many of his followers represent inspiring examples of the practice of cognitive, emotional, cultural and intelligent leadership. Renowned Vincentian leadership qualities of being creative to infinity, doing good and doing it well, envisioning the impossible and treating the least among us as most

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[27] To learn more about spiritual intelligence, see: Dorothy A. Sisk and E. Paul Torrance, *Spiritual Intelligence: Developing Higher Consciousness* (Creative Education Foundation, 2001). See also: Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, *SQ: Connecting With Our Spiritual Intelligence* (Bloomsbury, 2001).

[28] Zohar and Marshall, *SQ*, 11.

important requires great spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence makes us aware that our position of leadership is really a temporary job. It gives a leader a healthy perception and sense of humility by focusing on the bigger picture. It takes the leader beyond mere organizational interests and self-interests. Ultimately, leadership has meaning and is truly effective only when it is rooted in the deepest meanings and fundamental values of our lives.