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Spiritual Leadership in Religious Organizations: A Grounded Theory Study

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Research has not yet identified one specific style or set of characteristics that represents overall leadership effectiveness among Christian pastors. This grounded theory qualitative study examined spiritual leadership in religious organizations in order to develop a theoretical model of effective leadership for pastors. The use of grounded theory design was appropriate in order to develop a new theory on pastoral effectiveness, grounded in the data collected from the pastors and their congregation members. Twenty pastors and 20 congregation members of various non-denominational Christian churches throughout San Diego County were selected as participants. The data were obtained by querying the perceptions of the pastors and congregation members through the use of an open-ended electronic questionnaire. To ensure the accuracy of coding, data collected through the questionnaires were downloaded into NVivo10 qualitative data analysis software to uncover and analyze trends. The results of this study suggested the presence of five themes related to pastoral effectiveness in non-denominational Christian churches: communication, personal development, business acumen, religious practices, and relationships. A key finding pointed to the integration of spiritual leadership theory and transformational leadership theory for use in religious organizations. The integration of the components of the two leadership theories may provide pastors with a means and common framework for understanding the process of leadership effectiveness.

Wyatt, A. L. (2015). *Cultivating creative spiritual leadership: The role of art-making as a spiritual practice for ministers.* D.Min., Seattle University.

This study explored the creative process and activities of religious leaders who engage in art-making as a spiritual practice. The primary goal of the research was to provide a “thick description” of the experience of art-making as a spiritual practice, per se, as well as to identify how these spiritual leaders understood the effect of the practice upon their leadership. The data collected for this qualitative study, employing phenomenological, heuristic research methods, consisted of hour-long interviews with five spiritual leaders, which were then placed into conversation with journals kept by the researcher, who is also an artist and spiritual leader.

The findings suggest that the practice of art-making serves as a vehicle for personal and communal spiritual development for these religious leaders. The practice requires discipline, preparation, and immersion in process. It involves practicing presence, attending, and embracing vulnerability. Engaging in creative activity as a spiritual practice produces spiritual and bodily shifts which heighten an awareness of interconnectedness. Thus, it makes space for encounter—with oneself, God, and others. Furthermore, the practice of art-making influences how these spiritual leaders understand and embody transformational leadership.