Leadership is preemptive to the reality of human existence. Leading change is one of the most important, and still difficult, aspects of leadership. This paper utilizes a socio-rhetorical analysis of the twenty-first chapter in John’s gospel to explore the Johannine figure of Jesus as an agent of change and guidance. The data is extracted using the inner textual aspect of the model, which does not consider the translation of the words used in a context, rather the placement of the words to derive communication intent. The data is then compiled using two different, yet similar, models for change. First, is the Gestalt model for a cycle of experience. Second, is the still popular force field model postulated by Kurt Lewin in the 1950s, which defines behavior as a function perception experience. The textual data also supports that Christ’s function, as an agent of change, is representative of two emerging trends of leadership theory: transformational and authentic. Bass and Steidlmeyer argue that truly transformational leaders are grounded by moral foundations, and that lasting change is representative of the moral development of the followers. The data presents practical implications that effective change agents, such as Jesus, also exist among the elusively high stages of moral development.

Jesus is arguably the most effective leader and change agent the world has ever known. Stories, such as the one told by John in the twenty-first chapter of his gospel, retell the life, words, and interaction Jesus had with his disciples when he walked the shores of Galilee more than 2,000 years ago. The following analysis uses Robbins’ socio-rhetorical model of exegesis to extract textual data from the NIV scripture translation. The model provides the necessary archetype for the derivation of the text’s intended meaning from anthropological and sociological resources, and ascertains sensual methods of influence. Robbins’ model incorporates these five elements of analysis: (a) inner textural, (b) intertextual, (c) argumentative, (c) social and cultural, (d) ideological, and (e) sacred text. This review uses only data from the inner textural node of the Robbins’ model.

The data collected from the analysis is first mapped to Nevis’ approach to the Gestalt cycle of experience. A second demonstration is also conducted using one of the earliest, and still popular, change process theories called the force field model, developed by Kurt Lewin in 1951. The analysis of the textual data with both models allows the reader to witness the effectiveness of Jesus as an agent of change through the influence of transformational and authentic leadership. It also provides the opportunity for leaders to become even more influential by giving them an understanding of the effect of authentic transformational leaders as it relates to their state of moral development and the potential to influence others in their state.

I. INNER TEXTURAL ANALYSIS

The inner textural analysis node of the broader socio-rhetorical model does not consider the translation of the words used in a context, rather the placement of the words, to derive communication intent. The method reveals relationships among words and phrases which develop patterns. Such patterns are often used to evoke emotion and logic in the text. Likewise, references to sensory aesthetic elements are often used. Ultimately, the text presents patterns of narration which present the opening-middle-closing scenes of the text. The socio-rhetorical model established by Robbins identifies five specific areas of exploration in the study of the inner texture of the text. They are:

- Repetitive-progressive texture and pattern
- Opening-middle-closing texture
- Narrational texture
- Argumentative texture

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3 Ibid.
6 Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*. 
- Sensory aesthetic texture

Each aspect in the model is established with discretionary means and differentiated perspective. Once established, the discrete aspects of the model are brought together to form an integrated matrix. A bilateral approach, such as this, allows the exegete to derive the most comprehensive analysis of the text.

**Narrational Units**

The narrational texture and pattern resides in the voices of the text. Narrational units are separated by transitions in voice and represent partitions within the entire data, along with the other derivatives of the model. Narrational commentary regularly sets the stage for the actual data analysis because it creates a relational foundation from which the meaning of data is ultimately expounded.

The opening-middle-closing patterns are evident in the narrational units separately as well as collectively. These sub-sections of the unit are often marked by their repetitive and progressive word trends as well as argumentative and sensory aesthetic patterns. The purpose of the socio-rhetorical model, including the inner texture analysis dimension, is to use all aspects to derive the intended meaning in the data.

The first narrational unit identified in the text is verses 1-14. The second unit is verses 15-19. The third unit is verses 20-25. The opening-middle-closing of the entire chapter is set across the three units and are marked by points of progression through the scene. The scene opens with the disciples on the boat. The scene transitions to its middle stage when the disciples come ashore and features an exchange between Jesus with Peter directly. The closing scene of the text engages with a transition of ownership to the author, John, from the discourse which occurs mainly between Peter and Jesus.

**Repetitive and Progressive Word Patterns**

In the NIV translation of the Bible, the first narrational unit is identified by several repetitive word trends. *Fish* appears eight times, as does the name *Jesus*. The word *disciples* appears six times and the words (a) *said*, (b) *them*, (c) *Peter*, (d) *you*, and (e) *net* each appear five times. This equates to approximately 30 percent of the total translated words in the text. The words *fish* and *net* are unique to this narrational unit. The word *disciple* is used only in the first and third units, and is only half as frequent in the third unit.

The progressive word patterns demonstrate motion through the story as well as progression through the opening, middle, and closing parts of the unit. The repetitive and progressive use of the word *appear* is notable as the opening of the unit transitions to middle, and then the middle of the unit to the end. The opening phase foretells of Jesus’ appearance, the middle is when it actually occurs. In the closing section, there is reference that this was Jesus’ third appearance after being raised from the dead.

In the second unit, when the disciples come ashore and Jesus engages Peter directly, repetitive word trends continue. The repetition is more for expression than it is individual words. The text has the expression *Jesus said* six times, *he said* (referring to
Jesus) is shown two times, and the expression Jesus asked one time. Each time Jesus speaks, he speaks with Peter. The first three times, he is asking Peter if he loves him. The Greek word used the first two times is agapao, meaning sacrificial, committed love like the kind God has for us. Each time Jesus asks Peter this, he responds in the affirmative that he has phileo, or an affectionate love for the Lord. The third time Jesus asks, he too uses the word phileo and once again Peter responds in the affirmative with phileo love. Each time after Peter replies, Jesus repeats his answer with some progression in the choice of similar words. He says “feed my lambs,” “take care of my sheep,” and “feed my sheep.”

The repetitive and progressive word trends in the third unit demonstrate a progress of motion whereby Peter is commanded to follow and then does. As he follows, he turns and sees John. In the middle section, Jesus repeats to Peter the question, “What is that to you?” The word you appears several times significantly in this middle section as Jesus makes it clear he is talking to Peter. The middle section of the unit is also significant by the reference to those who remain alive (used twice) would not die (also used twice). The closing section of this final unit concludes with the repeat of John’s referral to himself as the disciple who testifies by what he has written of the things Jesus did.

**Argumentative Texture Pattern**

The repeat and progress of Jesus’ appearance displays the trend in both emotion and logic of the scene as well. The disciples were by trade fishermen. For them to spend a night at sea without catching anything was perhaps illogical, discouraging, or frustrating. As the middle of the unit approaches, the disciples are instructed by a stranger on shore to drop their nets on the right side of the boat. Finding the net full of fish shifts the emotion and logic of the beginning section of the unit from downtrodden to the excitement which exudes in the middle of the unit. This is the first time in the text where John, the author, refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus’ loved. He reveals that it was himself who recognized the Lord and who informed Peter who it was. Realizing that John, as the author, refers to himself in the third person is perhaps itself illogical because it suggests he is writing from outside of the experience. The excitement is compounded with the disciples’ realization that it was the Lord on shore and the illogic of the 153 fish that were in the net that did not break.

The second narrational unit features the exchange between Jesus and Peter. The third time Peter responds to Jesus prompting, “Do you truly love me?” is the first notable shift in emotion. Some readers, however, may discern that the repetitive action itself allowed the logic of the situation to affect the emotion before it is clearly identified in the text. The solemn response of Peter is confirmed by Jesus when he assures Peter he will have to ultimately surrender to a death which glorifies God. Before the anguish over the news settles in, Jesus issues a commandment to Peter to follow him. This, perhaps a distraction, creates a break in the logic and emotion and leads to the third unit of the text.
This third unit is once again primarily an exchange between Peter and Jesus, told intimately through the lens of John. Peter is aware of John’s presence and seems somewhat preoccupied with John, wondering what will happen to him. Jesus reaffirms that what happens to John is of no concern to Peter; yet Jesus does confirm that he did not say that John would not also die. The closing of the unit is captured by John’s confirmation that his testimony, which this is, is true.

Sensory Aesthetic Texture Pattern

The downtrodden emotion of the first phase is confirmed by the darkness of the night. As dawn breaks, the sensory trend starts to shift. The sun has not fully risen and the disciples cannot see clearly to the shore. As the sun rises, the shift to the middle of the unit is confirmed with the capture of many fish and the realization that the man on shore is the Lord. The transition to the middle of the unit is compounded with the indication of a fire on shore where food is cooking. This serves as a natural pivot point to the closing of the unit, which features sensory aesthetics of the food Jesus has prepared for the disciples along with indication of a specific number of fish, 153. This in particular, creates a visual image of the net that was so full, yet did not break.

The second narrational unit presents its sensory aesthetics through the progressive and repetitive use of words Jesus uses to refer to sheep. Sheep are gentle animals that require protection and feeding; Jesus is asking Peter care for his sheep out of love for him. The aesthetics of the scene shift from Peter’s position of responsibility over the sheep to one of submission as Jesus informs him of the future death he will endure.

The third narrational unit uses the placement of people to help create the scene. Peter is following Jesus as he was commanded to do in the closing section of the previous unit. As he follows, he notices John, another disciple, behind him. John refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, the disciple who was at Jesus’ side, and the only one in whom Jesus’ confided the truth of who would betray him. The text presents what will later be seen as John’s attempt to identify himself in a position of kinship with Jesus, preferable to that of Peter’s. The use of the repetitive words live and dead in the middle section of the unit allow for the two disciples to become once again equal. Another provocative use of sensory aesthetic text is the conclusion where John suggests that, had every one of the things Jesus did been written down, there would not be enough room in the whole world for all the books.

II. GESTALT POINT OF INFLUENCE

The Gestalt approach to organizational consulting was initiated by Richard W. Wallen and Edwin C. Nevis during sensitivity training and team development workshops. Both men were students of Fritz and Laura Pearls, who along with Paul
Goodman, are accredited with the established theories of Gestalt therapy. In the Gestalt view of therapy, several assumptions are made and referred to here as clusters. Cluster one perceives humans holistically. They are whole, self-regulating systems that are parts of other whole systems. The second cluster, called field theory, creates a psychological field of experience on a personal realm relevant to the individual. Field theory builds on the notion of self-regulation within a range of polarities where each individual feeling and reaction are paired with their opposite. Some polarities become prominent figures over others. The third cluster, called cycle of experience, is where the aforementioned figure of prominence is formulated. This cluster, along with the fourth called contact, is where the most attention is paid in this analysis because they are considered pivotal in converting Gestalt theory for use in organizations. The fifth cluster, called interruptions to contact, is sometimes referred to as resistance. Except in Gestalt practice, resistance is not the negative opposition to the experience, it is simply the opposite from which Beisser derives his theory for paradoxical, perhaps also radical, change. The fifth and final cluster of the Gestalt point of influence is the six plausible interruptions of contact as displayed in the steps of the model.

**Cycle of Experience**

The purpose behind this model is to highlight the punctuation points in the experience that the learner is engaged. In the circular model, there are seven main points given in order: (a) sensation, (b) awareness, (c) energy/mobilization, (d) action, (e) contact, (f) resolution/closure, and finally (g) withdrawal of attention. Mapping the exegetical data to this model of experience, the reader becomes aware that Jesus’ guides the participant through the entire cycle of experience with the author’s portrayal of the events.

The sensory aesthetic aspects to the exegesis model demonstrate the sensual arousal as required in the first phase of experience. Having light shed on the seen allows for the continuation of the experience. The obstruction or lack of light may have interrupted the experience by what is called desensitization.

Progression to the second stage of experience, awareness, is confirmed by both the sensory aesthetic data, as well as the progressive and repetitive trends of the word appear. The argumentative textual data confirms awareness and provides the energy to mobilize towards the next stage, action. Specifically, the data is the illogical response to follow an illogical command from a stranger: dropping the nets to capture many fish.

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10 Segal, *Points of Influence*. 
The excitement upon realizing that there are fish is in continuum with the realization that the man on the shore is the Lord. The emotion demonstrated in the data provokes the energy to mobilize to the next stage: the action of Peter leaving the boat to swim to shore.

Once on shore, the next stage of contact ensues. The data in this stage of contact includes the repetitive and progressive exchange of question and answer between Jesus and Peter. According to Pearl, it is in this stage where something becomes figural in the field of experiential polarity of the subject. Once contact is established between the subject and the figure, neither remains the same. The organism cycling through the experience is Peter. The figure of his attention becomes Jesus during the stage of contact. Contact does not necessarily mean that a need has been satisfied nor a problem solved, this is perhaps explicatory of why the same exchange occurred three times with striking similarity. As the agent of change, Jesus must affect Peter beyond any affect on him in his human experience.

Withdrawal and closure are the two aspects of ending the cycle, and are often not differentiable. A key aspect to this phase of experience is the removal of the focus of attention and energy away from the figure. The data are the progressions of Jesus’ commands “follow me” facilitate the transition from the second to the third narrational unit. The progression of the tense also portrays that Peter is starting to extract his attention from Jesus, and ultimately that the stage of contact is complete and that closure is taking place.

Closure is where meaning is extracted from the contact and is anchored in the cognitive repertoire of the subject. The data shows Peter’s involvement in the final narrational unit as less active. Peter’s only activity, besides following, is asking Jesus what would happen to John. The data leading up to this moment includes a rather profound use of sensory aesthetic text and argumentative text that confirm a position of ultimate surrender and death that Peter will endure for the purpose of glorifying God. Data in the middle of the third narrational unit remains vivid with argumentative elements. Peter experience nears completion as his attention is removed from the figure to himself, as confirmed with Jesus’ introspective question, “What is that to you?” The closing of the unit and the entire data set is established with the introduction of new repetitive elements. It is the first time in the data set that Peter is no longer present as datum. Peter’s experience reaches completion with John’s assertions that he is the disciple who testifies that what has been written is true.

**Interruptions in the Cycle**

Jesus’ effectiveness as a change agent can be seen by the lack of interruptions in Peter’s cycle of experience. Interruptions may occur at any point in the cycle. In addition to the one already mentioned, desensitization, there could also have occurred

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11 Segal, *Points of Influence*.
12 Ibid.
introjections. Jesus asks Peter two times if he had *agapao* love for him. To which Peter responds, that he has *phileo* love for the Lord. Rather than force Peter into a position of uncritical acceptance to what Jesus knew Peter was not capable of, the third time he asks, he uses the term *phileo*.

Another possible break in the cycle could have occurred when Peter projected the unwelcome impulse to question what would happen to John. Jesus overcame the possibility for interruption in the experience by addressing Peter’s concern twice, “What is that to you?” This is confirmed again by the logical assertion that indicates Jesus did not say John would not die. Jesus also did not allow Peter to deflect the experience. Nor did he let him erase the reality of the boundary of the situation, demonstrated perhaps with the repetitive use of the word *fish* in the opening section.

### III. LEWIN’S FORCE FIELD MODEL OF CHANGE

One of the earliest change process theories was Lewin’s force field model, a three stage model also referred to as unfreezing–change–refreezing. The central phase of change may be achieved by two actions: one directly increases the driving force toward the change, the other reduces the restraining forces that resist change. The two different points of influence that create change, work within the figurative field of the individual, group, or organization. The field theory indicates that the entity has its own field of influence at any given moment, which he called a life space. Within the field, there exist action triggers. These create behavioral outcomes whereby behavior (B) is a function (f) of perception (P) and experience (E) \[B=f(P,E)\]. In essence, how we interact with our surroundings is directly influenced by our prior beliefs, attitudes, and encounters. From this, one could infer that perception is truth as defined within the individual’s own *Gestalt*, or pattern of reasoning. There, in fact, exists a strong *Gestalt* learning background to Lewin’s theory, which allows for the practical use of the models together. One difference between the two models of change is the episodic versus continuous change approach. As mentioned, the *Gestalt* cycle of experience model allows for counter-actions to the possible interruptions to the cycle. The traditional Lewinian model approaches mainly rely on an episodic conception of change processes as described below.

*Textual Data Mapped to the Model*

Episodic change is often depicted with the influence of inertia, which triggers change. In the first narrational unit, Jesus interrupts the field of the disciples experience by presenting himself on the shore. This triggers change and inertia when

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13 Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*.
14 Segal, *Points of Influence*.
16 Ibid.
Peter jumps out of the boat into the water. Peter’s action not only changes the auditory setting of the experience, it also stimulates new directive behavior for Peter, as well as the others. The disciples were professional fishermen, therefore we can hypothesize that when they perceived (P) not to have caught anything, they would have decided to stay out to sea and fish (B) because their experience (E) tells them they would eventually catch something.

The second narrational unit shows little or no episodic change, unless one infers the emotional change within Jesus, and more so, Peter. The quasi-stationary equilibrium of Peter’s behavior is the main impediment to change in this unit. It is, however, broken at the end, as Jesus commands Peter “follow me” after indicating to Peter that his death would glorify God.

The third and final narrational unit verges on continuous change, yet still shows evidence of episodic change with Peter’s behavioral outcome functioning of his perception and experience. As Peter begins to follow Jesus as he was told, he turns and notices John approaching. Just as described with the Gestalt model, Jesus interrupted Peter’s normal behavioral reaction to what was his likely perception that John might experience something better, or less devastating, than he. This presents another interesting demonstration of Lewin’s change model. It uses inertia to create the linear progressive development of disequilibriums that Jesus sought after. The disequilibrium itself becomes a motivator to influence Peter’s behavior, along with the opportunity Jesus created to rebalance Peter with new a perception. A new perception, along with the shift of polarity of experience, ultimately creates in Peter changed behavior, precisely as Jesus intended.

IV. LEADERS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

The process of initiating and facilitating change is one of leaders’ highly critical roles. Bennis describes change as the metaphysics of our age, and cautions leaders against imposing change. He encourages them to inspire change. Christ’s role as an agent of change through Peter’s cycle of experience is representative of two emerging trends of leadership theory: transformational and authentic.

Transformational Leadership

A synonym for change is transformation. Transformational leadership as a construct is identified by four characteristics. They are (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. The Gestalt cycle of experience, which earlier described the process of change for

Peter, fulfills each of these characteristics. Evident early in the text is Peter’s awareness that Jesus is his idealized influence. Peter admits three times that he loves Jesus beyond the common love humans share for one another. The emotional response during this interaction and progressive profession of love, prepares Peter with the energy, intellectual stimulation, action, and inspirational motivation, to experience the remaining components of transformational leadership. The contact with Jesus compels Peter into the state of individualized consideration that exists through all sections of the text; often elusive, the sustainability of change is prepared.

Jesus continues to use the established idealized influence, individualized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation to prepare Peter for the duration of the transformation cycle, which endures presumably beyond the text and the data. Despite the discontinuity of Peter’s cycle of experience beyond the text, the enablement of sustainability during and after the process of transformation is an important discussion. There is evidence of Jesus’ use of repetitive, progressive, and argumentative or emotional influence to avoid the interruption to the change experience. Transformational leadership to describe this interaction alone is not sufficient because the construct does not account for the enablement of sustainability. Sustainability is realized when the follower influence is discussed in the context of cognitive development. Bass and Steidlmeier argue that truly transformational leaders are grounded in moral foundations and that lasting change is representative of moral development of the followers.

Moral Development

The reference to moral foundations alone misleads the reader away from the cognitive reality of the phenomenon. Understanding moral foundations requires the reader to then consider moral development. A detailed review of the literature on moral development is not the purpose here. Rather, the purpose is to provide some theoretical basis for understanding morality as it pertains to leaders’ as change agents. Arguably, the seminal work in the past several decades is Kohlberg's stage theory of moral development. The theory is cognitive because it is an iterative progression of moral reasoning where individuals assess decisions, and accommodate and balance perspectives of self and others. The progression beyond stage 1 (ego-centric orientation) and stage 2 (a quid pro quo), is stage 3 and the first encounter with interests beyond self. Stages 4 and 5 are a continuation of the willingness to consider beyond self in order to consider the direct group, followed by a larger sphere of influence, including unknown parties. Finally, at stage 6, the moral development takes on a universal influence; arguably, the most illusive of the stages, as per its lack of participants.

19 Bass and Steidlmeier, Ethics.
**Authentic Leadership**

Moral development allows for authentic transformational leadership and what Bass and Steidlmeier\(^{21}\) refer to as a more reasonable and realistic concept of self. This self is connected to friends, family, and community whose welfare is also taken into consideration. They also state that authentic transformational leadership is more consistent with the transactions of Judeo-Christian philosophies and teachings. Consistent with these statements are the definitions of authentic leadership, a construct introduced only in 2005. Authentic leaders are individuals guided by explicit and conscious values that enable them to operate at higher levels of moral integrity.\(^{22}\) Inherent to the models of authentic leadership is the definition of authenticity of the person—which is acting in accordance with true self-consistent with thoughts, feelings, and values—and the authenticity of the relationship with followers. Also present in several introductory models of authentic leadership is a hedonistic and eudemonic component of well-being; also referred to as positive psychological states and positive moral perspective.\(^{23}\) This hedonistic reference also describes stage 2 of the Kholbergian moral development theory. This hedonistic tendency among leaders is why some suggest it is not enough to know ones values, but require further reflection to understand the development of preferred values from life experiences.\(^{24}\) Transformational leadership also lends itself to amoral puffery since it makes use of impression management.\(^{25}\) These self-satisfying transformational tendencies are what some refer to as pseudo-transformational leadership.\(^{26}\)

**V. CONCLUSION**

It is important for the leader as a practitioner of change to understand the contrast between episodic and continuous change, as well as the internal psychological process that occur in relationship with followers. This understanding enables the practitioner to fine tune relationships, interactions, and the applications of change.

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\(^{21}\) Bass and Steidlmeier, *Ethics*.

\(^{22}\) William L. Gardner and others, “‘Can you see the real me?’: A Self-Based Model of Authentic Leader and Follower Development,” *Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005): 343-372.


\(^{26}\) Bass and Steidlmeier, *Ethics*.  

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according to the situation. The exchange between Jesus and Peter in the text is described best by the modern theories for transformational and authentic leadership. The characteristics of transformation explain the means and progress of the change cycle. The authenticity evident in Jesus, Peter, and in their relationship, provides the just reasons for change and its sustainability. Leaders’ should also lead with caution in the realization that change and authenticity alone are not enough; accompanying them ought to be progressive development of a leader’s moral foundation. Continued research will show the final stage of moral development, assuming that is the goal, is only achievable through the same humble and obedient nature which the Apostle describes as the nature of Christ (Phil 2:5-11).

About the Author

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27 Segal, Points of Influence.