

How Inspirational Culture Drives Transferable Servant-Leadership Behaviors

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Tenia Davis

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James G. Gustafson
James G. Gustafson, Ph.D.
Chair

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Committee Members

Sonya Anderson, Ph.D.
Marilyn J. Stocker, Ph.D.

Harvard University
Northwestern University

Abstract

The topic of servant leadership is of compelling interest in today's world. As a result, there have been and continue to be many articles published on this topic. Servant leaders are selfless leaders who focus on the greater good of the employee, organization, and society (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014). In organizations informed by a servant leadership model, employees, on average, are more satisfied, show greater signs of productivity, and experience better business results to the bottom line. While there is a large body of research about servant leadership, the topic merits some creative rethinking to remain relevant and inspiring for the times in which we find ourselves.

This is a narrative case study of Harpo Inc. (Harpo), a servant-leadership-driven culture, and examines how the company culture shaped servant leaders and how those attributes have manifested today. Findings suggest that Harpo's servant leadership culture fostered the personal and professional development of its staff members. In addition, this case study revealed that Harpo's culture had a positive influence on employees in new roles beyond their company experience, where they were able to carry forward to new organizations the values, behaviors, and attributes developed at Harpo. Based on the findings, the following theory emerged: A powerful servant leader (in this case, with a media platform) who intentionally creates an inspirational culture impacts other organizational leaders to inculcate this and, in turn, cascades these out by the future programs those organizational leaders create. This can create

tikkun olam, a concept often defined as global goodness (Jacobs, 2007). This is a huge contribution to Oprah Winfrey's (founder of Harpo) legacy that most people will never see directly. In addition to the emergence of a new theory, a new model was created to graphically depict the elements of an inspirational culture that has the power to positively impact people outside the walls of the organization for generations to come. This led to a powerful revelation that inspirational culture can have legs out in the world.

Keywords: servant leadership, Harpo, inspiration, narrative inquiry, company culture, cultural perspicacity, friendship accelerators

Dedication

This is dedicated to everyone in my *village*. To my mom, Sandra, and stepdad, Malik, for their wisdom and devotion in supporting my many aspirations. To my sisters, Mia Manns and Lita Malveaux, who keep me grounded. To my daughters, Nina and Athena: I am honored to be your mom. To Tyrone Manns, the best brother-in-law I could have asked for; thank you for championing me to the finish line. To my family and friends who have cheered me on and continue to send notes of encouragement and support. And last but not least, to my husband and best friend, Patrick.

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Leadership is not one thing, it's a mixture. It's not scientific, it's not data driven, but it does have information. It has the human side of life, it has, the ability to be artful, with the addition of data. But in the end, you have to shape it and you have to be a part of it.

—Tim Bennett¹

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following individuals:

Oprah Winfrey—Without you none of this would have been possible for me. With gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity and experience of Harpo, thank you.

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¹ Personal communication, June 5, 2021

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

There is a growing need for servant leadership in the workplace, particularly amid the turbulent global environment in which we currently find ourselves. More than ever, companies are challenged with developing leaders who can connect with employees, drive performance, and influence productivity outcomes. Most importantly, organizations want leaders who have a positive impact on the overall company culture. Simply put, people are yearning for leaders who merit their trust and inspire them to action.

We live in a time of great uncertainty, but this also offers an opportunity for a new kind of servant leadership to emerge. At present, innovation and employee well-being are each given high priority within the company ecosystem, so leadership rooted in ethical and caring behavior is of great importance (van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership is anchored in the human drive to bond with others and contribute to the betterment of society.

Servant leadership is differentiated from other leadership frameworks by empowering and developing people with empathy, humility, and an emphasis on service motivation (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). In 1970, Greenleaf (1970, 2015) introduced the concept and philosophy of servant leadership through an essay titled “The Servant

as Leader.” This servant leadership philosophy coincides with the description of Harpo’s company culture, curated and founded by Oprah Winfrey. While Greenleaf gifted the world with the philosophy of servant leadership, he did not provide a methodology for how to get there. Oprah’s influence on her company culture contributed to cultivating a community of servitude and intention that positively impacted a global audience. In essence, Oprah provided insight as to how an organization can be the catalyst for developing servant leaders. By modeling the essence of servant leadership at the helm of Harpo, she in turn created a servant leadership engine (Tichy, 2009).

Through the iterative nature of this study, another area worthy of examination emerged regarding the current relevancy of the term *servant*, as operationalized by Harpo, a servant-led organization.

Many leaders struggle with the word *servant* to describe socially responsible and purpose-driven behavior. Does the term *servant* have a negative connotation in today’s world of empowerment culture? This dissertation will explore a different terminology for the phenomenon displayed at Harpo, which will deepen this concept and help it resonate with leaders in a multifaceted business landscape.

This case study will introduce an exemplar of servant leadership within Harpo, a media and entertainment conglomerate, and provide first-hand observations and

interviews of how a powerful servant leadership philosophy positively impacted leaders and followers across several business groups in the organization, creating a culture inspired by servant leaders. As scholars debate the definitions and theoretical frameworks of servant leadership models (Block, 2006), there continue to be opportunities for further research. Rethinking the label of servant leadership for our times could provide an invaluable contribution as well. As an outcome of the research and analysis, a grounded theory emerged, which builds on current theories and offers a revised model.

This chapter provides background on Oprah Winfrey as a servant leader and her company, Harpo. The purpose of this case study and the research problem is introduced, and the chapter also outlines the selected research approach, which is discussed in more detail in the methodology section of the study.

Background

Harpo

Greenleaf (1970, 2015), the originator and primary early proponent of servant leadership, emphasized the importance of culture in servant leadership. Servant leaders provide a fresh outlook based on their past experiences and contribute to society by meeting its demands in an earnest effort (Grizzell, 2008). This was evident at Harpo, an organization led by Oprah Winfrey, the Chairperson and CEO. Oprah fostered and cultivated a culture committed to helping others through a learning, purpose-driven, authentic, creative, intentional and a thriving workforce community.

In turn, employees instinctively displayed servant leadership behaviors resulting in a life-changing work experience for employees, as stated by two participants:

I'm just so grateful that she was our leader because she allowed, she was a great servant leader. She allowed us to feel like. She set the stage, you know, she set a general intention and then allowed people to learn and grow and develop and do great things rise to their highest levels within our framework, the framework that was set within the intention of the show. (L12)

What motivates me is to know that I can make a positive impact on somebody in the world. You never know what little things that you may do or say that will be so significant in someone else's life. And like I said, sometimes if you just give someone five minutes to listen it could be the trajectory of their life. I think that is just so important. (L2)

Oprah created a cascaded intentionality for the employees at Harpo which resulted in a healthy and positive work culture.

The Oprah Winfrey Show was born in 1985 and syndicated nationally just one year later. Oprah's ecosystem included Oprah.com, The Angel Network, The O Store, Oprah and Friends Radio, Harpo Films, Harpo Studios, and the Leadership Academy. As a result, Oprah's DNA was deeply embedded in her diverse company portfolio (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Oprah's Ecosystem

The Harpo organization employed over 800 people across eight different business groups. However, Oprah's DNA remained evident within each organization. The company leaders hired the best of the best, the Ivy League of talent. The culture was highly creative, fast-paced, and driven to make positive changes in the world. Many aspects of Harpo's ecosystem could serve as a road map for other organizations that strive to build a positive work culture for their employees, such as engaging teams, inspiring an organization, maintaining leadership accountability, recognizing the value of authenticity, and the art of balancing the drive for high revenue with cultivating an exceptional workforce.

Instead of being like Jerry Springer and other tabloid daytime shows, Oprah made a deliberate decision for *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. She chose *tikkun olam* as the mandate to take care of the world and leave a legacy of goodness. *Tikkun olam* is a

concept rooted in Judaism and considered contemporarily as an aspiration to “repair the world” (Jacobs, 2007).

Oprah Winfrey has been described as the quintessence of a global servant leader, having received this recognition from multiple mainstream outlets; however, there is a lack of academic research to validate such designation. In addition, there appears to be a lack of academic research regarding servant leaders in the media and entertainment industries in general. As such, this case study will offer a first-hand account of the lived-in experiences at Harpo and showcase its impact on 12 former employees. These findings will contribute to two areas of academic research: organizational influence on employees who are servant leaders and post-Harpo influences from working in a servant leadership culture.

Research Question

Leadership is an area of research that has been extensively examined over the past 30 years; however, since 2004 an emerging area of focus has been servant leadership (Graham, 1991). Good leaders show compassion, empathy, fairness, honesty, ethical values, inspiration, confidence, relationship management, loyalty, and self-management in an ideal world. So, what can we do to produce a cadre of these servant leaders? This study intends to offer insight into a revised model for future servant leaders.

The study employed the qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry using a case study to address the following research question: What is the impact of Harpo's culture, attributes, and values on its leaders beyond their actual experience inside the organization?

Research Design

A case study methodology combined with a narrative approach was used as the research design. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. An inductive method using a systematic coding procedure was employed to derive the findings (Brantnell et al., 2019). The interviewees used storytelling as a form of expression and reflection. Stories serve as effective means by which information about a person's life can be assessed and by which the readers are shown the narrator's reality (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Data were collected from interviews conducted on Zoom, an online video meeting tool. Interview questions focused on Harpo's company culture and leadership style, and employees' lessons learned and overall work experience. Several interview questions prompted lengthy detailed responses which added to content and context of the stories, including the following questions:

1. Dr. Maya Angelo stated, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Describe the impact that Harpo's culture had on you?
2. What was your most inspiring experience at Harpo?

3. What leadership lessons did you learn during your employment at Harpo (professional or personal)?
4. What lessons learned did you carry into your new job or hobby after Harpo?

The 12 interviews were recorded with video and transcribed through Sonix, an online transcription tool. To properly ensure confidentiality, the interviewees were assigned a number in place of their names. The final step was Gioia's (Gioia et al., 2012) coding method, which led to forming grounded theory.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 follows the Introduction with a review of various servant leadership models and philosophies. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and research design for this study in great detail. Chapter 4 details the research roadmap that led to the findings. Chapter 5 provides context and an in-depth explanation of the findings that were captured in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 6 discusses recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Among the aims of the *International Journal of Servant-Leadership* is to “[reflect] the ideals of educating the whole person, living a life of personal courage and moral discernment, and striving to be a person for others in order to heal the heart of humanity” (Gonzaga University, n.d.). What a mission! The purpose of this study is to delve into various servant leadership theories and gain an understanding of the relevancy and influence of this leadership style. The origin for these philosophies is based on Robert K. Greenleaf’s (Mahapata & Virani, 2017) idea of stewardship that leaders should be the least entitled member of society and should serve the community at large, working to benefit and support others. This chapter presents a synopsis of existing research related to servant leadership theory, which will provide a wide range of theoretical context for this study.

Servant Leadership

The term *servant leadership* has been in the leadership nomenclature for close to 50 years, but the construct has been around considerably longer. It is an other-centered approach where the leader is solely focused on the needs, growth, and well-being of their followers (Sullivan, 2019).

As servant leaders demonstrate humility, followers are more likely to display humble behavior due to social learning motives (Bandura, 1977) and therefore, are more

likely to encounter parity and harmony in their setting. In addition, by observing servant leaders' interests in learning from others (van Dierendonck, 2011) and putting others' needs ahead of their own (Sun, 2013), followers/employees might feel some type of affinity and equality with their peers, therefore facilitating frequent, close, and personal interactions with them (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara & Ruiz-Palomino, 2019).

In addition, there are other aspects of servant leadership that require further development, such as servant leadership's influence on organizational performance and career trajectory. It is noted that servant leadership encourages intellectual and skill development and enhances moral reasoning capacity in the follower (Graham, 1991). Furthermore, with the growing complexities in the workforce, there is an increasing need for developing new leadership approaches and for deepening the historic leadership concept for today's workplace. Because servant leadership focuses on providing service to and developing others, servant leaders are more likely to support individuals with a minoritized social identity (Sims, 2018).

Although a plethora of viewpoints and concepts are explored in great detail, there continue to be opportunities for researchers to explore the relevance of servant leadership in the workplace. In fact, a large number of articles about servant leadership are published in five of the 20 journals listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Journals Related to Servant Leadership Research

Journals (select) publishing servant leadership research.

Journal	Number of articles	Impact factor
Leadership & Organization Development Journal	20	0.864
Journal of Business Ethics	17	3.526
The International Journal of Servant Leadership	13	NA
The Leadership Quarterly	12	4.269
Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies	10	1.242
Global Virtue Ethics Review	6	NA
International Journal of Leadership Studies	6	NA
Journal of Applied Psychology	5	6.89
Leadership	5	1.597
Journal of Management Development	5	NA
Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management	5	NA
Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	4	3.549
Journal of Managerial Psychology	4	1.844
Administrative Sciences	4	NA
Journal of Management	2	12.213
Personnel Psychology	2	8.176
International Journal of Hospitality Management	2	3.912
Academy of Management Journal	1	11.901
Journal of Management Studies	1	7.236

Source: Adapted from Eva et al. (2019)

The majority of the articles are reflective of the business-organizational psychology discipline. Companies are searching for the best methods to lead a multigenerational workforce and asking themselves, “What is the role of the servant leader and his or her impact on company culture and emerging leaders? Is it possible to measure the impact of the servant leader on culture and company performance? Are there guiding principles that serve as a foundation?” Many of these questions are worthy of

exploration. Altogether, there is an opportunity to contribute to this space from different perspectives and to also contribute to the nascent research.

Evolution of servant leadership research

The past 20 years produced several research contributions to the study of servant leaders. Greenleaf (1970, 2015) introduced the concept of servant leaders in 1970. Subsequently, several researchers were influenced by and were able to contribute to his work (Figure 2).

	Spears (1995)	Laub (1999)	Patterson (2003)	Wong & Davey (2007)	van Dierendonck & Nuijten (2011)	
Characteristics	Awareness	Builds Community	Agapao Love	Humility & Selfishness	Accountability	
	Building Community	Develop People	Act with Humility	Inspiring & Influencing Others	Authenticity	
	Commitment to the Growth of People	Display Authenticity	Altruistic	Modeling Integrity & Authenticity	Courage	
	Conceptualization	Providing Leadership	Visionary for Followers	Organizational Stewardship Wisdom Serving & Developing Others Consulting & Involving Others	Empowerment	
	Empathy	Shared Leadership	Trusting		Humility	
	Foresight	Values People	Serving		Interpersonal Acceptance	
	Healing		Empowers Followers		Standing Back	
	Listening				Stewardship	
	Persuasion					
	Stewardship					
	Measurements		Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA)		Multi-Dimensional Conceptualizations of SL Based on Early Greenleaf Writings on the Concept	8 Dimension Measurement Scale of SL Servant Leadership Survey (SLS)

Figure 2. Evolution of Servant Leadership Characteristics

The following researchers are the most acknowledged in journal publications.

Robert K. Greenleaf—Founder

The servant leader concept continues to grow in its influence and impact. In many ways, it truly can be said that the times are only now beginning to catch up with Robert Greenleaf’s visionary call to servant leadership (van Dierendonck &

Patterson, 2010). The idiom *servant leadership* was introduced in an essay by Greenleaf in 1970 and flourished into a leadership philosophy. The central meaning of the concept is that the great leader is first experienced as a servant to others, and that this simple fact is central to his or her greatness. True leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010).

Greenleaf (1970, 2015) believed that everyone had the potential to become a servant leader by being a champion for others, being open to individuality, and nurturing others to learn and excel. He said that the first and most important choice a leader makes is the choice to serve, without which one's capacity to lead is profoundly limited. That choice is not an action in the normal sense because it is not something you do but is an expression of your being (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010).

According to Greenleaf (Politis & Politis, 2012) it is important to stress that servant leadership is not a "quick-fix" approach. Neither is it something that can be instilled quickly within an institution. At its core, servant leadership is a long-term, transformational approach to life and work. In essence, it is a way of being that has the potential for creating positive change throughout our society (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010).

Larry C. Spears—1995

Spears (1995) stressed that a servant leader is one who actively listens to, tries to understand, and earnestly seeks to aid followers in achieving their personal, professional, and spiritual goals. Further, servant leaders rely on persuasion as their source of power, rather than using charisma or disseminating rewards or punishments to shape employee behavior (Hamilton, 2005).

According to Spears (1995), the servant leader tries to prepare the organization and its members for great contributions to the broader society and seeks to build a better community both inside and outside the organization (as cited in Kiker et al., 2019).

Spears (2010) based the following 10 characteristics of a servant leader on the original work of Greenleaf:

- Listening—Leaders traditionally have been valued for their communication and decision-making skills. Although these are also important skills for the servant leader, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to others. Servant leaders seek to identify the will of a group and help to clarify that will. They listen receptively to what is being said and unsaid. Listening also encompasses hearing one's own inner voice and, coupled with periods of reflection, is essential to the growth and well-being of the servant leader.
- Empathy—The servant leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits.

One assumes the good intentions of coworkers and colleagues and does not reject them as people, even when one may be forced to refuse to accept certain behaviors or performance. The most successful servant leaders are those who have become skilled empathetic listeners.

- **Healing**—The healing of relationships is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing one's self and one's relationship with others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact.
- **Awareness**—General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant leader. Awareness helps one in understanding issues involving ethics, power, and values. Awareness lends itself to being able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position.
- **Persuasion**—Another characteristic of servant leaders is a reliance on persuasion rather than on one's positional authority in making decisions within an organization. One of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant leadership is that the servant leader seeks to convince others rather than coerce compliance. The servant leader is effective at building consensus within groups.
- **Conceptualization**—Servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. The ability to look at a problem or an organization from a

conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. For many leaders, this is a characteristic that requires discipline and practice. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. Leaders who wish to be servant leaders must stretch their thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking.

- Foresight—Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is difficult to define but easier to identify. One knows foresight when one experiences it. Foresight is a characteristic that enables servant leaders to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future. It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind. Foresight remains a largely unexplored area in leadership studies, but one deserving of careful attention.
- Stewardship—Servant leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion rather than control.
- Commitment to the growth of people—Servant leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, servant leaders are deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within their organization. Servant leaders recognize the tremendous responsibility to do everything in their power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues. In practice, this can include but is not limited to concrete actions such as making funds available for personal and professional

development, taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone, encouraging worker involvement in decision-making, and actively assisting laid-off employees to find other positions.

- Building community—The servant leader senses that much has been lost in recent human history as a result of the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives. This awareness causes the servant leader to seek to identify some means for building community among those who work within a given institution.

Jim Laub—1999

Laub's (1999) model suggests that servant leaders are an important contribution to the scientific servant leadership research. In addition to instigating the initial push toward empirical research, the model continues to be used as the foundation for several studies. It is also useful in determining to what extent an organization has a servant leadership culture. Furthermore, the model has helped shape the thinking in the theorizing about servant leadership (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014):

- Value people—Believing, serving, and non-judgmentally listening to others,
- Develop people—Providing learning, growth, encouragement, and affirmation,
- Build community—Developing strong collaborative and personal relationships,
- Display authenticity—Being open, accountable, and willing to learn from others,
- Provide leadership—Foreseeing the future, taking the initiative, and establishing goals, and
- Share leadership—Facilitating and sharing power (Laub, 1999).

Kathleen Patterson—2003

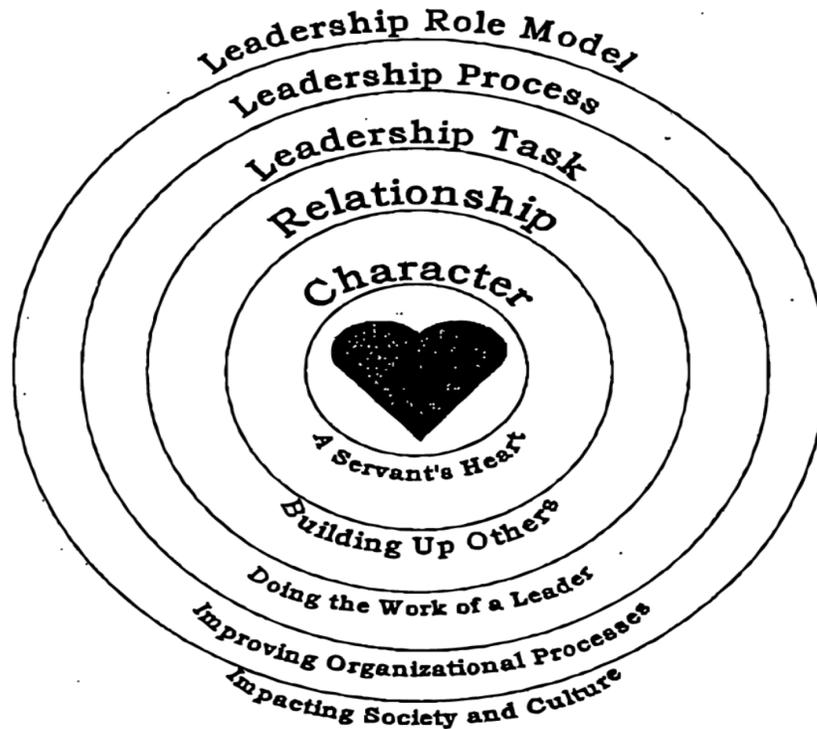
Patterson (2003) bridged the gap between being leader-focused and being follower-focused by developing a working theory of servant leadership that created a stage for more specific research. She defined the values, or virtues, on which servant leadership is based; she called these the “constructs” of servant leadership (Dennis et al., 2010). Patterson’s (2003) theory includes the following concepts (as cited in Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014):

- Agapao love—Social or moral sense;
- Act with humility—Ability to keep one’s accomplishment and talent in perspective;
- Altruism—Helping others selflessly just for sake of helping, which involves self-sacrifice, although there is no personal gain;
- Visionary for followers—Mode of seeing or conceiving or unusual discernment or foresight;
- Trusting—Confidence or in reliance on another team members;
- Serving—Models behaviors for others to follow; and
- Empowers followers—Effective listening, making people feel significant, putting emphasis on teamwork, valuing love, and humility.

Paul Wong—2007

According to Wong (Wong & Davey, 2007), character defines the kind of people we are. In servant leadership, this means a fundamental commitment to serving others with integrity and humility. Page and Wong (2007) introduced five characteristics of

servant leadership (Figure 3). Character is placed at the core of the circles because everything else a leader does flows from this inner reality. Followers demand it and leaders must live it.



Source: Adapted from Page & Wong (2007)

Figure 3. Expanding Circles of Servant Leadership

Dirk van Dierendonck and Inge Nuijten—2011

Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) developed eight servant leadership traits, which were constructed on an analysis of leadership literature and discussions with servant leaders. The insights they gleaned from the literature were included in a preliminary

model; additional insights from interviews they conducted led to the eight servant leadership characteristics, which are listed below:

- Empowerment—A motivational concept focused on enabling people and encouraging personal development (Conger, 2017, as cited in van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011);
- Accountability—A powerful tool to show confidence in one’s followers, it provides boundaries within which one is free to achieve one’s goals (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011);
- Standing back—The extent to which a leader gives priority to the interests of others first and gives them the necessary support and credit (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011);
- Humility—The ability to put one’s own accomplishments and talents in a proper perspective (Patterson, 2003, as cited in van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011);
- Authenticity—Closely related to expressing the “true self,” expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011);
- Courage—Related to proactive behavior and implies creating new concepts, ideas and approaches (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011);
- Interpersonal acceptance—Being able to cognitively adopt the psychological perspective of other people and experience feelings of warmth and compassion, a form of empathy, and being able to forgive when confronted with offenses, arguments, and mistakes (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011); and

- Stewardship—Stimulating others to act in the common interest by setting the right example (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Servant leadership and business ethics

The definition of servant leadership focuses on the moral, emotional, and relational aspects of leadership practice. The role of the servant leader is to support the aspirations of others first and nurture an empowered company culture for the benefit of the team.

Liu (2019) presented a study on the development of critical leadership studies by offering an intersectional critique of servant leadership. The theory of intersectionality is used to research how the dynamics of interlocking power inform who is to be constructed as a servant leader and who is not. Two research questions were asked:

- Between managers and subordinates, how is servant leadership socially constructed?
- In what ways do intersectional axes of identity-power inform the construction of servant leadership?

The findings demonstrated the ways servant leadership is necessarily embedded in wider power structures that shape who gets to be a servant leader and who remains merely a servant (Liu, 2019).

Measurements of servant leadership

Barbuto et al. (2014) provided an examination of emotional intelligence as an antecedent of servant leadership. He examined the various measurements of servant leadership, with emotional intelligence as a precursor, thereby proving that servant leadership has the potential for promotion and development. Two precursors were presented: the personality traits of agreeable and extraversion as well as emotional intelligence. In addition, emotional intelligence had a strong relationship to servant leadership both in theory and in practice. In theory, based on the leader's ability to be aware of others' individuality and emotions, the leader is believed to organically embrace a servant leadership philosophy. Hence, in practice, emotional intelligence is considered to have both character and talent-like attributes that are helpful for coaching and developing leaders.

Hypotheses

- There is a positive relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and their philosophy towards an unselfish calling. In addition, there is a positive relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and their genuine unselfish calling as witnessed by followers.
- There is a correlation between emotional intelligence and emotional therapy. In addition, there is a positive relationship between leaders' genuine emotional therapy as witnessed by followers.

- There is a positive relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and their philosophy with respect to wisdom. In addition, there is a positive relationship between leaders' genuine wisdom actions as witnessed by followers.
- There is a positive relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and their philosophy with respect to influential mapping. In addition, there is a positive relationship between leaders' genuine influential mapping as witnessed by followers.
- There is a positive relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and their philosophy with respect to organizational stewardship. In addition, there is a positive relationship between a leader's genuine organizational stewardship as witnessed by followers.

Methods and measurements

The leaders used the emotional intelligence self-report instrument (SLQ-leader), which assessed the behaviors of servant leaders and their influence on followers.

Leaders had the autonomy to select four to six of their direct reports to complete a portion of the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ-follower), which evaluated the followers' views of the leader's behavior.

Servant leadership a self determination

Synergies have arisen in a variety of ways between ethical leadership, servant leadership, and emotional intelligence for leaders. (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018) explored the theory of self-determination as a foundation for servant leadership. The study examined ethical leadership, servant leadership, and emotional intelligence to

determine any shared characteristics that would contribute to effective management. The philosophy of self-determination challenges the importance of sovereignty, integrity, and individual desire relatedness. Servant leadership focuses on care and service for a wider community. Ethical leaders generally make decisions that are morally reasoned. Emotionally wise leaders are self-conscious and self-regulating, fostering motivation and stressing empathy and social skills. Ten communal attributes connect the three elements of the theory of self-determination, including awareness, empathy, fairness, integrity, moral values, motivation, trust, relationship management, respect, and self-management. Several attributes are listed below:

- Self-determination theory (SDT)—SDT, a personal intelligence metaphilosophy, provides a framework for the analysis of driving factors in life and work.
- Ethical leadership—Ethical leadership involves ethical principles, the fostering of ethical conduct in others, and regard for the integrity and freedoms of others. Ethical leaders advise on ethical requirements, set clear ethical standards, and prescribe incentives and fines to guarantee compliance.
- Servant leadership—Leadership in the humblest way means serving and responding to others' needs. Leadership requires leaders dedicated to serving corporate members through listening and community-building.
- Emotional intelligence—In general, emotional intelligence explains the connection between cognitive and emotional capacity and the cognitive emotion control processes. The emotional intelligence paradigm involves self-confidence, self-regulation, inspiration, empathy, and professional competence.

This philosophy is particularly useful for research on servant leadership as it provides working, behavioral definitions of the servant leader.

Servant leadership and team dynamics

Chiniara and Bentein (2018) hypothesized that the fundamental principles of the servant leader have a positive influence on team dynamics. As a result of positive team dynamics, the researchers determined that the particular teams that were influenced by servant leaders outperformed the teams that were not led by what was described as a servant leader. Subsequently, positive team dynamics are related to both task performance of teams and service organizational citizenship behaviors.

Hypotheses at the group level:

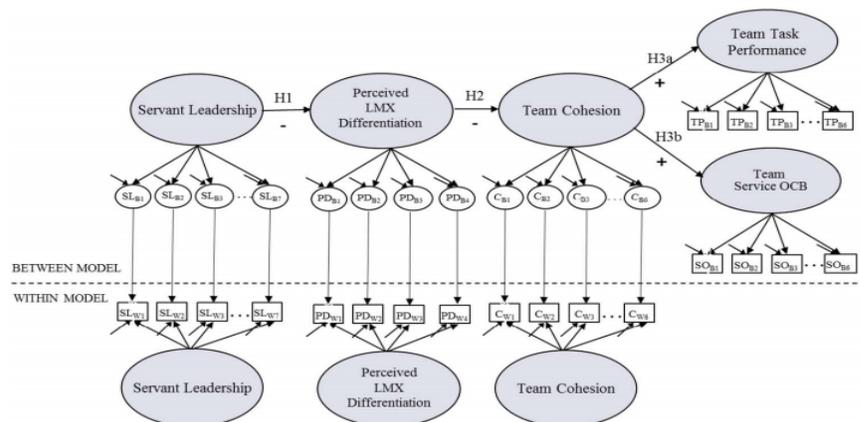
- Servant leadership is unfavorably connected to the quality of the leader-member relationship.
- Apparent leader-member exchange distinction is adversely connected to unit cohesion.
- Unit cohesion is positively connected to unit job performance.

Methods and measurements

In Chiniara and Bentein's (2018) study, a team member web-based survey was distributed to the email address of 2508 first-level employees. The questionnaire included questions on demographic data, evaluation of the supervisor as a servant leader, the team's interconnection, and observation of the distinction in leadership-follower relationship quality. There was a response rate of 33%, based on the

responses of 821 participants. The same questionnaire was distributed to managers to assess their teams' task performance and service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors (service OCB) (Chiniara & Bentein, 2018). A total of 157 managers responded, yielding a response rate of 55%.

The driving interest in exploring this topic was to answer the question of how servant leadership influences team performance (as displayed in Figure 4). The research focused on the impact that servant leaders have on an organization based on the ability to serve others. By extracting from the social comparison theory, the results revealed that the servant leaders improved group interconnection through an effect on the opinion of low variation in the caliber of follower-leader rapport within the group.



Source: Adapted from Chiniara & Bentein (2018)

Figure 4. Hypothesized Servant Leadership Mediation Model on Team Performance

Key actions of servant leaders

When leaders unleash the ability to bring out the best in their teams, both remarkable success with employee engagement and an improved sense of trust will occur.

Traditionally, leaders have led by fear, control, and misuse of power. Subsequently, the outcomes yield a lack of trust in management, fear of failure, and a distinct lack of innovation from the employee's perspective. However, there are key things that servant leaders do that create a positive work experience for staff. Servant leaders embody humility and servitude towards the work culture while empowering their teams to explore and grow (Cable, 2018).

Three key actions of a servant leader

- Inquire how you can contribute to the employees' success, and then listen. This is one of the most powerful questions to ask an employee. Avoid telling employees how to improve their work regimen. It is more productive to ask how you can assist him or her in doing the job better.
- Create a trusting environment for employees to be innovative. A proven method for leaders to provide support and inspire innovation to employees is the creation of a low-risk culture with room to make mistakes and take risks.
- Be humble. Leaders have noted the positive impact on employees when servant leadership qualities are exhibited by showing respect, remaining humble, and asking how they can help.

Organizational Culture

Marti and Gond (2018) studied the effectiveness and influence of theories by developing an analytical template, which resulted in a modest attempt to introduce a process model of performativity. They conjectured a theory as an objectified, standalone entity. Secondly, they described the effects of a theory in terms of a linear, chronological process. However, D'Adderio et al. (2019) determined there were several flaws in Marti and Gond's (2018) theories. The difference is that theory is hypothesized as inherently relational, and it must be considered in union with actors, artifacts, practices, and other theories. Therefore, the outcome will augment the generative potential of performativity for management research.

The topic of organizational culture became popular in the 1970s. This was prompted by the efforts of consultants and applied researchers who published their ideas in various journals and books. It was evident that there was a disconnect between the scholars and managers/practitioners, with the latter rejecting the published notion that relying exclusively on rational strategies of organizing managers had underestimated the importance of embodying values, inspiring loyalty, and influencing interpretation. This concept was mentioned by Peters and Waterman (1983), who highlighted the significance of culture and shared values for uniting an organization and maintaining its flexibility.

Organizational culture refers to the sets of values, beliefs, and ideologies shared among the members of an organization, and it is an important factor that influences the behaviors of individual members as well as the overall behavior of the organization (Schermerhorn et al., 1991). When employees are not just engaged but inspired, organizations see real breakthroughs. Inspired employees are far more productive, and in turn, they inspire those around them to strive for greater heights (Garton, 2017).

The role of a leader is very important in the formation and change of organizational cultures. In general, the beliefs, values, and behaviors of the chief executives of companies can significantly influence the formation of organizational cultures (Schein, 1995). Leadership refers to a process of influencing the members within an organization for the purposes of achieving organizational objectives and can influence the attitudes and behaviors of its members and their interactions (Robbins & Judge, 2010).

As such, servant leadership focuses on the dual focus of achieving organizational objectives as well as the growth and development of its employees, based on the emotional solidarity between the leader and the members of the organization (Mayer et al., 2008).

Global Leadership Effectiveness

Since global leadership is acknowledged in our field to be one of the most important challenges of our time, the literature offers rich learning on multicultural perspectives, and competencies of leadership around the world are extremely valuable to the values-based student and scholar. The academic research brings together cutting-edge empirical research, practitioner experience, and reports on the educational initiatives that have been developed to help leaders across the globe deal with the complexities and challenges they face. With editorial boards drawn from scholars and thinkers across the globe, the research represents the latest thinking about models and empirical research about leadership from multiple cultures, including non-western authors. This research is valuable to many interested in leadership beyond their own cultural biases, which is critical for the servant leader in today's workplace. These leaders are able to present perspectives that are holistic and international and relevant for scholars and practitioners alike. For example, several studies focused on the education and development of global leaders and aim to provide an excellent foundation for anyone interested in developing a global leadership curriculum.

Lessons learned from nonprofit organizations

Four leadership groups serve as a model to guide nonprofit organizations on how to thrive internationally by identifying the proper leadership attributes that value diverse communities. These leaders are well-versed in social issues, economics, and cultural dynamics, which take shape globally. The leadership capabilities in the nonprofit

sector have shifted from traditional and hierarchical to agile and adaptive to meet the demands of global complexities that impact the organization (Jules, 2017). These leadership groups are listed below:

- **Big picture:** This group forms and communicates the vision and mission. An executive or board member leads this effort.
- **Strategy:** This is a cohort of differing and strategic thinkers. This group is tasked with identifying the problem and then determining the best solution(s). The skillset required includes critical thinking, the ability to work without a lot of structure, and the ability to manage ambiguity.
- **Debate:** This group is a mix of executives and subject-matter experts. They tackle complex problems through the process of healthy debates, which results in in-depth solutions.
- **Frontline expert:** This is an executive who is a subject-matter expert and has a narrow scope of a problem to address. He or she is typically at an executive level and is a key decision-maker in the organization.

Based on the research conducted by Jules (2017), there are consistent characteristics that align with auspicious leadership qualities for nonprofit global leaders. These characteristics can serve as a guide for corporate cultures as well. There are two categories: mindset and capabilities.

- **Mindset:** beliefs and values, including integrity, humility, passion, respect, entrepreneurial spirit, and perseverance.

- Capabilities: skill, knowledge, and behaviors, including cultural dexterity, effective listening/communication, collaboration, foresight, and solution-driven.

There are several opportunities for exploration of the relevance of global leadership for a global market. Five global leadership capabilities are examined in the article based on interviews, empirical data, research projects, and the author's consulting observations. Moreover, the research that was documented presented a few ideas for the researcher to explore further to investigate the best process for this research.

Leader impact on teams

Many studies focus on the role of leaders and their impact on teams, and most of those studies are empirical observations or experiences. The behaviors of teams compared to their learning behaviors were studied over time. The final analysis showed both adaptive and developmental team learning tasks are nurtured from leaders who focus on the employee. Leaders who focus solely on the task will affect only team learning for adaptive tasks.

Adaptive tasks

- Provide a well-defined characterization of servant leadership and how it is recognized within the leadership writings;
- Evaluate the validity and construct of the measures related to servant leadership (see Table 2);
- Present a detailed nomological network that offers researchers a full view of the body of work; and,

- Provide a road map for researchers to push the work forward.

Data analysis

- There were 285 articles reviewed on the topic of servant leadership.
- The collection of reviewed work spanned 20 years from 1998 to 2018.
- Among the articles, 205 were empirical papers, 68 were conceptual, and 12 were literature reviews.
- The tipping point occurred in 2008 when servant leadership went from being a conceptual idea to a research stream in its own right.

Table 2. Servant Leadership Measures

Authors (chronological order)	Name of measure	No. of items	Item generation (deductive & inductive)	Content adequacy assessment	Questionnaire administration	Factor analysis EFA & CFA	Internal consistency assessment	Construct validity	Replication
Lytle et al. (1998)	SERV*OR (Servant Leadership subscale)	6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Luth (1999)	Organizational Leadership Assessment	60	Inductive only	Yes	Yes	EFA only	Yes	No	No
Page and Wong (2000)	Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership Profile	100	Deductive only	No	Pilot study only	No	Yes	No	No
Dennis and Winston (2003)	Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership Profile (a short-form of Page and Wong (2000))	20	No	No	Yes	EFA only	Yes	No	Yes
Ehrhart (1998, 2004)	Servant Leadership	14	Deductive only	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reinke (2004) & Reinke and Baldwin (2001)	Servant Leadership Inventory	7	Deductive only (for stewardship and vision)	No	Yes	EFA only	Yes	No	Yes
Dennis and Bocarnea (2005)	Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument	42	Deductive only	Yes	Yes	EFA only	Yes	No	Yes
Barbuto and Wheeler (2002); Barbuto Jr and Wheeler (2006)	The Servant Leadership Questionnaire	23	Deductive only	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
McCuddy and Cavin (2008)	Servant Leadership Composite Score	10	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Rieke, Hammersmeister, and Chase (2008)	Revised Servant Leadership Profile for Sport (RSLP-S)	22	No	No	EFA only	No	Yes	Yes	No
Fridell, Newcom Belcher, and Messner (2009)	Servant Leadership Styles Inventory	20	Deductive only	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, and Colwell (2011)	Executive Servant Leadership Scale	25	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Robinson and Williamson (2014)	SERV*OR Short	4	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Liden et al. (2015, 2008)	SL-7; Global Servant Leadership Scale	7/28	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
van Dierendonck et al. (2017); van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011)	Servant Leadership Survey	18/30	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sendjaya et al. (2018, 2008)	SLBS-6; Servant Leadership Behavioral Scale (SLBS)	6/35	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Storytelling in Qualitative Research

Several qualitative studies have used various research methods and narrative approaches to understand the lived experience of participants (Bird et al., 2009). The role of the researcher is to represent the voices of the participants. There is no single correct way to tell a story. Narrative, also known as storytelling, comprises an array

of tools, each suitable to a different purpose (Denning, 2006), including those listed below:

- Sparking action (springboard stories),
- Communicating who you are,
- Transmitting values,
- Communicating who the business is (branding),
- Fostering collaboration,
- Taming the grapevine,
- Sharing knowledge, and
- Leading people into the future.

There are three basic claims about narrative research (Moen, 2006):

- Human beings organize their experiences of the world into narratives.
- Narrative researchers maintain that the stories told depend on the individual's past and present experiences and values.
- Multiple voices are reflected in the narratives.

Narrative as a research method is less a matter of the application of a scholarly technique to understanding phenomena than it is a matter of "entering into" the phenomena and partaking of them. Thus, when we remove the sheep's clothing of method, we see something that is part of the phenomena experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989).

Debates and Issues Surrounding the Topic of Leadership

Servant leadership was presented as an organizational leadership style many decades ago. Though our understanding of servant leadership has advanced, it has not yet been fully operationalized (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018; van Dierendonck, 2011). There are two common themes that emerge as obstacles for the business environment:

- The term servant is not appealing to the contemporary business audience.
- Leaders have noted that servant leadership is perceived as a weak leadership style.

Although there is a surge of interest in the topic of servant leadership, there remains great debate in defining servant leadership within various contexts and cultures.

Bryant (2020) noted that the term *servant leadership* should be retired because the phrase is not used in everyday conversations when describing leaders. In addition, there is some concern from scholars regarding the validity of servant leadership measurement tools and methods.

There is a plethora of servant leadership research in the fields of healthcare, education, law enforcement, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations. However, there are unexplored areas within the corporate business infrastructures. Additionally, there is a void of servant leadership research in the media and television industry.

Research Gaps

There seems to be an appetite for further exploration of servant leadership, and the topic is relevant in today's workplace. There are many complexities that companies

are facing, especially relating to the challenges of leading in a multigenerational workplace. The leadership skills and attributes to drive performance and happiness that are needed in the marketplace have rapidly changed from the traditional corporate practices of yesterday. This in turn creates an opportunity for new leadership approaches in servant leadership. Based on the standing contributions, there is a roadmap (i.e., research was developed from Greenleaf's work on servant leadership).

However, there are future opportunities to explore; these are centered on the growing complexities in the workforce where there is an increasing need for new leadership approaches. Because servant leadership focuses on providing service to and developing others, researchers conjecture that servant leaders are more likely than other leaders to address both the business and spiritual development of their people. Companies are searching for leaders who can drive performance in today's highly diverse workforce. Prosser (2010) expressed that servant leadership is not a fad; rather, it is fundamentally an approach of life.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

This chapter describes the methodology used in the research study and presents detailed information regarding the research question, design, setting, participants, data collection procedures, and coding process. This is a narrative case study, which resulted in grounded theory with a generative approach (see Figure 5).

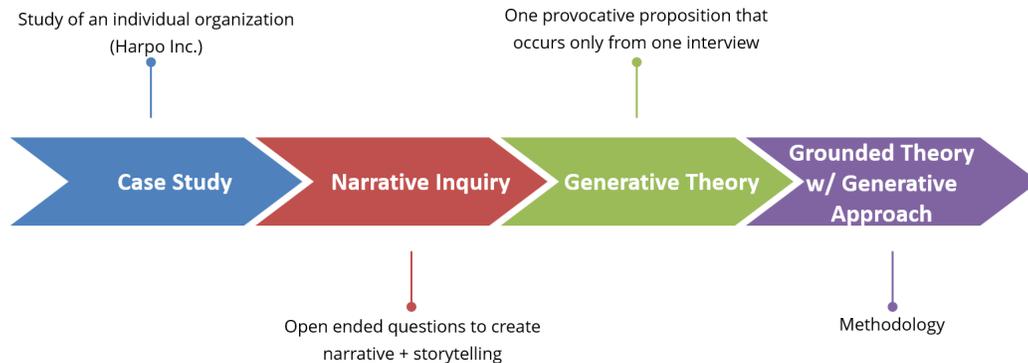


Figure 5. Research Methods

Introduction

While some empirically driven academics categorize this new qualitative research as non-traditional and radical-based leadership, the researcher's experience has proven quite the opposite. After a thorough review of multiple approaches to investigating servant leadership and culture, the researcher selected a narrative case study approach, which affords the best vehicle to explore the impact of a powerful servant leader on the others within the organization. This narrative case study explored the

“lived” experiences of 12 leaders who worked inside the servant-leader-driven culture at Harpo, a now-defunct media-based enterprise behind *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and other endeavors, which lasted over 25 years. The leaders represented different business groups and levels of leadership within the Harpo organization. The 12 interviewees observed and experienced firsthand Harpo’s company culture phenomena. There are several articles written about Oprah and the empire she built. She is often perceived as the epitome of positivity and is described as a classic servant leader, which was conveyed by several participants in this case study as they recounted their work experience at Harpo. However, after a thorough literature search the researcher found that there has not been an academic study into exactly what made Harpo a thriving and unique culture. As the Vice President of Human Resources at Harpo for over seven years, this researcher had a rare opportunity to look inside the organization and understand the impact it had on Harpo’s human resources ecosystem. Since the Harpo organization has “sunset,” the question explored in this qualitative study is as follows: What is the impact of Harpo’s culture, attributes, and values on its leaders beyond their actual experience inside the organization?

The Quantitative Archetype

For this study, the researcher maintained trust, confidentiality, integrity, and rapport with the Harpo participants, which was essential to the integrity of the research.

Because the researcher was the Vice President of Human Resources during the time studied and played an active role in cultivating the Harpo cultural experience, she

acknowledges that she was not a totally neutral investigator, which is often the case in a qualitative case study. As such, she was very mindful in conducting this research to maintain the objectivity of a social scientist to the best of her ability. Research with this particular audience called for close interaction between the researcher and interviewees who witnessed Harpo's work-culture phenomenon. A qualitative approach was selected because it provided the ideal methodology for this endeavor.

The Research Methods

Research design

This case study explored the lived experience of leaders within the Harpo organization. This research study explored the cultural attributes at Harpo and the influence they had on the employees within the organization. To gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of the 12 employees who served in a leadership capacity for three-plus years, the researcher used a narrative inquiry process. In the narrative inquiry, participants told stories of their lived experiences, and the researcher inquired about these encounters. This approach is essentially the study of life experiences as a storied phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

All 12 participants used storytelling as their expression of responding to the interview questions. This is a direct reflection of the Harpo culture, which was described as having a creative and storytelling company culture. These lived and told stories are the ways human beings create meaning in life as well as ways in which they enlist each other's help in building self and community (Clandinin, 2006).

The one-on-one interviews were conducted face-to-face on Zoom due to restrictions associated with the pandemic experienced during the time period (in 2021).

Participation was voluntary and confidential. After the initial transcription of interviews, the coding process took place, resulting in an initial pass that culled the characteristics and servant leadership traits of the leaders interviewed. The final step in analyzing the interview responses was to develop a grounded theory based on the results of the coding analysis (Figure 6).

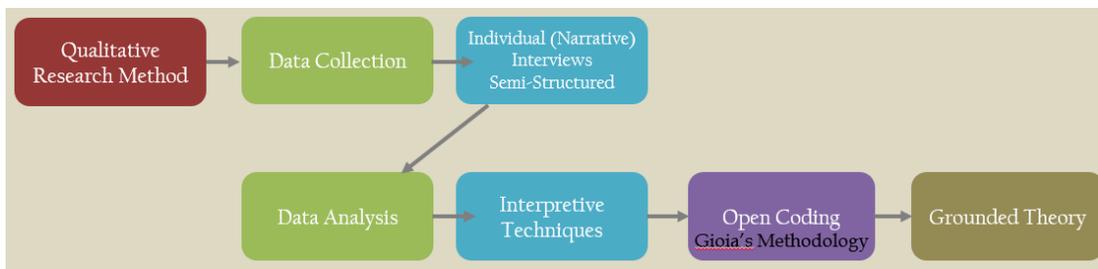


Figure 6. Research Process

Grounded theory

Grounded theory methods consist of systematic yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to allow for the construction of theories from the data itself. The grounded theoretical approach began with inductive data, invoked iterative strategies of the interplay between data and analysis, used comparative methods, and kept the researcher interacting and involved with the data and emerging analysis

(Charmaz, 2014). Another method that enhanced the grounded theory development was designed by Gioia (Gioia et al. 2012) and followed his four-step methodology:

1. research design;
2. data collection;
3. data analysis; and
4. grounded theory articulation.

The research design and data collection steps in this study are moderate variations on traditional grounded theory approaches. The data analysis and grounded theory articulation steps constitute the main distinctive features of the approach (Gioia et al., 2012). According to Gioia’s (Gioia et al., 2012) methodology, the first step requires an inductive approach by highlighting general themes from the narrative interviews, as illustrated in Figure 7.

Step ^a	Key Features
Research Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate a well-defined phenomenon of interest and research question(s) (research question[s] framed in “how” terms aimed at surfacing concepts and their inter-relationships) • Initially consult with existing literature, with suspension of judgment about its conclusions to allow discovery of new insights
Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give extraordinary voice to informants, who are treated as knowledgeable agents • Preserve flexibility to adjust interview protocol based on informant responses • “Backtrack” to prior informants to ask questions that arise from subsequent interviews
Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform initial data coding, maintaining the integrity of 1st-order (informant-centric) terms • Develop a comprehensive compendium of 1st-order terms • Organize 1st-order codes into 2nd-order (theory-centric) themes • Distill 2nd-order themes into overarching theoretical dimensions (if appropriate) • Assemble terms, themes, and dimensions into a “data structure”
Grounded Theory Articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate dynamic relationships among the 2nd-order concepts in data structure • Transform static data structure into dynamic grounded theory model • Conduct additional consultations with the literature to refine articulation of emergent concepts and relationships

Source: Adapted from Gioia et al. (2012)

Figure 7. Gioia’s Grounded Theory

Participants and sampling

This case study took the form of a narrative inquiry approach to the semi-structured interviews of the 12 leaders once employed by Harpo, all of whom were volunteers in the study. The researcher administered the following process for selecting the participants.

1. The researcher accessed a list of the 125 managers who were in their role when Harpo “sunset.”
2. The researcher randomly selected leaders across the organization that fit into the criteria of the four listed below.
3. The researcher narrowed the list from 125 to 40.
4. An invitation was emailed to the 40 former leaders and subsequently, the researcher received a response from the 40 former leaders.
5. Twelve of the 40 were able to meet on Zoom for 90 to 120 minutes within the time period specified.

All participants in the case study remained employed until the sunset of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (TOWS). The demographics of the interviewees were years of service, age, gender, ethnicity, department, job title, and level of leadership (Figure 8).

<i>Identifier</i>	<i># of yrs in leadership @ Harpo</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>
1	5 plus	M	50 plus	Caucasian
2	5 plus	F	41-50 years	African American
3	5 plus	F	41-50 years	Caucasian
4	5 plus	F	50 plus	African American
5	3-5 years	M	50 plus	Caucasian
6	5 plus	M	50 plus	African American
7	3-5 years	F	50 plus	African American
8	Less than 3 yrs	F	41-50 years	African American
9	5 plus	F	50 plus	Caucasian
10	5 plus	F	41-50 years	African American
11	5 plus	F	41-50 years	Caucasian
12	5 plus	F	50 plus	Caucasian

Figure 8. Participants’ Demographics

The four qualifying factors that went into the selection process were

- The employees must have been in a leadership role and managed more than five employees.
- The leaders worked across Oprah’s business groups.
- There was representation from the eight different businesses.
- There was a mix of gender, age, ethnicity, and management level. As it turns out, the ratio of gender, race, and age was reflective of the larger culture, and participants were selected in their roles based on competencies and values. The age of 40 and above reflects a more senior population of leaders.

Instruments

The instrument used for the case study was an interview protocol consisting of 16 questions that were consistent across all informants (see Appendix A). In addition, the interview research was supplemented by a contextual review of various artifacts about the Harpo experience such as photos, videos, and articles.

Research question

To better understand the lived experience of the corporate culture at Harpo, a research question guided the grounded theory with generative approach. In addition, to test and evolve the questions for the formal interview, the researcher conducted a focus group of participants that had demographics related to the formal participants. Several questions were eliminated and new questions emerged as an outcome of testing the effectiveness of the open-ended questions.

As a result of the focus group pilot, the researcher created a single research question with one ancillary, less important question. The primary research question this study asked was the following: What is the impact of Harpo's culture, attributes, and values on its leaders beyond their actual experience inside the organization? An interesting ancillary question, but not the main focus was the following: Is the term *servant leadership* relevant or does it need a different name? How should we refresh the term *servant leadership* to appeal to a contemporary corporate audience?

The research procedures

The one-on-one, semi-structured interviews took place over Zoom. The interviews took approximately 90 minutes to complete the 16 questions. The purpose was to learn about each interviewee's perceptions and experiences, both while working at Harpo and beyond their experience at Harpo. There were no right, wrong, desirable, or undesirable answers. All participants felt comfortable saying what they really thought and expressing how they really felt.

Participation was voluntary. The interviewees did not have to answer any questions that they did not want to answer. As it turned out, all participants answered all questions. If at any time they did not want to continue with the interview, they had the option to decline. The entire interview took approximately 90 minutes. To maintain the essence of their words for the research, each session was video recorded. The researcher transcribed, coded, and analyzed the data and artifacts.

All participants associated with this project were required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement (see Appendix D).

The interview: Collegial conversation

Although this was a formal interview, the researcher quickly found the conversations to be reflective, healing, and emotional. The first 10, 15, and even 30 minutes served as a “catch up,” as if the researcher and participant had picked up from a conversation that had taken place the day before. Subsequently, this continued after the interview questions were addressed. The researcher caught up on the current happenings as former staff members shared news about family, career, and recent accomplishments. There was a familiarity and trust between the researcher and the participants that created a safe place to have a direct conversation.

During the interview, the following occurred:

- Participants felt a level of trust with the researcher as a past colleague.

- Participants were comfortable in expressing emotions and vulnerability.
- Participants were candid.
- Participants expressed their gratitude upon reflecting on momentous moments while working at Harpo.
- Participants openly reflected on lessons learned and events that shaped their personal and professional development.
- Participants often went beyond the initial question, which added depth to the interview; the researcher maintained focus to ensure the questions were answered.
- Participants provided a full range of explanations, storytelling, and examples regarding the interview questions and what was top of mind.

Data analysis

Twelve interviews were recorded on Zoom and transcribed using the online tool, Sonix. To ensure accuracy and integrity of the transcripts, the researcher compared the Sonix transcription to the Zoom recordings. Once verified, the data were coded manually in Excel. In addition, the researcher took live notes regarding themes that were emerging from reading and re-reading the transcriptions. The researcher recorded observations and insights in the memo section of the Excel spreadsheet. However, the authenticity of the interview remained in the recording. One of the purposes of narrative analysis is to examine not only what is said, but how something is said, capturing the emotion and body language.

In turn, the researcher used Gioia’s (Gioia et al., 2012) methodology to form a grounded theory for coding and analyzing the data. In addition, the data were triangulated by testing the validity of information from the convergence of different sources and by soliciting feedback from cohort members, the researcher’s dissertation committee, and Dr. Marilyn Stocker (leadership consultant and academic professor). For example, one of the peer triangulators, Gena Lovett (an experienced corporate leader), highlighted the richness of the interviewees’ storytelling and noted that wisdom in the story is a “gift that keeps giving.” Lovett’s feedback added value to the analysis process, and she was able to identify pertinent information that contributed to the research (Figure 9).

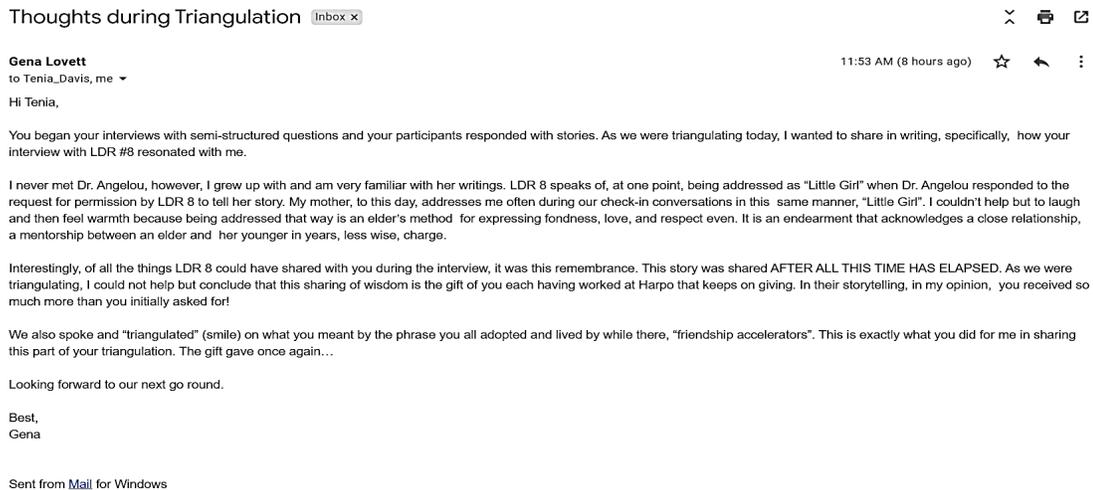


Figure 9. Feedback from Triangulation, Email from Gena Lovett

Open coding process in this approach

To offer insight and enhance rigor, two core methods of data analysis were used: open coding and a structured method of narrative analysis. There were two phases to this process. In the first phase, open coding was applied only to the direct responses to the interview questions themselves (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Coding Illustration—Question 1

In the second phase, open coding was applied to the entire interview by participant (Figure 11). In coding the entire interview of each participant, the storytelling responses provided a deeper understanding of the company culture and the lived experience of the individuals. In addition, the participant's emotions and reflective moments were also captured in the coding process.

A	B	C	D	E
Initial Codes From the Research Questions	Original Transcription	1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
Organization, attributes, culture and values What leaders are doing post Harpo The appeal of the title "Servant Leadership"				
Organization, attributes, culture and values	09: [00:00:14.51] I think the leadership working for Oprah Winfrey, as many of us, we are inspired by her. She's an icon and wanting to be able to support her vision on [00:00:30.00] making the world a better place is what drew me to the organization.	Inspired by OW's vision to make the world a better place	support change + inspired by OW vision and gravitas	The Power of O, Innate desire to be the Change
	09: [00:00:39.47] Before Harpo, I worked in development so I was a development manager for a non-profit where I was responsible for raising funds for community programs.			

Figure 11. Coding—Full Interview Transcription

Open coding is a method of sorting data into categories to identify themes and codes that could fit under more than one category (Clandinin, 2006). Subsequently, several themes emerged that had multiple meanings, and the researcher was careful to align the themes to the appropriate dimensions.

Early lessons from the coding process

Originally, the researcher investigated using an online tool called MAXQDA, but quickly realized that the tool was not effective for her purposes. While the tool analytically captured the data, it was insufficient to capture the essence of the emotions and expressions that were an essential part of the interview. An example is the use of the word *chaos* in an interview, which by its meaning alone could indicate disruptiveness, but in this case the interviewee was expressing the positive energy in the culture and how her team thrived in chaos. MAXQDA pulled the words without context, and the context was critical to understanding the meaning. This is largely due

to the storytelling style of the participants. Therefore, the researcher decided to manually code and interpret the data in Excel workbooks, which enabled her to be close to the nuances of the data and harness the sense-making aspects of coding.

Organizing the data in Excel workbook

The researcher originally organized the responses by each interview question. Then she determined there was more richness in analyzing the full interview. Therefore, the researcher then coded the entire interview of each participant holistically. Afterward, she created a key to map the coding process, assigned each participant with a numerical identifier to maintain their confidentiality, and documented the process. The researcher realized there were also many meaningful insights contained in the interview stories and the subsequent conversations. As the coding process evolved, the researcher added a column A, which served as a point of reference for how the interview responses mapped to the research questions (as depicted in Figure 12).

Steps in the analysis process

To identify first-order concepts, the researcher did the following:

- Coded column A (Figure 12) to reflect how the coded transcription section related to the interview question;
- Captured her generative thinking on poster-size sheets and kept a log in the Excel spreadsheet (Figure 13);
- Maintained a memo section in the workbook (Figure 12);

- Delved into the interview transcriptions and identified trends, meaningful expressions, and relationships in the raw data;
- Pulled the interview responses related to the 10 questions and analyzed the information for each question as an example (Figure 10);
- Separated the transcripts by the interviewee to ensure the substance of the idea was captured and coded properly;
- Coded the data—reviewed the expansive responses to the interview questions and identified simplicity in the key phrases and words;
- Created a word cloud for the second-order themes, dimensions, and individual transcriptions and then analyzed the outcomes;
- Created a word cloud for the dimensions and analyzed the results by the interviewees and results of the interview questions;
- Highlighted (in blue) the data that were viable for coding; and
- Identified similarities and differences among the many categories as the research progressed, similar to Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) notion of axial coding (as cited in Gioia et al., 2012).

The interview with O1 was very reflective. At one time Time got emotional when he described empathy. When working for a television station, members of his team died in a plane crash. O1 teared up, he is still emotional over this event. It was a somber moment. It surprised me when he stated that at one point he prayed to trade his son's life for the three that perished in the crash. Wow. That is amazing. O1 is known to be humble and respectful and it was so inspiring interviewing him. I also walked away with golden nuggets. I love this statement "Leadership is not one thing, it's a mixture. It's not scientific, it's not data driven, but it does have information. It has the human side of life, it has the ability to be artful, with the addition of data. But in the end, you have to shape it and you have to be a part of it". As a side note, at one time O1 was studing to be a monk.

Several interviewees mentioned that Harpo was a classroom for the world. Oprah intentionally extend the show learning to the Harpolians. An example is the book club; every employee was offer a free book that was part of Harpo's book club. Every employee was issued a TV when they started. They were able to watch the show taping and listen to the dialogue that took place.

O1 described the working relationship with OW as a freindship. Trust and friendship was a big part of the Harpo culture.

"being yourself" was associated with the minorities. It was important for them to be their "true selfs" and felt OW made space for that to occur

Learned the importance of offering space for everyone to have a voice. That's what the show offered a platform for people to be heard. It shaped our listen and empathy skills

Life is a classroom - gained wisdom from African American women who are viewed as legends. Working at Harpo, employees were exposed to legends, thought leaders and history makers. OW was generous, she shared her experiences with the employees. Harpo was not only a classroom for the world, but even more impactful for the Harpo employees

Figure 12. Excerpt from the Memo Section

Tab's Title	Description
Gus Feedback	Meeting notes regarding coding process, documentation, and methodology
Research Question	Research question and sub questions
Coding Process	Gioia's method, process and examples
Dimensions	Tracking of dimensions from the coding process
Generative Thinking	Interesting items that stood out from the interviews (27 images on 25x30 poster size)
Memo	My notes from the interviews and coding process (42 entries)
Demographics	Name, age, ethnicity, title, and years worked at Harpo
Interviewees (Identifiers)	Participants code key
Question 1	Coded responses (only) to Q1 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question 2	Coded responses (only) to Q2 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question 3	Coded responses (only) to Q3 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question 4	Coded responses (only) to Q4 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question 5	Coded responses (only) to Q5 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question 6	Coded responses (only) to Q6 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question 7	Coded responses (only) to Q7 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question 8	Coded responses (only) to Q8 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question 9	Coded responses (only) to Q9 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question 10	Coded responses (only) to Q10 - 1 st order, 2 nd order themes, and dimensions
Question Summary	Data comparison - coding questions vs. the entire transcription
Leader 1	Coded the entire interview transcription – 8,722 words
Leader 2	Coded the entire interview transcription – 5,509 words
Leader 3	Coded the entire interview transcription – 11,138 words
Leader 4	Coded the entire interview transcription – 13,816 words
Leader 5	Coded the entire interview transcription – 9,592 words
Leader 6	Coded the entire interview transcription – 13,099 words
Leader 7	Coded the entire interview transcription – 8,245 words
Leader 8	Coded the entire interview transcription – 7,012 words
Leader 9	Coded the entire interview transcription – 7,669 words
Leader 10	Coded the entire interview transcription – 5,128 words
Leader 11	Coded the entire interview transcription – 8,351 words
Leader 12	Coded the entire interview transcription – 7,940 words
Coding Summary – Individual	Summary and analysis of dimensions from the interview transcriptions
Coding – Second Order	Summary and analysis of themes – interview transcriptions
Coding – Second Order. Top 10	Summary and analysis of themes – interview transcriptions (top 10)
Word Cloud	1 st order
Word Cloud	Second order
Word Cloud	Dimensions

Figure 13. Excel Workbook Coding Log

Second-order themes

In the second-order analysis, also known as the theoretical realm, the focus was on the emerging themes and suggested concepts that helped describe and explain the observed phenomena (Gioia et al., 2012). Therefore, it was critical to continue to refine the data into themes. Reflected in the second-order themes were 430 original

themes and phrases combined across the 12 participants. The researcher had three cycles of iterations of consolidating the themes, eventually evolving into the top 25 themes (Figure 14). As the researcher consolidated the themes, she focused on honoring the stories and maintaining the essence of the words by keeping the original context.



Figure 14. Description of Company Culture—Leading 25 Words from the Themes

Microanalysis of dimensions

The researcher analyzed the coding of the participants across 13 dimensions and concluded that seven of the 13 presented stronger data representation (Figure 15).

 Dimensions	First Group	Expanded Group
Self Awareness		
Knowledge Transfer + Mentorship		
Adaptability		
Leadership (Empathy + Empowerment)		added
Collaboration		added
Continuous Learning + Development		
Cultural Perspicacity		addd
Innovation + Creativity		
The Power of O		added
Intention		added
Accountability to business results + Success of the greater good		added
Innate desire to be the Change		added
Tribal community		added

Note: The first group was formed from the initial review of the transcripts and the expanded group developed from the coding process

Figure 15. The Original 13 Dimensions

The researcher then went back into the coding and revisited the themes examining the connections back to the 7 dimensions to determine whether there were overlaps with the 13 dimensions. As an outcome, the researcher consolidated the 13 dimensions into four and grouped similar dimensions (as captured in Figure 16).

Consolidated Dimensions after Coding	
Leadership (Empathy + Empowerment)	
	Knowledge Transfer + Mentorship
	Continuous Learning + Development
	Accountability to business results + Success of the greater good
Tribal community	
	Collaboration
	Adaptability
	Innovation + Creativity
Cultural Perspicacity	
Intention	
	The Power of O
	Innate desire to be the Change
	Self-Awareness

Figure 16. Final Consolidated Dimensions

Aggregated dimensions of the qualities of the culture

As the analysis progressed, it was necessary to continue to condense the coding terms for the questions into groups. It is important to note that a key component of demonstrating rigor in qualitative research is the ability to configure data into a sensible visual aid, illustrating the process from raw data to terms and themes in conducting the analyses (Gioia et al., 2012).

Several dimensions emerged right away, such as self-awareness, knowledge transfer plus mentorship, adaptability, continuous learning plus development, innovation plus creativity. Other dimensions emerged from the second-order coding process, which is depicted in Figure 15.

Eventually, the dimensions were consolidated from 13 to four, and the remaining nine dimensions were folded into one of the final four dimensions. The dimensions were consolidated based on the word frequency and overlap of definitions that emerged from analyzing the transcripts. The four final dimensions listed below were expressed in all 12 interviews (Figure 16).

Memo

For the purpose of this case study, the researcher utilized the memoing process in grounded theory. Ideas were generated from emerging categories and aspects of the connection of categories of information (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). The researcher's notes encapsulated her views, possible follow-up questions, and expressions of observations, which offered a fluid and unstructured process, as shown in the example provided in Figure 12.

Generative thinking

Generativity is a creative engagement with experience that has “the potential to produce more enduring expansive and transformative consequences” (Carlsen & Dutton, 2011, p. 15) with regard to the following:

- The development of ideas,
- The development of researchers, their practices, and relationships, and
- The thought-action repertoires of people in the researched organization.

All three of these elements go hand-in-hand (Hibbert et al., 2014). Several ideas were generated during the generative thinking process. The initial thought was to document

the dimensions that emerged from the coding process and then identify leadership theories that aligned with the data (Figure 17).

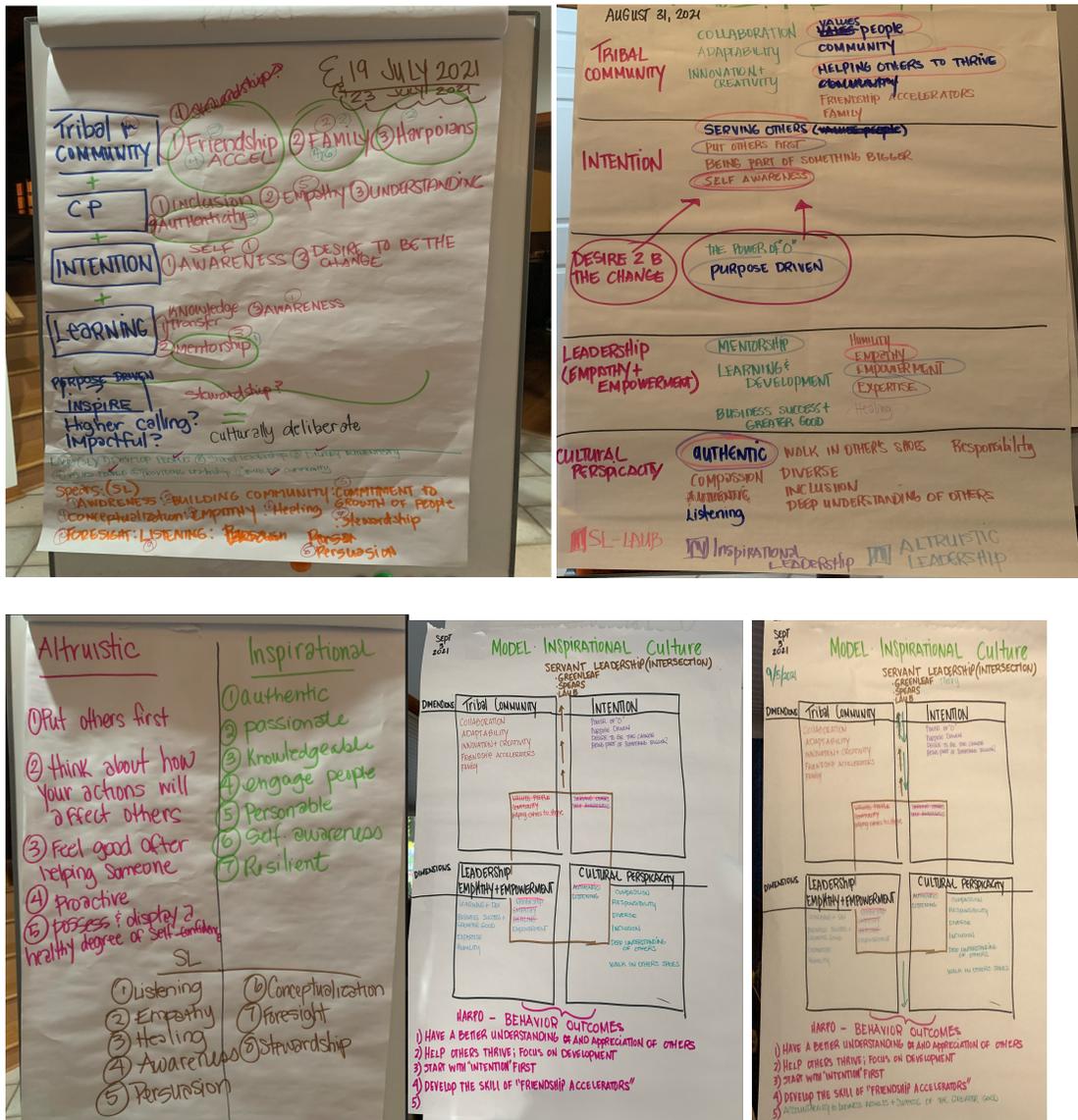


Figure 17. Examples of Generative Thinking—Notes from the Interviews

Three leadership theories were explored: servant leadership, altruistic leadership, and inspirational leadership. The second iteration evolved into a model for inspirational culture (Figure 18), which changed from a leadership framework. The third iteration continued to evolve the thought process by adding another behavior outcome and then redirected the arrows of intersection to (instead of from) the servant leadership intersection.

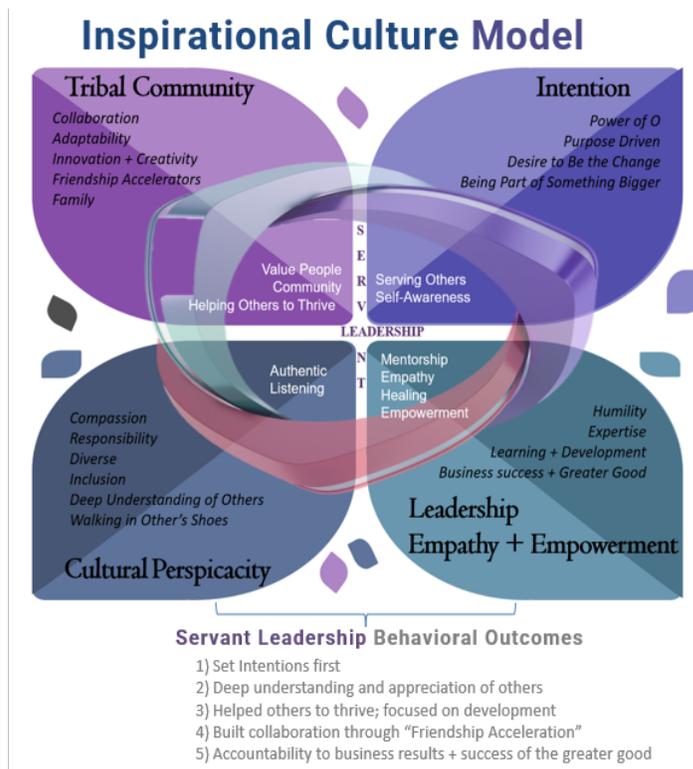


Figure 18. Model—Inspirational Culture

Ethical considerations

Participants willingly agreed to sign a consent form. The researcher was responsible for providing documentation that explains participants' rights to privacy.

Plans for presenting the results

There is a possibility that the narrative (without names) will be included in future work related to this dissertation.

Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology used for the case study. It included the research question, research framework, research approach, setting and participants, generative thinking, quantitative data collection, data analysis, and the process for arriving at the findings.

The primary focus of this case study was to examine how Harpo and its servant-leadership-driven culture shaped servant leaders and how those attributes have manifested today. The findings gained from this case study will potentially contribute to academic studies regarding servant leadership at Harpo, servant leadership in media and entertainment, and how servant leadership characteristics carry into future roles. The qualitative data analysis will be presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study focused on interpreting the narrative interviews of 12 Harpo leaders. This narrative case study of Harpo, a servant-leadership-driven culture, examines how the company culture shaped servant leaders and how those attributes have manifested today. The second part of the focus was to determine if the 12 participants carried the learning experience from Harpo into their new job roles, post-Harpo. The third is an exploration of the relevancy of the name servant leader.

Study Setting

While many articles have been written about the “Oprah Brand,” there continues to be a gap in academic research that documents and explains the phenomenon of Oprah’s inspirational company culture. Therefore, this case study enters new territory, as it was designed to produce an academic description of the lived experiences of 12 former employees. This is an important study because of the profound impact that Harpo’s ecosystem, a purpose-driven culture, had on a global audience as well as its influence on pop culture that continues to this day.

Participant Selection Process

For this qualitative case study, the researcher identified 40 former Harpo leaders, based on the researcher’s access to the leadership roster as a former Harpo senior leader, and invited them to participate. Twelve were able to participate during the research time period. The selection criteria required the following:

- Employees must have been in a leadership role and managed more than five employees;
- Leaders worked across Oprah's business groups;
- There was representation from the eight different businesses;
- A mix of gender, age, ethnicity, and management level.

The 60- to 90-minute interviews were conducted and recorded on Zoom, an online video meeting platform. Each participant was asked to review and sign the interview protocol prior to the interview, and the interviews took place over three months.

Qualitative Data Analysis

This section will detail the findings from the 12 semi-structured interview responses of former Harpo employees. The key themes that emerged from the coding process will be presented. The participants' ability to use storytelling in conversation with the researcher provided meaningful insights beyond their responses to the specific interview protocol questions. Their artful method of creating a picture with verbal expressions added to the authenticity of the conversation. The expanded verbal expressions took place outside the original set of interview questions. At times, the interviewee drifted into several examples that were not related to the direct questions; however, the responses provided deeper insight into their perceptions of events that took place and personal reflections of their lived experiences while working at Harpo.

Responses to the interview questions

Sixteen questions were presented to the participants. The questions were focused on specific aspects of the company culture, lived experiences, influences of leadership, and the individual learning trajectory of each participant. Each interviewee used storytelling as the preferred form of expression (Hill & Burrows, 2017). For the purpose of coding, the researcher narrowed the questions to 10, which most closely related to the dissertation research questions posed by this inquiry. The following are the researcher's findings and analysis of the responses to the 10 questions, their connection to servant leadership behaviors, and the implications on the research questions.

The researcher provided an analysis of the original set of unedited interview responses to understand the full vibrato of the narrative interviews. The following set of questions provoked responses that delved into descriptions of company culture, leadership styles, and the overall lived experience at Harpo. The excerpts below typify the kind of responses made. The L-number represents each leader interviewee. For illustrative purposes, excerpts of L1's transcript can be found in Appendix B. The full transcripts of all of the participants are available upon request.

Question 1 (Q1): What does the word culture mean to you? What are five words that describe Harpo's organizational culture?

A total of 75 words to describe the work culture at Harpo were discovered upon reviewing all of the complete interviews. The top 25 themes expressed across the 12 interviews related to the company culture were: authentic, diverse, intentional,

mentoring, friendship/relationship, trust, and learning (Figure 17). There were a few themes that were expressed differently across interviews; however, the themes had the same meaning. For example, several different descriptors of the concepts of relationships, mentoring, and intentions emerged.

The following excerpts from the original transcript represent the sentiments found throughout the data that offered insight into the company culture at Harpo, which parallels with the servant leadership behaviors defined by Greenleaf (1970), Laub (1999), and Spears (2004) (as cited in Ingram, 2016). The interview excerpts also reflect the organic conversations with the researcher. The following responses are related to the interview questions; however, these excerpts speak to the richness in the conversation in its entirety. The words in italics represent the themes of servant leadership and relate to the theoretical model of an inspirational culture developed as a result of this research. Theoretical models are used in qualitative research and refer to the key theories, models, and ideas that exist in relation to this topic (Davis, 2021).

And, you know, I think that Harpo was a really great example in a lot of ways of servant leadership, of people, people doing amazing, amazing things and people what people, what the kinds of shows that we're able to be produced and the lives that we're able to be changed all came from. I feel like that's servant leadership type of philosophy and intention that allowed people to be the best that they can be and helped people tap into their talents and their and their gifts and really put words out in the world. And, you know, I could tap into my talents and my gifts, and I/we can book the best of guests and write the best scripts. And you know, and then but it was a collaboration. And then Oprah when, Oprah then would take and add to that with her own magic and her own communication skills in her own voice, and it would just take everything to the next level, and it was it was like the

perfect, perfect storm of like all these amazing people coming together and contributing their skills and their talents and their experience to this cause. That became *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and became so life changing and influenced so many people's lives in such a positive way. And, you know, I don't I don't know if that answered your question. (L12)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Harpo's culture

I'm just so grateful that she was our leader because she allowed, she was she was a great servant leader. She allowed us to feel like. She set the stage, you know, of a she set a general intention and then allowed people to like, learn and grow and develop and do great things rise to their highest levels within our framework, the framework that was set within the intention of the show. (L12)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Helping others thrive + Value people + Serving others

Overall, Harpo just pretty much strengthened who I am at my core because, you know, from our leader on down, it was about integrity, you know what I mean, be true to yourself, you know what I mean? And that will, you know, just spill over into other aspects of your life. So that that was huge for me, you know, and that's what really meant stays consistent because again, going back to I'm authentically who I am, what you see is what you get with no surprises with me. Right. Or if we're in a room together, you know exactly who's showing up. (L2)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Authentic

But there was this sense of empowerment to make a decision at the at the contributor level because you were constantly being aligned with the vision and understanding what an impact what you were doing was making. (L3)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Empowerment

And it empowers you in the sense that. It wasn't so much working for a black woman to empower me; it was working for that black woman who had that mission that gives you that sense of empowerment. With her she you know, we never talked money, it was never about money, it was when I met with her, she said she wanted to know. She talked about happiness and balance. (L4)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Empowerment

Is it really a family when you've got about a thousand employees? Maybe. Maybe if you're part of a very tight knit and everyone's marching to the beat of the same drummer? Maybe. But I will say that that what made so much of the Harpo Eco-System work and thrive is that foundationally there were so many friendships that were that were compressed that were like, take that coal when you press it so hard that it's a diamond. So that was the foundation was based on friendship and trust and vulnerability and supporting each other in addition to doing work that you felt was meaningful, right. So, it was serving a higher purpose. And that was that was there, I certainly think, at the foundation. One of the reasons we all kind of killed ourselves we did because we knew it was for the greater good and we were changing lives and all those things that Oprah said. But what we believed because she said it over and over. (L13)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Community + Helping others + Helping others thrive

So I know that's the number one thing you have to finish. The question in is the number one, closer to being a great leader is to be able to walk in somebody else's shoes. The difference, of course, is not being sympathetic to their to their challenges and circumstances to be empathetic that you're able to put yourself in there. How did we best work out of this? Numerous times I had a team of associate producers and legal people, all staff had to work with, and I was constantly having to put myself in their shoes because otherwise I wouldn't understand the process. Yeah, perfect example, Dr. Oz. At that time, from O six to ten, three, at least three out of those four years was still doing surgery on Fridays. He doesn't do that anymore, I don't think. But he's a little busy with television. But back then, he was still doing some surgery on Friday. So, in order to accommodate his schedule, we taped five hours of Doctor Oz's shows in one day. And that takes a huge amount of energy, effort and empathy for people's giving up parts of their lives to come in at four o'clock in the morning, which was 5:00 a.m. in New York and put Mehmet and Lisa Oz in a studio in New York, put Mike Roys in a studio in Cleveland, tie all that together and do that for five hours straight. Who does that? We did that. (L5)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Empathy

Yeah, I mean, I would say the Harpo leader that made the most impact was two of them. I would say that made the most impact on my life in a positive way. Obviously, Oprah, Oprah Winfrey, you know you

know, for some of the reasons that I already outlined, Oprah was the obviously the driving force. She was the leader. And I feel like she was an unprecedented leader in in in a lot of ways because she focused on intention before it was something that we would read about connected to leaders. And because she encouraged us to always go with our gut and because she was tapped into people's hearts, people's souls, and we really used our hearts, our souls to create content and to drive the show and to, you know, and to really put it to put the show together. Tim Bennett, the president of Harpo for many years, was another driving force in my life, both Oprah and Tim were very spiritual as well. You know, Tim, I think, was in the seminary at one point, which always gave me a lot of comfort because I really did trust I really trusted him as a person, as a friend, as a leader. He's somebody that I felt like really cared about, people he operated with integrity. I think a lot of the best leaders at Harpo, you know, had a lot of those characteristics, integrity. I think there was also an alignment on values and beliefs. (L14)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Mentorship

Maya Angelou was one of my hosts. And so I spent a great deal of time with her. And as you phrased it that way, I felt that she mentored me. So, I felt that in a way, even in the informal structure, she was my leader. She was the person I was closest to because in the formal structure, it was who I was hired and who I was talking about before under the auspices of Oprah Winfrey. But I had the pleasure, the honor of working with her. Once a month, Oprah said, go down and take your radio equipment again. We're creating things from scratch. We're not in a studio. Don't take her to a studio. She's elderly. Go to her home. When I got to her home, Maya Angelou said, you will stay here. So, I didn't stay in a hotel. So, what was happening was this was a different kind of culture. This isn't how you did radio. You went into a studio and had somebody come. You didn't stay in the home of an icon. You didn't get to observe what was happening in that person's life and to have them continually teach you as they were talking to you, three to four days a month or four years. So, I mean, the impact was huge. I became. I became increasingly aware of all the things that had made me and looked at where I could actually go, because every time I looked around, I had role models. (L7)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Mentorship

I think, personally, professionally, and what I've taken from Harpo and just it's just spilled over in every aspect of my life, is just being

able to be present for people. You know, it's like we live in a world where we're doing ten things at once. But when someone asks you to show up for them, you know, it's like put the phone down, you know, stop fidgeting with papers, reading, and doing that be focused and focused and present because most of all people want is like five minutes, you know, five minutes of me so that I can help you, whatever that may be. You know, if you just want me to listen to whatever's happening to you or if you want me to give you or give my opinion and support you in a different way, then I'm more than happy to do that. So, I think that for me that that's huge to be able to, you know, just disconnect from other things so I can engage with somebody so that they know that they're being heard. So, they feel important. (L2)

Servant leadership + Inspirational culture themes + Listening

All participants were in strong agreement that Oprah Winfrey was and is a servant leader. There were strong indications from the interviews that Oprah set the expectations for staff members and that she modeled the behaviors for Harpo's culture. Based on the interview results, Harpo had a family community and a commitment to each other to excel. In other words, there was a tribal community that was incubated and fostered where employees felt safe and comfortable. Leader 13 described Harpo's tribal community as "a foundation based on friendship, trust, vulnerability and supporting each other in addition to doing work that you felt was meaningful." All 12 participants used the terms *family*, *learning*, *growing*, *authenticity*, and *inspiring* to describe the company culture. Family had a contextual meaning, as many of the employees worked together for over 10 years, which contributed to the deep bonds and relationships that were formed. The relationships transcended everyday traditional, working interactions and typical co-worker camaraderie.

Q2: What attracted you to Harpo?

Based on the data, the participants had a common reason for joining Harpo, and it was based on the persona of Oprah Winfrey, her vision, and the company mission. There were six participants who felt it was their destiny to work for Oprah. The employees of color expressed that they saw Oprah as a role model and that it was inspiring to work for an African American woman. The nine female participants expressed their desire to work for a female-led organization. The importance of relationships is depicted both in servant leadership literature and in Gallup's (Harter et al., 2003) research around the topic.

The first-order concepts that emerged from the data were common themes related to purpose, authenticity, and being part of something bigger. As illustrated in Figure 19, the second-order themes were as follows:

- Influence of Oprah Winfrey,
- Company mission and values,
- Serving a greater good, and
- Self-expressions.

As a result, the themes aligned to four dimensions:

- The power of Oprah,
- Leadership empathy plus empowerment,
- Intention, and
- Innate desire to “be the change.”

Altogether, the leaders expressed that the company culture attributes that were experienced at Harpo are integrated in their leadership style today.

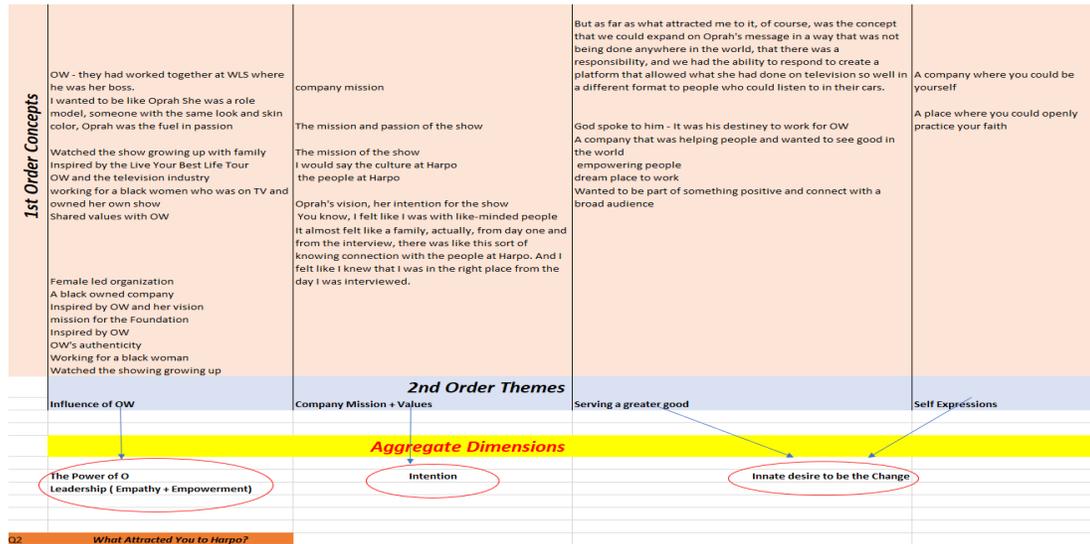


Figure 19. Coding—Responses to Question 2

Q3: What did you learn that carried into your new role post-Harpo?

Through storytelling, the 12 participants shared reflective narratives with the researcher regarding their learning journeys while at Harpo. The participants expressed that they were able to grow professionally and personally. Post-Harpo, employees carried many lessons learned into their new roles. The experience at Harpo is deeply rooted into how the former employees evolved professionally and personally. Five participants gained a rich understanding and appreciation for authenticity, while others learned the power of intention, which is pushed forward to current roles. For example, one is an executive producer of a popular daytime show

that uses intention as the focal point for show ideas, and another is a communications director for a major airline company and uses intention as the focal point for company communications. Four participants learned how to lead with empathy, empowerment, authenticity, and service to others, and all demonstrated characteristics of being servant leaders themselves (Sloan et al., 2020). Four participants gained a deeper understanding of diverse cultures and the nuances of leading them. The following excerpts demonstrate an understanding of how each participant carried forward the attributes and values from Harpo into the roles after the Harpo experience. Blue highlights provided by this researcher provide an emphasis.

The lessons learned. Is the importance of candor and speaking your truth because I don't think we always did it, but I think everyone did it at some point you picked you picked your time? And I'll just go through that and then I'll talk about how that moves through into the next phase. [The lesson of validation and making sure that everyone knows that they matter and that they that that they're being heard.](#) Getting really clear on the why I was explaining things, so people know it was very easy to just move, but for people to understand why, but that [the top of the list is intention](#), there's no question. And I can say that when I first started at United. I was in the boardroom for a meeting with the CEO and the executive team. And because. I this is how we pitched every idea we could, that pitch there was a turning point where [Oprah said you cannot pitch an idea unless there's an intention on the pitch](#), like I won't read it for approval. So. In my in my notes and my paperwork, I had listed out the intention on the top of my documents and I'd given everyone a copy of the deck and the CEO stopped to thank me for leading with intention, which is, you know, it's just it is a consistent reminder. (L12)

The leadership [lessons I learned would definitely be the intention driven](#), being intention driven about our work every single day. Our work we were focused on. [We had a large voice in the world, and we were focused on creating good in the world and changing people's lives for the better, impacting people's lives in a positive way.](#) Our

standards were very high. That was another lesson that we all had. (L12)

I think. Personally, professionally, and what I've taken from Harpo and just it's just spilled over in every aspect of my life, is just being able to be present for people. You know, it's like we live in a world where we're doing ten things at once. But when someone asks you to show up for them, you know, it's like put the phone down, you know, stop fidgeting with papers, reading, and doing that be focused and focused and present because most of all people want is like five minutes, you know, five minutes of me so that I can help you, whatever that may be. You know, if you just want me to listen to whatever's happening to you or if you want me to give you or give my opinion and support you in a different way, then I'm more than happy to do that. So I think that for me that's huge to be able to, you know, just disconnect from other things so I can engage with somebody so that they know that they're being heard. So, they feel important. (L2)

Yeah, well, you know, I learned a little from a lot of people I learned from you in terms of structuring. Some degree of responsibility in managing people. I learned from Doug the importance of keeping things organized and straight, but I also realized that I could never really do what you or he did. That's the value of having colleagues. I learned, I think, from Bill, what would he always talk about memorializing, remember memorializing his stuff. I'm going to talk about memorializing at his memorial zoom tomorrow. But I think I think I learned a little from a lot of people, and I feel as though. I have tried to apply it. Today, for example, I'm really going off of script here, but I thought to myself, when I'm gone with five kids and in two of them have some special needs challenges, particularly my youngest, Jonathan, who still lives with us in a little house right next to us. You know, I thought there's just a myriad of things that I know and taking care of him because he has cystic fibrosis, and his retail medications go for four hundred twenty-five thousand dollars a year. (L1)

It was probably the first time that I've worked with so many women in my life, which is it was good, but it was it was something that I noticed there were men that work there, obviously, but it just wasn't as many men. And so, when I got to Harpo and I saw that there were a lot of different women, a lot of women of different ethnicities, that itself was empowering to me. It was like, I can not only do this, but I can see other people who look like me that are doing the same thing or doing

more than this. So that was pretty cool to see. And I do take that with me to say, like when I go to other places and I have I mean, there's something that I noticed right away as a minority and as a woman. You notice if who looks like you if the room is diverse or not. And so, I try to make sure that. If I can make a difference, I try to make sure that we have diverse people coming in, whether it's women, men, Mexican, black, Asian, you know, I just want to have a diverse environment. And I do think that Harpo did have a pretty diverse environment. I mean, there were more women for sure, but it was pretty diverse all around. (L10)

To take my personal feelings out of doing my job. There's a difference. Between. Having to be right about something and doing the right thing. 2) giving people the space to do what they are empowered to do. 3) I just love working and helping people. (L6)

Teamwork, but we're talking about at that time, the large the biggest iconic figure in the world, perhaps. And I don't take that lightly and nobody else took it lightly, and so going into that, how I responded to that or felt the responsibility to that had me up my game a bit. it was more of a confirmation than a learning experience, it was confirmed that, you know, up front, honesty's the best policy. I already knew that. But it was confirmed that, again, you get lost in a bunch of people. You never know how things are going to move around and that it's better to be up front right now and deal with stuff that it is to let it simmer, and then have to deal with the aftereffects later. That was a huge confirmation. (L5)

1) How to run a start-up 2) How to engage and appreciate employees
3) Be surrounded by beauty and organization to spark creativity. (L7)

The biggest leadership lesson that I learned at Harpo from, you know, from Oprah was intention driven. We were intentionally driven and focused there. And I think that it goes even further than that. And it's like when you look at leaders in the world, it's like. Being a force for good in the world is something that maybe is something that I feel like. Oprah was Oprah is Oprah's Oprah is a force for good in the world, and she had power. She was probably one of the most powerful people in the United States and she used her power for good. (L12)

The lessons learned. *Is the importance of candor and speaking your truth.* The lesson of validation and making sure that everyone knows that they matter and that they that that they're being heard. *but that the top of the list is intention.* Oprah said you cannot pitch an idea unless there's an intention on the pitch. (L11)

1) Everyone can learn something 2) Fairness is essential 3) Importance of feedback 4) Communication 5) Be present. (L9)

1) Collaboration with others who have different experiences, different backgrounds, different viewpoints 2) Being diplomatic. (L8)

1) Create a safe place for women to thrive 2) awareness of unconscious biases 3) remain curious and 4) continue learning. (L3)

1) To be open and understanding to people that are different and not like her 2) Learn how to pivot 3) Be intentional. 1) One was the pivot at the top, that's the top thing, 2) one big thing is to be open and understanding be open to trying to understand people who are not like me. (L4)

The 12 participants were able to carry what they learned at Harpo into future roles post-Harpo. The interviewees expressed that while working at Harpo, they grew personally and professionally. As an example, being in service to others and how their values shaped behavior did not diminish after leaving Harpo. Instead, the values and attributes deepened, and the participants were able to carry on the knowledge that was gained from Harpo and bring it to life in their new positions, post-Harpo.

In addition, there were several comments among participants' responses regarding intention. The term *intention* was significant in the Harpo company culture and was mentioned in various forms in each interview (Figure 20). Interview excerpts related

to intention are captured in the Question 3 (Q3) and Question 5 (Q5) section of the document. Participants expressed that the philosophy of intention that Oprah taught was carried into their future roles post-Harpo. Several participants shared that they learned the concept and power of intention from Oprah and witnessed how it influenced the content of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. One leader said the following about intention. Blue highlights provided by this researcher provide an emphasis:

This is my intention. This is the type of organization that we are going to run. It is never going to be perfect. There will always be people who don't like something. Right. But **I will try to bring joy.** I will try to bring a supportive nature. **I will try to uplift.** I will try to help people further their careers. And I will tell, and I will with kindness tell people when they got to get off the bus. (L11)

Q3	What did I learn that carried over post Harpo	remain curious and continue learning	be intentional		
1st Order Concepts	I was able to appreciate people a little better and to understand them a little more and to have more compassion. She doesn't look like me, she's not from the same place as me, but she's able to give me a level of care and concern about what's going on. And, oh, that that's great. You know, we can, you know, collaborate in the environment together and, you know, connect. I think personally, professionally.	what I've taken from Harpo and just it's just spilled over in every aspect of my life, it's just being able to be present for people. It's that vision of integrity and also allowing people to have a voice an, again, one of those lessons I learned was, you know, people just want to be heard. They want they need to say, then, you know, it gives them an opportunity just to vent and don't necessarily want to be right. You know what I mean? If you give them a platform to say release. Most times you can look of move on as long as they're heard.	1) 2) But we're talking about at that time, the large the biggest topic figure in the world, perhaps. And I don't take that lightly and nobody else took it lightly, and so going into that, how I responded to that of felt the responsibility that had me up my game a bit. It was more of a confirmation that a learning experience. It was confirmed that, you know, up front, honestly the best policy. I already knew that. But it was confirmed that, again, you get lost in a bunch of people. You never know how things are going to move around and that it's better to be up front right now and deal with stuff that it is to let it simmer, and then have to deal with the aftereffects later. That was a huge confirmation.	the top of the list is intention. Oprah said you cannot pitch an idea unless there's an intention on the pitch	Teamwork
	create a safe place for women to thrive	be present to take my personal feelings out of doing my job. OK. There's a difference. Between. Having to be right about [00:27:00.00] something and doing the right thing. 2) going people the space to do what they are empowered to do. 3) I [00:41:30.00] just love working and helping people	How to run a start-up	be surrounded by beauty and organization to spark creativity	
	awareness of unconscious biases	The lessons learned. Is the importance of candor and speaking your truth. The lesson of validation and making sure that everyone knows that they matter and that they that that they're being heard.	everyone can learn something	The biggest leadership lesson that I learned at Harpo from, you know, from Oprah was intention driven. We were intentionally driven and focused there. And I think that it goes even further than that. And it's like when you look at leaders in the world, it's like, being a force for good [00:13:30.00] in the world is something that maybe is something that I feel like. Oprah was Oprah is Oprah's Oprah is a force for good in the world, and she had power. She was probably one of the most powerful people in the United States and she used her power for good.	
	To be open and understanding to people that are different and not like me and be things to be open and understanding to be open to trying to understand people who are not like me how to engage and appreciate employees	1) Collaboration with others who have different experiences, different backgrounds, different viewpoints 2) being diplomatic 3) respect is essential	Importance of feedback + Communication		
	It was probably the first time that I've worked with so many women in my life, which is it was good, but it was it was something that I noticed [00:08:30.00] there were men that work there obviously, but I just weren't being men. And so, when I got to Harpo and I saw that there were a lot of different women, a lot of women of different ethnicities, that that was empowering to me. It was like, I can not only do this, and I can see other people who look [00:09:00.00] like me that are doing the same thing or doing more than this. So that was pretty cool to see. And I do take that with me to say, like when I go to other places and I have I mean, there's something that I noticed right away as a minority and as a woman. You notice if who looks like you, if the room is diverse or not. And so, I try to make sure that I can make a difference, I try to make sure that I have diverse people coming in, whether it's women, men, African, Black, [00:09:30.00] Asian, you know, I just want to have a diverse environment. And I do think that Harpo did have a pretty diverse environment. I mean, there were more women for sure, but it was pretty diverse all around.		Learn how to pivot		
	Compassion	be Present + Communication + Listening	Manage Change		
			2nd Order Themes		
			Continuous Learning	Intentional	Teamwork
			Aggregate Dimensions		
			Cultural Fertility	Self Awareness	The Power of O Intention
					Collaboration

Figure 20. Coding—Responses to Question 3

Q4: How did Harpo support your personal development?

Harpo was described by one of the participants as a classroom to the world. The 12 participants described their development as personal and professional. The employees were students of the plethora of guests that graced *The Oprah Winfrey Show* stage. As illustrated in Figure 21, there were several common expressions, such as

- Learned life lessons regarding self-care plus empowerment;
- Opportunities to grow, stretch, and enhance careers; and
- Supported emotional plus personal development.

The second-order themes—professional growth, self-awareness, and personal/professional growth—evolved into the following dimensions: tribal community, leadership empathy plus empowerment, and continuous learning plus development.

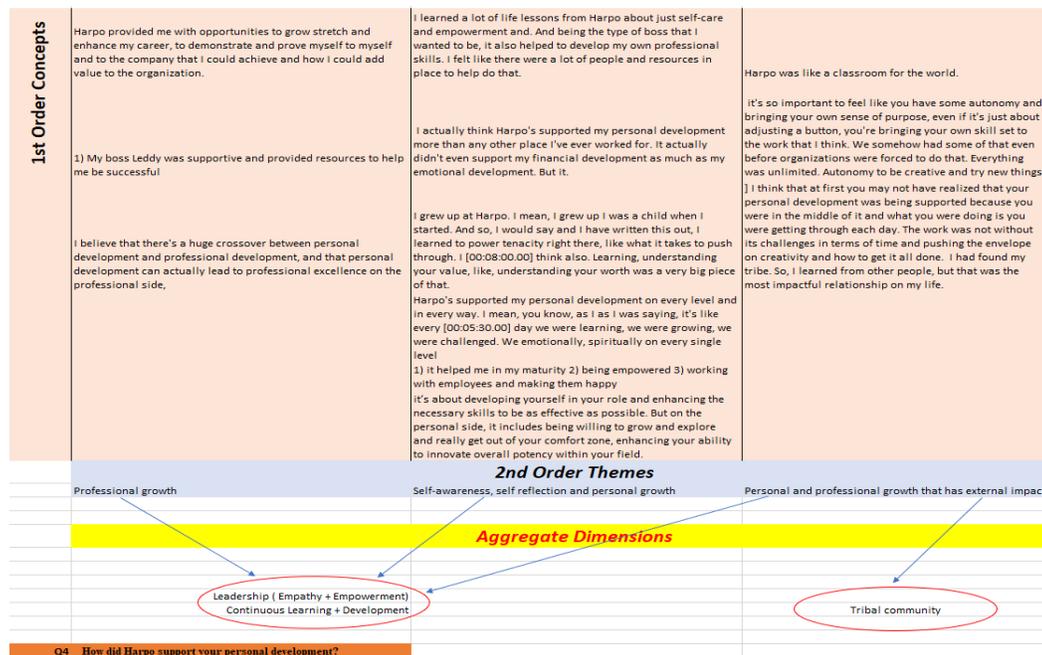


Figure 21. Coding—Responses to Question 4

Q5: How would you describe the leadership at Harpo? Please think of a Harpo leader that made an impact in your life. Describe their characteristics.

Another element that had an influence on Harpo's culture was the leadership. Leaders at all levels within the organization influenced teams directly and indirectly (Figure 22). The participants described Harpo's leaders as mentors, inspirational, and authentic. The following are narratives from a few of the participants. Blue highlights provided by this researcher provide an emphasis.

I think help mentoring people. And validating them and giving them credit because, you know, you want I think the more people around me, that shine's the better. So even Oprah was she'll tell you, I think she would describe herself as a servant. (L4)

I think help mentoring people. And validating them and giving them credit because, you know, you want I think the more people around me, that shine's the better. So even Oprah was she'll tell you, I think she would describe herself as a servant. (L4)

So, Libby is the first person that comes to mind that she has humor and balance and communication skills that were essential to being able to say no without it sounding like it was no. (L5)

Dr. Nicole Northlands. She worked on the Foundation team, and we worked very closely on assessing our grantees in sub-Saharan Africa. And I think she was a great leader because first she tried to understand your role as she was very good about understanding your role, what your goals are, and supporting where you wanted to go and being able to provide you the tools to succeed. So, she was a great mentor. And so today she's a great friend of mine, too. (L8)

I would say the Harpo leader that made the most impact was two of them. I would say that made the most impact on my life in a positive way. Obviously, Oprah, Oprah Winfrey, you know you know, for some of the reasons that I already outlined, Oprah was the obviously the driving force. She was the leader. And I feel like she was an unprecedented leader in in in a lot of ways because she focused on intention before it was something that we would read about connected

to leaders. And because she encouraged us to always go with our gut and because she was tapped into people's hearts, people's souls, and we really used our hearts, our souls to create content and to drive the show and to, you know, and to really put it to put the show together. Tim Bennett, the president of Harpo for many years, was another driving force in my life, both Oprah and Tim were very spiritual as well. You know, Tim, I think, was in the seminary at one point, which always gave me a lot of comfort because I really did trust I really trusted him as a person, as a friend, as a leader. (L12)

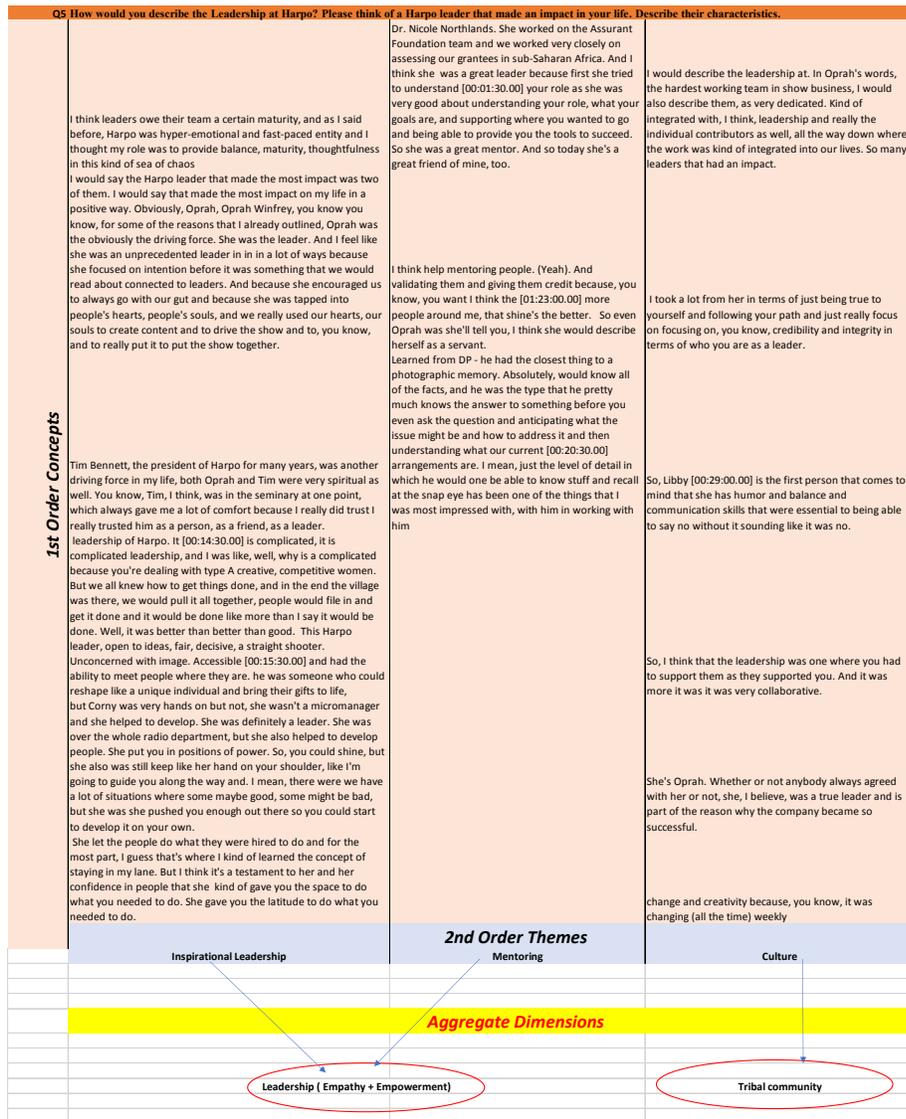


Figure 22. Coding—Responses to Question 5

Q6: Dr. Maya Angelo stated, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Describe the impact that Harpo’s culture had on you?

This was an interesting question as expressed by the participants because each of the participants recalled several memorable and heartfelt moments at Harpo. The participants provided examples that described the company culture, interactions with leadership, and a sense of belonging (Figure 23). The following are narratives that described the emotional quality of their lived experience in great detail. Blue highlights provided by this researcher provide an emphasis.

[Oprah] got up and gave me a remarkable tribute. And it was **all based on trust she had in me and I and her**. And instantly there was the **applause and appreciation** I got at that party from the staff that mainly from Oprah, that was just palpable, was rewarding. It felt wonderful. And it was a it really was a acknowledgement of the relationship that I had with Oprah that was so rewarding. Oprah held another event where she announced that I had come to her to retire, and **she pointed to me to thank me. And the entire staff gave me a standing ovation** for a minute, which just literally took my breath away. I you know, I was stunned, and I looked around and, you know, I just thought, there will be some clapping. What have you. But it was it was powerful, and **it was an unforgettable moment** for me, Tenia, at Harpo. And it wasn’t for a deal I had done, but **really for a relationship, I think that I had built with hundreds of Harpoians over the years.** (L1)

Overall, Harpo just pretty much **strengthened who I am at my core** because, you know, from our leader on down, **it was about integrity**, you know what I mean, be true to yourself. And that will, you know, just spill over into other aspects of your life. (L2)

I would go back to saying the feeling. Of the kind of the great the feeling that all humans strive for and that it is that feeling of like **intense validation that that what I’m doing is enough and it’s important and even just overall feeling.** Oprah always stood for and pushed

through throughout the culture was like people just people want to be heard. By the [end of the day, we want to feel like you matter](#). And like what you're doing matters. So, I would say above all other things, I felt like what I did mattered me specifically and also all of my team and me personally and professionally. I was there for nine years, but I have like [deep, deep-rooted friendships](#). Like we went through stuff together and we came out, we survived, and we came up the other end closer. (L3)

What I liked a lot about the culture, and this is what I like about creative cultures in general. [It's just it is creative](#). And so you have [a lot of different people](#). And I like the flow of ideas. I like the flow of ideas. And some people were some of the creators were very open. They were not afraid to let you know when they were feeling insecure or unsure about something. So [I do think the culture gave a certain to the creativity and the and the difference in people](#). And it had an energy [just to see how different people from different backgrounds think about the same thing](#). (L4)

It was laid out in such a way that I felt like [I just had drawn a very large family](#). And that is a rare thing, as I've learned since then, in any kind of business, that [it was like the Walton's with four hundred people in it](#). (L5)

[The show was the living embodiment of what our company did and at the heart of what the show did and helped people, and it did it in a way that it met you where you were](#). (L6)

Maya Angelou was one of my hosts. And so I spent a great deal of time with her. And as you phrased it that way, I felt that [she mentored me](#). So, I felt that in a way, even in the informal structure, she was my leader. She was the person I was closest to because in the formal structure, it was who I was hired and who I was talking about before under the auspices of Oprah Winfrey. But I had the pleasure, the honor of working with her. I had the [role model of a black woman running a major corporation](#) and business over 500 people to make this thing happen and different conglomerates because we interact with the television show and with the with the magazine. (L7)

[I felt that I belonged](#), the foundation team was very welcoming. We were very close. And so today I'm in touch with many because of that.

It wasn't the typical work environment where you came to work. You did your job and that was it. I think you were able to grow relationships with your colleagues because of that openness and the ability to belong to a group I think was really important. (L8)

I felt like we were a family. There was camaraderie. Although just like a family, it could be dysfunctional, but there are pockets of that, but also just like a family, there's very strong bonds, doesn't it? Not a family. Right. I think I go back to something that we used to talk about all the time, doing life together. It wasn't just showing up, doing the job. I mean, like we were in the trenches together. We threw things together in our personal lives. And, you know, I think. There was a support and comfort in that. (L9)

I felt like I was a part of making a difference. I felt like I cared about the content that we produced. it was very good to work in a place where I did actually care about the content that I was producing. And it made me feel like I was a part of making a change, like making the world a better place for I mean, that sounds really big and grandiose, but I truly felt like I was a part of something bigger than myself. it was cool to be a part of the change. (L10)

I did feel for a long time. That it was very challenging to move up in a hierarchy where I came in as a twenty-one-year-old kid, I was twenty-one and I think I left what I was forty two or something this very and over time there's some turnover, obviously. But I will definitely say that it changed the way I moved through my life. And it the culture of Harpo has been one of the greatest all-time gifts for me. Certainly, growing up in a company where we huddled regularly. To schedule a meeting. It was like, can you come over? It was just like, come over here. I just got an update from Katie. Fill in the blank, come over. We just got our topic approved. So, in a company growing up, in a company where you huddle regularly to brainstorm or tease out ideas or to write or vent or laugh, those were the best. I mean, those are really some of the best years of my life. (L11)

Harpo made me feel, I would say, you know, good about myself, I think Harpo. Harpo. You know, what was great about Harpo was. That. We did feel I did feel great every time we did a show because we could see the impact it was having on people, we could see sometimes with one show, you know, people's lives change people's lives.

Sometimes we're saved by these shows. People started to see themselves in a different way. And, you know, and we you know, it did feel very good to be able to have that kind of an impact on people's lives and on the world. So. Yeah, I mean, Harpo helped me, you know, learn every day, grow every day, see myself more clearly as a person, learn about myself, see my shortcomings, see, you know, see areas that I that I that I was challenged in and where I wanted to grow. (L12)

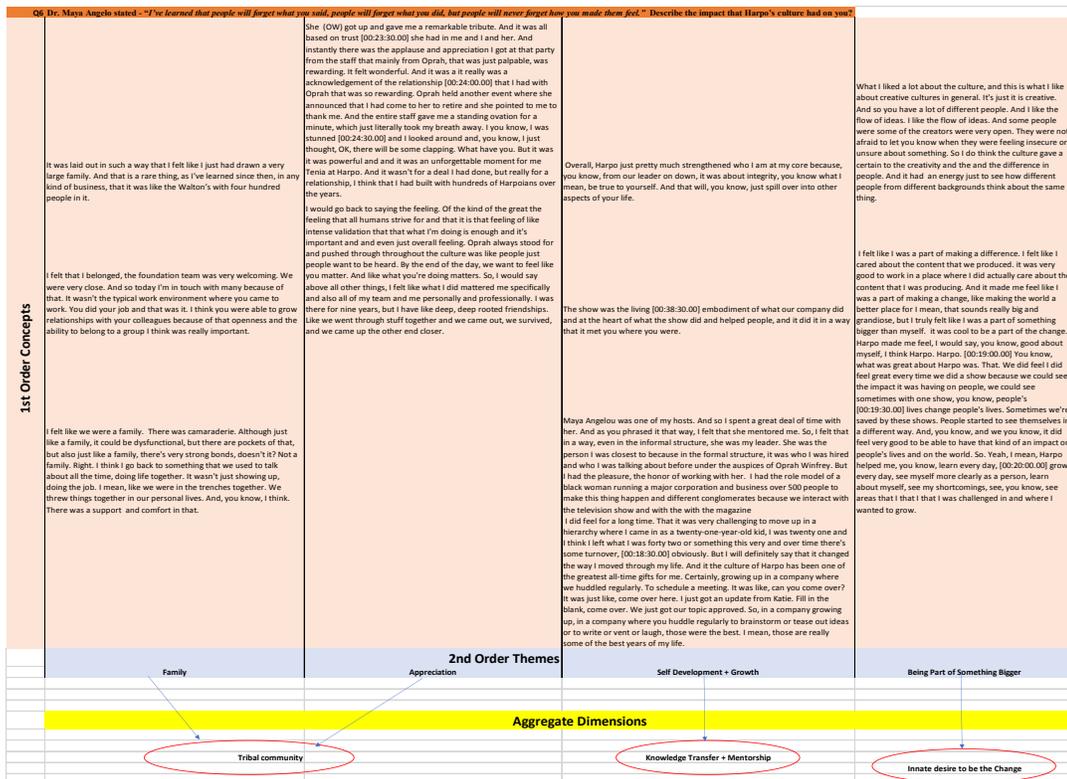


Figure 23. Coding—Responses to Question 6

Q7: What was the most inspiring experience at Harpo?

The interviewees recalled experiences that occurred during the day-to-day operation at Harpo and the experiences that Harpo offered outside of work (Figure 24). Three themes emerged from the interview: serving others, being part of something bigger, and community. The three dimensions that were formed from the themes were

intention, innate desire to be the change, and tribal community. A few participants provided examples that described their most inspiring moment while working at Harpo. Blue highlights provided by this researcher provide an emphasis.

1) “Trip of a Lifetime, 2) I know people that I’ve known for forever. Yeah It’s like my family. 3) live your best life tour, like just even putting that together and feeling like we’re a part of something bigger. 4) September 11th, the way the whole company responded to September 11th, there were so many Christmas kindness. Oh my God, I’ve been in tears so many times, like happy tears so many times the. I mean, it’s just I mean, even we’re talking about a earth, the Eckhart Tolle stuff, same thing, you know, book club, like all the things that we did for Book Club. (L3)

In my role, I was able to advocate for others and having Oprah as an icon who can tell the stories of those less fortunate, was really important. So in my role, I had to share charitable organizations or issues that we could highlight through *The Oprah Winfrey Show* to raise funds for those in need. And I think that was really powerful. (L8)

“but inspirational nonetheless would be like the 9/11 show and show, like some of the shows. Nelson Mandela, I don’t know. I didn’t go down to the hallway to shake his hand to this day. I don’t know what the heck I was doing, but I missed that opportunity. So, I think what I had to say overall, I had to see the trip of a lifetime just because there were so many experiences rolled up into that one trip, like I had never been out of the country before, I never really traveled that much unless I got to go to a conference that was paid for, you know, and I think. It wasn’t just because of the luxury and. You know, the experience that was, of course, awesome, but I think it was just an awakening in some ways because I really haven’t gone many places and I, you know, to be walking in Ephesus, where the apostle Paul walked. The party at the palace, the party at the palace, I mean, it’s just like so many things in that trip, the artifacts, the just being like the Spice Bazaar or whatever, you know, like it was just so different from what I was exposed to that it just made me. Well, more curious, I think, to want to do different things, to be open to more cultures, not that I wasn’t, but I you know, I grew up in the suburbs, you know, all Caucasian, mostly suburbs. And I just wasn’t exposed to a lot of different differences in culture. (L9)

I loved watching people figure it out. And I was side by side with her helping her develop ideas and script the show. And I was that sounding board and there was no playbook. I was playing a very integral role in the work and I was supporting and creating. But it was the first time I could see someone figuring it out, like the curtain was pulled back and it was very real. And it was a great reminder and continues to be a reminder for me, like, hey, I guess I can do this. Like she was asking if I can help her. We were figuring it out together. And I was like, oh, my God, I can do everything she can do. (L12)

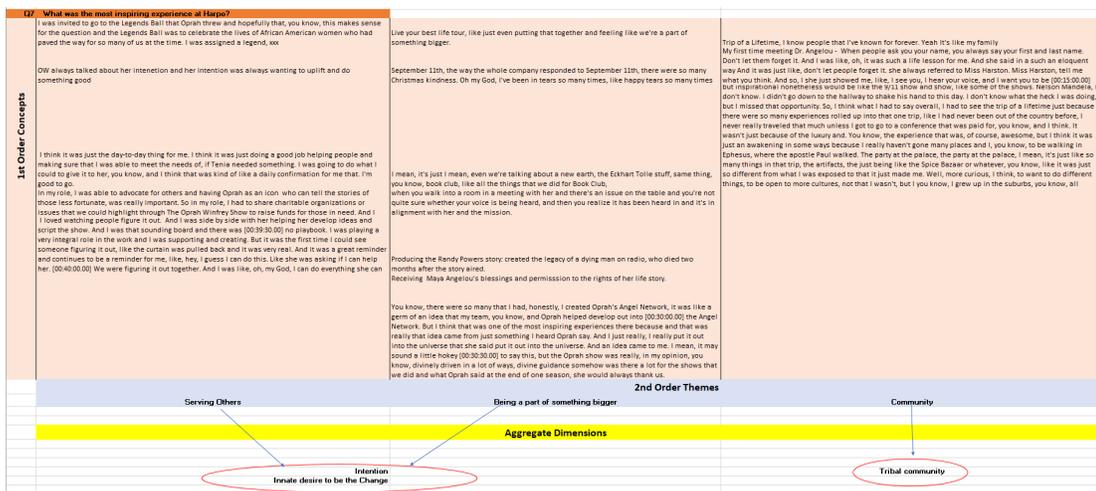


Figure 24. Coding—Responses to Question 7

Q8: What motivates you as a leader?

The second-order themes that emerged (as captured in Figure 25) were

- Create a total experience for employees personally and professionally,
- Deep understanding of others,
- Greater purpose, and
- Helping others thrive.

As a result, the dimensions that were developed from the themes were

- Tribal community,

- Intention,
- Innate desire to be the change, and
- Leadership (empathy plus empowerment).

Blue highlights provided by this researcher provide an emphasis.

I would hope that they would look back and see that number one. They liked coming to work. Number two, they were valued for what they did and number three. They were proud in their community. They were proud with their family of the association that they had in their line of business. I think most people felt that way. And I think **most of it came from quite frankly, from Oprah**. She had this glow. She had this aura. And even to this day, she's remain relevant. (L1)

What motivates me is to know that I can make a positive impact on somebody in the world. You know what I mean? And a lot of times this happens for everybody. You never know what little things that you may do or say that will be so significant in someone else's life, you know? And like I said, sometimes if you just give someone five minutes to listen it could be the trajectory of their life. I think that is just so important, you know. (L2)

As a Christian, it's about something deeper, more at the soul level. (Hmm) A source of everlasting motivation. God, I believe drawing nearer to God into that true source of all and motivates me. I hold that motivation flows from meaning the meaningful choices that we make. Self-motivation becomes easier when we see our choices as affirmations or deeper goals and values. (L9)

I like to be a part of change and I like to see people grow, And I also like to bring others along on the road. I like to help empower other people as other people have done me. And I'm also on this journey myself, like I'm still trying to go up the ladder. But as people have always told me, you always have to turn around and help somebody else in it. And it brings me such joy to be able to see other people that I've helped along the way that are doing great things or still, you know, learning good things. (L10)

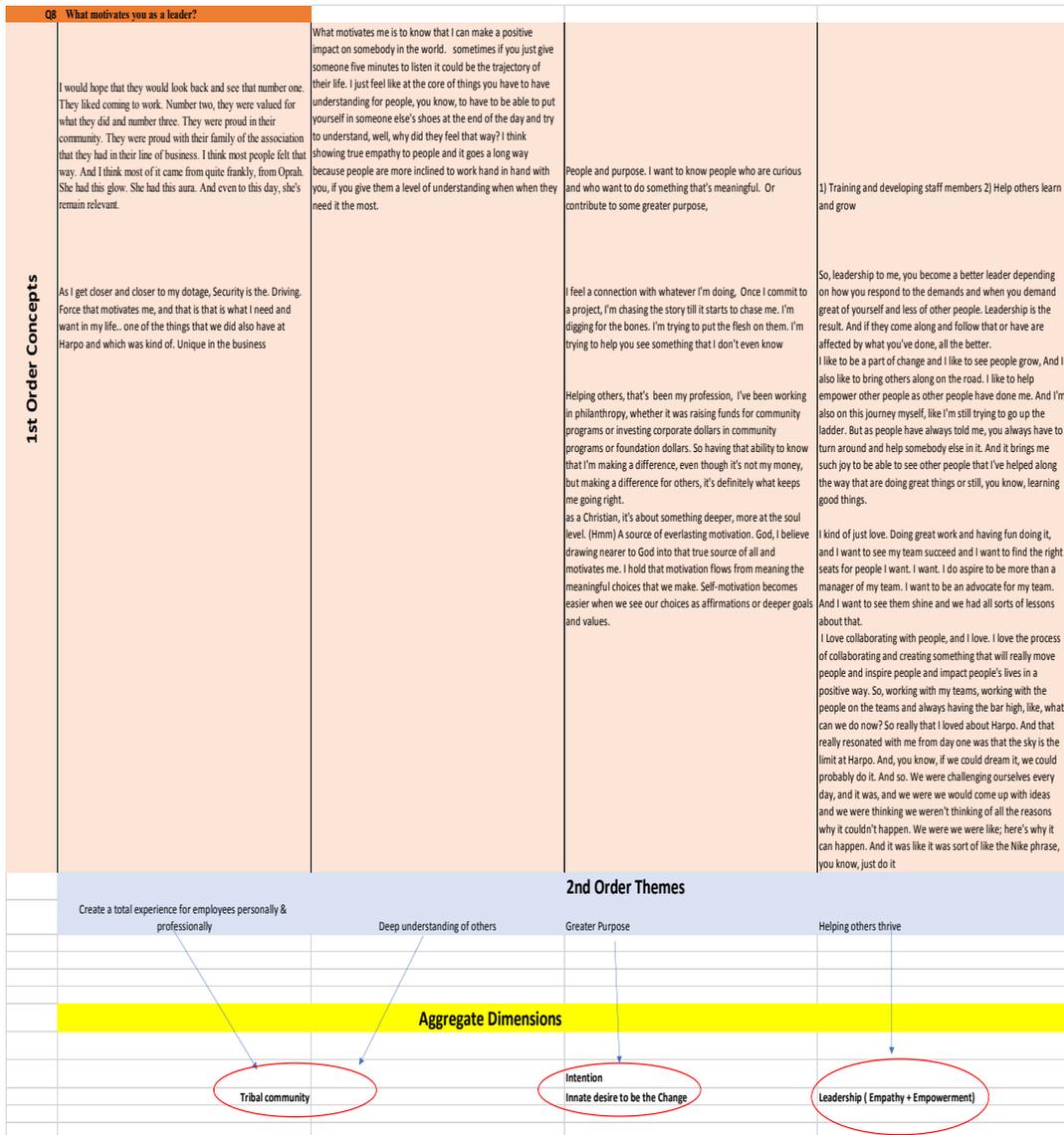


Figure 25. Coding—Responses to Question 8

Q9: Is it important for leaders to display empathy? Why? Or why not?

The 12 participants shared commonalities regarding their responses (Figure 26).

Based on the collective responses, having empathy contributes to happy employees and a healthy work culture. The second-order themes were humility, walking in someone's shoes, and open to learn and be vulnerable. The following dimensions

formed from the themes: cultural perspicacity, intention, and leadership (empathy plus empowerment). Blue highlights provided by this researcher provide an emphasis.

I just thought, you know, it was important to connect to [00:37:30.00] feel, to experience and maybe spend a little bit more time with the other person. I did realize that there were times when I spent too much time and I remember saying to Oprah when she was going to be letting somebody go. That she wanted me to let go, but I just said, I think this is your responsibility, but you can make it short and then you can they can have them come in and see me, you [00:38:00.00] know, and I'll help them through it. So, yeah, I think empathy is I think empathy is important. It shows you're real. It shows you're human. So that's my style. That's just who I am. (L1)

You know, for me, I just feel like at the core of things you have to have understanding for people, you know, to have to be able to put yourself in someone else's shoes at the end of the day and try to understand, well, why did they feel that way? Well, why did they say that or whatever? You know, you may not really get the answer you want. Oh, I think showing true empathy to people and it goes a long way because people are more inclined to work hand in hand with you if you give them a level of understanding when they need it the most. (L2)

Everybody is my superior in that I may learn from them. I stay grounded. my leadership style and just understanding and meeting you where you are. What is it that I can do for you? How can I help you? You know, that is that is the driving force for me and how I deal with that aspect of my life. (L6)

I just think that in the middle of everything we're doing is as important as we think it is, is as important as we think we are. We are dealing with human beings and things that are happening in people's lives that they're too embarrassed to say to themselves or out loud. I think life is really, really hard. I think at different times you touch a person and you're not sure that you haven't touched a bruise and all you did was say hello. Their mother could have died ten years ago on that day. If you don't really like people, if you don't really want to be supportive of people, then I don't think you need to be a leader. I think you need to just fall in line and march in the group. I don't think you can negate a person's humanity. (L7)

One hundred percent, yes, I think I mean, I don't know how anyone could say, I don't know how to say no, but I think that that is like the ultimate connector, and it goes back to being understood and knowing that people care. And I will say, if you're empathetic, I actually think that that might be one of the greatest loyalty builders if you care about your team. I mean, well, they're here. Here's another here's another lesson. It all comes back to the law of attraction or Newton's third law. **Everything you put out comes back. Right? (L12)**



Figure 26. Coding—Responses to Question 9

Q10: Is the term servant leadership relevant or does it need a different name?

The term servant leader was mentioned several times by L1, L2, L11, and L12. The participants were in alignment that servant leaders are in service to others, giving, and selfless. However, as a word without the definition, six participants found the word *servant* to be irrelevant, based on the historical baggage of the term. However, five of the participants expressed the term *servant* was appropriate based on its definition. And one participant was indifferent (Figure 27).

Y/N	Participant Feedback
Y	Another word is better. But I think a leader is sort of a catalyst of their followers. And I think a true leader enables his or her followers to realize their full potential.
N	That we understand that is allowing us to do better and, you know, and thrive in the world,
Y	Struggled with the word "servant". We should look for another term.
N	Servant as being in service. No issue with the term.
N	Servant is related to being in service and leaders are in service
Y/N	It depends on the context, not a clear understanding
Y	The term "servant" needs to change however, the definition is meaningful
Y	The term "servant" is old
N	Focus on the meaning
Y	The word "servant" has a negative term. Not sure what it should be
N	Focus is more on the definition vs. the wording
Y	name change for business only

Figure 27. Question 10—Participant Responses

Conclusion: Ten questions

The power of paying it forward

Even after a decade, it is evident that the culture that was fostered at Harpo left lasting impressions on its leaders. The 12 participants in this research shared personal

and thoughtful experiences of how they evolved as leaders and how they were able to carry forward their learning experiences to their new roles post-Harpo. This study clearly indicates that Harpo’s inspirational culture created a ripple effect. The authentic voices from the interviews speak for themselves. For this research, it was like finding diamonds on the surface of the ground. One did not have to dig deeply or mine for them. The messages were real, and the lessons learned continue to take shape in the organizations that interview participants are a part of today.

Key themes and insights from the individual responses

The research provided insight into the Harpo culture, behaviors, and leadership influences. The overall second-order themes of authenticity, friendship accelerators, learning, mentoring, diversity, trust, inspiring, and leading by example are leading descriptors (Figure 28).



Figure 28. Second-Order Themes

These attributes influenced a culture where staff members thrived, learned, and grew. Based on the data, employees were drawn to Harpo to be a part of something bigger than themselves. The participants were able to contribute to meaningful work that supported their personal and professional aspirations. Based on the comparison of the individual top 10 themes, the researcher determined there were several commonalities that the participants shared, such as authenticity, diversity, friendship, and trust (Figure 29 and Figure 30).

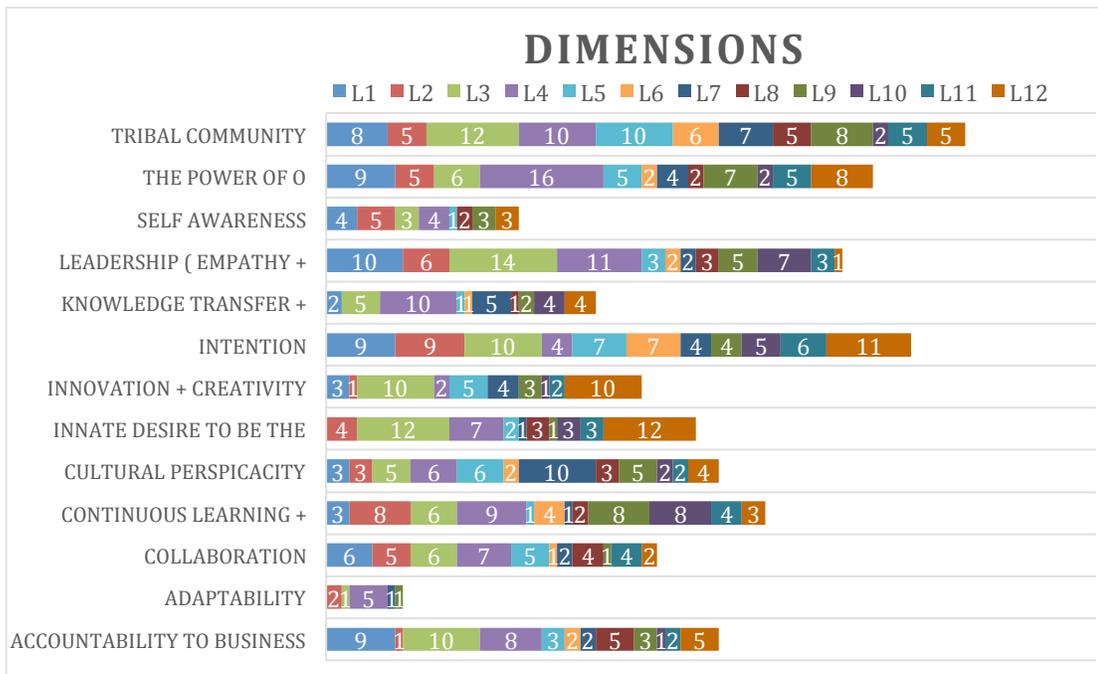


Figure 29. Frequency of Dimensions—Comparison by Participants

2nd Order Themes Participants Top 10										
L1	Authenticity	Caring	Compassion	Family Time	Friendship Accelerator	Guidance	Humble	Stewardship	Trust	Vision
L2	Authenticity	Destiny	Diversity	Excellence	Integrity	Listening	Role Model	Servitude	Thriving	Wisdom
L3	Alignment	Authenticity	Community	Empathy	Employee Engagement	Empowerment	Friendship Accelerator	Learning	People Centric	Role Model
L4	Authenticity	Friendship	Gratitude	Impactful	Innovation	Inspired	Example	Mentorship	Trust	Values
L5	Authenticity	Community	Destiny	Diversity	Empathy	Friendship	Humility	Purpose	Teamwork	Trust
L6	Authenticity	Awareness	Diversity	Employee Engagement	Empowerment	Family	Integrity	Example	Professional Development	Servitude
L7	Community	Creativity	Diversity	Faith	Friendships	Legacy Work	Mentorship	Role Models	Trust	Wisdom
L8	Bond	Community	Comradery	Diplomacy	Friendships	High Performance	Inclusive	Lessons Learned	Mentorship	Self-Awareness
L9	Being Open	Caring	Discernment	Diversity	Family	Friendship Accelerator	Job Satisfaction	Lead by Example	Purpose	Transparency
L10	Authenticity	Culture Matters	Diversity	Growth	Hard-Working	Humble	Mentoring	Respect	Role Models	Well-Being
L11	Caring	Destiny	Family	Friendships	Inspired	Intention	Passion	Respect	Trust	Vulnerability
L12	Being the Change	Connections	Creativity	Flourishing	Global Impact	Impactful	Inspiring	Lead by Example	Passion	Trust

Figure 30. Participants’ Top-Ten Second-Order Themes

Definitions of the four dimensions

Thirteen dimensions that described the company culture at Harpo emerged as an outcome of the coding process (Figure 31). The 13 dimensions folded into four key dimensions. Each theme and the associated data, including interview responses, are detailed in the next section. As an outcome, the researcher formed a two- to three-sentence definition of the four dimensions derived from the participants’ interview excerpts, explaining the rationale that governed how the original 13 dimensions were derived during the coding process. It was determined to consolidate the 13 dimensions to four and then align the nine remaining dimensions into the respective four categories that had similar meanings. This occurred after several iterations of scrubbing the data, identifying correlations in the themes, and comparing lived stories that were related to the research questions.

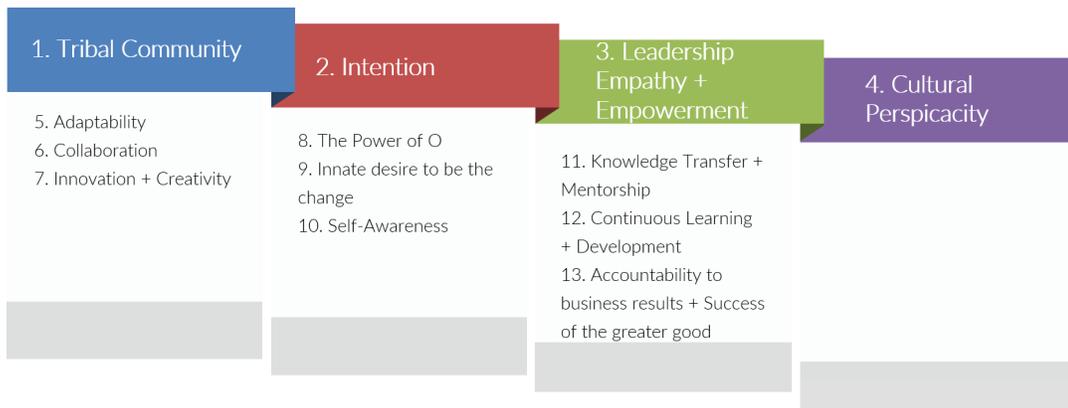


Figure 31. Consolidated Dimensions From 13 to Four

Tribal community

Oh, my. Well, I can continue or leave the meeting like, oh, no, please continue. So anyway, when he said this, it really resonated. He said that working in an environment, *there are certain environments that our friendship accelerators* and that was how I took it. And I thought a lot about that. *Working at Harpo under the circumstances with the timeline with the pressure there are you cannot replicate the relationships, the trust that's necessary, the vulnerability that is created.* You cannot replicate that in different corporate environments because it was such a unique in out for lack of a better term, say Pressure-Cooker. But that was what it was. And so, yes, we were all there for a long time. And it's certainly it certainly helped that that at the head of the company, *she would call it the Harpo family, because outside of Harpo, we always say Harpo family, Harpo family.* But I do hear that at United, where the United family, it's a lot different. I think it's very different when you're in corporate America. Do those words really ring true? Is it really a family when you've got ninety thousand employees? Maybe. Maybe if you're part of a very tight knit and everyone's marching to the beat of the same drummer? Maybe. But I will say that that what made so much of the *Harpo Eco-System work and thrive is that foundationally there were so many friendships that were that were compressed that were like, take that coal when you press it so hard that it's a diamond.* So that was the foundation was based on friendship and trust and vulnerability and supporting each other in addition to doing work that you felt was meaningful, right. So, *it was serving a higher purpose.* And that was that was there, I certainly think, at the foundation. One of the reasons we all kind of

killed ourselves we did because we knew it was for the greater good and we were changing lives and all those things that Oprah said. But what we believed because she said it over and over. (L13)

She said we are from the same tribe and found it tribal. I found that people who gravitated there gravitated there. Now you've got your crazy cousins and everybody else, but they gravitated there because they were from the same tribe that we wanted to forward something. It was it was Wauconda. It was a tribe that was happening. (L8)

Based on the interviews from the case study, the researcher developed an abridged description for the term *friendship accelerator*: the actions for forming a foundation of trust, collaboration, and vulnerability at an expeditious pace to produce business results in a fast-paced ecosystem.

Cultural perspicacity

It did, I think it did, because like we talked about earlier, it was so diverse and so everyone, you know, had different backgrounds and different thought processes, but it was important to respect that so that we could be a cohesive unit and work well together and make beautiful television. I think so. I think the good thing was that we were diverse, gay, straight, black, white, Jewish, Christian, whatever. And it allowed us the opportunity, a just a different platform to know people better and to respect the differences and appreciate the differences and celebrate the differences that we had. But, you know, to learn from them and, you know, some things, you know, we incorporate into our own lives now. You know what I mean is like my Jewish friends having Passover, I'm like, you want me to join you? I mean, you can come to Kwanzaa, you know, so things like that, you know, it's like and you and you build relationships with these people and they're more family than anything because, you know, you're in this environment so many hours out of the day more than your own family. So, I had to learn how to get along. You had to learn how to thrive together because of your diversities, not in spite of them. (L2)

Based on the interviews from the case study, the researcher developed an abridged description for the term *cultural perspicacity*: having the ability, plus in-depth insight

and knowledge of many cultures and their nuances, plus complexities that drive their behaviors and perceptions; this includes a deep understanding of the interplay between cultural dynamics, orientations, ethnicity, language, faith, respect, creed, cuisine, social customs, and business comportment.

Leadership (empathy plus empowerment)

But I think the empathy helps us to develop more deep relationships with those in need to whom we work alongside, I think we need to better understand others by gaining a greater insight of their feelings, how it impacts their perception, and also about being willing and able to appreciate what other people are going through. I think by doing that. I think that. If it can be an avenue to help the other person succeed that way by building a sense of trust and thereby strengthening relationships, I think that. Being more open and spending more time by leaning in and learning about the needs of others, which goes to that servant leadership, can set a tone and approach taken by others so that to help employees achieve their goals. And that does not go unnoticed when you can be more authentic and transparent and fallible. I mean, I think like it's the Brene Brown, you know, I dare to lead it's about being vulnerable in the workplace, which is controversial just as servant leadership is. But I think that you have a richer and a deeper team of people because there's a level of trust that you don't have to pretend to be somebody that you're not. You're all learning and growing at the same time. I think additional reasons why I think empathy is so important is that I think it helps us to gain a better understanding of what the needs of others are. I think you can lead people better when you understand what their needs are. (L10)

Based on the interviews from the case study, the researcher developed an abridged description for the term *leadership (empathy plus empowerment)*: to gain a better appreciation and learning of others; having the notion to walk in someone's shoes; helping others to thrive and achieve their goals and support their lifelong learning.

Intention

Ok, so it's. It goes back to the when, when? Oprah, has she used to have these meetings and she'd say it means sometimes you have the company wide meeting and sometimes you have smaller meetings and she will always talk about her intention and her intention was always wanting to uplift and do something good. OK, so. Never involved money, I mean, for somebody who has so much money, you would have thought she was focused on it, but no, never involved money. I couldn't even tell, you know, it's like, you know, but the thing that we did in these meetings, because she would set the intention, you know, going forward that all these little battles, it's like you always had her intention in the back of your mind, like, this is what she wants. (L4)

Yeah, well, yeah, Harpo's supported my personal development on every level and in every way. I mean, you know, as I as I was saying, it's like every day we were learning, we were growing, we were challenged. We emotionally, spiritually on every single level and whether it be. I did a show how to raise a thinking child, I did shows about how to communicate with your children, how to handle divorce, Gary Zuckoff Seat of the Soul, which is all about your soul and spirituality and intention and in in the world. And all of that personal development was really crucial to doing the Oprah show and to doing the job that we did every day. I think if we weren't growing, and we weren't learning and we weren't. Being vulnerable and putting ourselves out there and taking risks every day and facing our fears every single day, we could not have produced that show. So, everything at the level that we did. And so we were, you know, our personal development was really wrapped up in conjunction with our job. And I think that that was a huge gift that that we all got working at Harpo Studios. So, it was like. When I first started there, Oprah taught a class on the Gary Zuckoff book Seat of the Soul, and she taught it like once a week in the in the screening room. And we would study the book and we would study intention and we would study all the different chapters that were in the Seat of the Soul Gary Zukunft book. And that was also a gift because that helped us set our intention every single day for every show that we did and for our season. (L14)

Based on the interviews from the case study, the researcher developed an abridged description for the term *intention*: having a purpose that is meaningful and being able

to inspire others to live in their purpose; operating and collaborating from a strong foundation of shared purpose.

Generativity

Generativity can be thought of as strips of experiences that bring a feeling of energy and aliveness to people and also have the potential to produce more enduring, expansive, and transformative consequences with regards to the development of ideas (Clegg, 2011). The researcher documented words and expressions that stood out from the transcriptions. An example is the term *friendship accelerator*. The term was an organic outcome of the social conversation that took place between the researcher and a participant.

Summary

The data presented in this chapter provided an in-depth analysis to better understand the work culture phenomena at Harpo, and based on the findings, it was determined that all 12 leaders were able to carry on Harpo's attributes, culture, and values of a strong servant leadership organization to their next work experience. In addition, based on the findings of the coding process, the following theory emerged: A powerful servant leader with a media platform who intentionally creates an inspirational culture impacts other organizational leaders to inculcate this and in turn cascade these out by the programs they create. This can create *tikkun olam*, which is defined as global goodness (Jacobs, 2007). In addition to the emergence of a new theory, a new model was created to graphically depict the elements of an inspirational culture. The researcher focused on the lived experience of the 12 participants and

discovered the rich and inspirational culture at Harpo left a lasting impression. A great revelation for the researcher/practitioner was that inspirational culture can have legs out in the world.

The discussion in Chapter 5 will provide a comparison of the findings in Chapter 4 to the literature review in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings from Chapter 4 and discuss the experiences of 12 Harpo leaders that provided candid and vivid descriptions of the work culture they experienced while working at Harpo. Utilizing grounded theory techniques, the researcher conducted a case study analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of the Harpo work culture and to determine if the 12 leaders were able to carry forward the values and attributes that existed at Harpo. Despite the fact that Harpo Studios had sunsetted over a decade before the interviews were conducted, what emerged was that the 12 leaders had a visceral recall of their past work experience, and they expressed how they are carrying forward the values and attributes that were fostered in the Harpo culture. During the coding process, 13 dimensions originally emerged. Applying the Gioia (Gioia et al., 2012) method of analysis resulted in the four dimensions described below. The four, equally weighted dimensions are tribal community, intention, leadership (empathy plus empowerment), and cultural perspicacity. They are clearly defined in Chapter 4, as well as the process in which they emerged. These four dimensions form the basis of an inspirational leadership culture model (Figure 18) developed by the author. The hope is that the graphic depiction will make a significant contribution to an understanding of how servant leadership can cascade from the original lived experience to future organizations and experiences, especially in the context of powerful media situations.

The researcher closely examined connections between the emergent themes and the literature review in Chapter 2. While there is a vast body of academic research on servant leadership in several industries, there is a large gap in the literature relating to servant leadership in media and entertainment. Furthermore, there is also a gap in understanding the transferability of inspirational culture, to which this study hopes to add voice.

The purpose of this study was to explore how the leaders, drawn from an array of levels at Harpo, were able to carry the strong company values and attributes of the founder forward into their new roles, post-Harpo. It is interesting to note that Oprah Winfrey often enjoined her audiences to “pay it forward,” and this study demonstrates that she actually did this herself—in other words, she walked the talk. That is exactly what servant leaders do. Finally, this researcher attempted to move beyond the data to share insights from her own personal lived experience with the inspirational culture in her role as Harpo’s Vice President of Human Resources for over seven years.

Correlations Between Findings and Literature

Servant leadership was initially conceptualized as the leader’s intention and commitment to serve followers above all other missions and responsibilities (Greenleaf, 1970, 2015). Spears (2010) later refined Greenleaf’s work, defining the following 10 characteristics of servant leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. For the purpose of this study, there were

five servant leadership factors commonly found in most of the literature that aligned with the participants' descriptions of Harpo's leadership, including humility and selflessness, inspiring and influencing others, modeling integrity and authenticity, organizational stewardship wisdom, as well as serving, developing, consulting, and involving others (Wong & Davey, 2007).

Leadership is about the way people behave in organizations, and effective servant leaders who also demonstrate high emotional quotients are those who understand human behavior. Effective leaders are those who can calm the anxieties of their followers, arouse their hopes, increase their aspirations, energize them, and inspire them to positive action (Feser & Kets de Vries, 2016). Leadership in the servant leadership context is really not about the leaders themselves. It is about a collective practice among people who work together, accomplishing the choices we make together in our mutual work (Raelin, 2015). While there is a plethora of academic research regarding different forms of leadership, there is a lack of research that examines how the positive traits, attributes, and characteristics of servant leaders are carried forward beyond the organizations they lead, having been inspired by those they influenced as they move on to new roles beyond the original organization. Due to the gap in this area, there is a growing need to better understand how inspirational cultures are fostered and how the positive learning experience has a ripple effect beyond the specific boundaries of the originating organization.

Inspiration is a motivational state that raises an individual's intentions regarding something of high intrinsic value (e.g., a vision of an ideal self) and motivates the individual to engage in efforts to achieve these intentions (Figgins et al., 2019).

Previous studies regarding servant leadership have been conducted on the influence and impact of servant leaders in corporations, education, law enforcement, and nursing: However, there is a lack of research regarding servant leadership in media and entertainment. This is an important issue to address, as in twenty-first century global culture, the media have a great impact on creating meaning, particularly through shaping values and behavioral norms by means of their widespread impact. This is becoming more and more evident as the twenty-first century progresses, as Millennials and Gen Z cadres receive so much of their critical information through digital and social media (M. Stocker, personal communication, August 24, 2020). It is commonly understood in the United States that Oprah Winfrey is one of the most influential media individuals of all time, and she has impacted millions of people through her media platforms of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, her radio network, movie productions, and now through her OWN cable network (a joint venture between Oprah Winfrey and Discovery Communications), all of which serve to disseminate the founder's vision and values. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* shaped opinions about the world, attitudes toward media consumption, and people's views of themselves (Tsfati & Cohen, 2013). Oprah's message also resonated because she distributed it through a dizzying number of platforms, including her talk show, her magazine, her book club,

and her OWN network. These many Oprah outlets continue to influence culture in countless ways (Sohn, 2011).

The servant leadership model posits that by first facilitating the development and well-being of followers, long-term organizational goals will be achieved (Hoch et al., 2018). Focusing on results alone is not enough. Demographic, cultural, and technological changes have led to a workforce that demands a set of operating principles characterized by core values such as transparency, trust, inclusion, and real-time collaboration to help guide behaviors and decision-making in companies (Ready & Mulally, 2017). Moreover, in an increasing number of organizations, the role of the leader is expanding from the traditional top-down management style to structures which foster being open and vulnerable and where the leaders also build strong communities and purpose-driven cultures. Even though organizations give lip service to caring about people and being values-driven in many cases, in reality they are Theory X, top-down hierarchies driven by the profit motive and bottom line rather than so-called “doing good” values. In addition, authenticity itself serves as a power source for leaders, increasing their social and personal impact (Cha et al., 2019).

Research Question

The research question driving this inquiry was as follows: How did the senior leaders at Harpo, inspired by a powerful servant leader, carry forward the attributes, culture, and values of strong servant leadership qualities manifested into who and what they do now? The research question asked about the impact of Harpo’s culture, attributes,

and values on its leaders beyond their actual experience inside the organization. Narrative inquiry was the modality chosen for this research project. Through the narrative inquiry process, 12 participants were able to describe in-depth examples of their work experiences by recounting memories of their experience at Harpo. What emerged in every interview, regardless of the question asked, was the story of how they were able to carry Harpo's values, attributes, and servant leadership qualities forward to new roles after Harpo. There was a strong correlation between Wong and Davey's (2007) five factors of servant leadership and the 12 dimensions that emerged from the researcher's coding process. Thus, the findings answered the research question of how the 12 participants were able to carry forward the values, attributes, and the culture that Harpo fostered.

Culture Matters

Fortune magazine's edition highlighting the 100 best companies in the West featured culture as one of the determinants of success. Organizational culture is described as a system of shared meaning held by members that distinguishes the organization from other organizations, and culture is something with joint meaning (Koesmono, 2014). The DNA of Harpo's culture was evident throughout the organization. Personal and professional support were fostered within the organization to those who worked there, including the researcher. It was described in detail by the interview participants as a community of excellence, friendships, and authenticity. Of course, no company is perfect, and while great, Harpo was not a perfect company. There were many challenging moments and corporate growing pains. However, everyone in the

organization knew there was a greater purpose that they were responsible for fulfilling. One participant captured the essence of this sentiment in the following excerpt from the interview:

There was some dysfunction, I wouldn't trade it for anything I really wanted the hardest times that broke me down are the ones that grounded me and taught me to look at the situation. And, you know, this is Oprah. How did I invite this into my life? More importantly, like, what is the experience teaching me now? What is it trying to teach me? What Oprah would say? What is the universe trying to teach me? (L11)

This leader provided insight into her process of self-reflection for her personal growth from challenging moments. Knowledge of self has been considered to be at the very heart of human behavior and management. Self-awareness at work is the practice of reflecting on experiences and precisely assessing one's own behaviors and skills as they are manifested in the workplace (Showry, 2014). Moreover, there was a broader commitment, which extended from the individual experience to the broader company culture that focused on delivering purposeful work. This relates to the fact that the organizational culture was mission driven and purposeful, thus creating an atmosphere of trust and camaraderie (Setyaningrum, 2017).

The Gift That Keeps Giving—What Emerged from the Study

The power of storytelling was evident during the narrative inquiry process. These told stories and narratives about those stories are ways we create meaning in our lives as well as ways we enlist each other's help in building our lives (Clandinin, 2006). The participants chronicled their experiences during their time at Harpo with a series of

stories, reflections, descriptions of the company culture, and “aha” learning moments. The stories we bring as researchers are also set within the institutions within which we work, the social narratives of which we are a part, and the landscape on which we live (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

New Insights as a Result of the Study

While the research supported the relationship between servant leadership and Harpo’s leadership characteristics, other aspects of this research presented new insights. Based on the results from the coding process, Harpo’s culture and leaders were described as inspirational, and new terminologies also emerged. There were two interesting areas that merit additional research and exploration: friendship accelerators and cultural perspicacity. The first dimension was a form of bonding key to building trust and forming relationships, which were critical factors for fostering a healthy work culture. This form of bonding influenced the ability to execute expeditiously on work deliverables while building trust. Examples of this included professional and personal celebrations, development and learning together, and social interactions. The second dimension, cultural perspicacity, is how the environment supported mutual respect and valued inclusivity so that individuals could be their authentic selves in the workplace.

Narrative inquiry is an old practice that may feel new for a variety of reasons. It is commonplace to note that human beings both live and tell stories about their living. These lived and told stories and discussion about those stories are ways we create

meaning in our lives as well as ways we enlist each other's help in building our lives and communities (Clandinin, 2006). The participants in this case study provided richness and candor in their stories, which created vivid pictures of their experiences. As the researcher examined academic contributions on this topic, there is an apparent gap in media and entertainment companies. This is an opportunity for future researchers to continue to explore storytelling in an industry that shapes and curates stories.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as a result of the insights that emerged from this study, the researcher was able to postulate a new model that falls into the bucket of servant leadership in a new way. The model captures the behaviors of an inspirational culture led by a powerful servant leader. The second contribution of this study is the introduction of the concepts of friendship accelerators and cultural perspicacity within the servant leadership area. These also have potential as rich areas for future inquiry.

In addition, the researcher explored an interesting ancillary question, which has merit but was not the main focus of this case study. The question asked if the term servant leadership is relevant or if it needs a different name. It further inquired how the term servant leadership should be refreshed to appeal to a contemporary corporate audience. While the participants did not offer a definitive answer, there appears to be an opportunity to further explore a more relevant term.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

No matter who you are, no matter what your culture is, it is absolutely possible to look out and extend yourself in such a way, that you can connect to other people and find that we are more alike than we are different.

—Oprah Winfrey (as cited in Shaina411, 2014)

The purpose of this case study was to examine Harpo's culture and evaluate if the 12 participants were able to carry on the learnings from Harpo into their current roles.

There is a lack of academic research relating to the work culture of media and entertainment companies and little research available on Harpo's company culture until this time. The outcome of this study showed that 12 leader participants were able to carry the values and attributes learned from Harpo to other organizations after their Harpo experience.

Limitations

While there were limitations regarding this case study, it did not impede the rigor of the research process. The results of this research confirmed that Harpo employees were able to carry on values and traits to other organizations and cultivate an inspirational culture moving forward. Although the participants in this study represented a cross-section of the organization, a small group was selected. This population was not selected to match the workforce demographics over the working life of the Harpo organization, which in some respects can limit generalizability. There is room for additional study to explore this great and unusual organization led

by a great and rare servant leader to replicate and extend the scope of the study with a larger and more representative sample cross-section of subjects.

While there is a great deal of literature related to servant leadership in other arenas, such as hospitality, education, religion, healthcare, and law enforcement, another limitation of this study is the lack of academic literature regarding servant leadership in media and entertainment. This dissertation is put forth in the hopes that it will be the catalyst for researchers to explore servant leadership in media and entertainment and to deepen our understanding of its influence on their corporate community, targeted audience/viewers.

Finally, there continues to be ambivalence regarding the term *servant* as it is used in the term *servant leadership*. As noted in this study, the 12 participants struggled with the relevancy of the latter term as an acceptable idiom in today's workplace. This is an interesting question: How widespread is this term that has been around for some time? What can replace it? Has the word *servant* gone out of style in our egalitarian global world? Is stewardship a better term? Is service leadership a better term? Is inspirational leadership a better concept? Answering these questions creates an opportunity for researchers to explore the relevancy of the term *servant leadership* and its contextual meaning in contemporary organizations.

Implications and Recommendations

Over my career, I have observed how organizations struggle with leading and motivating a multigenerational workforce. Leaders are encouraged to lead differently, however, “differently” is not always clearly defined. Leaders continue to search for the right formula for building company culture. The implication of this study could lay the foundation for organizations to mold leaders that cultivate an inspirational culture where employees are productive corporate citizens and able to contribute to a greater cause that is uplifting to other ecosystems while also contributing to the company’s bottom line. Subsequently, I developed a rubric (see Appendix C) that was not part of this study. However, for future research it would be interesting to test the influence of operationalizing the inspirational culture framework.

A personal note

As I reflect on my time at Harpo, I recognize that it was indeed a company where people could immerse themselves in a company culture that was inspiring and uplifting. There were many inspirational moments where I was able to grow professionally and personally. Every day was challenging and rewarding, working side-by-side with passionate professionals who shared a common interest to “be the change that we wanted to see in the world.” The Harpo community was diverse, and everyone was able to contribute in a meaningful way to achieve the company goals. Harpo leaders fostered collaboration across all groups, and there was consistency in the high caliber of execution. Oprah set the tone and intentions for Harpo and her leaders embodied excellence, commitment, passion, respect, and yes—cultural

perspicacity. I am honored to have been part of the Harpo community, a journey of a lifetime.

What I know for sure

Many individuals expressed Harpo was a great place to work. However, now there is an academic explanation, empirical study, and a new theory and a model to explain this phenomenon.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Informed Consent to Participate in a Case Study

An Empirical Case Study

Servant Leadership by a Different Name

Tenia Davis
Ph.D. Student



Introduction

There is a growing need for servant leadership in the workplace. More than ever, companies are challenged with finding leaders who are able to connect with employees, drive performance, and influence productivity outcomes. Most importantly, businesses want leaders who have a positive impact on the overall company culture. Simply put, organizations are yearning for leaders who earn and merit their trust. We are currently living in a time of great uncertainty, but this also offers an opportunity for a new kind of servant leadership to emerge.

Throughout my career, I worked for great organizations. However, none compared to Harpo and the exceptional leaders that fostered a company culture of collaboration, innovation, and personal/professional growth. In an ideal world, good leaders would show an equal measure of compassion, empathy, and inspiration. So, what can we do to produce a cadre of such trusted leaders who display this multitude of traits? This study intends to offer insight into a revised model of competencies for future servant leaders. I will also conduct several interviews with ten leaders from the Harpo organization to gain an in-depth understanding of the work culture phenomenon that employees at Harpo fostered.

Research Questions

How do servant leaders carry forward the attributes, culture, and values of a strong servant leadership organization? How are the qualities manifested in what the leaders do now?

Should we modify the ‘Servant Leadership’ concept and term based on the stigma attached to the word “Servant”? Does the historic title currently appeal to the contemporary corporate audience?

For additional information on Servant Leadership reference the following literature:
Robert K. Greenleaf chrome
extension://cefhlghdlbobdpihfdadojifnpgbjj/http://www.ediguys.net/Robert_K_Greenleaf_The_Servant_as_Leader.pdf

Larry Spears chrome-
extension://cefhlghdlbobdpihfdadojifnpgbjj/https://www.regent.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/spears_practice.pdf

Instructions

The interview will take place over Zoom, and it will take approximately one and a half to two hours to complete the 16 questions. The purpose is to learn from your perceptions and experiences while working at Harpo. There is no right, wrong, desirable, or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and expressing how you really feel.

Recorder Instructions

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If at any time you do not want to continue with the interview, you may decline. Your time and involvement is profoundly appreciated. The entire interview will take approximately one and a half to two hours. To maintain the essence of your words for the research, I will record the information. At any time, you may request to see or hear the information I collect. You will receive an email reminder two days prior to our scheduled zoom interview.

The interview will be recorded, and the interviewer will take notes. This is done for data analysis. The dialogue will be transcribed by the interviewer and kept confidential in a password-protected computer. All individual identification will be removed from the hard copy of the transcript. Participant identity and confidentiality will be concealed using coding procedures. For legal purposes, data will be transcribed on to a thumb drive and transmitted to a Benedictine University faculty member for secure and ultimate disposal 60 days after the dissertation publication. Dr. Gus Gustafson is the Benedictine University faculty member who will secure and ultimately dispose of the information. His information is at the end of this document. The researcher will also maintain a copy of the data on a password-protected computer.

Excerpts from the interviews may be included in the final dissertation report or other later publications. However, under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics appear in these writings, unless agreed upon in writing. If at a subsequent date, biographical data were relevant to a publication, a separate release form would be sent to you.

I would be grateful if you would sign this form on the line provided below to show that you have read and agree with the contents. Please return it by email to me at tenia_davis@ben.edu. An electronic signature (via DocuSign) is also acceptable.

Your electronic signature above

(If you have problems with the electronic signature, please call me at 312.493.6997)

This study is being conducted in part to fulfill requirements for my Values-Driven Leadership Ph.D. degree in the Values-Driven Leadership program at the Daniel L. Goodwin College of Business at Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois.

The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Benedictine University. The Chair of Benedictine University's Institutional Review Board is Dr. Alandra Devall. She can be reached at (630) 829 – 6295, and her email address is

adevall@ben.edu. This study has been submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Benedictine University and has been fully approved by the chairperson of this dissertation, Dr. Gus Gustafson. He can be reached at 515.577.0198 or via email at jgustafson@ben.edu for further questions or concerns about the project/research.

Sincerely,
Tenia Davis
Ph.D. Student - Benedictine University

Leaders—Interview Questions

1. What originally attracted you to work at Harpo?
 2. What was your occupation before Harpo?
 3. How did Harpo support your personal development?
 4. How would you describe the Leadership at Harpo? Please think of a Harpo leader that made an impact in your life. Describe their characteristics. Please provide examples.
 5. What leadership lessons did you learn during your employment at Harpo (professional or personal)? And what lessons learned did you carry into your new job or hobby after Harpo?
 6. Dr. Maya Angelo stated - “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Describe the impact that Harpo’s culture had on you?
 7. What does the word culture mean to you? What are five words that describe Harpo’s organizational culture?
 8. Describe the different cultural aspects at Harpo (i.e., ethnicity, gender, cultural background, and age). What if any aspects were you able to carry into your new organization?
 9. How have you influenced the growth or development of another employee? At Harpo and in your current role.
 10. Do you feel that you were able to be your authentic self at Harpo? Please provide an example.
 11. What was the most inspiring experience at Harpo?
 12. What motivates you as a leader?
 13. Is it important for leaders to display empathy? Why? or Why not?
 14. How do you manage disappointments or setbacks?
 15. What do you think of the term “servant leader?” What words come to mind instead? Is it a relevant term? What is a better term?
- (thank you, one last question. anything that I did not ask about that is important for me to know as I embark on this research journey)

Appendix B: Excerpts from the Interview Audio_only.m4a(L1)

(xx indicates the names were removed)

Tenia: [00:05:13.91] Wow. Would you say in terms of your leadership philosophy, it was already shaped before those encounters, or did those encounters help shape your philosophies around leadership?

01: [00:05:28.87] You know, Tenia, [00:05:30.00] I would say they all shape you as I evolved, I tried to learn something from everyone that I was with. I don't think my fundamental. Character, my honesty, my integrity changed. I think those were sort of given this, but if you're talking about shaping yourself to both meet the person you're working for [00:06:00.00] and the people that are reporting to you, I think that's an evolution. For example, I think you might agree I'm more of a conversational leader. I'm not a motivational speaker. I'm not a take that Hill kind of person like xx was or motivating you through great words and phenomenal performance on the part of xx. What I tried to do was sort of connect the dots to success between the various department heads. I [00:06:30.00] talk through my rationale. I tried to reason with people. I sought their feedback. Ultimately, I was hoping everybody would be headed in the same direction. And I tried to do that more through individual conversations that we'd have, like when you and I would sit down or xx and I or xx was an early bird. So I saw him earlier in the morning. I think that's one way I shaped my style. And then I really can read [00:07:00.00] incessantly about leadership through readings like Herman Miller, CEO on this Max the week. This leadership is an art, and I will never, ever forget and I made some notes here, he said, The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. And in between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor. That [00:07:30.00] sums up the progress of an artful leader. And he was so in sync with my own personality, you know, versus, you know, some of these harder-edged, driven guys to run General Electric, like Welch or even xx.

01: [00:12:31.47] I [00:12:30.00] would say it was, again, barring some things that I read in Deupree's book. I think leaders owe their team a certain maturity, and as I said before, Harpo was fast-paced and I thought my role was to provide balance, maturity, thoughtfulness [00:13:00.00]

executive producer, smart as a whip, driven to the point where people would come in to see me when I was the program director at WLS TV and people were crying because she just beat them up so much and initially I'll defend her.

Tenia: [00:22:09.32] Fair enough. Dr. Maya Angelou stated, I've learned that people will forget what you said. People will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. What are your most unforgettable moments at Harpo?

Tenia: [00:22:26.81] How did Harpo make you feel?

01: [00:22:30.57] But honestly, I had I had a number of really unforgettable moments, and they may seem as unusual. The first one was and I'm not sure if you were there. So, tell me tell me if you were. I think this was when xx left. xx was the new EP. [00:23:00.00] xx held a party at Joe's Steak and Crab House on Ohio. We got there then? (no, I was after) and during that event where she talks to the company, everybody's there. So, several hundred people are at Joe's Crab House. We took it to the whole place over. She got up and gave me a remarkable tribute. And it was all based on trust [00:23:30.00] she had in me and I and her. And instantly there was the applause and appreciation I got at that party from the staff that mainly from xx, that was just palpable, was rewarding. It felt wonderful. And it was a it really was a acknowledgement of the relationship [00:24:00.00] that I had with xx that was so rewarding.

01: [00:24:05.19] And second, it was near it was probably the last you had to be there for this or if you were there that day. But xx held another event where she announced that I had come to her to retire, and she pointed to me to thank me. And the entire staff gave me a standing ovation for a minute, which just literally took my breath away. I you know, I was stunned [00:24:30.00] and I looked around and, you know, I just thought, OK, there will be some clapping. What have you. But it was it was powerful, and it was an unforgettable moment for me Tenia at Harpo. And it wasn't for a deal I had done, but really for a relationship, I think that I had built with hundreds of Harpoians over the years. So those are really two special moments [00:25:00.00] for me. You know, the successes and the things that we had done on various projects and Harpo Radio and own and doing things with affiliates were in in themselves special. But that relationship with her and that relationship with the staff were quite outstanding.

Appendix C: Inspirational Culture

Inspirational Culture – Leader Evaluation

← Anchors →

Tribal Community	The actions for forming a foundation of trust, collaboration, and vulnerability at an expeditious pace to produce business results in a fast-paced eco-system.	Very strong evidence NOT present	Strong evidence NOT present	Some evidence is present	Strong evidence is present	Very strong evidence is present
	1. Everyone on my team is flourishing.					
	2. I work well across the organization.					
	3. My team can adapt quickly					
	4. I give clear and concise direction					
	5. I am open to new ideas.					
Cultural Pespiscacity	Having the ability + insight (in-depth not surface) and knowledge of many cultures and their nuances + complexities that drive their behaviors and perceptions. This includes a deep understanding of the interplay between cultural dynamics, orientations, ethnicity, language, faith, respect, creed, cuisine, social customs, and business comporment.	Very strong evidence NOT present	Strong evidence NOT present	Some evidence is present	Strong evidence is present	Very strong evidence is present
	1. I am curious and open to learn from cultures that are different from mine.					
	2. I have a deep understanding of cultural nuances that exist in the workplace.					
	3. I offer opportunities for promotions and stretch assignments to diverse members on my team.					
	4. I immerse myself in other cultures, to learn from their experiences.					
	5. To build comradery, I take time for lunch or coffee with diverse employees.					
Leadership (Empathy + Empowerment)	To gain a better appreciation and learning of others. Having the notion to walk in someone's shoes. Help others to thrive and achieve their goals and support their lifelong learning.	Very strong evidence NOT present	Strong evidence NOT present	Some evidence is present	Strong evidence is present	Very strong evidence is present
	1. I create learning opportunities for everyone to grow.					
	2. I always put myself in other's shoes.					
	3. I am supportive when members of the team fail.					
	4. I consistently provide feedback.					
	5. I put the needs of others before my needs.					
Intention	Having a purpose that is meaningful and being able to inspire others to live in their purpose. Operating and collaborating from a strong foundation of shared purpose.	Very strong evidence NOT present	Strong evidence NOT present	Some evidence is present	Strong evidence is present	Very strong evidence is present
	1. am aware of the impact and influence that I have on others.					
	2. I create synergy within my team and drive positive results.					
	3. I inspire those around me.					
	4. I embody the values of the company.					
	5. I genuinely care for others.					

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

This Agreement is made and entered into this 16 day of May, 2021 by and between Tenia Davis (“Discloser”) and Name (“Recipient”).

Discloser and Recipient desire to begin discussions relating to all products and research related to the Discloser’s dissertation, which shall hereinafter be referred to as the “Stated Purpose”.

It may be necessary in the course of such discussions for Discloser to disclose certain confidential, proprietary and non-public information to Recipient. Any and all such information and any other information disclosed by Discloser to Recipient shall hereinafter be referred to as “Confidential Information”.

Discloser is only willing to disclose the Confidential Information upon the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth. Recipient is willing to receive the Confidential Information subject to such terms and conditions.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the above recitals and Discloser disclosing the Confidential Information to Recipient, Recipient hereby agrees as follows:

1. As a condition of and an inducement to Discloser furnishing the Confidential Information to Recipient, Recipient hereby agrees to treat confidentially and maintain in strict confidence (a) all Confidential Information received before and after the date of this Agreement; (b) all analyses, compilations, studies, notes, summaries, books and any and all other records prepared by Discloser or Recipient and/or “**Discloser’s Employees**” (defined as Discloser’s employees, agents, and contractors) which contain or otherwise reflect and/or are generated from the Confidential Information; and (c) any and all material relating to and/or in connection with any of the Confidential Information (any and all of the foregoing including without limitation to the Confidential Information is hereinafter collectively referred to as “Confidential Material”).
2. Recipient acknowledges, recognizes and agrees that (a) any and all of the Confidential Material and the information contained therein is highly confidential; and (b) Recipient will strictly comply with each of the terms and provisions of this Agreement.
3. Recipient and Discloser hereby acknowledge and agree that Discloser is submitting or disclosing to Recipient the Confidential Material for solely the Stated Purpose.

Recipient agrees that the Confidential Material will be used only in connection with the Stated Purpose.

4. Recipient agrees to take all necessary and appropriate efforts to safeguard and not disclose to any party any or all of the Confidential Material except in strict accordance with the terms of this Agreement.

5. Except in strict accordance with the terms of this Agreement, Recipient shall not, to or for the benefit of herself or any other party, whether indirectly or directly, in any manner whatsoever, disclose, use or dispose of any of the Confidential Material except with the prior written consent of Discloser. Discloser's consent may be withheld for any reason, and may be granted upon such terms and conditions as Discloser may establish from time to time.

6. Recipient's obligations hereunder shall not apply to: (i) Confidential Material which at the time of disclosure by Discloser is lawfully in the public domain; (ii) Confidential Material which, after disclosure by Discloser is in the public domain by publication or otherwise, other than by breach of this Agreement; (iii) Confidential Material which Recipient can show by written records was in its possession at the time of disclosure by Discloser and which was not acquired directly or indirectly from Discloser; (iv) Confidential Material which was rightfully received from a third party not in violation of any non-disclosure owed or in favor of Discloser and which was not acquired, directly or indirectly by Discloser; (v) Confidential Material which was developed independently of any disclosure hereunder as shown by written records; or (vi) information which is required to be disclosed by law or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction, provided that Recipient provides timely notice of such requirement to Discloser, so Discloser can file a motion for a protective or otherwise protect its interests in the Confidential Information.

7. This Agreement shall be construed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Illinois. If any action is commenced to enforce the terms of this Agreement, the prevailing party is entitled to recover (in addition to any other relief awarded or granted) its costs and expenses, including without limitation attorney's fees, incurred in any such proceeding.

8. Upon Discloser's request, Recipient will promptly return: (a) any and all Confidential Material; (b) any and all copies and/or reproductions thereof; and (c) any and all notes, extracts, summaries, information, documents and/or reports (whatever the format) related to, in connection with, derived and/or generated from and/or resulting from the Confidential Material, retaining none in any form.

9. This Agreement represents the entire understanding of the parties hereto with respect to the subject matter hereof and may only be amended by a written agreement

signed by the parties hereto. Recipient may not assign any of its obligations hereunder. This Agreement shall inure to the parties hereto and their successors and any permitted assigns. No waiver of any term, condition or default of this Agreement by Discloser shall be construed as a waiver of any other term, condition or default.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the date first written above.

Dissertation Chair / Committee Member Date

Tenia Davis Date

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