Shift Happens: Using Social-Emotional Leadership to

Construct Positive, Sustainable Cultural Change

Louis J. Alloro, M.Ed.

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Advisor: John Yeager, Ph.D., MAPP

ABSTRACT

If a crisis of character is eroding values in our communities, schools, and families, how do we construct a more positive reality for ourselves, and our future? Social-Emotional Leadership is an emergent, socially constructed, positive intervention designed to build character within groups. My hypothesis is that positive social/cultural change is possible but must emerge from within a group and from the ground-up. Social-Emotional Leadership occurs when at least one member of a primary network raises consciousness, urgency, and agency within his own network, which is defined as an established group of people with traditions and histories— a family, small business, school, or even book club. The task is to mobilize the group, leverage other Social-Emotional Leaders (potentially everyone), then find and then use the tools to help the network recognize individual and collective strength inherent at its core.

For my graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania, I am piloting a social experiment in Social-Emotional Leadership with my own family and our family business—to build character strength and reconstruct value systems within an appreciative paradigm. Goals: (1) to create positive social-cultural growth for our network and (2) to develop a replicable model for other networks to consider. This paper will include theoretical underpinnings of the project, initial data collected from both the family case study and interviews from a US independent school, and offer future directions of the project. Ultimately, I envision bringing a large-scale effort in Social-Emotional Leadership to a school district interested in holistic character education.

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION, NEED & INTEREST

<u>Introduction</u>

>We are stardust
>Billion-year-old carbon
>We are golden
>Caught in the devil's bargain
>And we've got to get ourselves
>Back to the garden
>   (Joni Mitchell, 1969)

As dynamic beings, the truth is that we change every second of everyday. Evolution is imminent too, and shaped by our own designs. But think about it: in which direction do we move? Are we growing? Are we learning? Are we moving in "upward spirals" to increased well-being, spiraling downward to worsened states, or just jittering in place with complacency? The downward spiral is a slippery slope that is much easier to gain speed on, while the upward one takes a bit more work but is so much better—and in so many ways. What kind of movement does our environment (cultures, traditions, institutions, society) encourage? The main question at the heart of my research has been, to what extent is "it"—life, the world, reality—*just the way it is,* or to what extent can a group of intentional people be proactive in the creation of a new, perhaps more positive social-cultural realities—by building strength and developing more positively directed traditions, customs, and ways of being that lead us in positive directions?

In this paper, I argue that we need each other to help influence our individual and collective well-being. I suggest that any network of people *can* achieve positive, social-cultural change by engaging in intentional, generative dialogues regarding what is needed, what is wanted and what is valued. I bridge positive psychology, a newer field within the traditional discipline of psychology that looks at what's right with life (how to build strength, as opposed to correcting weakness) with social constructionism, a meta-theory or orientation that shows us our

own agency in the creation of that good life. Taken together, these discourses offer a way of being in this world that could influence the course of our individual and collective evolution. I posit that the strengths-based and future-oriented language emerging from the field of positive psychology could be used as *a* tool in this co-construction of the good life. But what is the call to action to help people find and become their better selves individually? Collectively? Within groups? Between groups?

I propose an emergent, socially constructed, positive intervention called Social-Emotional Leadership. It is a meta-framework which guides the process of inviting others in our primary networks into long, intentional conversations regarding well-being, character, strength and virtue—all of which can be built and have been shown to contribute to increasing life's pleasure, engagement, and meaning (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Haidt, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 1990, 2006). Social-Emotional Leadership is a system in which "coaching" becomes a metaphor for life. It is a way of being in which we begin helping each other set goals that lead to enhanced personal growth and well-being. Becoming our better selves makes the groups we comprise stronger. Therefore, Social-Emotional Leadership can ultimately lead to real and sustainable institutional and even societal flourishing, starting with primary networks within families, schools, and businesses—even book clubs.

I have always wondered how sustainable change really occurs and how positive traits of human personality can be developed. I thought about sustainable change because I wanted to find ways to infuse our schools with pedagogies that foster the development of optimism, resiliency, happiness, bravery, reverence, and more (See Appendix F). These are topics that the field of positive psychology undertakes empirically, and what we know is that these traits can be learned and built. How do we teach children these skills when they go home to networks that can

not support and nourish them? Will character education work when we create a call-to-action that transcends the boundaries of the school and into the community and homes it supports? What would it look like for schools to serve as the gateway for the dissemination of new tools coming from positive psychology, where Social-Emotional Leaders can come to learn the skills and then bring them home to their networks?

For this project, I have been looking at families and schools using traditional and action research. First, I have collected pilot data from students at an independent boarding school in the mid-western section of the US who were identified by faculty as Social-Emotional Leaders. This data is rich with possibility, showing that Social-Emotional Leadership already exists to some extent—that some students do really look out for the well-being of others. Future plans include making Social-Emotional Leadership an official call-to-action within this community, within its preexisting leadership program.

Second, I have taken Social-Emotional Leadership home—and to work. That is, I have engaged my extended family and therefore, our family business, in an intentional effort to build new traditions and customs, which has involved discussions of well-being and strength. Already, shift is happening and it's in the right direction.

Defining the Terms

Social-Emotional Leadership is an emergent, socially constructed positive intervention, designed to build consciousness, urgency, and agency within a primary network with the goal to build character strengths and increase individual and collective well-being so as to lead to institutional flourishing. Social-Emotional Leaders use the strengths-based and future-oriented language emerging from positive psychology to invite generative conversations intended to build character strength from within a group and from the ground up. Social-Emotional Leadership

could eventually lead to institutional and ultimately societal flourishing.

Positive interventions bring focused attention and *consciousness*, or awareness, to the thoughts, feelings, impulses, and actions that we may habitually fail to notice, thereby increasing the range of what we think and do. They broaden our perspectives and make us both more flexible and accurate in our thinking.

A *primary network* is defined as an established group of people, two or more, with traditions and histories— a family, a business, an organization, or even a book club.

Urgency is the sense that now is the time, thus reducing complacency or the "jittering in place" which may prevent the activation of our own individual and collective agency.

Agency is the perceived capacity to use one's pathways to reach desired goals. These goals can be specific, including better physical health or finding a life partner, to more general wants, like increased life satisfaction or having more positive affect in day-to-day life. While these goals can be set individually, it is more likely that as social beings, these outcomes result in agreements we make locally, within the relationships we already find ourselves a part of (Luthans & Jensen, 2002).

Well-being is defined as a positive state of affairs in individuals, relationships, organizations, communities, and the natural environment. It is brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of material and psychological needs and by the behavioral manifestation of material and psychological justice in these five ecological domains (Prilleltensky, 2005). Well-being brings fulfillment in life, which includes a balance of pleasure, meaning, and engagement (Seligman, 2002).

Character is defined as a family of positive, individual differences as represented in distinct *strengths* that people possess to varying degrees in thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Strengths are malleable, measurable, and subject to numerous influences. They are plural.

Considered together, *character strengths* contribute to our *virtue*. Aristotle defined virtue as the

'mean' between the extreme, suggesting an inherent balance to virtuousness (Peterson &

Seligman, 2004).

Flourishing means living within an optimal range of human functioning, one that

connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience (Fredrickson & Losada, 2002).

<u>The Need</u>

> The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we
> fail to notice that we fail to notice there is little we can do to change until we notice how
> failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds. (Goleman, 1985)

With advancements in technology, we live in a world of continuous but partial attention.

This mental blurriness is induced by an overload of multiple and competing discourses which vie

for our limited attention (e.g., Gergen, 1991, 1999; James, 1890). As such, we fail to notice,

perhaps habitually, certain stimuli that might be important for our optimal functioning. Instead,

many have adapted to life as "just the way it is"—beyond our own determination, regulation,

agency, or control. It is in this misperception that the value of positive interventions becomes

fully realized for both individuals and collective groups of people who are interested in finding

their better selves. I posit that positive social interventions are tools which bring focused

attention and consciousness to the thoughts, feelings, impulses, appetites, and actions that we

may habitually "fail to notice," thereby increasing the range of what we think and do, perhaps

even beyond what we even think is possible.

With selective attention to what is negative, we often fail to recognize what is good about

life or good within the institutions we comprise (Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Baumeister,

Finkenauer, and Vohs, 2001). This negativity bias breeds complacency. However, living with

increased perspective and consciousness about what is good unleashes energy to create the lives and the relationships that we most deeply desire (Cooperrider, 2001; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gergen, 1999).

If we continue to be conscious of our ever-dynamic selves (in which shift is inherent), we recognize the collective power we have to shape the course of our social evolution in whichever direction we choose. This is an invitation to social construction—to transform social life and build new, perhaps more positive futures together. If we look at positive interventions as social constructions, we realize that they can include myriad possibilities—formal and informal, tested or not (Organic Uppers, 2008; Seligman, Steen, et al., 2005). In this sense, positive social interventions are what we need them to be, constructed from within groups and between people through the agency and creativity of those involved, beginning with the positive questions we ask and the invitations we offer to co-construct a better future (Gergen, 1999; Cooperrider, 2008).

The Hypocrisy

Seligman (2007) suggests an "inflection point" in human evolution. Peterson & Seligman (2004) claim that a crisis of character exists "on many fronts, from the playground to the classroom to the sports arena to the Hollywood screen to business corporations to politics" (p. 5). It is not *just* politicians or celebrities who live hypocritical lives—they are simply in the spotlights we shine. The truth is we all fall prey to this crisis in different ways and at different times. It affects you and me both, individually and collectively and its toxicity pervades our lives in multidimensional ways. This includes all of the organizations and institutions to which we belong—our communities, schools, and *families*. It is really a shame.

However, it is a shame that we have created and can therefore recreate as we see it

necessary—if we see it necessary. A recent example of this hypocrisy comes from New York

State's ex-Governor Eliot Spitzer who resigned this year amid great scandal. He is a glaring

example of the hypocrisy with which we live. This man, who incarcerated many people in New

York for illegal prostitution, then participated in it himself as if invincible from any ramification.

His story is not unlike Martha Stewarts's saga not long ago for insider trading—just because

"everyone else is doing it" still did not make it right.

The Spitzer and Stewart situations make one wonder how we can prevent downward

spirals for ourselves and for the ones we love. An article in a magazine called *Best Life* coined

the term "The Spitzer Syndrome" for those who think they are separate from the rest of us—

when their ethical or moral compasses lose direction. In the article, King (2008) suggests that we

can avoid a similar fate to Spitzer's by surrounding ourselves with:

> Unvarnished, even brutal, honesty and counsel. You need a colleague or two who won't
> be afraid to tell you when your behavior is wrong or when your decision making is
> suspect. Often, these people are old friends or mentors who care about your personal life.
> Such people will keep you grounded and honest with yourself. (2008, p. 32)

These people to whom King refers are our Social-Emotional Leaders.

<u>The Call to Action</u>

How can we build systems of support, so as to ensure the flourishing of our networks?

Taking King's (2008) suggestion about how we can avoid the Spitzer syndrome, I propose we

can start with a more positive, preventative, and proactive approach to the task as we attempt to

avoid fates like Spitzer's. Institutional adaptations of Social-Emotional Leadership would

provide a call to action in which we help each other find our better selves. By helping each other

see things we may habitually fail to notice, we increase the accuracy and flexibility of our

thinking and our subsequent behavior in the world, becoming our better and most virtuous

selves. Social-Emotional Leaders contribute to our well-being by helping us make deposits into our own psychological bank accounts, broadening our perspectives and creating the space for new and infinite possibilities to emerge.

Social-Emotional Leadership is necessary because hypocrisy is everywhere; perhaps it has become inherent in our culture of "me-me" individualism which puts us on slippery slopes—downward spirals—who we are and who we choose to be or act in the world are seemingly at odds. Gergen (1991) suggests that we are a "saturated self" and experience "multiphrenia"—competing discourses, which vie for our limited attention, often leading to paralysis, stagnancy and a loss of hope or agency in creation of new possibilities for ourselves and for our future. Seligman (2008) notes an "I/We" imbalance shaping our current reality. Instead, if we are called to act within this framework, designed to end the paralysis and increase the agency, Social-Emotional Leadership could possibly shift us toward Aristotle's "mean"—"the good life"—flourishing—"back to the garden," where there is a more virtuous and peaceful world.

Wright (2000), Valliant (2007), Haidt (2006) Seligman & Peterson (2004) all argue that the capacity for virtue already exists within us; we just need to tap into it by shifting our perspective in recognizing our own individual and collective strengths, which leads to agency and energy. By beginning from a place of what's already good (the strengths) within our groups, we have leverage to push further out and in the relatively right direction towards finding our better selves. This instrumental and pragmatic possibility is important not just for Spitzer and Stewart, but all for all of us to consider, especially within our families, schools, and communities. This way, we will be able to create our own positive, sustainable, social-cultural evolution. The time is now.

SECTION II: LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Introduction</u>

In this section, I explain how Social-Emotional Leadership is a socially constructed intervention that uses the tools and language emerging from positive psychology to help us create our own positive, social cultural change. I show that positive interventions help us question our habitual ways of thinking and behaving (the emotional component)—a task requiring we help each other see things we may otherwise fail to notice (the social factor). I then explain how leadership of this kind is not a hierarchy, but instead a holocracy—involving the whole network in an intentional system of integrity and accountability that this model provides.

Further, I present some of the related positive psychology and social construction literature respectively, and then show how the field of Appreciative Inquiry forms a natural bridge between them. Ultimately, I show how Social-Emotional Leadership is a *socially constructed* call-to-action inviting us to discover our own individual and collective better selves , which uses an appreciative approach and the tools emerging from positive psychology.

<u>Social-Emotional Leadership: A Socially Constructed Positive Intervention</u>

Come to the edge.
-We might fall.
Come to the edge.
-It's too high!
Come to the edge.
And they came,
And we pushed,
And they flew.
 (Christopher Logue)

What is Social-Emotional Leadership?

Social-Emotional Leadership is an emergent, socially constructed positive intervention designed to build consciousness, urgency, and agency within a primary network (see Section I,

Defining the Terms). Grounded in social construction theory, Social-Emotional Leadership is an invitation for people to begin long dialogues intended to help individuals within the network find and then become their better selves. These conversations encourage the questioning of assumptions, habits, traditions, and even language. They begin to invite alternative frameworks, paradigms, and systems generated by and for the people within the network. These interactions are "designed to bring out the best in people so that they can imagine a preferred future together that is more hopeful, boundless, and inherently good" (Cooperrider, et al., 2008).

Essentially, Social-Emotional Leadership is an invitation to shake the foundations of complacency and to use creative licenses to transform and grow in positive directions—"a moving beyond alienated coexistence to a more promising way of going on together" (Gergen, 1999, p. 148). As a meta-methodology, Social-Emotional Leadership can be used as a framework to invite, tolerate, and require *all* voices to the table. By merely inviting others into intentional and appreciative dialogues about what it is the network (two or more individuals committed to betterment) *needs*, what it is the network *wants*, and what it is the network *values*, character strengths can be built and meaning can be constructed from within the network itself. Social-Emotional Leadership potentially leads to individual and institutional flourishing by providing a system of accountability that diminishes hypocrisies and increases levels of authenticity and integrity—the very essence of a positive paradigm.

Recall the hypothesis that positive social/cultural change is possible but must emerge from within a primary network and from the ground-up. In a sense, all networks are "families" of some sort, which is defined as "a group of people affiliated by consanguinity, affinity, and co-residence" (Wikipedia, 2008). As a term loosely defined in the new millennium, a family in contemporary society does not always co-reside, but certainly exudes some aspects of "intimacy,

love and trust where individuals may escape the competition of dehumanizing forces in modern society from the rough and tumble industrialized world" (Zinn & Eitzen, 1987). These relationships are certainly not limited to nuclear families, but can be found in a multitude of institutional arrangements: boardrooms, classrooms, locker rooms, et cetera. For the purposes of this project, a "network" will suffice to include myriad arrangements.

Social-Emotional Leaders have the full well-being of the group in mind. While they do not necessarily know what will lead to the network's flourishing, they take the risks to begin asking the questions which might lead in that direction. Cooperrider (2008) suggests that positive inquiry (about what is already good) creates awe, which in turn moves us forward. He says that with the change process begins with the first questions posed. To answer these affirming questions, we first need an appreciative language to do so. It is argued that the strengths-based and future-oriented language emerging from the field of positive psychology can be used as to sustain these generative conversations (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Why "Social"?

Haidt, Sederka, & Kesebir (2007) suggest that we consider a *hive* hypothesis for human evolution. That is, humans, like bees and termites are hive creatures. They argue that while we are all individual selves, the social factor adds to the greatness and complexity of our existence. In losing our individual selves occasionally to a larger social organism, we may reach higher levels of human flourishing. Working together to build hive is an important part of our evolutionary success as it has great effect on our individual and collective well-being. Haidt et al. (2007) argue that as "ultrasocial hive creatures," it is important we work together to influence our modular, cognitive processes, as this will influence our group evolution (Dawkins, 1976).

To be successful at this process of group evolution necessitates that we break out of the rampant individualism that has swept Western culture and begin to find ways to build trust and connection. Gergen surmises (1999):

> If we hold the individual to be the fundamental atom of society, so do we emphasize separation as opposed to community. We evaluate, judge, measure, heal, and incarcerate separate individuals. As a result, we give little attention to relations—to the coordinated efforts required, for example, to generate knowledge, reason, and morality. (p. 18)

These "coordinated efforts" are realized through generative dialogue, which is the key organizing metaphor of social constructionism and Social-Emotional Leadership. It is a gracious invitation to dance, to deliberate, and to think reflexively and collectively on our condition, traditions, institutions, relationships, and systems—all of which have been socially constructed to be exactly as they are.

Why "Emotional"?

Emotion is derived from the French *émotion*, from *émouvoir*, "excite" based on Latin *emovere*, from *e-* (variant of *ex-*) 'out' and *movere* "move." Interestingly, "motivation" is also derived from *movere.* Social-Emotional Leaders motivate those in their networks to notice how their emotions motivate their actions, which in turn, motivates *our* emotions and thus, *our* actions. Whereas we often base our actions on how we feel, Social-Emotional Leaders help others base their actions on how they *want to feel*. But consider how difficult a task this is, which suggests we may need each other to help us monitor the internal radio stations playing in our heads—to know, what our belief systems are, what our values are, and how both affect our thought processes, actions, and well-being—perhaps in ways we may not even be aware of.

Thus, the interventions Social-Emotional Leaders bring to the network must be designed to create consciousness of our emotions—the thoughts, feelings, impulses, appetites, and actions that we may habitually "fail to notice." The type of heightened consciousness this thinking

requires makes a further case of the need for Social-Emotional Leaders, those who help us become more aware of our emotions and how they affect our actions. Knowing that we can increase our levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is important and necessary. Salovey, Caruso, and Mayer (2005) define EI as "involving both the capacity to reason about emotions and to use emotions to assist reasoning" (p. 448). They propose a four-branch model of emotional intelligence, which aids in the "processing of affectively charged information" (p. 448). The abilities involve perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions in ourselves and others and using them, among other things, to motivate adaptive behavior. This utility is key to Social-Emotional Leadership. Salovey et al. (2005) suggest that increased EI "could be an important predictor of success in personal relationships, family functioning, and the workplace. The term is one that instills hope and suggests promise, at least as compared with traditional notions of "crystallized intelligence" (2005, p. 159). Goleman and colleagues (2002) give this description:

> When people feel good, they work at their best. Feeling good lubricates mental efficiency, making people better at understanding information and using decision rules in complex judgments, as well as more flexible in their thinking. Upbeat moods, research verifies, make people view others – or events – in a more positive light. That in turn helps people feel more optimistic about their ability to achieve a goal, enhances creativity and decision-making skills, and predisposes people to be helpful. (2002, p. 14)

Much research has recently explored positive emotions, showing that they are different than negative emotions. As Seligman concludes: "A positive mood jolts us into an entirely different way of thinking from a negative mood" (2002, p. 38, italics deleted). While both emotions are inevitable, the good of positive emotions is that they lead to a more optimal range. They broaden an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire, and in turn build the individual's enduring personal resources that can be used later when a threat or opportunity presents itself. Further, positive affect leads people to see the relatedness and interconnectedness of thoughts, ideas, and other people. This integration and flexibility opens one up to new

possibilities, leading to the growth of durable physical, intellectual, and social resources—

psychological capital that leads to positive growth (Fredrickson, 1998, 2002).

In the broadening and building schema, an individual can see oneself clearly in

relationship to others and to the world. One shifts a narrow attention away from oneself and

broadens it toward these "other" and varying "entities." Such clarity produces "circular

causality" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 34), because as nonlinear and ever-dynamic systems, we

affect each other in unpredictable and often contagious ways. Considering our impulse control,

flexible and accurate thinking, empathy and efficacy from this relational stance is important.

Why "Leadership"?

Recent published models suggest that leadership is "primal" (Goleman, Boyatzis, Mckee,

2002), "authentic" (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), "resonant" (Boyatzis & Mckee, 2005),

"sustainable" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) and "situational" (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson,

2008). Each model is itself a social construction, but developed specifically for organizational

leadership in the workplace. While each model has its own unique qualities, they all share

similar features, including doses of social and emotional intelligences. The difference between

these models and the Social-Emotional one I propose is that the latter can be applied outside of

the business context and into any learning organization including the home, the school, and to

other areas where primary networks exist. Social-Emotional Leadership is a shared and fluid

activity.

Unlike traditional leadership models, Social-Emotional Leadership is not a hierarchy, but

instead a holocracy—a newer organizational practice which:

> aligns the explicit structure of an organization with its more organic natural form,
> replacing artificial hierarchy with a fractal 'holarchy' of self-organizing teams ('circles').
> Each circle connects to each of its sub-circles via a double-link, where a member of each
> circle is appointed to sit on the other, creating a bidirectional flow of information and

rapid feedback loops. (Robertson, 2008)

Holocracy and Social-Emotional Leadership are both transformative practices that challenge traditional beliefs about organizational leadership and suggest "regrouping around a profoundly deeper level of meaning and capability, so that we can more artfully navigate the increasing complexity and uncertainty in today's world, while more fully finding and expressing our own highest potential" (Robertson, 2008). It replaces the traditional power structure of a hierarchy and gives more responsibility and agency to the whole system, encouraging a "bidirectional flow" of accountability, which is similar to Cooperrider's (2008) model of Appreciative Inquiry, which calls for a "new kind of leadership."

Building the Bridge & Beyond

Ultimately, I liken my model of Social-Emotional Leadership to Quinn's (2004) metaphor for leading change: "Building the bridge as you walk on it." In a book with the same title, Quinn suggests that anyone can enter a "fundamental state of leadership," which involves:

> The movement toward ever-increased levels of personal and collective integrity. Ever-increasing integrity is the source of life for individuals and groups. Ever-increasing integrity is the alpha and the omega of leadership. (p. 91)

Social-Emotional Leaders enter the "fundamental state" by recognizing their own hypocrisies and by being open to dialogical input from their own Social-Emotional Leaders who enable them to see what they perhaps fail to notice. Quinn says, "With expanded awareness comes a desire for a new level of authenticity. They refuse slow death and choose deep change. Almost inevitably, they create new patterns of influence. They develop a new voice" (Quinn, 2004, p. 51).

Voice is an increasingly common neologism that encapsulates the strength and spirit of who one really is. Maxine Greene (1978) describes voice in relationship to the fading integrity of democracy within the context of teaching and learning in schools and beyond:

> In "the shadow of silent majorities," then, as teachers learning along with those we try to provoke to learn, we may be able to inspire hitherto unheard voices. We may be able to empower people to rediscover their own memories and articulate them in the presence of others, whose space they can share. Such a project demands the capacity to unveil and disclose. It demands the exercise of imagination, enlivened by works of art, by situations of speaking and making. Perhaps we can at last devise reflective communities in the interstices of colleges and schools. Perhaps we can invent ways of freeing people to feel and express indignation, to break through the opaqueness, to refuse the silences. We need to teach in such a way as to arouse passion now and then; we need a new camaraderie, a new en masse. These are dark and shadowed times, and we need to live them, standing before one another, open to the world. (p. 100)

She asks, "How can we communicate the importance of opening spaces in the imagination where persons can reach beyond where they are?" (Greene, 1978, p. 100). I posit that by implementing a system of Social-Emotional Leadership within our networks, we can purposefully help each other find our voices—who really it is we are—and then live in accordance to those values in recognition of the many perspectives of which they are comprised.

Social-Emotional Leaders know the importance of developing voice, a process that takes time, intention, and commitment. In working to find their own, true voices, Social-Emotional Leaders try their best to embody an ever-evolving sense of increased personal integrity. As we continue to change, Quinn (2004) suggests that:

> When we change ourselves, we change how people see us and how they respond to us. When we change ourselves, we change the world. This is the legacy of people who operate in the fundamental state of leadership. (p. 24)

This dynamic change process requires engaging in reflexive and intentional work toward becoming a better self (James, 1890; Lyubomirsky, 2008; Pawelski, 2007; Quinn, 2004).

Paradigm Shift: Positive Psychology

> Positive Psychology can be summed in three words: other people matter. (Peterson, 2006, p. 249)

With a positive paradigm shift, we begin to see the "synergistic approaches that embrace multiple avenues for change" (Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 53). Positive psychology is not about being more positive or less negative, but instead more flexible, accurate, integrative, and generative in our thinking and thus our ways of being in the world. As the scientific study of what goes right in life, positive psychology became a formal discipline in 1998 when its father, Martin E.P. Seligman, suggested to his colleagues that psychology as a discipline was "half-baked." During his tenure as president of the American Psychological Association (APA), Seligman surmised that by focusing predominantly on pathology and the fixing of weakness, traditional psychologists had inadvertently neglected the more positive sides of life—how to build what is already good (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

While it has been shown that our hedonic set point is genetically determined, like the propensity to gain or lose weight, staying happy requires work (Lucas et al, 2003; Lyken & Tellegen, 1996; Lyubomirsky, 2008). While this intentional activity may be harder for some than others, it is possible to learn new tools that can alter the way we think and behave based on how we *want* to feel. Both authentic positive and appropriate negative affect are important to the condition Fredrickson and Losada (2005) label "flourishing"—living "within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience" (p. 678).

In the past decade, three pillars have emerged that are of concern to positive psychologists and positive psychology practitioners: the pleasurable, meaningful, and engaged lives. To date, researchers have focused on three main areas of study: positive emotions, positive individual traits, and positive institutions. Positive emotions, which entails the study of

contentment with the past, happiness in the present, and hope for the future (e.g., Bryant, 2003;

Fredrickson, 1998; Norman & Luthans, 2005). Within positive individual traits, researchers

study character strengths and virtues, and constructs like gratitude, resilience, self-efficacy and

goal setting. These are strengths that are malleable and can be built (e.g., Dweck, 2006;

Emmons, 2007, Pawelski, 2007; Reivich & Shatte, 2002).

Positive institutions, the third pillar, is the study of what is involved in creating better

communities, schools, organizations, and families. As Peterson states, "A theory is implied here:

positive institutions facilitate the development and display of positive traits, which in turn

facilitate positive subjective experiences" (2006, p. 20). However, it has been noted that positive

institutions are the most underdeveloped area of the discipline (e.g. Gable & Haidt, 2005;

Peterson et al., 2008; Seligman, 2008). This potential for the development of positive psychology

as a field further demonstrates the potential impact of Social-Emotional Leadership on positive

institutional change. The impact of the literature emerging from positive psychology on Social-

Emotional Leadership, a social construction, will be further explicated below.

Realizing Agency: Social Construction

> Meanings are born of coordinations among persons - agreements, negotiations,
> affirmations . . . relationships stand prior to all that is intelligible. (Gergen, 1999)

Social constructionism is a meta-methodology in which meaning or reality is created by

people within relationships (Bascobert Kelm, 2005; Cooperrider, 2008; Gergen, 1999; Stavors &

Torres, 2005). Social construction is derived from constructivism, which is a cognitive theory

suggesting that knowledge is constructed by learners through complex knowledge structures,

including the unique experience of the individual. Social constructionism is more of a collective

practice, where meaning is generated *between* people, locally and through language. As

Anderson (1997) offers, we are "linguistically constructed, relational selves."

In a sense, what social constructionism as a school of thought stands for lies less in the technique and more in the philosophy with which a group of these techniques can be used. Like Buddhism, constructionism is a way of understanding or being in the world that welcomes all voices, without privileging any of them in particular. As such, constructionism challenges the last 100 years of Western culture, which has worked hard to emphasize science, objectivity, and the primacy of the individual. It is important to remember that these traditions, like all traditions, are value laden with belief systems that color our interpretations of the world and thus our habitual actions in it. Empirical scientists then, including positive psychologists, may see social construction as a threat, because it questions the objectivity it purports to uphold by raising the question: *whose* absolute truth is it?

A constructionist research method invites dialogue to address such a question. It is more provisional than essential, considering knowledge to be the production of collective and local meaning-making. Constructionists argue that the terms by which we understand the world "are neither required nor demanded by "what there is" (Gergen, 1999, p. 47), but instead by whatever we construct or mean them to be. Constructionists are concerned more with pragmatic utility and application of "truth" than with its validity per se. Through this lens, we are liberated to construct the truth in whichever ways we need, want, and value, as opposed to relying on the historical and arguably elitist traditions of science and religion to hand it to us unquestioned.

Bridging the Fields Dialogically

> Appreciative Inquiry is about changing attitudes, behaviors, and practices through appreciative conversations and relationships - interactions designed to bring out the best in people so that they can imagine a preferred future together that is more hopeful, boundless, and inherently good. (Cooperrider, 2008)

At this intersection, I offer a bridge between positive psychology and social constructionism. Both are disciplines concerned with the underlying belief systems which

consciously and unconsciously affect who we are in this world—what we think and therefore how we behave. Both positive psychologists and social constructionists agree that we can realize our own individual and collective voices in the creation of our shared, positive realities. The discourse and tools coming from positive psychology offer a strengths-based approach to gaining consciousness of the myriad belief systems or voices shaping our own thoughts and deeds in the world. A call-to-action like Social-Emotional Leadership welcomes new possibilities and invites us to dialogue about what we might pull from science, religion, and the like, or what we might leave behind.

The field of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a proven methodology for positive organizational growth, is a helpful tool to use in asking these generative questions. The key to AI's success is its inclusion of the whole system in identifying the positive core. From the core, we can explore what breathes life into a network by asking appreciative questions about what is already good. This approach may eliminate fear that is usually associated with change processes of any kind. A leader in the field of organizational design, Ronald Fry, describes AI like this:

> Fundamentally, AI is…about changing attitudes, behaviors, and practices through appreciative conversations and relationships—interactions designed to bring out the best in people so that they can imagine a preferred future together that is more hopeful, boundless, and inherently good. It is…about socially constructing a shared future and enacting human systems through the questions asked. And it is…about anticipatory learning—finding those positive, anticipatory images of the future that compel action toward them. (Cooperrider, et al, 2008, p. VI)

If hope and excitement about a bright future are present, the network is much more likely to experience positive growth than if people have an image of failure. The positive change process starts by asking unconditional, positive questions; this generates hope and the space for new possibilities to become envisioned and created collectively (Bascobert Kelm, 2005; Cooperrider et al., 2008, Stavros & Torres, 2005).

<u>Who are Social-Emotional Leaders?</u>

Anyone can be a Social-Emotional Leader. We all have strengths to tap into that could help others become better selves; it is a service we both need and have (or can build) the capacity to deliver. Social-Emotional Leaders are resourceful and growth oriented, seeing life with infinite possibility and abundance. Social-Emotional Leaders are people who believe that positive change is possible and take the initiative to create that change for themselves and invite others in their network to consider doing the same. They do not settle for life "just the way it is," but instead the way it could or ought to be—liberating, freeing, unleashing of energy that creates new, perhaps more positive possibilities for the network, the individuals within that network, and beyond. Like all good leaders, Social-Emotional Leaders see others as bigger than they may see themselves and point to the others' better selves as a mere suggestion of what might be possible (Dweck, 2006; Kotter, 1996, Prochaska et al., 1994). Social-Emotional Leaders are not elitist; they do not always have the answers—just the questions.

It is interesting to include James' (in Pawelski, 2008) notion of "inspire and rewire" here because this is the very task for Social-Emotional Leaders—helping people evaluate their thought processes and belief systems—to see how these affect ways of being and our overall well-being. Social-Emotional Leaders act as teachers, coaches, and role models in a way that helps people within their networks become inspired and rewired. They help others find their voices, build their strengths, and realize what is possible in creating the lives we want to live. In other words, Social-Emotional Leaders help others find their better selves in accordance with what they value. This implies that what one values is known, suggesting that this discovery is an essential part of the conversation.

Social-Emotional Leadership begins with at least one member of a network standing up

and suggesting that the network could consider and work toward its own betterment. This verbal

intention invites a socially constructed long conversation asking what the network and the

individuals within it need, want, and value. For some, this will require great risk, because it will

mean bringing new, unfamiliar conversations to the table. For others, it will offer alternative

perspectives to an existing conversation, such as to bring attention to certain stimuli that the

group or the individuals within it may have grown to habitually fail to notice. This is the call-to-

action.

<u>What do Social-Emotional Leaders do?</u>

Social-Emotional Leaders appreciatively build a commitment to shared values and hold

the network accountable to those values. Further, they make commitments with others to help

build strength and to grow, a realization that requires a malleable, not fixed mindset that change

is possible and within our own designs (Dweck, 2006).

The tasks of Social-Emotional Leaders require we transcend our own egoistic and biased

belief systems of what we think others are capable of and begin seeing everyone as utterly

creative, resourceful, and whole. To be a Social-Emotional Leader, one must first see oneself as

creative, resourceful, and whole (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, et al., 2007). To do so requires

building integrity by making and keeping commitments to oneself, which can be done by

entering the fundamental state of leadership as described above (Quinn, 2004). Interestingly, this

shows that Social-Emotional Leaders need their own Social-Emotional Leaders to help them stay

accountable to these commitments. Making and keeping commitments intra- and interpersonally

provides a system of accountability that is inherent in the model.

The task of the Social-Emotional Leader is to mobilize the group, leverage other Social-

Emotional Leaders (potentially everyone), and find the tools to help the network recognize

individual and collective strength inherent at its core. The tools and language emerging from positive psychology can be influential in helping Social-Emotional Leaders bring change to the networks. Social-Emotional Leaders will have to sift through a tool-box to determine which interventions will "fit" (Lyubomirsky, 2007). In the sections following, I introduce some of the theories from which these interventions are designed.

<u>What Role Does Positive Psychology Play?</u>

In relationship to Seligman's (2002; 2008) pillars of positive psychology, Social-Emotional Leaders help people find acceptance and happiness within and between the *pleasurable*, *meaningful*, and *engaged lives*. First, they help people find *balance* within what gives them pleasure, which can easily and does often turn into excessive and addictive habits (drugs, food, working out, dating, etc.). As Aristotle noted, it is balance that leads to *virtue*—the mean between the extremes (Melchert, 2002).

In the spirit of "other people mattering" (Peterson 2006), it is argued that the strengths-based and future-focused language and tools emerging from the field of positive psychology can be used to guide the conversations into which Social-Emotional Leaders begin inviting others. *The VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtue* for example, is a primary tool that Social-Emotional Leaders can use in building consciousness of strength. The strengths-based vocabulary that the tool provides serves as a basis for establishing effective conversation, which leads to the consideration and cultivation of strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The VIA Inventory of Strengths is a self-report questionnaire that measures the degree to which respondents endorse each of the 24 strengths of character in the VIA Classification. These strengths or traits fall under six virtue categories: wisdom and knowledge; courage; humanity; justice; temperance; and transcendence. It takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. A report

is immediately generated indicating 5 top strengths, a description of each, and a comparison of one's scores to others who have taken the test. It is important to note that Peterson & Seligman's work is not exhaustive. Further, the identification of five signature strengths (which the questionnaire provides upon completion) does *not* indicate that a person does not exhibit any of the nineteen others. The VIA assumes that good character is plural, shown in a variety of ways that differ across individuals, and is a primary tool that Social-Emotional Leaders use to build strength.

Gracious Hosts: Social-Emotional Leaders Work to Generate Hope & More

Prilleltensky (2005) suggests that change processes need to begin with leaders who are gracious hosts that inspire hope. Hope lays the groundwork and creates the space for creating our own individual and collective strengths in order to bring about positive change. Change requires goal setting and the pursuit of goals has many components (Locke, 1996). Hope, as an agent of change, is arguably the first of these components, since it creates the space for new possibilities to exist.

Hope is powerful because in realizing our own individual and collective agency, many pathways for reaching our visions are unlocked and freed. An important distinction in this often underestimated phenomenon is that hope is both traitlike and statelike in that it is both dispositional and developmental. Different from a wish, hope is something that we actually believe can happen—where there is a vision and pathways to that vision. (Luthans et al., 2007; Lopez et al. 2004; Norman et al., 2005; Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Social-Emotional Leaders embody hope. The research shows that when hope is modeled intentionally, it spurs a contagion effect that can spread through organizations like a surge of positive energy shown to spark life back into places that have grown so accustomed to things as

they always have been that they have lost sight of how they could or ought to be (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Norman et al., 2005).

According to Maddux (2002), self-efficacy theory supports hope development. Self-efficacy is an important part of Social-Emotional Leadership. With self-efficacy, one is equipped with "unshakable belief in one's ideas, goals, and capacity for achievement, there are few limits to what one can accomplish" (p. 285). Maddux reminds us that "when the world seems predictable and controllable, and when our behaviors, thoughts, and emotions seem within our control, we are better able to meet life's challenges, build healthy relationships, and achieve personal satisfaction and peace of mind" (p. 280). Social-Emotional Leaders need to promote self-efficacy—a capacity that continues to develop throughout one's life span. So, the old adage, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" does not apply within the game of Social-Emotional Leadership. At any age, we can see ourselves as both *objects* and *subjects* in the creation of *any* reality (Freire, 1998).

SECTION III: METHODOLOGY & DISCUSSION

Introduction

It is hypothesized that when Social-Emotional Leadership is used as a framework within primary networks, we can influence institutional cultural change. I have done some preliminary traditional and action research. First, I completed qualitative interviews with students at an independent boarding school who were selected by faculty as fitting the description of Social-Emotional Leader. Some interesting data was collected through these stories. Second, I show the action research I have been doing with my primary network, as I wanted to see what it is like to be a Social-Emotional Leader within the context of one of my own primary networks.

Social-Emotional Leadership at School: Pilot Interviews

Ten interviews were completed at an independent boarding school in the mid-western part of the United States. Serving eight hundred students, the school boasts excellent facilities and one of the most extensive academic and athletic offerings available at the high-school level. The Director of Character Excellence and I conducted interviews with ten students and several faculty members within the school community who were identified as potentially fitting the description of Social-Emotional Leader. All interviewees were 18 years old and over. After describing the project and defining the definition of Social-Emotional Leader, we asked the following questions:

1. How would you define good leadership?
2. How do you raise consciousness and bring out the best in people?
3. Tell us a bit about your story: growing up, family values, any peak experiences?
4. Who do you turn to when you are feeling you have a moral dilemma? Who provides you the bounce back?
5. Have you ever been in a situation where you have been a Social-Emotional Leader?
6. Have you ever been in a situation where you needed a Social-Emotional Leader?
7. What do you admire about the Social-Emotional Leader(s) you know?
8. What, if anything, is at stake in being an Emotional Leader? Is there a cost?

9. Are there any particular character strengths that you think an Emotional Leader endorses?

The responses we received during these narrative interviews suggested that Social-Emotional Leadership preexists the call to action that it intends to provide. That is, certain members of the community already look out for the well-being of others, as a part of their perhaps natural inclination to care for the other.

In relationship to good leadership, many of the students commented that leadership is about empowerment and modeling, so as to move a group of people forward. "If people see someone who enjoys success, people will see that and think 'I want that too'—and they will try to emulate the example . . . they tell you what you need to hear" (female leader1). This certainly encompasses the idea of Social-Emotional Leadership. One student thought of it in light of a mythological account of successful leadership:

> Most important is teamwork, getting people to work together. The most important question for me as a leader is, "What do you think about this?" It is amazing how people perk up when you ask them their opinion. It is like Theseus and the Cranes. He lets the people talk and decide their rules together on their way to Crete. That's why they succeed. Everyone had ownership over what they were accomplishing [Greek mythology]. (male leader1)

Another student said:

> I remember one time there was a student on the team who was gay and a lot of times there were inside jokes that I thought were dumb. One time, we were getting ready to go to bed and the student was laying down and some of the stronger forces on the team were making fun of him and I thought, "What can this guy do?" In instances like those, you have to put your strong foot forward and step up. I brought the guys in and said 'Here's the deal…you are being immature. There are some things people can't help and it Is not a big deal and it is breaking our team apart. We're all on the same team. When you take a link out of the chain, it breaks it.' (male leader2)

As male leader1 and male leader2 both show, being a Social-Emotional Leader requires compassion and insight. It is like being an interventionist, looking for the tools that could help a network do its best. Another one commented on how it is lonely at times to be a Social-

Emotional Leader, suggesting that there is a risk associated in caring for another: She said, "If you know something is going on, you have to step up. It gets lonely sometimes to stay true to your values" (female leader2). This implies Social-Emotional Leaders are clear about what their values are. It was evident that values were instilled at home by the family or by other organizations, like the Girl Scouts or summer camp experiences, which served as great examples of strength and virtue which carried into other domains of their lives. One student remarked of his family:

> I am definitely part of an honest family; we all trust each other a lot. We are all pretty close. I think that has helped me. My family does a lot of mountain climbing in the west. The first year we tried to climb Cloud Peak 13K feet; we didn't make it; we went back the next year and with determination, we made that one. I pretty much learned after that I can do whatever I want if I put my mind to it. (male leader3)

Further, it was evident that the students came from homes that were challenging. Further, these families supported the students to be true to who they were, without any pressure or expectation to be anything else. In a sense, these families supported a socially-constructed reality.

It was noted that although these students served as Social-Emotional Leaders, they also needed their own Social-Emotional Leaders, too. At times when they faced moral dilemmas, it was interesting to note who they would turn to in order to bounce back. Several of the girls said that they turned to their mothers for such support and others named several faculty members or other students who fit the bill. In reference to a teacher, one girl said:

> She knows when to give me advice, or to know how to encourage me to look at a situation in a different way. She really helps me be rational and not get lost in the situation…to take a moment, take a deep breath, and focus on what we need to do. (female leader3)

In noting their peer Social-Emotional Leaders, another commented:

> When you're at a boarding school, [with] no one but your friends…it's important the bond you share with the guys you are living with. If they're making the right choices,

you'll be making the right choices as well. You'll think if he can do it, so can I. (male leader2)

Another said:

On my first day at this school, I met an older student who took me under his wing. The night of [his] graduation he handed me a letter and told me to read it the next day. When I opened it, he said I should find a kid who was squared away like me, and to look after him like I did for you. You have to pass this on. And I did. (male leader1)

These comments suggest the contagion factor of Social-Emotional Leadership—that paying it forward has ramifications that make Social-Emotional Leadership a win-win, non-zero sum game that can benefit both individuals and the groups of which they are a part, and ultimately could improve dynamics between groups within the same organization, community, or society. Further, recent research by Diener & Biswas-Diener (in press) shows that people who help others (i.e. give social support) live longer and are happier themselves.

Taking Positive Psychology Home: A Social Experiment in Social-Emotional Leadership

Let us be grateful for the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom. (Marcel Proust)

I have taken on this role of gardener or Social-Emotional Leader within my family network (see Appendix A) to see what it is like to build the bridge as we walk on it. Through an action (i.e. life) research methodology, I am attempting to operationalize this construct to create positive change for our own network and to develop a model that could be replicable for other networks. Thus far, I have formally invited the whole system to participate in a social experiment (see Appendix B), to see what it is like to leverage other Social-Emotional Leaders in our network (of which there are many), creating new systems of responsibility and accountability, which could enable all of us to learn and grow, and evolve more positively in the group selection process (Dawkins, 1996; Haidt et al., 2007; Wright, 2000). In the spirit of Quinn (2004), we are building the bridge as we walk over it and shift is happening. I believe the great power we have

to nourish the soil and create positive change for our family will come from the union of our strengths. By focusing on what is already good, we will build social, psychological, and emotional capital and use collective strengths to create positive change within our network (Baker & Dutton, 2004; Cooperrider, 2008; Cross, Baker, & Parker, 2003; Goddard et al., 2004; Luthans et al., 2007).

All of us involved in an intentional effort toward the creation of something new and fresh and fun for our network, intrapersonally and interpersonally, could have a huge impact, beyond even our wildest dreams. Constructing this reality involves asking what we as a group really wish or hope for, what we need, what we value—questions I'm not sure we've ever brought to the table in any formal capacity, yet those that hold so much rich potential. Perhaps it is in neglecting these important, generative conversations that our collective life remains seemingly as it has always been, as opposed to how it could or ought to be.

The Need: A Local Look

I have had the good fortune of being born into a large, Italian family, for which I am utterly and completely grateful. With aunts, uncles, and cousins, we are thirty members strong. Traditionally, we see each other at holidays, which are always about feasting and merriment; the events are orchestrated around the plethora of food and the drink. The men of the family typically flock to the television to watch the sporting events du jour; others of us less interested in sports stay in the living room to eat and imbibe or to kibitz about the food and drink.

Lately, though, this set up has seemed stagnant to me. In talking with some of my siblings and cousins, I have found others similarly wondering whether these traditions are serving us well or even if they are much fun anymore. Is it just the way it is—traditions that have evolved as such—or to what extent do we have creative license in constructing new ways of

being together? I see the latter as a quite exciting possibility, requiring collective attention and intention as we creatively dialogue about what is possible for ourselves and our future. Essentially, this is Social-Emotional Leadership—the invitation to the co-creation of new customs, traditions, and ways of being together that may lead to increased well-being for individuals and the networks they comprise.

I realized the need for Social-Emotional Leadership within my own network two years ago when I saw one of the youngest members of our clan exhibiting some troubling behaviors on Easter. This young boy joined the men in the family room in a friendly betting pool that my Uncle Charlie, a patriarch of our family, organized in good fun for the baseball game. But as this young boy joined in, I noticed his physical and emotional responses to first thinking he was winning and then, through a sudden turn of events in the game, thinking he was losing these seemingly "friendly" bets. His emotional and physical reactions were quite bothersome to me; I saw him embody real excitement and then real rage almost within the same moment. Most bothersome was that we allowed his emotional rollercoaster to continue without intervention. In fact, none of the other adults seemed at all fazed by his reactions as if a pink elephant were right there in the family room and we were all navigating around it, or worse, not even noticing it at all.

But when I stood back to observe, I realized that the behaviors the boy was exhibiting were very much in line with what has been modeled for him by me and other members of our network. Compulsive behaviors (those that bring us to extremes—away from Aristotle's virtue), including but not limited to gambling, are a recurring, multi-generational issue that affects our network; why would we expect a child's reality to be any different unless *we* wanted it to be so?

I use this example because he is one of the youngest members of our family and in no way wish to single anyone out or put anyone on the defensive. It is merely to point out an urgency I see within our network to begin a dialogue about creating better for the collective of our hive. At this inflection point that Seligman marks for our larger society, I see a similar crossroads that we face in our family and for our family business as well. The apple not falling far from the tree is no problem, so long as the tree is strong and deeply rooted in a nourishing bed of soil, tended to and cared for, by the hopeful gardeners who live off of it.

Hope Through Communication: A Holographic Beginning

From the onset, I have been conscious of the importance of language. Talking about "strength" and "possibility" can create some uncomfortable tension. To begin with baby steps, I reached out in personal one-to-one communication with each member of the network—what Cooperrider (2008) notes as the center of all human relatedness—and I am encouraging those I speak with in the network to consider doing the same. Stavros & Torres (2005) call this the building of "Dynamic Relationships: Unleashing the Power of Appreciative Inquiry in Daily Living" which is the very title of their book. By opening another to a hopeful possibility, they say, two people step into a dynamic relationship. Letting those in the network know that you truly and wholly care about them is important in creating a holographic and hopeful beginning, generating space for the possibilities to emerge from within and from the ground-up (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Luthans & Jensen, 2002; Noddings, 1995; Norman, Luthans, et al., 2005; Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

For the first round of formal, written communication to my network, I sent a formal invitation and personal note to each member. Ludema et al. (2003) urge creative promotion, so I bought 30 different "Quotable Cards" each with different empowering quotations on the front

like this one from Horace Greeley:

> Fame is a vapor,
> Popularity an accident,
> Riches take wings.
> Only one thing endures
> And that is character

Or, Louis L'Amour's: "There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. That will be the beginning." I sent each member of my network one of these cards, with personal messages on the inside and printed inserts which included an explanation of Social-Emotional Leadership, my hypothesis, the goals I envision, an invitation to our first "event;" a Wii tournament which I organized on Easter Sunday, 2008 (See Appendix B).

I had been waiting for the "right" moment to send the invitations and I recall the pit in my stomach they hit the mailbox. But what I realized is that the project had already begun way before the formal invitations—in the conversations we've been having to generate hope, momentum and urgency. And while I was excited to see my vision come to life, I was still nervous for the reactions I would get and the responses I knew I must be prepared to give. I know my family has big hearts, but that is not enough—this project would take both an open hearts and and open minds (Dweck, 2006). This openness can only be requested and encouraged.

Expanding Positive Emotion, Building Community

The next phase of the experiment included building consciousness, curiosity, and community as overarching goals. Communitas is a process that inspires and revitalizes while reaffirming relationships within a community (Haidt et al., in press). According to Turner (1995), building communitas is an essential step to activating a community to healthy family functioning, healthy child development, and other dimensions of well-being. It also creates positive emotion, which has broadening and building effects of resources or space for positive

growth and endurance building (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Losada, 2003).

Terrion (2006) argues that social capital exists on at least 3 dimensions: bonding (sense of belonging within primary network), bridging (connections with more distant friends, neighbors, etc.), and linking (alliances with people in power—adds a vertical dimension to help leverage resources, ideas, and information). Prilleltensky (2005) offers that "gracious hosts" build such community through bonding, bridging, and linking within the network.

As a "gracious host," I have initiated two community-building events. First, I invited participation in a Nintendo Wii tennis tournament on Easter Sunday as an addendum to our traditional cultural celebration. The greatest part was that *everyone* participated in the bracket, even those who were most reluctant, and we had three generations represented.

As teams were up to play, they got a practice round to get the feel of the Wii and then it was on to the tournament. At first, there was hemming and hawing over the seeming difficulty of the coordination the Wii requires, but after just a short round of practice, many teams were raring to go, which goes to show that endurance-building takes just a bit of time, patience, and practice. In no time, teams were devising strategies and having real fun.

My nephew, Michael, and cousin, Tracy emerged as victors and during the final round of the tournament, the energy and excitement that came from my parents' family room was a palpable sign that my objective was reached. As a result, interest in other indoor and outdoor games was generated that day and groups naturally formed to participate. This shows the contagious effect of positive emotion and that as social capital is built, it starts to grow exponentially. The feedback I got from that Easter included:

"This was the best family holiday we had in a long time," one said.

"I think your project is working, Louis" another said.

"Louis, you didn't ask me to do anything but have fun," another offered.

Again, I want to underscore the importance of language. Some other feedback I was initially receiving from my sisters indicated that at times I may sound pious or preachy—like I have all the answers. While this is certainly not what I think, I found it necessary to reiterate: I do not have any of the answers, just the questions and some of the tools which might aid us on the journey. I am by no means an expert, just a member of the network who has vision of a better future—for myself and the ones I love (Gergen, 1999; Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

For the second event, I invited the network to a family field day and picnic at the beginning of May. The objective was to continue building communitas and to create some space for us to establish some new traditions, new customs—those we create and construct through our own agency and design. Interestingly, several family members jumped on board to help. We picked a spot at a state park, thinking that it would be good to take ourselves out of our normal meeting places and to go somewhere fresh. Unfortunately, threat of rain precluded us from going to the park as planned, and we ended up in my parents' backyard where, as it turned out, the sun was shining after all—literally and figuratively.

My intentional approach was "let's have fun" and "thank you for helping me with my project" rather than "rah rah! cheerleading for positive change." We played field and board games and had a potluck picnic that turned out to be an absolute blast. I did not do too much planning, as I was hoping the day would emerge, as it did, with everyone contributing to the creation of what was. For example, Uncle Charlie orchestrated a bocce tournament, my niece Casey took charge of organizing Apples to Apples, and my cousins got the day started off with hot potato.

Perhaps most interesting to me was a rather lengthy discussion we had using Table

Topics© cards, which are designed to encourage connection and conversation. From silly to thought-provoking, the conversation topics delve into family history and opinions on questions like:

- What historical sporting event would you like to witness?
- If you could have any view from your back porch, what would it be?
- What's the perfect age?
- Which other culture would you choose to be born into?

Many of us sat around on the deck as my cousin Caren read off the questions and we each took turns to answer. What it did for our network was give us the opportunity to get to know each other better—seemingly a silly task for people who see one another so frequently—by providing interesting questions and inviting all voices to offer unique and diverse perspectives. This activity kindled curiosity and provided a few baby steps closer towards some more rigorous conversations in the future.

In debriefing with my cousin a few days after the field day, she asked me if I got what I wanted out of it and I said, "Yes. All I really wanted, though, was for us to have fun"—as that is an essential first step in the model. She called me out on my mood leading up to field day, remarking that I seemed hesitant and unsure. I told her that she was right about how I was feeling—I was nervous. "What if this was all a big flop?" There have been many times since the start of this project where I have lost sight of the possibility. During these times, my internal radio station was playing, "You're crazy; they're not into it; you are going to fail."

With this example, I point out two things: (1) My cousin, having been aware of my emotional state, shows great potential for living as a Social-Emotional Leader because as is often the case, she was attuned to me. If only she had acknowledged this beforehand and had reached out and to say, "Hey, this is going to work, my friend!" I may have been able to better monitor my own self-talk and thus my mood and way of being. We all know how fearful, apprehensive,

and especially anxious moods are contagious; however, the same is true of hope and other

positive emotions that we arguably need each other to help build.

(2) Social-Emotional Leaders do face resistance. This reality is the same as any leader

trying to influence change. Paradigm shifts take work, but when this work involves having fun,

we build positive emotion, which creates the space for broadening and building to really occur

(Fredrickson, 1998). In this space, strength is made stronger and psychological capital is gained.

Strength: What's Already Good

Our next meeting was a month later—scheduled during earlier part of an already-planned

barbeque at my cousin's. I asked everyone to take the VIA Inventory of Signature Strengths

(Peterson & Seligman, 2004; see p. 26 for a discussion of the VIA). With some strategic

prodding, I was able to have nearly everyone complete the survey (see Appendix C for results). I

envisioned starting a large group conversation about strengths on that day, but it turned out to be

in the form of short, small-group discussion. I attribute this to the fact that we had never tried to

have a large group conversation before, coupled with the fact that we were there primarily for a

party.

We did however build a family tree of strength that day, to show the richness of our

network (Reivich, Seligman, Gillham, et al., 2007). I asked that each person write down their

signature strengths on separate sticky notes and then take turns adding them to a tree that I had

created, where each branch represented a different virtue, and the sub-branches a different

strength. We even had dialogue about what the strengths may have been of those who are

deceased, including my grandparents and also my brother, Todd, who committed suicide nearly

twenty years ago. It was refreshing to bring him and the others into the conversation—to say

"hello again" and think about what may have made their lives worth living (Neimeyer, 2002).

I expected some of the usual feedback to surface, mainly that the assessment takes over thirty minutes to complete and that a lot of the questions are repetitive. However, I found that many were eager to learn of their signature strengths, because the results accurately depict the character of an individual. "Yea, that's me," my Aunt MaryAnn exclaimed. "Wow, this is spot on," my mother offered. I also discovered that some of us had friends and their families who then took the assessment, demonstrating the ripple effect of Social-Emotional Leadership when people see that it's all about taking what is already good and making it better.

Another value that the VIA brings to Social-Emotional Leadership is that it provides a language with which we can talk about the amazing diversity of strength within our network. At Susan's, we had a brief conversation about strength and how life could be organized around the strengths of character we naturally endorse. As such, we can individually and collectively find opportunities to enact them in daily living (Bockert Kelm, 2005; Rashid & Anjum, 2005; Stavros & Torres, 2005).

Building the Bridge . . .

My Aunt Beverly recommended, "At our next meeting, we should try to do something which uses our individual strengths" which is an excellent idea. Because the hustle and bustle of summer is preventing us from meeting in person, I sent an email proposing a virtual meeting. The email suggested we write testimonials for others in the network whose strengths we have seen exhibited in the past (See Appendix D).

As Lyubomirsky (2007, 2008) suggests, we will have to see what "fits" as we continue to build the bridge: which tools feel right, what activities work. Continuing to build communitas and positive emotion is very important, as I think it will create more space for the incorporation of the tools from positive psychology. We will also work to incorporate the usage of our

strengths. Perhaps one of our future meetings can be organized to incorporate the usage of our strengths to contribute to the gathering—either working on our own, or pairing up with other family members with similar or complementary strengths. For example, folks high in gratitude could put together a booklet, list or even a poem of what they're all grateful for about each family member. People high in humor or creativity could create a skit or write a funny family song or they could find funny pictures on the Internet to illustrate each family member's strengths. People high in ability to love and be loved could collect love stories, poems, and letters, which might inspire the group when told.

I am also going to suggest we set aside some meeting time for non-fictional story telling—the telling of our own narratives which show us at our best moments in our lives. I recently asked my Uncle Charlie, a veteran of the NY Police Department, to retell me the story of the time he carried Malcolm X out of the building where he was shot and killed in New York City in 1965. The excitement and passion with which he told this story was palpable. To think that these stories will be forgotten if we do not keep them alive through oral tradition is troublesome. Social-Emotional Leadership invites these stories, these voices, to the table. Without the invitation, it stands possible they become silenced. The network can create great meaning from an event like this, as telling stories about past triumphs is awe-inspiring and elevating. Peterson (2006) describes these stories as positive introductions and as such, will provide a narrative-rich environment for our network (Bryant, 2003; Cooperrider et al., 2008, Haidt, 2006).

With the building of enough communitas, I wonder if we might create the psychological capacity and trust to incorporate more didactic instruction, where the skills of resiliency, savoring, active-constructive responding, and forgiveness might be taught more formally. The

key will be to present it in ways that are inviting and inclusive of dialogue and experiential

practice. Given that many of them are empirically proven to increase happiness and well-being, I

suspect that if we start with open hearts and open minds, we will find ourselves building our own

upward spirals.

These meetings might best be scheduled separately from parties or celebrations, so that

the framework with which we approach the conversations can be focused on the tasks and skills

at hand—conversations and activities designed to build strength and character—making better

what is already good enough (e.g., Organic Uppers, 2008; Reivich, Gillham, & Joycox, 2008;

Seligman, Steen, et al., 2005).

To that end, all meetings will include a heavy dose of appreciative inquiry in the form of

progressive meetings that we will schedule from month to month, virtually and in-person. The

appreciative questions I currently have in mind are: *What do we want? What do we need?* and

What do we value?—questions I'm not sure I ever discussed with my network before, yet which

are so crucial to who we are in the world individually and collectively. Other questions include:

What breathes life into our family? What does it look like for our network to be at its best—

flourishing? What does that feel like? Smell like? (Cooperrider, 2008; Ludema et al., 2003).

These are the affirmative topics that I foresee, but as I will underscore again, this project

and process are *emergent*, which is a central component of my hypothesis. In exploring the 4Ds

of Appreciative Inquiry (discovery, dream, design, destiny) we will continue to develop a

language to talk about what breathes life into our system—what we know and sense about its

strong core. The other fundamental principles of AI (Cooperrider, 2008; Ludema et al., 2003)

that we will keep close by are:

- The importance of wholeness
- A relevant, clear, and compelling task

- A healthy physical and relational space
- The power of high-quality connections
- Appreciative dislodgment of certainty
- Leadership levels the playing fields
- Dialogue, voice, and the search for common ground
- A focus on the future
- A commitment to support success of decisions and outcomes
- A commitment to self-management
- Minimal and mindful facilitation

It will be important to look at this process along the five domains Prilleltensky (2005) identifies: individual, relational, organizational, communal, and environmental. It is also important to underscore that Social-Emotional Leadership works when people agree to it as a way-of-being together. Although it may be difficult to endure a conversation that may involve what you are "failing to notice," if it is coming from an appreciative place—where strength and psychological capital have been built in other ways—then real honesty, true integrity, and active authenticity may replace our other habitually silenced ways of being. Here, there is agency, well-being, and flourishing—by definition, the very goals of Social-Emotional Leadership.

SECTION IV: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

> There's nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come. (George Bernard Shaw)

Social-Emotional Leadership as a Game

As a game, it is interesting to note that the rules of Social-Emotional Leadership are constructed by its players as the game progresses, using an appreciative process which includes the whole system (Cooperrider et al., 2008). I posit that by implementing a system of Social-Emotional Leadership within our networks, as I am beginning to do with my network, we can purposefully help each other find our true voices and our better selves. If we view this framework as a game, the question then begs to be asked of a network: if we are already on the same team, are we all playing the same game?

Social-Emotional Leaders take people already on their teams (at home, at school, or at work) and ensure that they are all playing the same game. After all, we are social beings and we will continue to evolve as such. Social-Emotional Leadership is the 'game' that could help us evolve more positively—that is, to help each other become more virtuous as true "Aristotelian friends" would.

Bringing the Game to Our Family Business

I hope that another phase of this project will be to include our family business, a small basement waterproofing company located in New Jersey in developing a system of Social-Emotional Leadership. My father started this company nearly thirty years ago and as he approaches retirement, it is time we consider succession and transition. There has been talk of selling the business altogether, but instead, my father has offered it to me and my two sisters, Lisa and Christine. In considering the great value of this investment, we are quite grateful and excited by what is possible for its future. The thought of combining our strengths and co-creating

this reality will provide a good cross-roads in which we can incorporate an intentional inclusion of Social-Emotional Leadership—keeping us on the proactive and preventative side of any potential challenges we will undoubtedly face.

Like all change processes, this one involves many variables. Switching to an appreciative paradigm for a whole system does take work, as it involves the questioning of tradition and habit, which we know to be quite challenging tasks (James, 1892/1897; Prochaska, 2005). Even the small changes I have attempted to make in the past five years of my involvement have been somewhat resisted. The traditional business model is still being employed and to introduce a new model, which I suspect we have to do, will be difficult for some of us to endure. Although I am the only one of the three of us currently involved in the operation of the business, there are other family members who are essential parts of the business. We also employ a sales team and a work crew. Again, I think the key the key will be to involve the whole system in Social-Emotional Leadership as the framework with which we design the reality we envision. My thought is that by starting to create the space within our primary network, the family, we might then be able to shift that collective efficacy to the transformation of our business (Goddard et al., 2004).

Developing A Character Education Program

As I continue to develop this model with my own networks and talk to people doing the same, I will develop Social-Emotional Leadership into a model of positive character education— a call-to-action in which the learning of new knowledge and building of skills transcends the boundaries of a school into the community and homes it supports. Essentially, this character education plan is emergent, sustainable, and ecological in the sense that it emerges from within the primary network and then expands through the many dimensions of our lives.

A potential model for social change, Social-Emotional Leadership can energize and activate a particular community in its own construction of regenerative moral, social, and communal capital. I hypothesize that this capital will lead to sustainable, positive praxis. In other words, the effect of leveraging Social-Emotional Leaders in our primary networks within our institutions could mean that by the contagion effect, we make viral Social-Emotional Leadership as the call-to-action which creates positive social change in families, schools, communities, and beyond.

Although character education has always been of vital importance, schools strayed from proactive efforts to incorporate character development into their teaching in past decades. Especially when classroom time is so heavily focused on passing math and reading tests, the priority to develop moral character has disappeared. Ironically, this neglect has come at a time when the need is so great. The tragedies at schools in Columbine, Cleveland, and the like continue to punctuate these concerns for character education across the country. It follows, then, that when schools renew a commitment to character education, they are committing to the complete well-being of those they are intending to serve. This is where Social-Emotional Leadership could be crucial in creating positive, sustainable cultural change.

Back to School

The next phases of the development of Social-Emotional Leadership will be to pilot the program within a school district interested in a new approach to character education. Perhaps the program may be adopted by the Coalition of Essential Schools, or a public school district with whom I could apply for funding from social-change sources like Ashoka or the Transformative Action Institute.

For this grant, I would propose a one year, multi-phase intervention and longitudinal research project that brings people together in a particular community to collectively build social, moral-communal capital and to ultimately increase the well-being of its constituents by employing a push toward Social-Emotional Leadership. It would include the whole system. As Haidt (2006) argues, "Finding coherence across levels feels like enlightenment, and it is crucial for answering the question of purpose within life" (p. 227).

The proposal would include teaching people some of the empirically proven tools to construct this meaning collectively (Reivich, Seligman, Gillham, et al., 2007; Reivich, Gillham, & Joycox, 2008). Schools will serve as the natural home for this project, as knowledge based on the empirical findings will be disseminated through holistic educational programs, for students, their families, and the community at large. This education can take many forms, including assemblies and workshops led by MAPP graduates. As has been noted about character education programs, the home, the school, and the community must all be educated in this "multidirectionality" and empowered to shift the paradigm in which they coexist (Smith et al., 1997).

Social Networking

As we do live in a technically advanced world, it is important to consider the many ways we can communicate Social-Emotional Leadership. We must transcend the boundaries of traditional social networking—the church, the country club, the gang, the online chat room. One of those ways might be to develop a Web 2.0 social-networking site for Social-Emotional Leadership. It can include web-based platforms (blogging, chatting, sharing, connecting), similar to MySpace or Facebook, but will link connections of people *pledging their Social-Emotional Leadership* to the others whose well-being they truly have in mind. This way, we may be able to

connect the entire world on a system of shared similar values, within and between networks. The site may also include coaching for Social-Emotional Leaders and the platform to make tools available to the many networks.

As Social-Emotional Leadership is about helping each other define values, clarify visions, and set goals, it is appropriate to include the research of Ingram (unpublished), who is working to develop a website called *Coyogo*—COmplete, YOur, GOals. The site enables and motivates individuals to set goals. I think this forms a natural bridge with Social-Emotional Leadership, especially if a piece is built in for social networking and support.

For my network, I am considering setting up a social network on www.ning.com, a site which allows anyone to develop a social networking platform. It is a hub which could help us and other primary networks stay connected—and accountable.

Coaching

Essentially, Social-Emotional Leadership is a system of coaching that exists in our primary networks. Coaching is a partnership between a coach and an individual that supports the achievement of results, based on goals set by the individual. I have set up a coaching practice with its focus on coaching Social-Emotional Leaders as they attempt to construct positive change for themselves and their networks.

The Call to Action

Building character strength and virtue for ourselves and our families is a task we *all* need to take seriously and as wholly necessary as Spitzer's resignation. According to John F. Kennedy (1962), "The greatest enemy of the truth is very often not the lie, deliberate, continued and dishonest—but the myth—present, persuasive, and unrealistic." Social-Emotional Leadership attempts to expose our collective myths and to help each other see our own infinitely possible

truths. To do so, Haidt (2006) suggests that it is essential we see ourselves as divided—both controlled and automatic. Without heightened consciousness to the many belief systems and voices that affect our ways of being (Gergen's "multiphrenia"), we will continue to endorse these myths as reality by our own, perhaps even unconscious, doing. We must change.

The phenomenon about change is that it is inevitable: shift happens. We are dynamic beings, changing every second of every day and influenced by each other and our environment. But in which direction do we grow? As Anais Nin (1971) once said:

> We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another, unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made up of layers, cells, constellations.

Realizing that we are "relative" is a perfect entrance to Social-Emotional Leadership, because it suggests that *we need each other* to see what we may habitually fail to notice, thereby intentionally shaping the course of our individual and collective evolution. This is our responsibility and Social-Emotional Leadership is our call-to-action.

The take-home message here is to take Social-Emotional Leadership home. That is, bring this framework to your primary networks at home, at work, or at school, and suggest that the group consider its own betterment. Start by making the fundamental decision to live as a Social-Emotional Leader yourself, which requires you seek out your own Social-Emotional Leaders to invite into this long conversation—this process. It is important to underscore that Social-Emotional Leaders do not have all of the answers—just the questions, the efficacy, and the wherewithal to find the tools that could lead to our positive evolution.

Remember that the positive approach to change starts by asking questions about what's already good and strong: what "breathes life into the system" (Cooperrider; Ludema et al., 2003). Starting from this point might help the inherent weaknesses self-correct, or, at the least, might

provide the space (and language) to deal with them more directly and productively. There are many tools emerging from positive psychology researchers and practitioners that can be instrumental in the process, but considering "fit" for each network is important.

This is where building the bridge comes in—whereby Social-Emotional Leadership is whatever the people in the network need it to be—a positive intervention that is socially constructed by its participants, akin to a game where the rules are decided by the players as it proceeds. Constructing the game happens through conversation (literally meaning "to turn with") about what is needed, what is wanted, and what is valued within our networks. It is about helping each other become our better selves.

It is also important to remember that all social change starts with a utopian ideal. As Social-Emotional Leadership emerges within and then between networks (as a web based platform can easily show), more win-win situations will begin replacing the "me vs. you" stagnancy and resignation we currently face. Leadership of this kind also builds trust, which in turn reduces hypocrisies and the corruption we face in our world, including the damage we are doing to our melting biosphere. After all, we not only have relationships with other people, we have them with the natural world as well.

The development of Social-Emotional Leadership could also help with the dissemination of positive psychology, giving MAPP graduates and other change-agents a framework with which to teach the tools coming from our emerging field. Bridging these tools with social constructionism, the idea that reality is whatever we create, will give networks the collective responsibility and Social-Emotional Leadership will provide the call-to-action.

If we are truly at a pinnacle point in our evolution, now is the time to build the collective hope, efficacy, and determination necessary for positive social-cultural change to be fulfilled.

Bringing this call-to-action to networks of people may lead to transcendent ways of being. This collective consciousness will create the space for the exploration of the many pathways possible in leading communities to optimal levels of flourishing—this is the invitation to Social-Emotional Leadership. It is the framework with which we can find our ways "back to the garden." The time is *now*. As our Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama says, "It's the *fierce urgency of now*." Or, I'd ask, *if not now, when?*

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APPENDIX A

My Network

Photo taken after the Wii Tournament, Easter Sunday, 2008

APPENDIX B

Invitation Inserts

Join me on Easter to formally kick off "the" project you've heard me humming about . . . SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEADERSHIP ❖ A Wii Tournament is being put together for Easter Sunday, as well as the opportunity to play other, cool games together. So, please bring your favorites and some energy to have fun!	WHAT IS SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEADERSHIP? Social-Emotional Leadership (SEL) is my own concept that I've been developing as a psychological construct throughout my program this year. Essentially, it's my plan to take positive psychology *home*. It's a social experiment of sorts—to see about building strength, morale, and virtue *from within* a system (like our family) and *from the ground-up.* I propose, then, to pilot a program of SEL with you, my family, who I love and respect so deeply. I want to share this amazing knowledge with you and to see about what our process might be like in creating *positive* cultural change. Social-Emotional Leadership takes risk. But I think great risk comes with great reward and I ask you to consider being my Emotional Leader, too. *We need each other.*
HYPOTHESIS Social/cultural change within a system or network IS possible, but it must emerge from the ground-up. SEL occurs when at least one member of a primary network (defined as a group of people that "be" together, with traditions and histories inherent in its culture and as such, could be a family, a small business, organization of any kind, or even a book club) stands up and says, "Hey guys, we can do better." ❖ *As a family, we are all on the same team,* *but at times I wonder whether* *we're all playing the same game . . .*	WHAT IT'S ABOUT The Social-Emotional Leader's job will be to mobilize and energize the group, leverage other Social-Emotional Leaders (which is ultimately to include every individual in the network), and find/use the tools to help the network recognize the individual and collective strength inherent at its core. This is done from an appreciative way of being, and *does not focus on weakness.* It starts with having real fun together, so I ask that you Easter with this intention. The rest, I invite you to create with me as we go along. We will figure out what "fits" and what works as we proceed. In this sense, we are really part of a social experiment that we build together.
GOALS (1) to create positive growth within our sphere of influence – for our primary network (2) to develop a model that can be replicable for other primary networks	

APPENDIX C

Family Tree of Strength

Name	Signature Strength 1	Signature Strength 2	Signature Strength 3	Signature Strength 4	Signature Strength 5
Leslie	Gratitude	Humor, Playfulness	Caution, Prudence	Spirituality	Capacity to Love
Lou	Fairness and Justice	Humor, Playfulness	Forgiveness and Mercy	Modesty and Humility	Leadership
Christine	Capacity to Love	Citizenship, Teamwork	Kindness and Generosity	Social Intelligence	Bravery
Louis	Capacity to Love	Social Intelligence	Gratitude	Leadership	Humor, Playfulness
Lisa	Apprec. of Beauty & Excel.	Capacity to Love	Gratitude	Kindness and Generosity	Honesty, Authenticity
Mike	Social Intelligence	Capacity to Love	Humor, Playfulness	Fairness and Justice	Hope & Optimism
Michael	Hope & Optimism	Perspective/Wisdom	Spirituality	Humor, Playfulness	Love of Learning
Casey	Gratitude	Humor, Playfulness	Spirituality	Citizenship, Teamwork	Hope & Optimism
Max	Bravery	Humor, Playfulness	Spirituality	Curiosity and Interest	Hope & Optimism
Julie	Gratitude	Fairness and Justice	Kindness and Generosity	Forgiveness and Mercy	Open Mindedness
Tracy	Bravery	Kindness and Generosity	Capacity to Love	Fairness and Justice	Humor, Playfulness
Chuck	Perspective/Wisdom	Open Mindedness	Forgiveness and Mercy	Honesty, Authenticity	Modesty and Humility
Beverly	Gratitude	Curiosity and Interest	Kindness and Generosity	Capacity to Love	Caution, Prudence
Charlie	Forgiveness and Mercy	Kindness and Generosity	Humor, Playfulness	Modesty and Humility	Fairness and Justice
Caren	Curiosity and Interest	Love of Learning	Open Mindedness	Humor, Playfulness	Bravery
John	Modesty and Humility	Citizenship, Teamwork	Fairness and Justice	Forgiveness and Mercy	Honesty, Authenticity
Anthony	Modesty and Humility	Industry, diligence	Open Mindedness	Humor, Playfulness	Bravery
Jody	Love of Learning	Spirituality	Caution, Prudence	Gratitude	Modesty and Humility
Amanda	Social Intelligence	Capacity to Love	Honesty, Authenticity	Judgment, Critical Thinking	Leadership
Robin	Capacity to Love	Love of Learning	Fairness and Justice	Creativity, Ingenuity	Open Mindedness
MaryAnn	Apprec. of Beauty & Excel.	Curiosity and Interest	Gratitude	Bravery	Citizenship, Teamwork
Susan	Fairness and Justice	Citizenship, Teamwork	Kindness and Generosity	Capacity to Love	Industry, diligence
Doug	Honesty, Authenticity	Capacity to Love	Fairness and Justice	Kindness and Generosity	Perspective/Wisdom
Tracy	Industry, diligence	Bravery	Creativity, Ingenuity	Social Intelligence	Gratitude
Dan	Fairness and Justice	Humor, Playfulness	Capacity to Love	Kindness and Generosity	Gratitude

APPENDIX D

Example of Recent Communication with my Network

Hello, everyone!

Hope you all are having awesome summers! I can't believe it is nearly half over. I've spent the first part of it on my actual written thesis, which is almost done. I want to share it with all of you really soon. If you'd like, I'll give the presentation that I gave in Canada for y'all when the dust settles. I'm hoping to have an apartment by 8/1 in Manhattan.

Before we come together again though (which means this fall, when we consider the hustle and bustle of summer), I thought maybe we can have a virtual meeting through email. Here's the task: See if you can look at someone's strengths and write a sentence which captures an essence of who they are with that strength. It could be a story you remember about that person, or things more general like:

-Aunt Julie's kindness & generosity shines as she always chooses the most perfect gifts for a recipient. She really puts her all into making meaningful selections. For my birthday, she gave me a beautiful money clip, which I hope to start filling immediately if not sooner!

-Amanda is a great example of social intelligence. She is always forthcoming with how she feels, demonstrating an honesty and authenticity that is almost contagious when I am around her. While we know her mouth can sometimes get her in trouble, I think that she adds an interesting and socially-intelligent voice to our family.

-Jody's spirituality is so gentle. She never forces her belief systems on me, but with her gentle ways, she definitely influences my own ways of seeing and being in the world.

-When Michael's humor & playfulness emerges, he is so much fun to be around, because he gets a belly laugh reminiscent of his being a little boy (which clearly he is no longer!). It's fun

to find ways which activate his h&p, which I'm sure his friends are good at doing all the time.

-Uncle Charlie's modesty & humility is so incredible to me. Recently he was telling me war & NYPD stories that are really incredible testaments to all of his strengths. I'm hoping we can have a story-telling night soon, so we can hear some of them from directly from him. (We can tell our own stories too.)

See below for the chart of strengths (attached too if you can't see it). Reply-all to this list with your responses and let's see what happens!

Love to all, Louis

*Note: At the time of submission, responses to this email have started to come in. Here is one from my cousin Tracy:

> MaryAnn, Beverly and Caren are great examples of Curiosity and Interest:
> They are always taking an interest in new experiences and prospects. They continue to explore the boundaries of human knowledge, MaryAnn and Beverly by reading as many books as possible and Caren by taking more college courses. MaryAnn and Beverly are always going to seeking out the newest movies to go see. Caren is always seeking out new games. MaryAnn, Beverly and Caren are always starting new events and experiences. Whether it is MaryAnn and Beverly decorating and gardening to change the setting or Caren with her "game day, all loved foods" party. They are all great examples of Curiosity and Interest.

Here is a response from Aunt Beverly:

> I cannot believe that LOU does not have "kindness and generosity" as his first strength. He has always been giving without question and more importantly he offers without being asked - this would demonstrate his "modestly and humility". His "humor and playfulness" are known attributes to all his family and friends. (I remember his making up poems, hiding clues and gifts. He always teased Charlie about his Yankees - sending mail messages, etc.)
>
> My dear sisters, MARYANN and LESLIE, show their "gratitude" in many different ways and I do appreciate them but may not always show my gratitude.
> MARYANN'S "bravery" is obvious by the way she has faced her difficulties (her having cancer and going through chemotherapy, losing her hair, aches and pains, etc and her unemployment at this time.)
>
> LESLIE'S "spirituality" shines through her actions in giving to charities, not only money

but in doing things like "meals on wheels." Lou gets included here too.

SUSAN'S strengths "capacity to love" and "industry and diligence" have always been evident. Susan remembers to send cards to the family on holidays and birthdays - she is caring and loving. Her industriousness is evident whenever she is called upon to do something. Her house always shines. Doug is definitely "honest" and I feel "loving" and "kindness" coming from him too.

TRACY'S "creativity" probably comes from her Mother. She was always making things crafty. She is definitely on the chart with "Gratitude"!

APPENDIX E

Some Recent Real-Life Examples of Social-Emotional Leadership

Aristotelian Friends

My friend Dina told me that several weeks ago, the night before she had a wedding to attend, she realized that she didn't fit into the dress she was planning to wear. She was horrified and mortified, left feeling disappointed—questioning her levels of self-control. What happened to the balance she had once found? With her normal strong will and energetic motivation, Dina has been able to begin losing the few pounds she had gained and she's feeling good as a result of it. She's back in a regular workout routine and better monitoring her food intake. In fact, she said that she was even able to avoid her mom's homemade chocolate chip cookies—her self-control shocking the rest of the family who were wholeheartedly digging into them. "It's not that I'll never eat another chocolate chip cookie," she told me. I heard her respectfully and with admiration. It's that right now, at this point in time, she's making an agreement with herself that by keeping, helps her to increase her own well-being. In other words, she's contributing to her own happiness.

I told Dina I think her focus and motivation are inspiring to me, and that seeing her on an upward spiral of well-being made me want the same for myself. I asked that if it were okay, I'd like to join along with her on her quest, not to fit into the dress, but for improved levels of physical-fitness. I suggested that as Social-Emotional Leaders or, Aristotelian Friends helping each other become more virtuous, we could keep each other in check of this commitment as regularly as we wanted. I thought that this arrangement could provide extra positive energy for the both of us—the "contagion" factor of Social-Emotional Leadership. It reminds me of why Alcoholics Anonymous is probably successful; each of the twelve-steps comes with a socially

supported system of accountability. Social-Emotional Leaders talk to people within their

networks about our and their goals and then become Aristotelian Friends to those we can support

through our mutual strength.

Failing to Notice

My friend Bright is really good at being green. She has even suggested to me that we

look at being green as a game we play, much like Social-Emotional Leadership. One day, during

a break in class, we went downstairs to the deli to get iced teas. It was one of those self-serve

situations, where we poured our own, and then took them to the cash register to pay. By instinct,

though, I reached for a plastic lid and straw for my cup of tea when Bright asked, "Do you really

need those?" When I realized what she was inferring—that we were going right back up the

escalators to sit in another few hours of lecture I realized that I didn't need to waste the plastic

lid and straw. At that moment, Bright served as a Social-Emotional Leader for me. She helped

me see something that I had "failed to notice" and habitually so. This is not to suggest that I will

never use a plastic lid or straw; that is ridiculous. I am just more conscious of when lids and

straws are necessary and when perhaps they are not. We need more "Brights" in our lives to help

us play the green game as consciously as she does. Besides "green" causes, there are others—

love and peace to name a couple—that could be supported through Social-Emotional Leadership

as well.

APPENDIX F

A Lifetime of Interest

My experience as both a student and teacher has led me to similar questions regarding institutional culture. How can we make schools the most inclusive and productive places they ought to be? I have spent a lot of time thinking about this question and I think that Social-Emotional Leadership could be part of its solution. In part, this interest has emerged from my own coming-of-age experiences, but I fear that my story is a tale as old as time: the kid who did not quite fit in. As a middle- and high-school student, this was my "crisis of character" which formed the frame with which I saw the world for so long—beyond my own agency or control.

Personally, as my voice became silenced in the halls of my high school, I moved further from really knowing my own story—who really I was versus what I thought the world wanted me to be. I believed that what I had to say and how I felt mattered little in light of what was dominant. Like all successful oppressors, the ideologies within the school took my power and agency away with my voice. At this place, nothing was possible but the stagnancy that pervaded my own, stagnated reality: I really thought life was just the way it was, as opposed to how I wished or hoped it could be. Without Social-Emotional Leaders, I was lost, afraid, and alone. I had no hope. I do realize this marginalization is different from other kinds that many women, people of color, and the poor experience in the world. However, for any of the oppressed, there is rarely any place for positive possibilities within the hegemonic ideologies of the institutions and communities from which we come, unless we begin to question these ways of being and co-create new ones.

As a high school teacher, I saw other silenced students, but this time from the other side of the desk. Furthermore, I witnessed teachers and parents with similar plights. This astonishes

me to no end. Is this just the culture of schools, I thought, or can we prevent the marginalization and increase the inclusivity and productivity of schools—making them the flourishing places they ought to normatively be?

These are the questions led me to pursue a masters in education, where I read the works of great educators like Deborah Meier (2002) who in her book, *The Power of Their Ideas,* says that such a reinvention of schools and communities should "provide an excellent opportunity to use our often forgotten power to create imaginary worlds, share theories, and act out possibilities." Another revolutionary thinker, Freire (1970, 1998), who reawakened themes of a tradition regarding new possibilities dating back to Plato, argues that we need to begin this process by recognizing our "unfinishedness" and learn to put ourselves on a "constant search" of our individual and collective voices. It is in this Freirean sense that we see ourselves as true students—malleable, and able to grow (Dweck, 2006).

I posit that these voices become, like learning itself, a permanent yet extremely momentous process of individual and collective creativity and discovery. True learning is a result of that movement insofar as it occurs in the exploration of curiosities. Here, we become conscious of ourselves as not just objects but active and informed *subjects* or participants in the construction of our own realities. Perhaps it is in acknowledging and exploring our historicities, then, that we can collectively become the empowering force in freeing our own voices from the very forces which keep us from being free, true, and real.

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First and foremost, I'd like to acknowledge my family, all of them, for their open hearts and open minds. Their support during my many years of schooling and especially this project is testament to their unconditional love, for which I am eternally grateful. I realize that my life has taken an untraditional path, but the truth is that this project, the development of Social-Emotional Leadership, has been a lifetime of interest for me. Being able to share what I am most passionate about with those I most care about adds ice cream on the cake—and I hope that this is just the beginning of the many and multiple great things in store for our network.

I'd like to thank my capstone advisor, Dr. John Yeager for being the man. He has gone above and beyond the call of duty for me, and for that I am very grateful. I also send a big thank you to our program director and my running buddy, Dr. James Pawelski, for his ears and his advice. I would like to acknowledge my older MAPP siblings for their coaching, support, and love: Sherri Fisher, Dave Shearon, Deb Giffen, and Helene Finizio. And of course, to all of my MAPP brothers and sisters, especially my Aristotelian Friends, who helped me through this capstone process: Nikki Bardoulas, Lee K Bohlen, Eleanor Chin, Kirsten Cronlund, Bright Dickson, Cheree Ingram, Lisa Jacobson, Breon Michel, Cathy Parsons, Suzie Pilleggi, Denise Quinlan, and Maggie Wachter. Thank you for being my Social-Emotional Leaders. May we stay forever connected.

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CONTACT

Louis J. Alloro

University of Pennsylvania

LouisAlloro@mac.com