

The Cardinal Sins of Leadership A Faith-based Perspective on Vice and Virtue

William L. Sparks, Ph.D.
McColl School of Business
Queens University of Charlotte
Charlotte, North Carolina 28274
USA

Abstract

This paper explores leader behavior through the lens of two frameworks: the concept of “cardinal” or “deadly sins” found in Christianity and the Actualized Leadership Framework (ALF) that examines leaders’ motivation and their corresponding “Leadership Shadows.” After examining the two foundational sins potentially affecting all leaders in applied settings, pride and greed, the paper then correlates a unique cardinal sin to each leader style: Achiever (Vanity), Affirmer (Envy) and Asserter (Lust). The faith-based implications are explored, as well as an approach for integrating the specific Leadership Shadows to lead in a more self-aware, and self-actualized, way.

Introduction

While the concept of “cardinal sins” is usually relegated to religious doctrine and discussion, specifically Christianity, there have been some efforts made to apply these concepts outside of philosophy and religion. Both the concepts and terms “cardinal” or “deadly” sins of leadership and organizational behavior have been explored in applied settings. Researchers (Kellerman & Pittinsky, 2020; Morrissey, 2014; Coleman, 2010) have examined leader behaviors and the adverse impact they often have on others in applied settings, citing the actual seven sins, which include “pride,” “greed,” and “lust,” in their examination. To date, no effort has been made to attribute specific “sins” to unique leadership styles when working with others.

The *Actualized Leadership Framework* (ALF) is an approach that integrates the seminal works of Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, David McClelland and Viktor Frankl into a unified and comprehensive approach for assessing and understanding leader behavior. The ALF represents an attempt to distill, synthesize and integrate these various and, at times, competing models and theories into one integrated framework. Although an obvious cornerstone for this model is the seminal work of Abraham Maslow, who coined the term “self-actualization” as it relates to human potential and peak performance, the framework starts with an emphasis on *logotherapy*, a philosophy developed by Viktor Frankl. This is followed by a view of *logotherapy* through the lens of Biblical suffering. Frankl is the author of “Man’s Search for Meaning” and has influenced an untold number of researchers, psychologists and philosophers. The purpose of this paper is to examine the cardinal sins of pride, greed, vanity, envy and lust from a leadership and organizational behavior perspective by linking specific sins to leader style using the ALF.

Finding Meaning through Suffering

Austrian psychoanalyst Viktor Frankl (1946) discussed the horrors of his experience as a prisoner in concentration camps during World War II in his best-selling book “Man’s Search for Meaning.” It was in these hellish conditions that he came to realize that everything can be taken from us but one thing: *our freedom to choose our response to any situation*. This insight provides the first pillar and a basic assumption of our model: You are free to choose your response and your attitude to anyone and any situation.

With this insight, and his resulting therapeutic approach, “logotherapy” (the process of finding meaning in our suffering), Frankl challenges us with a profound truth: no one can make you feel, think or do anything; you have the freedom to choose your response and your attitude to any person and situation. When we react in anger or fear we give that freedom away. This insight led Stephen Covey in “The 7 Habits” to coin the term “responsibility”: the freedom and ability to choose our response to any situation. Viktor Frankl’s theory confronts us with a powerful truth: when we react to others in fear or anger, we relinquish this one guaranteed freedom. More times than not, the resulting interaction has negative consequences for the individual and adverse or outright dysfunctional implications for his or her group (the term “group” is used to refer to a group of three or more members, which could be a team, department, division or entire organization).

Christianity was born of suffering. Salvation is the result of a climactic build toward the Son of God’s choice to realize meaning even at the hands of persecution. Not once did Jesus rebuff in fear or anger to defend against His accusers. It was said, “The governor marveled greatly,” at the fact that Jesus chose to stay silent despite His imminent crucifixion. (Matthew 27:14) Yet Jesus did not remain silent. He gave up his very life while in the same breath exchanging suffering for the opportunity to forgive. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34) In his philosophical theory of *logotherapy*, Frankl reminds us of our own power and freedom to choose our response to others, as well as the comfort of knowing that when we find meaning in our suffering, it ceases to be suffering.

As personified by Jesus’ example and supported by Viktor Frankl’s work, we have established the foundation for the ALF and the *Actualized Performance Cycle*. Power is found in our freedom to choose a meaningful response to any situation or person, knowing that “Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” (Romans 5:3-4) Now, let’s turn our attention to human motivation and the motive needs or “drivers” that propel our behavior. In this endeavor, we will review the seminal work of David McClelland and explore unique motive needs from a Christian perspective.

Different Members of One Body: Exploring Human Motivation

The power that we desire as Christian leaders equipped to make a real difference in the world involves more than mustering enough faith to turn water into wine. Beyond miracles, our success is contingent upon how well we navigate both spiritual and psychological moors. This involves blazing an emotional path down which we can clearly mark behavioral signposts that speed our journey. Knowing what motivates us is the first step toward actualized leadership, followed closely by a better understanding of what motivates our colleagues as well as those next in line to lead. The ALF provides a logical framework that allows us to step outside of our emotions – equipping us to more intuitively approach leadership challenges that emerge at the level of unconscious behavior and action.

Many behavioral science theories attempting to explain human motivation – what drives us to do what we do – have been proposed over the last 100 years. Some researchers have focused on the internal needs of individuals that drive our behavior, while other researchers have examined the context and process by which we exert effort, and the expectations we have on successfully being rewarded. Although the works of Maslow (1954) and Herzberg (1959) remain extremely popular, perhaps no other researcher has been more influential than David McClelland and his three-need or “Acquired Need” theory of human motivation.

The word motivation comes from the Latin word *movere* which means “to move” or “to stir.” A need may be best thought of as an “internal state that makes a certain outcome appear attractive.” (Robbins and Coulter, 1999) So, when we think of motive needs, also referred to as “drivers,” we are simply examining the internal states that drive or stir our behavior in an attempt to satisfy this need (e.g., our desire for safety, the need for relationships and connection to others, our desire for control, etc.). As found in I Chronicles 28:9a, this type of psychological assessment is a discipline with which even the Lord himself is concerned, Scripture stating that he “Searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.”

A number of very influential theorists through the years have informed our thinking in this area, including Yale psychologist Clayton Alderfer's ERG Theory (1972) and Frederick Herzberg's "Two-factor theory" (1959). It could be argued that no one has been more influential in describing what motivates or drives us to do the things that we do than the late Harvard psychologist David McClelland. McClelland (1987) identified three motive needs or drivers that propel our behavior: *Achievement*, *Affiliation* and *Power*.

Achievers, those with a high need for achievement, are driven for success, improvement, and accomplishment. They are primarily concerned with expertise and competence, and are detail-oriented, focused and very well-organized. These individuals are efficient, rules and process-oriented, and prefer consistency and predictability. Under stress, however, their "Leadership Shadow" is triggered and *Achievers* become narrow-minded and rigid, transforming into the classic "micromanager."

Affirmers, those with a high need for affiliation, are warm and friendly, and are more focused on interpersonal relationships and harmony than results and outcomes. They are primarily concerned with their connection to, and acceptance from, others. These individuals are loyal, trusting, and empathetic. Under stress, when their Leadership Shadow is triggered, these individuals become overly accommodating, avoiding confrontation and allowing others to take advantage of them.

Asserters, those with a high need for power, are candid, decisive and courageous risk-takers. They are often viewed as "natural" leaders who challenge the status quo and drive results. *Asserters* are primarily concerned with control and can be skeptical and slow to trust others. Under stress, when their Leadership Shadow is triggered, they become controlling, autocratic and condescending, often manipulating or intimidating others to get their way.

Within Christianity, leadership successes or failures are often solely attributed to the level at which the Holy Spirit indwells a leader's life with much less emphasis on ones' workmanship or ability to "rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15)" about their human instincts and behavioral patterns. However, understanding unique leadership styles is essential for operating effectively as one of many members in God's body. It should be noted that to identify with one leadership profile, either as an *achiever*, *affirmer* or *asserter*, is not to dismiss the importance of another. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" (I Corinthians 12:21) God expects that we "study to show ourselves approved" and this should include examining our own motives and proactively shining light onto those areas of our lives where shadows threaten to give way to complete darkness. Christians find comfort in knowing that along the journey of self-actualization, "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness," and that despite our shadows, "The light dwells with Him." (Daniel 2:22)

Leadership Shadows and Living in the Light of Christ

Carl Jung is among the most influential psychologists on Western Culture. From his theories of personality type ("introversion" and "extroversion") that led to the MBTI, to his concepts of the "collective unconscious," "archetypes" and "synchronicity," one could make a compelling argument that Jung's influence on psychological systems of thought over the last 100 years is without a contemporary equal. An untold number of therapists and researchers have built their entire practices, and careers, on his concepts and frameworks. And it is Jung's concept of the "shadow" that is critical for understanding how normally positive traits (e.g., organized and efficient) can become negative (e.g., rigid and inflexible) under stress.

The "shadow" is Jung's concept of the dark, unconscious aspect that resides within each of us. While Jung acknowledges Christianity in general terms, his explanation of a "dark, unconscious aspect" of our experience does not fall strictly within the purview of Christianity despite its metaphorical semblance to good (light) and evil (darkness). Biblically, shadows are depicted as both good and bad, as symbols of a protective shade (Psalm 36:7) or a place where evil lurks (Job 34:22). Jung believed that in addition to an individual's shadow, there is also a collective unconscious that is essentially the repository or unconscious DNA of human history, varying by culture. Similar to Jung's idea of the Collective Unconscious, the Bible points out that our struggle is against the "world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) Although Jung was convinced that the collective shadow had an enormous impact on human behavior in the present, our focus will be to further refine his notion of the "personal shadow" by looking specifically at leader behaviors under stress, and how normally positive characteristics and traits can and do become dysfunctional or outright destructive.

The Shadow has been defined as the dark, rejected, instinctual sides of ourselves that we deny or repress. Impulses such as rage, lust, greed and jealousy reside in the shadow. We spend an inordinate amount of energy trying to deny, repress or manage this aspect of being. We often explode in angry denial when someone points out a Shadow trait in our self that, while blatantly obvious to others, has been repressed. Jung reminded us that we do not become enlightened by pretending to be perfect; rather, we become enlightened when we're willing to confront this darker side of ourselves.

Projecting an outward façade that buries those darker aspects of our personality may buy us some time and help us to save face as a leader, but from a Biblical perspective, "No one can hide so that [God] can't see him." (Jeremiah 23:24) Perhaps King David had intimately come to understand this, as demonstrated by his prayer for God to "see if there be any hurtful way" in him. (Psalm 139:24) David, even as a "man after God's own heart," (I Samuel 13:14) eventually confessed that his impulses were just as alive and well as his predecessors' who had exhibited more deliberate and outward acts of jealousy, lust and greed. (I Samuel 18:9) Upon being initially confronted with his shadow, in the parable in which Nathan the prophet told of a poor man's only sheep being unjustly taken for slaughter, David reacted with indignant anger against the idea that someone would murder and take that which was not his own. David's denial quickly turned into enlightenment because Nathan's confrontation finally opened up the space for David to identify with the story and admit that he was not perfect. Only then was he able to confront his darker side, face the consequences and begin to rebuild his life based on the truth about himself.

Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, is the concept of *Leadership Shadows*. We define them as the extreme and negative manifestation of our positive drivers, which are based on irrational thoughts, unfounded fears and limiting core beliefs. Based on the three motive needs or drivers identified by McClelland, there are three *Leadership Shadows*: ***Fear of Failure***, ***Fear of Rejection*** and ***Fear of Betrayal***. **Table 1** summarizes these shadows in the context of the ALF. Much like Jung's perspective of shadows, the Bible also depicts shadows as a fluid reference point, similar to a sundial that casts shadows for telling time yet with its accuracy dependent upon positioning or perspective. Meaning, from a Christian perspective, the three Leadership Shadows we've identified provide an indication of who we are at a given "point in time" but the reality of who we become is ultimately found in Christ. (Colossians 2:17) Hymn writer Katherine Davis sums it up well in these lyrics, "His banners are o'er us, his light goes before us, a pillar of fire shining forth in the night, till shadows have vanished and darkness is banished, as forward we travel from light into light." (Katherine Davis, *Let All Things Now Living*)

Table 1

MOTIVE NEED	LEADERSHIP STYLE	LEADERSHIP SHADOW
Achievement	<i>Achiever</i>	Fear of Failure
Affiliation	<i>Affirmer</i>	Fear of Rejection
Power	<i>Asserter</i>	Fear of Betrayal

The key contextual element related to all of the three styles and their corresponding Leadership Shadows is stress – that tense and taxing space we so often encounter in our professional and personal lives. The aspect of ourselves that is triggered by stress often results in career (and relationship) limiting moves, such as micromanaging, avoiding conflict, or refusing to trust others. We're often puzzled when at the pinnacle of one's career, someone, notably a high-profile Christian leader, suddenly chooses to make a move that completely undermines their position of leadership. Yet these foibles make sense, considering it's also at the peak of success that a leader is more likely to experience heightened stress and fatigue. Wayne Cordeiro, in his book "Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion," says, "The adversary lurks in the shadows of vulnerable moments in our lives. Like an uncomplaining sniper squatting in a darkened second-story room, he squints patiently into his high-powered scope, waiting for an opportune time to squeeze off a shot at his unsuspecting target." Thankfully the story doesn't end there. Scripture reassures us that, "Though [we] have fallen, [we] will rise, though [we] sit in darkness, the Lord will be [our] light." Micah 7:8

Jesus provides us with an example of how to deal with the darkest of moments at our most vulnerable. During a critical point in His ministry Jesus was led to fast and pray in the wilderness. Rooted in the temptation that awaited Him was what the ALF describes as an appeal to all three motive needs – hitting Jesus at what might have been one of His weakest moments in the flesh, having just fasted for 40 days. Satan said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” (**Power**) “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you...” (**Affiliation**) “Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” (**Achievement**) (Matthew 4:1-11)

Jesus had performed many miracles up to this point so what was especially alluring about the temptation to turn stones into bread? Embedded in this particular temptation was a power play. Satan might have better said, “If you think being the Son of the Most High makes you so powerful, go ahead and prove it!” But that's still not enough to explain the brevity of this temptation. Jesus had already performed many miracles in front of very large crowds so why would He feel in the least bit motivated to demonstrate his power now, for Satan? Fast forward to Jesus' cry on the cross, “My Father, my Father, why hast thou forsaken me?” It's possible that in this moment of wilderness temptation leading up to the crucifixion, Jesus was motivated to prove His own power, apart from His Father's, knowing in the Spirit that His Father would soon forsake Him. In the flesh, did Jesus ponder who He might become without His Father? We typically emphasize Judas' kiss as the ultimate betrayal, but it's plausible Jesus felt that His Father's imminent abandonment could be likened to the type of betrayal an asserter style of leadership would particularly fear. So, it's important to understand that our leadership style is not colored solely by our motive needs but also by our underlying fears. Even more important is the subject of how we deal with those underlying fears. Jesus confronted each of these temptations of the flesh by quoting scripture, demonstrating that in addition to self-awareness, it's by our connection to the divine that we're brought into the light.

Pride and Greed: Foundational Leadership Sins

Before examining the three unique leadership sins related to leader style using the ALF – Achievers > Vanity; Affirmers > Envy; Asserters > Lust – two foundational cardinal sins that may potentially impact all leader behavior are explored. Pride is often considered the most dangerous sin of all, and the root of the others. Greed will then be explored as both an extension of pride and a precursor for the other three leaders' sins of vanity, envy and lust.

Pride

Pride leads to every other vice.

C.S. Lewis

Arrogance. Ego. Selfishness. Pride. In other words, or actually in one word, pride. Pride is considered by many theologians and philosophers to be the deadliest sin of all. And while this paper is not about religion per se, it is about the wisdom from these traditions to better understand leadership.

C.S. Lewis, perhaps most widely known for “The Chronicles of Narnia,” which included one of my all-time favorite books growing up – “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe” – stated in “Mere Christianity” that pride is the “anti-God” state, and that anger, greed and debauchery were “mere fleabites” compared to pride. The ancient Greeks referred to pride as “hubris” – a gross exaggeration of one's ability.

Before examining the “sin” of pride as it relates to leadership, it is important to distinguish between good pride and bad pride. “Good pride” refers to dignity, self-reliance and self-respect, and is often associated with persistence. “Bad pride,” which is the topic of this examination, refers to boastfulness, smugness and arrogance.

Pride undermines leadership effectiveness in a number of ways. First, from a self-awareness perspective, pride closes our mind to constructive criticism and feedback. When this occurs, we insulate ourselves from others and from reality, impeding our access to personal and professional growth.

Second, pride prohibits vulnerability. In her famous TED Talk, *The Power of Vulnerability*, Brené Brown illustrates how vulnerability is absolutely necessary to experience authentic connection to others. But pride won't allow us to let our guard down, so we are unable to admit mistakes, apologize to others, or ask for help.

And third, pride ultimately prevents us from reaching our highest potential. Not only is deep self-awareness necessary for our growth and development, authentic relationships and creative collaboration are critical for actualizing our potential. Pride erodes our ability for both self-reflection and connection to others.

Pride is omnipresent, especially in organizations today. But keep the faith, because the virtue of humility is both the counterpart and the antidote to pride. Humility can be developed in a number of ways, such as actively listening to different perspectives, soliciting feedback from others, and practicing gratitude on a daily basis. The Harvard Business Review article HBR 6 Principles for Developing Humility provides some practical suggestions and sound advice for cultivating this crucial aspect of leadership.

The ancient Greeks believed that “hubris,” defined as extreme pride and ambition, was so offensive to the gods that it led to their intervention in human affairs to ensure the downfall of the prideful perpetrator. Cultivating humility and modesty will prevent you from offending others, on earth and in heaven, so that you optimize your happiness and success instead of facilitating your own demise.

Greed

Who is greedy is always in want.

Horace

Greed is universally cautioned against by most religious traditions, however. In St. Paul’s letters to Timothy, he states that the “love of money is the root of all evil.” But even among Christian denominations there is some disagreement when it comes to money. In general, Catholics have a more skeptical attitude toward business and commerce while Protestants are typically more comfortable with money and its role in promoting our financial and spiritual lives.

So, is greed always evil?

Greed is one of the “7 Deadly Sins” and, after pride, is often considered to be the most dangerous. And it’s not hard to find examples of greed in Corporate America, such as Tyco and Enron, and the ultimate destruction that they created. Because of these and many other examples, greed has been referred to as the “hobgoblin of Capitalism.”

And while it’s easy to identify these extreme examples of greed, it’s harder to consider the role of greed in our own lives. In addition to outright greedy behaviors on their part, it also leads to selfish and self-centered “what’s best for me” decision-making approaches instead of a “what’s best for the organization or our stakeholders” mentality.

I don’t think the question is “Are you greedy?” Rather, I think it’s “How greedy are you?” Here are some questions to consider when assessing your current “Greed Quotient” (GQ):

1. Do I see the world in an abundant (Growth) or scarcity (Fixed) mindset?
2. Whom do I consider first – myself or others – in making decisions?
3. Would others describe me as modest or prideful?
4. Do I celebrate the success of others or am I secretly jealous?
5. Do I “play well with others” or am I in a self-imposed professional “timeout”?

Italian author Baldassare Castiglione suggested that only those who were “disciplined” – trained in conducting their lives in an orderly way – were suited to lead. He stated that such individuals have a heightened awareness of their basic drives and have taken steps to integrate them into a tempered approach to living and leading. In other words, they have integrated their greed Shadow trait into their conscious awareness so that they can manage this instinctual and often reactive response.

The Dark Side of Achievement: The Deadly Sin of Vanity and the Fear of Failure Leadership

Vanity keeps persons in favor with themselves who are out of favor with all others.

William Shakespeare

Vanity is an excessive belief in, and overestimation of, one’s abilities and physical attractiveness. And, vanity lies at the heart of the *Achiever Style* and the *Fear of Failure Leadership Shadow*.

Vanity is typically considered the “first cousin” of pride, which comes from the Latin word “gloria,” and refers to unjustified boasting. Vanity impacts our ability to be a fully self-actualized leader in a number of ways, including:

- Vanity interferes with our ability to authentically connect to others.
- Vanity inhibits intellectual honesty – the ability to admit mistakes and failings.
- Vanity inflates an individual’s ego by overestimating his/her abilities.

From a psychological and self-awareness perspective, vanity ultimately leads to deceit. While Achievers work very hard to project their “image” externally, it does not reflect their true selves. Achievers attempt to convince the rest of the world, and themselves, that their idealized image is justified and true. This in turn requires a tremendous expenditure of energy to keep up the charade while simultaneously repressing their fear and guilt for their laziness and sloppiness. Said another way, the negative emotions they experience are for simply being human. Swiss psychologist Carl Jung reminds us that these negative counterpoints don’t just exist in some people, they must exist in all. As the saying goes, the brighter the light, the darker the shadow. Accepting this notion of counterbalance allows us to let go of the image we are trying to project and embrace our true, authentic self. When this integration occurs, we are much less likely to fall for temptation.

Achievers desire perfection and have an underlying belief that their way is the best. They often struggle with a sense of not feeling worthy and therefore focus on their accomplishments to help prove to the world, and themselves, that they are enough. Unfortunately, the irrational thoughts that underlie the Fear of Failure Shadow trigger the emotions and behaviors that, over time, almost guarantee that Achievers will fail.

Christian leaders struggle with the need for achievement, especially in terms of how they measure up in God’s eyes. One author put it this way, “It seemed as if my self-esteem was congruent with my performance or lack thereof. The concepts of abiding and acceptance had yet to penetrate my heart. I knew God had said to Jesus, “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased,” (Matthew 3:17) but I didn’t know he said it to me as well. These were dark times.” (Bryan Loritts, “Saving the Saved: How Jesus Saves Us from the Try-Harder Christianity into Performance-Free Love”) This author and many leaders, whether religious or not, use achievement as a means of gaining approval from others to convince themselves they’re really enough.

But the Bible says, “It is when the Lord thinks well of us that we are really approved, and not when we think well of ourselves.” (II Corinthians 10:18) Further, when we “rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil” we miss out on the rest that God really meant for us as His “beloved sheep.” (Psalm 127:1-2) And perhaps Jesus speaks straight to the heart of Achievers in His words to Martha as she worked feverishly to earn His approval, “You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:38-42)

So, how can an individual hold on to all the virtues of an Achiever, such as detail-orientation, organization and ambition, while managing the Shadow characteristics of vanity? The “redemption” antidotes include humility and modesty. When cultivated, these counterbalancing traits help to integrate and manage the Fear of Failure Shadow and sin of vanity. Cultivating humility and modesty is at the heart of empathy for others, and when this shift occurs, altruism and servant leadership are likely to follow. Therein lies the straight and narrow path for Actualized Achievers, where integration and authenticity support resisting the all-too human temptation for vanity.

The Dark Side of Affiliation: The Deadly Sin of Envy and the Fear of Rejection Leadership Shadow

Envy is the art of counting the other person’s blessings instead of your own.

Harold Coffin

Envy is the negative emotion that occurs when an individual perceives and desires another’s quality, achievement or possession. Aristotle stated that envy is the “pain” at the sight of another’s good fortune and is one of the root causes for unhappiness. And, envy lies at the heart of the *Affirmer Style* and the *Fear of Rejection Leadership Shadow*.

Envy should not be relegated to only theological discussions or pop music. Thought leaders and even the Harvard Business Review devote time (and space) to exploring how envy emerges in the workplace and the detrimental impact it has on performance.

From an Actualized Performance perspective, envy impacts our ability to be fully self-actualized in a number of ways, including:

- Envy interferes with our ability to celebrate the accomplishments of others in the workplace.
- Envy inhibits our capacity to truly experience and express satisfaction and gratitude.
- Envy drains our psychic energy into constant comparisons with others.

From a psychological and self-awareness perspective, envy ultimately creates two (2) painful paradoxes for many Affirmers. First, many seemingly selfless acts of kindness and outward expressions of empathy on the part of Affirmers are, in fact, offered with a subtle “catch.” That catch is the implicit expectation that the receiver of kindness will respond in kind to Affirmers’ needs and wants when the time comes. Second, there is an internal cycle that is grounded on envy. Famous Swiss psychologist Carl Jung talked about the need for counterbalances in our life, so that the brighter the light, the darker the “shadow.” He insisted that this isn’t true some of the time, it must occur all the time. As such, the effusive kindness and generosity offered by many Affirmers must be counterbalanced by their opposites: cruelty and envy.

Perhaps a short example will best illustrate this point. A few years ago, I was consulting with an organization and the CEO had a genuine interest in Jung and his theories. As we discussed the notion of counterpoints and opposites, he asked for a member of his team to volunteer. “Mary,” the office manager, eagerly agreed. She was a very intense Affirmer and the CEO marveled at how I could stand there and “accuse” her of being mean and selfish when she was the most warm and loving person he had ever known. As other members of the executive team began to loudly chime in with their agreement, I remember having the distinct feeling that my session was about to come to an abrupt end, especially when Mary began to cry. But she quickly collected herself and, almost trembling, she whispered, “It’s true, he’s right.” As the mutiny vibe in the room began to subside, the CEO countered that he had never heard her utter a mean or hateful word about anyone in their 20 years of working together. Mary said that while that was true, he had “...never heard the horrible things that I say to myself.” She continued to say that she often felt inadequate and even “stupid,” and that she could never truly celebrate someone else’s success because deep down she was jealous. The mutiny was avoided, and what followed was one of the most genuine and profoundly moving personal growth experiences I’ve ever facilitated.

Affirmers desire connection to, and approval from, others. They have an underlying belief that relationships are paramount and separation or rejection from others must be avoided at all costs. They often struggle with not feeling wanted unless they are helping others. Unfortunately, the irrational thoughts that underlie the Fear of Rejection Shadow trigger the emotions and behaviors that, over time, almost guarantee that they will experience the rejection and separation they are so desperately trying to avoid.

Despite an Affirmer’s seemingly insatiable desire to be *chosen* as a friend and confidante, it’s imperative that we understand that “Even before He made the world, God loved us and *chose* us...” (Ephesians 1:4) When an Affirmer operates from the context of being unconditionally loved, they’re more likely to stand up for themselves when others try to take advantage of them. Jesus identified with the rejection Affirmers fear most, the Bible stating that “He is despised and rejected of men.” (Isaiah 53:3) Christians are promised that “Whoever believes and has decided to trust in Him, for this one, there is no judgment, no *rejection* and no condemnation.” (John 3:18) An Affirmer’s fear of separation can be paralyzing. While it’s true that some form of rejection and separation are unavoidable in this life, especially to those who fear it most, Jesus promises that “He will never leave us. He will never forsake us.” (Hebrews 13:5)

So, how can an individual hold on to all the virtues of an Affirmer, such as empathy, encouragement, and interpersonal skills, while managing the Shadow characteristics of envy? The “redemption” antidotes include satisfaction, gratitude and “goal envy.” Affirmers who cultivate a sense of satisfaction and gratitude for what they have are more likely to give without expecting anything in return. We would all do well to remember that expectations are premeditated resentments. And, having a bit of “goal envy,” as opposed to personal jealousy, will help ensure that you are competing at your highest level and that your work ethic stays focused and sharp.

Therein lies the straight and narrow path for Actualized Affirmers, where gratitude and satisfaction help us avoid the awful monster of envy.

The Dark Side of Power: The Deadly Sin of Lust and the Fear of Betrayal Leadership Shadow Cycle

The lust for power, for dominating others, inflames the heart more than any other passion.

Tacitus

In their 2020 book entitled “Leaders Who Lust,” authors Barbara Kellerman and Todd Pittinsky explore lust from the perspective of leader behavior and organizational dynamics. While most of us associate lust with sex, they expand their definition of “lust” to include an intense desire for money, power, status, and, well, sex. And while the authors note that “controlled lust” can lead to exceptional performance, unabated lust leads to dysfunction and, ultimately, downfall.

Lust is commonly thought of as a psychological force that drives behavior in search of excitement, conquest and satisfaction. Pope John Paul II stated that lust devalues our humanity and corrupts our spirituality because of its sole focus on selfish gratification.

When exploring the concept of lust, it is important to separate it out from its “first cousins” greed and gluttony. Greed refers to wanting and keeping – hoarding something simply for the sake of having it. Likewise, gluttony refers to wanting and consuming, and it is usually associated with overeating where the individual has little or no regard for himself/herself, or for others in want.

By contrast, lust is the state of an intense desire for someone or something – the wanting – for the sole purpose of personal gratification. This gratification is often in terms of physical pleasure and intense Asserters often have conquest, whether of a competitor or a colleague, on their mind.

From an Actualized Performance perspective, lust impacts our ability to be fully self-actualized in a number of ways, including:

- Lust interferes with our ability to empathize with others authentically because the desire for personal gratification is usually present.
- Lust impairs our judgment because the intense desires that must be continually satisfied often occur with increasingly higher levels of risk and danger.
- Lust requires asserting your will over others which is ultimately not sustainable.

From a human motivation and psychological perspective, there is a profound irony for Asserters as it relates to lust. Carl Jung asserted that the state of counterbalance must occur within everyone. In other words, the brighter the light, the darker the shadow. Asserters are driven out of a need for power and control. Feeling out of control and vulnerable is at the heart of their Fear of Betrayal Shadow. And therein lies the irony and the paradox for Asserters. While Asserters are driven by the need to be in control, living in the grip of lust is the antithesis of control. I “assert” (pun intended) this because the desired person, object or status is outside of our immediate control. As such, that external object that provokes lust requires Asserters to forfeit control and personal power and, in doing so, to take the first step in Viktor Frankl’s notion of “paradoxical intent.” Frankl stated that the more we fear something, the more likely we are to experience it. When lust drives our decision making and behavior, the intensity and recklessness that ensues clouds our judgment and almost guarantees that we will experience the loss of control and resulting sense of betrayal that we so fear.

Asserters are natural leaders who crave power and like to be in control. They have an underlying belief that the world is not safe, and that resources are scarce. They often have a very strong “Zero-Sum” mentality, meaning if someone else “wins” then, by default, they “lose” because theirs is a world of scarcity, not abundance. They often have difficulty trusting others and fear vulnerability, often waiting to be betrayed. Unfortunately, the irrational thoughts that underlie the Fear of Betrayal Shadow trigger the emotions and behaviors that, over time, almost guarantee that they will experience the sense of betrayal and loss that they are so desperately trying to avoid.

The Bible provides an alternative route for those who might be tempted to exercise leadership from that dark place of needing to maintain control at all costs. "You shall not rule over him with severity, but are to revere your God." (Leviticus 25:43) Though Asserters are often gripped by the temptation to take extreme measures for driving their vision, the Bible says to leaders, "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock." (I Peter 5:2-3) Joel Peterson, in his book "The 10 Laws of Trust," says, "Indeed, I've learned that to trust means taking a leap of faith – a necessary part of giving over control to another." For the assertive leader, it's imperative to understand that in contrast to the scarcity mindset fueled by their shadow, the Bible emphasizes that "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." (James 1:17)

So, how can Asserters hold on to the virtues such as courage, candor and objectivity, while managing the Shadow characteristics of lust? The "redemption" antidotes include mindfulness, redirection and attention to the "company you keep." First, Asserters need to develop mindfulness and what I refer to as "Optimal Time Orientation" (OTO), living primarily in the present. This shift will help you better understand the underlying intention behind the desire, as well as motivate you to carefully consider the likely consequences of giving in to temptation. Second, once this mindful connection is made, it becomes easier to redirect your passion to other productive pursuits. Finally, mind the company you keep, including both the people you spend time with and the situations you put yourself in. Only through deep reflection and awareness will you be able to discover and manage the temptation "triggers" for excitement and conquest. Therein lies the straight and narrow path for Actualized Asserters, where mindful awareness and productive outlets for our drive and passion help to mitigate the uncontrollable desire for more.

Self-Actualization: Human and Divine

Out of this somewhat dark and depressing state of the human condition came what is known today as the "Humanistic" movement in psychology led by Abraham Maslow and his concept of "self-actualization." As described earlier, prior to Maslow the vast majority of psychologists and researchers focused on human deficiencies: why people act in destructive or neurotic ways, for example. Maslow turned the field upside down when he began to focus on psychological health, well-being and optimal performance. Maslow identified a number of characteristics and traits of these "self-actualizing" individuals that allow them to be more satisfied, more at peace, and ultimately, more effective. And what is perhaps most important to remember is that people aren't born this way. Just like the research into what causes or creates healthy cells in biology, Maslow found that there are changes we can make – both internally and externally in our environments – which facilitate and accelerate our growth and development.

Maslow's most famous contribution to the study of human behavior is his "Hierarchy of Needs" which attempts to explain human motivation from a needs-based and hierarchical perspective. According to Maslow (1954), there are four groups of basic or "deficiency" needs that must be met in ascending order. The goal of every individual is to meet a given need, and then allow a higher order need to emerge to drive our behavior. Maslow illustrated, and many subsequent researchers have pointed out, that satisfying one need does not necessarily mean that a higher order need will emerge. Both research and every day experience demonstrate that many individuals get "stuck" in a certain deficiency need, for recognition or a sense of belonging to others, which can and does adversely impact one's ability for continued growth and development, which is the self-actualizing process. **Figure 1** provides an overview of Maslow's model, with the three motive needs captured in their appropriate level:

Figure 1

Christian leaders sometimes shy away from Jesus, the man. It's too tempting to write off Jesus' leadership success as strictly a part of the divine and that of no human effort on His own. While it can be argued that Jesus' dynamism as a leader was sustained by the same Spirit with which Christians believe they're also filled, we can further identify with Christ by providing a deconstructed view of how He reconciled His humanity, that part of nature subject to the earthly reality with which we all contend, separate from His being fully divine. The challenge of viewing Jesus as fully human lies in our tendency to believe that Jesus' success as a leader was singularly dependent upon God's will for Him as His only son. Though unspoken, Christian leaders frequently embody a belief that Jesus was nothing more than a tool used by His Father to fulfill a divine purpose that had absolutely nothing to do with Jesus' personal desire or will to succeed. How many times have you witnessed a Christian unable to take steps that will move them closer to achieving their goals because they're waiting on the "nudge of the Spirit?" Lip service is given to the belief that Jesus identifies with our suffering – that lifetime struggle to wholly accept ourselves as imperfect leaders striving toward greater self-actualization.

Comparing ourselves to Him who "knew no sin" makes our aim toward self-actualization seem futile apart from our own connection to the Divine. (II Corinthians 5:21) It's important to remember though, that here on earth, while Jesus grew in stature, He also grew in wisdom. (Luke 2:52) "Faith without works is dead," in the sense that no matter how much we believe God has a divine purpose for our lives, that purpose is brought to life by taking proactive steps toward reaching our highest potential. (James 2:20)

In a closer examination of how Christianity affects the bottom line for Christian leaders, a popular coping mechanism is often to excuse Jesus' successful ministry as a God-ordained destiny separate from a fully integrated human effort. It's easy to entertain the ideas of Divinity and Humanity as complexly intertwined. Yet fathoming the plausibility of being fully human, irrespective of a religion or spirit one believes is independently guiding them toward greater self-actualization, is harder to accept for those whose faith defines their worldview. Notwithstanding the supernatural, Jesus' life was a continuum of practical self-aware choices He made to realize the success He saw as a leader who eventually became perhaps the most iconic symbol of the last 2,000 years, leaving an indelible impact on the world.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): A Biblical Principle of Transformation

The Leadership Shadow Cycles for all three styles, Fear of Failure (Achiever), Fear of Rejection (Affirmer) and Fear of Betrayal (Asserter) follow the well-known and evidence-based approach of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or CBT. CBT is widely used in a variety of clinical and non-clinical applications for improving performance and personal satisfaction and happiness. CBT has been shown to be especially effective in treating anxiety and mood disorders.

The famous Greek philosopher Epictetus really sums up CBT with his well-known quote: *People are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them*. CBT is a powerful framework to help each of us “reframe” events, setbacks, colleagues, and the like so that we can become aware of what we are thinking (hence the name “Cognitive” Behavioral Therapy) and assess whether it is rational and valid, or irrational and incorrect. Once we are able to achieve this level of awareness, we can then replace irrational thoughts with others that are more rational, thereby triggering healthier emotions and more optimal behaviors and responses to any circumstance or situation.

The Leadership Shadow Cycle begins with the most common thoughts associated with each Style, and then illustrates the emotions that are likely triggered and the resulting behaviors. Until we learn to understand the thoughts and limiting beliefs that are triggering negative emotions, we will always be in a highly reactive state where our emotions, and our Leadership Shadow, are managing us.

Additionally, the work in emotional intelligence (known as EI or EQ) has been critical at demonstrating the multiple intelligences that people possess, as well as an understanding of why social or emotional intelligence is so critical for leadership effectiveness. The research in EI demonstrates that the further you go in your career, and the more people you manage, the more important EI is. However, concern with EI is that whether intentional or not we have made emotions “primal” in understanding leadership effectiveness. The ALF asserts that behavior doesn’t start with an emotion, it starts with the thought that triggers the emotion, which then can lead to less than optimal or outright dysfunctional behavior. In order to truly grow into our full potential, we must become aware of those thoughts in order to meet our Leadership Shadow.

The Bible dedicates a significant portion of its teaching to an emphasis on transforming our thought life. Scripture instructs us to continuously think about good things. (Philippians 4:8) Thinking *wholesome thoughts* isn’t as easy as flipping a switch though, and it requires a reconditioning of our minds to eliminate thoughts that habitually lead us toward negative outcomes. Changing our pattern of thinking requires intentionality. The Bible speaks about our thoughts as if they are a force with which to be reckoned, a power with which we must contend. But many are slow to take an active role in creating new patterns of transformational thinking. According to Scripture, we are to “control our thoughts,” “prepare our minds,” and “guard our minds.” (II Cor. 10:5, I Peter 1:13, Philippians 4:7) This is not a one-time task yet requires a constant state of disciplined “renewal.” (Romans 12:2) Leading a disciplined thought life based on the Word of God is a Christian leader’s main defense as they experience the dynamics of each *leadership shadow cycle*.

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

This article has provided a view of the Actualized Leadership Framework from a Christian faith-based perspective. While many psychologists resist a grounding in one religion over another to support their scientific claims, history proves that the spiritual aspect of our total being cannot be divorced from an honest assessment of our personality and, particularly, our leadership style.

Jung famously quipped that “... the brighter the light, the darker the shadow.” It’s important to note that he is making a completely objective statement, without judgment, about human nature. A rock is hard, water is wet, and the brighter someone’s potential and persona, the darker their shadow counterpart. It isn’t personal or even bad. It just is. In this sense, the “cure” – meaning a life well-lived at full potential – requires interaction and dialogue with the “poison” (i.e., the Shadow). In other words, if we are serious about living in our brightest light, we must have the courage to accept our darkness. This notion applies to humanity in the sense that some of the funniest comics are very sad individuals. Some of the nicest Affirmers are incredibly hard on themselves (e.g., mean and hateful self-talk, etc.). And, some of the most effective leaders may indulge and engage in some of the most mortal sins. Given these insights into the human condition, what are we to do?

In conclusion, here are three steps we can take to initiate the Leadership Shadow integration process and, in doing so, more effectively manage the temptation of the deadly sins:

1. Accept that you have a Shadow – People who deny or reject their Shadow are not only low in self-awareness, they are also at war with themselves. Anything with substance casts a Shadow, and accepting your darkness is the first step in realizing your highest potential.

2. Acknowledge your Shadow to others – Being honest with others about your own “stuff” and giving them permission to call it out when they experience it is a huge step toward self-actualization. And, in doing so, you are implicitly giving them permission to do the same.

3. Embrace your wholeness – Only when you can embrace your own unique wholeness will you be at peace. Remember, Jung stated that it is “... better to be whole than perfect.” I think what he meant by that was that our constant striving for absolute perfection in who we are and all that we do is not only impossible, it also prevents us from living authentically in the moment with mindful gratitude.

I know it sounds counterintuitive, but the only way to prevent future Shadow “train wrecks” grounded in deadly sin is to accept, acknowledge and embrace that darkness. The intent of this paper is not to trivialize the extreme negativity and dire consequences of engaging in these deadly sins of leadership, to say nothing of the adverse impact they have on others. Nor is this paper intended to generalize the basic model of the psychoanalytic movement (upon which much of the ALF is based) to one that is more explicitly religious or spiritualist. (Noll, 1997) Rather, this paper should serve as a tool to facilitate the application of both psychological and spiritual principles through the lens of Christianity, as a means of understanding how the divine plays an irrefutable part in our ability to acknowledge and address the temptation of the deadly sins of leadership related to our motive need and style, and to emerge from this process as a more self-actualized and self-aware leader.

References

- Coleman, K. (2010). *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership: Overcome Self-Defeating Behavior in Work and Ministry*. West Highlands, England, UK. Next Leadership.
- Cordeiro, W., Buford, Bob. (2009). *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion*. 2012. Retrieved from Kindle Version (p. 94).
- Davis, K. (1939). *Let All Things Now Living*. Retrieved from http://hymnary.org/text/let_all_things_now_living_a_song_of_thu.
- Kellerman, B., Pittinsky, T.L. (2020). *Leaders Who Lust: Power, Money, Sex. Success, Legitimacy, Legacy*. Cambridge, UK; New York, NY. Cambridge University Press.
- Loritts, B. (2016). *Saving the Saved: How Jesus Saves Us from Try-Harder Christianity into Performance-Free Love*. EPub Edition 2016. Retrieved from Kindle Version (Introduction).
- Morrissey, C.L. (2014). *The 7 Deadly Sins of Leadership: And How to Overcome Them in Yourself and Others*. Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.
- Noll, R. (1997). *The Aryan Christ: The Secret Life of Carl Jung*. (p. 61).
- Peterson, J., Kaplan, D. (2016). *The 10 Laws of Trust: Building the Bonds that Make a Business Great*. Kindle 2016. Retrieved from Kindle Version (Introduction).
- Robbins, S., Coulter, M. (1999). *Management 6th Edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ. Prentice Hall.