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WE APPRECIATE DR. ANGIE CARTER AND THE STUDENTS IN HER
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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

DEAR READERS,

We are honored to present to you Volume 10, Issue 1 of *The Journal of Student Leadership*. As we celebrate a decade of scholarship, creativity, and thoughtful dialogue, this milestone issue invites readers to consider leadership not as a title to obtain, but as a lifelong process of becoming.

Leadership is often spoken of in simple terms, as strength, confidence, direction, success. Yet leadership can be found in perseverance amid barren landscapes, in the courage to apologize, in the wisdom to listen before acting, and in the quiet resilience of those who continue forward even when recognition is absent. It is found not only in public triumphs, but in private moments of reflection and renewal.

Our contributors explore these themes through scholarly essays, poetry, prose, and visual art. Readers will find thought-provoking examinations of wisdom and contemporary leadership, historical examples of principled service, and reflections on voices who challenged entrenched systems. A recurring theme in this issue is that leadership is deeply human. It is imperfect, developmental, and often forged through adversity. As several contributors suggest, leadership is not something preserved in monuments of stone, but something passed from person to person through service and example.

This issue is also evidence of the dedication shown by our editorial staff, peer reviewers at student and faculty levels, and supporters whose many hours of careful work made this publication possible. Their commitment to excellence sustains the mission of this journal and creates a platform where voices and ideas can flourish. We extend our sincere gratitude to Dr. Doug Gardner, Beth Reid, department assistants Eden Black and Marcos Ortiz, and to the School of Education and Department of Student Leadership and Success Studies at Utah Valley University for their firm support.

As you turn these pages, we invite you to reflect on your own capacity to lead. Leadership may emerge in grand moments, but more often it is revealed in daily choices—to learn, to serve, to persist, to heal, and to lift others. It is our hope that this anniversary issue both enlightens and encourages you as you consider the leadership within yourself and the communities around you.

Warm regards,

BENJAMIN A. JOHNSON, PH.D.

SENIOR EDITOR

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PROCESS OF BECOMING

LEE SORENSON

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Acrylic on Canvas

Becoming a leader in my own life has been a never-ending process. The journey of painting this self-portrait was about connecting deeper with myself, understanding my passion for creation, and discovering the resilience behind it. Being a creative leader means you must take initiative and start somewhere. This artwork is a testament to the *beauty of becoming*, by seeing a vision through to the end.

THREE WAYS OF KNOWING LEADERSHIP

DEVON ALMOND, PH.D.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

This essay examines three modes of knowing—information, knowledge, and wisdom—as a developmental typology for contemporary leadership. While leaders today are afforded unprecedented access to information and specialized knowledge, these strengths often come at the expense of cultivating wisdom, a capacity urgently needed in the context of the current meta-crisis. Drawing on T. S. Eliot’s distinction between information, knowledge, and wisdom, the paper clarifies each mode as a distinct way of understanding and engaging with the world: the way of information as externally-anchored and deficiency-based; the way of knowledge as experiential, strategic, and oriented toward autonomy; and the way of wisdom as contemplative, interdependent, and generatively responsive to larger wholes of life. This typology, which uniquely integrates various sources, offers leadership educators, practitioners, and scholars a useful method for including all three modes, with a particular emphasis on cultivating wisdom as an essential capacity for whole-person and whole-system leadership. An experiential exercise illustrates how leaders can discern and practice these modes of knowing through direct engagement with natural worlds.

“Humankind now possesses enormous knowledge, awesome power, and little wisdom. And that is a potentially lethal combination.”

– Roger Walsh (2014, p. 2).

Leaders in educational, organizational, and community settings are wise to unfold the potential of the whole self and the whole system, over the whole of life. However, default approaches to leadership are often culturally directed towards developing fragments of oneself, within fragments of systems, and within fragments of life. The accumulated effect of this fragmentation is potentially disastrous in that it develops ever more information and knowledge that amounts to immense power for action and change in the everyday world—at the expense of wiser ways of knowing. Clearly, wiser ways of knowing are integral for leadership in the contemporary meta-crisis (Scharmer & Pomeroy, 2024). Nowadays,

leaders are drowning in information and skilled at using knowledge, but are rarely taught how to cultivate wisdom, and that imbalance is dangerous. Imagine, for instance, a leader scrolling through endless dashboards, confident in their data, yet unable to discern: What truly matters here? This brief essay, which outlines a typology useful for leaders to practice as they continue their learning and growth, draws inspiration from poet T.S. Eliot who inquired: “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” (as cited in Walsh, 2014, p. 1).

In this, Eliot, who abandoned a banking job to source a pragmatic philosophy of practical wisdom, pointed to three ways of knowing: the way of information, the way of knowledge, and the way of wisdom (Shusterman, 1989). An experiential exercise later in this paper illustrates how leaders can practice these modes through direct engagement with natural worlds.

Leadership, for the purpose of this article, is viewed in terms of managing energies—first within oneself, then in others (Clawson, 2008), in service of becoming more integrated people, bringing together disparate elements of oneself, in order to more fully and freely offer our gifts into the everyday world. Indeed, the process of becoming a leader is similar to the process of becoming a human being (Bennis, 2009).

WAY OF INFORMATION

The first way of knowing, *the way of information*, refers to a way of knowing that relies on outside reference points for understanding, drawing upon received truths from the material world in conjunction with familial, local, and institutionally-inherited traditions. While this way of knowing might include handling data, grasping bits of information, and acquiring technical leadership skills, most fundamentally the way of information refers to an understanding of one’s place in the world in which external structures and traditions construct and define one’s identifications of selfhood. In this traditional way of knowing, leaders are primarily informed by the world “out there” (i.e. objective reference point).

The overarching concerns with the way of information pertain to remaining updated on the needs, events, and issues of the day. Similar to what Daniel Pink (2011) calls “Motivation 1.0,” this *traditional* way of

knowing is anchored by an “if/then” orientation that is deficiency-based, aiming to adequately meet physical needs. These needs reflect an emptiness, that once filled through satisfaction, simply return to their original form of emptiness (e.g. satisfaction of hunger returns to its earlier state). In this way, leaders’ scope of concern is on surface structures that point to physical symptoms, immediate effects, and production/consumption.

But, what happens when information becomes a trap? Whether it is undergraduate students who are taught to major in minor activities (McKeown, 2020), corporate managers who value well-informed decisions over intuitive discernment, or community leaders who conduct endless needs assessments, contemporary cultures rely heavily on data and information—often to excess. In his book, *The Information Diet*, Clay Johnson (2012) describes various symptoms of what he calls “information obesity”—symptoms, such as a poor sense of time, attention fatigue, distorted sense of reality, apnea, sedentary lifestyles, etc. (p. 63). Clearly, relying solely on external reference points leaves leaders ill-equipped for complexity—a limitation the way of knowledge begins to address.

WAY OF KNOWLEDGE

Informational excesses rapidly propel the knowledge-doubling curve—from every century, to every quarter century, to every year, to an astonishing every 12 hours (Fuller, 1981; Schilling, 2013). Whereas information is exemplified by facts deriving from outside sources (“what”), knowledge is learned through first-hand experience and tends to matters of “how”. As skillsets give way to mindsets, *the way of knowledge* draws in a leader’s unique experience in relationship with subjective and objective reference points. This way of knowing is process-oriented in that it emphasizes strategies for building patterns and subtle distinctions through experience to cultivate judgement, recognition, and critique that often take the form of scientific knowing. Subtle methods that promote effectiveness, efficiency, goal orientation, analysis, and reasoning are highly valued in this way of knowing. In short, leaders learn how to think rationally and act intelligently.

With this conventional way of knowing, the world “out-there” and the dimensions of selfhood “in-here” subtly influence each other in distinguishing patterns of information into knowledge. Leaders are prone to

ask: “How am I unique?” “What is my niche or competitive advantage?” And, “How can I plan, achieve, and be successful within society at large?”

Compared to the dependency associated with the way of information, the way of knowledge is much more *independent* in its pursuit of maximizing agency and choice. A motivating question underlying this way of knowing might be: “How can I maximize my own achievement through utilizing knowledge?” This way of knowing draws on social values to emphasize *how* leaders know. Reflective of what Pink (2011) calls “Motivation 2.0,” this *conventional* way of knowing taps into the realm of the mind in a process-oriented manner that points toward future goals.

The satisfaction of earlier physical drives and the cultivation of mental interests transitions from deficiency-based *surviving* towards a more sufficiency-based *striving* and *thriving*. Here, the starting place is not one of need, but rather a place of strengths and adequacy that ambitiously aims for the possibility of more in the future—more ambition, advantage, accomplishment, achievement, and so on. Yet, this spectrum of surviving, through striving and thriving, seldom ever arrives at a more presence-based and relational way of knowing (e.g., Belenky, et al., 1997). The way of wisdom offers this contemplative texture.

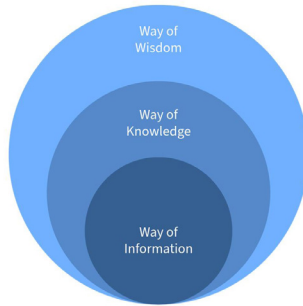
WAY OF WISDOM

The third way of knowing, *the way of wisdom*, transcends and includes the first two ways of knowing. Developing beyond the dependency-based skillsets of the way of information and the independency-based mindsets of the way of knowledge, this way of knowing involves rich *interdependency* with larger wholes of life. These heart settings reflect what Pink (2011) calls “Motivation 3.0,” which involves learning, caring, and creating to serve all, including oneself.

As Rowley and Slack (2009) demonstrate, there are many conceptions of wisdom. The core of practical wisdom includes deep accurate insight and understanding of oneself, the central existential issues of life, and skillful benevolent responsiveness (Walsh, 2015). In short, wisdom is a deeper, calmer ability to see the bigger picture and to respond with care. This way of knowing is about refining oneself through generative contributions into larger wholes. Whereas information and knowledge

are driven towards acquiring more, whether it be accumulating bits of information or attaining knowledge and accomplishments, the way of wisdom attunes with larger wholes to care for worldly aches. Drawing on Scharmer (2016), the way of wisdom attends to the triple fracture of Me (within self), We (with other people), and Its (with natural worlds).

While a well-informed and knowledgeable company president is likely to be skilled at forecasting and projecting himself into the future, a hospital leader who employs a wiser way of knowing looks to the long-haul with a moral sensitivity for the well-being of all. Her heart setting combines with her mindset and skillset to also include right judgement. Moral, social, and practical dimensions are integral as she embraces not only “what” (i.e., way of information) and “how” (i.e., way of knowledge), but as also bigger picture matters of “why” and “who” (i.e., way of wisdom).



Distinct from the certitude of the ways of information and knowledge, the way of wisdom is built on a robust and trustworthy bedrock of unknowingness. In this way, vulnerabilities, not mere strengths, are essential to the way of wisdom. Rooted in a deep ground of being, leaders wisely offer their gifts to benefit the everyday world at large, which includes oneself. As expressed by David Deida (2001), unoffered gifts clench as stress. He suggests that people die having fully offered their gifts or die having never offered them.

EXPERIENTIAL APPLICATION OF THREE WAYS OF KNOWING

This paper claims that leadership development benefits from integrating all three modes of knowing, with a deliberate emphasis on cultivating wisdom as an essential capacity for navigating the contemporary meta-crisis. In a time of climate crisis, political division, and psychological

burnout, I argue that wisdom is essential for leaders to serve their communities, heal fragmentation, and lead with humility and purpose.

Leaders in educational, organizational, and community settings can intentionally and systematically instill practices that cultivate wiser ways of knowing. In my college classrooms, I emphasize slowing down, clearly seeing, and deeply listening to cultivate the presence, humility, equanimity, and moral sensitivity that are sometimes backgrounded in the contemporary cultural meta-crisis. In my experience, students learn to soften from an incessant “go-go-go” into a sense of “slow-slow-slow”: a seemingly necessary precondition to heal the triple-fracture.

I now offer an example of one of these experiential practices. To experience the ways of information, knowledge, and wisdom, you might situate yourself in front of any natural phenomenon and apply the three steps described below. For this example, imagine your natural phenomenon is a planted tree in a city park.

Step 1 - Sensory Attention:

Look at the natural phenomenon offering sensory visual attention to the object. (e.g., naming the species of the tree, noticing the leaves, branches, roots, etc.).

Step 2 - Inner Qualities:

Now, squint your eyes slightly to soften your gaze, relating the outer characteristics with the inner qualities of the natural phenomenon (e.g., name the species, leaves, branches, roots, etc. and also glean into the entity’s inner dimensions/structures).

Step 3 - Life Qualities:

Finally, squint your eyes deeply so that your gaze not only softens, but blurs to reveal the life of the natural phenomenon (e.g., the clouds, rain, sun, soil, winds, seed, birthing, all of which have nurtured through the lifespan of the tree, etc.)

This brief exercise, which draws on the three eyes of knowing—essentially, gross/objective, subtle/objective/subjective, and highly subtle/contemplative—described by St. Bonaventure fosters the preconditions to recognize the ways of information, knowledge, and wisdom.

Finally, if this exercise resonated, Scharmer's Theory U (2016) offers a useful leadership framework to foster wiser ways of knowing. The model creates the conditions for leaders to suspend the habitual judgements of the ways of information and knowledge to access the more generative states of consciousness, which form the bedrock of ways of wisdom.

CONCLUSION

This paper's analysis recognizes the prevalence of the ways of information and knowledge, often at the expense of the way of wisdom. In this, leaders feverishly amass more and more pseudo-productive activities and professional responsibilities to justify end goals. While this may achieve a mediocre legitimacy, it fails to serve the whole of the person, in the whole of the community, over the whole of life. In doing so, leaders may perpetuate developing fragments of the self, within fragments of the system, within fragments of life. Leaders forging along in this contemporary meta-crisis would do well to draw upon a full spectrum of knowing and home in on the gifts that they uniquely are here to offer. Future leadership development must move beyond information and knowledge transmission to create conditions for wisdom to emerge.

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THE LITTLE LIGHTHOUSE ON THE HILL

TATUM BUNKER

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

For the past century, a little lighthouse has sat on the hill. It used to be the color of the sky, a pastel pale blue, with cobbled steps and painted flowers that reached about as high as the local children could reach.

Time rusted and peeled the little lighthouse that sat on the hill. Time cracked the steps and weeds would grow through. The flowers on the side faded and dripped off onto the dirt below. Time made it clear of its intentions to destroy the old, little lighthouse. But what time didn't understand was that the little lighthouse's purpose was not yet completed.

The light never did die.

Night after night: through fog and rain, through the most tempest storms, that little lighthouse on the hill stayed strong. Despite the storms and rust, there was no crack in the bulb. That little lighthouse saved thousands of boats, boats of all contents and sizes. Boats of all goals and colors. Boats of all modernities and pasts.

The light never faded, the light never dwindled. The light stayed shiny and bright, on the hill of ever-growing weeds. The light will never die, as long as it is needed. The little lighthouse may need a fresh coat of paint, but it will always lead those who are lost in the churning waves. It will lead those stranded in the darkest night, those trapped in the thickest fog. It will lead those unable to leave home and those wanting more from life.

The light of the little lighthouse will lead you.

BARREN GROWTH

SPENCER LADD

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Photography

In today's circumstances, we often find ourselves struggling—with ourselves and with our surroundings. It's important now more than ever to push forward, to keep moving, and strive for what is right even when it feels like the world is out to get you. This is leadership inspiring through persistence.

In the middle of a dry and barren Nevada desert, a single, tall bush is focused on the center of the frame. In the background is a somewhat desolate, dry, and rocky landscape emphasizing the unforgiving nature of the desert heat. Although its environment is shrouded in rocks, dirt, and a lack of a prominent water source, the bush grows tall, wide, and green.

Much like a bush growing in the desert, leaders are often faced with an environment that is contrary to growth. One of the defining features of a good leader is the ability to break through these challenges and flourish despite the circumstances. As a future leader, I hope to stand out through my sheer will to grow when the environment is trying to keep me down.



BARREN GROWTH

SPENCER LADD

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Photography



TOGETHER, WE LEAD

AIMEE BARCEL

DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

Photography

People stand together, raising their voices to create change. Leadership is never a solo act. It is not a lone struggle but a collective effort—calling out and moving forward together, shoulder to shoulder.

MARRINER S. ECCLES: AN EXAMPLE OF LIFELONG LEADERSHIP

LEE JOHNSON

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Marriner S. Eccles was a man of principles, yet he may be perceived as paradoxical. He was a staunch Republican, a strong supporter of Keynesian economics, and a deep reservoir of knowledge concerning working financial systems. Contrary to what one may assume, Marriner Eccles also championed deficit spending and New Deal programs that many called socialist. This paradox, however, begins to dissolve when one uncovers Eccles's strong sense of leadership. Eccles was a unique and effective leader due to his strong display of leadership, personal integrity, and commitment to being a lifelong learner. These ideas are supported with examples from Eccles's personal life to foster positive benefits to leaders, organizations, and society at large.

MARRINER S. ECCLES: CONSISTENT, IMPARTIAL LEADERSHIP

On any given day, thousands of visitors flock to the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The iconic buildings and large fields there quietly whisper the history that shook the world. Images of groundbreaking protests, Martin Luther King, Jr. the AIDS quilt, along with many others, fill the minds of those who casually wander from one site to the next. As visitors are seeking to connect themselves to great historical figures and events, a mere block away on Constitution Avenue stands a quiet, confident building. This building bears the name of a man who transformed the role financial institutions play not only in the United States, but the entire world—Marriner Stoddard Eccles.

Due to his Utah roots, Eccles's name may sound familiar to those who are connected to the Beehive state, as his family has been heavily involved in philanthropic giving for much of Utah's modern history. Despite the use of the Eccles's name nationwide, many do not understand the magnitude

of what the family has accomplished. It has been said that Eccles was “one of the most remarkable public servants of the twentieth century, on par with George Catlett Marshall and Paul Volcker.” (Warsh, 2013, para. 5). A banker by trade, Eccles became a prominent financial figure when he was credited with preventing the collapse of First Security Bank during the Great Depression. This public prowess led Eccles to serve as an assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury, and eventually, as the governor of the Federal Reserve (serving from 1934-1951). The Federal Reserve is the central bank of the United States, with the role of governor currently held by Jerome Powell. In this public and scrutinized role, Eccles provided support and innovation to FDR’s New Deal, shaped the modern central banking system through the Banking Act of 1935, and defended the central bank’s independence throughout the Great Depression and WWII (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2025).

While dozens of books have been derived from Eccles’s theories and financial models, this paper seeks to understand how one man was able to influence others with stark political differences to achieve extraordinary results. Although Marriner Eccles’s official period of public service spanned from the 1930s to the 1950s, his excellent leadership began before (and continued long after) his unmatched financial legacy. He was an outstanding leader for the duration of his life by exhibiting traits of a Level 5 leader, abiding by personal principles and being a lifelong learner.

A LEVEL 5 LEADER

Level 5 Leadership is a relatively new term that has withstood the test of time since its inception. Pioneered by Jim Collins in his book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't* (2001), Level 5 leaders have been described as those who exhibit extreme personal humility while being fanatically driven to accomplish organizational goals. *Level 5 leadership* was coined by Collins after his team performed an analysis of why “good companies become great” and determined that this style of leadership is found in exceptional cases of organizational success (Collins, 2005). The leadership qualities of Levels 1 (highly capable individuals) through 4 (effective leaders) are typically found within any functional organization, but the rare combination of personal humility and unusual professional will is what defines Level 5 leaders (Collins, 2001).

It has been noted that “because Level 5 leaders are so humble, they may seem shy and self-effacing,” yet are found “all around us today in businesses, schools, government, and homes” (Winn et al., 2020, Section 2.12). Eccles embodied this definition as he was never concerned with his personal matters, nor did he allow fame or accolades to be the motivation behind his work. Eccles accomplished tremendous, seemingly impossible tasks during his time at the Federal Reserve. Some of his feats included passing the Banking Act of 1935 (which created the foundation for the modern Federal Reserve we know today), convincing the government to engage in deficit spending, and solidifying the doctrine that the Federal Reserve will act independent from political pressures.

Like many great leaders, Eccles seldom spoke or wrote about himself. In the few books he published, he was intentionally vague about the personal details of his life and instead focused on his ideas, theories, and an impartial view on what had occurred during his career. However, despite his efforts to keep a low profile, the public and his contemporaries could not help but take notice of such a remarkable individual.

It was in 1933 when Eccles testified before a congressional committee with an argument that would ultimately become the framework for FDR’s New Deal (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2025). This testimony, motivated by a desire to pull the nation out of the Great Depression, is what led to Marriner to be appointed as an assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury, transitioning his focus from private business to public service. This led to further exposure, such as *Time* magazine featuring Eccles on its cover and stating that “a good many people believe that Marriner Stoddard Eccles is [t]he only thing standing between the U.S. and disaster” (Time, 1936). What followed would be a notable career in Washington that implemented crucial fiscal policies throughout the Great Depression and WWII. Even after his death, students, politicians, and scholars continued to uncover the work that Eccles had done for his country.

This marks Eccles as a Level 5 leader, according to Jim Collins, who noted that “Level 5 leaders set up their successes for even greater success in the next generation, whereas egocentric level 4 leaders often set up their successors for failure” (Collins, 2001, p. 39). Eccles was able to create a system that has withstood the test of time and is credited with pioneering

our modern financial systems. This is further evidenced by the fact that Eccles continues to receive praise even today. A recent example comes from former U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch, who stated that “...FDR deserves an awful lot of the credit, but FDR couldn’t have done half of what he did without people like Marriner Eccles advising him and helping him. I think if FDR were here today he would admit that” (PBS Utah, 2019, 54:16:00). Eccles’s immense ambition, future thinking, and personal integrity were what made him a strong Level 5 leader and allowed him to produce unprecedented results. Furthermore, it is notable that almost all scholars agree that much of his leadership ability stemmed from his unwavering personal beliefs.

INTEGRITY, PERSONAL PRINCIPLES, AND TRUST

All leaders know that trust is imperative when it comes to leading others. It has been noted that trust relies on integrity, competence, and warmth. Integrity is present when individuals understand their values, ensure their actions align with their values, and model the behavior that is expected of others (Winn et al., 2020). Eccles was able to demonstrate all three of these attributes because he committed himself to his personal values and was well-prepared for a leadership role. Eccles credits serving a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Scotland for giving him the ability to back his beliefs even when confronted with immense opposition. In a letter to home during his missionary service, he cautiously mentioned that perhaps “a Mission gives one almost too much nerve” (Hyman, 1976, p. 39). He was known for being driven and passionate in convincing others in Washington.

Early in Eccles’s short life, he witnessed the devastation that the Great Depression had wrought and observed how local businesses and religious organizations managed the situation. This provided him with both perspective and competence. Eccles’s unique circumstances and background fostered the belief that there comes a time when governments must step in. Because of this, he developed his own unwavering credo, which paid homage to both his faith and father. Eccles acted with warmth and was known to be a very personable and friendly individual, but he never hesitated to disagree.

Any individual that is willing to disagree on serious topics will have peers and contemporaries who oppose them. In fact, Eccles’s obituary notes

that his willingness to shake up the status quo led people to characterize him as “an errant Republican, a spendthrift and an economic witch doctor” (Jensen, 1977, p. 38). Despite the noise and opposition, Eccles continued to stand firm in his beliefs and ideals—to the point of losing his position as chair of the Federal Reserve under President Truman. Through it all, Eccles was never rude or overbearing, but rather confident, measured, and analytical in his approach and responses. Because of this, he was able to successfully foster trust with some of the most important American leaders of the twentieth century.

A LIFELONG LEARNER

Leaders are lifelong learners and “understand that learning is a form of renewal for individuals, teams, and organizations...They realize that the best way to control the future is to create it” (Winn et al., 2020, Ch. 6). Eccles understood that societal changes would be required if the world were to prosper in peace. It is well-known that Eccles’s father, David, was a very wealthy Utah businessman. After the senior Eccles’s untimely death in 1912, Marriner became the legal guardian of much of his father’s estate. Despite the unusual wealth and privileged background of Eccles, he spent the bulk of his career championing more equitable income distribution. After his career in Washington, Eccles shared his perspective on this matter by stating,

We have gone far toward bringing about a more equitable distribution, than was the case 20 years ago.... In 1929 the highest 5 per cent of all income recipients obtained 34 per cent of the total national income, while, at the present time, they receive but 18 per cent of the total. Meanwhile the share of total income received by those in the lower income classes has increased proportionately. This means that we have in the years since 1929, accomplished one of the great social revolutions of history, a revolution that has developed gradually and has been, and will continue to be, of inestimable benefit to our entire nation. The fact that such a redistribution of income has been affected without social unrest and upheaval or dislocation of our productive activities is in itself an eloquent testimonial to our economic, social, and political institutions. (Eccles, 1951, p. 3)

Eccles embodied lifelong learning by continually assessing trends and situations and was not afraid to admit when he was wrong. Although he won the respect and subtle adoration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, he was never able to convince President Truman on various fiscal policies and was not reappointed as chairman of the Federal Reserve. This was devastating for Eccles. However, great leaders are not only leaders at the workplace or during the peaks of their careers—they exemplify leadership no matter the time, situation, or place.

When Eccles finished his career in public office, the newfound abundance of time allowed him to reflect on what he could have done better. One of the first reflections he recounts in his biography is the pain of not spending enough time with his wife or family. After this time, he began devoting more time to his family and acted as a surrogate father to his grandchildren (PBS Utah, 2019). His reflections also inspired him to champion ideas for the betterment of humanity, even when such ideas were unpopular. He is known to have prophesied valid concerns on various global issues during his final days, such as the Vietnam conflict, global population growth, and the growing influence of China.

CONCLUSION

Eccles possessed an incredible mind, coupled with numerous formidable talents. When reflecting upon his rich history, it is imperative to note that during the Great Depression, Eccles was able to offer insight and direction when nobody else could. As innovative leaders of today understand Level 5 leadership, have unwavering personal integrity, and become lifelong learners, they are better equipped to solve the problems of tomorrow.

Eccles embodied these simple leadership principles despite his lack of formal education and he left behind an unmatched legacy by creating a system that would continue to bless and guide future generations. He built something greater than himself and sincerely sought to improve the world we all share. Many great leaders are often inspired by the writings of others, and Eccles was no different. In a commencement speech at the Utah State Agricultural College (Utah State University) in 1951, Eccles felt that the best conclusion he could give to new graduates was a quotation President Woodrow Wilson gave during a speech in October 1913. The quote perfectly embodies the principles of a Level 5 leader:

Do you covet honor? You will never get it by serving yourself. Do you covet distinction? You will get it only as the servant of mankind. Do not forget, then, as you walk these classic places, why you are here. You are not here merely to prepare to make a living. You are here to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand (Eccles, 1951, p. 7).

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FAILURE

JESSICA BRADSHAW

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

“Come on, guys, recess is over.” I blow my whistle again, frustrated that my students are not lining up. I bounce from one foot to the other, desperately trying to warm my freezing legs. I am usually more patient with my little kiddos, but I am getting agitated as they slowly meander to me. I yell one last time to hurry, then decide to take in the kids who are already in line. I ask Tally to hold the doors for the others as I hit a wall of much-needed heat.

They all dispersed to either run to the bathroom or to get water before we head upstairs back to our classroom. I wait by the lockers, counting as they come, and line up once again. The routine is engraved in their bodies by now, and I haven’t had issues for months, until today.

I turn to see the two small best friends, Luke and Koah, pushing each other. Feeling little patience, I take a long breath.

“Boys, please stop.” They both turn to me, shame written over their faces. Thinking that’s the end of it, I glance away and watch for the others.

“This is your fault,” Luke grumbles.

“It is not!”

THUD.

In horror, I find that Koah has cornered Luke against the lockers. Looming over the other boy, looking ready to pummel him to the ground.

“Koah, go to the back of the line.” Anger chokes my throat; I can hardly breathe.

“No!” Koah huffs, “It’s not my fault.” Crossing his arms, standing like a freaking teenager. He is only six!

“Either go to the back of the line or cut. it. out.” I emphasize each word with a hard glare directed at the two boys. I am not feeling proud of how I am dealing with this, but I am just so tired, my feet are cold, and it’s just stupid. They never fight, and Koah is just being a little brat. Why is he not just letting it go?

Once the rest of my students are all lined up, I take one deep breath. Getting a hold of my emotions, stepping out to the center so all of them can see me.

“Okay, guys, before we head upstairs, I wanted to let you guys know that...”

“See, your fault,” Luke mumbles...I ignore.

“Our schedule is going to be a little different because of the power outage last night.”

“Shut up.” Koah.

“So, the computer lab is out of commission.” Just ignore it.

“No.” Luke.

“So we will instead have some free time after math, and hope that they can get the computers back up and running. If not, we will work on our story project.”

“Shut up, Luke!” Koah whispers loudly. I swallow the anger and annoyance burning in my chest.

“No!” Luke turns away from Koah, acting like he just dropped the best comeback that the world has ever seen.

“So we will...”

Koah shoves Luke, knocking him into other students and causing them all to stumble.

“KOA! Get to the back of the line. Now!” My voice bounces down the long hallway, drawing others to turn and watch the scene I am creating. Koah scoffs. He storms to the back of the line and punches the wall, wincing as he pulls his red knuckles away from the solid brick. My head protests the tears welling in my eyes. I can’t believe I just yelled at him. Why did I—my breath comes out shakily as I look at my students’ eyes—they are scared. I ball my hand into my too-small jean pockets.

“So, we will...umm do our story projects.” I feel like I am being choked; I can’t breathe. I need to get out of here, but I can’t. “Aly, can you lead us up the stairs, please? Charlie, can you hold the upstairs door for the class? Thank you.”

My sweet Aly gives me an undeserved smile and guides the rest of the class into the stairwell. I hold the bottom door for them as Charlie runs to get the upstairs one. I avoid Koah’s eyes when he passes me. I pause longer than I should, trying to control my heightened emotions.

I let the stairwell door clatter to a close, sighing against it, rubbing my back to only be met by small, tear-filled eyes. Koah is curled up into a small ball on the landing. I walk up to him, feeling the force of what I did once more. I promised myself when I started teaching that I would never, EVER, yell at a student...and yet here I am. I wave to Koah to follow me. I wait for him to unwind before he goes out into the upstairs hallway. I tell him to stay there as I poke my head into Sarah’s classroom, knowing her students are still out at recess.

“Hey, can you watch my class for a moment?” Her typing pauses as she glances at me, probably noticing my watering eyes.

“Of course.” She closes her laptop and walks past me to the next classroom over. Mine. I turn back to Koah, who is sitting in a ball again with his face tucked away. I come and sit by him, leaning my tired head back against the cold wall.

“What happened, man? Why couldn’t you just listen to me?” I cringe at how I sound. I am acting like it’s purely his fault. He doesn’t answer. I mean, I wouldn’t have either. I rub my stinging eyes and try again. “What happened with Luke?”

“He was being mean.” His small voice floats out from his protective shell.

“Did he do something?” Koah nods against his arms. “What did he do?”

No answer.

“You don’t have to tell me.” I curl my legs up against my chest, matching Koah’s position, while still looking at his fragile form.

“Why am I in trouble...it’s not my fault.” My heart cracks at how small his voice sounds.

“You pushed Luke...” I rub my eyes, feeling defeated. I need to try this differently, “I should have listened to what happened; I shouldn’t have yelled. I am sorry, Koah.”

“You’re...you’re sorry?” One small eye pokes up, glancing at me. His cheeks are wet with fresh tears.

“Yes, I am really sorry. It wasn’t right of me.” We both fall silent. I close my eyes to listen to the sound of children playing, learning, and just being themselves. My lip quivers as a tear escapes my eye.

“No, one has said sorry before.”

“What do you mean?” I hear Koah shifting beside me until he is facing me. His black curly hair falls against his reddened face. He is so small yet knows too much of the world. I turn towards him until we are both crisscross applesauce.

“My brothers never...never say sorry.”

“You brothers are a lot older than you, right?”

“Yes...why are you sorry?”

“Because I made a mistake that hurt you,” I say, such a simple statement that seems to slap him right in the chest. He is quiet for a long moment.

“I am sorry, too. For pushing Luke and not listening to you.”

"Thank you."

"My brothers yell at me." He says so quietly, I don't know if I heard him right.

"And they don't say sorry?" An ache runs down my throat.

"No," he rubs his hands together, rubbing and rubbing. "I don't want to do that. I want to be, sorry for what I do."

"That's a very admirable thing."

"What does ad-marble mean?" He stumbled across the word.

"Well, it means that..." How do I say this? "When you are admirable, it means you're a good person...and people respect you." A wide, cheesy smile grows across his face, a contrast to his red eyes.

"Yeah?"

"Yes, Koah, you are a good person." His smile turns warm as he looks to the ground.

"Okay, let's head back to class," I say softly. He bounces up fast and is already in the classroom by the time I am on my feet.

I wave goodbye to the last student picked up at the end of the day. I feel the weight of the day sit heavily in my chest.

"So, what happened?" Sarah asks. I feel my cheeks rise with heat. I knew she would ask. I mean, I practically cried in front of her earlier when I asked her to watch my kids.

"I yelled at Koah." I don't even feel like trying to come up with a lie. She doesn't respond but just waits. "I said I was sorry, and he was just so...shocked. Apparently, his brothers yell at him all the time and never say sorry. I mean, why would an 18-year-old boy yell at his 6-year-old brother? It's insane! Yet I feel like a monster and a terrible teacher."

"You are only human."

"But I need to be better for my students."

"You already are Lily." I finally turn to Sarah, spotting the seriousness etched into her eyes. "You told Koah that you are sorry. That you will try to be better."

"I shouldn't have yelled."

"Maybe so, but leadership is not being perfect." She gives me a small smile. "I was short with one of my students, my first year teaching. She wasn't getting the math I was teaching, and I decided it was her fault. I blamed her. One day, I got frustrated and raised my voice at her. She yelled so loudly and defensively, 'I am not stupid.' It hurt. I made a student feel... stupid. I beat myself up for it for months, hating myself. But lucky for you, you're already a step ahead of where I was. I didn't apologize to my student. I just let it go. I didn't own up to my mistakes."

"Okay."

"Ugh, sorry, I don't mean to preach to you. I just think that being a leader or a teacher is being self-aware of your mistakes. Apologizing will not hinder your classroom; it will grow it into a better place. A safer place."

"It still hurts."

"And it will forever. Just don't let it destroy you, learn from it." Sarah leaves me standing on the sidewalk. I stare at the sparkling concrete and wonder if she is right.

She is right. I begin to own up to my mistakes, and my students soon follow. I grow closer to them and understand their lives. I realize that being a leader doesn't mean that you are perfect. It means you are self-aware and know when to apologize.

(Names have been changed to preserve anonymity)

BEFORE THE STONE SETS

JENNA BERNDT

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

The leaders before us
did not build statues
because they believed
themselves eternal.
They built them
because they weren't.

Because statues send a message
and leadership is a loan,
never a possession.
Because power inevitably
leaves the body
no matter how much we resist.

The Greeks stood before marble
and asked the question:
*What must a person become
to be worthy of being followed?*

So, they carved balance into hips,
calm into faces,
virtue into muscle.
Not because leaders were like this—
but because without shape
beliefs collapse.

Because power
is sometimes fear:
Remember me.
Remember that I stood here.
Remember that order existed
because I did...

Leadership, they knew,
was aspiration strained through flesh.
A constant failure
to live up to one's own outline.
To live up to the "greats."
The Romans did not ask *what should be*.
They asked *what remains*.
They knew memory must be taught
how to stay.
So, they carved weight.
Age.
Endurance.
They said: *Look at what leadership costs*.
They said: *This face led us to victory*.

But stone does not remember the pauses.
It does not show the moment
before the order was given,
when a leader realized
someone would not come back.

Statues erase the trembling.
They erase the private reckoning
between conscience and consequence.
Leadership lives in that space—
not in the speech,
not in the triumph,
but in the quiet understanding
every choice made
matters.

Stone pretends leadership is certainty.
It is not.
It is a willingness
to act without it.

When we lead in this time,
let it be with listening before legacy,
accountability before admiration,
movement before monuments.
Let there be proof
that leadership does not harden into stone,
but passes from
human to human—
not to be remembered,
but to act, to influence,
to shape what comes next.

SUNLESS SUNFLOWER

KATE HATCH

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Colored Pencil on Black Paper

Sunless Sunflower reflects leadership through perseverance and quiet strength. The sunflower is traditionally associated with light and optimism, yet this piece portrays it in a subdued and wilted state. This dichotomy represents leaders who continue to stand grounded and resilient even when visibility, recognition, or clarity is absent. Leadership is not always bright. It is not always celebrated. Often, it exists in moments of endurance and strength despite challenging conditions.



SUNLESS SUNFLOWER

KATE HATCH

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY
Colored Pencil on Black Paper



BLUE TIGER

SAMUEL BROWER

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Mixed media: Alcohol markers and colored pencils

Leaders are brave, sometimes ferocious. Not afraid to break their chains and push past the things in life that try to bind them.

APHRA BEHN: THE PIONEER OF FEMINIST LITERATURE

CASSANDRA L. VASQUEZ

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

This paper argues that Aphra Behn pioneered feminist ideas far ahead of her time by layering female moral perspectives onto traditionally male-dominated contexts, crafting complex female characters with a depth and nuance largely absent from the works of her male counterparts, inviting women to engage with her writing, and critiquing patriarchal authority. These morals and tactics come to light in her works such as Oroonoko, The Rover, and Love Letters. Not only was Behn a female writer, but an excellent author in general, comparable to her male counterparts. Utilizing her authorship, the narrators and characters in her stories, and a new perspective on female sexuality, she successfully shattered the boundaries that previously existed for female writers. She deserves much more credit than what is now attributed to her in modern literature and society. We should elevate Behn's as the trail-blazing voice of feminism that it truly is and was. Every young girl of the future will know Aphra Behn's name and hold it with equal value next to male literary geniuses of 17th-century Europe.

Aphra Behn's works exhibit stark differences from those of other authors and playwrights of her time, such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Donne. This is primarily due to the fact that she is a woman and therefore portrays women much more vividly. Behn brought a very different depiction of women to literature during a time when authors and playwrights were almost exclusively male. "The burden of representativeness has fallen heavily on women poets, who have had constantly to prove that women could write at all" (Mermin, 1990, p. 337). After years of the people only seeing and reading depictions of women written by men, Behn finally provided a true representation of women from the much more accurate perspective of a woman herself. Her creations pioneered feminist ideas far ahead of her time by layering female morals onto contexts usually reserved for men; bringing complex female characters to life with a depth

and perspective unseen in the works of her male counterparts; inviting women to engage with her works; and critiquing patriarchal authority. These morals and tactics come to light in works such as *Oroonoko*, *The Rover*, and *Love Letters*. And of course, not only was Behn a female writer, but an excellent author in general, comparable to her male counterparts. This significant change in literature was resisted by patriarchal society, but Behn paved the way for other female writers, and her influence pervades into the modern age.

BREAKING BARRIERS

During the Restoration era of the 17th century, Behn was functioning in an “unprecedented space [where] women wrote poetry, published, and were read. Still, because they wrote and were read specifically as women, they did not become part of the mainstream of English poetry” (Mermin, 1990, p. 352). The lack of female writers and pushback from patriarchal society, however, did not stop Behn, and she became well known for her plays, novels, and poems. “While the almost total absence of women poets from the central literary tradition in England before the 19th century can be attributed in very general terms to the cultural suppression of female voices, many women had written and even published poetry” (Mermin, 1990, p. 335). Confronted with discrimination and inequality, it is a wonder that Behn had the courage to write from the female perspective, let alone publish her written works at all during the 17th century.

The concept of women writers was an utterly foreign idea to audiences of the time who were accustomed to experiencing stories from solely male perspectives: “When the prologue confessed that the playwright was female, the audience could not help but be struck by the novelty of a woman playwright, especially in a time when actresses were still unfamiliar” (Backscheider, 1987, p. 247). The elevation of women voices in literature was so uncommon, that this experience made audiences hyper-aware that they were experiencing media not from the default male perspective, but from a foreign, female viewpoint. “The awareness that a woman was the author acted like background music: at least periodically, it interfered with the act of watching (or reading) from beginning to end” (Backscheider, 1987, p. 247). Even though women were faced with many obstacles like this, their voices began to emerge.

FEMINIST LEGACY

The question of whether Behn was an active feminist has been debated, as “some critics find her a vigorous feminist, making ‘suffragette’ claims for women, while others argue that she compromised with a male-dominated literary establishment and that her work consequently displays a ‘masculine set of values’” (Pearson, 1991, p. 40). Behn recognized and openly denounced the limitations her work faced due to her sex. She scathingly described how the first audience to view her play *The Dutch Lover* was explicitly advised at the play’s beginning that they should drastically lower their expectations solely because the play was authored by a woman.

When her third play, *The Dutch Lover* (1673), failed, she blamed those who believed that her sex incapacitated her art. In the preface she wrote for the printed version of the play, she included a striking description of the first performance: “That day ‘twas Acted first...a phlegmatic, white, ill-Favor’d, wretched Fop...opening that which serves it for a mouth, out issued...that they were to expect a woeful Play...for it was a woman’s.” (Backscheider, 1987, p. 251)

Behn clearly spoke out against those who would minimize her due to her sex—the epitome of feminism. To mention another incident where she does the same, in Behn’s *Sir Patient Fancy*, she “gives Nell Gwyn a scathing speech...‘Pray tell me then, Why Women should not write as well as Men’” (Backscheider, 1987, p. 252). As we analyze Behn’s works and the conventions she used, it becomes apparent to the reader that Behn was, in fact, an advocate for women and pioneered the way for female authors, women, and feminism.

FEMALE AUTHORSHIP

Behn gives voice to women not only because she is a female author, but also because she writes the narrator of many of her works as a female voice and intends for women to be her target audience of readership. As female authors of the 17th century, Behn and other women writers, “never forget that they write, and will be read, as women...whereas male poets have imagined their own voices to be genderless, ‘universal’” (Mermin, 1990, p. 336). Female authors are favored in her stories, whereas “[m]ale

authorship is often thwarted or malign[ed]" (Pearson, 1991, p. 48). Similar to many authors today, Behn writes stories that possess whisperings of her own experiences and "[t]he tales, then, are full of female authors. The female narrators are themselves specifically authors" (Pearson, 1991, p. 47). In this way, Behn subverts the patriarchal ideas which insist that only men should be authors. One feminist feature of the characters in her stories is that "[m]ale authors fail, [and] female authors gain a control, however ambiguous or contradictory, over literary texts or the world in which they move" (Pearson, 1991, p. 48). We can see how Behn carefully utilizes her authorship to favor feminism.

NARRATIVE AUTHORITY

By creating female narrators, Behn vividly illustrates the female experience and how women are treated unequally. "In Behn's fourteen fictions, the narrator is never definitely male; six give no clue to gender, though she sometimes seems to be female by implication, and in eight... she is definitely female" (Pearson, 1991, p. 41). Behn not only wrote *about* women, but she wrote stories from the *perspective* of women, which allowed her stories to explore themes rarely touched upon in her time.

In the simplest cases the female sex of the narrator lends an authority to her accounts of women's lives and natures, and reflects the empowering of women, or the mockery of men, within the narratives. In more complex tales, the female narrator is depicted, like the female characters, as embedded within patriarchy and limited by it. These women are torn by contradictions, powerful and governing within their fictions, powerless outside them, and their narratives are deeply coloured, even undermined, by these contradictions. (Pearson, 1991, pp. 41–42)

The way these female narrators speak, either "with a consciously ironic voice to reveal contradictions in the received orthodoxies of gender or unconsciously reveal themselves as victims of these very contradictions," helps the reader to recognize the seemingly contradictory issues that women face regarding power and powerlessness (Pearson, 1991, p. 48). For example, one instance where the female narrator is portrayed as having the moral high ground in comparison to the male readership is found in Behn's *Oroonoko*.

When the English Captain invites Oroonoko aboard his ship and then kidnaps the prince into slavery, the female narrator again adds her own comment directly aimed at the male reader; “Some have commended this Act, as brave in the Captain; but I will spare my Sense of it, and leave it to my Reader to judge as he pleases”... The female narrator implies a strong moral disapproval, but presents her male readers as less moral, male criteria of judgement being potentially very different from their female equivalents. (Pearson, 1991, p. 46)

By adding this commentary, Behn makes herself the moral teacher of male readers.

NARRATIVE POWER

The gender of the narrator has a large impact on how feminist ideals come across to the reader. If the storyteller herself—the person who holds the most power in a narrative—is a woman, it is that much more difficult to discredit or disagree with the ideals she expresses. The “[f]emale narrative [often] creates and controls male behaviour” in Behn’s writing (Pearson, 1991, pp. 46–47). However, her works do not exclusively feature female narrators; *Love Letters*, “[b]y arrogating to herself the right to speak as a man in the letters—and a treacherous one—rather than, as in her plays, to speak through male actors, Behn seizes and discredits patriarchal authority. By speaking as a woman, when she *is* a woman, she does more” (Gardiner, 1989, p. 211). Because she is a female writer, Behn’s choices of narrators are in some cases more powerful and in other cases more authentic than the narrator choices of a male author.

There are several indications that Behn also intended to write for a female audience. She dedicated some of her works specifically to women: “[T]he printed text of *The Feign’d Curtezans* (1679) is dedicated, for instance, to Nell Gwyn, and *The History of the Nun* to Hortense Mancini, Duchess of Mazarine” (Pearson, 1991, pp. 44–45). With the style of her writing itself, Behn implies that the “reader may also be female, as she is invited to enter closed female worlds of nunnery or brothel. A female reader is constructed within the text, by, for instance, Behn’s use of the first-person plural” (Pearson, 1991, p. 44). Although it is significant that Behn was nodding at a specifically female audience as a way of empowering women, her writing wasn’t exclusively for women. “[W]hile Behn expected and

encouraged women to read her tales, her female narrators sometimes imply, image, or address specifically male readers, often for critical or ironic purposes" (Pearson, 1991, p. 45). However, this too attempts to dismantle the patriarchy by criticizing and taunting her male readers.

EMPOWERED HEROINES

The author also uses her characters to elevate the female voice, raise awareness of unique challenges that women face, and criticize the patriarchy. In *The Rover*, Behn uses dynamic female characters. She writes Angellica Bianca as a courtesan who is capable of providing for herself and taking charge of her own life. Angellica Bianca's career is depicted as acceptable and valid rather than dirty and shameful. Through this character, Behn "attempt[s] to transform the prostitute into the Petrarchan mistress, wounding men with her eyes" (Pacheco, 1998, p. 335). Behn turns the typical ideals of her patriarchal society on their head as "Angellica attempt[s] to efface her predicament by universalizing it: it is not she who is a discardable piece of merchandise, but men who are by nature inconstant. Her emotional detachment is thus portrayed as a defensive strategy" (Pacheco, 1998, p. 336). Rather than objectifying this woman, Behn represents her as someone who intelligently utilizes her beauty to her advantage, providing her with success and independence. "Behn invests her high-class prostitute...with an immense pride bred by her astonishing beauty and her experience of the power it gives her over men" (Pacheco, 1998, p. 335–336). The idea that a prostitute, of all people, could be superior to men in any way was an audacious claim that shattered social norms of the time.

This is also found in *The Rover*, Behn's character Hellena is witty and can hold her own in conversations with men, even positioning herself on an equal playing field when discussing their positions in society.

Hellena's parity of wit is accompanied by a bid for sexual equality manifested in her appropriation of libertine discourse; "Well, I see our business as well as our humours are alike, yours to cozen as many maids as will trust you, and I as many men as have faith"...By adopting the male subject position, Hellena seeks to compete with Willmore on equal terms, rejecting the sexual double standard that in this dramatic world is clearly enforced through rape. (Pacheco, 1998, p. 342)

Hellena's character serves as a portrayal of feminine strength and defiance against the patriarchal system. Even when her brother dooms her to the life of a nun, she calculatingly finds a legitimate way around the undesirable circumstances.

Florinda, the main female character of *The Rover*, is also a character Behn designs to heighten awareness of the female plight. Florinda is nearly raped twice, both times by her fiancé's friends. This choice in the storyline illuminates the real issue of sexual assault for women in the world, illustrating that even good women must be vigilant and are subject to dangerous situations—even in the presence of males who are considered friends. These views were severely underrepresented at the time, if represented at all prior to the production of Aphra Behn's *The Rover*. It was not until the late 16th century that "the legal focus [of rape law] shifted...from property to person" and "the crime itself came to be seen not as a property violation but as the ravishment of a woman against her will" (Pacheco, 1998, p. 324). Behn's play was one of the first depictions that humanized women as victims under the new understanding of rape law.

The issue of the objectification of women is represented by Florinda's character. Behn furthers this imagery with Florinda's "claim to possess a rational soul—a prominent argument in seventeenth-century proto-feminist writing borrowed from philosophical rationalism—[which] entails a demand to be treated as a fully human subject rather than as the 'slave' of patriarchal fiat" (Pacheco, 1998, pp. 324–325). Not only was Florinda objectified in the physical sense when she was nearly raped by both Willmore and Blunt, but she is also treated as property by her brother who intends to arrange her marriage for her. "Florinda's pride in her self-worth clearly chafes at the exploitation involved in forced marriage" as well, serving more than the purpose of condemning the all too common and traumatizing experience of rape (Pacheco, 1998, p. 325).

DEFYING TRADITION

Behn took bold steps to amplify the female voice in many of her works. Particularly with *The Forced Marriage*, the author unreservedly condemned arranged marriages, the first of the plays in its genre to do so (Backscheider, 1987, pp. 246–247). "In many ways, the submission of *The Forced Marriage* to the Duke's Men is one of the most audacious acts in

history. Here was a woman presenting a play for public performance to a company which had only recently begun to put actresses on the stage” (Backscheider, 1987, pp. 246–247). The fearlessness that Behn exhibited in having so many of her plays and works that depicted feminist values published and presented to the public is admirable.

Similarly, in *Love Letters*, “Behn conducts a sustained critique of the double standard and of the coerciveness of the marriage market for women” (Gardiner, 1989, p. 209). She takes a common misconception regarding women, found within the patriarchal society, and gives it the opposite meaning with a female perspective instead.

With Calista, Behn subverts the virgin vs. whore opposition that was already a cliché and that continued into later fiction. Calista the virtuous married woman falls to the seducer Philander, only becoming a nun after she knows that he is unfaithful. Sylvia and she, both conspicuously pregnant by Philander, face off grandly and maliciously in Calista’s nunnery. However, Calista is not the heroine but the “other woman,” so that the stereotyping identifications between protagonist and virtuous woman fail. (Gardiner, 1989, p. 214–215)

Further, Sylvia’s “story is premised not on a woman’s renunciation of pleasure but on continuation in pleasure, in keeping desirable and desiring, and in keeping writing” (Gardiner, 1987, p. 219). Many of Behn’s characters seamlessly and naturally support the feminist movement. By changing the narrative of a story everyone thinks they already know, Behn attempts to also prompt the minds of the people to change the misogynistic narratives placed upon women by society.

EROTIC AGENCY

Another element Behn uses in her writing to promote feminism is the sexuality of women, sometimes juxtaposed with that of men. “Critics have often remarked that in Aphra Behn’s *The Rover*, ladies act like whores and whores like ladies” (Pacheco, 1998, p. 323). Clearly, women were not permitted the same freedoms as men during the 17th century, especially when it came to sexuality. “Love poetry had been dominated...by male subjectivity, women appearing as either silent objects of male desire or...dramatized figures used by male poets to distance and control feelings

that no respectable Englishwoman could publicly express in any way at all..." (Mermin, 1990, p. 342). In giving female desire a voice, Behn usurped men's sole position as sexual beings.

Behn "flourished in literary contexts that gave openings to a female voice...the sexual freedom and gender ambiguities enjoyed during the Restoration, which allowed women to speak as erotic subjects" (Mermin, 1990, p. 335). While many works by male writers featured women as temptresses seducing men, "Behn's is a woman struggling to resist the seductions of a beautiful man. She describes him first as a physical object, with the same charms that men have seen in women: 'Amorous Curles of Jet,' 'Wanton Tresses,' 'Vast Store of Beauties,' 'Starry eyes,' 'Coral Lips,' 'Amber Breath,'" turning the narrative on its head (Mermin, 1990, p. 345). In this way she demonstrates that women and men are equals. Why should the sexuality of women be ignored or shunned when it is just as important and prevalent as that of men? "[I]n Behn's poetry men are also beautiful, and women also desire and speak, and so there are two beloveds and two lovers" (Mermin, 1990, p. 346). Behn brilliantly utilizes female sexuality as a way to place women at the same level as men, challenging traditional misogynist discrimination against women.

CONCLUSION

Aphra Behn was certainly a proponent of feminist ideals and rejected patriarchal discrimination and oppression of women. Despite the known and unknown challenges, she faced as "[t]he first Englishwoman to earn her living by writing, Behn was an extraordinary figure, praised in her own time as the wonder of her sex" (Gardiner, 1989, p. 202). Utilizing her authorship, the narrators and characters in her stories, and a new perspective on female sexuality, she successfully shattered the boundaries that previously existed for female writers. "Currently, feminist critics celebrate the women writers, including Behn, who have been neglected or patronized by masculinist historians" (Gardiner, 1989, p. 206). She deserves much more credit than what is now attributed to her in modern literature and society. Unfortunately, due to masculine dominance, her influence has been seemingly silenced for centuries; however, we are now able to elevate Behn's as the trail-blazing voice of feminism that it truly is and was. Behn pioneered "championing autonomous female desire, in

speaking through an assertive, desiring, and changing female voice, and in showing women's choices in a constrained social world" (Gardiner, 1990, pp. 216–217). I hope every young girl of the future will know Aphra Behn's name and hold it with equal value next to male literary geniuses of 17th-century Europe.

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THE HIGH ROAD

MORGAN McDOUGAL

Photography

In Scottish folklore, a Scotsman who leaves their homeland can return one of two ways—via the High Road or the Low Road. The High Road is the physical journey across the face of the Earth home to Scotland. The Low Road is a spiritual journey back for Scottish folks who die away from home.

One November morning, I was in Scotland, heading out for a sunrise hike, when I received the call that my grandfather had died in the United States. Full of grief and alone in a country across the sea from my family, I regretted my trip. As I looked out at the Quiraing*, the sun rose brightly and I remembered that old Scottish lore. Wanting to stay here with the sunrise, with my grandpa, I hesitated to take the road back to the city—back to people—a feeling I'm sure anyone who has lost a loved one has felt. But the winding road led back home and, though it was hard to take, it led me away from grief. Pushing forward brought me to where I now thrive.

*A Scottish landform, as pictured

FEATURED ON THE COVER



THE HIGH ROAD *MORGAN McDOUGAL* *Photography*

I'M READY TO TALK

MASON JAMES BUTLER

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

I march down a hall of kingdoms, fringed with buzz cut shag carpet.
Above me stand soldiers of all nations,
arrayed in rank in opposite rows, each at attention,
one hand outstretched with a waving tapestry of vibrant emblems.
Together, we watch their formation shift to the face of a woman,
made of patchwork, all a little different, but cut from the same cloth.
All the fabrics made her glowing:
a pale blue dot against a silver pinpricked infinity—a common mother,
her arms open wide.
We, her keepers of this blue flame, saw her set ablaze by one of our own.

The fabric was tearing, and burning, dissolving into pieces
as I walked under and around the scattering soldiers.
On my right, a pond without water.
To the left, it was there, and as I looked, all I felt was my heartbeat,
throbbing in my shoes, tasting a catacomb of one,
an empty courtyard of concrete and grass.
The colorless, soundless spot of a murder, where no one dwells,
faded glory's starless colors, touching and bleeding
into the overgrown grass.

I saw a small fox beside the rubble, creeping by, avoidant, stray.
It sniffed and looked everywhere but there.
Superstitious as I was, that the same curse would fall upon him
from the irradiated center, Armageddon, an opened wound.

As I passed, I spied a young couple, who actually looked into this gash,
from the inverted stepped pyramid.
Their eyes speak with silence and despair,
where once stood a choir, now stood two, in dread silence reposing.
Their eyes were white like a ward of forgotten loved ones,
their dementia making them forget the face of their patchwork mother.
They weren't talking, but they were speaking.

Orange and Red and Blue.

A message meant for one now spread to two.

We don't talk. Why won't we talk?

I asked a passing friend, another student, if she knew.

Marching she went from the water, the ghost of a Confederate soldier,
into the wilderness, tracing her steps in that former life, recalling this day.

I wasn't there, dropping off my brother at a center for training,
feeling like I had called in sick on *that* day in September.

And yet, I heard a shot felt 'round the world,
an orange chrysanthemum, flown from a barrel,
grown in a brass pot engraved with venom,
blooming that same colored pox,
making my backyard the front page of news,
indiscriminate disease, speckling hands and mouths,
Orange, Red and Blue.

Those who walked in the halls, but never run,
still know it as a place of screams, now full of unease.
A president, lauded in many a standing ovation ousted by her grief.
How does a university stand without a head?

Students that once would sing and zing with dialogue
Retreat from speaking together between two
to just one
How can any of us speak with a knife to our throats,
violence in our heads—grief's bells ringing,
scrolling to see a social media feed soaked in blood.
Cries ring out: "Blood for blood!"
Only those who say "I'm Ready to Talk"
will plant pastel purple flowers instead,
growing where someone who once spoke up, now lies dead.

Oh, can we still say
The Star-Spangled Banner will yet wave
Over the land where I felt free—
And the home of the brave?



WEATHERING

MORGAN McDOUGAL

Photograph

Wind whips at the highland cow—his coat painted with raindrops as he peers through the barbed wire with wide open eyes, staring toward what is exactly in front of him. No fear of the future, no self-pity for the harsh climate he is built to endure. Just quiet weathering, leadership through the storm.

SHE RIDES AGAIN

NATALIE BREWSTER, M.S., M.B.A.

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

No more riding just for praise,
she sought the truth in humbler ways.
Her heart was wild, her spirit kind,
a servant's heart, a leader's mind.

When others fell, she turned her steed,
and offered help to those in need.
Her strength was not to stand above,
but to lift through grace, through faith, through love.

No gold buckle, no spotlight glare,
just dusty boots and steady care.
Her power was born from getting through
and teaching others they could, too.

When all the dust began to clear,
her purpose rang for all to hear:
The truest leader rides for souls,
to break the chains, to make us whole.

So here she stands through joy, through pain,
through loss, through light, through wind, through rain.
A scarred-up heart, but soft and grand
a rodeo soul, a servant's hand.



CLARITY

KATE HATCH

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Acrylic and mixed media on canvas

This piece presents leadership as the result of tension and challenge, rather than perfect conditions. The fragmented imagery and layered marks reflect moments of uncertainty, conflict, and outside influence. Conversely, the central flower represents growth that continues despite those forces. Leadership is learned over time, shaped by experience and the ability to move forward even when clarity is not immediate.

SCREAM

REAGAN MECHAM

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

You'll make a perfect mother,
Perfect wife perfect daughter
Nurturing and gentle
Loving and silent
Composed of birdsong and sonata

Does not scream
No daughter of mine will scream
Beams through the discordant notes
Ricocheting in her brain
Drapes torn flesh with pastel

Sings hymns of spiderwebbed glass
Why don't you sing more?
Cries when appropriate
Mascara never smudged though
She doesn't know how to make it so

Does not rage.
Does not turn tears into fire and reap burning fields
My happy girl
Does not let flame rip from her lungs and devour whatever was left
Though she aches to do so

A good woman
Dances through delicate chains
Hums melodies she did not write.

I will not.

This poem examines leadership through the role of women in metal music. Metal is often perceived as a "male" genre of music, and occasionally, women are barred from participating in it due to hard-engrained, restrictive ideas about femininity. This poem rebels against these beliefs and the rigid walls of womanhood.



AUTHENTICITY WITHIN

MANDY M. WATSON

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Acrylic paint on paper

This artwork displays leadership by showing the authenticity needed to make a good leader. Many leaders have worn their hearts on their sleeves throughout their duties, creating an authenticity that people can connect with. That connection, in combination with all the other attributes of great leadership, is vital for making a difference within the world. Why be a leader if you don't care to make that difference?

REDEFINING THE ARTIST: ART RETURNED TO THE PEOPLE

ARAWYN WALTER

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Artistic elitists have set social standards that limit the value and mastery of art to a talented few, suppressing fundamentally human creative capacity. By redefining the artist and revealing art's immense value and impact on current and historical events, I will inspire the reader to reclaim their creative capacity and embrace their artistry. With the advancement of machines and technology, researchers have seen a significant decline in creativity on a global scale. Without significant attention and action in our institutions, there will be catastrophic consequences. Reclaiming our creative expression is essential for personal wellbeing, community, and social function.

THE PROBLEM OF ARTISTIC GATEKEEPING

“**I** am not an artist; I don't have a creative bone in my body.” Whether you have heard this statement from someone else or your own self-doubting mind, you have set a barrier. Hindering participation in creative outlets is based on the singular belief that an objective skill or talent sets the standard for artistic identity. Elitist patrons, like the Medici family, and wealthy religious figures from the Renaissance era set a standard definition for artists. They defined an artist as someone highly trained in a specific craft, giving the artistic elite immense influence in high society and expanding the gap between lower and upper class. However, Paul Cezanne, the *father of modern art*, and many other modern artists have shifted the understanding of art as a way of self-expression and communicating individualized perceptions. The traditional view of the artist has turned into this unattainable identity, and only the *talented few* are said to deserve the title. Scientific research and case studies by Dahlia Zaidel, George Land, and notable sociologists challenge this claim

based on the fundamentals of human behavior and experience with a psychological need for art and creative expression. This paper argues that all humans at their core possess artistic abilities through intent, self-expression, and a unique perception of the world that is revealed through creative outlets, not technical mastery.

REDEFINING THE ARTIST

An artist is any individual who engages in intentionally creative expression to share, explore, or process human experience and unique perspectives.

This redefined definition comes from years of personal research, reflection, and discussions, along with my own personal journey of exploring the many forms and uses of art. This new definition is meant to break down the limitations of artistic identity. Art can be used as another form of communication: it is a visual way to feel and understand one another and communicate the ineffable. Reclaiming this definition is essential to human wellbeing and social function.

EVOLUTION AND HISTORY OF THE ARTIST

Humanity has used art as a fundamental tool since the beginning of human existence, from the drawings on cave walls, to the art of storytelling and dance. For millennia, this tool has been used as a way of survival through communication, bonding, and teaching. It carries deep spiritual significance, enlightening understanding of our ancestors. We see the oldest evidence of art calculated to be over 51,200 years old, as figurative cave art discovered in the Indonesian Island of Sulawesi by Australian and Indonesian scientists. The researchers and original discoverers of this historic mural described the finding as a complex story and the earliest evidence of creative storytelling (Ghosh 2024). We have discovered purpose and significance in art in every period since.

From 30,000 BCE to 400 CE, ancient art showed ways of communicating and expressing concepts. Examples include ancient clay tablets discovered in the first city of Uruk depicting economic data, along with pottery with carvings of spiritual rituals and accurate harvesting practices. In the Medieval period (500 CE–1400 CE), art was used to depict the widespread hardship after the Roman Empire collapsed, while the early

Christian Church utilized artwork to communicate religious narratives and maintain spiritual authority (DeGuzman, 2025). As these examples illustrate, art has influenced society and sociocultural perspectives throughout history and will continue to do so for the rest of human existence.

PSYCHOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE

With the evolution of art's influence through wars, global conquests, and toppling religions, we see the immense impact art has had through the ages. However, art is so much more than its historical impact: it influences our personal brain development and growth, bringing to light innovation and human evolution. Arnold Hauser (1982) expands on this idea in his book *The Sociology of Art*, stating, "Art isn't just this sociohistorical phenomenon, it is a tool that should be used to further our practical interests, discussed in moral consideration, and a part of scientific points of view" (p. 6). With this broader perspective in mind, how can art help you personally?

On a psychological level, participating in creative outlets is shown to reduce stress, increase your well-being, and support you in identity formation. Beyond that, there is neurological and scientific evidence of how art can link multiple neural regions in the brain and increase the development of brain evolution (Zaidel, 2009).

Everyone has capacity for divergent thinking and creation, not just the talented few. For most, creativity has been buried by rules and regulations. "Our educational system was designed during the Industrial Revolution over 200 years ago to train us to be good workers and follow instructions" instead of delving into our natural creativity (Naiman, 2024, para. 7). This was the beginning of the creative decline. With the pressures of a standardized education system and little room for deviation, children and adults alike began to lose sight of their natural creative capabilities. Not to mention the rise of machines and technical advancement, which led people of all ages from creating with their hands to swiping on digital devices. This significant decrease in creativity is evident from almost 300,000 Torrance scores, a creativity assessment, with a dramatic decline in the 1990s, when advanced technology was first introduced, steadily declining from then on (Bramley, 2016). Not only do we see creativity declining over time, but also with age. In a case study, the George Land's Creativity Test,

George Land did an assessment on the same group of children from a Head Start Program at ages 5, 10, and 15 years old, and then as adults; the results were astonishing. “The test had subjects look at a problem and come up with new, different, innovative ideas” (Britfield Institute, 2019, para. 1). Amongst the 5-year-olds, the outcome was 98% creativity capacity, at 10-years-old it was 30% and by 15-years-old, they were as low as 12%. Finally, for the adults, they were only at 2% creative capacity. With the rise of an automated future, higher degrees of creative thinking, imagination, and innovative ideas are essential for a competitive edge, yet there is a lack of creative development in schools, and social conditioning to suppress artistic practices. People do not stop being artists; they are taught to stop believing they are capable of artistry from a young age.

HOW ARTISTIC ELITISM EMERGED

Artistic elitism is the belief that only those with mastery of skill, training, or recognition deserve artistic identity. The danger of elitism in art discourages people from embracing creativity out of fear of judgment or social pressures. This concept started with the rise of the *genius myth*, a belief that only a select few possessed the genius and masterful talents of artistry based on aristocratic and elite criteria. The myth was initiated by Giorgio Vasari and other wealthy families and religious figures from the Renaissance and Romanticism Era. Arnold Hauser, an art historian and sociologist, explains, “[T]he Romantic concept of genius is a myth perpetuated by artists, poets, and thinkers who sought to claim the privileges of an ‘aristocracy of the spirit’” (Menninger, 2024, para. 4). The fallout of this myth altered art into a social marker of status and refinement, which “[I]nitiating the alienation of art from its social functions” (Menninger, 2024, para. 2). The genius myth and the individuals involved in its creation inadvertently took art from the people used for expression, communication, and connection, and into the hands of aristocracy.

THE HARM OF ARTISTIC ELITISM

If artistic elitism continues, the barriers it creates will persist in causing psychological, social, and cultural harm. Elitism stifles creative expression, creating an environment where only certain forms of art are valued. Exclusive standards are established by a privileged few, thus discouraging individuals of various backgrounds from pursuing artistic expression, including their unique perspectives and unconventional ideas that may

be dismissed or minimized. No one should ever feel undervalued for their perspectives and outlets of expression. It narrows the artistic scope of who gets to speak, who gets to be seen, and who belongs.

Worst of all, elitism in art stifles risk-taking in expression that has historically driven social change and innovation. Many of the most influential movements came from individuals willing to challenge elitist standards in the art world, seen in the rise of impressionism and contemporary art. Many of these artists, like Van Gogh and Johannes Vermeer, were rejected in their time and died before seeing their impact in disrupting norms in technique, purpose, and beauty. While the artistic elite may have guided the structures of these limiting standards, in the end, we are the ones who choose to build that gap by internalizing our fears. By staying complacent and drowning in judgment, comparison, and self-doubt, we stop ourselves from pursuing creativity, expression, and the many rewards art has to offer. We must be the ones who step into uncertainty, into our imagination for the sake of expression and breaking down restricting social norms.

MASTERY VS. IDENTITY

This paper is not meant to discredit the work of practiced artists. Art mastery is impressive; however, it is not required for artistic identity, just as:

- Anyone can cook, but chefs still matter
- Anyone can write, but authors still matter
- Anyone can sing, but opera singers still matter

Identity is about who you are; your skill is what you can do. Identity does not require permission from society, and in turn, mastery of skills in any field deserves recognition for the time, dedication, and discipline it takes. Identity cannot be measured or set to one standard since everyone's identity is constantly evolving and is inherently distinct from others. Universal participation in art does not diminish excellence; it illuminates its influence on social and personal functions.

OPPOSITION AND UNDERSTANDING

Critics would argue that by giving everyone the title of artist the term becomes meaningless. However, I am not saying that everyone *is* an artist, simply that everyone has the potential to *become* an artist. Each

person already has the creative capacity through their innate perspectives and perceptions of the world. By taking part in the act of creating with intentionally creative expression to share, explore, or process human experience and unique perspectives, you become the artist.

Another argument critics may raise with this new definition of artistry and the accessibility of artistic identity is the question: where is the line between art and nonart? One of the main differences between art and nonart is the intent of creation for some purpose, not necessarily solidified at the beginning of every creation, but found along the way. Theodor Adorno (1998), a German philosopher, once said “Artworks... await their interpretation. The claim that there is nothing to interpret in them, that they simply exist, would erase the demarcation between art and nonart” (p. 169). Art invites creative meaning-making, divergent thought, and interpretation from others by shaping attention and perspectives.

CONCLUSION

Powerful eras and institutions come and go, but art has remained beside humanity through every transformation. Over 51,000 years ago, the people from the Indonesian islands created cave art that held expressive and raw storytelling. These figures weren’t created for prestige, galleries, or recognition; they were acts of meaning, evident long before systems of status and experts emerged. Humans were already using art to understand themselves and others long before us. Somewhere along the course of history, the instinct for creativity was restricted by standards and refinement for a select few. Yet the psychological pull and historical evidence still point to the same truth: Art was never meant to belong to the few, it was meant for everyone.

With current advancements in technology and the dramatic decline of creativity, the consequence of this separation is becoming more visible. People are losing their ability to imagine, interpret, and create. This is not just the risk of losing our artistic expression, but our cognitive and social tools to innovate, empathize, and build resilience. This should not solely be the concern of the artistic few, but all of humanity. To restore our creative capacity, we need to make a cultural shift. Education systems need to provide opportunities for artistic exploration, communities need to make space for expression beyond performance and mastery, and

individuals need to challenge the idea that creativity belongs in someone else's hands. Art was never meant to be confined to small spaces but broadened to wherever humans interpret it in the world around them. When we recognize this concept, the real question is not who qualifies as an artist but if we are willing to participate in the act of creativity that is inherently ours.

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SPINNING A LEGACY: WHY SPIDER-MAN IS THE KEY PLAYER IN COMIC BOOK CULTURE

BROOKE HAUSSER

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Spider-Man has become a popular figure and one of the most influential figures in comic book history. This paper argues that his unparalleled prominence contributes not only to his relatability but also to his sense of responsibility and ultimately his leadership role that sets him apart from earlier heroes in the comic book world. From previous sidekicks, Spider-Man has redefined the definition of what it means to be a teenage hero and has become the focus of the story, referencing his leadership capabilities. With his personal sacrifices and unique abilities, Spider-Man is an inspiration, showing us that his leadership and courage are not just from his powers, but from his human character. His struggles, integrity, and overall dynamic abilities alone have made him a cultural icon that has brought a long-lasting influence on generations of comic book consumers.

Since his first appearance in 1962, Spider-Man has become one of the most popular and recognizable superheroes—known for his teenage antics, struggles, responsibilities, and unique powers. However, there has been debate around the discussion surrounding Spider-Man’s prominence in comic book culture. While some may argue that the popularity of the iconic character is merely due to his universal appeal, some readers challenge the view, insinuating that other icons hold popularity over Spider-Man. According to news editor Paul Harris from the online site *The Guardian*, Superman holds popularity over 70 years later. With changing his slogan to “fighting for truth, justice, and the American way” (Harris, 2013, para. 3). Despite Harris’s praise of Superman, a recent survey has revealed that Spider-Man has become the most popular superhero in America, eclipsing such noted figures as Superman, Batman, and the Incredible Hulk (Jolliff, 2022).

Spider-Man has surpassed other superheroes to become the most prominent comic book character of the early twenty-first century because his relatability, exceptional sense of responsibility, and natural leadership distinguish him from earlier heroes and make him the most compelling and influential figure for comic book audiences.

A significant amount of Spider-Man's popularity is based on his relatability with his readers. A key characteristic and appeal to this character would be his youth. Before Spider-Man, teenagers were represented as sidekicks. A prime example of the sidekick role would be "Robin" in Batman. These roles were to help attract younger audiences to reading comics. Unlike earlier teen characters, they followed the lead of the hero rather than taking the lead. Spider-Man redefined what it means to be a teenage superhero. He is, instead, at the very center of the story that portrays him as a leader rather than a follower or sidekick companion. While DC teen heroes were popular, they lacked the complete traits possessed by Spider-Man. Comic book aficionado David Harth states that "The DC teen heroes were simplistic, they were basically just small versions of adult heroes. The Amazing Spider-Man changed the way teen heroes were portrayed forever after" (Harth, 2022, "It Changed Teen Books Forever" section).

Peter Parker—the man behind Spider-Man's mask—exemplifies the characteristics of the typical *everyman* or woman, who grapples with challenges in their personal life while trying to maintain a superhero persona. His spirit of survival is paramount in the most stressful situations he's up against, making him a reliable representation of the human experience in comic book culture. Spider-Man's story alone is one that helps us to look at and deal with our own personal challenges faced in life. It gives us direction on what path to take, whether good or bad. By making sacrifices and sometimes even giving up personal dreams just to be the hero of the world or someone in your personal life needs. "Superheroes stand out, not just because of their outfits and powers but because of their altruistic activism and dedication to what is good" (Loeb & Morris, 2005, p. 14).

Spider-Man, as a character and icon, holds a significant place in comic book culture due to his remarkable sense of responsibility, which reflects the essence of the hero archetype and serves as a template for all superheroes

to follow, as he vows to use his powers for the forces of good. Authors Lois Gresh and Robert Weinberg bring out examples of how Peter Parker doesn't seek out revenge after the murder of his Uncle Ben. In their book, *The Science of Superheroes*, they describe a moment during an audition for a show business gig when Peter ignores a plea for help to stop a small-town criminal, assuming the police can handle it themselves. In a plot twist, his Uncle Ben was the one murdered. Peter seeks the murderer, and once he has caught up with the suspect, he realizes it is the same criminal he had let escape before (Gresh & Weinberg, 2002, p. 67). Most superheroes would take the initiative in seeking out revenge for a loved one's death. But Spider-Man's exceptional sense of responsibility has made him a prominent and highly respected figure in comic book culture.

Spider-Man's life depicts the pitfalls faced by the average person. He is a regular person, considered the protagonist, and makes right and wrong choices. Author C. Stephen Layman analyzed that, "To be a superhero, you would have to be super-responsible, that is, you would have to take on responsibilities in proportion to your enhanced powers" (Loeb & Morris, 2005, p. 15). Peter Parker's Uncle Ben said it best, "With great power comes great responsibility" (Robichaud, 2005, p. 177). His character embodies the virtues of a true hero, inspiring readers to strive for greatness, even in the face of adversity.

Peter Parker tries to find some amount of normalcy by being a good nephew, friend, eventually husband, and even a father later. It's notable that the beginning of Todd Macfarlane's comic book series, *Spider-Man: Torment* (1990, part 2), describes a platonic relationship between Peter and his wife, Mary Jane. The personal bond begins fun and majestic, as most relationships do, until something disrupts that momentum. It's where Peter is soon distracted by the news reporting of a monster unleashed and evil foe, Dr. Curt Connors, also known as the Lizard. Without hesitation, Peter jumps into action with an obsession to catch the monster. This kind of moment demonstrates his situational leadership, as he sacrifices his personal life and relationship with Mary Jane to prioritize the safety and overall well-being of the community. Peter catches up with the Lizard in a standoff where Spider-Man is to fight for his life, and in that moment, his will to survive is guided by the thoughts of his loved ones, like his

beloved Mary Jane. This is just a prime example of the love Peter holds and is willing to sacrifice to preserve all that's good and worth meaning to his life.

Nevertheless, both followers and critics of the popular superhero, Superman, will probably suggest otherwise and argue that he tends to show more compassion and humility to the human spirit than your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man. Superman was among the earliest iconic superheroes, resonating with audiences by demonstrating plausible character development through responsibility. Editors Tom and Matt Morris bring up examples in their book *Superheroes and Philosophy: Truth, Justice, and the Socratic Way* by exemplifying these responsibility traits seen through other iconic roles in comic book literature. "Superman gives us an ongoing example of what a commitment to truth, justice, and not just the Human way but genuinely human way should look like" (Loeb & Morris, 2005, p.18). Some could speculate that most superheroes pertaining to popular comics all strive to do right for altruistic reasons, not in default of what would make the hero more popular. Of course, others will probably disagree because Superman avertedly makes ultimate sacrifices to be able to pursue his heroic lifestyle. The commitment to justice and truth is shown through the actions of the character, not only in comics but in real life, as the ultimate American, human way. It's where Spider-Man holds on to a promise to protect and serve for the common good. He signifies what one would call a true and unique hero. In contrast, Superman's origin is that of an alien from space who was sent to Earth and was raised by a normal, working middle-class family. Superman's upbringing was humble, and his commitment to fighting for the truth resembled that.

Spider-Man's social class status sets him apart from most superheroes, including Superman. Spider-Man's origins can be traced back to his lower-middle-class background, where the daily struggles to make ends meet in the challenging hustle and bustle of inner New York City. The lack of limited resources affects social status. Peter Parker was just another common face in the crowd before that fateful encounter with the radioactive spider, altering his fate forever. Despite the advantages, Spider-Man embodies values of humility, commitment, and overall

justice. His persistence, determination, and resources are what make him a key player in adversity and achieving the power of greatness.

Spider-Man's unique powers result from a fortuitous spider bite altering the genetic makeup of Peter Parker. His unique set of powers is credited to the radioactive spider bite. A single spider bite was all it took to make this once ordinary teenager a superhero. But what makes a unique combination of powers and abilities like Spider-Man is what makes him a dynamic superhero who can adapt to any situation, no matter how big or how small. "Needless to say, though, Peter Parker isn't the only kid on the block with superpowers. Comic books have given rise to a universe chock-full of people with amazing abilities, and all of them face the same fundamental moral concerns" (Robichaud, 2005, p. 178). There are, however, several unique attributes distinguishing Spider-Man from the other superheroes. Probably the most notable of these would be his *spider-sense*, in other words, his sixth sense. This unique ability gives him an advantage in alerting him to danger and allowing him the time to react to any potential threats before they occur. The spider sense helps make him a daunting force in battle, both as a solo hero and a team player. With it and his exceptional intelligence when it comes to science, he has given him the skills to help invent his iconic web shooters. Spider-Man can shoot webs from his hands to help him swing across the city and capture evil enemies in one of his expansive webs. According to author and librarian Michael R. Lavin, by creating "adhesive webbing, portable web shooter and electronic homing device that's attuned to the spider sense" (Lavin, 1998, p. 82). He travels in a more unique way than most other superheroes.

When hearing *superhuman strength*, it is often associated with other superheroes like Thor or Hulk. But despite not possessing the same level of strength as these two counterparts, Spider-Man still has the strength to perform tasks such as heavy lifting, swinging from buildings, and overpowering his enemies in the process. So, while he's not the first to come to mind about absolute strength, his abilities are still not to be overlooked. These abilities are what make Spider-Man versatile, someone who can adapt to any given situation, no matter the consequences that follow. His powers represent more appeal to his beloved character. Having

these unique combinations of powers and abilities makes Spider-Man a dynamic superhero, a formidable opponent, and a popular icon.

Spider-Man's popularity and cultural significance reflect a true testament to the phenomenal impact of comic book culture altogether. His unrelenting commitment to justice, relatability, responsibility, and the everyday struggles as a human being have resonated with fans over generations. Spider-Man's legacy will continue to be inspirational and influential to future generations and continue to serve as a role model that caters to leadership that anyone can aspire to. Spider-Man is setting the standard for all superheroes to follow, making him a key dominant player in the comic book culture throughout the world and throughout history.

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TOWER

PARKER KILLIAN
UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY
Digital painting



ADVENTURE

Good leadership inspires hope and positive action. There is so much despair and fear in a world that is constantly changing, especially in a country that is descending into authoritarianism. What we need is the hope that things can get better, and the path to get there. I want to be a part of that through my art.

COMMUNICATED GUIDANCE

SLATER MILLER

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

I take the wheel amidst the chaotic waves,
Directing the crew away from certain danger,
Undeterred by the sharp rocks ahead attempting to separate us.
Instead, I steer the ship of beginners toward a sea of collaboration,
Encouraging the investigation of the unknown, of ideas not yet explored.
My speech reinvigorates those on deck as I confidently lay out the course,
Igniting a spark ushered by gentle command that ripples
into the sea beyond.

Positioned at the helm, I guide this newfound knowledge into the light.
Holding the map, I navigate these uncharted waters with practiced ease.
With confident words and actions, I convey a sense of belonging,
Stretching my arms out wide to embrace the storm ahead of us.
A vision, clarified in humility, echoes across the crew's searching faces.
Transforming spoken phrases into a guiding spark of courage
that reaches out,

Touching the outskirts of the ocean the ignorant cannot see.

Change is never without resistance, but we are determined
to see it through.

It will become an inscription,
Forever engrained into the society we have built,
Together.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS AND ARTISTS

DEVON ALMOND, PH.D. Dr. Almond's lifework involves guiding adults to become more fully who they uniquely already are and to care for an ache in their communities. As a former study-away director with a fondness for small towns, he has worked—mostly as a faculty member—with various geographically remote and rural colleges and universities across North America, spanning from the Yukon to Hawaii. Devon lives with his wife and daughter in a log cabin in the woods near Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

AIMEE BARCEL is a senior high school student at De La Salle University. She explores photography that captures social issues and community action. Her work focuses on themes of collective responsibility, leadership, and civic engagement.

JENNA BERNDT is an emerging writer whose work has appeared in Utah Valley University's *Journal of Student Leadership*. She is pursuing a Bachelor's of English with an emphasis in creative writing and writes poetry and prose exploring identity and the human experience. When she's not writing, she can usually be found pretending to be a soup critic, savoring every spoonful like in that one scene from Disney's *Ratatouille*.

JESSICA BRADSHAW lives in Lehi with her two cats and husband. She is a full-time student at Utah Valley University studying to become an English teacher.

NATALIE BREWSTER, M.S., M.B.A is the Director of Leadership Certificate Programs and is an Adjunct Professor at Utah Valley University. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at Gonzaga University, where her work focuses on servant leadership, leadership identity development, and trauma.

SAMUEL BROWER is a student in the Art Education program at Utah Valley University. His work ranges a wide variety of genres and styles such as pop art, surrealism, realism, and abstraction. He currently works with special needs populations and attends UVU, working towards a career as a high school teacher to give to students a similar inspirational experience in the arts he had.

TATUM BUNKER is a Junior studying English with a Creative Writing Emphasis. She is a student employee for the Donor Relations department and is currently being commissioned by FanX Studios to write a movie script. In her Freshman and Sophomore years, she ran two online literary magazines and was staff for various others. She has published pieces in *The Journal of Student Leadership*, podcasts, websites, and online literary magazines. Literature is an extremely important part of her life and loves to share her writings with whoever she can convince to read it.

MASON JAMES BUTLER is a poetry aficionado and science fiction writer, having published a novel in 2021 titled *The Heart of Destiny*, about a conspiracy theorist, aliens, and a talking cat. Mason is an Integrated Studies student at Utah Valley University, studying entrepreneurship and creative writing, and expects to graduate in 2027.

KATE HATCH is a student at Utah Valley University driven by creativity and self expression. She has a strong interest in both business and the arts. Her work often explores growth, resilience, and emotion through visual storytelling.

BROOKE HAUSER is married and the mother of three boys. She is a currently a student at Utah Valley University, studying Family Science. Brooke enjoys life and spending time with her family. She loves reading, comic books, and collecting, is an avid Dungeons & Dragons enthusiast, and loves hiking and all things outdoors.

LEE JOHNSON is a pre-med student at Utah Valley University with a professional background in banking, consulting, and policy research. He has presented policy research both domestically and abroad and is an avid life-long learner. Outside of biological interests, Lee enjoys cross-cultural engagement, with particular interest in Russian, Spanish, Korean, and Romanian speaking communities.

PARKER KILLIAN has been published in *Warp and Weave*, previous issues of *The Journal of Student Leadership*, and has shown in the Utah Valley University Museum of Art. He is currently working on his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Entertainment Design. He works to inspire hope and positive action through his art.

SPENCER LADD is a pre-nursing student at Utah Valley University with a passion for film photography. He is hoping to obtain a bachelor's degree in nursing and expects to graduate in 2029. As a future healthcare professional, he is hoping to one day work as a critical care nurse and a full-time firefighter.

MORGAN McDOUGAL is a proud alumnus of Utah Valley University, having graduated with her BS in English Creative Writing in 2025. Her art extends through multiple mediums, though photography and writing are the two with the strongest presence. Her work focuses on the common themes of the human experience—love, loss, and self.

REAGAN MECHAM is currently studying English education at Utah Valley University. She is the author of numerous short stories and poems, and her work has been published in *Warp & Weave*. When she is not writing, she lies awake at night plotting the colonization of Antarctica.

SLATER MILLER is an undergraduate student at Utah Valley University, majoring in creative writing. Slater has published work in the journal, *Warp and Weave* and had English essays used as examples for the “Introduction to Academic Writing” course at UVU.

LEE SORENSON graduated from Snow College with an Associate of Fine Arts in 2024. After taking a gap year to redefine his creativity, Lee is now pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Utah Valley University.

CASSANDRA L. VASQUEZ is a Utah Valley University student known for her love of learning. She has an Associate of Arts from UVU and is pursuing her Bachelor of Arts in English Education, with a minor in languages. Her love of reading since she was a child and knack for teaching others was the seed that inspired this career path. When she's not studying, Cassandra enjoys reading, camping, crafting, and celebrating holidays. She lives in Lehi, Utah with her husband, stepson, and two adorable doodles Waffle and Mocha.

ARAWYN WALTER is a senior at Utah Valley University, majoring in Marketing and minoring in Business Management. She currently serves as the Presidential Intern to Val Peterson, Vice President of Administration and Strategic Relations, where she focuses on strengthening

communication systems for students and gaining hands-on experience with university and local policy. As an emerging artist and entrepreneur, she is passionate about blending creativity and strategy to develop innovative solutions that inspire positive change.

MANDY M. WATSON is a student at Utah Valley University, currently working towards her bachelors in Fine Art and is hoping to get more involved within the art world at UVU.



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2. Provide an engaging outlet for research, writing, editing, and publishing.

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