

Leadership at the Boundary of Faith, Health & Community

A Plenary Session Outline - Interfaith Health Project National Conference

LEADERSHIP MATTERS

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Sources

- Boundary Leadership is a conceptual framework created by Dr. Gary Gunderson. Many of the attributions and descriptions of boundary leaders used in this presentation are those identified through ongoing research by Dr. Gunderson in many years of personal involvement and relationship with these transformational leaders. The book ***Boundary Leadership*** authored by Dr. Gunderson, where these are discussed, will be available in late 2004. Other resources for the February 11, 2004 plenary session on Boundary Leadership follow.
- This plenary session was in collaboration with three very adept and experienced Boundary Leaders. **Rev. Shawn Green-Smith**, President, Faith Partnership Network, Inc. Milwaukee, WI; **Rev. Larry James**, Executive Director, Central Dallas Ministries, Dallas, TX; **Kathryn Robbins**, Parish Nurse Coordinator, St. John Medical Ctr., Longview, WA.



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Descriptions, Attributions, and Tendencies of Boundary Leaders

- ❑ Because Boundary Leaders work on the margins they often describe themselves as marginal
- ❑ Boundary Leaders seldom see the hope they seed and are reluctant to find themselves responsible for the transformation they engender
- ❑ For the Boundary Leader, outrage has a way of gathering single-minded energy...other words have been used
- ❑ Boundary Leaders emerge because the very force of life that draws them out and up propels them toward the vital arenas where the future is trying to be born...
- ❑ Sometimes Boundary Leaders are closeted in the structures they work and live within. The condition is temporary or the frustration is intolerable.



Descriptions, Attributions, and Tendencies of Boundary Leaders

- ❑ Boundary Leadership is a process which exists on a continuum. There is a coming out, sometimes slow, sometimes fast.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders align assets in light of a mature faith and relevant science.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders align assets based on a shared vision but in a covenant relationship that seeds hope.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders are adapted to the margins, to the edges, and to the spaces in between...that adaptation allows them to align assets with the most powerful, and give hope to the most destitute.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders who are gifted with marginality are hard to surprise. Their hopes and personal power protect them from cynicism, but their marginality protects them from naiveté.



Descriptions, Attributions, and Tendencies of Boundary Leaders

- ❑ It is hard to sneak up on a Boundary Leader, they are harder to sabotage, not quite so easy to distract and deflect.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders see the cracks in the system's own cynicism where remnants of mercy and justice live.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders emerge from and then extend toward networks of relationships that cross lines otherwise dividing communities into discrete organizations and tribes.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders are social hubs, nodes, with a disproportionate number of human links across which information and influence flow back and forth.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders have a high tolerance for ambiguity and excellent survival skills



Descriptions, Attributions, and Tendencies of Boundary Leaders

- ❑ Boundary Leaders experience the boundary zone as a place of brokenness and contested authority, but they are not defeated by either the powerful interests that create pain or by divisions that threaten to obstruct progress.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders are resilient.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders do need survival skills, they are not so clever as tenacious, and not so quick as tough.
- ❑ Boundary Leaders have the strength of imagination, a subtle capacity to see what could be.
- ❑ Because Boundary Leaders live in webs of transformative relationships, they think and vision at the scale of systems.



Descriptions, Attributions, and Tendencies of Boundary Leaders

- Boundary Leaders ground people in the holy
- Boundary Leaders have boundary zone intelligence, which also comprises organizational intelligence, sufficient to see that they are semi-permeable boundary zones.
- Boundary Leaders are marked by a restless faith that will not give up.
- There is an itch in the boundary leader's soul...an itch that unless scratched irritates to more than distraction, but to personal deprecation.
- Boundary Leaders are integrated individuals whose soul and mind keep each other in check and produce a drive for self truth



Descriptions, Attributions, and Tendencies of Boundary Leaders

- Boundary Leaders are self truth-tellers and self-true, because to not be creates a dissonance that is greater than any other pain that might accost them... it is simply the integrity of soul and mind, heart and spirit, faith and purpose.

EMORY

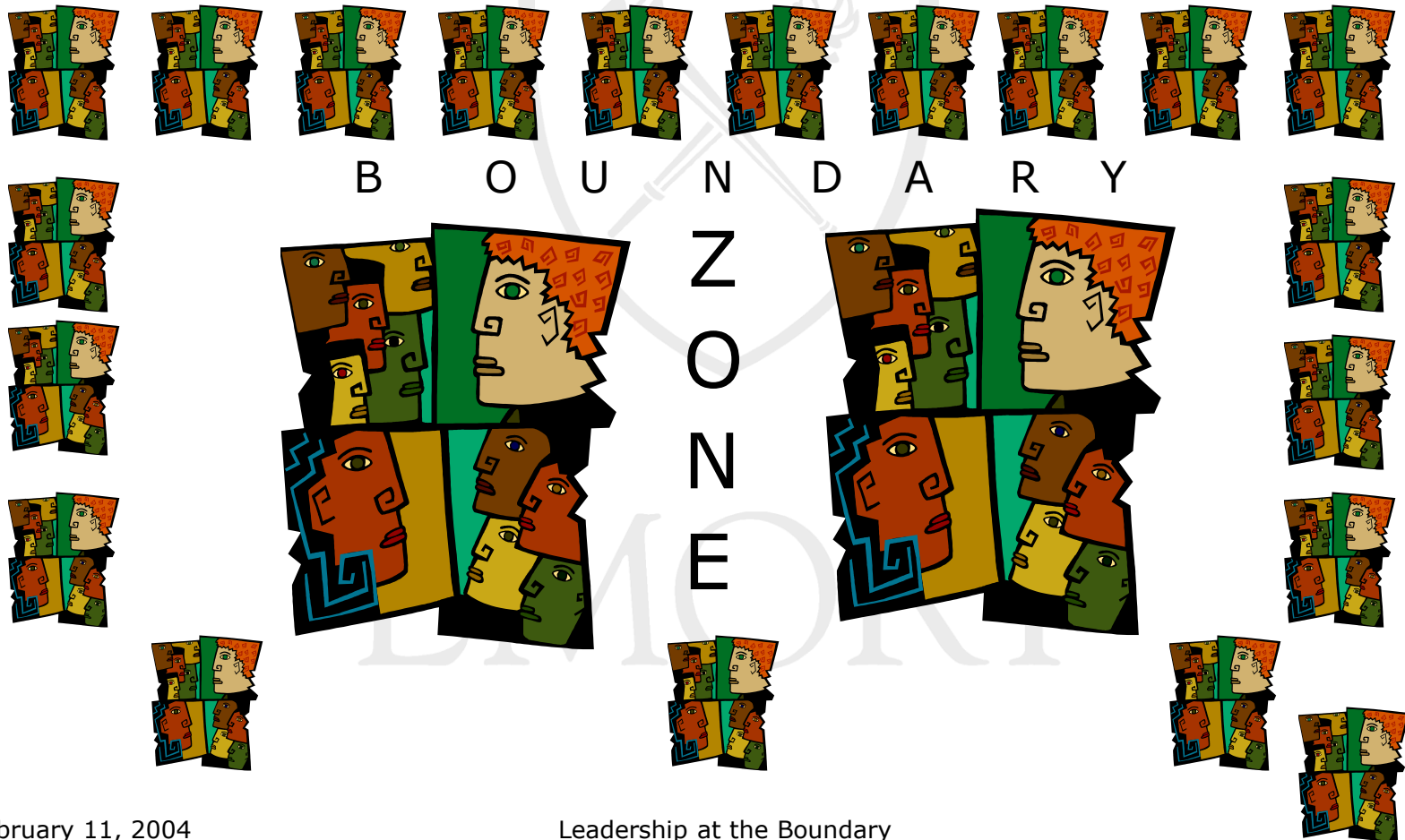


The Boundary Zones

- ❑ We easily understand the delineations of boundaries, organizational boundaries, political boundaries, geographical boundaries, all of which give us a handle, a name, an identity that distinguishes and points out lines of demarcation.
- ❑ Boundary leaders function within these boundaries but find themselves constantly out at the edges, lurking in and out, finding it much more enticing in the zones between boundaries.
- ❑ We assume that the edges of structural and organizational boundaries bump up edge to edge, where when you leave one, you enter the other, that is simply not the case.
- ❑ In fact, there is a separation between edges, in fact, the edges aren't near what we ascribe them to be. There are zones between them, where ambiguity, paradox, uncertainty, and the jagged ugly and unpleasant edges that are often undefined.



The Boundary Zones



The Boundary Zones

- ❑ The boundary zones are not empty, they are fields of relationships and networks and power. There are webs of relationships that exist in the zones that have no relationship necessarily to the cleanly defined structures that we come from.
- ❑ The boundary zone is where the work of change and transformation is born and gets its nutrients to flourish for it is the zone where perspectives meet perspectives in the minds and hearts of boundary leaders hungry to satisfy a compelling to achieve what appears to be the impossible.
- ❑ Boundary leaders engage in the boundary zones to locate and do work at systems level, engaging multiple assets and weaving them together to effect relevant and transformational systems change that affects communities and the individuals who give communities life.



The Work of Systems and Their Structures

- ❑ Social determinants of health, racism, even the disparities we name as the target of our elimination are much too simplistically identified in a single word for the efficiency of language.
- ❑ Dr. Camera Jones, a research with the CDC laid out this argument in a presentation to the Morehouse School of Medicine's conference on measuring race as a determinate associated with health.
- ❑ What Dr. Jones articulates is that when this occurs they are making race a proxy for some combination of socioeconomic status, culture and genetics, and some combination of the three. As Dr. Jones points out, this sort of proxy communication to delineate the system at play does not well represent all that is happening to create the disparities in health that plague us.
- ❑ But the same thing is true of the word disparity and disparities, it is a proxy for systems that perpetuate and maintain themselves as a system of systems.



The Work of Systems and Their Structures

- Margaret Wheatley in her early work on organizational change, in her work, “Leadership and the New Science” helps to define the underlining work of Chaos theory and its relationship to organizations, communities, and superstructures with a fundamental understanding of Quantum theory.
- Margaret talks of observing children at a playground frolicking hither and yon from a swing set to a merry go round, up and down on a teeter totter, you’ve had the experience. It seems that the very experiences that these children seek out are ones we avoid: they create disequilibrium, novelty, loss of control, surprise. These make for good playground but a dangerous life.
- We avoid these things so much that if the social structures and systems were to take the form of a teeter totter, we’d brace up both ends, turning it into a straight plank, eliminating all possibility of disequilibrium.



The Work of Systems and Their Structures

- The American Heritage Dictionary says that 1. equilibrium is a condition in which all acting influences are cancelled by others resulting in a stable, balanced, or unchanging system, 2. Physics. The condition of a system in which the resultant of all acting forces is zero.
- In classical thermodynamics, equilibrium is the end state in the evolution of isolated systems, the point at which the system has exhausted all of its capacity for change, done its work, and dissipated its productive capacity into useless capacity to change.
- Fred Smith who you see here in a leadership role at this conference, is in real life a thinker and a boundary leader who has identified in his own work that we have invested in structures and systems that in effect procreate and sustain the very systems that maintain the social determinants that keep disparities alive and well.



The Work of Systems and Their Structures

- And we do so with a stellar and commendable achievement of zero, nada, nil...for Earnest Campbell, the teeter-totter in North Nashville has for 60 years been level, though many grants, projects, initiatives, interests, clinics, etc. etc, have been placed on the plank.
- Systems do not necessarily produce negative outcomes, in fact all the contrary. Equilibrium in effect sometimes is in reality a commendable achievement, 0 small pox, 0 Guinea worm disease, but these equilibriums have been achieved by seeking out the entry points into the systems that generated their downward spiral and transformed the system to yield an upward spiral of transformation.
- Systems in and of themselves are often inert and neutral, they are neither good or bad, but the outcomes for which those systems are used and rewarded may not be. The system can be impacted to affect the system's output, and establish an upward spiral.



The Work of Systems and Their Structures

- Systems change in the boundary zone requires a relevant leadership. I wish I could say that just any leadership would do, but it won't. It has to be a leadership that matters...leadership that is clearly fueled by a set of values that cohesively are a system themselves, for without a value framework that engages a system of leadership, there is not system transformation. It simply cannot be understood.
- Boundary Leadership engages the following values framework: transformative relationships; vision; faith and health alignment; elimination of health disparities while nurturing a common hope; community transformation; calling and accountability; and boundary leadership as a value.



Leadership at the Boundary of Faith, Health & Community

- ❑ Leadership theory of the day suggests, and I believe it is right, the boundary zones are not becoming smaller and less complex as we modernize and become more technically agile. In fact, the opposite is true.
- ❑ The edges of the zones are increasingly more murky like the swamp is as it separates the ocean from the land, but the zones themselves are increasingly more ambiguous, more paradoxical, and yet, have greater power than before.
- ❑ The power resides because boundary leaders are coming out to the party! Our industrial revolution and the leadership it produced delivered 100 years of productivity and problem solving somewhat well, but that age is gone, and the zone problem aren't relevant to the solutions of an age gone by.



Leadership at the Boundary of Faith, Health & Community

- This is the age of boundary leaders, of global leaders whose product is transformation and whose legacy is determined by their capacity to deliver HOPE, the very thing they are the best at.
- Leadership that matters in this context demands a greater sophistication and a complex integration of systems that addresses the whole person, whole communities, and understands whole systems. Boundary Leaders exercise their leadership through systems of integrated leadership to make sense out of nonsense to those who follow them.
- There are three leadership systems they use and espouse with those of their webs of transformation:



Global Leadership Systems of Boundary Leaders

(Adapted from Global Leadership, Leadership Systems Conceptual Framework for Global Leadership Identification and Development: © 2004, Brad S. Gray.)

| Capacity | Reciprocating Capacity | | Leadership System Name |
|---|--|---|---|
| Self-transformation Community transformation | A part of the solution, NOT the solution... (you don't have to go it alone) | → | <i>Problem Solving System</i> |
| Omnicompetence | Spiritual Leadership, the gifts that keep on giving: authorship, significance, empowerment, love | → | <i>Impact/Influence System (Spiritual System)</i> |
| Ethnorelativism | Use of paradox and ambiguity for transcendence | → | <i>Transcendence System</i> |



Global Leadership Systems of Boundary Leaders

| Boundary Leadership Values | | | Leadership System Name |
|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Vision □ Community transformation | < | > | <i>Problem Solving System</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Transformative relationships □ Eliminate disparities, Nurture common Hope □ Calling and Accountability | < | > | <i>Impact/Influence System (Spiritual System)</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Faith and Health Alignment □ Boundary Leadership as a value | < | > | <i>Transcendence System</i> |

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Boundary Leaders

Community-Based Agents of HOPE

- Dr. Jerome Groopman, the Dina and Raphael Recanati Chair of Medicine at the Harvard Medical School and chief of experimental medicine at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston whose focus of research are the basic mechanisms of blood disease, cancer, and AIDS has just published his work on the "Anatomy of Hope" How People prevail in the Face of Illness. Dr. Groopman's research has much to say about the science of hope, highlighting how hope may be sustained or snuffed out...in the relationship between the body and the brain .
- That science is the science of community transformation.
- Pain was the hurdle that prevented these patients from working to strengthen their muscles and ligaments. Once that hurdle could be overcome by the power of the mind, then the necessary rehabilitation could proceed. Without hope, nothing could begin, hope offered a real chance to reach a better end. Hope helps us overcome hurdles that we otherwise could not scale, and it moves us forward to a place where healing can occur.



Boundary Leaders

Community-Based Agents of HOPE

- ❑ Transformation is indeed change, but change is not necessarily transformation.
- ❑ At the nexus of change and transformation is Hope.
- ❑ For you can certainly have change without hope, all of us at one time or another have fallen lock step in place into the next organizational re-organization, or new program, the next grant, the next initiative without transforming or being transformed.
- ❑ BUT ONLY HOPE MAKES CHANGE TRANSFORMATIVE.
- ❑ I would suggest to you that Boundary Leaders are the catalytic element who weave hope with change to foster an environment for community transformation. Much like the endorphins of the body that block pain sufficiently long for pain to diminish and healing to begin, Boundary Leaders establish Hope.



Boundary Leaders

Community-Based Agents of HOPE

- ❑ At the nexus of health and faith.
 - is a person, a human heart and soul
 - the exist integrated whether we treat them that way or not
- ❑ At the nexus of health and faith.
 - are our communities, living organic groups who share life in relationship, sometimes with hope, sometimes with hope, sometimes not
- ❑ But make not mistake, our health systems and our faith systems, at the point of their meeting is a community.



The Words of a Boundary Leader

"The miracle that I did have something to offer, that we each do, something that you might call witness, something that might clinical supervisor would probably have called empathy, something that I have come to call "attending" the power of attending from the literal term tendere, to hold. I learned I had something to give which was different than anything I had known to give or thought amounted to a gift.

Not a solution to a problem, the gift of my analytic mind. Not advice, the gift of my wise experience. Not reassurance, the gift of my own faith or optimism. Not even consolation, the gift of my sympathy,....but accompaniment, attending to the other's experience, making known my efforts to understand, to give voice. No matter how hard it might be to give voice to the helplessness, to hopelessness in the other's experience, stuttering strange words hoping to resonate, strange in a culture of relentless doing..."

Robert Kegan, PhD



Boundary Leaders

Community-Based Agents of HOPE

- Attending to the experience of others, letting them weave their hope from the seed you, a Boundary Leader, lay at the feet of their soul, and at the door step of their community.
- You, Boundary Leader, by this moment have entered the door of the movement. You have place, you give Hope, there is much work to be done...You boundary leader are a catalyst, truth-telling hope breeder, to change the inequity of disparity in the nation, on the globe.
- You boundary leader are standing in the gap.



Leadership at the Boundary of Faith, Health & Community



Thank You

