

Shaping Influences on the Leadership of Genghis Khan, George Washington, and Nelson Mandela: Applications for Educators

Dr. Jean-Pierre Bongila

Assistant Professor and Director International Leadership Program
Department of Leadership, Policy, and Administration
College of Applied Professional Studies
MOH 217, 1000 LaSalle Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55403-2009
(651) 962-4799
jpbongila@stthomas.edu

Abstract

Using a prosopographical methodology this study examines common leadership influences that might have existed among Genghis Khan, George Washington, and Nelson Mandela. Shoup (2005) suggests that the following seven influences have contributed to nurturing the leadership of 12 renowned individuals: involved parents, happy childhood, formal, informal education, prodigious patrons, critics and adversaries, apprenticeship/sequences of success, and favorable fate. This analysis suggests that the seven influences in his model had an affect the lives of the three individuals in this study, making them competent or exemplary leaders. The study additionally proposes three application stages that educators can utilize to instill leadership values and abilities in young minds.

Comparing Three World Leaders

Comparing biographies of three leaders as different in lifetime era and cultural milieu as Genghis Khan (1162-1227) (Ratchnevsky, 2006), George Washington (1732-1799) (Abbot, 2005), and Nelson Mandela (1918-) (Lodge, 2006) might seem postmodern at best because Genghis Khan lived a nomadic life in Mongolia in the 12th century while George Washington spent most of his life fighting for what became the United States of America, and Nelson Mandela was the anti-apartheid leader in South Africa following 27 years in prison for his freedom struggle. The three leaders varied greatly in how they governed their land and country, and in how they are viewed in the popular imageries of world citizens. Temujin (later to be known as Genghis Khan) ruled autocratically over the Mongol tribes and territories he conquered and unified. Many in the West perceive him as a cruel tyrant (Ratchnevsky, 2006). George Washington on the

other hand led the North American colonies as a “res-publica” in their struggle for independence. He believed in power sharing and resisted calls for a monarchy, even if he were to be named king. Generations of people around the world remember him as the father of the United States of America (Ellis, 2005). Nelson Mandela, a political prisoner for 27 years, led South Africa toward multiracial democracy via a successful Truth and Reconciliation process. The world remembers regards him as a selfless national reconciler who willingly stepped down as the first president of the new democratic South Africa after serving only one term (Carlin, 2008).

Finding commonalities among these diametrically distant and diverse leaders might seem a stretch. However, in his book *A collective biography of twelve world class leaders*, Shoup (2005) examines the lives of 12 diverse world renowned leaders and provides a framework from which to examine leadership characteristics by revealing seven common attributes that might have influenced the leadership of the randomly selected individuals he studied. The seven common influences identified by Shoup include: involved parents, a happy childhood, formal and informal education, prodigious patrons, critics and adversaries, apprenticeships/sequences of success, and favorable fate.

Involved Parents

Each of the three leaders examined in this study lost their fathers at an early age. The presence of strong mothers played a significant role in their leadership development. Genghis Khan was eight when he lost his father (Ratchnevsky, 2006). Nelson Mandela was 10 (Lodge, 2006). George Washington was barely 11 (Abbott, 2005). In each case, their fathers appeared to be leaders in their society and they instilled in their children an extraordinary sense of the common good as well as a profound love for their cultural heritage. Genghis Khan’s father, Yisugei, led the Kiyat-Borjigid tribe, a member of the Mongol confederation. Augustine Washington, George Washington’s father, was part of an aristocratic family in the Virginia colony. Nelson Mandela’s father, Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa, was related to chiefs in the Thembu ethnic group.

Genghis Khan’s mother, Hö’elun, worked at consolidating her tribe upon the death of her husband (Ratchnevsky, 2006). Hö’elun fueled Temuchin’s determination to avenge the humiliation the Tayichi’ut tribe inflicted upon her family when the tribal members deserted them after the death of her husband. So great was her influence in the life of Temuchin that the Mongol leader feared her even at the peak of his military conquests. Only Hö’elun would have been able to storm into Genghis Khan’s tent and stop the trial that would likely have led to the execution of Genghis Khan’s younger brother, Kasar (Ratchnevsky, 2006).

According to Abbott (2005), Washington's mother exerted great influence on her growing son. She conveyed domestic and Christian virtues, instilling in young George principles of probity and piety.

In his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela acknowledges enjoying the love, protection, and support of his mother, Noqaphi Nosekeni (Mandela, 1994).

Happy Childhood

According to biographers, Temuchin's childhood was traumatic, particularly after the murder of his father. In his early childhood he did enjoy, however, a relatively happy childhood surrounded by siblings, and a blood-brother, Jamuka (Ratchnevsky, 2006). At the age of eight, Temujin and his brothers became family providers through hunting and fishing. Over time Temujin was to murder his own half-brother for stealing the family spoils and helping himself. Ratchnevsky (2006) sees this criminal action as an early sign of a very ambitious person destined for greatness.

In contrast, Abbott (2005) painted a virtuous portrait of George Washington's childhood, focusing on traits that made the future leader appear to be a more honorable man. He avoided falsehoods, kept balance in his life, and remained constant in his religious practices. With strong support from his mother and siblings, even the death of his father did not disturb his childhood.

Mandela's short-lived enjoyment of his father did not take a dramatic turn upon his father's death. Although Lodge (2006) does not describe joy in his childhood, Mandela (2005) acknowledges in his autobiography the end of that era of his life as the sort of childhood he would have loved to keep on living. The time spent with his father provided an invaluable education in tribal administration and culture. Lodge adds, "Mandela himself maintains that much of his childhood was a form of apprenticeship shaped by knowledge of his 'destiny,' in which he would ascend the office as the key counselor to the Thembu chiefdom" (p. 2).

Formal and Informal Education

The formal education of the three leaders diverges considerably. Because of the time and place in which he lived, Genghis Khan's education was exclusively informal. He had to master indispensable survival skills, including horsemanship and archery (Waly, 2008). He also learned the customs and fables at the heart of the history of his people from his mother. Cultural learning contributed to both his

mental strength and his sense of justice. Like other Mongol boys, he was also exposed to the harsh physical training required for survival in steppe life.

George Washington, in contrast, was well educated. Although his formal education ended at the age of 16, he remained interested in mathematics and sciences throughout his lifetime. According to Abbott (2006), George's love for learning was a prelude to his character, diligence, brilliance, and "careful business habits" (pp. 16-17).

Of all three leaders, Mandela had the most formal schooling. He received a law degree from the University of South Africa (Lodge, 2006). Like Khan, he was also introduced to the culture and tradition of both his tribe and his country from an early age when he sat by campfires and listened to tribal stories told by elders. He developed a profound love for South African history that was enhanced by time spent in the court of his patron Jogintaba, then Regent of the Thembu tribe. Like Khan and Washington, he embodied physical agility, excelling in such sports as soccer, marathon running, and boxing (Mandela, 1994).

Prodigious Patrons

All three leaders had prodigious influences. Genghis Khan's were less stable because of the nomadic steppe life Mongolian led. The first of his patrons, Wang-Khan (also known as Toghrul), a close ally of his father, encouraged his rise to power. Toghrul was a ruler of Keraites, one of the sub-groups of the Mongol confederation (Ratchnevsky, 2006). Wang-Khan helped him gather his first supporters and fight minor and major wars. So influential was Toghrul in his life that Genghis Khan frequently reunited with him even when he (Toghrul) failed to share the booty he gained after attacking the tribe of Merkits or when he (Toghrul) deserted Khan during critical battles (Waly, 2008). When Toghrul would not allow his daughter to marry Genghis Khan's first son, Jochi, this constituted a grave offense in Mongolian tradition. Then Toghrul sided with his son Senggum who had threatened to assassinate Genghis Khan. Finally, Toghrul, fearful of the growing power of Genghis Khan, plotted with Jamuka (Khan's blood brother) to assassinate him. Toghrul was defeated by Genghis Khan. As he was fleeing he was ambushed and eventually executed by the Naiman soldiers in 1203 (De Rachewiltz, 1971).

George Washington also knew a number of prodigious patrons, including Lord Fairfax who met him at his brother's house when Washington was just out of school (Abbott, 2005). "Charmed with the manliness, intelligence and gentlemanly bearing of the young man Fairfax engaged him to survey" (p. 20) the vast lands he had just purchased. Believing in young George's abilities, Lord

Fairfax offered him not only his first employment, but also support and consideration. Another important prodigious patron of George Washington was the French nobleman, Marquis de Lafayette. Abbott (2005) states that “the commanding air yet modest bearing (of Marquis de Lafayette) immediately attracted the attention of Washington, and a life-long friendship was commenced” (p. 314). This French aristocrat and military officer served in the Continental Army under Washington. Because of his foreign origin, Lafayette could not work as a division commander, but Washington held him in confidence.

In the case of Nelson Mandela, Jongintaba Dalindyebo, the Regent of the Thembu, had great influence on the growing leader. It was a wish of Nelson’s father that his son be accepted by the Regent as “his ward and companion to his own son, Justice” (Lodge, 2006, p. 3). Jongintaba took the patronage role very seriously and provided Nelson the best possible education and upbringing. He “arranged for his passage into manhood through the customary procedures of circumcision and initiation” (p. 7). He generously sponsored Mandela’s boarding school and early college experience. Walter Sisulu had business connections with Johannesburg where Nelson hoped to begin his professional career (Lodge, 2005). He appears to be the most influential patron in Nelson Mandela’s life. Through Walter Sisulu, Nelson met his first wife, Evelyn Mase who became the “mother of four of his children” (p. 24). Both participated in the Treason Trial hearings in Pretoria in 1955-1956 (Lodge, 2006) and spent years in prison on Robben Island.

Critics and Adversaries

Genghis Khan was moved by loyalty to himself and he dealt summarily with his adversaries. Any opposition to his power and conquest was met with an extreme blow to the adversary. For example, as noted earlier, when his blood-brother Jamuka turned out to be one of his notorious critics and adversaries, Genghis Khan offered reconciliation to his former friend in exchange for his loyalty. Because Jamuka refused to promise allegiance, he was summarily executed at his own request. Genghis Khan dealt in the same brutal fashion with the leaders of tribes and nations that chose to fight him rather than peacefully capitulate. Close advisors such as his own shamans perished for attempting to usurp his power, for being disloyal or for lying (Ratchnevsky, 2006).

One of George Washington’s greatest adversaries was General Thomas Gage, commander of the British military forces in Massachusetts (Abbott, 2005). Gage was a ruthless general who allowed plunder and maltreatment of people in the North American colonies, as well as vicious treatment of prisoners – “treating them with utmost barbarity” (p. 228). In his correspondence with Washington, Gates displayed insolence and defiance, refusing to honor Washington’s rank.

Ironically, Gage would experience a number of defeats at the hands of ill-equipped and less numerous revolutionary troops. Washington inflicted a serious defeat on him at Concord in April 1775 which caused the British government to recall Gage (Abbott, 2005). Dealing appropriately with critics and defeating such adversaries as General Gage only increased Washington's confidence and resiliency in the effort to free the colonies.

A long time member and President of the African National Congress (ANC), Chief Albert Luthuli disagreed with Mandela on the strategy needed to bring about their common objective – freedom for Black South African people. While Luthuli advocated for “gentler kinds of conciliatory politics” (Lodge, p. 71) toward the apartheid, Mandela and Sisulu eventually lost hope in that failed strategy. Because Mandela, Sisulu, and their supporters blamed Luthuli for his lack of assertiveness in planning or leading ANC campaigns (Lodge, p. 55) they went on to found and sanction “the establishment of a new military organization, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)” (p. 90). It was a military guerilla force against apartheid government installations.

Apprenticeship: Sequences of Success

Enemies, friends, and prodigious patrons contribute to sharpen leadership competence as they offer leaders opportunities for apprenticeships and successes. Hildinger (2001) holds that Temujin began his apprenticeship as a leader by offering himself as a vassal to his father's blood-brother Toghrul. Under his protection, Temujin secured a safe recapture of his wife Börte from the Merkits. Following this successful campaign, Genghis Khan foresaw trouble between him and his blood-brother Jamuka, thereby learning a lesson based on experience. Genghis Khan acquired additional professional experience through his relationship with Subutai, one of the generals in his armies. He also shared with his master the value of engineers in siege warfare (Books, 2008).

Abbott (2005) writes that, like Genghis Khan, George Washington's path was crisscrossed by military apprenticeships and victories. Prior to military services, however, Washington followed his family's tradition as a planter. Historians Abbott (2005), Palmer (2006), and Long (2006) claim that in 1874 Lord Fairfax invited Washington to help him survey his land west of the Blue Ridge. The following year, he was appointed the first public surveyor (Adams, 2004). Abbott (2005) adds that his half-brother, Lawrence, influenced George's interest in the Ohio Company aiming to explore western land. When Lawrence died, George was asked to take over some of his duties as adjutant of the colony. His zeal as an apprentice paid off when Virginia governor Robert Dinwiddie appointed him the district adjutant general in the Virginia Militia in 1752. Historians and

biographers also maintain that Washington learned a significant amount of military administration and diplomacy, particularly when he set out on Governor Dinwiddie's mission to investigate the position of French Canadians on the Ohio frontiers (Abbott, 2005; Adams, 2004; Long, 2006).

Mandela's apprenticeship in South African politics began as he joined the African National Congress (ANC), particularly when participating in the founding of the ANC resistance Youth Movement in 1944. He learned to fashion action programs using boycotts and strikes in order to obtain full citizenship and equal parliamentary representations for Black South Africans. In 1941 Walter Sisulu recommended Mandela for his first job as a clerk for Lazar Sidelsky who had a distinguished law firm in South Africa (Lodge, 2006). During his imprisonment on Robben Island from 1962 on, Mandela learned among other things how to remain true to his admonishment to community activists "to make every home, every shack or rickety structure a centre of learning" (Clark & Worger, 2004, p. 132). Eventually, Mandela would turn the prison into an educational sanctuary.

Favorable Fate

After his victory over the Tartars, Genghis Khan wanted to strengthen his claim to the Kerait throne by a marriage alliance (Ratchnevsky, 2006) between his son and Wang-khan's daughter. Wang-Khan's son Senggum strongly opposed the union. A stratagem was devised that ended in a fierce battle. "Temuchin's complete defeat could not have been prevented had not Senggum been struck in the head by an arrow" (p. 70). When exposed to arrows on the battlefield, Khan waited for his son Ögödei, his adopted son Boroghul, and their companion Bo'orchu to come to his rescue. Fate favored him as he safely retreated and pursued sequences of military successes that allowed him to dominate a significant part of Asia.

George Washington faced numerous close calls on battlefields. For example, in March 1776 at Dorchester Point, Washington prepared to face an overwhelming number of British battalions ready to pound his redoubts with heavy bombardments (Abbott, 2005). However, "[a] violent easterly storm arose, rolling such surges upon the shore that the boats could not land It was the best ally the Americans could have" (p. 259). Fate, including aid from France contributed to Washington's ultimate victory over the British. Being the right person at the right time also propelled Washington into becoming the first president of the united colonies of North America. Thomas Jefferson wrote the following about Washington, stating "and it may truly be said, that never did nature and fortune combine more perfectly to make a man great" (Cantor, 2003, p. 50).

Likewise, Nelson Mandela benefited from some exceptional twists of fate. The white South African minority sentenced to death many leaders of the anti-apartheid movements, particularly the ANC. It spared Mandela's life, but sentenced him to a life in prison as a consequence of the Rivonia Trial of 1963-64 (Mandela, 1993). The rough, inhumane, and depressing conditions of the Robben Island Prison, where he spent 18 of his 27 years in prison, were meant to crush inmates. Only a few, such as Mandela, came out of those insane conditions undeterred, and even transformed, by the devastating experience.

Competent versus Exemplary Leaders

Shoup (2005) sees in competent leaders "those with requisite skills and knowledge base" (p. 9), adding that followers do not always admire such individuals. Nor do they willingly follow them. He defines exemplary leaders as those capable of displaying some sort of functionally virtuous spirituality. In addition to being competent, exemplary leaders practice ethical means, and are geared toward ethical ends. The prime characteristic of exemplary leadership that sets it completely apart lies in the prevalence of moral voices or consciences, referred to as "prodigious patrons" that influence the thinking and actions of the leader. The three leaders examined in this study reached their full potential by the multiple influences covered above. According to Shoup's definition they epitomize the characteristics of competent leaders.

It would be safer, however, to characterize both George Washington and Nelson Mandela as exemplary leaders. Although Genghis Khan believed in the power of shamans and of spirits, his behavior as a leader was not completely exemplary. This is noticeable in the cruel, though necessary in his time and culture, way he treated those who opposed his power or betrayed their loyalty to him or other clan leaders. As depicted by Abbott (2005), George Washington definitely stands the test of exemplary leader. Several examples attest to his prayerful activities, and, in particular, to the compassion with which he treated not only his own soldiers, but also his enemies. Nelson Mandela epitomizes such compassion. From being the victim of the apartheid system that kept him in prison for 27 years, he has become the icon of nation building and reconciliation (Lodge, 2006). Most contemporaries would concede that Mandela typifies exemplary leadership.

Shoup (2005) believes that educators including parents and teachers might enhance the leadership abilities of youth by systematically imparting common values of exemplary leaders. He identifies three stages of leadership development:

- Stage 1 - instilling a sense of purpose
- Stage 2 - providing plethora of apprenticeships
- Stage 3 - recruiting the right people

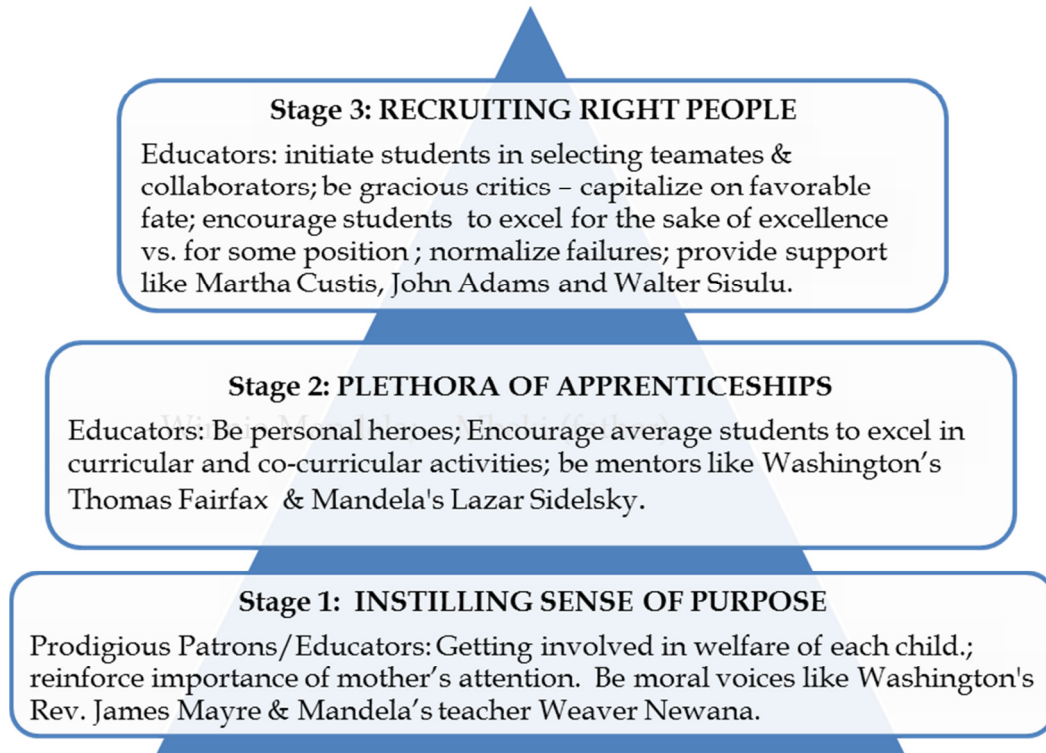
Implications for Educators

That educators (teachers, parents, ministers, and others) positively influence young minds remains a timeless truth. Socrates, for example, had to be silenced by death for his tremendous impact on the young Athenians of his time (Plato, 1992). It was through the inspiration of his teacher, the Reverend James Mayre, that young George Washington wrote the first manuscript version of his *George Washington's Rules of Civility* in 1745 (Phillips II, 2003).

The teaching of a Black history instructor was an impetus for Nelson Mandela to engage in the South African liberation movements. Lodge (2006) specifies “In fact,....schools employed black as well as white teachers and amongst the former, Weaver Newana enlivened history classes with his own versions of the oral narratives Mandela had heard at his father’s fireside and Jongintaba’s Great Place” (p. 2).

Recently, several movies, such as *Dangerous Minds* (Smith, 1995) and *Mr. Holland’s Opus* (Herek, 1996) have recounted how educators can elevate even distraught minds. Oliver and Reynolds (2010) demonstrated that educators can use television characters to instill servant-leadership principles in public school students as young as 14-years of age. Similarly Gray and Callahan (2008) used the movie *300* (2007), which tells the story of the Spartan King Leonidas, to equip educators with tools for leadership teaching. In the following three-stage model of leadership development, Shoup (2005) only attempts to systematize the empowerment process of young students, which educators have pursued in every corner of the world. Figure 1 represents the roles of educators as prodigious patrons at each stage of leadership development. The ascending arrow indicates the growth from the bottom (young age) to the top (late college level).

Figure 1
Roles of Educators in Leadership Development



Adapted from Shoup, J. (2005).

In stage one educators would instill in youth a sense of purpose. To do this, educators must bear the role of prodigious patrons who hold youth to high expectations, get parents and extended family (church, school) involved, help youngsters specify their mission, instill in them spiritual (religious) belief, call them to greatness, repeat calling messages, and insist on loyalty toward their fellows.

George Washington might have acquired some sense of purpose (stage one) through expectations set for him as the oldest child at home after the death of his father (Abbott, 2005). The involvement of Mary Ball, his mother, and that of his half-brother, Augustine, as well as an enfolding mission enlightened by Christian virtues, imply that sense of purpose. Washington's imposing social stature might be read as a calling to greatness (Abbott, 2005). While he received repeating messages to serve in the British and later in the Continental armies, he remained loyal to his fellow colonists both as a surveyor and an army officer.

People placed high expectations on Nelson Mandela because of his chieftaincy lineage and being the first son of a preferred wife who was actively involved in the destiny of her child (Mandela, 1994). In the aftermath of his father's death, Mandela enjoyed the extended family of the Regent Jongithaba who adopted him. He benefited from some Christian church influence. Because of his schooling it is clear desegregation and liberation of the Black South African people became his driven mission. His socially imposing stature, including his traditional circumcision, constituted a sort of calling to greatness. Receiving repeating messages of his people's struggles for liberation, he remained loyal to the anti-apartheid movement.

At stage two, to foster leadership development, educators as prodigious patrons must help to enhance students' competency through a series of challenging curricular and extra-curricular activities. They would insure series of successes, suggest ways of coping with failures, and introduce new levels of experiences through formal and informal education. Prodigious patrons must help students discover their niches as they learn to guide other fellows.

Washington developed tremendous competency through land surveillance (Abbott, 2005) and as troop commander, taking advantage of a series of failures and successes, such as those at Fort Duquesne and Valley Forge. Through formal and informal education, he progressively sharpened his skills from those of a simple surveyor to military and government leader via tremendous experiences at the head of the Continental Army.

The same can be said of Nelson Mandela. He increased his competency through leading as a member of the Africa National Congress, and as a lawyer by training. Throughout his struggles against the apartheid regime, he experienced failures (death of colleagues and imprisonment) as well successes in civil disobedience and boycotts, leading eventually, to the complete annihilation of apartheid. The creation of Umkhonto we Sizwe and the experience of 27 years in prison only allowed him to see a nonracial South Africa (Temkin, 2003).

At stage three, leadership development requires educators as prodigious patrons to engage students in selecting teammates to foster collaborative works and to recruit peers and collaborators in class and extracurricular activities. They provide students with strategies to nurture collaboration and fill strategic roles with competent and exemplary colleagues. As indicated in Figure 1, educators should encourage students to excel for the sake of excellence as opposed to simply holding a position, and to dwell on positive sides of failures. The leadership styles of Genghis Khan, George Washington, and Nelson Mandela testify to these attributes. At the utmost, prodigious patrons will become ethical voices and

consciences whose advice and counsel will be rooted in ethical means that the future leaders should utilize to reach ethical ends.

In his wife, Martha Custis, and in such collaborators as Thomas Jefferson, John Adam, Alexander Hamilton and others, George Washington found exemplary and competent collaborators whose contributions as first lady and founding fathers played an instrumental role in the beginning of democracy established in the United States of America (Abbott, 2005). All believed passionately that liberty as an end was larger than any individual.

Such collaborators as Walter Sisulu, Mbeki, and leading members of the ANC played a critical role in the beginnings of a democratic South Africa. By means of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Temkin, 2003), which Mandela's collaborators embraced, South Africa was reaching the unprecedented goal of the abolition of apartheid and the inauguration of a nonracial era.

Conclusion

This prosopography, a collective study of biographies, shows that a plethora of human and natural influences nurtured the leadership of Genghis Khan, George Washington, and Nelson Mandela. Those influences fueled them with a sense of purpose that was rooted in passion for nation and territory building, hands-on education, and response to critics, fate, or providence. Emboldened by their mothers and a myriad of followers (army generals, shamans, collaborators, and advisors), in addition to destiny, the three leaders reached a similar goal – the unification into one nation/territory of a loose confederation of people, although in different times and contexts. Genghis Khan succeeded in creating the largest empire ever through military and diplomatic conquests (De Rachewiltz, 1971; Ratchnevsky, 2006). George Washington liberated the North American colonies from British bondage and helped make them the United States of America (Abbott, 2005; Johnson, 2005). Nelson Mandela broke the oppressive apartheid system of South Africa and reconciled a nation torn by racial discrimination and segregation (Temkin, 2003; Lodge, 2006).

These three individuals are deemed competent leaders given their great organizational capabilities sharpened particularly by advisors and collaborators with whom they surrounded themselves. Additionally, according to Shoup's (2005) definition, Washington and Mandela may be categorized as exemplary leaders because parents and friends helped them to internalize ethical/spiritual values including compassion and forgiveness.

The roles of educators are critical both as major influences on the lives of youth and as agents of their leadership development. It is incumbent on them to take future leaders through this process of exemplary leadership maturation because their social position and charisma naturally appeal to young people. In proposing an adapted model of Shoup's (2005) stages of leadership development (see Figure 1), an attempt marred with some incompleteness as far as the sequences of those stages are concerned has been laid out. While educators might adapt this sketchy model to their needs, they should also consider analyzing and fostering whichever influences are likely to nurture future exemplary leaders. Because of their status and function, educators (e.g., teachers, parents, ministers) remain the most influential prodigious patrons of young minds.

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Author Biography

Dr. Jean-Pierre Bongila is Assistant Professor of Leadership, Policy and Administration in the School of Education, College of Applied Professional Studies at the University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is currently the Director of the Certificate and masters in International Leadership. His area of research is in cross-cultural leadership as well as in global positioning leadership – how global leaders should position themselves in the ever broken and ever changing world.