Case Study of "Remember the Titans" (2000) to Examine Power, Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Followership and Change

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ABSTRACT

This case study seeks to utilize the film "Remember the Titans" to focus on five contrasting leadership principles as a means for students to apply the concepts. The key leadership variables discussed in this case study are as follows: 1) sources of power (French & Raven, 1959), 2) servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996) 3) transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), 4) followership (Kelley, 1988) and 5) change (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). In a context of forced integration in the early 1970's, a football team is charged with the task of creating a major paradigm shift.

Participant Case

"In Virginia, High school football is a way of life. It's bigger than Christmas Day. My Daddy coached in Alexandria. He worked so hard, my mamma left him. But I stayed with coach. He needed me on that field. Up until 1971 in Alexandria, there was no race mixing. Then the school board forced us to integrate. They combined the white school and the black school into one called TC Williams High School. That summer a black teenager was killed by a white teen and the town was on the verge of exploding…. "
Cheryl Yoast, 1981

Significance of the Film

The quote above focuses attention on Cheryl Yoast, daughter of a main character, Coach Bill Yoast. Told from Cheryl's perspective as an innocent in a time of social change, "Remember the Titans" is a film that examines some of the most important issues of our day. It addresses the central question of race in America, and how a community can overcome its deep divisions through the spirit of sports and teamwork. The film also is an effective analysis of leadership and how it can affect, for good or ill, the sense of community and individual cooperation. The film deals with theuse and misuse of power and authority, the relationships between change andappropriate leadership styles; the ways in which transformational leadership creates outcomes that are positive and synergistic; and finally, it considers the role of both leader and follower within a servant leadership perspective.

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Plot Summary

Set in Alexandria, Virginia, the school board has decided to integrate a high school and bring in a new head football coach, Herman Boone, a black man. By taking the position, Coach Boone is ousting Coach Yoast in his Hall of Fame year, potentially robbing Yoast of ever achieving his coaching goals. In reluctantly agreeing to assist Boone, Yoast abandons all formal power and adopts a followership role. Anticipating tremendous change -- forced integration -- the players and the entire town must acknowledge the need for a major paradigm shift in their values and beliefs. Our initial view of Coach Boone's leadership style is seen as the team prepares to leave for football camp. He is curt, abrasive and uncompromising. '"This is not a democracy" will be his motto for the coming weeks. Uncertain about his formal authority, he will use power to lead and rule. Yoast, who deeply questions these tactics, and whose leadership style is markedly different, recognizes his responsibility to remain loyal and continues in his followership role. He is aware of his larger responsibilities to the community in this time of forced integration knows he cannot simply walk away.

At one point, Coach Boone tells the players that they must "Change everything. Change the way you eat, change the way you sleep, change the way you run, change the way you fight, change the way you win, and change the way you train" Boone attempts to create the paradigm shift through authoritarian methods and coercive power. But while his team makes some progress, the team development is not a shift that represents a fundamental change in attitude and behavior.

A pivotal point in the film occurs during a 3:00 a.m. run through the forest near Gettysburg. Boone is able to teach his players about the true nature of the battle they are fighting by comparing his players to the young men at the battle of Gettysburg. Boone says, "... This is where they fought the battle of Gettysburg. Fifty thousand men died right here fighting the same fight we are still fighting amongst ourselves... Take a lesson from the dead; if we don't come together on this hallowed ground, we too will be destroyed just like they were".

Once the coaches begin to work as a team, so too do the players. The team captain, Gerry, and the key black leader, Julius, begin to develop a strong friendship, but only after strong and volatile conflicts. Through their bonding and mutual commitment to the vision of a unified team, they begin to develop their own leadership qualities. The team models their lead by beginning to develop friendships among each other. Gerry becomes a model for the white players to follow, as does Julius for the blacks. Over the course of the football season, we follow the evolution of each leader and follower through his or her behaviors. The team learns that only through cooperation can success become a reality and they find eventual triumph as state champions.

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Historical Background

"Remember the Titans" is based on a true story of two highly effective football coaches. Herman Boone successfully coached football, basketball and baseball prior to joining Coach Yoast at T. C. Williams High School. Boone, a native of North Carolina, received his bachelors and masters degrees from North Carolina College.

Boone's effective coaching was evident through the many national and state championships gained during his first 13 years of coaching. The Scholastic Coach Magazine as "the number one football team in America" recognized his 1966 Williamston, North Carolina team. He was selected as Coach of the Year six times before his school board in Williamston informed Boone that their town was not ready for a black head coach.

Seeking a new employer in 1969, Boone applied to be the assistant coach at T. C. Williams High. He worked under Coach Yoast for two years before, in 1971; the City of Alexandria decided to integrate its school system. They appointed Herman Boone as the first head coach over Bill Yoast, reinforcing their commitment to forced integration. Boone was honored to be selected as head coach, but with the abrupt change in leadership, he was apprehensive about the challenge of creating both a cohesive coaching staff and successful football team.

William Yoast, who was born and raised in Florence, Alabama, received his education through the United States Air Force at the Georgia Military College. Yoast received his masters degree at Peabody College and started his teaching and coaching career in Sparta, Georgia before moving to Alexandria, Virginia to begin a thirty-year tenure at T. C. Williams High School. During the 1971 season, the year the film takes place; his team was ranked second in national polls and won the state finals.

Main Characters

Coach Herman Boone	Head Coach	Denzel Washington
Coach Bill Yoast	Assistant Coach	Will Patton
Julius Campbell	Black team captain	Wood Harris
Gerry Bertier	White team captain	Ryan Hurst
Petey Jones	black player	Donald Andeosun Faison
Jerry "Rev" Harris	black player	Craig Kirkwood
Lewis Lastik	white player	Ethan Suplee
Ronnie "Sunshine" Bass	white player	Kip Pardue
Sheryl Yoast	Coach Yoast's daughter	Hayden Panettiere
Carol Boone	Coach Boone's wife	Nicole Ari Parker

Introducing the Case

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It is suggested that the study participant watch the film in its entirely prior to the case discussion. Taking notes while viewing the film will help the participant synthesize key information for discussion. Special attention should be given to specific behaviors of the key characters. For example, what outcomes result with each behavior/situation? How do characters' behaviors change over the course of the film? What impact did the character changes have on the team and the community?

Relevant Theories That Apply

Interpersonal Relations and Race

As mentioned above, the film "Remember the Titans" addresses the central question of race in America. It is necessary to understand cultural diversity in not only society, but within the organizations in which we live and function. Leadership is impacted by the relationships we form with others and race impacts the way these relationships are developed. Leader member exchange theory (Graen & Uhl-bien, 1995) states that leader and follower relationships are created through interpersonal exchanges in which the parties to the relationship evaluate each other with regard to trust, ability and integrity. Leader member exchange theory contends that leaders develop relationships of varying quality with each of their followers and that the quality of these relationships remains stable over time. Thus, a leader forms "in" and "out" groups within their organization. Anjali (2000) studied demographic variables and found support for the hypothesis that demographic variables, such as race, impact the quality of relationships developed between leaders and followers. Additionally, Tsui and O'Reilly (1989) found that increased dissimilarity in leader-follower demographic characteristics was associated with lower evaluations of effectives as perceived by leaders and less personal attraction on the part of leaders toward followers.

The film "Remember the Titans" creates a scenario where leaders and followers of different races are forced to work together in order to achieve a goal – winning the state championship. Race issues are present at all levels of the organization – coaches, players, administrators, parents, and, ultimately, the community. At first glance, the characters in the film view each other as extremely "dissimilar". Coach Boone and Coach Yoast have immediate distaste for each other at the beginning of the film, as do the team captains Julius and Gerry. Additionally, the Coach Boone negatively evaluates Gerry, the white team captain which is evident in the "Who's your daddy?" scene. Each coach appears to positively evaluate the team captain to whom they are most similar --Coach Yoast positively evaluates Gerry and Coach Boone positively evaluates Julius.

As the film progresses, however, the coaches and team begin to see each other differently. Coach Boone requires that the players sit with members of their team by position rather than by race. Further, he requires the players to share a room with a player of a different race. The players begin to know each other at a different level – they begin to understand how they are alike and how they are different. The quality of

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their relationships grows beyond the color of their skin toward how they can support each other on the team. Coach Boone and Coach Yoast begin to respect each other for their behavior rather than disrespect each other because of their race or situation. Perhaps leader member exchange theory can impact initial evaluations within leader/follower relationships, but once individuals have the opportunity to understand each other and work toward a common goal, the negative of perceived dissimilarity is diminished.

Sources of Power

Power and authority have been examined in organizational behavior and leadership research for many years (Allen, et al., 1979; Pfeffer, 1981; Weber, 1947; Kanter, 1979). Pfeffer defines power as "a force, a store of potential influences through which events can be affected" (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 407). This contrasts with politics, which he defines as "intentional acts of influence." Though much research has been done regarding organizational power, many of these theories fail to bring forth a parsimonious taxonomy that can be tested empirically. For this reason, this case utilizes French and Raven's (1959) power taxonomy as a means of understanding the force of power in the context of social change. French and Raven (1959) identify five sources of power by which an individual can potentially influence others. The five sources of power are oriented from the leader's perspective, but it should be noted that the follower must acknowledge and award each source of power to the leader in order for the leader to use that power. In addition, followers also have the same five sources of power and can influence the leader. Becoming aware of these bases of power can help those who study leadership understand more clearly how leaders and followers influence each other. Briefly, the five sources of power are as follows:

1. Expert Power: Expert power is the use of knowledge. Those with an expertise in an area are able to influence those around them through the use of that expertise.
2. Referent Power: Referent power is derived from the relationship the leader develops with the followers. The stronger the relationship between a leader and his/her followers, the greater referent power the leader possesses.
3. Legitimate Power: Legitimate power is derived from a leaders' formal position within an organization, or their organizational role. Legitimate power is one's formal authority.
4. Reward Power: Reward power is the potential to influence others due to one's control over valuable resources. This type of power can include raises, bonuses, promotions, assignment to high visibility projects, time off, desired activities, parking places, interceding on one's behalf, awards and praise.
5. Coercive Power: Coercive power is the opposite of reward power – it is the potential threat of taking away valuable resources, or employing negative sanctions. The fear of punishment becomes the motivating factor for the follower when coercive power is being used. Speeding tickets, forced over-time, denial of

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vacation dates, refused promotions, loss of social privileges, and prison sentences are all sources of coercive power.

Research indicates that leaders who rely on expert and referent power have subordinates that are more motivated and satisfied than leaders that use coercive, legitimate or reward power. Hinkin and Schriesheim (1990) studied influence tactics and their relationship with sources of power. Though influence tactics are not a focus of this case study, it is relevant to the theoretical development of this case that in Hinkin and Schriesheim's 1990 study, rationality was positively associated with legitimate, expert and referent power. Rationality was also the most commonly used influence tactic by leaders in their study. In contrast, assertiveness was positively associated with coercive power and negatively associated with expert and referent power. (See appendix A for definitions of influence tactics).

In the context of this film, it is of interest to watch Coach Boone shift from using assertiveness in the beginning of the film to using rationality toward the conclusion of the film. The followers (players) in this case respond to all sources of power, coercive, expert and referent, but the outcomes are significantly different based on the source of power utilized by Coach Boone. The question arises as to whether Coach Boone understood the source of power that he was using and the purpose for using it. Did he change his tactics in response to the situation at a conscious level? And finally, what context forces a leader to use authoritarian power over the other sources of power available? Cobb and Margulies (1981) make the observation that it may be possible to separate the objectives of a leader and the means to solve a problem. However, they conclude that the means to solve a problem may ultimately impact the end result. Boone used coercive means to initially solve the problem. However, he shifted strategies when he saw the objectives he desired were not being attained.

Every leader and every follower possess a certain amount of power. As shown above, many leadership theorists state that a leader must utilize power in order to be effective. However, the many effective leaders allow their followers to influence them in a give and take power relationship. High degrees of reciprocal influence are present in the most effective organizations where power is a factor of reality.

Servant Leadership

In direct contrast to the power theory described above, Robert Greenleaf, (1996) defined servant leadership as occurring when the leader yields to the will of his followers in order that the followers can reach their goals. According to Greenleaf, in order to be effective as a servant leader, one must relinquish control over goal setting. The role of the leader in this scenario is to guide the process and provide resources while allowing the followers to determine their course of action. Followers are empowered in this leadership process. Spears (1995) identified ten characteristics of the servant leader based on Greenleaf's work. They include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community.

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And while the theoretical basis for studying servant leadership is still being developed by leadership scholars, many highly successful companies such as Southwest Airlines, TDIndustries, and Synovus Financial currently use servant leadership as their management philosophy and have been placed on Fortune's list of "Top 100 Best Companies to Work for in America" (Levering & Moskowitz, 2001). Though there is little empirical work available, the qualitative work of Greenleaf and others has enabled students to understand the servant leadership theory.

Servant leadership is based on variables such as: (1) release of power, (2) facilitating followers' process and (3) keeping an open mind. It is a way of living more than a learned behavior. The release of power refers to the leader's ability to forgo their personal agenda in order to take up the cause of the followers. The servant leader provides valuable resources to the followers as well as opening avenues of collaboration amongst the followers. Facilitating the followers' process requires the servant leader to act as leader only as much as required for the group to take form. Once the group is functioning, according to follower-defined rules, the servant leader observes the process develop. The servant leader might only verbalize ideas when directly requested by the followers. Again, the servant leader is primarily concerned with the goals the followers have developed for themselves. Keeping an open mind requires the servant leader to refrain from influencing the group to take specific action and accepting group decisions without discussion. The pre-conceived ideas of the servant leader must be held at bay while the follower group formulates plans and begins to implement them.

Senge (1990) continued Greenleaf's work on servant leadership by developing the concept of the learning organization. Briefly, the learning organization as defined by Senge emphasizes the need for organizations to be adaptable in order to react to ongoing change. The concept of the learning organization is in direct conflict with traditional bureaucracies who find it difficult to adapt in changing business environments. Senge's concept of the learning organization requires corporations to foster creativity in order to increase their capabilities.

Unique qualities of effective leaders in a learning organization resemble the qualities of a designer, teacher and steward of the people. These leaders seek to serve their stakeholders rather than the more traditional view of the leader who gives commands and sets agendas. Leaders in learning organizations have the knack of instilling "creative tension" (Senge, 1990). Creative tension exists when the leader can create a vision for followers and then illustrate the current realities. The tension that is created in this process serves to motivate followers toward change. Followers can see for themselves the need for change and begin to move toward the vision.

Coach Boone did not create a learning organization, at least during the first half of the film. He was the traditional authoritarian leader who exerted coercive power to attain his goals. In contrast, Coach Yoast, who had been ousted from his head coaching position, acted as a servant leader by complying with Coach Boone's strategy. Coach

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Yoast provided resources, yielded to Coach Boone's process, and tried to keep an open mind. As the film progressed, however, Coach Boone began to instill the values of the learning organization in the team by creating a vision. Coach Boone began to make clear for the players the large gap that existed between the vision of what they could be and what they currently were. The effect of this motivation becomes evident as the players begin to emerge as leaders in their own right by making creative decisions about their behavior and attitudes. Coach Boone becomes the designer, teacher and steward to the team rather than the primary decision maker and authoritarian.

A common theme in the film "Remember the Titans" is the transition from coercive leadership style derived from power toward a more "learning" type of leadership style. Stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson, 1997) has been developed in an attempt to respond to competing notions of leadership. Economic approaches to governance assume that followers are individualistic, opportunistic and self-serving. In contrast, agency theory posits that individuals seek to maximize utility (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), is a primary example of an economic approach to governance. Sociological or psychological approaches to governance, such as stewardship theory, assume that followers are collectivists, pro-organizational and trustworthy. Stewards of an organization act in the best interests of their followers. Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson (1997) are clear to state that neither agency theory or stewardship theory are appropriate in every situation. Rather, they indicate situations, psychological states, and social values that impact which theory might be most appropriate.

This film provides an excellent example of how one can transition from an agency perspective toward a steward perspective and the impact that the shift of leadership style can have on followers. Coach Boone's initial management philosophy was control oriented. He put strong control mechanisms in place and wanted immediate action in order to control psychological costs. His management objectives were individualistic. This case effectively demonstrates how stewardship theory slowly replaces agency theory for the participants as the situation demands.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) attempts to outline specific leader behaviors that result in higher-order organizational outcomes. Transformational leadership has been found to be a universally accepted model of leadership (Bass, 1996) and to lead to higher performance in organizations (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Those who are able to be effective transformational leaders have been found to attain a higher developmental level than other leaders (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Transformational leadership requires leaders to use a fair amount of drama, or charismatic behaviors in order to inspire their followers (Gardner & Avolio, 1998).

Transformational leadership culminates from the leader's influence over his/her followers and the leader's willingness to allow followers to be creative and contribute their ideas. The leader must also have the ability to create a compelling vision, articulate the undesirable current reality (creative tension), and to take a stewardship

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perspective with regard to situational factors. The transformational leader is approachable (low power distance), involvement oriented, trusting of followers, collectivist (what's best for the team) and stresses the importance of performance enhancement. Transformational leadership occurs through a unidirectional leader and follower relationship where the leader influences the followers in order to help them reach organizational goals. Often, the goals that are achieved are more far reaching than either the leader or the followers' thought possible. The goals to be reached, though, are essentially determined by the leader.

In order to accomplish organizational goals through followership, a leader utilizes the "4I's of transformational leadership: (1) Individual consideration, (2) Inspirational appeal, (3) Intellectual stimulation and (4) Idealized influence. Briefly, individual consideration in used when the leader looks at each person individually, assesses their individual talents and seeks to develop each individual to their greatest capacity. Inspirational appeal is used when the leader describes a clear and exciting vision that encourages and motivates the follower to action. Intellectual stimulation is used when the leader seeks new and different ideas from followers. The leader seeks to induce creativity from followers and develop ideas that take the organization toward its goals. Idealized influence is used when the leader "talks the talk" and "walks the walk". Behavior and values of the leader are standards accepted and modeled by the followers.

Differences between transformational leadership and servant leadership are numerous. First, regarding the goals to be achieved, under transformational leadership, the goals are decided and guided by the leader. In using servant leadership, the goals are determined by followers and followers implement changes.

However, under both transformational and servant leadership, the leader wants followers to be stronger as a result of their relationship. Using transformational leadership, leaders encourage followers to forgo self-interest in order to adopt the goals of the organization. In servant leadership, followers are completely empowered to reach their goals with the leader serving as a catalyst in the process.

A leader using transformational leadership behaviors would have considerable influence over followers; they would seek to develop followers to their greatest capacity. A follower might be able to decipher which style the leader is using by asking, "is the request being made for his own benefit, for the benefit of the organization or for my benefit?" Of course, a servant leader would not make requests. Instead, he/she would ask the follower "Given the information I have shared, and what you already know, what do you think would be our best course of action?"

Another distinction between servant leadership and transformational leadership is that the servant leader does not claim people as "followers". He/she equips them to perform their tasks even in the absence of the leader. Under transformational leadership theories, the followers are "claimed" by the leader in order to attain specific goals.

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"Remember the Titans" effectively portrays Coach Boone utilizing transformational leadership behavior on several occasions during the second half of the film. He takes his players on a midnight run toward Gettysburg inspiring them to function as a team. He gives Lewie individualized consideration when he asks to see his grades at the end of each school term in order to help him qualify for graduation and college admittance. He serves as an ideal leader when he confronts racial tensions with character. Finally, he brings forth the intellectual stimulation of the coaching staff when he asks Coach Yoast for help at the close of the film. Coach Boone maintains his ultimate power while guiding the team to the ultimate goal, winning the state championship.

Followership

Researchers have discovered that effective followership is essential to attaining effective leadership. Recent research (Kelly, 1988; Hollander, 1992) work finds that we are each leaders and followers through our various roles throughout the day. The same characteristics that make one a good leader are also the characteristics that make one a good follower. Some of these characteristics are dependability, competence, commitment to the cause, self-management, forgoing personal goals and adopting the goals of the organization, and honesty. Followers are not passive, as previous work has found. Instead, they are active with their leaders in achieving the goals set before them. A leader cannot be effective without strong followers.

However, there are some differences between leaders and followers. Leaders garner greater attention and influence. Leaders set the tone and pace of the change. Leadership is a process or a function to be performed. Relatedness is an essential element for quality leadership. Followership is the interaction between the leader and the follower. The definition of leadership should mirror the definition of followership. In essence, they are two sides of the same coin. It is essential for researchers to understand the interactions that take place between leaders and followers in order to achieve higher organizational effectiveness.

"Remember the Titans" effectively illustrates the differences and similarities between leaders and followers. Particularly visible through the team captain Gerry and his peer, Julius, the players move between leader and follower roles throughout the film. At first in direct conflict with Coach Boone, Gerry realizes the value of leadership and followership as he ultimately develops into a leader whom Coach Boone emulates. Julius intrinsically understands the value of effective leadership, but also learns how to be an effective follower.

Change

This film illustrates a time of tremendous change for a town, a school system and an entire culture. The change theory of focus in this case is first order, second order and third order change (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). This theory is particularly applicable to the case as this change theory emphasizes the situational variables that call for each type of change. As described by Bartunek and Moch (1987), change can occur at three

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levels. First order change is when incremental, procedural and small changes are made. First order change is of little consequence to organizations and workers because of the incremental nature of the changes. An example of a first order change might be the change in organizational letterhead, or inter-office communication procedures. Little effort is required by followers to integrate the change.

Second order change occurs when a consultant or other leader is brought into the organization for the purpose of making recommendations for change. The consultant is deciding what is best for the organization. The consultant must convince the members of the organization that a problem exists within their current schemata and then convince them that the change recommended is for their own and organizational best interests. The consultant would use influence tactics and/or transformational leadership behaviors in order to encourage compliance from followers to forgo individual goals for the sake of organizational goals. Second order changes are more difficult for follower to adopt because they must accept the consultant's view on their schemata. After acceptance, the followers must implement the changes recommended.

Third order change occurs when a consultant or leader is brought into an organization to educate follower about their options, provide resources, and encourage the organization members to develop a solution of their own. This type of change would be more closely associated with the servant leadership model. Third order change is required when major paradigm shifts are necessary for organizational growth and effectiveness. Third order change has been found to be the most lasting type of change because followers are first-hand contributors to the change process. The leader functions primarily as a facilitator in the process.

The level of change determines the type of leadership necessary. First order change requires little leadership because organization members are familiar with the schemata and can made changes on their own. Second order change requires transformational leadership skills and influence tactics because the consultant is trying to encourage followers to forgo personal goals and agendas for the sake of the organization. Third order change requires servant leadership skills. The leader is educating the followers about their options and encouraging their active involvement in decision-making. The consultant actually relinquishes decision-making power to the followers. The consultant in the third order change scenario is seeking to help followers develop their own new and different schemata. Third order change encourages followers to proceed without the assistance of the consultant when they deem future changes are needed.

This case illustrates a major paradigm shift for the characters in the film. Not only have the rules been changed, but also the leadership, the way of communicating, and the players on the team have been changed. Initially, Coach Boone attempts to force a second order change by creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. He wanted to make the rules and have them followed. However, as the film progresses, it is clear that another type of change, third order change, will be necessary for the paradigm shift to occur. Once Coach Boone begins to relinquish control, empower others, and encourages their involvement, third order change is allowed to develop.

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General Questions to Consider While Viewing the Film

1. How did Coach Boone evaluate Gerry, his white team captain at the beginning of the film? How did members of the team react to each other initially? How did this change over the course of the film?
2. At what points during the film did you see effective uses of power? At what points during the film did you see ineffective uses of power?
3. What factors might have prompted Coach Boone to utilize certain types of power?
4. Describe a situation in the film when you observed servant leadership? Did this differ from a time when you observed followership?
5. When did you observe the use of transformational leadership? What was the outcome of this type of leadership behavior?
6. At what points in the film did you observe first order, second order and third order change. What level of change was required for the characters to develop?

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