

Servant Leadership



Developments in Theory
and Research

Edited by Dirk van Dierendonck
and Kathleen Patterson



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Foreword

I know that people all over the world understand and support servant leadership. I know that from talking to taxi drivers. When I find myself in a taxi, heading into a city from a nearby airport, I like to strike up a conversation with the taxi driver. The taxi drivers I have talked to are from all over the world – the United States, Nigeria, Pakistan, Korea, Colombia. When they ask me what I do for a living, I tell them I work for the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. When they ask me what servant leadership is, I say that servant-leaders focus on identifying and meeting the needs of others, instead of just trying to acquire power, wealth, and fame for themselves. Servant-leaders focus on serving people instead of using people.

There is usually a pause, and then the taxi driver will say something like: ‘Well, that’s the way it’s *supposed* to be’, or ‘Now wouldn’t that be nice!’ Wherever they are from, they understand.

Many people have a deep yearning for a better world. They know that our world could be freer, healthier, more humane, and more prosperous. There does not have to be so much violence, starvation, sickness, and environmental degradation. There do not have to be so many unsolved problems and unfulfilled dreams. The world does not have to be like this. It could be a great deal better – *for all of us*.

Servant leadership is a key to that better world. Servant leadership has ancient roots and modern applications. It is grounded in universal values and is adaptable to different cultures. It is good for the leader as well as the led, because it is an ethical, practical, and meaningful way to live and lead.

This book is a rich resource for anyone on the servant leadership journey. It represents diverse voices. The modern servant leadership movement is still young, and it benefits from different perspectives. Some of us see servant leadership as a foundational philosophy with a set of values and key practices. Others see it as a leadership style. Yet others seek to develop a theory of servant leadership. Some are focused on the characteristics and inner life of the servant-leader; others are identifying the ways in which servant leadership is being implemented in organizational life. Meanwhile, new research is helping us to understand more about the impacts of servant leadership on employees and the customers, clients, patients, members, students, and citizens their organizations

serve. For all these people, as well as for newcomers to the topic, this book will be a rich resource, informing and stimulating further discussion and learning.

I congratulate the editors, Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson, for bringing together this valuable collection of essays. I have no doubt that this book will be an important source of information and inspiration for many years to come.

KENT M. KEITH
Chief Executive Officer
Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership

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Many people deserve our gratitude for their role in helping this book become a reality. First, the many people within the servant leadership field that we met and that inspired and supported us, including our colleagues at our respective universities and at the Servant Leadership Research Roundtables in Virginia Beach and Rotterdam. Second, and foremost, the authors of the chapters who – as a true servant-leaders – graciously accepted our invitation to write a chapter to share their thinking and insights with others; who were open to the feedback that we, as editors, gave them. Third, the people at Palgrave Macmillan who supported us and were essential in materializing this final version. Finally, as coeditors of a volume on servant leadership, we would like to recognize each other for exemplifying servant leadership in our cooperation.

DIRK VAN DIERENDONCK
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Shann Ray Ferch is a married father of three daughters. As a poet and prose writer, his work has appeared in some of the nation's leading literary venues. He serves as Professor of Leadership with the internationally-recognized PhD Program in Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University, where his emphasis is on how servant-leadership honours personal and collective responsibility and self-transcendence. His work regarding conflict and the human will to forgive and reconcile has appeared in scientific journals internationally. He is the editor of the *International*

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Stephen Prosser was Professor of Leadership and Organisation Development at the University of Glamorgan in the UK from 2001 to 2010. Throughout these ten years, he was a very active promotor

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Larry C. Spears is the editor-author of 11 books on servant leadership, including the best-selling *Insights on Leadership*. He is the Senior Advisory Editor of the *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*. Larry was President and CEO of the Greenleaf Center from 1990 to 2007; he is now the President and CEO of the Spears Center for Servant-Leadership, located in Indianapolis, Indiana (www.spearscenter.org).

Duane Trammell is founding Partner and Executive Vice-President of Ann McGee-Cooper & Associates, Inc. He has co-authored three books – *Time Management for Unmanageable People*, *You Don't Have to Go Home from Work Exhausted!*, and *Being the Change: Profiles from Our Servant Leadership Learning Community*, as well as numerous learning modules, seminars and presentations. Working collaboratively with Ann McGee-Cooper, their innovative approach explores new avenues for servant-leadership development through alignment work among diverse industries, as well as virtual learning communities for business leaders across the globe.

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List of Abbreviations

CLT	culturally endorsed leadership theory dimension
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
HF	Human Factor
ICLS	Instrumento de Contribución al Liderazgo de Siervo
LMX	leader–member exchange
MSQ	Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire
NSEE	National Society for Experiential Education
OCB	organizational citizenship behaviour
OLA	Organizational Leadership Assessment
OTI	Organizational Trust Inventory
SDT	self-determination theory
SLAI	Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument
SLI	Servant Leadership Instrument
SLLC [®]	Servant Leadership Learning Community [®]
SMU	Southern Methodist University
SWA	Southwest Airlines
VSLLC [®]	Virtual Servant Leadership Learning Community [®]

Part I
Positioning Servant Leadership

1

Servant Leadership: An Introduction

Dirk van Dierendonck and Kathleen Patterson

Within a few short years, our view on what accounts for good leadership has changed dramatically. The ideal of a heroic, hierarchical-oriented leader with primacy to shareholders has quickly been replaced by a view on leadership that gives priority to stewardship, ethical behaviour and collaboration through connecting to other people. Never before has the call been louder for leadership that is virtuous, while followers seek leaders who lead with behaviours that do not ignore them, but embrace them as whole individuals. This sort of leader is one whose decisions take all stakeholders into account. The short-term and personal bonus-oriented focus has given way to a long-term societally responsible focus that begins with the focus on the follower. As such, it should come as no surprise that interest in servant leadership has risen, and is continuing to rise. Intriguingly, the term 'servant leadership' was already coined four decades ago by Robert K. Greenleaf (1904–1990) in his seminal work *The Servant as Leader* (1970, 1977). It took that long for his ideas to start reaching mainstream organizational thinking, research and practice, and it is interesting to note that his ideas are as fresh and interesting today as they were in the beginning. At the start of the second decade of the twenty-first century, academic research on servant leadership is increasingly finding its way into international journals; organizations are redefining their leadership models incorporating – explicitly or implicitly – the ideas behind servant leadership; politicians emphasize the importance of building a more caring society. This book hopes to inspire the timeless ideology of service to others in the leadership context (and maybe beyond), with a look into servanthood and the legacy that servant leadership leaves behind in the lives, and hearts, of both followers and organizations.

Servant leadership: history and background

While some would suggest that servant leadership is timeless – or at least as old as time itself, most thinking clusters around the work of Robert Greenleaf, and rightly so. After spending 40 years working at AT&T, Greenleaf retired in 1964 as director of management research. During his life, he had been influenced by several people (Frick, 2004). Most notable among them were his father, who stood as a role model for servanthood; E.B. White, whose writings emphasized seeing things as a whole; the culture at AT&T, which showed him that it was possible to nurture the spirit of employees while making a profit; and the work of nineteenth-century Danish Lutheran clergyman Nikolay Frederick Severin Grundtvig, who showed how servant leadership could transform a country. Greenleaf was inspired by the notion of the servant-leader, specifically when reading Herman Hesse's novel *Journey to the East*, in which the narrator goes on a pilgrimage. One of the people in the group is Leo, a servant who takes care of the daily chores, plays music, and looks after the well-being of the group. At some point Leo disappears, and the group falls into disarray. Years later, the narrator again contacts the Order to which the group belonged. It transpires that Leo was, and is, the titular head of the Order, its spiritual guide and leader. Through this story, Greenleaf realized that it is possible to combine the roles of servant and leader in one person; that this very aspect may be characteristic of a real leader.

It may not come entirely as a surprise that servant leadership does have spiritual connotations (Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002). Greenleaf himself was a Quaker, and the Quaker teachings and practices can be found throughout his writings (Frick, 2004). Most notably, their emphasis is on consensus for making decisions in which silence, listening and persuasion are essential. Greenleaf mentioned John Woolman – a Quaker who, through persuasion, convinced other Quakers to abandon slavery – as an excellent example of how servant-leaders work to achieve their goals. The work of the German writer Herman Hesse exemplifies the spiritual search for meaning. In 1946, Hesse received the Nobel Prize for literature. Some of the other novels he wrote are *Steppenwolf*, *Siddharta* and *The Glass Bead Game*. Interestingly, the name of the main character in Hesse's major work, *The Glass Bead Game*, is Joseph Knecht. The German word '*knecht*' is the equivalent of the English word 'servant'. The book describes how Knecht worked his way up from apprentice in an order of elite intellectuals to magister and head. At the end of the

story, Knecht renounces his leadership position because he feels he can be of greater value to society outside the order. As in Hesse's other novel, *Journey to the East*, we see that leadership and service are closely related. This relationship was relevant for those times, and is even more relevant today.

Servant leadership is viewed as a leadership style that is beneficial to organizations by awaking, engaging, and developing employees, as well as beneficial to followers or employees by engaging people as whole individuals with heart, mind and spirit. According to McGee-Cooper and Looper (2001a), servant-leaders achieve this by emphasizing the goals of the organization, its role in society, and the separate roles of the employees. People are well-informed about the organizational strategy. An organizational culture is created with opportunities to learn, yet also to make mistakes. Decisions are made in a process of information gathering and taking time for reflection. Thus, employees feel safe to use their knowledge, and are focused on continuous development and learning. Servant-leaders also focus on building community (McGee-Cooper and Looper, 2001a) by emphasizing strong interpersonal relationships – a bonding – within the organization. A feeling of togetherness and trust is seen as essential to handle challenging times.

Examples of servant leadership

We can find several historic examples of servant leadership. One of them is Jean Monnet, a Frenchman who played an essential role in the instigation of the European Union. Birkenmeier *et al.* (2003) described Monnet's contribution during World Wars I and II, and his role in the unification of Europe, in terms of four key components of servant leadership as formulated by Farling *et al.* (1999): vision, credibility, trust, and service.

Monnet came from a family with assets in the cognac industry. After World War I, he worked for 10 years in the family business and in international banking. He was very successful and, as a result, became financially independent. This allowed him to hold unpaid positions in organizations that focused on the greater good. Before and during World War II, he was instrumental in smoothing the relations between England and the United States by getting the latter to release war loans and materials and, in general, getting its industry war-ready before the United States actually entered the war. After the war ended, Monnet created the European Coal and Steel Community, which was the forerunner

of the current European Union. In terms of servant leadership, Monnet had the unique capacity to see the long-term needs of countries, always stressing the need to collaborate. Because he had no political ambition himself, politicians found they could trust him; they believed that he truly worked for the sake of mankind. The fact that he demanded no fee was extremely helpful in this respect. Instead of pursuing a career in the family business or in international banking, he put himself in service of the dream of a united Europe.

Another historic example of a servant-leader is George Washington, often called the 'Father of Our Country' in the United States due to his pivotal role. He demonstrated how one can have real position power, use it for the good of the society in which one lives, and combine it with the ability to let go of the power after the task is accomplished (Keith, 2008). Washington was Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army in the War of Independence against Great Britain, and served as the first president of the United States of America. After winning the war, he returned to his plantation at Mount Vernon. Due to the need of the still young and struggling nation, he returned to the political forefront, being elected president in 1789. After serving for two terms, he refused to run for a third time.

Another powerful example of historical servant leadership is William Wilberforce, an Englishman who devoted his life to the abolition of the slave trade in England. Wilberforce, a Member of Parliament, devoted himself in selfless service for the good of others, even when it was an incredibly unpopular stance to take. Wilberforce drew strength from his religious principles and, though Wilberforce was the youngest Member of Parliament ever elected, and is still so to this day, he stands as an historical tower of a man with great endurance and commitment to service, having devoted more than forty years to the eradication of the slave trade in the British Empire. Even though he was vilified in the press of the day, physically assaulted for his beliefs, and suffered great personal ill-health, his dedication to serving others – at great personal cost to himself – leaves a gentle path of an example of servanthood.

Dyck and Schroeder (2005) gave an intriguing illustration of how working from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective can offer a different approach to leading organizations that is closely related to servant leadership. Due to decreasing access to farm-land in the 1970s, the Amish in Pennsylvania and Ohio started small businesses. When expanding their businesses, utmost care was given that their expansion was fair to competitors, to the point that these businesses had to be sold or sub-divided when they got too successful. Individual striving for gain and profit was

discouraged. According to the Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective on management, humanity has four responsibilities:

- to manage creation in a God-like manner – meaning to help sustain order, and work from servanthood
- to foster community
- to create meaningful work
- to care for creation.

The concept of servant leadership is not limited to the Western culture. Sarayrah (2004) offers examples from the Bedouin-Arab culture. The first is Omar Bin al-Khattab, who succeeded Abu Bakr in 634 as caliph of a growing Islamic community. In those early years, the selection of the caliph was conducted by *shura*, the consultation of a tribal council. The goal of the *shura* was to come up with the best decision for the community. It was also used by the caliph to seek advice from the elderly on communal matters. The similarity with the key characteristics of servant leadership is most notably visible in the leadership characteristics as described by Nawafleh (2000). These characteristics are the ability to listen and to accept criticism, the ability to plan and organize, to promote participative decision making through the *shura*, the ability to empathize, to effect change and overcome unforeseen problems, and to practice the skill of incognito enquiry. Within the Islamic world, the example of al-Khattab does not stand alone. Even in the twentieth century, certain Arab tribes still lived according to the old rules. An example is Shaykh Hajj Ali, a relatively recent Arab tribal leader whose leadership style was exemplified by generosity, humility, modesty, patience, and forgiveness.

While history is full of servant-leaders, some more well-known than others, the opportunity exists – indeed, our world might be crying out – for more servant-leaders. This book hopes to address this need by offering a perspective on service that is solid, global, and inspiring. While each man will choose his own journey, the hope is that some will be inspired to embrace a life of service; and, while most will not be listed in some grand list of great historical leaders, those who embrace servanthood will most certainly change the world.

Unique elements in servant leadership

There are two important and unique elements in servant leadership theory. First, compared with other views on leadership – where the ultimate goal is the wellbeing of the organization – a servant-leader is genuinely

concerned with serving followers (Greenleaf, 1977), as is also indicated by Stone *et al.* (2004). This person-oriented, follower-focused attitude paves the way for safe and strong relationships within the organization. Furthermore, as Greenleaf (1998) puts it, servants that are chosen to be leaders are greatly supported by their employees, because they have committed themselves and are reliable. In this way, an atmosphere is created that encourages followers to do the very best they can. The very idea of servant-leaders being follower-focused has come to the forefront in leadership research with the concept of the follower as first in the servant-leader's agenda, with organizational concerns being peripheral: servant-leaders value the people who are the organization (Stone *et al.*, 2004). In addition to this affinity for the people first, servant-leaders, according to Parolini *et al.* (2009) have a high moral focus in congruence with the focus that shifts from the organization to the followers. Servant-leaders are able to be follower-focused due to their primary interest being their followers, which leads to the second unique element in servant leadership.

Second, it is important to recognize that Greenleaf positions the servant-leader as *primus inter pares* (i.e., first among equals), who does not use his power to get things done but who tries to persuade and convince his staff with the power of service, as is iterated by Stone *et al.* (2004), whereby followers are given extraordinary freedom to excel. A servant-leader acts as a steward who holds the organization in trust (Reinke, 2004). It means that servant-leaders go beyond self-interest and are motivated by an others-interest approach. This motivation stems from a high sense of personal mission to others – the followers. This commitment to others is also seen in the high regard servant-leaders have for others (Parolini *et al.*, 2009). Leaders are typically motivated by self, by the organization, or by others: the servant-leader is cognizant of all three; however the primary motivation is for others, thus the desire to serve others. This was described by Greenleaf as:

The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. (Spears, 1998: p. 1)

This book

This book encapsulates this thinking of service and an others-motivated approach while delving into current thinking in servant leadership. It provides a foundational approach for the reader, whether scholar,

leader, or seeker. This foundation is rooted in the bridge between theory and practice with an undergirding global approach.

The book is both theoretical (scholarly in nature) as well as practical. And while it is not typical to see this blend, the authors hope the delicate balance between theory and practice will serve the two arenas well – and, ultimately, the readers.

The foundation presented in this book is strong for several reasons, most notably the wide-ranging perspectives that are included. This diversity in thinking provides a non-limiting approach, whereby we hope the reader will find nuggets of great value in their leadership for their organizations and followers. It is further hoped that the reader will also find a path that leads them further down the road of service to others that will benefit humanity at large.

One aspect of this diversity includes the global approach that is presented. Today, as never before, one must consider the global approach. The days when we lead, lived, studied, and researched in isolation are long gone. A more open, inclusive approach requires that we look beyond the borders around us and be open to the world around us, with all its inherent beauty and complexities. This beauty and complexity often exists within the people we find. Thus it is with this book: the authors are diverse, representing continents such as Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America. This blending of the continental perspectives lends itself to a wider, more comprehensive viewpoint. Adding to this level of global perspective are viewpoints that look into the varied contextual aspects of servant leadership, most notably chapter 10, in which Irving offers his perspective on the cross-cultural components.

The book comprises five parts. The first part is entitled ‘Positioning of Servant Leadership’ and, together with this Introduction, offers writings from Larry Spears on the legacy of Robert Greenleaf, Stephen Prosser on the opportunities and tensions that exist in servant leadership, and the idea of how to demystify servant leadership by Sen Sendjaya.

Part II, ‘Becoming the Servant-Leader’, presents a perspective on the history of the concept of service as leadership from various religious traditions from Corné Bekker, a perspective on servant leadership and love from Kathleen Patterson, a perspective on consciousness, forgiveness, and gratitude from Shann Ferch and, finally, a perspective on the motivation to serve that looks at the heart of the servant-leader from Kok-Yee Ng and Christine S.-K. Koh.

Part III, ‘Building a Servant Leadership Culture’, is devoted to the following ideas: the servant organization from Jim Laub, the cross-cultural perspective on servant leadership from Justin Irving and, finally, the idea

of learning communities and how servant led companies are rewarding places to work from Ann McGee-Cooper and Duanne Trammell.

Part IV is entitled 'Servant-leaders' Influence on Followers'. This section presents writings on how servant leadership meets the needs of followers, specifically looking at satisfaction from David Mayer, and then broaching the idea of how to enhance innovation and creativity with servant leadership from Dirk van Dierendonck and Laurens Rook.

Part V, 'Studying Servant Leadership', offers writings from Robert S. Dennis, Linda Kinzler-Normhei, and Mihai Bocarnea on the measurement of servant leadership, and a chapter from Bruce Winston on the place for qualitative research methods in the study of servant leadership.

Final words

We now invite you to read on and discover servant leadership. Our hope is that the readers' journey of discovery includes the theoretical, the practical, the global, but – most notably – the inspiration of service. The hope is that each person will not only see a glimpse of themselves in these chapters, but also a glimpse of what might be. While no one journey is like any other, we do hope one current theme will abound with us all: the idea of service that Greenleaf so aptly promoted and ignited for many of us.

2

Servant Leadership and Robert K. Greenleaf's Legacy

Larry C. Spears

The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not be further deprived?

(Robert K. Greenleaf,
Servant Leadership, 1977/2002)

The servant-leader concept continues to grow in its influence and impact. In many ways, it can truly be said that the times are only now beginning to catch up with Robert Greenleaf's visionary call to servant leadership. The idea of servant leadership, now in its fifth decade as a concept bearing that name, continues to create a quiet revolution in workplaces around the world. This chapter is intended to provide a broad overview of the growing influence this inspiring idea is having on people and their workplaces.

In countless for-profit and not-for-profit organizations today, we are seeing traditional, autocratic, and hierarchical modes of leadership yielding to a different way of working – one based on teamwork and community, one that seeks to involve others in decision-making, one strongly based in ethical and caring behaviour, and one that is attempting to enhance the personal growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of our many institutions. This emerging approach to leadership and service is called 'servant leadership'.

The words 'servant' and 'leader' are usually thought of as being opposites. When two opposites are brought together in a creative and meaningful way, a paradox emerges. And so, the words 'servant' and 'leader' have been brought together to create the paradoxical idea of servant leadership. The basic idea of servant leadership is both logical and intuitive. Since the time of the industrial revolution, managers have tended to view people as objects; institutions have considered workers as cogs within a machine. In the past few decades, we have witnessed a shift in that long-held view. Standard practices are rapidly shifting towards the ideas put forward by Robert Greenleaf, Stephen Covey, Peter Senge, Max DePree, Margaret Wheatley, Ken Blanchard, and many others who suggest that there is a better way to lead and manage our organizations. Robert Greenleaf's writings on the subject of servant leadership helped to get this movement started, and his views have had a profound and growing effect on many.

Robert K. Greenleaf

The term 'servant leadership' was first coined in a 1970 essay by Robert K. Greenleaf (1904–1990) entitled *The Servant as Leader* (1970/1977, The Greenleaf Center). Greenleaf, born in Terre Haute, Indiana, spent most of his organizational life in the field of management research, development, and education at AT&T. Following a 40-year career at AT&T, Greenleaf enjoyed a second career that lasted 25 years, during which time he served as an influential consultant to a number of major institutions, including Ohio University, MIT, the Ford Foundation, the R.K. Mellon Foundation, the Mead Corporation, the American Foundation for Management Research, and Lilly Endowment Inc. In 1964, Greenleaf also founded the Center for Applied Ethics, which was renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center in 1985 and is now headquartered in Westfield, Indiana.

I am honoured to have known Bob Greenleaf, and to have served as President and CEO of The Greenleaf Center from 1990 to 2007. In 2008, I launched The Spears Center, where I continue to carry forward the idea of servant leadership as first described by Greenleaf.

The concept of servant as leader

As a lifelong student of how things are achieved in organizations, Greenleaf distilled his observations in a series of essays and books on the theme of 'The Servant as Leader' – the objective of which was to stimulate thought and action for building a better, more caring society.

The idea of the servant as leader came partly out of Greenleaf's half-century of experience in working to shape large institutions. However, the event that crystallized Greenleaf's thinking came in the 1960s, when he read Hermann Hesse's short novel *Journey to the East* – an account of a mythical journey by a group of people on a spiritual quest. After reading this story, Greenleaf concluded that the central meaning of it was that the great leader is first experienced as a servant to others, and that this simple fact is central to his or her greatness. True leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others.

In 1970, at the age of 66, Greenleaf published *The Servant as Leader*, the first of a dozen essays and books on servant leadership. Since that time, more than half a million copies of his books and essays have been sold, worldwide. Slowly but surely, Greenleaf's servant leadership writings have made a deep, lasting impression on leaders, educators, and many others who are concerned with issues of leadership, management, service, and personal growth.

What is servant leadership?

In his works, Greenleaf discusses the need for a better approach to leadership, one that puts serving others – including employees, customers, and community – as the top priority. Servant leadership emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and the sharing of power in decision-making.

Who is a servant-leader? Greenleaf said that the servant-leader is one who is a servant first. In *The Servant as Leader* he wrote:

It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?

It is important to stress that servant leadership is not a 'quick-fix' approach. Neither is it something that can be quickly instilled within an institution. At its core, servant leadership is a long-term, transformational

approach to life and work – in essence, a way of being – that has the potential for creating positive change throughout our society.

Greenleaf clearly believed that some people were more predisposed towards being natural servant-leaders than were others. And yet, he also believed that one could learn to be a servant-leader – a very important point from my perspective. We are not all natural-born servants; some of us learn to be servant-leaders only through the school of hard knocks, or sometimes through a slow, internal evolution. Greenleaf really wanted to encourage natural servants to overcome whatever aspects of their personality might keep them from seeking leadership positions within organizations. His belief was that, if natural servants began to get more involved in leadership, then organizations and society would benefit tremendously.

Greenleaf clearly felt that you can also learn to be a servant-leader. Some of the most effective methods of developing servant-leaders include: encouraging people in their own service impulses; doing your best to live your own life as a servant-leader; accepting people for who they are; focusing on personal examples of servant leadership within each person's life; sharing a variety of learning tools on servant leadership.

The single best starting point for most people who want to read about servant leadership remains Robert Greenleaf's essay, *The Servant as Leader*. The ideas of servant leadership may be communicated in many ways. The personal development of servant-leaders can be enhanced by showing them love, acceptance, and encouragement. I have also seen the benefits of service-learning projects – deeply grounded in the values of servant leadership – as a method capable of igniting the servant's heart in students.

How Robert Greenleaf began his work

Robert Greenleaf loved to tell the story of being a college student (at Carlton College in Minnesota) and of going to class one day to listen to a professor, who he thought was, by and large, boring. On this particular day, Greenleaf said that his ears were more open than usual, and that the professor said something to the effect that the future of organizations and organizational change in the twentieth century was to be found by people who made the commitment to go inside large organizations, spend a lifetime there, and who would seek to create positive change within those institutions. Greenleaf said that his old professor, Oscar Helming, just clicked with him that day and he immediately decided that was what he wanted to do.

Just before graduation Greenleaf researched various companies, identified AT&T as the then largest corporation, and set his sights on joining AT&T, which he did.

Greenleaf started at the bottom of the traditional pyramid at AT&T in the 1920s. He started out digging holes for telephone poles in Ohio for a time; then, he was asked to train some AT&T workers. Within 18 months, his supervisors took note of his management potential and he was brought to work in AT&T's headquarters in New York City, where he spent the next 36 years. For Greenleaf, the statement by his college professor was absolutely crucial to the arc of his own life story. I wonder whether the frequent job changes that increasingly appear to be the norm today may actually prevent many natural servants from gaining the opportunity to rise within the organization chart, thereby developing the power to transform it in some positive fashion.

Robert Greenleaf believed that most people have an innate desire to serve others, but he also believed that institutions and society did not tend to encourage this kind of behaviour as much as some others. To some degree, he was also intending to suggest the importance of intuition. We talk more about intuition today than was the case 40 years ago, when Greenleaf was writing about this. For Greenleaf, that natural feeling was something that he occasionally observed in leaders at AT&T during his 40 years there, and where he proved to be a good judge of leadership talent. His observation of effective leadership traits led him to identify those who had a natural inclination towards serving others.

Characteristics of the servant-leader

Starting in 1990, I realized that there were many people for whom Bob's foundational essay, *The Servant as Leader*, spoke to them with great clarity, and that it had energized them. However, I also encountered many people who said: 'Well, you know, I've tried several times to pick up and read that essay and I just cannot get through it.' That was the kind of frustrated expression that I frequently heard from many sincere seekers and practitioners – particularly among students, business people, and others.

As I considered how best to encourage as many people as possible to become interested in the understanding and practice of servant leadership, I took into account the fact that different people learn differently. Greenleaf's essay, *The Servant as Leader*, connects very well with people who are strongly conceptual, who like to play with ideas, and who are more attuned to making intuitive leaps in thought. In lifting up

Greenleaf's characteristics of a servant-leader, I sought to develop a list of servant-leader traits that might speak more directly to many other people as their initial introduction to servant leadership. I saw these characteristics as another possible pathway into servant leadership – particularly for people coming from a perspective of applications, or personal modelling and development. I also viewed the characteristics as a natural companion to Greenleaf's more conceptual examination of servant leadership.

I had read and reread Greenleaf's writings, and I gradually began to notice, in different places in his essays and books, a series of seemingly isolated characteristics of servant leadership about which Bob would write, though not necessarily in an organized fashion. On one page he would write about foresight; 20 pages later he would write a great page on listening; in another book or essay, he wrote eloquently on persuasion, and so on. Like any good researcher-organizer, I began to see patterns emerging in his ideas, and I started to make notes on all kinds of seemingly disconnected traits and thoughts that popped up throughout his writings. At some point, Greenleaf's thoughts on servant leadership characteristics coalesced as a group in my own mind. I simply extracted them from his various writings and pulled them together, with the belief that they might prove helpful for many people as a means of easing into servant leadership. Over the past two decades, I have found many people along the way who have confirmed my initial belief. So many people have told me that they could not get into Bob's essay at first, but that they found in the list of characteristics, or in my own straight-forward narrative articles and book chapters, a clearer introduction to servant leadership – something that allowed them to get started along their own path of self-discovery.

I have read all of Greenleaf's writings, published and unpublished, numerous times, and I know that his elliptical writing style can be challenging. It does require your full attention. And yet, it also yields its secrets to careful and repeated readings. *The Servant as Leader* is one of the most profound essays I have ever read, on any subject. While I am grateful that many people have become interested in servant leadership through reading my own works on servant leadership, I am always quick to tell anyone: You simply can't understand fully Robert Greenleaf's key thoughts on servant leadership without several careful readings of *The Servant as Leader*.

And so, I have spent many years carefully considering Greenleaf's original writings, and from them I have extracted a set of 10 characteristics

of the servant-leader that I view as being of critical importance. The following characteristics are central to the development of servant-leaders:

Listening

Leaders have traditionally been valued for their communication and decision-making skills. While these are also important skills for the servant-leader, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to others. The servant-leader seeks to identify the will of a group and helps to clarify that will. He or she seeks to listen receptively to what is being said (and not said!). Listening also encompasses getting in touch with one's own inner voice and seeking to understand what one's body, spirit, and mind are communicating. Listening, coupled with regular periods of reflection, is essential to the growth of the servant-leader.

Empathy

The servant-leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits. One assumes the good intentions of co-workers and does not reject them as people, even while refusing to accept their behaviour or performance. The most successful servant-leaders are those who have become skilled empathetic listeners.

Healing

Learning to heal is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing oneself and others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant-leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to 'help make whole' those with whom they come in contact. In *The Servant as Leader*, Greenleaf writes: 'There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share.'

Awareness

General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader. Making a commitment to foster awareness can be scary – you never know what you may discover. Awareness also aids one in

understanding issues involving ethics and values. It lends itself to being able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position. As Greenleaf observed, 'Awareness is not a giver of solace – it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity.'

Persuasion

Another characteristic of servant-leaders is a primary reliance on persuasion, rather than using one's positional authority, in making decisions within an organization. The servant-leader seeks to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant leadership. The servant-leader is effective at building consensus within groups. This emphasis on persuasion over coercion probably has its roots within the beliefs of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the denomination with which Robert Greenleaf himself was most closely allied.

Conceptualization

Servant-leaders seek to nurture their abilities to 'dream great dreams'. The ability to look at a problem (or an organization) from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. For many managers, this is a characteristic that requires discipline and practice. The traditional manager is focused on the need to achieve short-term operational goals. The manager who wishes also to be a servant-leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking. Within organizations, conceptualization is also a proper role of boards of trustees or directors. Unfortunately, boards can sometimes become involved in the day-to-day operations (something that should be discouraged), and they may fail to provide the visionary concept for an institution. Trustees need to be mostly conceptual in their orientation, staffs need to be mostly operational in their perspective, and the most effective CEOs and leaders probably need to develop both perspectives. Servant-leaders are called to seek a delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day focused approach.

Foresight

Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is hard to define, but easy to identify. One knows it when one sees it. Foresight is a characteristic that enables the

servant-leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future. It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind. While open to speculation, one can conjecture that foresight might be the one servant-leader characteristic with which one may be born. All of the other characteristics can be consciously developed. There simply has not been a great deal written on foresight. It remains a largely unexplored area in leadership studies, and one most deserving of careful attention.

Stewardship

Peter Block (author of *Stewardship* and *The Empowered Manager*) has defined stewardship as 'holding something in trust for another'. Robert Greenleaf's view of all institutions was one in which CEOs, staffs, and trustees all played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant leadership, like stewardship, assumes first a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion rather than control.

Commitment to the growth of people

Servant-leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, the servant-leader is deeply committed to the growth of every individual within his or her institution. The servant-leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything within his or her power to nurture the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of employees. In practice, this can include (but is not limited to) concrete actions such as making available funds for personal and professional development, taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone, encouraging worker involvement in decision-making, and actively assisting laid-off workers to find other employment.

Building community

The servant-leader senses that much has been lost in recent human history as a result of the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives. This awareness causes the servant-leader to seek to identify some means for building community among those who work within a given institution. Servant leadership suggests that true community can be created among those who work in businesses and other institutions. Greenleaf said, 'All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form for large numbers of people is for enough servant-leaders to show the way, not by mass movements,

but by each servant-leader demonstrating his own unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group.'

These ten characteristics of servant leadership are by no means exhaustive. However, they serve to communicate the power and promise that this concept offers to those who are open to its invitation and challenge.

Servant leadership in practice

Servant leadership as an institutional model

Servant leadership principles are being applied in significant ways in many different areas. The first area has to do with servant leadership as an institutional philosophy and model. Servant leadership crosses all boundaries and is being applied by a wide variety of people working with for-profit businesses; not-for-profit corporations; and churches, universities, health care organizations, and foundations.

Servant leadership advocates a group-oriented approach to analysis and decision-making as a means of strengthening institutions and improving society. It also emphasizes the power of persuasion and seeking consensus, over the old top-down form of leadership. Some people have likened this to turning the hierarchical pyramid upside down. Servant leadership holds that the primary purpose of a business should be to create a positive impact on its employees and community, rather than using profit as the sole motive.

Many individuals within institutions have adopted servant leadership as a guiding philosophy. An increasing number of companies have adopted servant leadership as part of their corporate philosophy, or as a foundation for their mission statement. Among these are The Toro Company (Minneapolis, Minnesota), Synovus Financial Corporation (Columbus, Georgia), ServiceMaster Company (Downers Grove, Illinois), The Men's Wearhouse (Fremont, California), Southwest Airlines (Dallas, Texas), and TDIndustries (Dallas, Texas).

Some businesses have begun to view servant leadership as an important framework that is helpful (and necessary) for ensuring the long-term effects of related management and leadership approaches such as continuous quality improvement and systems thinking. It is suggested that institutions that want to create meaningful change may be best served in starting with servant leadership as the foundational understanding, and then building on it through any number of related approaches.

Servant leadership has influenced many noted writers, thinkers, and leaders. Max DePree, former chair of the Herman Miller Company and author of *Leadership Is an Art* and *Leadership Jazz* has said, 'The

servanthood of leadership needs to be felt, understood, believed, and practiced.' In addition, Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline*, has said that he tells people 'not to bother reading any other book about leadership until you first read Robert Greenleaf's book. I believe it is the most singular and useful statement on leadership I've come across'. In recent years, a growing number of leaders and readers have 'rediscovered' Robert Greenleaf's own writings through books by DePree, Senge, Covey, Wheatley, Autry, and many other popular writers.

Often when I speak on servant leadership, someone will raise the question regarding the bottom-line benefits for an organization practicing servant leadership. This is usually something like, 'What evidence (proof) is there that servant leadership works?' While a handful of dissertations and studies have compared servant-led companies against their competitors and have shown that those servant-led companies have done as well as or better than their competitors, that is not the right reason to embrace servant leadership.

While I am happy that such objective studies and quantitative analyses exist, I do not believe that anyone really ever adopts a personal belief primarily based upon proven data. For most people who choose to become servant-leaders, it just seems the right way to live one's life to the best of one's abilities. Yes, knowing that it is also good for the bottom line can offer further reinforcement, but it all comes back to Greenleaf's statement: 'The servant-leader is servant first.'

Servant leadership is invitational by its very nature. One may accept or reject it for a broad range of reasons. I have a great deal of interest in sharing the idea of servant leadership far and wide, and with those who find it a deeply resonant idea at the deeper level of values, spirit, and human development. Servant leadership works for people, for organizations, and for society.

Education and training of boards of trustees

A second major application of servant leadership is its pivotal role as the theoretical and ethical basis for 'trustee education'. Greenleaf wrote extensively on servant leadership as it applies to the roles of boards of directors and trustees within institutions. His essays on these applications are widely distributed among directors of for-profit and non-profit organizations. In his essay *Trustees as Servants*, Greenleaf urged trustees to ask themselves two central questions: 'Whom do you serve?' and 'For what purpose?'

Servant leadership suggests that boards of trustees need to undergo a radical shift in how they approach their roles. Trustees who seek to act as servant-leaders can help to create institutions of great depth and

quality. John Carver, the noted author on board governance, has also done much to raise awareness of servant leadership in relation to trustee boards.

Community leadership programmes

A third application of servant leadership concerns its deepening role in community leadership organizations. A growing number of community leadership groups are using servant leadership resources as part of their own education and training efforts. The late author M. Scott Peck wrote about the importance of building true community in his book *A World Waiting to Be Born*: 'In his work on servant leadership, Greenleaf posited that the world will be saved if it can develop just three truly well-managed, large institutions – one in the private sector, one in the public sector, and one in the non-profit sector. He believed – and I know – that such excellence in management will be achieved through an organizational culture of civility routinely utilizing the mode of community.'

Service-learning programmes

A fourth application involves servant leadership and experiential education. During the past 30 years, experiential education programmes of all sorts have sprung up in virtually every college and university – and, increasingly, in secondary schools, too. Experiential education, or 'learning by doing', is now a part of most students' educational experience.

In about 1980, a number of educators began to write about the linkage between the servant-leader concept and experiential learning under a new term called 'service-learning'. It is service-learning that has become a major focus for some experiential education programmes since the early 1990s.

The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) has service-learning as one of its major programme areas. In 1990, NSEE published a massive three-volume work called *Combining Service and Learning*, which brought together many articles and papers about service-learning – several dozen of which discuss servant leadership as the philosophical basis for experiential learning programmes.

Leadership education

A fifth application of servant leadership concerns its use in both formal and informal education and training programmes. This is taking place through leadership and management courses in colleges and universities, as well as through corporate training programmes. A number of

undergraduate and graduate courses on management and leadership incorporate servant leadership within their course curricula. A number of colleges and universities now offer specific courses, certificates and degrees in servant leadership. Of special note are: Regent University (Virginia Beach, Virginia), which offers courses in servant leadership and sponsors an annual Servant Leadership Roundtable; Viterbo University (La Crosse, Wisconsin), which offers a Masters degree in servant leadership; and Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, which offers a Certificate of Study in servant leadership and hosts the annual *International Journal on Servant Leadership*, which has become an important academic journal in this field of study. Additionally, a number of noted leadership authors – including Peter Block, Ken Blanchard, Max DePree, and Peter Senge – have all acclaimed the servant-leader concept as an overarching framework that is compatible with, and enhances, other leadership and management models such as total quality management, systems thinking, and community-building.

Through internal training and education, institutions are discovering that servant leadership can truly improve how business is developed and conducted, while also successfully turning a profit.

Personal transformation

A sixth application of servant leadership involves its use in programmes relating to personal growth and transformation. Servant leadership operates at both the institutional and personal levels. For individuals, it offers a means to personal growth – spiritually, professionally, emotionally, and intellectually. It has ties to the ideas of M. Scott Peck (*The Road Less Travelled*), Parker Palmer (*The Active Life*), and others who have written on expanding human potential. A particular strength of servant leadership is that it encourages everyone to seek opportunities to both serve and lead others, thereby setting up the potential for raising the quality of life throughout society.

A growing movement

Interest in the philosophy and practice of servant leadership is now at an all-time high. Hundreds of articles on servant leadership have appeared in various magazines, journals, and newspapers since the turn of the millennium. Many books on the general subject of leadership have been published that recommend servant leadership as a more holistic way of being. In addition, there is a growing body of literature available on the understanding and practice of servant leadership.

Life is full of curious and meaningful paradoxes. Servant leadership is one such paradox that has slowly but surely gained hundreds of thousands of adherents over the past 40 years. The seeds that have been planted have begun to sprout in many institutions, as well as in the hearts of many who long to improve the human condition. Servant leadership is providing a framework from which many thousands of known and unknown individuals are helping to improve how we treat those who do the work within our many institutions. Servant leadership truly offers hope and guidance for a new era in human development, and for the creation of better, more caring institutions.

3

Opportunities and Tensions of Servant Leadership

Stephen Prosser

You've held on to the spirit of servant leadership, you've kept it vague and indefinable, which I think is a great strategic advantage. People can come every year to figure out what the hell this is, and by not answering, they're forced to come the next year. So it's both a clever marketing strategy and a stance in support of the spirit of it rather than the substance of it.

(Peter Block to Larry Spears,
Greenleaf International Servant
Leadership Conference 2005)

Peter Block's humorous and perceptive aside to Larry Spears, during Block's keynote address to the Greenleaf International Servant Leadership Conference 2005, raises three important questions and potential challenges for advocates of servant leadership, and for leaders seeking to determine whether its principles resonate with their understanding of leadership and the needs of their organizations. First, as servant leadership becomes more popular, with growing popularity potentially bringing greater chances of misunderstanding and misapplication, how can it be explained and explored in terms helpful to leaders while remaining true to its central principles? Second, how can the absence of a simple definition of servant leadership, and the intentional lack of a formulaic set of rules, be reconciled with a leader's need to appreciate fully how the concept can be applied within their organizations? Third, it may be better for advocates to remain faithful to 'the spirit of it rather than the substance of it', but what principles and practices need to be understood by leaders wishing to demonstrate servant leadership's potential contribution to the bottom-line performance of their businesses?

The three diagnostic questions concern definition, application and contribution; and it is by means of such questions that leaders typically seek to understand and implement most management and general business concepts. However, Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership does not lend itself to those three tried and tested diagnostic questions: at first, the enquirer may not readily understand the key principles of servant leadership (especially the intriguing play on the hyphenated words 'servant' and 'leader'); may fail to see how it can be applied within their organization; and may struggle to believe there can be any contribution, presently or potentially, to the 'bottom-line' performance of the business. Robert K. Greenleaf does not comply with the tried and tested definition-application-contribution rubric – his writing is of another style – and consequently others have interpreted and applied his thoughts through various emphases and approaches, illustrating ways in which servant leadership principles can be applied individually and corporately.

This chapter identifies those different emphases or approaches, highlighting the irreducible and irreplaceable minimum lying at the core of what it means to be a servant-leader, to answer fundamental questions concerning definition, application and contribution, and to signal opportunities and tensions that may occur.

Context

Greenleaf's best-known quotation (see Chapter 2) captures the essence lying at the heart of the concept of servant leadership – namely, that someone chooses to serve others and realises that the best way of serving their needs is through acting as leader. Therein is both the profundity and simplicity at the core of being a servant-leader, and Greenleaf's words point out:

The servant-leader is servant first
 one wants to serve, to serve first
 That person is sharply different from one who is leader first
 The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types
 The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first
 to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being
 served.

He saw the leader-first and the servant-first as different persons and, although the servant-leader incorporates components of service and

leadership, it is the servant element that is more prominent. As Keith (2008) stresses, the role of a servant-leader must be seen chiefly as an act of service: this service is born out of 'the natural feeling that one wants to serve' and the act of leading must be seen as the conscious choice of the servant.

The significance of being *servant* first and then *leader* is recognized by various respected academics as the following two examples show:

Servant leadership is leadership upside-down. Servant-leaders transcend self-interest to serve the needs of others, help others grow and develop, and provide opportunity for others to gain materially and emotionally. The fulfilment of others is the servant-leader's principal aim. (Daft, 2007)

Greenleaf ... says that the first and most important choice a leader makes is the choice to serve, without which one's capacity to lead is profoundly limited. That choice is not an action in the normal sense – it's not something you do, but an expression of your being. (Senge, 1996)

There is little doubt that Greenleaf would have welcomed the growing interest being shown in servant leadership – 'Nothing could have made Robert Greenleaf happier than to see the ongoing evolution of his ideas since 1990' (Spears, 2004) – and it is apparent that Greenleaf was not prescriptive in his writings – 'I will remind you in offering you these conversations that I am not presuming to tell you how you should think. Rather, I am offering what I think in the hope you will say what you think and then, out of the dialogue, all of us will be wiser' (Freeman 2000). However, believing in an 'evolution of his ideas' is not the same as acquiescing to their mutation into something quite alien, and being free to 'say what you think' carries with it a commitment to intellectual rigour and experiential honesty. Therefore, those subscribing to Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership appreciate some things are non-negotiable and recognize certain boundaries.

With this admonition very much in mind, a close examination of the literature (Prosser, 2009) reveals seven different yet complementary emphases of servant leadership and, unless these different emphases are recognized and valued, generalised statements may be made that are potentially misleading for those wishing to learn more about this philosophy of leadership. (The emphases have been identified through a combination of analysis and sensitive humour, and an

apology is offered willingly to anyone offended by some of the terms employed.)

Different emphases of servant leadership

The Poets (or romanticists and visionaries)

The Poets emphasize the romantic and visionary aspects of Greenleaf's writings, and the inspirational role played by literature, including poetry, on his thinking. Without question, Greenleaf was a visionary – an idealist – and he wanted others to appreciate what life in the workplace, and in the broader community, could and should be like.

The Poets turn to various leadership writers who use poetry to explain and expand their ideas. For example, Max DePree (1989) laments the fact that 'talent may go unnoticed and unused' by quoting Thomas Gray's famous verse (from *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*):

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Jim Autry's (1991) poetry is used to expand fundamental servant leadership and business points, and poetry is featured and celebrated in *The International Journal of Servant Leadership* (IJS-L). Volume 2, for example, contained a poem by Meg Wheatley, Greenleaf on Robert Frost, a chapter called *A Poetics of Servant Leadership*, and concluded with a section entitled *A Place for Poetry*.

However, *romanticists* and *visionaries* move beyond poetry, believing that the widespread application of servant leadership can bring about fundamental changes in the very nature of society – the IJS-L's manuscript reviewers' guidance document speaks admirably of 'educating the whole person' in order to 'heal the heart of humanity' – and their commendable idealism generates articles with titles including phrases such as: *Servant Leadership and Unconditional Forgiveness*; *Servant Leadership, Forgiveness, and Unlimited Liability*; *Happiness, Success, Quality Of Life, And Love*; and more.

The Romanticists possess admirable passion, and their views are often reflected in the writings of others who encourage new patterns of work and relationships to emerge within the employment relationship, including those not holding a declared servant leadership persuasion. Others consider this focus on poetry and romance to be tangential,

at best, to their understanding of the world of work; they favour the appeal of 'The Managerialists', with their understanding of how servant leadership should be applied within the world of business.

The Managerialists (or partially reconstructed Taylorites)

In his non-poetic guise, in *The Servant Leader* (2004) with its references to performance management, negative appraisal, firing people, handling conflict, leadership when things go wrong, and much else, Autry deals with servant leadership in practice – or the harsh realities of organizational life, as he calls it – and, understandably, this is what the Managerialists consider to be the 'real world'. Autry considers the application of servant leadership within the context of business, and shows how sound managerial practice may be applied systematically while adhering to, and being guided by, servant leadership principles.

Similarly, Douglas's (2003) discussion of servant leadership among supervisors shows that the principles and practices are grounded in the reality of corporate life: 'Supervisors who model servant leadership will face all the challenges of any other manager – personal and organizational conflict, budget crises, sexual harassment, hirings and firings, reorganizations and complex ethical dilemmas. The difference is the approach servant-leaders use in making decisions and managing resources.'

In typically graphic style, Stephen Covey (1994), the renowned management guru, also exemplifies that a servant-leader can become engaged in tough action: 'Later in life, I served as a vice president under a benevolent dictator. The servant-leader who replaced him was actually tougher. That experience taught me that servant leadership is not soft or touchy-feely. It's a much tougher style because when you set up performance agreements and become a source of help, people have to be tough on themselves. They just can't sit around and blame others.' Reinke (2004) makes a similar point: 'the servant-leader does not accept mediocre performance, but keeps everyone focused on achieving organizational objectives within the constraints of shared organizational values'.

Many other commentators agree. McGee-Cooper and Loooper's *Lessons on Layoffs: Managing in Good Times to Prepare for Bad Times* (2001b) provides advice on how a servant-leader should handle layoffs, and examples of how the servant-leader can utilize human resource policy and practices to make the organization healthier, thereby obviating the need for redundancies. They also comment on management practices to 'weed out non-performers within the six-month probationary period'.

This notion of performance is also found in the work of Irving and Longbotham (2006), 'We trust that these findings will encourage

increased exploration into the positive effects of servant leadership on team effectiveness, as well as a robust application of servant leadership in contemporary organizational settings'. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) conclude their examination of servant leadership with 'The excitement surrounding servant leadership may be justified, as it appears strong relationships with positive outcomes such as employers' extra effort, employees' satisfaction, and perceptions of organizational effectiveness were found. Organizations may look for opportunities to recruit individuals who possess servant leadership characteristics'.

Arguably, the work of Showkeir (2002) illustrates the managerialist approach in clearer terms than anyone else. He recognizes that, in order for servant leadership to be positioned alongside successful business practice, a *sine qua non* in his writing, it needs 'a solid business argument that reconciles the attainment of unequivocal business results (profit, market share, and so on) with the need and longing for individual meaning and purpose at work'. He believes that much of the misunderstanding over servant leadership is because of a lack of 'connection between servant leadership and attaining business results'. These references illustrate an important principle: sound managerial practice need not be antithetical to the principles of servant leadership.

The Egalitarians (or redistributive socialists)

The speeches and writings of George SanFacon (for example, *Awake At Work*, 2008) epitomize the views of the Egalitarians, who view servant leadership as an opportunity to create new structures and governance in the workplace, thereby redistributing power from single managers to a wider community of participants. SanFacon's leadership of the University of Michigan's Housing Facilities Department resulted in a removal of their traditional management hierarchy, and the introduction of shared governance with managers in collaborative teams – the traditional boss-subordinate relationships were removed, with managers reporting to a Council. As SanFacon and colleagues (Malinoski and SanFacon, 1998) describe:

[The] Facilities Council decision making is collective and done strictly by consensus ... The Council's consensus process consists of hearing and understanding what each individual has to say, and reaching a decision that is acceptable to all and consistent with the mission statement ... Departmental staff and others may appeal decisions made by the Council or a Council member

The Egalitarian emphasis can be detected in their description of ‘consensus decision making’, ‘resources freely shared across units’, ‘time for participants to adjust to the equalization of their roles’, and ‘power and authority distributed more equally among the members’. SanFacon developed his thinking in *Awake At Work* (2008), and the following quote illustrates egalitarianism precisely:

Organizations – both for-profits and not-for-profits – are deserving of our commitment and support to the extent that they extend such consideration to each of their stakeholders ... With consensus decision-making and open access to decision-making bodies, every person in the system has influence and power. No one person has unilateral power over another, and there is protection against the arbitrary use of power.

Many find this approach appealing, and Bowie’s *A Kantian Theory of Leadership* (2000) resonates with SanFacon: ‘Kant’s moral philosophy ... is basically egalitarian ... Given these egalitarian commitments, how can Kant provide a theory of leadership when ‘leadership’ has connotations of elitism and hierarchy?’ As Bowie develops his argument, he comments: ‘Perhaps a Kantian would endorse a theory of leadership that specifically eschews the notion that the leader is somehow superior to his or her followers. Servant leadership is one such theory ... there are many passages in Greenleaf that would fit with a Kantian theory of leadership.’

For many, that represents a step too far, perhaps even an abrogation of the leader’s responsibility to lead, of the manager’s responsibility to manage; but, for others, it represents the application of one of Greenleaf’s cardinal principles: that leadership should be exercised on the basis of *primus inter pares* – first among equals – and what, they contend, could be more appropriate than the emphasis typified by SanFacon.

The Peripherals (or zealots and agnostics)

The Peripherals are a diverse group of people and organizations unified through a common characteristic: they confess allegiance to servant leadership principles without any necessary reference to the work of Greenleaf. Apart from this common factor, they include a disparate range of views and reputations, from the commendable to the questionable (and both categories remain nameless).

First, are many overtly Christian writers, speakers and websites, who base their views on Bible verses such as ‘And whosoever will be chief

among you, let him be your servant' (Matthew 20: 27 KJV). Building on such teaching, they construct a series of principles to expound the principle of servant leadership. Then there are institutes established to 'provide opportunities for the spiritual formation and leadership development of people who are called to be servant-leaders', and training organizations who introduce clients to 'a unique style of leadership that is modelled on the approach of Him who said he came to serve, not be served', and universities introducing students to 'the nature, styles, and skills of Servant Leadership, utilising historic and contemporary models and emphasising moral roots of responsible leadership'. Some Christian organizations appear to equate servant leadership's apotheosis with work to alleviate the needs of the least privileged in society: 'asylum seekers, the homeless and drug addicts'.

Typically, such organizations have admirable aims, undertaking commendable work – the word 'zealots' is used charitably – and, although they may make fleeting references to a Greenleaf website, usually they promote servant leadership from a standpoint peripheral to Greenleaf's writings.

The *agnostics* comprise writers who advocate servant leadership, but their writings reveal that they are not advocating it from a Greenleaf perspective, or (at times), it appears, from any other robust body of work. Within this group of agnostics are books, journal articles and websites that may have servant leadership in the title, or in a prominent position, but contain little reference to servant leadership in a recognizable form. Worse still, they may contain sentiments running counter to Greenleaf and other advocates. They may contain many important points regarding leadership, consistent with many leadership textbooks, but the whole thrust of the article misses, and perhaps contradicts, many of the fundamental servant leadership principles. This is the reason for labelling them *agnostics* – they continue to struggle to come to terms with a set of beliefs that are clear and relevant to others. The Peripherals contain reputable individuals (and their companies) but, for some reason, often they have not fully grasped the significant and substantial distinguishing characteristics of servant leadership as set out by Greenleaf.

The Discreet (or silent disciples)

The Discreet are those people who are wary, circumspect, and prudent; in other words, they are cautionary and guarded, and concerned that any understanding and application of servant leadership should recognize the contextual aspects of their organization. They may adhere to servant leadership principles without declaring their commitment

publicly. For that reason, many of these individuals and organizations are difficult to identify.

To illustrate this contextual point, take the example of two businesses with a deserved reputation for their commitment to servant leadership: TDIIndustries and Southwest Airlines are among the most frequently mentioned exemplar organizations (see also Chapter 11 for a more elaborate description of these companies). The TDI website's *Culture, Mission, and Values* page announces, 'TDIIndustries strives to model the management style defined by Robert Greenleaf as 'Servant Leadership'. We firmly believe our shift to this culture during the 70s has made us one of the most unique companies in the country – it is to this practice that we attribute our many years of success.' Its servant leadership page tells its customers that the company 'uses Robert Greenleaf's essay, *The Servant as Leader* (1970), as a blueprint for our behaviour'.

The Southwest Airlines website is quite different, even though their commitment to servant leadership is unequivocal. At the time of writing, a 10-minute visit to their website could find no overt reference to servant leadership. This was quite unexpected, as there are many *YouTube* clips of their former president, Colleen Barrett, promoting the virtues of servant leadership and its beneficial effect within the business. The site contains its mission statement with the words 'We are committed to provide our Employees a stable work environment with equal opportunity for learning and personal growth. Creativity and innovation are encouraged for improving the effectiveness of Southwest Airlines. Above all, Employees will be provided the same concern, respect, and caring attitude within the organization that they are expected to share externally with every Southwest Customer.' While it is possible to detect the servant leadership influence throughout the site (in much the same way as their commitment to distributed leadership can be detected on other websites), there is no overt declaration of adherence to the Greenleaf principles.

This example, from two companies with an impressive servant leadership track record, merely illustrates the contextual aspect of what may motivate many of the Discreet. Anecdotally, and based on numerous conversations with executives at leadership conferences, it is possible to describe other companies as committed to servant leadership principles but reticent when it comes to making a public announcement, and sometimes even a clear statement within the privacy of their own companies. They prefer not to wear the tag or label in a way that identifies them with what others may consider another management concept or fad. For some, it makes sense to make a bold declaration; for others, it does not.

What is true for organizations can be even truer of individuals; again, there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence. As discussed in *To Be A Servant-Leader* (Prosser, 2007), some individuals work as leaders in businesses where the organizational culture is inimical to the principles of servant leadership. Such courageous individuals remain true to their belief in Greenleaf's writings, ensuring that they do not alienate their bosses or enable colleagues and staff to seek or gain unfair advantage. After all, being a servant-leader does not equate with being naïve.

It is clear that sincere individuals and whole organizations can be loyal to the principles of servant leadership, yet remain discreet.

The Syncretists (or harmonisers and mystics)

A Syncretist is someone who attempts to reconcile or blend different dimensions of belief and practice into their lives and, as these quotes illustrate, sees it as a logical conclusion of acting consistently in every aspect of their life:

So there is a strand in servant leadership that encourages us to take a more holistic view of who we are as individuals, which helps to stop this compartmentalization that considers work as one part of our life and the rest of our life as something completely different. (Larry Spears in Lloyd, 1996)

The servant leadership concept is a principle, a natural law, and getting our social value systems and personal habits aligned with this ennobling principle is one of the great challenges of our lives. (Stephen Covey, 1998)

Is Servant Leadership a Spiritual Concept? Well, of course it is! You will find it in the sacred writings of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. But you will also find versions of it in secular humanism and in systems that are theistic and non-theistic. (Don Frick, 2007)

Links with philosophy, ethics, philanthropy, virtues, mysticism, emotional intelligence, self-esteem and much more can be detected in many servant leadership journal articles. The contributors, academics and practitioners alike, readily describe servant leadership in terms of its connection with other ideas and practices – partly to legitimize it, partly to encourage further adherents, but chiefly it appears to syncretize, and thereby rationalize, a kaleidoscope of belief and practice (as the three quotes above and the two examples below demonstrate).

Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin and Kakabadse's 'Spirituality and Leadership Praxis' (2002) shows that, while 'spirituality, historically, has been rooted in religion ... its current use in business and in the workplace is most often not associated with any specific religious tradition'. They add that 'Increased attention to personal meaning and transformative leadership has shown striking benefits of integrating personal development and awareness at work'. They also quote various sources to illustrate 'the dramatic increase in interest in incorporating spirituality into management theory, management development and management practice'.

The second example is found in the work of Whetstone (2002), who sets out to identify a link between servant leadership and what he calls personalism, which he explains through terms such as 'centrality of the person', 'human dignity', and 'participation and solidarity'. – and His assertion that 'Servant leadership is a more appropriate paradigm for implementing personalism with the business community' is significant from the perspective of the servant leadership Syncretist, as is a concluding point that 'genuine servant leadership is consistent with the five themes of the philosophy of personalism'.

Spears's quote, at the start of this section, went on to remind readers that Robert Greenleaf 'really felt people would grow best, in both a personal and spiritual sense, by being encouraged to integrate more fully both their personal and their work lives'; and Frick's (2007) quote concluded with, 'You could say that Greenleaf took a religious concept, distilled the spirituality beyond doctrine, and applied it in fresh ways'.

It would be wrong to claim that Greenleaf started the widespread interest being shown by many in uniting all aspects of one's life, but it can be rightly claimed that servant leadership provides many actual and potential Syncretists with the opportunity to integrate beliefs and practices.

The Systematizers (or architects and quantity surveyors)

The Systematizers set out to plan and build theoretical and applied models of servant leadership, subsequently measuring its impact on individuals, teams and businesses, and demonstrating its contribution to wider organizational concepts and practice.

In many ways, the Systematizers are not a separate emphasis at all; they are a group of academics and practitioners who have attempted to bring together concepts and practices concerning servant leadership into coherent models through a series of codifications and distinguishing features, in much the same way as systematic theologians developed an integrated statement of belief for parts of the church.

However, the very act of engaging in model-making or codification is a distinguishing feature that justifies grouping them together. The Systematizers believe servant leadership 'requires rigorous quantitative and qualitative research. As the current literature on servant leadership is filled with anecdotal evidence, empirical research is critically needed to test and validate these various questions and to create further predictions and hypotheses' (Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002) – and with commendable vigour they set about their task.

Typically, but not exclusively, quantitative analysis is undertaken by the *quantity surveyors*, who delight in statistical analyses to determine the length, breadth, height and depth of the impact of each and every aspect of servant leadership principles (for example, see Hebert, 2006). By means of their commitment to statistical enquiry – through correlation coefficients, significance tests, hierarchical regression analysis and the like – valuable information and insights are obtained, providing scope for others to pursue even further quantitative analysis.

Again typically, but not exclusively, *architects* qualitatively undertake the creation of codifications and, given the metaphysical nature of Greenleaf's work, their codifications of the conceptual and practical nature of servant leadership into sets of precepts is vital.

The codifiers and modellers (and, often, the functions of *architect* and *quantity surveyor* fuse into one person) have used their knowledge and expertise to identify servant-leader characteristics and the following examples, presented alphabetically and taken from qualitative and quantitative work, are among the best known:

- AMCA's eleven defining qualities (2008)
- Autry's five ways of being (2004)
- Barbuto and Wheeler's five factors (2006)
- Daft's four precepts (1999)
- Frick's ten skills and capacities (2004)
- Keith's seven key practices (2008)
- Laub's six key areas (2008)
- Patterson's seven virtues (2003)
- Sipe and Frick's seven pillars (2009)
- Spears's ten characteristics (1995)
- van Dierendonck and Nuijten's eight dimensions (in press)
- Wheatley's seven keys (2004)

Some question the need for the development of ever more codifications, while others celebrate the proliferation of interpretations as an

indication of the growing interest in servant leadership, praising this organic rather than mechanistic development. Perhaps a coalescing of the lists may happen over time, becoming a generally agreed set of characteristics.

The Systematizers have at least one thing in common with the Syncretists: they bring together different elements of belief and practice to establish a 'whole person', or the identification of an all-embracing model, thereby uniting elements of servant leadership.

Welcoming opportunities, addressing tensions

At this point in the chapter, it would be understandable if the first-time reader of a servant leadership book exclaimed: 'It seems to mean all things to all people! It appears you can manipulate it to make it fit whatever you want it to fit; to fit whatever you happen to believe.' This is why we return to the essential three servant leadership questions identified at the start of this chapter – definition, application and contribution – and reflect on the opportunities and tensions that might arise in pursuing one or more emphasis, while remaining true to servant leadership's central principles.

Servant leadership may well have few established rules and regulations, but the principles lying at its heart are crucial and non-negotiable: the greatest of these principles is the commitment to being a servant. Everything else follows from that conscious decision. It may appear pedantry, but what separates servant leadership from every other discussion of leadership is that, above all else, it concerns *servants* who lead and not *leaders* who serve; servant leadership must never be relegated to one among many descriptions of leadership, ignoring the fundamental and all-pervading concept of servanthood. From that fundamental starting point – a servant who leads – it is then possible to appreciate how servant-leader behaviour can be manifest through different emphases, thereby recognizing personal preferences and one's organizational environment. Servant leadership is not *all things to all people*, the non-negotiable commitment to being a servant (among other things) makes that clear, but it is sensitive to different styles and different requirements.

With the welcomed increasing popularity of servant leadership, some misinterpretations are inevitable and should encourage advocates to explain further its central concepts, and its benefits to individuals, organizations and wider society. The challenge is to explain servant leadership in terms that enable practitioners to discover how this concept might be applied within their organizational settings. This is one reason

for identifying seven different emphases in this chapter, and recognizing that reactions to them may differ – that opportunities and tensions do exist. The Poets may appear reasonable, or outlandish; the Managerialists may resonate with the harsh realities of business life, or appear a tad unenlightened; the Egalitarians may seem faithful to the core message, or out of touch with reality; the Peripherals may be seen as sincere, but perhaps oblivious to the full meaning of their words; the Discreet understand business sensitivities, or are unduly reticent; the Syncretists, rightly or wrongly (according to one's viewpoint), seek authenticity in all aspects of life; and the Systematizers endeavour to make servant leadership more understandable and accessible. These emphases show there is more than one way to be a servant-leader: it is possible to emphasize different, yet complementary, aspects and remain faithful to its precepts. That is one of servant leadership's inherent fascinations.

Greenleaf's contribution must never be condensed to a set of dos and don'ts. There is a need to accept that his work was never intended as a simple step-by-step guide but, rather, as a fundamental challenge for everyone to consider and apply within their environment and circumstances, remaining true to the cardinal and non-negotiable principles but allowing different emphases or approaches to guide. This is one reason why researchers and practitioners need to produce further case studies – particularly on application and contribution, based on the experience of companies (and commendably, the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership website contains such examples).

Robert Greenleaf may have avoided prescription in his writings, but exploring and developing the concept must be accompanied with safeguards; otherwise servant leadership could become merely the latest fashionable thinking or, worse still, a trendy shibboleth or shorthand for unfocused views. Servant leadership is not an add-on extra; it is a fundamentally different way of being that strikes at the very heart of everything one believes and practises, in all aspects of life. Servant leadership runs deep: it is not something superficial to be taken up and then put down when someone becomes tired of it, or when some other topic is in vogue. There has to be a commitment to the long haul; otherwise, a person has not understood that becoming a servant-leader changes one's whole approach to life. Being a servant-leader may be a challenge, but being a half-hearted or easily distracted servant-leader is not an option.

4

Demystifying Servant Leadership

Sen Sendjaya

The servant leadership approach is the less travelled road of leadership. In the final analysis, it is not an outward leadership behaviour or skill, but an internal character of the heart. It is a matter of 'being' rather than 'doing'. This character-focused approach is what makes servant leadership distinct from other leadership models, and explains the proliferation of empirical studies in the field since the turn of the millennium. Complementing the explosion of empirically rigorous studies in servant leadership is the increase of anecdotal evidences of servant leadership practices in high-performing companies reported in the media and popular press. Typically, companies such as Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, Ritz-Carlton, TDIndustries, Synovus, and ServiceMaster are cited (Gergen, 2001; see also Chapter 11). While these corporate practices can be downplayed as isolated cases, as critics may suggest, servant leadership has spurred curiosity beyond the capacity of scholars to keep pace, either theoretically or empirically.

This chapter begins with a brief review of servant leadership as a holistic and multidimensional approach to leadership that encompasses the rational, relational, ethical, emotional, and spiritual sides of both leaders and followers. What follows is a discussion on the most common arguments erected against the whole notion of servant leadership. During the course of conducting servant leadership research, executive workshops, and classroom training over the last 10 years, I have received considerable feedback and numerous inputs that have been very useful for clarifying my own thinking on the concept. Many of these comments came from journal editors, reviewers, executives, and students, to whom I am heavily indebted. Some of their arguments against servant leadership were so carefully constructed that they delineate the boundary conditions for servant leadership. Some, however,

were logically derived from a lack of interpretation or from misinterpretation of the concept.

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to provide a conceptual clarity on the key contentious issues associated with servant leadership which, to the best of my knowledge, have not been discussed in sufficient depth, given the rush to present the necessary empirical evidences in support of the construct. In the course of writing this chapter, I selected only the more robust issues and excluded the peripheral.

The multidimensional nature of servant leadership

Researchers have measured servant leadership under different frameworks, bearing in mind that the absence of accurate measures hinders any scientifically valid progress in any field of inquiry. To date, there are at least half a dozen servant leadership measures that have been developed, validated, and (to a lesser extent) published (for a review, see Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008; see also Chapter 14). Clearly, there is a convergence among all measures in the inclusion of servanthood (i.e. willingness to serve others) as a fundamental dimension of servant leadership, albeit the different terminologies used. However, its idiosyncratic attributes go beyond the dimensions of servanthood. For example, the intent to serve others does not naturally emerge; neither does it happen in a vacuum. Instead, it is driven by the leaders' spiritual insights and humility (Graham, 1991). Equally important is that both the ends and means of the acts of serving are exercised in accordance with moral and ethical principles. As I argued elsewhere, spirituality and morality-ethics are the *sine qua non* of servant leadership. The links between servant leadership and spirituality (Fairholm, 1997; Korac-Kakabadse *et al.*, 2002) and between servant leadership and morality or ethics (Graham, 1991, 1995; Yukl, 1990) have been well-documented in extant literature. In fact, without its spiritual and moral-ethical emphases, there is nothing new about servant leadership that has not been addressed in existing leadership approaches such as transformational leadership or authentic leadership. Hence, the inclusion of the spiritual and moral-ethical dimensions reflects a more comprehensive construct of servant leadership than existing leadership measures.

To give an overview of a measure that reflects this position, the six dimensions of servant leadership behaviour outlined in Sendjaya *et al.* (2008) are briefly outlined in Figure 4.1. The first dimension, *Voluntary Subordination*, signifies the conviction of the leader to renounce the superior status and privileges attached to leadership in order to embrace greatness by way of servanthood. Servant-leaders are more conscious of their

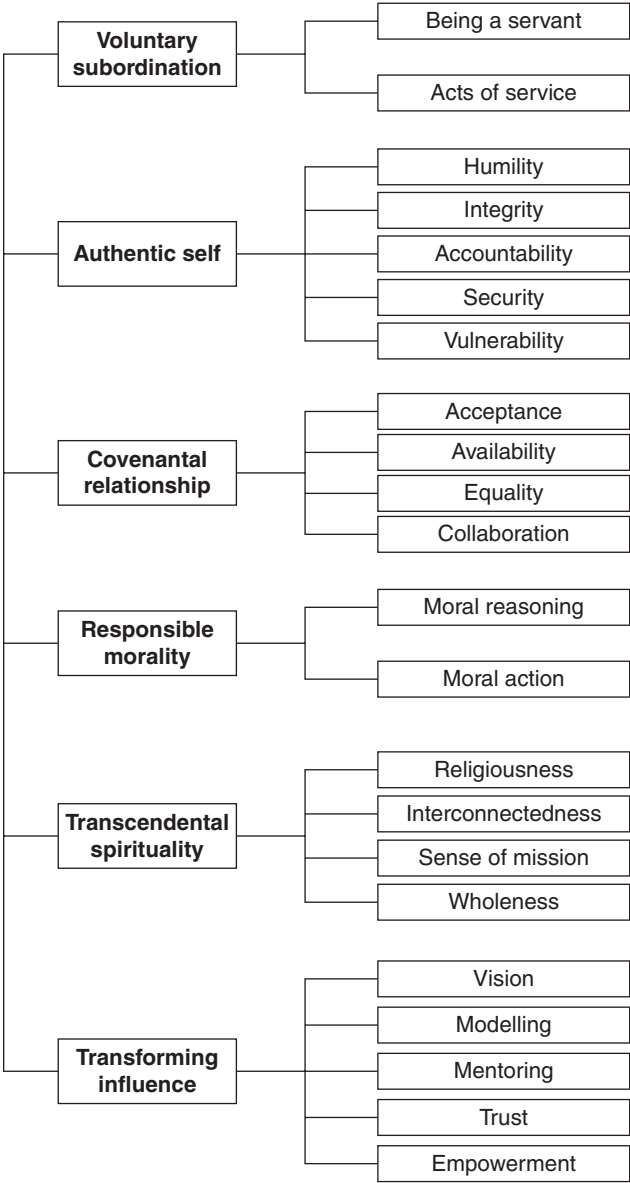


Figure 4.1 Theoretical framework used to categorize the qualitative data

responsibilities than their rights, readily taking up opportunities to serve others whenever there is a legitimate need without seeking acknowledgment or compensation (Blanchard and Hodges, 2003). The voluntary nature of this subordination is a reflection of the leader's strength of character, which simultaneously becomes a source from which the leader draws her or his inner satisfaction.

The second dimension, *Authentic Self*, signifies the authenticity of servant-leaders whose lives are marked with humility, integrity, accountability, vulnerability, and a secured sense of self. Knowing and being who they really are, which is critical in leader-follower relationships (Autry, 2001; DePree, 1989; George, 2003; Guillory, 1997), servant-leaders practise what they preach, admit their mistakes and limitations, and are not defensive when their decisions and actions are questioned.

Covenantal Relationship, the third dimension, characterizes the profound, genuine relationships servant-leaders build with people who work with and around them (DePree, 1989). As opposed to contractual, tit-for-tat relationships that are often at risk whenever there are disagreements or conflicts (Van Dyne *et al.*, 1994), covenant-based relationships last, as leaders and followers share common values, mutual trust, open-ended commitment, and concern for the welfare of the other party (Bromley and Busching, 1988). Quality leader-follower relationships are also saturated with moral and spiritual values (Ciulla, 1995; Graham, 1991), which makes the servant leadership approach distinctive (as captured in the dimensions of *Responsible Morality* and *Transcendental Spirituality*). Servant-leaders not only ensure that both the ends they seek and the means they employ are morally legitimized, thoughtfully reasoned, and ethically justified (Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002), they also encourage other people to behave in the same way through moral reasoning, thereby elevating the morality of both the leaders and the led (Graham, 1995; Yukl, 1990). Similarly, servant-leaders are attuned to spiritual values, in that their lives are driven by a sense of higher purpose, direction, meaning, and fitness between the internal self and the external world, all of which they also nurture in the lives of others (Fairholm, 1997; Korac-Kakabadse *et al.*, 2002).

Finally, through the sharing of vision, personal examples, unreserved trust, mentoring, and empowerment, servant-leaders transform their constituents in multiple dimensions – emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually (Autry, 2001; Greenleaf, 1977). This dimension, *Transforming Influence*, suggests that the profound change takes effect, first and foremost, in the development and growth of members of the organizations instead of the financial bottom-line of the organizations.

Evidences for multidimensionality

A decade of research into these six dimensions suggests that servant leadership behaviour is a holistic behavioural cluster that is not meant to be practised in a piecemeal fashion. The holistic construct signifies the selfless life orientation that a servant-leader possesses. Empirical investigations (for example, the chi-square difference test) revealed that the six dimensions were found to be empirically distinguishable, each representing unique, though related, latent dimensions. These studies confirm the multidimensional nature of the behaviour of the servant-leader as captured in the Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale (SLBS) (see Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008). The relatively high correlations between dimensions support this conclusion. For example, the high correlation between *Transforming Influence* and *Transcendental Spirituality* suggest that servant-leaders' efforts to transform people into what they are capable of becoming is closely associated with their spiritual conviction (Fairholm, 1997). Practically, this finding implies that servant-leaders *draw the best out of others and contribute to their personal and professional growth (Transforming Influence)* as a way to *encourage other people to express their whole self in the workplace* and because they are *driven by a sense of higher calling (Transcendental Spirituality)*. This finding confirms Graham's (1991) contention that the source of a servant-leader's influence is one that is spiritual, and is not based on personality, competency, or hierarchical position.

The boundary conditions of servant leadership

The following section discusses several key issues raised by journal editors, reviewers, and practitioners against the concept and practice of servant leadership. I will briefly outline the essence of the arguments then provide my thoughts and responses to these arguments.

Are servant-leaders doormats?

Given the altruistic motive with which servant-leaders serve others, would they not be treated as doormats and their altruism misused or abused?

The concept of accountability embedded in servant leadership sheds light on this concern. Block (1993) argued that servant-leaders view themselves as stewards who hold themselves accountable for the well-being and growth of the people they serve. It is, however, relatively easy these days to cite accountability merely as an exercise in compliance. Marshall

(1991: p. 72) distinguished between accepting accountability as a matter of reactive obligation and proactive or voluntary choice, and maintained that servant-first leaders choose the latter as 'they are accustomed to being answerable to their performance'. As a natural expression of their true servanthood, servant-leaders seek to be accountable not only to the people they serve, but also to others (for example, a board of directors, other stakeholders of an organization, the leader's personal core values and moral integrity). Hence, the accountability of servant-leaders towards their followers is not absolute, in that servant-leaders will be subservient to followers' demands. On the other hand, servant-leaders' accountability to their followers is tempered by other accountability structures and relationships into which they consciously put themselves. The interplay between accountability and service in these relationships is perhaps best captured by the phrase 'I am your servant, but you are not my master', as outlined in the following remark made by a Director of a not-for-profit organization in an interview I conducted in 2003:

Call it 'I am your servant, but you are not my master' ... If you think servant leadership is just giving the people what they want ... you are actually missing the generous nature of true servant leadership. Your relative accountability is to the people you work with and who work for you. So you do have a relative accountability then, but it's not absolute.

Is servant leadership for religious people?

Is it true that servant leadership has such a heavy religious overtone that it excludes people who do not associate themselves with certain religions or religious beliefs?

A cursory review of extant literature reveals that it is typically linked to some religious teaching. The majority of publications have both explicit and implicit links to the Judeo-Christian theology, although many emerging publications also link servant leadership to other religious teachings. Robert Greenleaf, dubbed the grandfather of servant leadership, was a Quaker but drew heavily on Hesse's *Journey to the East*, steeped in ancient Eastern religious mysticism, as well as Carl Jung's atheistic notion of self-consciousness. Greenleaf's conceptualization therefore reflects a syncretic view that merges two discrete theological presuppositions and traditions. It is important to note, however, that

servant leadership has also found support from non-religious beliefs (see, for example, Fry, 2003; Hicks, 2002). Kurth (2003), for instance, argued that the concept of service is taught by all major religions (for example, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism; see Chapter 5) and by non-religious philosophies (for example, moral philosophy, Siddha yoga, Taoism). To illustrate, one of Immanuel Kant's (1964: pp. 32–3) famous categorical imperatives strongly captures the most important tenet of servant leadership: 'Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end'.

In summary, practising servant leadership does not require one to subscribe to a particular religion or religious belief. For those of some religious persuasion, it emerges from an internal conviction that the servant-leader is a servant of a higher being or power and, in obedient gratitude to that higher being or power, they serve other people. For those with spiritual orientation but no religious attachment, the motivation to practise servant leadership comes from not a higher being, but from a set of core values, ideals or causes that partly or wholly define their lives and give meaning and significance.

Which comes first: influence or service?

One of the biggest conundrums in the servant leadership field is its underlying influence process. If the hallmark of servant-leaders is their deliberate choice to serve others and desire to serve first, does that signify followership rather than leadership? If the primary focus of servant-leaders is to serve, how does a servant exert influence over others with the authority expected of a leader? Does the *servant first* step mean that someone began as a servant who served a leader and/or team members, and subsequently rose to leadership in a unique way?

Servant leadership stems from a heartfelt conviction and a desire to transform other people with moral courage and spiritual insights into what they are capable of becoming. In leader–follower relationships, the leaders act as stewards – that is, they consider their followers as people who have been entrusted to them to be elevated to their better selves and to fulfil their potential. Followers tend to respond well to servant-leaders because they have proven themselves trustworthy as servants. And since leadership is more 'caught' than 'taught', followers themselves will

be transformed into servant-leaders. The transformational effect in followers is achieved through what is often perceived as a counterintuitive way – that is, servant-leaders willingly sacrificing their needs and wants in order to serve others, instead of serving their own selfish aims by sacrificing other people. As a leadership approach that is other-oriented, rather than leader-centred, effectiveness is therefore measured by the holistic development of both the leaders and followers.

The desire to serve others does not preclude the servant-leader from the responsibility of exerting influence. While servant-leaders seek to transform others to be more servant-like, there is a higher purpose that both the leaders and servants mutually seek to accomplish. Servant-leaders try to support others in achieving that higher purpose by way of service. Service, therefore, is a means by which to try to role model ideal behaviours and values aligned with this higher purpose: servant-leaders seek, first, to influence, and choose the path of servanthood to accomplish that task.

The paradox, therefore, is not between leadership and service but, rather, lies in the ordering of service and influence. Which comes first: service or influence? I believe that servant-leaders have in mind a series of influences to which they wish to expose the followers. In this sense, servant-leaders are visionary individuals who have a clear idea of the kind of leaders that they expect their followers to become. This vision will, in the final analysis, benefit the followers and, perhaps, benefit the leaders. If servant-leaders first serve others, would their acts of service be driven mainly by needs and aspirations at an individual level and marked by the absence of a greater purpose or unifying principle? In my view, servant-leaders offer others unconditional and unqualified acceptance, thereby transforming them into their true selves. Just as parents love their children unconditionally but are committed to helping them learn and grow to realize their full potential, servant-leaders accept followers as they are but seek to transform them to be better servant-leaders. It is therefore accurate to conclude that there is a higher purpose that servant-leaders pursue – that of turning followers into servant-leaders to achieve this, they employ service to try to role model these behaviours. Hence, servant-leaders can choose to serve others in an attempt to model ideal behaviours, but the intent remains to influence someone to see the vision of the greater good, or at least that leader's interpretation of the greater good. It is therefore appropriate to view servant leadership as a dyadic theory where there is a unique one-to-one relationship between leader and follower.

Is there a real difference to the bottom line?

Perhaps the most common criticism against servant leadership is that, given its focus on followers' needs and development, it will not positively contribute to the bottom line – at least, not directly.

This view is largely derived from the commonly known observation that, in comparison with other leadership approaches, servant-leaders are more likely to demonstrate the natural inclinations to serve the marginalized people and to set the following priorities in their leadership focus: first, followers; second, organizations; and, finally, themselves. On the basis of this assumption, one typically concludes that servant leadership does not contribute to the corporate performance as measured by the traditional financial indicators (for example, profit margin, earning per share, and so on).

This is a vital observation, and needs serious consideration by researchers. To date, we are yet to see published empirical evidence in support of those direct effects. However, preliminary evidence in support of the positive impacts of servant leadership on other (soft) measures of corporate performance are on the increase –for instance, trust in leaders, commitment, job satisfaction and the like. Empirical studies have shown that servant leadership behaviour contributes to building followers' trust in the leader (Joseph and Winston, 2005; Liden *et al.*, 2005). A more recent study confirmed that servant leadership is a significant predictor of trust with *Covenantal Relationship*, *Responsible Morality* and *Transforming Influence* as the key servant leadership behaviours significantly contributing to followers' trust in their leader (Sendjaya and Pekerti, in press). Followers who perceived high servant leadership behaviours in their leaders had significantly higher levels of trust compared with those who perceived low servant leadership behaviours in their leaders. The relevant behaviours that engender followers' trust in the leader are:

- articulating a shared vision that followers can identify with collectively
- setting a personal example
- appealing to commonly shared values
- demonstrating shared values
- open-ended commitment
- concern for the welfare of their followers
- engaging in moral dialogue to examine the ethics of the organization and of the leaders themselves.

These findings, and others, may provide a hint and possibly lead one to hypothesize that servant leadership has positive effects on the financial performance of an organization only on a long-term basis. Hence, the corporate context that encourages the culture of creating and maintaining short-term profits may run counter to the long-term orientation of servant leadership. In this light, it is therefore not too far-fetched to argue that, in the organizational contexts where more long-term perspectives and a balanced approach to performance (for example, triple bottom line) are adopted, servant leadership may better take root and flourish. Having said that, the calls for for-profit organizations not to be fixated on short-term profits, and to have a more balanced view of performance, will create space and opportunities for servant leadership to present itself as a viable alternative approach to leadership.

Is it really relevant?

What transpires from the recent failures of leaders and the collapse of organizations across the globe is the limitation of performance-oriented leadership approaches that sacrifice people on the altar of profit and growth.

The unprecedented challenges that confront contemporary leaders today cannot be met with leadership approaches that regard people merely as units of production or expendable resources in a profit and loss statement. While such approaches may bring about impressive growth and 'performance beyond expectations', these results will not be sustainable in the long run, as the relational, ethical, emotional, and spiritual sides of followers – and, to a lesser extent, leaders – are neglected. Since servant leadership is an altruistic, holistic, ethical, spiritual, and relational approach to leadership, this leadership approach can be timely for organizations operating in the post-Enron world. While it is certainly not a panacea to the global epidemic of toxic leadership, an appreciation of the philosophy and spirit of servant leadership will help leaders and followers relate to each other in more meaningful and profound ways. Its moral and spiritual ideals, which guard leaders and followers from leadership pitfalls, make it a distinct approach to leadership.

The six dimensions of the SLBS (see Figure 4.1) may be particularly relevant for the holistic development of leaders. In fact, developing a holistic leadership intervention is worth considering in light of the ubiquity of toxic and destructive leaders playing major roles in recent

corporate scandals. While a myriad of leadership development programmes is easily accessible today, many of them are fixated on competency-based developmental areas at the expense of the character-based areas, which incorporate emotional, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. In the wake of morally flawed corporate leaders, the need to reflect, think through, and make moral decisions in ill-defined and ethically ambiguous environments cannot be overstated, as this will spell success or failure for the organizations and their stakeholders. The notion that the exercise of authority and power always entails ethical challenges must be permanently on the agenda for discussion. Further, leadership development programmes need to expose (potential) leaders to a range of situations, with the purpose of developing emotional, moral, and spiritual awareness or reasoning.

Servant-leaders produce multiplying effects in others as they turn those served into servant-leaders. When followers perceive that they are the recipients of the leaders' trust, they, in turn, are more likely to trust their leaders. And when leaders attribute followers' trust to themselves, they enhance their self-concept, which further reinforces the servant leadership behaviours of both the leaders and followers. Similarly, servant-leaders' readiness to serve first selflessly, as opposed to lead first, will be likely to result in followers' emulating self-sacrificing behaviours (Choi and Mai-Dalton, 1999). These multiplying effects signify the transforming influence of servant leadership.

What is distinctive about a servant leadership training programme?

In comparison with other leadership training programmes, servant leadership training will have an emphasis on character as opposed to competency (leadership skills) or concept (leadership theories and models).

Since it is ultimately a reflection of the heart, training programmes are built on the assumption that what leaders do will flow from who they are, hence involving participants in re-examining their core values, life meaning and priorities, past and future trajectories, and so on. In addition, training programmes will cover emotional, spiritual, and moral-ethical training, which are delivered not as separate topics in and of themselves but, rather, as parts of the holistic nature of servant leadership. These components will, in fact, inform each and every topic in the training programme. For example, participants will learn

how to build and articulate a shared vision using emotionally, spiritually, and morally attractive approaches. By the end of the programme, it is expected that participants will have a conviction to lead ethically, selflessly, and compassionately and to influence others in their circles to do the same. Participants will also develop relevant skills – such as in-depth reflection, emotional sensitivity, moral analysis and others – which will help them critically evaluate their leadership decisions and actions. Further, training programmes do not aim to help participants behave in certain ways to boost followers' performance so much as to help them to build a genuine and lasting relationship with followers, which in the long-run will positively affect their performance.

Is it relevant cross-culturally?

As with many other leadership theories, servant leadership was a US-centric theory, largely studied and practised by American companies. Given the vast differences that exist between the USA and the rest of the world in terms of national culture, is this theory applicable in non-US countries? The GLOBE study, for example, revealed that there are different perceptions of leadership effectiveness in each society (House *et al.*, 2004).

Chapter 10 provides a full overview of studies into servant leadership throughout the world. In addition to confirming the relevance of servant leadership outside the USA, these cross-cultural studies across and within cultures also demonstrated variations of servant leadership practices (Hale and Fields, 2007; Washington *et al.*, 2006). For example, African-American leaders exhibited more servant leadership behaviours in comparison with 'white leaders' in the USA (Washington *et al.*, 2006). This finding was somewhat expected, since African-Americans are strongly predisposed to kinship relationships that extend to the entire African-American community and, hence, highly value cooperation and interdependence. Another cross-cultural study exploring servant leadership in Ghana and the USA found respondents from Ghana experiencing servant leadership behaviours significantly less frequently than their American counterparts (Hale and Fields, 2007), which is largely due to the higher levels of power distance and collectivism in Ghanaian cultural practices.

A more recent study showed empirically that servant leadership is universally practised and accepted in Australia and Indonesia, but that

its practice would be moderated by culture (Pekerti and Sendjaya, 2010). In terms of the six-dimensions servant leadership framework (Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008), Australian leaders exhibited more behaviours associated with *Authentic Self*, while Indonesian leaders exhibited more behaviour associated with *Responsible Morality* and *Transforming Influence*. In contrast, we found no significant difference between Australian and Indonesian leaders' behaviours associated with *Voluntary Subordination*, *Covenantal Relationship*, and *Transcendental Spirituality* behaviours. The similarities in perceptions and practices found between Australian and Indonesian leaders can be explained by the similarities in certain values, such as equality and companionship for Australians, and community and mutual respect for Indonesians. At the same time, culture-specific differences found were also linked to leaders' and followers' societal profile and cultural identities, particularly on three of Hofstede's (1991) indices: power distance, individualism and masculinity.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the multidimensional construct of servant leadership, and discusses the most common arguments raised against its concept and practice. While the list of arguments presented in this chapter is not exhaustive, they provide a snapshot of the current state of theoretical development of the servant leadership concept. Given the increasing rate of qualitative and quantitative studies that are currently being conducted across different continents, no doubt the construct will be further clarified and refined, which will help in establishing servant leadership as a best fitting model of leadership for future organizations.

Part II
Becoming the Servant-Leader

5

A Modest History of the Concept of Service as Leadership in Four Religious Traditions

Corné J. Bekker

I see our society as urgently in need of strengthening. Awareness of the pervasive alienation among contemporary young people in our country suggests that nurturing the human spirit could become a unifying idea. With all the diversity of religious beliefs and non-beliefs, there is a chance that substantial consensus could be achieved in searching for a basis for this unifying idea in our history and myth.

(Robert K. Greenleaf, 1996d: p. 44)

The current turn to spirituality and values-based leadership

Contemporary public discourse and scholarly interests have been marked by an increasing interest in the phenomena of spirituality (Bekker, 2008a) and this interest has reached the fields of business, economics, commerce and leadership studies (Singh Sengupta, 2007). Kourie (2006) proposes three broad reasons for the current turn to spirituality:

- a shift from mono-cultural communities to multicultural, polycentric societies that is marked with a determined move from divergence to convergence
- a growing dissatisfaction with established forms of spirituality that finds its expression in deep spiritual hunger and a desire for existential meaning
- a Gestalt shift in the rise of postmodernism that rejects the extreme individualism, secularism, materialism and nihilism of modernity.

This current turn to spirituality coincides with the emergence of alternative, post-industrial and global paradigms of leadership where leadership is re-imagined as acts of virtue in community and mutuality, rather than the strivings of power and prestige by one privileged individual (Bekker, 2008a). This paradigm shift from extreme individualism to perspectives in communal leadership is a global phenomenon and is contrasted by the individualistic, competitive leadership approaches of the past (Lipmen-Blumen, 1996). No other virtues-based theory of leadership embodies this global shift in leadership perspective and application more than Robert K. Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership. This chapter seeks to explore the emerging nature of this shift in leadership philosophies by locating the spirituality of Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership and comparing it with the rich ground of religious philosophies and examples of service in leadership that is evident in four of the world's older religious traditions: Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

Contemporary theological research in spirituality – characterized by multi-disciplinary, post-patriarchal, telluric and post-structuralist approaches – locates the phenomena of 'spirit' in the ontology of values (Kourie, 2006). Thus defined, spirituality is seen as the 'ultimate' or 'inner' values that provide meaning in life. This broad, defining approach provides a platform for scholars to examine a wide variety of spiritualities, ranging from religious to secular orientations. This trend in theological research of spirituality is thus no longer limited to religious contexts and has also been observed in the fields of business, commerce and leadership studies (Winston, 2002). The current approaches in spirituality research advocate a 'dialogical-phenomenological' research approach making use of the analytical, hermeneutic, mystagogic, form-descriptive, and systematic tools of theology, sociology and psychology (Kourie, 2006). This is rich ground to explore the spiritualities that motivate, energize and sustain the phenomena of values-based approaches to leadership, such as servant leadership.

Current phenomenological investigations in spirituality research distinguish three basic forms of spirituality (Waaijman, 2006):

- established schools of spirituality
- primordial spiritualities
- counter-spirituality.

Descriptions of established schools of spirituality (Waaijman, 2006) describe movements that have their origins in specific historical and socio-cultural settings that, over time, give rise to discernable schools or ways of the 'spirit'. Research of these established schools or ways of spirituality

are marked by investigations of the source-experience, the formation of pedagogical systems, the socio-historical context, the emergence of a value system, the formation of the consistent whole and accessibility of others to the school or way. Primordial spirituality research attempts to locate spiritualities that are not closely connected with any school or way but, rather, are embedded in ordinary human experiences such as birth, marriage, having children, and experiencing death and suffering. Investigations in primordial spiritualities centre around descriptions of everyday spirituality developed in the context of community, forms of indigenous spiritualities, and aspects of secular spirituality. Counter-movements in spirituality describe approaches that offer alternative solutions to existing social and religious power structures, and the research in these fields follows descriptions of systems of liminality, inferiority, and marginality. Greenleaf's concept of servant as leader can best be described within the domains of counter-movements of spirituality.

Greenleaf's counter-spirituality of service

In an unpublished and undated document archived at the Greenleaf Center, entitled 'The Primacy of Visions' (Fraker and Spears, 1996), Greenleaf described the sources of his concept of and efforts to promote servant leadership:

Five ideas seem to me to have shaped the course of my life work. They were the servant model of my father in my early years; the advice of my professor to get into a large institution, stay there, and become a meliorative force; at age twenty-five, beginning to read E.B. White, sensing his great art of seeing things whole, and learning to practice that art; the advice of Elmer Davis at age forty to begin to prepare for a useful old age; and at age sixty-five reading Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East* and seeing the vivid dramatization of the servant as leader. These ideas sustained me in my work from youth onward and have had increasing force as I have grown older. (p. 43)

In this excerpt from the Fraker and Spears' unpublished document, Greenleaf identifies five 'ideas' that shaped his life-long quest to define leaders as servants:

- the model of paternal service
- the value of employment stability as a source of organizational transformation

- the integrative worldview philosophies of the children's books author E.B. White (author of the well-known books *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web*)
- the belief in the communal value and service of older persons
- the theosophy inspired philosophies of Herman Hesse, chiefly in the book *Journey to East*, a book that came to embody the values of the counter-cultural, 'hippie' movement of the 1960s.

In one or more ways, all five of Greenleaf's source 'ideas' describe a counter-cultural approach to life and society that has at its core values that promote personal and communal transformation. This is in step with Greenleaf's own faith tradition, that of Quakerism. The Christian witness and spirituality of George Fox and the Quaker movement has been described as that of a counter-movement of spirituality (Bekker, 2008b). Greenleaf (1996a) described the spirituality of Fox and the early Quakers as one of counter-action, ethical regeneration, societal reformation and organizational transformation, thus a good example of a counter-movement of spirituality:

What made George Fox's service to seekers (and their response to him) so exemplary was the significant move to new and more exacting ethical standards, the force of which carries to this day. Fox's major contribution was not his theology, nor even his encouragement to care for suffering – important as these were. Rather, it seems to me, what gave durability to the Quaker tradition was the practical result that so many of those who called themselves Friends behaved more lovingly toward all creatures and assumed an impressive level of responsibility for their society and its institutions. Perhaps the most innovative result was that, by the effort of those whom Fox inspired, the quality of some contemporary institutions, notably commerce, was markedly improved. (p. 299)

It is this counter-cultural aspect of Greenleaf's vision of servant leadership that clearly delineates the spirituality of Greenleaf as a counter-movement. One of the clearest descriptions of Greenleaf's (1996c) counter-spirituality of service lies in his frequent use of the designation of prophet to describe servant-leaders: 'One is at once, in every moment of time, historian, contemporary analyst, and prophet – not three separate roles. This is what the practicing leader is, every day of his life' (p. 15). The leader as prophet is a designation that has been defined and explored in scholarly descriptions of religious leadership (McClymond, 2001). Weber (1968) defines

the prophet as 'a purely individual bearer of charisma who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment' (p. 46).

McClymond (2001) goes further and explains that a prophet is an 'agent of change who takes personal responsibility for breaking with the established order, declaring this break to be morally legitimate and influencing others to follow his or her example in breaking away' (p. 622). Greenleaf's vision of servant-leaders as prophets embodies this counter-cultural approach of morality and organizational transformation, and sought to influence others with his 'subversive' message of servant leading. Quay (1997: p. 84) rightfully notes, 'Greenleaf was more than a moralist, he was an evangelist. He preached to managers about how things might be in an utopian world, and how they might become servant-leaders in such a world'.

Greenleaf's concepts of servant leadership and the leader as both servant and prophet can best be described as a form of counter-spirituality that expresses itself in a dynamic system of social marginality. Greenleaf's servant-leader seeks to bridge the two opposing worlds of self-interested commerce and the altruistic philosophies of public service and social transformation. Greenleaf proposes that the servant-leader is a prophet that facilitates the formation of a new vision that unites and transforms (both individually and societally). These leaders bridge the world of commerce and community, and, by doing so, create new possibilities of widespread societal transformation that ushers in a new era of radical mutualism best expressed in service. Greenleaf's vision of the servant-leader as prophet is consistent with the prophetic and often subversive call in counter-spirituality that offers an alternative vision for individual and societal identity and organization. In a dynamic system of marginality (double-loyalty), Greenleaf imagines a new world where leaders are servants, and servants are prophets. Greenleaf's new world is marked by service, equality, unity and new possibilities of radical altruism. Greenleaf invites leaders to become nurturers of the spirit and prophets that will influence their times as a constructive force.

Max Weber's theory of religious leadership, and the concept of service and leadership in four religious traditions

It is surprising, with the relative increase in scholarly focus on the phenomena of leadership, to see how leadership scholars in modernity and post-modernity have largely ignored the topic of religious leadership (McClymond, 2001). There has been little advance in theoretical perspectives in the processes of religious leadership in the twentieth

century (Lindt, 1986) beyond the pioneering sociological studies of Weber (1968) and Wach (1944). But, the turn of the century and the accompanying turn to spirituality have produced a focused return to the scholarly study of religious leadership (Freedman and McClymond, 2001), and few comparative efforts to find common philosophical and ethical foundations for leadership within the tenets of world religions (McClymond, 2001; Kriger and Seng, 2005; Wallace, 2006). Weber's original description of religious leaders identified three distinct kinds of religious leaders: magicians, priests, and prophets. Magicians as religious leaders exert influence by 'virtue or personal gifts made manifest in miracles' (McClymond, 2001: p. 622), priestly leaders are described as 'functionaries of a regularly organized and permanent enterprise concerned with influencing the gods' (Weber, 1968: p. 28), and, finally, prophetic leaders seek to confront the status quo of cultural and religious traditions based on a renewed ethical call or personal mission (Weber, 1968: pp. 54–5). It is Weber's designation of the religious leader as prophet that resonates mostly deeply with Greenleaf's vision of leader as servant. Weber's description of the religious leader as prophet includes two sub-categories: the ethical prophet and the exemplary prophet. The servant-leader as prophet fits both categories. The servant-leader seeks to lead from an ethical foundation of altruistic love and seeks to cultivate the formation of servant leadership in the followers.

McClymond (2001), in seeking to extend and apply Weber's (1968) theory of religious leadership, proposed four themes that delineate and describe the leadership of religious founders of world religions as acts of: reaffirmation, radicalization, ritualization, and responsiveness. Religious leaders lead by reaffirming the central truths of existing traditions, they aim to radicalize these truths from within the community through a process of exemplary behaviour, they ritualize the truths into codes of laws and sacred rituals, and, finally, they open new ways for followers to respond to the original call to lead in systems of responsiveness. The following is a brief description of the existence of the comparative values of service as leadership in four religious traditions through the lens of Weber's descriptions of these leaders and prophets, and McClymond's four themes of religious leadership (discussed in chronological order with regard to the origins of the religious founders of each tradition): Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

Service and leadership in Judaism

Traditional Jewish approaches to leadership, deeply influenced by Judaism's own religious texts and traditions, have been marked by

systems of communal leadership that are concerned with the correct use of power and, thus, have 'sought to divide power, rather than allow it to coalesce in a single individual or group' (Lewis, 2007: p. 246). Moses, considered to be the quintessential Jewish leader (Bloom, 2002), is noted as a servant-leader with an 'unswerving commitment to empowering the leadership of others for the long-term good of the people' (Lewis, 2007: p. 250). The concept of service as leadership in Judaism is most clearly embodied by this Biblical, paradigmatic figure of Moses, who leads as a shepherd (Ehrlich, 2001) and prophet intent on liberating his followers from a life of slavery. It is this image of leader as shepherd that is arguably the most endearing image of servant leadership in the Hebrew Scriptures, and an image that will be utilized in the descriptions of the Divine as leader (Psalm 23) and the nature of the leadership of Judaism's most famous king, David (1 Kings 2).

The Biblical Moses is a leader marked by great humility (Numbers 12: 3) who reaffirmed the core truth of Judaism once lost; the 'understanding of a transcendent God that infuses the individual with a sense of overall meaning, integrity and wholeness' (Kriger and Seng, 2005: p. 790). The core message of oneness radicalized in spectacular accounts of experiences with the Divine as mentioned in the Torah is finally codified and ritualized by Moses in the *sh'mah* (Deuteronomy 6:4, NIV): '*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one*' – a core statement of belief that had to be recited twice each day and which formed the basis of religious pedagogy for generations to come. It is this original vision of the unity, oneness, wholeness of the Divine that served to facilitate the formation of a connected vision with others in the followers of Moses. The belief of connectedness was further ritualized in the use of the Semitic construct of covenant in the *Torah*. Pava (2003: p. 2), in describing the kind of 'covenantal leadership' seen in the figure of Moses and the *Torah*, proposes 'five paths' of leading that are infused with meaning and service:

- the path of humanity – leading in humane ways
- the path of no illusions – leading marked by the centrality of pragmatism
- the path of moral imagination – leading that focuses on human value
- the path of the role model – leading characterized by a radical mutuality between leader and follower
- the path of moral growth – leading that facilitates the moral formation of followers.

Pava's Jewish-inspired, 'covenantal leadership' connects in deep ways with the vision of Greenleaf of leader as servant. Moses, seen as the elect of God in the *Torah* (Numbers 11: 24–9), completes this tenure as leader with the insistence 'that no leader can create a cult of personality and hope to succeed in the long term' (Lewis, 2007: p. 250). Moses does not enter the Promised Land with his people; he proclaims that a new leader is needed (Numbers 27: 15–17) and fully embraces the leadership of one of his followers, Joshua (Numbers 27: 22–23). Through this action of responsiveness, Moses declares that the work of a leader is to serve by identifying and nurturing the next generation of leaders. The concept of service as leadership is primary in the images and metaphors of Judaism, and proclaimed and lived in its most exemplary prophet, Moses.

Service and leadership in Buddhism

One of the core truths of Buddhism is the concept that the personal self or 'I' is a false construct of delusional thinking and, ultimately, devoid of reality (Kriger and Seng, 2005). This foundational belief stands in stark contrast to the foundational tenets of self-actualization in Western psychology, on which most theories and principles of Western understanding of leadership have been built (Yukl, 2002). A Buddhist understanding of leadership, infused with the notion of selflessness, or 'no self' (*anatta*), promotes a view of interconnectedness with everyone and everything in the world that is characterized by the 'four immeasurable states of mind' (*Brahmaviharas*): love, compassion, joy and equanimity (Kriger and Seng, 2005: p. 785). The Buddha describes the characteristics of this kind of 'no self' leadership in the *Vimalarkiti Sutra*, in a striking description of a *bodhisattva* (an individual who chooses to forego final enlightenment out of compassion for others): 'During the short eons of the swords, they meditate on love, introducing to non-violence. In the middle of great battles, they remain impartial to both sides, for *bodhisattvas* of great strength. In order to help all living beings, they voluntarily descent into the hells (negative states) which are attached.' It is in this pursuit of 'no self' that Buddhist leadership, celebrating the principles of interconnectedness and interdependence (Quatro, 2004), seeks to serve all of mankind in mindful and alert states of leading that Buddhists refers to as 'right livelihood' (Bodhipaksa, 2001).

The Buddha as an awakened leader (Buddha is translated literally as the *Awakened One*), in his efforts to eliminate suffering (*dukkha*), reaffirmed the 'key cosmological conceptions of Hinduism' (McClymond, 2001: p. 628); in particular, the first three noble truths: that life means suffering, that the origin of suffering is attachment, and that the cessation of

suffering was attainable. Siddhartha Gautama would go on as the Buddha to add a fourth noble truth, expounded in an eightfold path that provided a practical guideline for followers to end suffering in their lives. The eightfold path – as a way to wisdom, mental development and ethical conduct – centres on eight areas of right living: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration (Cohen, 2001). The Buddha radicalized the key truths of Hinduism by proposing that devotees could progress to ultimate salvation (*moksha*) through a ‘single lifetime of disciplined effort’ (McClymond, 2001: p. 637). What is most radical about this idea is that this spiritual progress was made without the observance of caste systems or ritualized sacrifices, as within normative Hinduism. An interesting note on this radicalization was the willingness of the Buddha, as leader, to defer his entrance to nirvana in order to serve others by showing the way. This compassionate action of the Buddha is the nexus point between Buddhist approaches in leadership and Greenleaf’s servant leadership. Most of the ritualized aspects of Buddhism were probably developed long after the time of the Buddha, but the verbal recitation of the threefold refuge: ‘I take refuge in the Buddha, in the dharma (teaching), and the sangha (community)’, might very well have served as the ritualized result of the leadership of the Buddha (McClymond, 2001: p. 645). It is important to note that the recitation of the threefold refuge itself contains a kind of mnemonic map of right belief to ethical action, from teaching to community (Cohen, 2001). The Buddha’s choices, as servant-leader, though deferring his entry to nirvana, created an ethos in which his followers could not only follow the *dharma* (teachings), but also, under Buddha’s compassionate servant leadership, help others find the way. The Buddha as servant-leader fits the model of Weber’s (1968) exemplary prophet who shows the way to a more ethical domain of being and doing.

Service and leadership in Christianity

Recent scholarly models and descriptions of Christian leadership are characterized by descriptions of:

- mimetic imitation of the Divine (Ayers, 2006; Bekker, 2006)
- concern for correct use of power (Engstrom, 1976; Kretzschmar, 2002)
- follower-centred approaches (Clarke, 1998; Whittington *et al.*, 2005)
- an overt Christological focus (Clarke, 1992; Niewold, 2007).

Bekker and Winston (2009), in an attempt to define a ‘proto-theory’ of Christian leadership, turned to the ‘proto-text’ of the New Testament

(considered possibly to be the earliest text of Christianity), the Christ-hymn in the letter of Paul to the Christian communities in ancient Roman Philippi. Bekker and Winston's work proposed an early mimetic Christological model of Christian leadership in Roman Philippi by exploring the judicial, rhetorical structure, and the social function of the Philippians hymn (2: 5–11) as a *cursus pudorum* (course of ignominies), which stands in stark contrast to a *cursus honorum*, the formalized sequence of public offices in first-century Roman cities. The Philippians hymn challenged the notions and principles of the prevalent shame/honour social matrix of Roman societies by offering an alternative set of behaviours and values that stood in stark contrast to those of the dominant culture. The hymn made use of a *cursus pudorum* in which the voluntary abasement, service, humility, and obedience of Christ becomes an exemplum that offers a critique of the tyrannies of the timocratic leadership style of Roman Philippi and offers an alternative vision of service-oriented leadership rooted in radical humility and common mutuality.

Jesus of Nazareth, often described as the model servant-leader (Delbecq, 1999; Hutchison, 2009), described the nature of his leadership as one that came to reaffirm the basic tenets of ancient Judaism (Matthew 5: 17–19). He defined His leadership as one of service (Matthew 20: 28, NIV): 'the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'. Jesus radicalized this notion of leading as service with the ultimate act of self-sacrifice in what the Philippians hymn refers to as being 'obedient to death – even death on a cross' (2: 8, NIV). The ritualization of Jesus' radical message of service and self-sacrifice in leading takes the form of a ritualized dinner in which companions (literally, those who break bread together) re-enact the death of Jesus (1 Corinthians, 11). Not only does the Philippians hymn invite followers to imitate this example of extreme servant leadership; 'your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus' (2: 5, NIV), but the Gospels record that Jesus defined leadership for His followers in a system of responsiveness in terms of service: 'whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant' (Matthew 20: 26, NIV). The servant leadership of Jesus of Nazareth, culminating in his atoning and self-sacrificial death, has been the central focus for Christian scholars and practitioners in the ongoing quest to find an effective and moral model for leadership (Taylor, 2004).

Service and leadership in Islam

Islamic leadership, as exemplified by the prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors, is characterized by a sense of lived spirituality and

the avoidance of personal ambition (Kriger and Seng, 2005). According to Islamic tradition, the leadership of Muhammad is seen to belong to 'a long line of prophets familiar to Jews, Christians, and Muslims' (Campbell, 2008: p. 432). The leadership of Muhammad, as a prophet of Allah, is described in the Qur'an as being of a moral nature: 'and you stand an exalted standard of character' (68: 4). The moral base of Islamic leadership is rooted in the Qur'anic command to serve Allah: 'and We made them leaders guiding (men) by Our command and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served Us' (21: 73). When a leader serves Allah, service to followers becomes possible. According to Islamic tradition, Islamic leaders willing to serve Allah develop a moral character as they progress through four stages of spiritual development:

- faith in Allah (*iman*)
- the achievement of peace with Allah (*islam*)
- developing a sense of awe of Allah (*taqwa*)
- a love for Allah (*ihsan*).

The last stage, the love of Allah (*ihsan*), is what motivates leaders to lead in moral and ethical ways (Qur'an 19: 90). Service as leadership is central to early Islamic models of leadership (Kriger and Seng, 2005), and has been described as present in pre-Islamic approaches of leadership in Bedouin-Arab cultures (Sarayrah, 2004). Contemporary Islamic leadership scholars continue to build on these early foundations and philosophies of servant leadership in a quest to 'eradicate all problems in our social life' (Ather and Sobhani, 2007: p. 7).

Muhammad, as a religious founder, never proposed that he was establishing something new: in his mind he was reaffirming older truths and 'was simply restoring the religion of Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus' (Peterson, 2001: p. 677). Yet, Muhammad radicalized the message by recasting the Judeo-Christian accounts of the past to reflect the final mission of Allah in him as His prophet. For Muhammad, service to Allah was linked to fidelity to the message of His prophet; this fidelity would lead to service and leadership to others. Muhammad structured this message in 'rituals that he inherited and repristinated at the Ka'ba' (Peterson, 2001: p. 678) in Mecca, and made the ritual and place central to the religion of Islam. The centrality of both place (Mecca) and text (Qur'an) in Islam was Muhammad's enduring strategy to afford the followers of Allah access, through examples based in responsiveness, to the same spiritual forces that shaped him as a servant-leader.

The servant-leader as prophet

The concept of the leader as servant is clearly present in the religious philosophies and traditions of the four religious traditions discussed. But religious leaders do not always lead as servants. There are many ancient and contemporary examples of leaders in Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam that have led in destructive, self-serving, narcissistic and violent ways. Too often, the original visions of service as leadership in the philosophies of Moses, Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad have been set aside by those who aspire to use their positions of leadership to aspire to power, prestige and fame. Servant leadership has the capacity to remind the scores of believers in traditions of these four religions of the moral and transformative possibilities of leadership that is focused on the follower and which is measured in the positive change on their lives. In doing so, we, as leaders, might once remember the ancient wisdom that proclaims that '*omnia vincit amor* (love conquers all)' (Virgil, 70–19 BCE):

The Prophet ... is one who imagines what will later be proved.
(Robert K. Greenleaf, 1996c: p.14)

6

Servant Leadership and Love

Kathleen Patterson

Servant leadership is based on love, but some may ask what does this love look like, or even ask about the appropriateness of love in the organizational setting. This chapter explores the basis of servant leadership as love, defines servant leadership from a perspective of love, and defines love from a moral and virtuous perspective. Finally, the chapter describes how love works from the perspective of the leader, answering the questions of why one should lead with love and how to love the unlovable; from the perspective of the follower, addressing the questions of how love can transform the lives of followers; and, from the perspective of the organization, addressing the benefits to employees and organizational life and culture. The chapter concludes with a discussion of servant-leaders who lead with love, showing the concept in action.

The basis of love

Love is elusive in many ways, a mystery that is meant to be appreciated and yet never fully captured. To fully capture the concept would be almost to confine it, and to confine love would, in some ways, inhibit its powerful abilities. Greenleaf seemed to understand this. Known as the Father of Servant Leadership, he fully understood the connection between leaders and followers and this idea of love: he states, 'Love is an indefinable term, and its manifestations are both subtle and infinite. But it begins, I believe, with one absolute condition: unlimited liability! As soon as one's liability for another is qualified to any degree, love is diminished by that much. Institutions, as we know them, are designed to limit liability for those who serve through them' (Greenleaf, 2002: p. 52). There is no wonder that love is often considered one of the

most written about topics in all of literature (Altman, 2005), discussed perhaps more than any other concept (Batton, 1998), and considered as foundational to all generations and at all stages of life (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986), and yet, the concept in leadership is just beginning to surface as a necessity.

Love is a concept that is both of great interest and mystery, an almost mystical concept that continues to remain mysterious both to scholars and leaders (Daft, 2002; Myers and Shurts, 2002; Patterson, 2006). Love has been acknowledged with great importance by philosophers, theologians, and scholars (Myers and Shurts, 2002), and yet the varied interpretations and understating of the word love have been both perplexing (due to the concept of being 'in love') and complex, creating a constrained definition as well as an assortment of typologies. According to Aron and Westbay (1996) a classical definition of love does not exist and yet we all have a lifetime experience of knowing love, the search to understand love is an ongoing journey. Yeung (2005) explains it by stating, 'Although the notion of love is a key for relationship building, its meaning can vary widely across individuals and social settings'; in fact, Altman (2005) calls it a 'love feast'. And, while these variations do occur and many typologies do exist, within the leadership context the idea of *agápao* love seems to resonate.

Leadership and love

In the context of leadership, Winston (2002) seems to offer a most compelling insight into the nature of love within leadership. He encourages leaders to see followers as hired hearts instead of hired hands; this admonition is born out of *agápao* love. *Agápao* love is a moral love, meaning that the leader should do the right thing, at the right time and for the right reasons. Patterson (2003) calls this love the cornerstone of the servant-follower relationship, fostering a deep connection between leaders and followers, a connection that is not only deep but also strong.

Leading with fear and leading with love appear to be at opposite ends of a continuum (Patterson, 2006). According to Fine (1983), 'hostility leads to despair, fear and unhappiness; love, on the other hand, leads to hope, fearlessness, and relative happiness', Daft (2007) seems to concur with these ideas, as he discusses the idea of leading with love as opposed to leading with fear, declaring that the day for love in organizations has arrived, and that the days of leading with fear should be behind us. For leaders, fear is manifested as arrogance, selfishness, deception,

unfairness and disrespect, while love is manifested as the generation of dignity, respect and honour (Daft, 2002; Patterson, 2006).

Love, according to Daft (2002) is a potent form of leadership, a way of living, and has power. This power opens the door for improved performance, creates emotionally connected employees, enriches lives that are balanced, and allows for an environment that fosters the encouragement of organizational members to take risks, to learn, to grow, and to move to better ground (Patterson, 2006). Leadership motivated by fear will 'prevent people from doing their best, from taking risks, and from challenging and changing the status quo'; in addition, fear will inhibit organizational life, including how people feel about their 'work, themselves and their organization' (Daft, 2007). The tendency, or perhaps pitfall, that some leaders fall into is the confusion that leading with fear gets results; however, the results are short-lived and are only born of compliance and nothing more. As if this is not enough, Daft (2007) also iterates that the fear atmosphere zaps people's 'confidence, commitment, enthusiasm, imagination and motivation' – not the type of motivation that leaders can count on for any kind of sustainability with followers or in an organization.

In complete contrast to this fear-based leadership, the love in leadership is an atmosphere where respect, trust and dignity are fostered. Within this organizational environment, the doors are open for followers to thrive. Bakke (2005) seemingly advocates a love environment that is based on 'unselfish and benevolent concern' whereby we are free to give our power away, we treat others with respect and dignity, and we are inspired to serve and work with greater purpose. Daft (2005) iterates that the emotion that encourages followers to take risks, to learn and to grow comes directly from love. In addition, love creates emotional connections for followers. This connection, according to Daft, is about enabling people to feel 'alive, connected, and energized'.

Love and the case for virtue

To appreciate the concept of love and leadership fully, we must first understand the idea that love is a virtue. The very idea of virtues in leadership is beginning to blossom as leadership and organizational scandals around the world are receiving more attention and, thus, the call for leaders and organizations to remain ethical has occurred. One might ask why virtue in leadership matters: this question is best answered by Manz *et al.* (2008), with their admonition that the 'recognition of virtues, and the elements that promote virtuousness, represents

an indispensable part of any meaningful long-term ethical leadership process'. Interestingly, according to Patterson (2003) there has been a contemporary resurgence in the very idea of love as a necessity in leadership. This is echoed by the recognition by Manz *et al.* (2008) that the resurgence of virtues as research has shifted from an over-focused approach on people's shortcomings to a positive approach to studying leadership and organizational behaviour, with insight into how virtues (such as 'hope, resilience, optimism, and efficacy') show significant correlation to work performance and satisfaction. Baldoni (2005) considers the idea of having a virtuous cycle in creating a culture within an organization, a virtuous cycle wherein followers are the first priority.

The framework for the establishment of the creation of virtues is typically credited to Aristotle (Kennedy, 1995), coming from the Greek word '*arête*', meaning excellence. In fact, virtue theory is often considered the oldest tradition in Western philosophy, with origins in Greek civilization, most notably in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Arjoon, 2000). Virtues are the part of oneself that is qualitative, a characteristic that is internal and almost spiritual (Whetstone, 2002). Kreeft (1992) explains Aristotle's teaching: there are three reasons for seeking knowledge, these are truth, moral action, and power, though power is not for ill usage as this power is more about an ability to make things happen. This part of ourselves that is virtuous is the part that exemplifies human excellence, according to Yu (1998) and helps us address the idea of doing the right things and having focus on our moral character (Kennedy, 1995). Aristotle is noted as saying that excellence is a habit (Bakke, 2005); Bakke confirms this with his stance that we 'catch' character, virtues and values by our engagement in right behaviours.

This virtue, or human excellence, is based in Aristotle's three elements in virtues, which are good habits, the middle-ground between extremeness of too much and too little, and habits that are firm and settled that compel us to choose good. The virtuous life is a life of practise, and enhances the lives of others (DeGraaf *et al.*, 2004). Of interest, Greenleaf (2002) broached the subject of good many times: he advocates that the 'real enemy is fuzzy thinking on the part of good', and goes on to state that this induces lack of leading as servants and following servant-leaders.

This choice to seek good – or, as Greenleaf says, 'good society' – is not only propelled by virtue, but also compelled by it. Yukl (2002) explains that the servant-leader 'must stand for what is good and right'; he further goes on to state that this has to occur (the good) even when it is

not in the best financial interest to do so. The call for good seems to be a large, and yet necessary, call for leaders, specifically servant-leaders.

While virtue does not answer the specific questions of what is right or wrong (Patterson, 2003), it does guide one in seeking the right response. This is congruent with Winston's (2002) work in *agápao* love, which is moral love that compels the leader to seek to take the right action, at the right time, and for the right reasons. In addition to this congruency, virtue's place in leadership – specifically, love – is compelling due to the idea of focus: for servant-leaders, the focus is on followers. This symphonic relationship between servant-leaders and virtues springs from the idea that virtues seek common good rather than profit maximization (Arjoon, 2000; Patterson, 2003). This is congruent with Manz *et al.* (2008), who advocate that organizations should consider a virtuous perspective in their leadership equation, and that those who do not run the risk of having profit-based models that can miss the mark and find ethics issues and the promotion of unethical actions.

The congruence of servant leadership and virtue is inseparable, as servant-leaders lead with virtue (Patterson, 2003, Manz *et al.*, 2008). For servant-leaders, this charge to lead with virtues is about a call they feel to change things, to change the world. Perhaps Greenleaf (2002) explained it best when he stated, 'A central attitude for those who believe it their duty to remake the world and bring it more in accord with virtue and justice, with their own hearts is "This is the day"'. Greenleaf advocates a visionary outlook where leaders seek to know that each moment is an opportunity for eternity, meaning that each moment is to be lived with intensity: what better intensity could leaders embrace than to lead with virtues – most notably, love – wherein we find the deep connection between servant-leaders and love? Indeed, this deep connection is the starting place for servant leadership.

And yet, we are compelled to ask how we reach the point of leading from a virtuous perspective as servant-leaders. Of interest, Floyd (2007) posits that, if we fail to understand virtues and the acquisition of them, then we are prone to failure – specifically, organizational failure. He advocates a virtuous perspective based on three of St. Thomas of Aquinas's themes in his account of virtue; these are that: '(1) virtues make us morally good persons, (2) virtues are constitutive not only of a good character, but a good life; and (3) virtues are not naturally occurring properties'. Floyd explicitly states that virtuousness is comprised of a rich understating and pursuit of human goodness. This pursuit, in leadership, leads us to servanthood – specifically, servant

leadership, where leaders are prompted to lead and serve from the inner workings of love.

Servant leadership from a love perspective

Servant-leaders lead with love, are motivated by love, and serve their followers with love (Patterson, 2003). This love is a force, a force so intense that it changes lives – the lives of the followers, the life of the organization, and even the life of the leader. In fact, according to Gunn (2002), the force of love is so great that it can cause leaders to lead with understanding, gratitude, kindness, forgiveness and compassion. Greenleaf (2002) understood this essence of the human equation, and even adamantly stated that organizations are people. He asked, 'But how, one may ask, can one love this abstraction called the corporation? One doesn't! One loves only the people who are gathered to render the service for which the corporation is enfranchised. The people are the institution!' With Greenleaf's comments comes the very bold idea of two things; first, that an organization is really the summation of the people, and, second, that love is a major portion of servanthood.

Why does love work? Quite simply, love is enticing; it attracts the human spirit and speaks directly to followers. Followers respond to love, says Daft (2007), by answering the following unspoken needs: '(a) hear and understand me, (b) even if you disagree with me, please don't make me wrong, (c) acknowledge the greatness within me, (d) remember to look for my loving intentions, and (e) tell me the truth with compassion'. Daft directly states that, when leaders are in tune with these unstated emotional needs of their followers, an amazing thing happens – followers respond with love for their work, together with an emotional engagement and with enthusiasm. In short, love is a great motivator and, while both fear and love will get results, the end gain is much greater when the approach is one of love.

Winston (2002) seems to understand the connection between servant leadership and love in a way that is deeper than most. He advocates leaders asking themselves questions that go beyond the obvious to more substantive inquiries, such as 'Can a leader love his or her followers?' and 'What does it mean to love?' These probing questions will not have easy answers due to their outright complexity, and yet the leader who takes the initiative to ask might just find the answer in the very act of seeking. Winston advocates the Golden Rule in leadership, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you', but he also raises the stakes with the call to charge the Platinum Rule in leadership,

'Do unto others as they want you to do unto them'. This approach of moral love will have to involve the leader's full authentic self in order fully to recognize their followers as whole individuals, not merely hands to complete a task or service, but a person with heads, hands, and a heart. Fine (1983) seems to concur with the statement: 'It is widely recognized that there is a pressing need to improve the entire quality of life of the worker, not merely his productivity or performance on the job.' In order for leaders to love this whole person to the full, he or she must engage the follower completely – meaning physically, mentally and spiritually. This deeper connection with followers is based on the selfless aspect of the nature of the leader.

Engstrom (1976) seems to understand this selfless approach, as he compels us with his insights that leadership involves selflessness and that service is an example. He iterates that 'greatness is not found in rank or position, but in service', and that 'true leadership is grounded in love which must issue in service'. These comments are echoed by Turner's (2000) connection of servant leadership and love with the suggestion that the philosophy of servanthood is that the 'true leader builds everyone up except himself, and his goal is to grow less and less as others grow more and more'. Love for the servant-leader is the brave approach, it is easy to rule with power and authority, based on the position one holds. This is addressed by Nouwen (1989), who asks 'what makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love'. It is much easier to control people than to love people, and yet, for the servant-leader, this is not the recipe. The servant-leader is full of love for their followers, and this changes everything. You cannot love and hurt something at the same time: if you love someone, you will care for them and care deeply; your disposition will be the evidence. According to Strauch (2006), love in leadership does, indeed, have a certain disposition: this disposition is humble, patient, kind, tender, compassionate, slow to anger, and gracious.

One may ask about the cost to the servant-leader with the love-based approach. And this question is very real: love might cost the leader; it may cost a great deal, and yet the servant-leader will still choose to love, still choose to serve, and still choose to lead. Such was the case with William B. Turner's (2000) account of his grandfather. Turner recounts that, during the Great Depression – a time in the United States of great economic woe when people were out of work, out of money and even (for some) out of food – that his grandfather made the decision to keep the Eagle and Phoenix Mills running, even though during

this time most mills closed, leaving many employees out of work and their families suffering with joblessness and hunger. During this time of hardship, the mill was unable to sell its products and had mounting inventories; all the while, running out of money and issuing scripts to employees in order for them to buy groceries. After the depression was over, Turner's grandfather was able to sell the stockpile of goods. This shows the risk his grandfather took while motivated by a followers-first approach where love is part of the equation. It would have been easy to let employees go, save the mill and take an easy path; and yet, Turner's grandfather apparently seemed to be motivated by a deep connection with his followers that fostered an apparent choice (save the company or save the employees) that might have meant ultimate financial failure, rather than the survival of both a company and its many employees and their families.

The servant-leader is about bringing out the best in their followers (Winston, 2002), even when it is not easy; in reality, it is often the more difficult path for the leader to take based on the investment made. And yet, for servant-leaders this investment in others is well worth the efforts. Engstrom (1976) notes that 'true leadership is achieved in selfless service to others ... those who have exemplified this selfless service: Florence Nightingale, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Sadhu Sundar Singh, Watchman Nee, Martin Luther King, Ken Taylor'. This list is of the well-known and not so well-known – a frequent occurrence with servant-leaders, who are apt not to tout their own accomplishments but are, rather, humble in their approach. It should also be mentioned that this list is by no means exhaustive, as a thorough listing of servant-leaders would encompass multiple centuries. These leaders and many unsung heroes have given themselves with great fervour in love and service.

The idea of a leader giving of themselves in service is a noble idea echoed by Sipe and Frick (2009), with their admonition of putting people first. In order to do this, they say, leaders must display a servant's heart (never straying from love), be mentor-minded (having an attitude of love, love in action, the growth of a protégé), and show care and concern (which might be tough love, beyond niceties, expressed with action). These authors advocate servant leadership and love as a deep connection, showing that the love of the servant-leader is not emphasized in sentimentality but, rather, in intentional ways that support the 'health, wisdom, freedom and autonomy of persons': what power this is for followers, the opportunity to be healthy, wise, free, and autonomous. Perhaps we could all agree that Greenleaf would be proud, due to his belief that the successes of servant-leaders were based on these very

ideas (2002). And yet, Sipe and Frick (2009) say outright that the move beyond sentimentality will include being present for others, making decisions that put people first, holding yourself and others accountable, and delighting in the growth of others, even when it propels them beyond the path we may see for them. Turner (2000) seems to agree, showing that the philosophy of servant leadership is where the true leader builds everyone up except himself and is content to see others grow more as he grows less; this is, indeed, love in action.

We see such actions by servant-leaders motivated by love; actions such as not showing preference to individuals based on their positions, as well as actions that exhibit humility. Such is the case with Bakke (2005), who shares that, when he was young in leadership, he quickly learned that love was about spending time with followers: he had to be with them. He advocates being wary of those leaders that treat their subordinates differently from their superiors, for setting folk apart does not promote joy in organizations. Interestingly, he takes this further and states that leaders cannot serve followers without spending time with them. Servant-leaders spend time with their followers; they take an interest and are truly engaged in their lives. We also have to look at actions that exhibit humility, such as not keeping track of followers' wrongs. According to Swindol (1981), 'True love flowing from authentic servants does not keep a record of who did what, and it does not look to others for the credit. In other words, real servants stay conscious of the blindness pride can create.' 'It sounds lowly ... humiliating ... lacking in dignity.' Servant-leaders seem to have an uncanny ability to be so in love (moral love) with followers that they are able to look beyond the moment and, in so doing, have an intense, life-changing affect upon their followers: such passion is of great moment in bringing about great change.

And while this passion is intense, it is also necessary for an organization to have joy (Bakke, 2005), happiness (Batton, 1998), and fun (Baldoni, 2005). Batton encourages leaders to have love as their voltage – in other words, love is the fuel, and this love will create happy, fulfilled people. Interestingly, Baldoni (2005) references Herb Kelleher as crediting Colleen Barrett of Southwest Airlines for creating a culture where people feel cared for and wanted, and where they can feel individualistic without a need for masks – in other words, people can truly be themselves. The need for love is a human need: we all desire to be loved, accepted, appreciated and respected. Batton seems to understand that servant-leaders meet this need for followers, in that servant-leaders are, in essence, healers, unifiers, integrators, stimulators, renewers, resassurers and forces for good. He further advocates that leadership without

this love can be violent, destructive and confusing. Indeed, the heart of followers is almost seeking this love from their leaders; it is part of our humanity.

This human desire is not limited to a place and time, as it is a desire that is ever-present and ever-seeking. Servant-leaders seem to know this and, therefore, are the leaders to whom followers are drawn, for whom followers feel compelled to work, and to whom followers are loyal. This attraction that followers have is just as strong for the servant-leader, who is also compelled to have this love for others.

Before the reader begins to think that servant leadership and love is a mushy-gushy or a soft approach, I would urge that reader to think again. Love is the tough road for leaders. It is easy to tell others what to do and how to do it with little engagement from the leader or from the follower; and yet this is not servant leadership. For the servant-leader, the approach to love is a much more complex journey. In fact, this tough road of love is about a great deal of hard work. Baldoni (2005) shows that Barrett requires a high level of work from her followers, and that people are expected to work very hard as well as have a willingness to have their capabilities stretched. The servant-leader is tough, tough in love and tough in spirit, and willing to walk that extra mile, give of themselves, engage fully in the lives of the organization and the lives of their followers. This will sometimes mean having to face the idea of loving the unlovable, and yet, for the servant-leader, this concept is a misnomer, in that all people are worthy human beings, deserving of love and respect. This is much easier to say than to do, and yet the cup of the servant-leader is full – full enough to reach for all with this love. The servant-leader is willing to love, willing to show up with all of who they are, and willing to engage followers in all that they are: this is not easy. Servant leadership is for the brave!

Conclusion

In conclusion, a plausible hope for the future of humanity, and leadership, lies in the very idea of servant leadership, starting with the very mystery of love. And while love in leadership might remain mysterious, one cannot ignore the effects of this power. True leadership is based on love and, while love will probably remain elusive conceptually, the effects are infinite and enobling. Love – specifically, moral love – resonates not only with leaders, but also with followers, as it speaks directly to the very essence of who followers are. Leaders who find themselves walking the brave road of love will be the very leaders who change the world.

7

Consciousness, Forgiveness and Gratitude: The Interior of the Servant-Leader

Shann Ray Ferch

Greenleaf's concept of the servant-leader is garnering increasing attention in the leadership literature of the present day. With many of *Fortune* magazine's 'Best Companies to Work For' ascribing to servant leadership, organizations have experienced not only a sustaining excellence regarding the bottom line, but also the kind of communal resilience and commitment to humanity that accompanies people of foresight and confidence everywhere. But what are some of the most salient components of the servant-leader, and what is the interior nature of those who serve? Several chapters of this book go into components that may characterize servant leadership. Here, we specifically posit forgiveness and gratitude as hallmarks of those whose lives are committed to servant leadership.

The landscape of servant leadership on personal, organizational, and global levels is imbued both with the bright promise of human community and the concurrent gravity of human lack, loneliness, power imbalance, and relational embattlement. To acknowledge the elegant and often elusive presence of forgiveness and gratitude is also to recognize the need for forgiveness and gratitude as a healing presence with regard to the often all-encompassing grip that cynicism, scepticism, and entrenched modes of consciousness hold in the everyday life of people. Empirical research in forgiveness and gratitude (for reviews, see McCullough and Vanoyen Witvliet, 2002; Emmons and Shelton, 2002) has begun to form a bridge that is capable of transforming the bitter rigidity of the family, work, and global environment into the kind of liberty and responsibility attuned to the central essence of servant leadership – a leadership that evokes in others greater health, autonomy, freedom, and wisdom, as well as the deepened will to serve the most important needs of humanity. Within this chapter, forgiveness

and gratitude is based within a theoretical groundwork in human consciousness. The poetry of Mary Oliver, together with the leading work of Viktor Frankl and Vaclav Havel, provide sure footing to show how forgiveness and gratitude are an integral part of the psychological make-up of servant-leaders.

Choosing the right path in life

It starts with the question penned by Mary Oliver (2004):

Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

These words provide a good pathway towards servant leadership and the possibilities that exist in the space created by the paradox of justice and forgiveness. The tension of human conflict can be likened to a great bonfire whose light reaches the heavens through the perpetual gifts of human goodness ... but also, whose inner fire can be a reminder of the hell we so often create by our relentless capacity for evil. In receiving the gift of life, each person is confronted by forces undeniably nuanced, powerful, and unwieldy. If the nature of our daily encounter with existence could be captured in a question, it might be precisely the one Mary Oliver has given us: 'What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?'

The answer is of grave importance, especially for leaders.

Both the question and the answer are tied to gratitude. I recall walking as a boy with my father in the Beartooth Range along the eastern front of the Rockies in southern Montana, the fourth largest state in the USA, a vast wilderness bordering Canada. We wanted to hook the striking and rarely caught golden trout, a delicacy of high mountain lakes and streams. The only problem, as I saw it, was a five-mile climb, near straight up, along steep, rugged switchbacks, rocky and severe. I was twelve years old and, when my dad told me of the hike and how hard it would be, I wanted nothing to do with it ... too much work, too much pain, and, in the end, we might not even catch any fish. My thoughts were consumed with excuses, and even anger, at my father for suggesting we go for golden trout, rather than the rainbow trout that filled East Rosebud Lake (no hike at all) or Mystic Lake (a comparatively easy hike

over relatively flat terrain). But my father convinced me not only to go with him, but also to make the trip worthwhile, to enjoy the challenge together, receive the beauty of the Beartooths with awe and respect, and not give in to everything in me that wanted to complain or blame. His own spirit of delight pervaded the air ... he was in love with every aspect of encountering the mountains. He was present.

We began and he took me with him, keeping me in stride, waiting for me when we rested, helping me progress again. The hike was far and away the most difficult of the hundreds we took together, and many hours passed before we crossed a final up-slanted swath of mountain grasses, grabbing at the roots of windblown trees, scrambling slowly on all fours. At last the destination came into view and we pressed our hands into the earth, dug in our feet and went step by step until finally we crested the lip of a massive rock bowl and stood and looked down on Silven Lake ... a blue gem encased in the heart of the mountains, reflecting the heart of the sky.

The right journeys are worth all the toil.

Servant leadership is just such a journey – one that, at the outset, is strewn with daunting obstacles, steep swings of overdone ego or lack of self-confidence, and a stubbornly embedded sense of anger and blame for self or others. But when we approach the life of servant leadership with awe and willingness, a remarkable pathway opens itself before us.

By the time my father and I had crested the jagged lip of the mountain, my thoughts had changed. Even now, decades later, when I think of my father and of the mountains of Montana, it is with gratitude, affection, confidence, love. Servant leadership, when we surrender to the call humanity places on our lives, can lead us up through the difficult terrain of our own weaknesses, both individual and collective, and take us to places where we look – and find, again – the beauty of life: and not only the fulfilment of being well again, but also that of leading others into their own longed-for sense of hope and well-being. In the bold mountains of Montana, the sun is big and shines bright in a seemingly endless sky. Our thoughts, too, are expansive and imbued with a natural capacity for grandeur. When the life of the mind receives illumination, our thoughts lead to a sense of humility and the will to be present for the good of others.

Choosing our manner of thinking

Illumination has historically symbolized piercing vision, decisive knowledge, strong-minded discernment, or a better approach to circumstances formerly viewed as irresolvable. Illumination is a sure and

present light, the steady glow of a candle in darkness, the majesty of the sun at dawn. Our manner of thinking too, can be blessed by illumination and, in this context, our thinking is vital to how we choose what to do with this one wild and precious life. Natural logic says that the way we think is the type of thinking we are okay with, or willing to engage in ... otherwise we would change our thinking. It follows that the quality of our thinking is an important part of what defines us.

Certainly, thought is elusive and, before training our minds toward quality of thought, even the notion of developing, honing, or transforming our thoughts can seem slippery or beyond reach. However, a significant truth reveals itself if we follow the typical trajectory of our everyday thought life. If our thoughts are low-level, our mind tends toward an unconscious but sinister self-focus: unconscious because we have not called attention to the thoughts we think in order to change them; sinister because unexamined thought results in actions and impacts that can pervasively harm ourselves, others, and the world.

The life and work of holocaust survivor and thought-leader Viktor Frankl defines the wounded condition associated with being overly self-focused, and how the ascent into self-transcendence reveals what it means to live, to be alive:

Consider the eye. The eye, too, is self-transcendent in a way. The moment it perceives something of itself, its function – to perceive the surrounding world visually – has deteriorated. If it is afflicted with a cataract, it may ‘perceive’ its own cataract as a cloud; and if it is suffering from glaucoma, it might ‘see’ its own glaucoma as a rainbow halo around lights. Normally, however, the eye doesn’t see anything of itself.

To be human is to strive for something outside of oneself. I use the term ‘self-transcendence’ to describe this quality behind the will to meaning, the grasping for something or someone outside oneself. Like the eye, we are made to turn outward toward another human being to whom we can love and give ourselves.

Only in such a way do people demonstrate themselves to be truly human.

Only when in service of another does a person truly know his or her humanity.

Though Viktor Frankl wrote over thirty books, he was no ivory-towered scholar. He put his views of life into practice with thoroughness and integrity. Born in 1905 in Vienna to a Jewish family of civil

servants, he rose to become one of the leading neurologists in the country, serving as head neurologist in the *Selbstmörderpavillon* (suicide pavilion) of the General Hospital in Vienna. He treated over 30,000 women prone to suicide and, when the Nazis invaded Austria and he was relegated to practising medicine only with Jewish patients, he continued his neurology work, also working as a brain surgeon, and succeeding in giving medical opinions that saved many patients from being euthanized during the Nazi euthanasia programme, in which Nazis routinely found and killed people who were handicapped or who had mental conditions.

When the Nazi regime began to exert progressively more influence in Vienna, Viktor's parents arranged for him to attain exile in America. Viktor, however, was not sure he should go. If he went to America, his parents would surely face a very difficult and painful future, even as his own life would be saved. If he stayed in Austria, he felt he might be able to act as a buffer to serve and protect them. He agonized over the decision whether to stay or leave and, in the end, told himself he would listen for a Divine answer. At one point, only a few days remained before the window would close and he would be unable to leave the country. Viktor came home and his father was seated at the kitchen table with a piece of rubble in front of him. Viktor asked what had happened and his father told him the Nazis had destroyed the temple that day. From where Viktor stood, he saw a symbol engraved on the piece of broken rock, a mark his father had not yet noticed. Looking closely, Viktor made it out: the mark was a number from the Ten Commandments, the very number for the commandment 'Honour your father and mother'. Viktor found what he sought. He remained with his parents until he and they were taken from each other and shipped to separate concentration camps. In the concentration camps at Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and Türkheim, although mandated to labour detail, even after being separated from his parents and his wife, Viktor Frankl continued until the final moments of the Second World War to work to prevent suicide in his fellow prisoners and to help cure them of despondency, depression, and weariness of life. After the War, even after discovering the Nazis had killed his parents and his wife, Frankl continued as a profound healing presence for humanity until his death in 1997 at the age of 92.

If we engage thought that resonates with transcendent values such as truth, mercy, goodness, beauty, justice, and love, our way of life becomes self-transcendent and we are given the opportunity to truly know our own humanity. Frankl felt there were only two races of people: either moral or unprincipled – and he found these two across

all classes, ethnicities, and groups. He also found consciousness to be the factor that determines whether we are moral or whether we are unprincipled. Our way of thinking results in the actions we take in the world, and so who we are (in other words, our character) is directly tied to how we think. In light of this, good thinking becomes as valuable as good sight, and as indispensable as oxygen. In returning to Greenleaf's work in defining servant leadership, we can embrace the consciousness to which Frankl pointed and create meaningful and fulfilled lives. Author Stephen Covey said, 'The deepest part of human nature is that which urges people – each one of us – to rise above our present circumstances and to transcend our nature. If you can appeal to it, you tap into a whole new source of human motivation. Perhaps that is why I have found Robert Greenleaf's teaching on servant leadership can be so enormously inspiring, so uplifting, so ennobling.'

Even when faced with the most heinous forms of human evil, there is a noble answer in the human heart. Again, Frankl points the way:

After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those chambers upright, with the Lord's Prayer or the Shema Yisrael on his lips.

Choosing our character

The level or type of thought we entertain determines the level at which we ennoble ourselves and others. Consider the plight of Czechoslovakia during and after the Second World War. Crushed by Nazism then subsumed by the Communist machine, after decades of subservience to an overruling power that severely suppressed human rights, the country threw off its shackles and gave the world a new transcendent legacy. Vaclav Havel, the playwright and former prisoner, one of the first spokesmen for the revolutionary group Charter 77, and a leading figure in the Velvet Revolution, became president.

Havel gives credence to the importance of our thought life not just as people, but as leaders who play an important part in righting the wrongs of the world. Just as our thought life equates to our character, our character equates to the quality of our leadership. Havel's underground leadership of a nation bound by the negation and degradation of Communism eventually led to the pervasive non-violent awakening in Czech resolve that struck a chord in the collective soul of humanity, unseated a totalitarian regime, and gave the world a sense of hope hard-won, and freedom delivered by women and men of courage. Consider

Havel's focus on the crucial property of accountability with regard to ones' own thinking:

consciousness precedes being, and not the other way around, as the Marxists claim. For this reason, the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility. Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which this world is headed – be it ecological, social, demographic, or a general breakdown of civilization – will be unavoidable.

Hope is a state of mind, not of the world. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good.

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

Yet, the kind of thought Havel presented was long-awaited. Before the Velvet Revolution, before the onslaught of Western capitalism, before even the Prague Spring and the long burden of Communism, at the hand of Nazi Germany, Czechoslovakia experienced a cultural annihilation reflective of the vast atrocities of the present day: Darfur, Rwanda, Bosnia. I am reminded again of my grandparents on my mother's side and their marriage in New York City during the Second World War: my German grandfather, who died shortly after my wedding ... my Czechoslovakian grandmother – who we affectionately call 'The Great One'. I often wonder if every person's heritage is not one in which we must face the vast history of our own personal and cultural evil, and make a profound individual and collective reconciliation. I believe life asks us to free our children in a common effort to overcome darkness with the light of forgiveness, responsibility, and love. This resolve to overcome, and the ensuing sense of healing, brings gratitude.

The voice of history is a clarion call: we do violence to others; others do violence to us ... and the voice of transcendent or Divine love is an answer resplendent and worthy of the better angels of our nature: the true person overcomes violence with forgiveness, cynicism with gratitude, and hate with love.

Frankl and Havel remind us that leadership arises in times of crisis. Today, it often appears our lack of sensitivity to one another in family, at work, and in churches, mosques, and synagogues, and even between nations has reached paramount levels. Servant leadership calls out: Do you counter cynicism with gratitude? Do you ask forgiveness? Do you commit to the long good road of change and reconciliation? Do you forgive? Are you a healer?

If not, then perhaps you are not a servant-leader.

Choosing to become a servant-leader

Servant leadership echoes Havel's refreshing sense not only of hope, but also of the holy, the sacred with regard to consciousness and being. In so doing, servant leadership provides a thoughtful and active progression toward mature personhood. Havel's call is personal and global and, if it infuses the institutions – large and small – that constitute the daily work life of millions around the world, if it infuses both the individual and the collective, the result will influence significant trends of human interaction across all societal levels. Gratitude, forgiveness, and appropriate power accompany Havel's view of being and consciousness, a view of the life of the mind and spirit whose illumination is expressed in the body and breath, the elemental basis of what it means to be human. In this way, we become present to others in listening, and touch, and quietness, and song; present to our deepest and most physical expressions of peace, love, and affection, especially in the aftermath of horror, be it pain and degradation in the family, the negation of humanity often brought about by big business, or the grave harms we encounter today on a global scale.

At the other end of the scale, where love and connection have atrophied, people live bound by knots of ultra self-focused thought whose foundation is ego and fear, and whose corresponding actions are oppressive to self others, self- and other-annihilating, and empty of regard for human wellness. Consider the strands of consciousness, and the corresponding ways the leader motivates when he or she is bound by such consciousness (Table 7.1).

Below-the-line thinking

In *The Mindful Corporation* (2000), Paul Nakai presents a view of consciousness blessed with transparency. People of immature or undeveloped consciousness make poor leaders. Such a view, simple on the surface, forms a veil beyond which lies a complex nexus of personal responsibility, mature living, and self-transcendence. Consciousness

Table 7.1 Thinking above and below the line

Levels of understanding	How the leader motivates
Love, wisdom, inspiration	Love, discernment, compelling life
Gratitude, humour	Encouragement, service to others
Grace, ease	Peace, common sense
Contentment, humility	Self-responsibility
<hr/>	
Stress and effort	Pressure, rewards, punishments
Chaos or crisis	Retribution, control, dominance
Unhappy, insecure, complaining	Guilt or obligation
Troubled, highly fearful, and angry	Fear and threats

can be envisioned as a fluid continuum in which the person or the collective experiences a steady advance towards increased thoughtfulness, and greater maturity. The lower levels of thought, however, are immensely fortified and, in certain cases, perhaps intractable.

Nakai speaks of the totality of thought, and of how our grasp of our own thought, and our responsibility for our own thought, determines the light or shadow we cast in the world. At the lowest level, our thinking is troubled and we find ourselves incapacitated, highly fearful, or tremendously angry. At this level, we find relational functioning, work, and life itself extremely difficult. Our experience is often plagued by insurmountable failure or pervasive harm. Not everyone experiences this level but most of us, at one time or another, have either lived in it briefly or encountered a system bound by troubled thought. For some, the troubled thought life is so pervasive they never escape it. At the troubled level, anxiety or anger accompany us like unwanted. Major depression – or its counter, fully expressed rage – consumes us. Our thoughts torque inward in an ever deepening spiral; we face suicide. Our thoughts bend outward in uncontrolled explosiveness; we perpetrate homicide. Our self-focus is tirelessly inward or viciously outward: in undiluted narcissism, mentally and physically, we kill ourselves or kill others. We make very poor leaders and, in fact, as people we are very hard to be around. We get our way by threatening others. Life at its most excruciating is caught in this web of thought, and degraded action and impact follow. Our lifestyle is entrenched in, and bound by, pain.

One level up from the troubled impulse is simple unhappiness. Unhappiness characterizes the thought life of those who tend to complain, rarely admit their own faults, and often point out the faults of others. Defensiveness also resides at this level and, in turn, insecurity. In other words, such thinking is often still laced by fear and anger, and

remains pervasively-oriented toward externalization of responsibility for one's own choices, actions, and encounters with others. The unhappy person is unhappy, even when life is good. At this level, we may use our words to heap guilt on others, reminding them, manipulatively, of what we think they owe us. We make others feel obligated.

Above unhappiness is chaos. In chaos, our thoughts centre on the disruption and intensity of life and, even if a time of rest comes to us, we feel uncomfortable and quickly orient our lives back to chaos. We tend to feel disordered and out of control; we live from chaos to chaos without a true sense of direction or consistency. In chaos, we are definitely better than the levels below chaos, but our thought life remains tenuous because a given amount of chaos can tip the scales and send us plummeting back to unhappiness, fear or anger.

Above chaos is stress and effort. At the level of thought in which we tell ourselves we are okay with stress and effort, our consciousness is oriented toward a hard work ethic and the compulsive push to press on, achieve, and never give up. A refreshing sense of accomplishment can accompany this level of thought, but our lives are also undeniably plagued by the haunting shadows of stress. Such shadows exhibit themselves through mental, physical, and relational breakdown. We tend to overdo it. We are rigid and defined more by efficiency and results than creativity and exponential potential. Our attempts to motivate others are infused with control and dominance. We have a consistently high need for retribution.

Fear and anger, unhappiness, chaos, stress and effort define the lower levels of consciousness. If there is a line between immature and mature thought, between intellectual unconsciousness and the thoughtful life, between unthinking reaction and conscious purposeful action, then fear, anger, chaos, stress, and effort are below this line.

Above-the-line thinking

Above the line, we find the fulfilment of the mind designed for beauty and selflessness. We are attended by elegant and decisive ways of thinking and living: contentment, grace and ease, gratitude, humour, love, wisdom, forgiveness, and power. Above-the-line thinking involves an immediate turn towards self-transcendence.

Contentment is the first level of thinking above the line. The contented person is not plagued by cynicism, blame, complaint, or nihilism. She or he is wonderful to be with. In this person's presence, we experience their contentment and it leads us to embrace our own self-responsibility for life and choices and, in doing so, we become

more humble and more content. Their contentment is not dependent on external circumstances, justice, physical health, or the avoidance of suffering. Contentment defines the life of a person who has come to terms with self, others, God, and world.

As we continue into more selfless ways of thinking, our thoughts become infused with grace and ease. We view others with grace, and we approach the complexity and uncontrolled aspects of life with openness and appreciation. Even during very difficult circumstances, we live in peace. We bring peace with us in daily life and, when external pressures intensify, we embrace the ambiguity and provide a calming and salient influence. Even during oppression, injury, or unavoidable suffering, we lead others into a greater sense of peace. Relationships and common sense, not external circumstances, define our way of life.

Above grace and ease, we find gratitude and humour. People who live with gratitude bring a larger sense of life to bear. They are refreshing and undaunted. Viktor Frankl lived with tremendous audacity, and an immensely graceful sense of personal gratitude for life even while facing the total depravity of the Nazi regime. Frankl spoke of the healing powers of both gratitude and humour when confronted by humiliation and imminent threat to personal and collective life. In conditions of disease and death, Frankl drew himself and others to a place of unshakable relationship and true respect through deep life affirmation and unrelenting gratitude. Frankl's description of the eye is haunting in its metaphorical power, defining our purpose to focus on others, not on ourselves. In service to others, we live clearly. In service to self, our life is plagued by relational blindness, lack of foresight, and self-defeat.

At the upper end of the continuum of consciousness, we find people who compel us to expressions of vitality and renewal that are luminous and, in a sense, eternal. Such people represent the Mystery – the Divine or formless elements of our collective humanity – what mystic Christianity and branches of Hinduism and Buddhism define as the life-force or life-energy. The formless is that part of us we cannot hold down or easily control, it is wild and worthy; in its presence, we are drawn to a greater sense of ourselves. Love is the essence of the formless. Here, wisdom, inspiration, gratitude and forgiveness are love's attendants. The forms we take to express the formless are myriad – simple, complex, creative, direct – and we know them when we experience them. True power, then, resides in the ability to live in a humble sense of our own weaknesses and shun dominance, coercion, and control. In the real sense of human dignity then, love is power. Table 7.1 represents the continuum of our potential for greater and more other-focused consciousness.

The continuum, at its upper levels, reflects the mind and action of the mature leader.

The nucleus of servant leadership

Truth is not a stepwise progression, but a spiral dynamic, both linear and circular. Contentment, grace and ease, gratitude and humour, love, wisdom, inspiration, forgiveness, appropriate power ... these are the hallmarks of true personhood, true consciousness, and true leadership. In a spiral dynamic, we may find ourselves in one moment afraid or angry, and in another full of grace. Reaching more mature levels of thought and action requires willing submission, surrender, devotion to the quality of being true. In this sense, to be willing ... to listen and obey... to submit... is not a burden but a heartfelt response to love. Unsurprisingly, the word 'truth' comes from the root word 'troth' (or betrothal) – to be faithful, devoted, loyal, to love another in the depths of their being. True leadership is love. People at mature levels of consciousness love deeply, and are deeply loved. They are not easily hurt. They have legitimate power, and they help others engage legitimate power.

From this place we return to Mary Oliver's initial question:

What do you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver's own answer is resonant with Havel's conception of the consciousness that precedes being, with the internal tenacity of Frankl, and with Greenleaf's great call to listen well and serve the heart of all. In her poem 'When Death Comes', Oliver gives a radiant answer to her own question:

When it's over, I want to say all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

In Mary Oliver's poetry, we find the bright nucleus of servant leadership – to love the world, to love others more than our own lives – and, from this, emerges the consciousness that precedes being and the joy that accompanies willing devotion to what is good and what is true. In this life, we can enter together the crucible of human existence, with its ever-present capacity for good and evil, and emerge with a sense of refinement, wholeness, and holiness.

An important part of the crucible of human existence is our quest to understand both the complexity and simple beauty of forgiveness and gratitude. It is my hope that this chapter provides inspiration for developmental pathways of the servant-leader devoted to a mature sense of human consciousness, forgiveness and gratitude. May forgiveness and gratitude and their connection to servant leadership help us engage the world as leaders, and emerge from this creative engagement more whole and better able to serve others.

8

Motivation to Serve: Understanding the Heart of the Servant-Leader and Servant Leadership Behaviours

Kok-Yee Ng and Christine S.-K. Koh

It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first ...The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served.

(Robert Greenleaf, 1970, p. 4)

The motivation to serve others is deeply embedded in the philosophy of servant leadership. As seen from the quote above, Robert Greenleaf articulated the core essence of a servant-leader as having the desire to serve others. It is this desire that precipitates actions taken by the servant-leader to ensure that others' critical needs are met (Greenleaf, 1970). In a time where abuse of power and unethical leadership practices are increasingly common, it is not surprising that servant leadership, which emphasizes the leader's genuine desire and moral responsibility to meet the needs of the subordinates, is gaining more appeal with organizations.

Despite the centrality of the leader's 'motivation to serve' in Greenleaf's (1970) conceptualization, there is surprisingly no research that seeks to examine servant leadership from a motivational perspective. Although research on servant leadership has grown significantly in the last few years, the predominant focus has been on identifying behavioural characteristics of servant leadership. For instance, Ehrhart (2004) developed a general measure of servant leadership comprising prioritization of subordinates' concerns and ethical behaviours. Others have developed multidimensional measures that assess specific aspects of servant leadership, including altruistic calling, emotional healing, organizational stewardship, and creating value for the community

(Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006; Liden *et al.*, 2008). While these studies have undoubtedly made important contributions, they shed little light on the motivational aspect of servant leadership.

By a motivational perspective of servant leadership, we ask the question: Why are some individuals more likely to emerge as servant leaders than others? To address this question, we expound on the novel individual difference construct of 'motivation-to-serve' (MTS) (Ng *et al.*, 2008). We believe that motivation-to-serve addresses three major gaps in the existing literature. First, motivation-to-serve directly targets the core of the servant leadership philosophy, which, although articulated by Greenleaf (1970) more than three decades ago, has not received serious attention.

Second, given the preponderance of the behavioural approach in existing literature, our emphasis on the motivational aspect through motivation-to-serve could enrich and provide new insights to the servant leadership phenomenon. Moreover, focusing on motivation-to-serve circumvents the need to identify specific servant leadership behaviours or frameworks, which are often criticized for lacking completeness or theoretical soundness (Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002).

Third, while several studies have demonstrated important consequences of servant leadership – such as organizational citizenship behaviours and in-role performance (Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006; Ehrhart, 2004; Liden *et al.*, 2008; Neubert *et al.*, 2008; Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008) – relatively less attention is paid to antecedents of servant leadership. Since motivation is a primary driver of behaviours (McClelland, 1987), motivation-to-serve presents a conceptually valid and important predictor of servant leadership behaviours that merits attention.

In the rest of this chapter, we offer a brief review of the leadership literature on individual differences to provide the conceptual basis for motivation-to-serve, and elaborate on its antecedents and consequences. Specifically, we propose that leaders' motivation-to-serve is influenced by their personality, value orientations, and past experience with servant-leaders. Leaders' motivation-to-serve, in turn, influences the display of servant leadership behaviours. Trait activation theory (Tett and Burnett, 2003), however, suggests that this relationship is moderated by situations that either activate or constrain the cues for leaders with a high motivation to serve to demonstrate their servant leadership. We illustrate this 'person-in-situation' perspective (van Knippenberg, *in press*) with the empowerment climate of an organization, to highlight the important role of situations. Our final set of propositions integrates piecemeal relationships, to advance a moderated mediation model. Figure 8.1 presents our theoretical model.

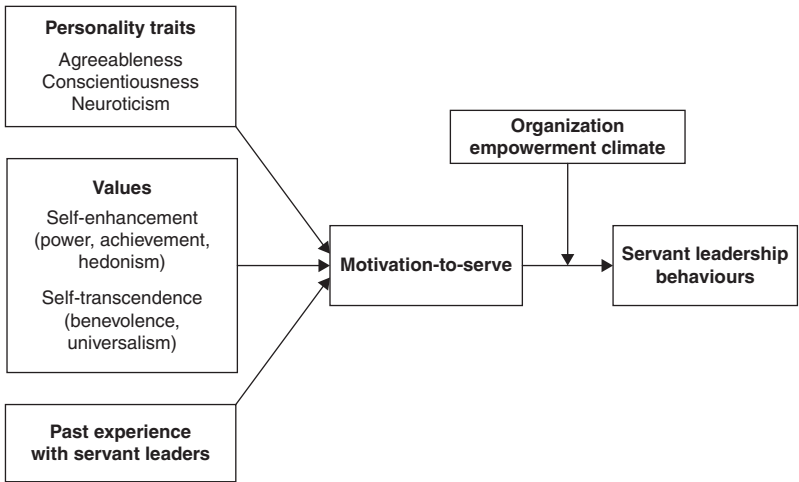


Figure 8.1 A conceptual model of motivation-to-serve

Individual differences in leadership research

The study of leaders' individual differences has a long tradition in leadership research. This stream of research has its roots in the trait perspective of leadership, which argues that leaders' personal qualities play an important role in determining leadership emergence and effectiveness (Judge *et al.*, 2002). Although leadership scholars were initially sceptical of the trait perspective due to weak and inconsistent findings across studies (for example, Stogdill, 1948), recent meta-analyses have demonstrated that leaders' intelligence (Judge *et al.*, 2004) and personality (Judge *et al.*, 2002) account for significant variance in leadership outcomes. These findings, based on a comprehensive review of existing studies, reinvigorate interest in the trait perspective of leadership.

From a motivational perspective, non-cognitive individual differences such as leaders' personality and motivational traits play an important role in explaining why some individuals are more likely to emerge as leaders than others. This is because different leaders, given their values and dispositional tendencies, are likely to seek and approach leadership activities and roles differently, which, in turn, will affect their leadership performance (Chan and Drasgow, 2001; Judge *et al.*, 2002). Judge *et al.*'s (2002) meta-analysis, organized around the popular Five Factor Model of personality, found that personality traits had a multiple correlation

of 0.48 with leadership, thus providing strong support for the validity of personality traits in leadership research.

Another relevant stream of non-cognitive ability individual difference research in the leadership literature examines individuals' motive dispositions in their need for power, affiliation, and achievement (McClelland, 1975, 1985). McClelland (1985) defined a motive disposition as a recurrent concern about a goal state that drives, orients, and selects behaviours, and argues that it can be learned. McClelland's theory has been applied quite extensively in order to understand how leaders and non-leaders differ in their motive dispositions. In essence, this research argues that effective leaders are more likely to possess a moderate-to-high need for power because of their interest in influencing others, a basic requirement of leadership; as well as a low need for affiliation, because concern for having good relationships with others may constrain the leader in making difficult decisions (McClelland, 1975, 1985).

A third relevant individual difference for leadership is Chan and Drasgow's (2001) 'motivation-to-lead' construct, which captures leaders' propensity to undertake leadership training, roles and responsibilities. Chan and Drasgow (2001) positioned motivation-to-lead as a more proximal construct that mediates the distal influence of stable personality traits on leadership roles and activities, which, in turn should affect leadership performance. For instance, extraverted individuals may be more likely to emerge as leaders because of greater motivation-to-lead. Chan and Drasgow (2001) further argued that motivation-to-lead is multidimensional in nature – individuals may be motivated to lead because of an inherent liking to lead (affective motivation-to-lead); a sense of duty to lead (social-normative motivation-to-lead); and/or calculated beliefs about the outcomes associated with leading (non-calculative motivation-to-lead).

Motivation-to-serve: a new individual difference construct

Recently, Ng *et al.* (2008) proposed the construct of 'motivation-to-serve' to better understand the servant leadership phenomenon. Motivation-to-serve refers to a leader's inclination or willingness to promote the interests of his or her subordinates and, hence, should influence decisions made and the amount of resources dedicated to developing and growing subordinates. Ng *et al.* (2008) conceptualized motivation-to-serve as a motivational state that is more proximal to behaviours and amenable

for development, as opposed to distal and stable traits such as personality and values (for example, Chen *et al.*, 2000; Kanfer, 1990). This conceptualization draws from findings that transformative life experiences contributed to the development of servant leadership (Boyer, 1999), suggesting that an individual's motivation-to-serve could be developed through leadership experiences. Nonetheless, Ng *et al.* (2008) argued for a certain degree of stable inter-individual differences in motivation-to-serve due to personality and value differences, on which we will elaborate later in our model.

Motivation-to-serve can be distinguished from McClelland's (1985) learned needs by its domain-specificity. Unlike McClelland's (1985) need for achievement, power, and affiliation which describe the general motivation to act, motivation-to-serve specifically targets an individual's desire and drive to meet the needs of subordinates. Hence, as with personality traits, we expect motive dispositions to serve as more basic motivational mechanisms that will influence the domain-specific construct of motivation-to-serve.

Motivation-to-serve can also be distinguished from motivation-to-lead (Chan and Drasgow, 2001). Both are specific forms of individual difference constructs targeted at leadership, and are distinguished from more general individual differences such as personality and motive dispositions. However, motivation-to-lead focuses on a leader's inclination to take charge, as opposed to motivation-to-serve's focus on developing subordinates. In a study involving organizational leaders, Ng *et al.* (2008) demonstrated that motivation-to-serve is empirically distinct from motivation-to-lead. Interestingly, results showed that motivation-to-serve is negatively related to affective motivation-to-lead, which suggests that individuals who like to serve are less likely to want to take charge. This reflects a fundamental difference between servant leadership and other conventional theories: conventional theories suggest that effective leaders are characterized by their power motivation (for example, House, 1977; McClelland and Boyatzis, 1982), the servant leadership philosophy places others' interest first. Unsurprisingly, motivation-to-serve is positively correlated with the other two motivation-to-lead dimensions: social-normative motivation-to-lead, which is based on the values of duty and a sense of responsibility; and non-calculative motivation-to-lead, which is based on altruism. Taken together, these relationships provide evidence for the divergent and convergent validity of motivation-to-serve in relation to motivation-to-lead.

Antecedents of motivation-to-serve

Personality

We adopt the popular Five Factor Model (Digman, 1990) to consider possible relationships between stable personality traits and motivation-to-serve. The five factors are: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Costa and McCrae, 1992). In developing our propositions, we draw on existing research that has examined personality in relation to organizational citizenship behaviours. This is because, similar to organizational citizenship behaviours, servant leadership behaviours can be largely viewed, at least in most organizations, as discretionary acts by the leader to enhance followers' outcomes which are not formally prescribed and explicitly enforced. Thus, the personality antecedents motivating the display of organizational citizenship behaviours are also likely to affect leaders' motivation to serve their subordinates.

Of these five personality traits, agreeableness and conscientiousness have been most commonly linked to organizational citizenship behaviours (Ilies *et al.*, 2009). Agreeable individuals tend to be altruistic, sympathetic, eager to help others, and usually strive for cooperation rather than competition (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Barrick *et al.* (2002) found that agreeable individuals are more likely to be motivated by the goal of getting along with others and obtaining acceptance in their personal relationships. We propose that agreeable individuals are more likely to be motivated to serve their subordinates because of their focus on the welfare of the other party, and their emphasis on developing supportive relationships.

Conscientiousness comprises two distinctive aspects: responsibility and dependability, and striving for achievement (Mount and Barrick, 1995). Moon (2001) further distinguished these two components as being other-oriented as opposed to self-oriented, and demonstrated that they exert different impacts on one's escalation of commitment in a decision-making task. Given that servant leadership is an other-oriented behaviour, we argue that one's motivation-to-serve is driven primarily by the duty component of conscientiousness. Consistent with Costa and McCrae's (1992) definition of duty as behaviour governed by conscience, we expect individuals high in this facet of conscientiousness will possess greater motivation-to-serve because they are more aware of their moral obligations towards helping and developing their subordinates.

Individuals high in neuroticism tend to be anxious, depressed, emotional, worried and insecure (Barrick and Mount, 1991). Neurotic

individuals are less likely to develop cooperative relationships because they tend to be more stressed and more likely to express negative attitudes towards others (LePine and Van Dyne, 2001). We argue that these individuals' sense of insecurity and anxiety predispose them to focus on self-protection, rather than looking out for the needs of others.

Extraversion and openness to experience have less obvious relationships with motivation-to-serve. Extraverts are often described as assertive, energetic, sociable and adventurous (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Although the energy and sociability of extraverts may suggest that they are more likely to be motivated to develop cooperative relationships with others (LePine and Van Dyne, 2001), research has also demonstrated that extraverts tend to have a self-centred desire to excel and get ahead of others (Barrick *et al.*, 2002; Stewart, 1996). As such, we do not posit a relationship between extraversion and motivation-to-serve.

Individuals that are highly open to experience are perceptive, imaginative, curious, and broad-minded (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Research has shown that openness is most relevant to contexts involving creativity and change (for example, George and Zhou, 2001), and less so with interpersonal or prosocial contexts (Ilies *et al.*, 2009; LePine and Van Dyne, 2001). Hence, we do not posit a relationship between openness to experience and motivation-to-serve.

Values

Values refer to an individual's beliefs about desirable end states that guide selection or evaluation of behaviours and events (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987). By specifying what is right and wrong, values guide and influence leaders' motivational, affective, and cognitive processes (Lord and Brown, 2001) and, hence, are important antecedents of motivation-to-serve. Schwartz's theory of basic human values (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987) advances ten major values that are recognized within and across cultures. These values are organized in a circumplex based on two sets of opposing higher-order values: change versus conservation, and self-enhancement versus self-transcendence. In particular, self-enhancement and self-transcendence are theoretically relevant to motivation-to-serve.

Self-enhancement values comprise power, achievement and hedonism. Power describes the emphasis placed on social status, prestige and dominance over people and resources; achievement focuses on success through demonstrating competence according to social standards; and hedonism refers to the seeking of pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself (Schwartz, 1992). These values, which essentially focus on

dominance over others, task accomplishment, and self-indulgent pleasures, are antithetical to the premise of servant leadership, which strives to put others before self. Hence, we argue that individuals high in self-enhancement values are less motivated to serve their subordinates because of their self-orientation.

Self-transcendent values comprise benevolence and universalism. Benevolence emphasizes the preservation and enhancement of the welfare of others with whom one frequently interacts; and universalism involves an understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection of the welfare of all people and nature (Schwartz, 1992). Rooted in the altruistic motive (Kanungo and Mendonca, 1996), the emphasis of self-transcendent values on the acceptance of others as equals, and concern for others' welfare is aligned with the value of empathy frequently associated with servant-leaders (Spears, 1998; Washington *et al.*, 2006). Thus, we argue that individuals who possess self-transcendent values are more likely to be motivated to serve their subordinates.

Experience with servant-leader role models

Greenleaf (1970) advanced that the litmus test for servant leadership is to ask whether subordinates 'while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants?' (p. 7). This suggests that individuals' development of motivation-to-serve is shaped by their experience with leaders who are role models of servant leadership.

Consistent with Greenleaf's (1970) proposition, we argue that servant-leaders will help promote motivation-to-serve in their subordinates. This spill-over effect of motivation-to-serve onto subordinates could be explained by social contagion theory, which describes the process in which a 'recipient' changes to become more like the 'initiator' through social interactions (Grosser *et al.*, 1951). Several studies have applied social contagion theory to explain the influence of leaders on subordinates. For instance, George (George, 1990; George and Brief, 1992) demonstrated that leaders who feel excited, enthusiastic, and energetic are more likely to energize their followers. Erez *et al.* (2008) found that followers under charismatic leaders possess more positive affect and less negative affect because charismatic leaders are more likely to display positive affect and expression. In a study of 93 leader-subordinate pairs, Cheng *et al.* (2008) found a moderately strong positive relationship between leaders' and subordinates' servant leadership behaviours (Cheng *et al.*, 2008), thus providing direct support for the social contagion effect of servant leadership.

Motivation-to-serve: a proximal antecedent of servant leadership

Consistent with Kanfer's (1990) definition of motivation as comprising elements of direction, intensity and persistence of behaviours, we argue that leaders' motivation-to-serve will affect their decisions and the amount of resources they dedicate to developing and growing their subordinates. This implies that leaders with high motivation-to-serve are more likely to demonstrate supportive and developmental behaviours aimed at addressing the needs of their subordinates. In a study of 96 matched leader-subordinate pairs, Koh and Ng (2009) demonstrated that leaders' self-report of their motivation-to-serve is positively related to the subordinates' ratings of their servant leadership behaviours, thus providing construct validity evidence for motivation-to-serve.

The empowering climate as a situational moderator

The 'person-in-situation' perspective in leadership research recognizes that leaders do not always act according to their dispositions or motivations (van Knippenberg, *in press*). Rather, situational factors play an important role in predicting and understanding under what conditions leaders' dispositions and motivations are expressed in their behaviours. Specifically, trait activation theory asserts that personality traits require trait-relevant situations for their expressions (Tett and Burnett, 2003). From this perspective, personality traits are viewed as latent potentials residing in a person that can be triggered into action by situational cues that are relevant to characteristics of the traits.

We propose that the empowerment climate of an organization is one important situational factor that will affect the effect of motivation-to-serve on servant leadership behaviours. An empowering climate is defined as a 'shared perception regarding the extent to which an organization makes use of structures, policies, and practices supporting employee empowerment' (Seibert *et al.*, 2004). Based on earlier work by Blanchard and colleagues (Blanchard *et al.*, 1999), Seibert *et al.* (2004) conceptualized team empowerment to involve information sharing, autonomy through boundaries, and team accountability. Information sharing involves providing potentially sensitive information to employees. Autonomy through boundaries involves organizational structures and practices that promote independent actions, including developing vision and clarifying goals, work procedures and areas of responsibility. Team accountability refers to teams as the

locus of decision-making authority and performance accountability in organizations.

We propose that a climate of empowerment strengthens the relationship between motivation-to-serve and servant leadership. Using trait activation theory, we argue that perceptions of an empowered work environment provides cues to leaders that they have the autonomy and latitude to demonstrate behaviours that they believe are important to their subordinates and to achieving the unit's goals. This will prompt leaders with high motivation-to-serve to display behaviours consistent with their concern and motivation to serve their subordinates, such as showing concern toward subordinates, empowering them, providing career advice and resources, and creating a sense of community (Ehrhart, 2004). The relatively easy access to organizational information also enables leaders with high motivation-to-serve to provide important and timely work or career advice to their subordinates.

On the other hand, when the work environment is commonly perceived by employees as rigid and devoid of autonomy for action, and where information and decision rights are centralized in the organization, individuals perceive that they have relatively little latitude to demonstrate behaviours that are consistent with their motivational bases. In this case, individuals with high motivation-to-serve will have fewer opportunities to demonstrate servant leadership behaviours because of a lower level of control over how decisions are made and access to organizational information.

Integrative propositions

Based on our earlier propositions, we offer two integrative propositions. First, we have suggested that motivation-to-serve is a more proximal individual difference construct that mediates the effects of personality, values, and experience with servant-leaders on display of servant leadership behaviours. Positioning motivation-to-serve as a more proximal antecedent to servant leadership behaviours than personality, values and experience is consistent with Kanfer's (1990) distal-proximal framework of motivation, which asserts that broad and distal individual differences exert indirect effects on performance through more specific and proximal individual differences. It is also aligned with Barrick and Mount's (2005) assertion that motivation is a primary means through which stable traits such as personality affect behaviours. We propose that individuals' motivation-to-serve will mediate the effects of: agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, self-enhancement values,

self-transcendent values, and experience with servant-leaders on their servant leadership behaviours.

However, the role of motivation-to-serve as a proximal mediator is contingent on an empowering climate, such that motivation-to-serve is more likely to be activated to mediate the distal individual difference effects on servant leadership when organizations possess an empowering climate. This proposition is consistent with recent findings by Ng *et al.* (2008) that situational factors such as job demands and job autonomy moderate the mediating role of leadership self-efficacy in explaining the relationships between leaders' personality and leadership effectiveness. The empowerment climate of an organization will moderate the strength of the first integrative proposition, such that motivation-to-serve is a stronger mediator under a strongly empowering climate than under weak climate of empowerment.

Conclusion

Although motivation to serve is a hallmark of the servant-leader (Greenleaf, 1970), little research has examined servant-leaders from a motivational perspective. Addressing this gap, we advance a moderated mediation model of motivation-to-serve to further our understanding of motivation-to-serve and its relationship with servant leadership behaviours. Our model highlights two key points.

First, motivation-to-serve is a promising motivational approach to understanding servant leadership because it is consistent with the core premise of servant leadership as emanating from one's desire to serve (Greenleaf, 1970), as well as being aligned with the long tradition of research on the trait perspective of leadership. We argue that some leaders are more naturally inclined to display servant leadership behaviours because their personality traits and value orientations predispose them to have greater motivation-to-serve. Others may develop motivation-to-serve through their experience with servant-leaders. Put together, we suggest that an individual's motivation-to-serve is a construct that exhibits both trait-like as well as state-like attributes, which, in turn, has both selection as well as training and development implications for organizations.

Second, based on trait activation theory, we argue that not all individuals with high motivation-to-serve may exhibit servant leadership behaviours. We propose that the empowerment climate of an organization is one example of situational features that may activate or constrain the expression of behaviours consistent with one's motivation-to-serve.

In doing so, we highlight the importance of having a conducive environment that facilitates the expression of servant leadership behaviours. Otherwise, even leaders who have the natural inclination to serve others may be constrained or deterred from serving. This suggests that any organizational interventions to promote servant leadership must focus not only on leaders, but also on the larger organizational context.

Our conceptual model of motivation-to-serve aims to further our current understanding of factors that promote servant leadership in organizations. We believe that motivation-to-serve offers immense potential for research to better understand the nature of the servant-leader, as well as for organizations to select and develop servant-leaders who will make an important difference to their subordinates, organizations, as well as their communities. We hope that our proposed model, with its testable propositions, presents ideas that will stimulate more empirical work on the novel individual difference construct of motivation-to-serve, to better understand the heart of the servant-leader.

Part III

Building a Servant Leadership Culture

9

The Servant Organization

Jim Laub

When you think of the term ‘servant leadership’, you probably envision a concept or a particular set of characteristics applied to leadership. When you think of the term ‘servant-leader’ you think of a person; an individual leader. But, what do you think of when you consider the term, ‘servant organization’? Can the characteristics of servant leadership be observed and assessed within organizational life and experience? Can an organization be considered to be servant or non-servant in the same way as an individual leader?

In this chapter, we will define the servant organization and how it can be described, developed and assessed. We will also show how organizations that function with a servant mindset are healthier and more effective than non-servant minded organizations, as revealed through research conducted through the use of the Organizational Leadership Assessment.

Expanding Greenleaf’s concept of ‘Institution as servant’

Robert Greenleaf wrote extensively on the concept of servant leadership as well as the meaning of the servant-leader, but he also went beyond this to address the *Institution as Servant* (1977). Consider his powerful statement:

This is my thesis: caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built. ... If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions. (Greenleaf, 1977: p. 49)

Greenleaf knew that servant leadership must be displayed through the institutions or organizations within which most leaders function. Most leadership action, leadership that produces an effect on society, is mediated through complex and often large organizations. Our work in organizations takes up most of our life: our time, effort and creativity. We can be strengthened and lifted up by our organizational experience, or we can be driven down, oppressed and depleted.

Many organizations today have taken up the servant leadership banner. It has become fashionable in certain circles to claim a connection to servant leadership or to training up servant-leaders. I currently serve in a Christian liberal-arts university in South Florida. Many universities, like ours, promote to their public that they are building students as servants and leaders. But, in what ways do these organizations take this seriously? Do they serve well the people, faculty and staff, within the organization? Are they truly servant organizations, and how can we know this? The answer to these questions must begin with clearly defining our key terms.

Definitions of 'servant leadership' and 'servant organization model'

It is critical that we define our terms when it comes to leadership and servant leadership. Rost (1993) addressed this issue within the larger field of leadership studies, stating 'Responsible scholarship requires that one clearly articulate the nature of leadership if one is going to expound on it' (p. 70). By defining our terms, we place a semantic stake in the ground that others can challenge and, through that, our knowledge and awareness of these sometimes vague concepts can be clarified. Rost suggests that 'it is no longer acceptable for leadership scholars to ignore the issue of what leadership is' (1993: p. 17). I agree, and I believe we must apply this also to the study of servant leadership. If we are to conduct research on servant leadership, or the servant organization we must define our terms in specific, clear and observable ways that allow us to identify when servant characteristics are perceived as present and when they are not (Laub, 2004).

What does the servant organization look like? What characteristics must be present for an organization to be viewed as healthy and servant-oriented? In 1999, I developed the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) instrument, together with operational definitions of servant leadership and the servant organization. A research-based conceptual model was constructed to provide the basis for ongoing servant organization assessment and research.

The development of the OLA began with a Delphi survey sent to a select list of experts in the field of servant leadership. The list was comprised of people who had published or taught at university level on the topic of servant leadership, together with some recognized practitioners of servant leadership within organizations. The expert panel included Larry Spears, Jim Kouzes, Lea Williams, Ann McGee-Cooper, Jack Lowe Jr and nine other participants (14 in total) who completed a three-phase Delphi survey process to determine an agreed upon list of 60 essential and necessary characteristics of the servant-leader. This list became the basis for the OLA Servant Organization Model and the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) instrument (Laub, 1999). Table 9.1 provides a definition of servant leadership, and shows how that definition expands into the OLA Servant Organization Model. This model includes the six key disciplines of a servant organization with three descriptors provided for each discipline. A definition of the servant organization is also provided. This model provides the conceptual constructs that allow us to clearly describe and then assess the servant organization. These constructs make up the foundation of the OLA, an instrument designed to measure the perception of servant leadership characteristics within organizations.

Development of the Organizational Leadership Assessment

The OLA instrument is comprised of 60 items assessed on a five-point Likert scale indicating each participant's level of agreement or disagreement with each characteristic as it is observed or experienced by them within their organization. An additional six items were developed to assess the construct of Job Satisfaction; a separate scale added to the OLA instrument. This additional scale has allowed researchers to study the relationship between the servant organization and job satisfaction, which will be presented later in this chapter.

The OLA was designed to assess the organization rather than specific leaders. Servant leadership assumes a shared leadership where everyone in the organization is responsible for exhibiting the key qualities of servanthood. An organizational assessment also provides the opportunity to compare responses from people at different levels in the organization (top leaders, managers/supervisors, and workforce). Assessing the entire organization allows positional leaders to become aware of how employees are experiencing the organization and how that may differ from their own perception. Finally, an organizational assessment helps to overcome some of the problems inherent in leadership assessments.

Table 9.1 The servant leader and the servant organization

Servant Leadership is ...

an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and developing of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization.

The Servant-Leader ...

Values people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By trusting and believing in people• By serving other's needs before his or her own• By receptive, non-judgmental listening
Develops people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By providing opportunities for learning and growth• By modeling appropriate behavior• By building up others through encouragement and affirmation
Builds community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By building strong personal relationships• By working collaboratively with others• By valuing the differences of others
Displays authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By being open and accountable to others• By a willingness to learn from others• By maintaining integrity and trust
Provides leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By envisioning the future• By taking initiative• By clarifying goals
Shares leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By facilitating a shared vision• By sharing power and releasing control• By sharing status and promoting others

The Servant Organization is ...

an organization in which the characteristics of servant leadership are displayed through the organizational culture and are valued and practiced by the leadership and workforce.

Source: Laub (1999: p. 83).

Social desirability is a testing concept that suggests that individual leaders may respond to self-assessments in ways that could be expected, rather than providing a more honest and accurate response. This reality has led to the development of the 360 degree assessment process that is so common today. By assessing the organization rather than the individual leader, we have a better chance of producing a more

accurate reflection of what is being experienced by employees within the organization.

Through this OLA assessment process, an organizational health (servant organization) score is obtained to determine which of the six health levels best describes the organization, ranging from Org¹ to Org⁶. The OLA then provides a breakdown of the perception match between top leadership, managers/supervisors, and the workforce.

When the OLA began to be used for research and organizational assessment, it came as no surprise that most organizations were not perceived by their workforce as being servant organizations. This means that the workforce response fell below an average response of 4.0 (agreement) on the OLA. If most organizations scored below a servant organization level, then what did this say about them? What were the characteristics of these non-servant organizations?

Adding the A-P-S Mindset Model

When an organization is not a servant organization, what is it? Table 9.2 shows the results of two studies (Laub, 2005; Herman, 2008) revealing a similar result in how organizations were identified by health level (Org¹ → Org⁶). Between the two studies, an average of 14 per cent of the organizations scored in the Org⁵/Org⁶ range – the range of the servant organization. In contrast to this, an average of 31 per cent scored in the Org¹/Org² range – the range of the autocratic organization. This leaves the majority (55 per cent) of organizations assessed as being neither autocratic nor servant organizations. What kind of organizational mindset is prominent within these non-servant, non-autocratic organizations?

Table 9.2 The A-P-S Mindset Model

Organizational level	Laub study (2005) N = 136 %		Herman study (2008) N = 440 %		Organizational mindset (A-P-S model) Percentage average	
Org ¹	7.35	30.88	6.59	32.04	AUTOCRATIC:	31
Org ²	23.53		25.45			
Org ³	33.82	57.35	25.90	51.58	PATERNALISTIC:	55
Org ⁴	23.53		25.68			
Org ⁵	9.55	11.76	11.59	16.36	SERVANT:	14
Org ⁶	2.21		4.77			

The autocratic organization (leading for self over others) is led for the benefit of the top positional leader(s). It is a top-down, authority-driven leadership that tends to produce a high fear, low trust environment. In contrast, the servant organization (leading for others over self) is characterized by high trust, creativity and risk-taking. The A-P-S Mindset Model suggests that the 55 per cent of organizations that do not fall within either of these are best seen as being paternalistic, or parental, in their leadership mindset. The paternalistic organization is led with a parental mindset from the leader and a corresponding child mindset and response from the workers. This parent-child relational dynamic is a key to understanding how most non-servant organizations function.

Once the organizational health level is determined, the organization can begin to address the reality of how its workforce is experiencing the organization and how they can begin to move toward a servant mindset of leadership to become a more healthy organization. But, are servant organizations healthier? Are they more effective? What is the business-case for taking the time, energy and risk of pursuing a servant culture within your organization? We now turn to OLA research for some answers to these critical questions.

Organizational Leadership Assessment research and the servant organization: a summary

At the time of this writing, forty two dissertations or theses have been completed using the OLA to study various aspects of the Servant Organization in different types of institutions. Some key findings from this research base will be presented to reveal what we have learned over the past years about the Servant Organization. Table 9.3 presents the types of organization in which OLA has been used.

Through these various studies, a number of key findings have come to light concerning the relationship between the servant organization and employee job satisfaction, student achievement, team effectiveness, employee attrition and absenteeism, organizational and leader trust, and employee safety. Is the servant organization a healthier, more effective organization?

The servant organization and employee job satisfaction

The most frequent use of the OLA (16 studies) has been to consider the correlation between the OLA servant organization score and employee job satisfaction (Laub, 1999; Thompson, 2002; Hebert, 2003; Drury, 2004; Miears, 2004; Anderson, 2005; Irving, 2005; Klamon, 2006;

Table 9.3 Organizational Leadership Assessment usage in various organizations

Higher education	
Thompson (2002)	Hannigan (2008)
Drury (2004)	Inbarasu (2008)
Iken (2005)	Adamson (2009)
Van Tassell (2006)	
Elementary and secondary education	
Herbst (2003)	Ross (2006)
Lambert (2004)	Anderson, J.D. (2006)
Miears (2004)	Svoboda (2008)
Anderson, K.P. (2005)	Metzcar (2008)
Law enforcement	
Ledbetter (2003)	
Health care	
Freitas (2003)	Amadeo (2008)
Krebs (2005)	Wyllie (2009)
Bradshaw (2007)	
Religious organizations	
Anderson, K.P. (2005)	Witter (2007)
Arfsten (2006)	Kong (2007)
Ross (2006)	Beaver (2007)
McCann (2006)	Salie (2008)
Business/manufacturing	
Beazley (2002)	Rauch (2007)
Non-profit organizations	
McCann (2006)	
Call centre	
Chu (2008)	
International honour society	
Meredith (2007)	
Social enterprise organizations	
Klamon (2006)	
Multiple types of organizations within the same study	
Laub (1999)	Cater (2006)
Braye (2000)	Molnar (2007)
Horsman (2001)	Herman (2008)
Hebert (2003)	

Van Tassell, 2006; Kong, 2007; Amadeo, 2008; Chu, 2008; Inbarasu, 2008; Svoboda, 2008; and Wyllie, 2009). When the OLA was developed, in 1999, to assess the servant organization, six additional items were added as a separate OLA Job Satisfaction scale. Utilizing this scale, this author found a high positive correlation between the OLA score

(servant organization) and the level of job satisfaction. 'A significant ($p < .01$) positive correlation of .653 was found between the OLA score and the job satisfaction score' (Laub, 1999: p. v).

Thompson (2002) followed with his own study, using both the OLA Job Satisfaction scale and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). He not only found a significant positive correlation between the OLA score and Job Satisfaction, but also found a 'statistically significant correlation between the OLA Job Satisfaction score and the MSQ score' (Thompson, 2002: p. 72). This finding supports the use of the OLA Job Satisfaction scale for further studies on the topic of job satisfaction.

After Thompson, 14 additional studies were conducted to measure the relationship between the servant organization (OLA score) and job satisfaction. A clear, positive correlation was reported by nearly all of these studies (Hebert, 2003; Drury, 2004; Miears, 2004; Anderson, 2005; Van Tassell, 2006; Amadeo, 2008; Chu, 2008; Inbarasu, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Svoboda, 2008; and Wyllie, 2009) and the studies were conducted in many different types of organizations.

In summary, a consistent message arises from the research that indicates a strong, positive relationship between the servant organization score and employee job satisfaction, which suggests that, as an organization becomes more servant-minded, its employees will enjoy greater job satisfaction, providing stronger health to both the employees and the organization.

The servant organization and secondary school student achievement

Herbst (2003) conducted a study 'to determine if schools where higher degrees of servant leadership were practiced performed better than schools that practiced lower degrees of servant leadership' (p. vi). The study, conducted with 24 high schools in Broward County, Florida, looked at the relationship between the OLA score (servant organization) and Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores in writing, reading, and mathematics, together with other scores. This study found that statistically significant relationships, at the 0.10 level, could be reported between the OLA score and specific measures of student achievement. In schools where servant leadership is being practised at higher levels, students are achieving at higher levels.

Lambert (2004) conducted a study with eight schools that also showed 'a significant relationship between servant leadership of secondary school principals and gains in student achievement. An even

stronger relationship was shown to exist between servant leadership and school climate' (Lambert, 2004: p. v).

The servant organization and team effectiveness

What affect does the presence of servant leadership in an organization have on the effectiveness of teams? Irving (2005) utilized Larson and LaFasto's (2001) Team Effectiveness Questionnaire (TEQ) together with the OLA to seek to answer this question. The study, conducted in a US division of an international non-profit organization ($n = 729$), found that 'a statistically significant and positive correlation was found for each of the variables associated with servant leadership and job satisfaction when analyzed in reference to team effectiveness' (Irving, 2005: p. iii). With the ever-increasing use of teams within all types of organizations today, these findings suggest that the servant organization provides a healthy environment that supports and encourages the effective use of teams.

The servant organization and employee attrition and absenteeism

What is the effect of the servant organization on the critical employee issues of attrition (turnover) and absenteeism? Twenty-eight manufacturing locations within an automotive parts organization from the Midwestern USA participated in a study to address this question (Rauch, 2007). Armed with 3896 completed OLA instruments and an 88.9 per cent response, Rauch attempted to answer this specific research question: 'To what extent are established manufacturing performance measurables correlated with the presence of servant leadership within the organization?' (2007: p. 63). On the topic of absenteeism, it was found that as the servant leadership score increases, absenteeism decreases. On the topic of employee attrition, higher attrition rates occurred at organizations with lower OLA scores.

Another way to view these findings is through the lens of the six organizational health levels of the OLA. Within this study, absenteeism decreased 41 per cent for each increase of a single organizational health level (for example, moving from an Org³ to an Org⁴), and employee attrition decreased 22 per cent for each increase in organizational health level (Rauch, 2007). This result is meaningful for organizations today who want to retain their workers and avoid the high costs related to these two critical organizational health factors.

The servant organization and organization and leader trust

How is servant leadership related to organizational and leader trust? To address this question, Joseph and Winston (2005) conducted a study

($n = 69$) utilizing the OLA and the Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI) developed by Nyhan and Marlowe (1997). Within this study, Organizational Trust refers to the level of trust employees have in the organization, while Leader Trust refers to the level of trust employees have in the leader. Trust is critical to an effectively operating organization.

Joseph and Winston (2005: p. 6) found that 'perceptions of servant leadership correlated positively with both leader trust and organizational trust' (); as the perception of servant leadership increased (the Servant Organization score) so did the levels of Organizational Trust and Leader Trust (the OTI score).

The servant organization and employee safety

Are servant organizations safer organizations for their employees? We find mixed results on this question. Krebs (2005) conducted a study ($n = 230$) within a large pharmaceutical organization to determine whether the existence of servant leadership can positively affect safe behaviours by employees. The findings from this study revealed that 'servant leadership is predictive of actively caring and each of its three components (i.e., belief that people should actively care, willingness to actively care and engagement in actively caring behaviors)' (Krebs, 2005: p. x).

However, in Rauch's (2007) study a different result was found on safety effectiveness. On Recordable Accident Rates, 'the recordable accident rate at the research sites does not vary strongly with changes in servant leadership' (Rauch, 2007: p. 87) while there is no relationship between the OLA score and the Accident Severity rate. It is clear that more research needs to be conducted on this important area of organizational health, but there are indications that servant organizations may provide safer places for employees to work.

In addition to the studies already presented, OLA servant organization research has been conducted on topics including spirit in organizations (Horsman, 2001; Beazly, 2002; Herman, 2008), women leaders (Braye, 2000), effective teaching (Metzcar, 2008), cultural studies (Molnar, 2007), social enterprise (Klamon, 2006), and organizational succession (Cater, 2006).

Organizational Leadership Assessment servant organization model and other models on organizational culture: a comparison

Morgan (2006) presents his review of organizational studies through the lens of a metaphor. Through this lens, he looks at the organization

as machine, organism, brain, culture, political system, psychic prison, transformation or domination. The organization as machine centres on Max Weber's concepts of bureaucracy and Frederick Taylor's ideas of scientific management. The focus was on efficiency and production; getting the job done in the best way possible. Workers were seen as tools or cogs within the overall production machine. The organization was primarily a collection of processes, positions, policies, and procedures; the relationship between the worker and management was one of utility and results. The multiple weaknesses of this approach (that is, ignoring the creative contribution of the worker, the inability of the organization to adapt to change) produced a much needed post-bureaucratic response. The post-bureaucratic model presented a focus on dialogue, persuasion, mutual trust, interdependence, mission, open communication, and an emphasis on guiding principles over rules (Jaffee, 2001). Organizations were encouraged to become open and to rely on the worker as a person with creativity and knowledge to contribute to the fulfilment of the organizational mission. This new response to organizations emerged during the same time that transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) were being introduced. The OLA Servant Organization model fits clearly within the conceptual framework of the post-bureaucratic organization, and provides a necessary culture-building support to the desired outcomes of this newer organizational approach.

Morgan (2006) also spoke of the organization through the metaphor of culture. Culture refers to a mindset that permeates the organization; a collection of shared values, beliefs and assumptions that end up driving organizational behaviour. The six key disciplines of the OLA Servant Organization model (together with their descriptors: (see Table 9.1) provide a way for organizations to assess their culture according to the criteria of a servant leadership mindset. There are multiple ways to look at organizational culture and several models that can be considered. One model that provides a contrasting view of four different cultural perspectives is the Competing Values Framework model (Cameron and Quinn, 2006). The developers of this model took the 39 indicators of organizational effectiveness developed by Campbell and clustered them into two major dimensions:

- Flexibility and Discretion versus Stability and Control
- Internal Focus and Integration versus External Focus and Differentiation

and four competing cultures:

- Hierarchy culture – focused on rules, control, and bureaucracy
- Market culture – focused on external results, competition and profits
- Clan culture – focused on developing a sense of family, team and commitment to employees
- Adhocracy culture – focused on innovation, new products/services, and adapting quickly. (Cameron and Quinn, 2006).

These four cultures are presented as competing cultures, each of which can lead to organizational effectiveness based on the nature of the organization and the particular purpose it is trying to achieve. It is a situational organizational model drawn from the consideration of what makes an organization effective.

In contrast, the OLA Servant Organization model presents an underlying mindset that can provide a servant-minded, healthy foundation for any of these four cultures. As we saw in the A–P–S model description, there are three different mindsets or paradigms that will underlie our leadership practice: autocratic, paternalistic, or servant. The OLA model provides a way to look at the basic health of the organization, while suggesting that the healthiest mindset is that of the servant organization. Each organization will exhibit some combination of all four of the competing frameworks. The OLA Servant Organization model suggests that they will do so with an underlying foundational mindset that focuses on the leader either as autocrat, parent or servant.

Morgan (2006) also spoke of the organization through the metaphor of the Brain. This metaphor is primarily represented by the model of the Learning Organization. The Learning Organization is represented by five disciplines: Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Team Learning, Shared Vision and Systems Thinking (Senge, 1990). Again, the OLA Servant Leadership model provides an underlying mindset that is compatible with the values of the Learning Organization. As organizations develop the servant discipline to value and develop people, build community, display authenticity, and both provide and share leadership, they will be healthier and in the best position to act on the disciplines of the Learning Organization.

The OLA Servant Organization model is not drawn from a study of effective organizations, which has been the common approach to developing organizational models. Instead, it is drawn from a research-based approach to understanding what servant leadership is and how it can be practised and observed within organizational life. The assumption

that a servant-minded approach will produce healthier organizations is now being supported by OLA Servant Organization research. Although more research needs to be done to support this contention, the initial results are promising.

Conclusion

Through the OLA instrument and model, Greenleaf's *Institution as Servant* has been defined, described, operationalized, and assessed. The existing research base presents a positive relationship between the servant organization and key organizational health factors. This serves to establish a business case to support the promotion of the servant organization within organizations as a way to improve their organizational health and overall effectiveness. Through this, we may begin to 'raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions' (Greenleaf, 1977: p. 49).

10

Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Servant Leadership

Justin A. Irving

Beginning in a formal way with the work of Robert K. Greenleaf in the 1970s, the study of servant leadership has gradually moved from theoretical discussions, to model development, to initial empirical research. With an emphasis on service, and a commitment to follower-orientation on the part of leaders, servant leadership holds great promise for meeting the unique leadership challenges facing our global communities. These challenges, some of which were evidenced by the fall of our global markets in 2008 and 2009, remind us once again that the health of our organizations and societies is increasingly interdependent on the health of other individuals, organizations, and global communities.

While our world has been rich with cross-cultural diversity down through the ages, the rise of globalization raises our awareness of this diversity. Spurred on by twentieth-century advances in technology – aviation, communication, and especially the quantum leaps in late twentieth-century Internet communication – the cultures of our world have been brought into closer contact than ever.

Engaging cross-cultural perspectives on servant leadership is inherently a valuable exercise, globalization notwithstanding. However, our increased global interdependency of cultures highlights the importance of this topic. Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) argue that, ‘To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behaviour as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures’ (p. 416). While such cultural awareness and sensitivity on the part of leaders may occur through a variety of leaders and leadership styles or philosophies, servant leadership – with a focus on the needs of followers – provides a platform upon which the unique cultural perspectives of leaders and followers may be considered.

While the study of servant leadership has gradually moved from theoretical discussions, to model development, to initial empirical research, most of this work has been done in North American and European contexts. Thankfully, there is a small but growing literature base focused on servant leadership in broader global and cross-cultural settings. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of this current theoretical and empirical work, and then explore its potential directions.

Cultural perspectives on servant leadership

In order to furnish an overview of this literature, in this chapter I will provide a general summary of these works around the following categories:

- African perspectives
- Asian perspectives
- Latin American perspectives
- Eastern European perspectives
- ethnically diverse North American perspectives
- perspectives from other global contexts.

African perspectives

Significant research-based and theoretical treatments of servant leadership in the African context have emerged in recent years. Representing this treatment, Kumuyi (2007) argues that ‘what Africa needs for its redemption is servant leadership instead of the self-serving governance that the continent is famed for’ (p. 18). While historically self-serving approaches to leadership are not limited to the African context, Kumuyi is arguing that Africa finds itself at a unique time in history – a time in which servant leadership practices may be critical for ongoing continental health and stability. While Kumuyi’s reflections are largely theoretical and persuasively oriented, they are complemented by a growing set of research-based reflections.

West Africa

In an important study exploring the servant leadership experience of Ghanaian and US followers, Hale and Fields (2007) provide an examination of these followers around three servant leadership dimensions – service, humility, and vision – and the extent to which these followers related servant leadership dimensions to judgements about leadership

effectiveness in each culture. Among the key findings of this study, Hale and Fields found that:

- Ghanaian followers reported experiencing servant leadership behaviours significantly less than North Americans
- the servant leadership dimension of vision had a significantly stronger relationship with leader effectiveness for Ghanaians in comparison with North Americans
- both Ghanaian and US followers relate service and humility with leader effectiveness in a similar manner.

Related to the first finding, Hale and Fields suggest that this may be associated with the higher levels of power distance and in-group collectivism within the Ghanaian culture when compared with US cultural expectations of leadership. These higher levels in Ghanaian culture are supported by the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) studies (House *et al.*, 2004) in West Africa.

Okafor-Dike (2008) conducted an exploratory study of the relationship between presidential leadership and economic development in the West African context of Nigeria. The study attempted to identify how presidential leadership characteristics contribute to Nigeria's ongoing status as a developing country with the World Bank. In short, the study focused on how the presidents' leadership impacted the economic growth or decline of the nation from 1960–2004. Examining several leadership styles – including servant leadership – against economic growth indicators, Okafor-Dike concluded that inadequate leadership contributed to the lack of sustained economic growth, and ineffective leadership was more significant in the lack of economic development than resource availability.

East Africa

Moving eastward, we come to two studies focused on one of the most influential countries of East Africa – Kenya. Koshal's (2005) study was focused on extending Patterson's (2003) servant leadership theory by exploring the acceptability and applicability of the constructs within a Kenyan context. Utilizing data from extended interviews with 25 participants, Koshal identified seven prevailing themes reminiscent of the construct of service within Patterson's servant leadership theory. Koshal noted that the construct of service was seen as both acceptable and applicable among Kenyan leaders and managers across the various organizational settings included in the study – government, business corporations, NGOs, and academic institutions.

Next, Ngunjiri (2006) engaged the topic of tempered radicals and servant leadership within a Kenyan context by building upon Alston's (2005) work on the same topic with another population. Alston and Ngunjiri note that tempered radicals are those individuals who are willing to challenge organizational norms while at the same time remaining committed to working within, rather than outside, the organization. Motivated by the limited number of studies on leadership by African women, Ngunjiri sought to understand women's leadership by studying the lived experience of 16 women leaders in the context of Nairobi, Kenya. In this study, Ngunjiri identified the following variables as critically important in their stories and success as leaders: Africana spirituality, tempered radicalism, and servant leadership.

Also within the East African region, Irving (2007) studied the reliability of Dennis's (2004) Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (*Instrument d'Evaluation du Serviteur Dirigeant*) among French-speaking Rwandans, and contrasted the results in similar studies conducted in Peru (with a Spanish translation of Dennis's instrument) and the USA. Conducted on site in Rwanda, the findings of this study were presented at the Ninth Annual International Leadership Association meetings along with reflections on pre- and post-genocidal leadership within the context of post-colonial Rwandan history. While the reliability coefficients for the love, empowerment, and vision scales were strong in all three contexts (Rwanda, Peru, and the USA), the reliability coefficients for the humility scale were lower in the French Rwandan (0.5871) and Spanish Peruvian (0.4987) contexts, and higher in the English US context (0.9202). Discussions around societal, cultural, and linguistic perceptions of humility followed.

South Africa

We begin a look at South Africa with Cerff's (2004) conceptual study of servant leadership in which the African concept of Ubuntu is studied in light of the African Renaissance and the South African context. Cerff argues that the unique concepts of Ubuntu and African Renaissance provide promising insights regarding the application of servant leadership theory – this particularly in light of historic experiences of slavery and colonialism in the African context.

Dannhauser and Boshoff (2006) of the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa addressed the relationships between demographic variables, servant leadership, trust, and team commitment in their empirical research. In this work, these constructs were measured among a group of sales persons ($n = 417$) in the automobile industry. In their analysis

(including Pearson product moment correlation, multiple regression, t-tests, and ANOVA), strong and significant relationships were found between servant leadership, trust, and team commitment.

Finally, in Ramsey's (2006) fascinating study focused on the lives of six South African perpetrators, the themes of servant leadership and unconditional forgiveness were studied in the South African context. Through this study of six political perpetrators who applied for and received amnesty after the apartheid era, Ramsey explores how former South African president Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu modelled servant leadership in their negotiating a restorative justice approach through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process of dealing with the atrocities of the apartheid struggle.

As the data from the study was analyzed utilizing phenomenological methods, five primary themes emerged:

- violence harms both victim and perpetrator
- denial and arrogance are used to protect the perpetrator from shame
- empathy creates an environment whereby the perpetrator can ask for and receive forgiveness
- the gift of forgiveness increases the ability to forgive oneself
- forgiveness is a bridge to the future.

One of the more striking accounts of the story is the great lengths victim families went through to show restorative and unconditional love and forgiveness to perpetrators. Ramsey (2006) makes the connection of this radical forgiveness with Greenleaf's description of servant leaders' commitments to serving the good of others and their holistic development.

Latin-American perspectives

Spanish speaking

While only in its initial stages, the research on servant leadership in Latin America includes reflections from both Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries. We begin with Serrano's (2006) treatment of servant leadership in the Panamanian context. Focused on Patterson's (2003) theory of servant leadership, Serrano examined the viability and acceptance of the theory's constructs within Panama. Serrano found that Patterson's servant leadership constructs were conceptually acceptable and considered as good leadership practices within the culture, and also that there was wide practical application of the constructs evidenced

throughout the culture. Furthermore, while the research did not specifically study enactment of the constructs, it did identify both inhibiting conditions as well as conditions conducive for the application of servant leadership constructs. Serrano concluded with two important implications. First, empowerment must be understood appropriately; second, participants identified political leaders as most in need of the servant leadership construct.

Next, we highlight Anderson's (2006) exploration of barriers that impede the effective implementation of servant leadership in Latin America. Anderson identified that many members in this study agreed with the notion of servant leadership, but the number of leaders actually practising it is significantly wanting within the study's Christian Latin American organizations. Utilizing a grounded theory method, Anderson identified ten primary barriers and three central strategies for overcoming these servant leadership barriers.

Also exploring hindrances to, as well as the value of, servant leadership practice in Latin America, Irving and McIntosh (2009) present their initial findings based on their research in a Peruvian context. The authors found a pattern of overall participant affirmation of the concept of servant leadership, evidenced by such participant statements as, 'In order to be a leader one must first become a servant.' Alongside such affirmation, participants also raised questions about whether or not servant leadership principles will be effective in their unique cultural context. Irving and McIntosh highlight four probable causes to this cultural questioning of servant leadership's efficacy:

- the high power–distance nature of Latin America
- the hierarchical nature of the dominant religious movement in the region
- the semantic confusion between *servant* and *slave* in the language of servant leadership
- cultural emphases such as personalism, particularism, and paternalism.

In another article (Irving and McIntosh, 2007), the authors evaluate the reliability of the *Evaluación Organizacional de Liderazgo* (EOL; a Spanish translation of Laub's (1999) Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA)) among Spanish speaking Latin Americans. In order to further the servant leadership research agenda in cross-cultural contexts, Irving and McIntosh provide an exploratory examination of the EOL's reliability with-Peruvian participants. The reliability coefficient for the EOL in this study was 0.9862. This finding is consistent with the alpha

coefficient found in other studies using the English version of the OLA (Laub, 1999 [0.98]; Ledbetter, 2003 [0.9814]; Irving, 2005 [0.9713]).

In another Latin American speaking study, McIntosh and Irving (2010) provide an evaluation of the *Instrumento de Contribución al Liderazgo de Siervo* (ICLS; a Spanish translation of Dennis's (2004) Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument) for reliability in Latin America. Research in Lima, Peru demonstrated that the translated instrument was reliable in three of its scales – love (0.8373), empowerment (0.9167), and vision (0.9047), paving the way for increased servant leadership study in that country and other parts of Latin America. The instrument had a lower reliability rating in its humility scale (0.4987); the authors suggest that this finding may be associated with culturally established patterns of leadership in the Latin American context of Peru.

While not specifically focused on servant leadership, McIntosh's (2007) research on Peruvian leadership definitions and practices highlights findings relevant to the study of servant leadership within the Latin American context. Among other things, McIntosh's research demonstrated that Peruvians were anxious to experience new models of leadership, having tired of the authoritarian or *caudillo* model that is dominant in the region. Participants in McIntosh's study indicated that effective leaders need to be characterized by:

- living a life of integrity
- serving others
- leadership that encourages maximum participation from teams that will support the leader's ability to motivate, persuade, and build trust.

I conclude this section with two additional works. First, in a theoretical piece engaging neoliberalism in Latin America, Moreton (2007) examines how economic reforms have moved Latin America towards a state of neoliberalism, and connects these concepts with a reconnection to the biblical past, servant leadership, and service economy. The second piece is an original work engaging the topic of servant leadership from a Puerto Rican perspective. Writing to Latin American Christians, Batista (1998) notes in this work that leader motives may be a significant obstacle in following key Christian principles, and goes on to engage the problem of leaders who practise their leadership in a manner that is inconsistent with their beliefs and values. While not a researcher-based work, Batista provides a key original work in Spanish that engages the concept of servant leadership from a Christian perspective.

Portuguese speaking

Moving to a second language group in Latin America, there are two significant projects focused on servant leadership within the context of Portuguese-speaking Latin America. First, Amaral (2007) studied the application of servant leadership theory among Brazilian church leaders. After an examination of servant leadership theory and an evaluation of its relevancy and applicability to Evangelical Brazilian church leaders, Amaral developed a course for them and then utilized a pre-test and post-test survey, with interviews and observations, to evaluate course emphases and shifts in leadership practice. Amaral included the following servant leadership emphases in the course: leadership focus, influence, character, and heart. While some participants viewed the model and emphases as a utopian form of leadership, most saw these as being consistent with their biblical roots in the model of Jesus Christ. When evaluated six months after the course, most leaders believed their leadership style had changed, but that their leadership influence had declined due to servant leadership practices not meeting the cultural expectations of followers for more authoritarian forms of leadership. Overall, participants demonstrated that the servant leadership model had a significant impact on their personal lives and affected their lay leaders as well.

In the second Brazilian piece, Marinho (2005) engages servant leadership in the country's changing culture. Marinho identifies a tension between servant leadership's 'incontestable appeal' (p. 115) in the Brazilian corporate environment and the culture's ambivalence over the word 'servant', because 'the concept of *servant* as represented by Biblical and ethical values is not as clear for a Catholic culture as it seems to be for an Evangelical culture', and 'in a Catholic culture there seems to be no clear distinction between the concept of *servant* ... and the concept of *slave*' (pp. 116–17). Due to the 73.8 per cent (2000 census data) dominance of Catholic religiosity in Brazil, Marinho notes that, 'the semantic confusion between the terms *servant* and *slave* in the Brazilian culture presents a significant challenge to engaging in servant leadership as a way of life' (p. 117).

Asian perspectives

Our survey of Asia begins with Moon's (1999) study of servant leadership in Korea. Moon engaged Korean leaders who tended to conceive of biblical servant leadership as weak. Moon demonstrated to them that Jesus Christ was both an example of great service and authentic

spiritual authority, and that Korean church leaders should also see these as working together. With a similar focus, Jeong (2005) utilized the perspectives of various Korean theologians in his study to establish differences between the 'pyramidal' structure, servant leadership, and servant-oriented structures. Addressing the social changes in Korea, Jeong studied pastoral leadership in light of structural considerations and the role of a community-based church.

In two additional Korean studies, Chung (2004) focused on a biblical model of servant leadership that could be used as a new paradigm for Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Korea, and Han (2006) explored the role of a servant model for pastoral leadership within a Korean American church context. Han addresses, as Moon (1999), the challenge of authority perceptions with Korea's leaders aiming to practise servant leadership, but argues that servant leadership holds a unique advantage in helping Korean Americans as they face the physical and mental stresses of adapting to life in America.

Finally, Hean and Tin (2007) provide a unique Singaporean perspective that addresses servant leadership in Singapore leadership mentoring, and Chen (2002) provides a case study analysis of servant leadership among Taiwanese Mennonite churches. Chen addresses the challenges associated with Chinese views of hierarchical leadership, noting that the concept of 'leader' and 'servant' stand against one another in the Chinese mindset. This study explored related hindrances to servant leadership and provides strategies for its implementation among Taiwanese Mennonite churches.

North America: racially diverse perspectives

Among the growing voices in servant leadership studies are reflections within the US context from or about Black leaders and organizations. Among this literature, Taylor (2006), Williams-Scurlock (2005), Alston (2005), and Berry (2008) provide important reflections. Engaging the importance of servant leadership in a rural African American church, Taylor focused on a training model to equip deacons for servant leadership. Williams-Scurlock investigated how the servant leadership attributes of pioneering, modelling, appreciation of others, empowerment, and vision have been demonstrated within a historically Black fraternity across multiple eras.

Alston (2005) was the basis for Ngunjiri's (2006) previously identified treatment of tempered radicals and servant leadership in Kenya. Alston focused on how this juxtaposition contributed to the persistence of Black female superintendents in their positions despite the many

challenges of serving as a Black female in educational leadership. Also focused on education, Berry (2008) examined three African American female elementary principals who allowed their personal spiritual beliefs to provide a framework for how they lead their urban schools. These individuals were studied in order to better understand how their leadership styles, decision-making habits, and communication practices contributed to environments of academic excellence for children of colour. Of the common characteristics identified between these principals was a demonstrated philosophy of servant leadership.

Other global perspectives

In a significant study involving 3282 respondents from 23 countries, Molnar (2007) conducted a cross-cultural study of national cultural dimensions and servant leadership. Molnar's statistical procedures utilized Hofstede's (2001) cultural typology dimensions and the Servant Leadership Index (SLI), an instrument with which to explore potential relationships between the variables. Centred on the correlative and influential relationships of gender upon the applicability of servant leadership, Molnar argues that servant leadership holds great potential to act as an intellectual and emotional bridge between worldviews.

Dillman's (2004) cross-cultural study examines servant leadership perceptions of Australian and US pastors. Examining perceptions of servant leadership variables consistent with Patterson's (2003) work, Dillman found their understandings to be largely similar, although differences were seen at the implementation level. Also including Australian participants, Sendjaya *et al.* (2008) developed the Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale – a 35-item, six-dimensional measure. Their resulting model is a positive extension to existing models, due to its features of service orientation, holistic outlook, and moral-spiritual emphasis.

Representative of Canadian scholars and practitioners, Crippen (2005a, 2005b, 2006) engages servant leadership in the education and history of Manitoba. In History, Crippen (2006) examined how three pioneer women impacted Manitoba through service, leadership, and determination to serve the wider community. In education, Crippen (2005b) identified Greenleaf's 'first to serve, then to lead' concept as being particularly useful for educational leadership (Crippen, 2005b), arguing that servant leadership was applicable to provincial legislation that required an inclusive philosophy of education focused on meeting the needs of each student (Crippen, 2005a).

From the Eastern European context, Dimitrova (2008) investigated the causal relationship between dimensions of Patterson's model with

students enrolled at Sofia University in Bulgaria. Support was found for the causal relationships among the servant leadership constructs with one exception – the relationship between altruism and vision.

Future directions for the study of servant leadership within the global context

Based upon this overview of cross-cultural perspectives on servant leadership, I will provide several observations and directions for future research. First, while the African and Latin American literature sets are the strongest, most of these projects provide research insights that are exploratory and introductory in nature. With the evaluation of some servant leadership instruments in these contexts, and with initial contextual validation of servant leadership constructs, the open doors for research further down the servant leadership research stream are abundant.

Second, in light of culturally embedded views of what constitutes leadership authority in the Asian context, servant leadership researchers and practitioners will need to pay attention to this tendency to associate servant-oriented practice with weakness. Additionally, much of the work in this context has been focused on leadership among religious groups. While helpful, there is need for servant leadership research in the Asian context focused on leadership in other sectors such as business, government, and education.

Third, in light of the great work on cross-culture leadership that has been, and continues to be, undertaken surrounding Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions and the larger GLOBE project (House *et al.*, 2004), servant leadership scholars will find many open doors for research looking at the relationship between servant leadership and cultural dimensions. Additionally, the relationship between servant leadership and culturally endorsed leadership theory dimensions (CLTs) in diverse global communities will also be helpful for advancing our understanding and practice of servant leadership in global contexts. These observations and recommendations for future directions in research only begin to describe the significant opportunities that are available to the research community.

Servant leadership and cross-cultural validity

Perhaps one of the most pressing and practical questions for readers is this: Is servant leadership a valid and viable leadership approach across

cultures? My short answer to this is 'Yes, but not without qualification'. First, while demonstrated as valid through many of the studies reported in this chapter, the literature and research around servant leadership is not yet sufficiently extensive to speak to this question with precision. Second, some of the works reported in this chapter do suggest that contexts associated with high power-distance relationships find the modes of servant leadership to be challenging and, at times, associated with a 'weak' form of leadership that is counter-intuitive to the culturally familiar hierarchical structures. Third, in addition to structural-cultural challenges, there are also cultural-linguistic challenges in some contexts, with the language of services and servant being too closely associated with the language, imagery, and histories of slavery.

Finally, I would argue that the enactment of servant leadership must take on culturally-contingent characteristics to be effective in diverse settings. For instance, the GLOBE studies (House *et al.*, 2004) highlight societal variance around the self-protective, culturally endorsed, implicit leadership theme. In a context where leader self-protective behaviour is associated with effective leadership, a follower-focus (serving the needs of the led over the needs of the leader) will probably appear different than in a context that views leader self-protective behaviour as being the absence of humility and indicative of poor and dictatorial leadership. Such cultural perspectives may be viewed by some as an argument for why servant leadership is not cross-culturally valid. I would argue that this evidences the need for servant leadership theory and practice to be culturally-contingent, adapting to diverse contexts in order to fulfil the heart of a follower-focused and servant-first orientation.

The need for servant-leaders with cosmopolitan and global perspective continues to grow in our day (Patterson *et al.*, 2007; Quist, 2008). The cross-cultural voices on servant leadership highlighted in this chapter provide an encouragement that good work in servant leadership studies is starting to take place in the global context, and demonstrate the great need and opportunity for future research in this area of study that still exists.

11

Servant Leadership Learning Communities[®]: Incubators for Great Places to Work

Ann McGee-Cooper and Duane Trammell

Servant-led organizations do not happen overnight, and they must be steadily and continuously cultivated. The Dallas Servant Leadership Learning Communities[®] concept was conceived by Ann McGee-Cooper & Associates ten years ago, and thrives today as an innovation in fostering and maturing leaders at all levels in 11 community organizations, all sharing a long-term commitment to servant leadership. Each member benefits from the community interaction and the shared practices and lessons learned from fellow members, all of which are servant leadership organizations who lead the way with their well-established servant leadership cultures and commitment to grow learning organizations based on the five disciplines as described by Peter Senge (Senge, 1990). In this chapter, we will describe the forces at play in the conception of this community of learning organizations, feature the practices of two key members who helped define the standard of membership, and address how this innovation has been extended to servant-leaders in organizations nationwide and around the globe virtually.

How the idea of a Servant Leadership Learning Community[®] came into being

At the beginning of the twenty-first-century, a stream of servant leadership consciousness and practice was surging across the globe. In Dallas, Texas, the consulting firm of Ann McGee-Cooper & Associates (AMCA) was partnering with mature, corporate cultures rooted in Robert K. Greenleaf's philosophy to help them enhance and enrich their commitments to servant leadership.

At the same time, *Fortune* magazine published its first survey of '100 Best Companies to Work for in America'. The 'Great Places to Work'

criteria honoured both Southwest Airlines (ranked second) and TDIndustries (ranked fourth), two of the corporations with whom AMCA had been working. Almost immediately, we were inundated with calls from organizations large and small, eager to learn more about servant leadership.

Further, another stream within organizational theory was gaining attention. The publication of *The Fifth Discipline*, by Peter Senge, Director of the Systems Thinking and Organizational Learning Program at MIT's Sloan School of Management, had precipitated a flood of learning organization practice, with its five disciplines of shared vision, mental models, personal mastery, team learning, and systems thinking (Senge, 1990): from this work, the SoL (Society of Organizational Learning) emerged.

The convergence of these three streams opened a new opportunity for AMCA to share what we had learned as practitioners of servant leadership and the learning organization disciplines; it was an entry point for systemic change that we couldn't ignore. Our team decided to create a circle of local leaders as learning partners and to give our time, resources, and facilitation as a gift back to the community. This research project is now in its tenth year.

From our work as members of SoL, we had learned about fractals (learning communities, each of which replicates the pattern of the larger organization). Could we experiment with a fractal of leaders focused on servant leadership, woven seamlessly with the five disciplines of a learning organization?

Since we believe that it is not possible to create a true learning organization without following the principles of servant leadership, building upon the relationship between the five disciplines and Greenleaf's principles of servant leadership seemed like a natural next step.

The Dallas-based Servant Leadership Learning Community® (SLLC) launched in 2000 with seven member organizations; it has since grown to 11. In addition to TDIndustries and Southwest Airlines, this diverse and effective learning community includes a suburban police department, county teaching hospital, internationally recognized electronic design and manufacturing company, community college campus, energy plant, probation institute, two other construction companies, a furniture marketing group, and a restaurant.¹ Each member group reserves up to four seats at quarterly sessions, during which we learn new skills and competencies as well as discuss current issues and challenges. Governance is by consensus, with all members contributing topics and resources.

The vision of SLLC® is to:

aspire to practice and improve our collective capacities as a learning community centered on servant leadership: to increase our ability to co-create a future based on relationships of trust and respect as well as a triple bottom line balancing People, Planet, and Profit. (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007)

AMCA is the facilitator of the Dallas SLLC®, sharing over 30 years' experience of creating interactive learning environments to grow and deepen servant leadership. TDIndustries and Southwest Airlines have shared a wealth of insights from their many years (almost 40 and 38 years, respectively) growing corporate cultures where each Employee, regardless of title, recognizes and accepts his/her role as a leader with a servant's heart, (referred to as 'leaderful cultures'). Together, through the Dallas SLLC®, we are collaborating to create an incubator for servant-led cultures that is crossing the physical boundaries of Dallas. Further, we are developing a way to extend the SLLC® concept of nurturing and sustaining servant-led organizations to servant-leaders around the globe through a programme we are calling Virtual SLLC®.

The servant leadership legacy at TDIndustries

TDIndustries is a lifecycle provider of facility services and mechanical construction. With offices in Austin, Dallas, Denver, Fort Worth, Houston, Phoenix, and San Antonio, TD employed more than 1600 Partners with \$324 million in revenue in 2008. TD's mission states:

We are committed to providing outstanding career opportunities by exceeding our Customer's expectations through continuous, aggressive improvement.

Jack Lowe, founder of the company now called TDIndustries, had a vision that a company could be more than a job and a pay packet long before such considerations were embraced by the business community in America. He was committed to engaging his Employees as Partners, practising servant leadership to bring mutual trust and a servant's heart into business.² He envisioned an organization in which every person awakened their full potential and responsibilities, both as leaders and servants of others.

Jack came across a copy of *The Servant As Leader* (Greenleaf, 1970) not long after Greenleaf published it in 1970. He liked it so much

that he began buying copies by the box and passing them out to all his Employees and friends. Greenleaf became curious about who was buying his book in bulk and why. A phone call began a long and deep friendship in which each man drew on his intuitive belief that more respectful, effective ways to grow leadership existed (Cheshire, 1987).

Jack Lowe changed the face of Dallas. Because of his extraordinary servant leadership, he was able to create alliances formerly thought impossible. An outstanding example was Jack's capacity to bring racial groups filled with distrust into a shared plan to integrate the Dallas public schools. In his honour, a new public school in the Dallas Independent School District has been named after this man, who forged a lasting trust.

For two years, Jack Lowe and Linda Wyatt Smithey, his executive assistant, met with small groups of Employees in Jack's home to discuss Greenleaf's essay and how they might apply it in their work together. Harriet, Jack's wife, cooked and served meals for each group. Jack was saying, 'I really want you here. I want you to be a part of the family, not just the company.' Working together, the People Objective emerged:

Each and every TD person to feel successful as a person – as a total person – with one's co-workers, family, friends, community, God, and self. Among other things, this means one must feel growth, must feel individually important ... and it requires of oneself a high order of responsibility and self-discipline.

If through oversight or neglect or just not caring much, we fail to do what we can to help even one person in this objective, it's really a bad failure. For this concept to be real, it must be total. There must be no one excluded. (Cheshire, 1987)

In order to make sure every Partner had the opportunity to learn about servant leadership and grow into its practice at TD, Jack brought in Ann McGee-Cooper, Ed.D. Ann was then a professor at Southern Methodist University (SMU) who had founded an Experimental Arts programme. She helped to create a curriculum tailored to TD, based on servant leadership, using the same innovative, accelerated learning techniques pioneered at SMU. More than 30 years later, Ann McGee-Cooper & Associates continues to facilitate three levels of servant leadership classes for Partners at TD.

In 1980, when Jack Lowe Jr earned the CEO role at TD, he continued to espouse his father's philosophy of servant leadership. Earning and maintaining the highest levels of trust was the foundation upon which both

Jack and his father did business. One of Jack Jr's special gifts was to build TD as a business. Yet, he did so from a primary commitment to servant leadership. Even in financial downturns, Jack never wavered in his commitment to grow the people as well as the business. He comments today:

The return on investment (ROI) on really good leadership development is almost infinite. Partners who spend a day away from their job in personal development feel so valued that they do ten days' work in the next nine days. After that, all the gains from the experience are free.

In January 2006, after five years of careful succession planning, Harold MacDowell became the third CEO at TD. Promoted from within, Harold had more than 20 years of experience with TD. His message remains both compelling and consistent with Jack Lowe Sr and Jack Jr: 'I'm convinced that our collective commitment to servant leadership enhances the shared trust that produces strong business results.'

Harold tells funny stories of sobering mistakes he has made that have helped him mature as a humble, yet tenacious leader. Humour and humility are cornerstones of TD's culture and, in his new role, Harold seeks to connect openly with everyone. Each leader is unique, yet what sets TD apart is the seamless commitment to making trust the foundation on which a great business and a great workplace are built.

Sometimes people make the mistake of thinking that servant leadership is 'soft stuff', or easy to learn. Together, we have learned that, as hard as the technical business challenges are to get right, they are easier than the people side of the equation. A doctor once asked Jack, Jr whether he couldn't just learn about servant leadership in a book and then implement it in his hospital work. Jack gave the doctor some resources to read, but then asked the doctor if he could recommend a book on how to do surgery so Jack could perform an operation. The skills of servant leadership require no less investment and practice than do the skills of a surgeon.

TDIndustries enjoys many accolades and special awards, including having appeared on *Fortune's* 100 Best Companies to Work For in America list since the awards were first published in 1998. TDIndustries is one of only 13 companies to have received that recognition each year since the awards inception.

To become a truly effective servant-leader requires courage, persistence, and commitment to the belief that something more meaningful and successful emerges by working together than by working

independently. Greenleaf challenges us to start within (not outside) on our mission to bring lasting change in the world:

The servant views any problem in the world as in here, inside oneself, not out there. And if a flaw in the world is to be remedied, to the servant, the process of change starts in here, in the servant, not out there. (Robert K. Greenleaf, 1970)

The spirit of LUV at Southwest Airlines

Southwest Airlines (SWA) has long been known for setting and achieving incredible records of performance in their industry. The Company's net income for 2008 was \$178 million, with 101.9 million Customers and over 35,000 Employees. For five years in a row, SWA is the only airline to win the Triple Crown, ranked first in most on-time flights, least lost baggage, and fewest Customer complaints.

'If the greatness of a Company is measured by the hearts and souls of its People, then SWA is indeed the richest Company in the world', says Colleen Barrett, President Emeritus of SWA. (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007) Colleen's own servant leadership can clearly be seen inside the amazing Culture Committee, one of her many innovations that nurtures hearts and minds and keeps SOUTHWEST SPIRIT thriving.

Many people have doubted whether SWA could sustain its unique, warm, family inclusiveness as they doubled in size from 4000 to 8000, and then doubled again and again now to over 35,000 Employees. Yet, somehow, they keep managing to prove the naysayers wrong.

Many also conjectured that the irrepressible Herb Kelleher and maternal *grande dame* of SWA, Colleen Barrett, were the secret to SWA's success. They feared that, if Kelleher and Barrett were not at the helm, the Company would not be able to retain its unique personality and spirit. Both leaders have stepped back from their leadership positions now and there exists no evidence that the Culture is suffering, a true testament to the philosophy having been authentically ingrained in the hearts and minds of the next generation of leaders.

AMCA has had the privilege and pleasure of working with SWA for almost 20 years, serving inside the Culture Committee, a highly dedicated team of 120 volunteers from all parts of the company with this stated mission:

To help create the SOUTHWEST SPIRIT and Culture where needed; to enrich it and make it better where it already exists; and to liven

it up in places where it might be floundering. In short, this group's goal is to do 'WHATEVER IT TAKES' to create, enhance, and enrich the special SOUTHWEST SPIRIT and Culture that has made this such a wonderful Company/Family. (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007)

What is the special DNA that makes this company such a great place to work and produces unmatched productivity and financial performance, year after year? As one SWA Employee told us, 'if someone came in modelling leadership based on coercive power, we would rise up and drum them out of the Company! We hold each other accountable to be and grow servant-leaders on a daily basis! An important part of our culture is to be self-correcting' (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007).

We have had many opportunities to observe and interview pilots and flight attendants, gate agents and skycaps, reservations agents and luggage handlers. Each time we have asked, 'How have you learned to stay so cheerful and bring such creative Customer service when you are bombarded with Customers, many of whom are grumpy, demanding and rude?' We have been amazed at how consistently the answers come back:

I have learned that my job is not just to do my obvious job, but to provide Positively Outrageous Customer Service in every way I can to both internal and external Customers.

And another:

My job is to make sure every Customer has such a delightful experience flying Southwest Airlines that they tell all their friends and colleagues to come fly with us! And even more importantly that they keep coming back! We need every seat filled to make a profit. And profit keeps me employed. (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007)

Indeed, SWA has recorded 36 years of consecutive profitability, something unmatched in the airline industry.

In studying the unique DNA of Southwest Airlines culture, here are some of the consistent patterns.

- **Recruit people who already have a very positive attitude towards teamwork and the maturity to put serving others before serving self**
Their philosophy is to recruit for attitude and then teach skills. Of course, there are some jobs – such as being a pilot – where the person must be licensed. Yet, within those candidates, they have found ways to screen for pilots whose nature is to be servants of others rather

than the sky gods so prevalent in this profession. When pilots are interviewed, the way they treat those who might be seen as the least among them is carefully noted.

A classic story is told of one candidate who flew in from another city and was both rude and arrogant to the gate agent and a receptionist en route. He had already been rejected as a candidate before he made it to what he considered to be his interview. 'If a person is rude to anyone when they are coming to interview, how could we expect them to do better at the end of a long day when flights are full, Customers are tired, team members need help stowing strollers and an elderly Customer needs a little extra assistance getting from a wheel chair into her seat? The best time to catch this personality flaw is before you sign a contract' (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007). It is easier to teach cheerful, collaborative people the work skills necessary than it is to try to change the attitude of selfish, self-centred people!

- **The customer comes second!**

There is another philosophy deep in the DNA of SWA. You will not hear it outside, as they are careful to not speak about it externally out of concern that it could easily be misunderstood. We were startled the first time we heard Colleen Barrett correct a consultant who was addressing the Culture Committee with his wisdom of 'the Customer always comes first'. 'No', she politely corrected him. 'We believe the Customer comes second. What we mean by this is that all of us in top leadership and management positions must treat our Employees with the same Positively Outrageous Service that we expect our Employees to extend to our external Customers. How can they be gracious, gregarious, and generous of spirit if those serving them are judgmental, grumpy, demanding or aloof? We must model Southwest Spirit in all that we do and say' (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007).

- **The pay scale through the company is the antithesis of most other airlines and major companies.**

Southwest pays their top leaders significantly less than do competitors. There is a hidden benefit within this practice. People attracted by money and motivated by greed, power and visible perks will not be attracted to SWA. 'In short, those who value money over People go elsewhere' (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007).

SWA has no pension programme. But, true to all other aspects of SWA, this is not a way to be stingy with entry level Employees. Rather, they were the first airline to bring profit sharing to all levels of Employees and the first to give stock options to those other than

top executives. Their 401K plan is generously weighted so that Employees can manage their own investments and enjoy a much more generous package if they make SWA a career than they would at a competitor airline with the kinds of packages offered there.

Once, we talked with two reservation agents who had been hired within the past year from a competitor airline. Each had served in a significantly higher position for approximately 20 years. I asked how their year at SWA compared with their previous employer. 'We both only wish we had started at Southwest Airlines!' was their response.

- **Promote from within**

It is rare for SWA to bring in a senior leader from the outside. A major part of this is that they want to model and make a reality that Southwest offers great careers. Everyone starts at the bottom and works their way up. By learning the business from a front line position, leaders have a better appreciation for the kind of support these Employees need and deserve. Also, they are far more likely to be excellent role models, having been selected based on both their servant leadership qualities and technical competencies. And, of course, when Employees see people at the top who have worked up from entry level positions, the message is clear. The only limits on your future are the ones you choose to put on yourself and your capacity to dream and grow. If you are willing to invest your best effort, SWA will provide the training, mentors, and opportunities. And will make it great fun along the way!

- **Learn to ask good questions, listen at a deep level, and acknowledge the value of each person.**

Colleen Barrett carefully recruited 38 outstanding role models of Southwest Spirit from a widely diverse range of professional levels, from skycaps to mechanics to secretaries to captains. Then she began to listen carefully. The Culture Committee began by meeting one full day four times a year. Every member serves as a volunteer on their own time. Most fly in from other parts of the nation (which can take one day each way for travel). So, this means a minimum annual twelve-day commitment.

Colleen always begins the gatherings by asking good questions:

- What are our biggest challenges from your perspective?
- What might keep us from achieving the Positively Outrageous Customer Service which is our hallmark?

- Where should we put our efforts this year in support of our People?' (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007)

She is known for finding 1000 seemingly small ways to demonstrate and express the high regard SWA has for each person. For example, from the beginning, she and Herb Kelleher have sent a personal birthday card and acknowledgment of all significant life events – such as weddings, illnesses, graduations, births, deaths, and such – to all Employees. With the company now over 35,000 Employees, this is no easy job! Yet, because this has been modelled from the beginning, it is now a custom practised by top managers, working in conjunction with the Internal Customer Care Team.

- **Constant celebrations and frequent appreciation**

The Culture Committee is all about keeping work fun. From the first year, this creative team began brainstorming ways to create special events to honour the least among us. One early example which has become a much anticipated annual tradition is called Heroes of the Heart. Each Valentine's Day there is a special celebration honouring some group of heroes within the organization. Anyone can nominate a group. The criteria are that it be a department that works behind the scenes but whose work, attitude and generosity of spirit are critical to the on-going success of SWA.

Over the years, several aspects of this celebration have become traditional. For example, several hundred Employees gather at 10:30 am on 14 February in the great hall that welcomes People to the Southwest Corporate Headquarters, adjacent to Love Field in Dallas. Upbeat music is playing; a zillion balloons have been woven into garlands and arches to transform this area into a wonderland of hearts. A special camera crew is set up to capture the event and project it onto large screens so all can see as scores of Employees watch from several levels of the building.

Halloween is another outrageous tradition. Their very large corporate headquarters is transformed into a Halloween fun house for the day. Children of Employees and from the community are welcomed to Trick or Treat. A testament to how important Employees view SWA celebrations is markedly revealed by one who told me, 'I learned early to always check the Company calendar for events before planning my vacation. They are so much fun you really don't want to miss!' Now that's a new twist. An Employee who enjoys work so much she'd rather be at work getting in on Company events than miss out by being away on vacation!

- **Living the Vision or walking the talk is another vibrant strand of Southwest Airlines DNA**

Herb Kelleher really does love people. He is known for his extraordinary ability to remember people's names and details about their families. From the very beginning, he has learned from and lifted up those around him. He and Colleen Barrett, who began as his legal assistant, are an inspiring example of strength through difference. Herb is a gregarious extrovert, with the tendency to wander off task frequently. So much so that, years ago, Colleen had the carpenters come in and wall over the back door to his office so he couldn't wander off and sabotage the schedule she carefully managed for him. Colleen, on the other hand, is very focused. They laugh and tell this story as an example of both the humility to be led and the courage to step in and make things better.

- **Diversity: growing strength through difference.**

One of the foundational secrets to SWA's great, winning culture is their commitment to diversity. Over half of all their leaders at all levels are women. Minorities are well represented in their ranks of leaders. And responsibility is given liberally to very young Employees working at all levels. In addition, they do a great job of balancing strength through difference.

One of the early stories we found fascinating was about how Colleen Barrett, when first hired as Herb Kelleher's legal secretary, took the opportunity to get his mountains of paper organized. Herb went on vacation and Colleen went to work. One of the senior partners in his law firm looked in to see Colleen hard at work organizing. At that time, Herb had one office to welcome Clients and another which was stacked with paper. The senior partner asked Colleen what she was doing. She replied that she was opening files and organizing Mr. Kelleher's records. He replied, 'Oh, don't do that! He'll fire you. This is the way he likes it.' To which Colleen responded, 'He can't fire me. He won't be able to find anything without my help' (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007).

From that day onward, they have been a highly productive team: Colleen contributing through her skills of organization and her incredible gut instinct for supporting people, and Herb being Herb – gregarious, fun-loving, unpredictable and rarely on schedule. Both are servant-leaders, and their role model of keeping work fun and playing to strengths has inspired an organization to 'be yourself and find balancing opposites to support and help you grow' (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007).

- **The most significant arrow in their quiver is LUV.**

This is their ident on the stock exchange, and is the glue that holds SWA together. The word is used often with sincerity and delight.

They love people, both internal and external, Customers, suppliers, vendors, and community. They are passionate about their Company, to the point of making spontaneous personal sacrifices early and often as appropriate. And they obviously love their work, which they refer to as giving the freedom to fly to everyone by making it affordable, frequent and with unmatched service.

How does SWA sustain their culture to be more than a 'feel good' programme and to move beyond the personality of one or two charismatic leaders? We think the answer lies in understanding the foundation of the culture and the deep work done over the years within the Culture Committee: by carefully selecting leaders and coaching them in the principles of servant leadership, modelling this extraordinary culture of sacrificing to keep alive their Company and their vision; by creating a spirit of family, truly caring and being there for each other; by honestly believing that each person has ideas worth hearing and listening respectfully to, then building on the good ideas of Employees; by making it fun to work together each day; and, by rigorously holding themselves and each other accountable to this vision they call Southwest Spirit, when adversity comes, they are prepared. They have a great deal of practice stepping into the gap, making decisions, supporting each other, learning from mistakes and turning problems into opportunities.

Who can forget their response to 9-11, when their three top leaders quickly and quietly agreed to work without pay until the crisis had passed? Not one Employee was laid off and across the following year, 4000 new Employees were hired to make sure they did not compromise their extraordinary Customer service, given the new security restrictions that were added by the NSA and the Department of Homeland Security. SWA refused to solve budget shortfalls by giving loyal Employees leave of absence and, due to heroic efforts and generous sacrifices by thousands of Employees, they remained profitable for every quarter during this crisis.

So, typical of Southwest Spirit, their Employees asked for a way to give back salary during this period. A 'Pledge to LUV' fund was set up and many Employees volunteered to work for significantly less pay until the Company was again profitable. Even loyal Customers sent funds to help the Company survive. This illustrates the unlimited potential of their unique DNA. To quote Colleen, 'It's simply practicing the Golden Rule. Treat others the way you want to be treated' (McGee-Cooper *et al.*, 2007). When Employees can trust their Company to stand by them in crisis, they then rise to the challenge to save their Company ... and they did!

SWA cultivates and encourages Employees to strive to realize their full potential (something Employees in other companies often cite is lacking in their workplace). SWA Employees really understand and appreciate that *they* are the Company and it is up to them whether their Company succeeds or fails. As a company embodying the principles of servant leadership, SWA speaks volumes about how effective these principles are in creating a truly sustainable business.

Building sustainable servant-led organizations

What we have observed at SWA and TDIndustries – both of which have had legacy leaders step down in the recent past and a new generation of leaders take their places – can be crystallized thus: in order to sustain true servant leadership cultures, both companies started decades ago investing in growing Employees and a corporate culture *on a regular and consistent basis* so that the culture of servant leadership is woven into all business practices and the minds and hearts of all Leaders and Employees.

Organizations that purposefully foster servant-led cultures reap long-term results. Participating in learning communities with other SL organizations adds breadth and depth to the process.

SLLC[®]s connect SL organizations across the globe

If SLLC[®]s could effectively support and nurture great places to work within the local community (and we have seen proof of that), what about broadening the SLLC[®] experience to include servant-led organizations across the nation – even across the globe? Could the next step be offering the SLLC[®] experience virtually? The Dallas-based SLLC[®] is a place where business and community leaders learn more quickly to put the principles of servant leadership into practical use and infuse it into their communities. In this age of digital technology, connecting servant-leaders virtually in organizations around the world seemed like the next extension of an idea that was already working. In September 2008, AMCA launched, in partnership with the Greenleaf Center and the Sophia Foundation, the first global Servant Leadership Learning Community[®], which we call a Virtual SLLC[®].

Thirteen extraordinary leaders participated in this first VSLLC[®] (Virtual Servant Leadership Learning Community[®]) from cities across the United States, as well as Canada, and The Netherlands. Their stories and insights are rich. The facilitators were Dr Deborah Voegelé-Welch (AMCA), Dr Ginny Gilmore (Sophia Foundation) and Dr Ann McGee-Cooper. The

format consisted of five large-group tele-circle meetings and four small-group meetings; each meeting lasted 75 minutes and was held by means of a tele-circle (a telephone call that is designed as if the participants were sitting in a circle in dialogue): the meetings were conducted over a period of ten months. The purpose was chiefly to develop the art of serving others among those who were already practised servant-leaders. The goals and objectives for the programme became unique for each individual. We followed a framework of innovation and practised listening, coaching, and the disciplines of growing authentic learning communities as described by Robert Greenleaf, Peter Senge and other visionaries.

The community of leaders shared profound insights and strides in inner work and growth as servant-leaders. Additionally, they actively worked on some kind of SLLC® project, whether it be to form servant leadership learning circles in their own communities or to introduce servant leadership to an organization or university course. A few chose to focus their time to deepen their own inner journey as servant-leaders.

A small sampling of comments shared at the end of this experience reveals the breadth and depth of learning that participants realized. One attorney and consultant from Indiana told us, 'This year's journey with our Virtual SLLC® took me much deeper – from intellectualizing servant leadership to experiencing it through reflection, listening, and more.'

The participant and business consultant from The Netherlands told us: 'I was somewhat clear on my vision coming in; ever since this vision became clearer, sometimes because I understand myself better, sometimes because I can shape [my] business better. To me, it feels as if moving a wide-angle camera lens into focus. Suddenly what was already there jumps magically into clear view and there is excitement as I recognize unlimited potential in all this and my place in it.'

The professor from Duke University Graduate School of Business in Durham, North Carolina, shared the benefits he found for not only himself, but also for his students:

I grew in confidence that if I continue to seek and move toward light rather than move away in fear, I can help people take their own steps toward wholeness. After [initially] allowing a powerful academic environment to diminish my own voice, I reaffirmed my calling to be present with my own servant leadership voice and to create a learning experience based on full human authenticity and the enduring core values ... My MBA students entered the class mostly espousing the conventional dogma that the only purpose of business is to maximize profits for shareholders ... In their final reflections [however], nearly

all of the students explicitly affirmed the liberating notion that being their best, most authentic selves is the best way to achieve sustained excellence in business.

Margaret Mead wisely observed that it only takes a small group of dedicated individuals to change the world. This is our experience in the Dallas SLLC® and our newly launched VSLLC®, where individuals are learning to live the change they want to see in the world and to collaborate with others to transform their organizations and communities for the good of all. Are SLLC®s incubators for great places to work by nurturing community among servant-led business environments? We would answer with a resounding *YES!*

It is important that the quality of your life be extraordinary; and that you carry this quality into the work of the world Robert K. Greenleaf. (Frick, 2004)

Notes

1. Carrollton Police Department, Celebration Restaurant, Parkland Hospital, the Bill Priest Institute for Economic Development, Luminant Energy (formerly TXU), Texas Instruments, Balfour Beatty Construction, Tempo Mechanical Services, Collin County Supervision and Correctional Department, Furniture Marketing Group.
2. The authors have adopted TDIndustries' style of capitalizing 'Partner' and Southwest Airlines practice of capitalizing 'Employee', 'Company', and 'Customers' to reflect the respectful terminology used in these organizations.

Part IV

Servant-Leaders' Influence on Followers

12

Servant Leadership and Follower Need Satisfaction: Where Do We Go From Here?

David M. Mayer

Given the fallout from the global financial crisis and the plethora of corporate scandals around the world in the past decade, many citizens are fed up with organizational leaders who they perceive to be corrupt. Perhaps as a response to public sentiment, many organizational scholars have started developing and examining leadership that has an ethical component (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Brown and Treviño, 2006; Northouse, 2001; van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2007). One leadership style – servant leadership – has been the subject of several theoretical and empirical articles as of late and, of course, is the focus of this entire book. Servant leadership is distinct from related styles of leadership, as the leader is viewed as a ‘servant’ to help satisfy the needs of his or her followers (Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, 1970, 1977). At a time in history when business leaders have damaged reputations and are overwhelmingly thought of as selfish and greedy, the increased interest in servant leadership is refreshing, relevant, and important.

In this chapter, I have three primary objectives. First, in an effort to highlight what is unique about servant leadership, I briefly review seminal and recent works on servant leadership to demonstrate the explicit focus on follower needs. This is important, because it helps to distinguish servant leadership from related constructs. Second, I present a theoretical model with need satisfaction as a mediator of the relationship between servant leadership and follower attitudes and behaviours. I succinctly walk through the model identifying the key linkages. Third, I provide several recommendations for future research on servant leadership. I am encouraged that some recent articles have been published in excellent journals (for example, Ehrhart, 2004; Neubert *et al.*, 2008), and I provide some suggestions to increase the rigour and visibility of

work on servant leadership so that it can thrive as a mainstream leadership construct in the management literature.

Servant leadership and follower needs

There are several leadership constructs that have an ethical component: charismatic leadership, ethical leadership, spiritual leadership, fair leadership, and authentic leadership (see Avolio *et al.*, 2009, for a review). Although there are many commonalities between these leadership styles and servant leadership, I argue that there is one key aspect of servant leadership that is unique – the explicit focus on and concern for follower needs. This unequivocal focus on follower needs and follower personal and professional development separates servant leadership from these related forms of leadership. This focus on follower needs is articulated by several prominent authors on servant leadership. For example, Greenleaf (1970), who introduced the concept of servant leadership approximately four decades ago, was adamant about this focus on follower needs. His statement on the topic was clear and concise: to be a servant-leader one must, ‘first make sure that other people’s highest priority *needs* are being served’ (Greenleaf, 1970: p. 4). Clearly, from the outset, a concern for meeting follower needs was a central aspect of the servant leadership construct.

Other scholars have followed suit. For example, in her influential theoretical piece on servant leadership, Graham (1991) notes that servant-leaders are ‘sensitive to the needs and desires of all organizational stakeholders’ (p. 117). Clearly, Graham emphasizes that servant-leaders are concerned with whether their followers’ needs are being met.

In addition, some recent articles have emphasized the connection between servant leadership and follower needs. For example, Matteson and Irving (2006) stated that, ‘servant leadership is essentially focused on placing the *needs* of followers before personal interests’ (p. 36). Similarly, Liden *et al.* (2008: p. 162) state that servant-leaders strive to ‘develop employees to their fullest potential’. Such development highlights the concern for employees’ personal and professional needs for growth. Finally, the primary focus of the work by Mayer *et al.* (2008) was the empirical linking of servant leadership and follower need satisfaction.

The theoretical and empirical work noted above shares a common theme: servant leadership is about satisfying the needs of followers. Whereas other leadership styles have ethical components, servant leadership is the only theory with this explicit focus on follower needs and,

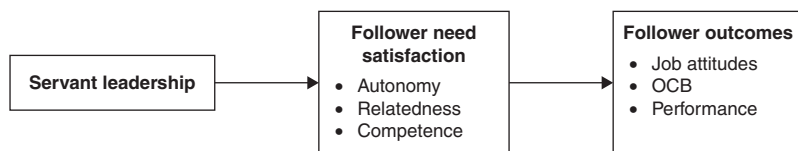


Figure 12.1 Theoretical model of servant leadership and follower need satisfaction

by extension, the development and growth of the follower. Given this link, in the next section I present a theoretical model (see Figure 12.1) that may be useful for empirically linking servant leadership to follower need satisfaction, and the positive outcomes that stem from having one's needs satisfied.

A theoretical model linking servant leadership and follower need satisfaction

Although theory has heralded servant leadership as a form of leadership with an explicit focus on follower needs, there is a surprisingly small amount of empirical research that has explored whether servant-leaders do, in fact, satisfy their followers' basic needs and, ultimately, whether this need satisfaction translates into positive job attitudes and behaviours (see Mayer *et al.*, 2008, for an exception). Given the fundamental role of follower needs in the servant leadership construct, I argue that:

- this link should be made explicit in empirical research
- need satisfaction will mediate the relationship between servant leadership and several positive work-related attitudes and behaviours.

In what follows, I briefly describe the links in the theoretical model presented in Figure 12.1. This model is not meant to be exhaustive but, rather, an initial foray to stimulate thought and future research linking servant leadership to follower outcomes through follower need satisfaction.

Servant leadership to need satisfaction

As highlighted earlier, a hallmark of servant leadership is the focus on follower needs. There is an extensive literature in social psychology examining different types of basic human need. Perhaps the most well-established needs-based theory of motivation is self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 1985). SDT defines needs as 'innate psychological nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological

growth, integrity and well-being' (Deci and Ryan, 2000: p. 229). Three basic needs comprise SDT:

- autonomy – feeling in control of one's environment
- competence – feeling confident and capable
- relatedness – feeling connected to others.

A premise of SDT is that satisfying these three basic human needs is critical for developing a positive sense of subjective well-being, and that an inability to satisfy these needs leads to dysfunctional attitudes and behaviour.

Servant-leaders should be able to help satisfy these three basic human needs at work. In terms of *autonomy*, servant-leaders are not micro managers. These leaders are interested in the development of their followers and give them space to grow on their own. Because servant-leaders want to see their followers thrive and develop as autonomous individuals, they provide space to allow their followers to do their job. In terms of *competence*, servant-leaders want to see their followers develop a sense of confidence and mastery over their work. By providing autonomy, servant-leaders communicate that they have faith in their followers to do a good job, and this belief in the ability of followers is likely to translate into an increased sense of competence. In terms of *relatedness*, servant-leaders make it explicit to followers that they are interested in helping them grow, develop, and succeed. This support is likely to make employees feel more connected to their leader and work group, and to feel valued; it also creates a sense of belonging at work. Thus, servant-leaders, with their focus on follower needs and development, should help satisfy these three basic human needs.

Need satisfaction to job attitudes and behaviour

The second part of the proposed theoretical model focuses on the link between need satisfaction, and employee attitudes and behaviour. In an effort to understand how servant leadership impacts follower outcomes that have implications for organizational performance, it is important to examine how need satisfaction relates to these valued outcomes.

Perhaps the most commonly studied job attitude is job satisfaction. Although the link between job satisfaction and performance has been purported to be small, in recent years there has been mounting support for a substantial relationship between job satisfaction and job performance (Harrison *et al.*, 2006). Several theories of job satisfaction highlight

the importance of basic need satisfaction. As an example, Herzberg's two-factor theory of job satisfaction highlights two categories of factors that influence satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with one's job (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959). Herzberg *et al.* suggest that job satisfaction is caused by motivators (for example, achievement, recognition, advancement, responsibility), whereas job dissatisfaction is caused by hygiene factors (for example, pay, working conditions, peer relations). It is critical to note that motivation and hygiene factors are expected to influence job satisfaction because these factors influence the satisfaction of basic human needs such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness as described by SDT.

Another theory that links basic need satisfaction and job satisfaction is the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). The job characteristics model suggests that jobs are more intrinsically motivating for employees when they are high in variety (for example, using many skills and talents), identity (for example, working on all aspects of a piece of work), significance (for example, impacting others' lives), autonomy (for example, performing job duties freely), and feedback (for example, receiving information about expectations and performance requirements). These job characteristics are expected to influence employee's fundamental human needs such as autonomy and competence, which ultimately influence motivation and job satisfaction. Meta-analyses have linked the job characteristics model to job satisfaction (Fried and Ferris, 1987; Loher *et al.*, 1985).

In addition to job satisfaction, the satisfaction of basic needs can also improve commitment to the supervisor and the organization. Consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), when employees have their needs taken care of by servant-leaders, they are likely to feel a sense of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) to behave in ways that are beneficial to the supervisor. Thus, given that one's needs are satisfied, a follower will probably remain committed to the supervisor and organization.

Social exchange theory is also a useful lens with which to understand the link between need satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and task performance. When employees are given freedom to do their jobs, instilled with trust from their leader, and provided support, they will probably feel obligated to engage in behaviours that support their leader. Given that leaders try to motivate their employees to reach group goals and objectives, employees who have their needs satisfied by the leader recognize the importance of the group's success to the leader and therefore engage in behaviours that help the group perform well. These behaviours include going above and beyond what is prescribed in

one's job duties, and performing well at core aspects of one's job. Thus, need satisfaction should improve followers' OCB and performance.

In sum, the proposed theoretical model links servant-leadership to favourable follower job attitudes and behaviour through the mechanism of follower need satisfaction. Although the model is not exhaustive, it highlights an important mechanism for understanding servant leadership effects – a mechanism that is at the core of the concept of servant leadership: the satisfaction of follower needs. In what follows, I provide some suggestions for testing this model, as well as other avenues for future research.

Future directions for servant leadership research

Although there is considerable interest in servant leadership, it has yet to develop into a mainstream management construct, with articles regularly being published in the top management journals. I believe that servant leadership shows much promise as a construct, and that there is an important place for this form of leadership within the leadership literature. The explicit focus on follower needs provides a unique theoretical perspective on leadership that I believe can benefit the organizational literature. In an effort to see servant leadership continue to garner interest and attain status in the most prominent journals, I provide some suggestions for how to help this area of inquiry thrive.

Test and extend proposed theoretical model

Perhaps unsurprisingly, I believe that testing the model I propose in this chapter would be useful on many fronts. First, it would highlight what is truly unique about servant leadership: a focus on follower needs. Second, it could empirically establish that the theoretical link between servant leadership and follower needs is, in fact, perceived by followers. Third, by linking servant leadership to valuable follower outcomes (through follower need satisfaction), this area of inquiry will have some practical value that managers will be unable to ignore. Indeed, by linking servant leadership to outcomes, organizations and managers desire for successful and beneficial outcomes will undoubtedly increase interest in servant leadership.

Also, rather than focusing solely on need satisfaction as a mediator, it would be useful to explore alternative mechanisms, such as social exchange and social identity processes. It would be a wonderful next step to include these multiple mechanisms in the same study to determine which mechanism(s) serve to underlie servant leadership effects.

Empirical demonstration of the distinctiveness of the construct

In an effort to gain legitimacy, it is critical that servant leadership be empirically distinct from related constructs. Theoretically, I tried to make the case that there are differences between servant leadership and other related constructs. However, this case also must be made empirically. There are two important approaches to demonstrating the distinctiveness of servant leadership. First, it is important, using factor analysis, to show that servant leadership is distinct from related constructs. Second, it is critical to demonstrate that servant leadership explains unique variance in valued outcomes above and beyond related leadership constructs. If scholars are able to highlight the fact that servant leadership is unique in these ways, this affords the opportunity to make an important contribution to the leadership literature.

Measurement of servant leadership

Several different measures of servant leadership have been utilized. For example, some have used the measure developed by Ehrhart (2004), which is uni-dimensional and contains 14 items (Mayer *et al.*, 2008; Neubert *et al.*, 2008). Recently, new measures have been developed. For example, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) developed a measure that empirically supports a five-dimensional framework. Chapter 14 describes an instrument that builds on Patterson's (2003) theoretical framework. In addition, Liden *et al.* (2008) created a measure of servant leadership and found evidence of a seven-factor operationalization. Most recently, Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (in press) developed an eight-dimensional measure (see also Chapter 13). It is important for scholars interested in servant leadership to come together to agree on a single measure of servant leadership. When there is a generally accepted measure, scholars can seek to tackle the first two issues mentioned: the empirical linking of servant leadership with follower need satisfaction and valued outcomes while controlling for related types of leadership.

Examine boundary conditions

The model presented in Figure 12.1 is purposefully simple and underspecified. However, future work that examines contingencies of the links in the model would be interesting. For example: What individual differences or contextual variables moderate the relationship between servant leadership and need satisfaction? What individual differences or contextual variables moderate servant leadership to the outcomes of interest? In this respect, the suggestions made in Chapter 8 could

be valuable. Such nuances would provide a beneficial extension of the servant leadership literature. There is scant research that has examined boundary conditions of servant leadership effects; such research would be a boon both theoretically and practically.

Incorporating multilevel models

One trend in the leadership literature is to test leadership using multi-level models (Avolio *et al.*, 2009). It would be interesting, for example, to examine whether employees generally have a shared perception of servant leadership (Ehrhart, 2004). In addition, it would be intriguing to explore cross-level moderators to examine whether aspects of the work context moderate the relationship between servant leadership, and individual-level attitudes and behaviours. By incorporating multilevel models, this literature could be enriched, and provide an opportunity to make a theoretical and empirical contribution.

Conclusion

With the increased distrust of corporate leaders in society, it is refreshing to focus on a form of leadership that is the antithesis of self-interest and greed. Indeed, servant leadership is an other-focused form of leadership that is concerned with the needs and development of followers. In this chapter, I have explicitly made the link between servant leadership and follower needs, presented a theoretical model illustrating this connection, and provided several recommendations for future work on servant leadership. The focus on servant leadership is timely, and will probably be well-regarded; however, research must have the requisite scientific rigour in order to be published in top journals, thereby affording this field the opportunity to gain legitimacy within the mainstream management literature.

13

Enhancing Innovation and Creativity through Servant Leadership

Dirk van Dierendonck and Laurens Rook

Creativity is of vital importance for organizations that compete in globally operating markets faced with market dynamics and determined to stay ahead of the competition. In such organizations, employees have to constantly generate products and services that are original and innovative (for example, Basadur, 2004). In this light, many studies suggest that the maintenance and/or improvement of intrinsic motivation among individual employees in the workplace is key to the proper management of organizational creativity (Amabile, 1996). In the organizational context, there is a growing need for adequate knowledge on the relationship between leadership and creativity (Zhou and Shalley, 2008), particularly given the crucial influence that leadership exerts on the learning processes that are so vital to creativity. Servant leadership theory may be specifically suited for understanding the management of creativity and innovation because of its employee-focused nature, which aims at enhancing the intrinsic motivation of employees. In this chapter, we present a model for servant leadership and creativity, building on the observation that the encouragement of followers, largely, to manage their own work is not only the defining feature of a servant-leader, but is also the key element in the management of creativity in the organizational setting.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will first define creativity within the context of organizations. Second, we will provide a specific measurement-based definition of servant leadership. Third, we will offer a business case to illustrate the viability of a servant leadership perspective on organizational creativity. In conclusion, we will present a model for servant leadership and creativity, and describe the specific mediating mechanism through which we propose servant leadership is related to creativity (Figure 13.1).

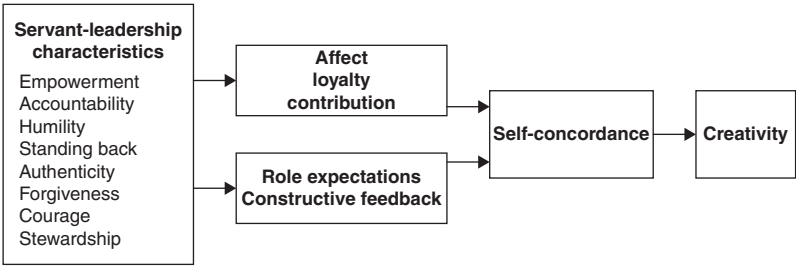


Figure 13.1 A conceptual model of servant leadership and creativity

What is creativity?

Creativity is a widely recognized and important topic in behavioural research (Amabile, 1996; Zhou and Shalley, 2008). Creativity is thought to serve as prerequisite for innovation and, thus, substantially add to a company’s competitive advantage (Amabile, 1988; Oldham and Cummings, 1996). In everyday life, creativity is mostly understood as relating to or involving the use of imagination or original ideas in order to create something, but within the organizational context it has been defined as a continuous process of thinking innovatively and implementing new solutions (Basadur, 2004). The most common conceptualization of creativity in the organizational domain, though, is to perceive creativity as the generation of novel and potentially useful products and ideas (Amabile, 1996; Shalley *et al.*, 2004). It should be acknowledged that slightly different conceptualizations exist in various sub-domains of organizational creativity that are directly targeted to tackle a specific area of interest. For instance, in organizational brainstorming literature, creativity tends to be defined in terms of quantity – that is, the more ideas one produces, the more creative one is considered to be (Diehl and Stroebe, 1987).

Given the importance of creativity in an organizational setting, a vast literature has focused on the effects of various personal and contextual factors on creative performance in the workplace (Amabile, 1996; Shalley *et al.*, 2004; Zhou and Shalley, 2008). Of course, people must possess particular skills and/or talents in order to be creative – in other words, they must have a base-rate level of creative potential. However, one of the key findings in the literature is the recognition that someone’s intrinsic motivation is closely connected to creative performance (Amabile, 1996). Specifically, people need to be intrinsically motivated

to engage in creative problem-solving, whereas those people that are primarily extrinsically motivated (that is, driven by sources outside themselves instead of by an inner drive directly related to the task itself) usually display limited creativity. Over the years, researchers in organizational creativity have explored many possible managerial activities that may bolster, rather than hinder, the individual creativity of an employee through intrinsic motivation. Increasingly, however, it has been recognized that many contextual factors play an important role in the creative process in organizational setting – that is, the individual employee in a creative organization does not work alone but, rather, with groups of other people that sometimes are direct colleagues in a project team, but at other times are more loosely connected consultants or external experts (Hargadon, 2002; Hargadon and Sutton, 1997). These groups will have some form of leadership structure to guide the whole process. Given the scale and scope of such larger groups of creative employees, leadership is an important issue in the field of organizational creativity, and an intriguing question arises: ‘What sort of a leader best facilitates the creative process in an organizational setting?’

Servant leadership and creativity

In an organizational setting, many factors have been put forward that, in one way or another, refer to the importance of climates and cultures on employee creativity (West and Richter, 2008). Most of these factors build on the assumption that, when employees explore new roads and try to find new solutions, it is critical to allow a flow of innovative thinking (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Edmondson, 1999; Hargadon, 2002; Hargadon and Sutton, 1997). Even imperfect or openly stupid ideas may result in promising new products or avenues for further creative exploration. The consequence of a managerial assumption that there is no such thing as a stupid idea is the facilitation of an open social environment that allows for the free flow of ideas, and the open exploration of ideas that might initially seem peculiar. Furthermore, management should provide an environment in which employees are enabled to explore their most extreme ideas anywhere and at any time – in the middle of the night, in strict isolation, while away on holiday rather than in the office, or even in the company canteen (cf. Hargadon and Sutton, 1997).

Creative people are usually experts in their area, with a strong need for achievement and autonomy (Mumford *et al.*, 2002). They are able to explore new avenues under conditions of ambiguity. As such, they

need a work environment that allows for experimentation and making mistakes within a culture characterized by an open exchange of ideas. In that respect, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) has pointed to the importance of facilitating flow experiences in the creative process. 'Flow' refers to a subjective experience of full involvement with the tasks at which people are working. In an organizational setting, 'flow' implies that a creative employee must feel that his or her talents are fully explored, that there is full opportunity to further develop his or her talents, and that this can be done in an organizational climate that is not too stressful or demanding (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Servant-leadership may be a particularly effective leadership style, given the specific nature of creative people.

In defining servant-leadership, we draw from a recent measure developed by Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (in press). Based on a careful screening of the literature on servant-leadership and an extensive psychometric study, eight characteristics were distilled. These eight characteristics are positioned to give a good overview of servant-leadership behaviour as experienced by followers. Servant-leaders empower and develop people; they show humility and stand back, are authentic, accept people for what they are by showing forgiveness, provide direction in day-to-day work through courage and accountability, and are stewards that work for the good of the whole. Each of the eight dimensions can play its own role in helping to create such an open culture.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a motivational concept focused on enabling people (Conger, 2000). It aims at fostering a proactive, self-confident attitude among followers, and gives them a sense of personal power. Studies on leadership imply a positive relation between empowering followers and organizational effectiveness (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Empowering leadership behaviour includes aspects such as encouraging self-directed decision-making, the sharing of information, and coaching for innovative performance (Konczak *et al.*, 2000). Empowering leadership emphasizes employee self-influence processes, and actively encourages followers to use self-leadership strategies (Cox *et al.*, 2003). Through this process of self-leadership, people move towards self-direction and self-motivation, which both are essential for creativity.

Accountability

Accountability can be posited alongside empowering leader behaviour (Konczak *et al.*, 2000), and emphasizes that reallocating power

by delegating authority goes together with responsibility for the outcomes (Ford and Fottler, 1995). Accountability is about giving people clear goals to strive for, but also holding them responsible for the achievement of these goals. Accountability ensures that people know what is expected of them, which is beneficial for both employees and the organization (Froiland *et al.*, 1993).

Humility

Humility is the ability to put one's own accomplishments and talents into a proper perspective (Patterson, 2003). Servant-leaders dare to admit they can benefit from the expertise of others. They actively seek the contributions of others. An element of humility is the willingness to *stand back*, putting the interest of others first and facilitating their performance. It is also about modesty; a servant-leader retreats into the background when a task has been successfully accomplished. Together, humility and standing back help create a learning environment where mistakes are allowed. It fosters a social climate that encourages experimentation and creativity.

Authenticity

Authenticity is closely related to expressing the 'true self', expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings (Harter, 2002). Authenticity is about being true to oneself, accurately representing – privately and publicly – internal states, intentions and commitments (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). By owning one's personal experiences – be they thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs – creative ideas will be accessed and allowed.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the ability to forgive – for example offences, arguments, and mistakes. It means letting go of perceived wrongdoings and not carrying a grudge into other situations (McCullough *et al.*, 2000). For servant-leaders who want to encourage creativity, it is important to create an atmosphere of trust where people feel accepted, are free to make mistakes, and know that they will not be rejected (Ferch, 2005). By not being revengeful or eager to get even, a setting is created that brings out the best in people.

Courage

Courage is pro-active behaviour focused on creating new ways, finding new approaches to old problems, and having strong reliance on the

values and convictions that govern one's actions (Russell and Stone, 2002). By daring to take risks and challenging the conventional models of working behaviours, innovation and creativity come to the surface.

Stewardship

Stewardship is the willingness to take responsibility for the larger institution and to commit oneself to service, instead of seeking control and indulging in self-interest (Block, 1993; Spears, 1995). Leaders should not only act as caretakers; they should also act as role models for others. By setting the right example, leaders can stimulate others to act in the common interest. Stewardship is closely related to social responsibility, loyalty and team work.

A business case

The management practices at the SAS Institute, the largest private software company in the world, serve to illustrate the management of creativity and innovation using servant leadership. The SAS Institute is based in North Carolina, USA, and was established in 1976. The company has been ranked among the top 20 of *Fortune's* 100 Best Companies to Work For ever since the first publication of that list. SAS provides software to almost all of the top 100 companies on the *Fortune* Global 500, and to 90 per cent of all 500. The employee turnover rate is between 3–5 per cent, whereas the industry average is 20 per cent.

The SAS approach to managing creativity rests on three pillars:

- employees are rewarded by assignment to intellectually engaging tasks
- managers are responsible for facilitating creative 'sparks'
- employees and customers are treated as equal partners in ideas development in order to deliver superior products.

To ensure that SAS employees maximize their creative output, managers concentrate on removing unnecessary obstacles and providing any materials needed. For instance, the SAS campus provides many facilities relating to everyday (family) life (including sports facilities, lunchrooms that are open to all family members and car repair services), and fosters an informal culture in which people can share ideas anywhere and at any time. No distinction exists between 'suits' and 'creatives': CEOs work side-by-side with creative employees, and this managerial practice positively influences collegiality and trust. Importantly, this working

climate goes beyond allowing experimentation aimed at development of better products – making mistakes is considered a vital element of the creative process as mistakes can provide important ‘lessons learned’.

The management of creativity at the SAS Institute essentially is employee-focused, and aimed at triggering employees’ intrinsic motivation. Creative employees at SAS are empowered to work in any way they prefer, but are responsible for the products they deliver. They are free to express themselves as they wish, as long as this yields creative flow, and CEOs not only stand back to allow this flow of creative ideas, but also act as role models that, for instance, write code together with their creative staff. Courage and experimentation are highly valued, but those employees accountable for failed projects usually are welcomed back.

The case study of the SAS Institute, drawn from Florida and Goodnight (2005), is a good example of how a company can manage creativity using the principles of servant leadership.

Mediating processes

Building on the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 2003), we propose three key mediating processes through which servant-leaders encourage creativity:

- role expectations and feedback
- a high-quality leader–follower relationship
- self-concordance.

Previous studies have provided strong evidence that leadership support is related to employee creativity (Tierney, 2008). The extent to which a leader is capable of establishing a working environment that is supportive and stimulating for creativity is one important factor in facilitating creativity on the shop floor. Employees should feel safe and free to experiment (Edmondson, 1999). In that light, it has been shown that, in general, employees perform best in the presence of supportive supervisors and co-workers that may trigger feelings of ease and competence (Zhou, 2003). Moreover, many studies have pointed to elements of leadership style, most essentially relating to the way in which supervisory feedback is communicated to the individual employee. Therefore, role expectations and feedback serve as the first mediating factor in servant leadership of creativity. Specifically, the servant-leader must provide clear role expectations and constructive feedback. When feedback is presented in a controlling manner, the effect is detrimental (Shalley and Perry-Smith, 2001)

whereas, when feedback is informative and constructive, this positively contributes to the flow of creative ideas (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 2003). It helps creative employees to feel competent, to work intuitively, and to have a greater tolerance for ambiguity – which allows them to think outside the box; a controlling atmosphere diminishes creative potential.

Of equal importance to building an open learning-focused culture is the extent to which servant leadership behaviour influences the quality of the relationship between leader and followers. This is expressed in terms of building a good leader–member exchange (LMX) relationship (Ng *et al.*, 2008). LMX theory was put forward as a relationship-based approach to leadership (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), and thus best represents the relational dynamics between servant-leader and follower. The empowering and developmental behaviours shown by servant-leaders are prone to result in a high quality LMX relationship, which is related to engaging more in challenging projects. Such relationships are characterized by mutual trust, respect and obligation.

In our model, we follow the multi-dimensional characterization of a high-quality LMX relationship as conceptualized by Dienesch and Liden (1986) in terms of perceived contribution, loyalty and affect:

- perceived contribution is the amount, direction and quality of the activities each person brings to the table in order to reach mutual goals
- loyalty is the explicit support shown to each other
- affect is the level of positive feelings leaders and followers have for each other.

The choice for these three dimensions was based on the concept of mutuality, which is grounded in social exchange theory. Both servant-leaders and their followers are expected to contribute to the relationship. The development of this relationship over time involves not only their interactions, but also the personal characteristics they bring to the relationship and the behaviour they show to each other.

High-quality relationships lead to an internationalization of the organization's and leader's goals (Hogg, 2008). By building high quality relations, servant-leaders enhance their followers' well-being and their performance, and build a group culture based on loyalty and gratitude. High LMX employees are more likely to take risks and receive the necessary resources and support for creative work. With regard to creativity, this perception of support from and being approved of by the leader can specifically be linked to creative behaviour (Tierney, 2008). An ideal

creative organization should be managed so as to enable each employee's potentialities (in other words, the worker's intrinsic motivations) to find room for expression: the relationship between leader and follower should aim at providing conducive conditions under which workers can experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 2003).

Importantly, the two processes described above facilitate a stronger sense of intrinsic motivation. For that reason, self-concordance (Sheldon and Elliot, 1999) should be considered as the third mediating factor in our model on servant leadership and creativity. Self-concordance is based on self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), and provides an operationalization of intrinsic motivation that is explicitly goal-oriented. Self-concordance refers to the extent to which a person's goals are pursued because of core values and enduring interests (that is, reflecting a core self). A strong sense of self-concordance means that goals are integrated within the self, there is a feeling of ownership, and one experiences an internal locus of causality resulting in proactive behaviour (Bono and Judge, 2003). A central thesis within self-determination theory is that a controlling social context should negatively influence autonomous motivation and thus hinder goal attainment, whereas an autonomy-supportive environment – such as that provided by servant-leadership – is likely to promote internalization and enhance the effect of intrinsically motivated goals (Gagné and Deci, 2005).

No studies yet relate servant leadership with self-concordance, but one study showed that transformational leadership was, indeed, related to self-concordance among followers (Bono and Judge, 2003). Along such lines, indirect evidence exists for the influence that leaders can have on self-concordance among followers. One study showed that instructors' support of autonomy helped a stronger internalization of the follower's goals (Black and Deci, 2000), while a second study revealed that, in a coaching context, the self-concordance level of senior managers' goals was also enhanced (Burke and Linley, 2007). A final study showed that servant leadership had a stronger influence on followers' inclination to nurture others, and to pursue and attain ideals (Neubert *et al.*, 2008). For the study of creativity, these findings seem to suggest that a leader who builds a supportive work environment must encourage people to embrace their intrinsically motivated goals fully, and bring out the best and most creative work. Self-concordance is therefore of vital importance in understanding how servant leadership may be related to creativity.

In sum, the three mediating factors – clear role expectations and feedback from leaders, a high quality dyadic relationship between leader and followers, and followers' motivation for self-concordance – acknowledge

that leadership in creative organizations is a balancing act of providing direction on the one hand (by giving feedback and clarifying goals), and offering freedom to explore on the other (by maintaining an atmosphere aimed at an open exchange of ideas). Because it is essential for the performance of individual employees in creative organizations to reach a state of flow leading to outstanding creative performance, leaders that strive to inspire employees need to combine a set of behaviours that includes monitoring, clarifying roles and objectives, and consulting (Amabile *et al.* 2004): goals should be clear, and feedback immediate and constructive. At the same time, leaders should take these steps with care and consideration, facilitating LMX relationships of the highest possible level with all employees, whether individually or in group settings. Importantly, Zhou and George (2003) reasoned that emotional intelligence is a key prerequisite for leaders of creative organizations. Indeed, the willingness to take one more step, to explore another avenue after others have proven fruitless is an important leader attribute that turns potential for creativity into innovative and new products (Hargadon, 2002; Hargadon and Sutton, 1997). Finally, within a creative project team, the leader's belief in the intrinsic value of each individual should be at the core of relationships at all times (Greenleaf, 1998), causing the leader to manage his or her creative employees with a sense of self-concordance. To summarize, the servant leadership of creative employees should guide them towards optimal flow experiences by making sure that clear role expectations and constructive feedback, together with a high-quality leader-follower relationship, will enhance a sense of self-concordance, leading to creative performance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we set out to present a model depicting how servant leadership theory can help us understand the link between leadership and creativity. Based on previous research on creativity and grounded in servant leadership theory, our model describes three key mediating mechanisms: role expectations and feedback; leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship in terms of perceived contribution, loyalty and affect; and self-concordance. We suggested that servant leadership, with its emphasis on understanding employees and interpersonal acceptance, will contribute to an awareness and understanding of the many issues with which employees are confronted in the creative process. First, a humble attitude will allow the servant-leader to stand back and encourage the team to find solutions. Second, because creativity is often

accompanied with frustration and mood swings, a servant-leader will understand and provide the necessary guidance to allow the creative process to continue towards successful implementation of the initial idea. Third, the servant-leader will, at all times, establish and maintain an open working atmosphere in line with the (sometimes unexpected or peculiar) wishes and demands of the innovative group work to generate the flow of the creative process.

Part V

Studying Servant Leadership

14

Servant Leadership Theory: Development of the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument

Robert S. Dennis, Linda Kinzler-Norheim and Mihai Bocarnea

Valid and reliable measurement instruments grounded in theory are essential to move the field of servant leadership forward. Since the turn of the millennium, starting with Laub's (1999) Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA), we have seen several instruments enter the field – for example, Page and Wong (2000; Wong and Pace, 2003), Dennis (2004), Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Liden *et al.* (2008), and Sendjaya *et al.* (2008). This chapter describes the development and validation of a measure based on Patterson's (2003) theory of servant leadership: the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI) (Dennis and Bocarnea, 2005). Through its direct link to Patterson's theory (including the constructs of love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, service, and empowerment), this instrument allows for a test of the proposed theoretical framework in various populations. The chapter will address in detail the development of the 42-item Likert-type Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument. Information about its reliability, validity, and availability will also be included. Furthermore, the chapter will offer a thorough review of current servant leadership literature on the usage of the SLAI in leadership research. Finally, the SLAI will be compared and contrasted with other servant leadership instruments.

Servant leadership as a theory emerged from Robert Greenleaf's (1977) work. Greenleaf (1977) stated that the servant-leader's primary mission is to serve: 'It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then, conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead' (p. 10). Additionally, Greenleaf stated that leaders that aspire to lead first, rather than serve, do so as a result of a need to achieve control, or power and personal gain. Greenleaf (1977) argued that a leader's individual characteristics, not their leadership techniques, will cause them to choose to lead or serve first. He argued that every leader will fall somewhere along

the leader-focused versus follower-focused continuum. Existing theory, until recently, did not include phenomena such as Greenleaf described, and according to Kuhn (1996), when existing theory does not explain observed phenomena, new theory emerges.

Patterson's model of servant leadership

Patterson (2003) bridged the gap between being leader-focused and being follower-focused by developing a working theory of servant leadership that created a stage for more specific research. She defined the values, or virtues, on which servant leadership is based – values that she calls the component 'constructs' of servant leadership. In Patterson's (2003) view, popular leadership theories such as transformational leadership have not adequately explained the values – for example, altruism – that are sometimes demonstrated by leaders. According to Patterson, 'Transformational leadership shows leaders focused on the organization, and is insufficient to explain behavior that is altruistic in nature, or follower-focused; thus servant leadership theory, which is follower focused, explains such behavior' (personal communication, January 30, 2003; cf. Patterson, 2003). These qualities characterize the servant-leader, who is guided by virtues within (constructs). These virtuous constructs define servant-leaders, shaping their attitudes, characteristics, and behaviours. Thus, according to Patterson, the definition of servant leadership is:

Servant-leaders are those who serve with a focus on the followers, whereby the followers are the primary concern and the organizational concerns are peripheral. The servant-leader constructs are virtues, which are defined as the good moral quality in a person, or the general quality of goodness, or moral excellence. (Personal communication, 30 January 2003)

Patterson's (2003) theory extends existing literature and includes the following constructs, in that the servant-leader:

- leads and serves with love
- acts with humility
- is altruistic
- is visionary for the followers
- is trusting
- is serving
- empowers followers.

These seven constructs comprise servant leadership in Patterson's model. Each of these virtuous constructs is now described.

Agápao love

The cornerstone of the servant-leader–follower relationship that Patterson describes is *agápao* love. Winston (2002) states that *agápao* means to love in a social or moral sense. According to Winston, this love causes leaders to consider each person not simply as a means to an end, but as a complete person: a person with needs, wants, and desires. This moral love is foundational for servant-leaders.

Humility

Humility, according to Sandage and Wiens (2001), is the ability to keep one's accomplishments and talents in perspective. This means practising self-acceptance, but it further includes the practice of true humility, which means not being self-focused but, rather, focused on others. Swindoll (1981) argued that the humility of the servant is not to be equated with poor self-esteem but, rather, that humility is in line with a healthy ego. In other words, humility does not mean having a low view of one's self or one's self-worth; rather, it means viewing oneself as no better or worse than others.

Altruism

Kaplan (2000) stated that altruism is helping others selflessly just for the sake of helping, involving personal sacrifice without personal gain. Similarly, Eisenberg (1986) defined altruistic behaviour as 'voluntary behavior that is intended to benefit another and is not motivated by the expectation of external reward' (p. 1).

Vision

Blanchard (2000) defined vision as 'a picture of the future that produces passion' (p. 5). Vision is necessary to good leadership (cf. Sashkin, 1986). Laub (1999) found that shared vision builds others up (empowers them) and serves others' needs (serves them). In addition, 'servant-leaders build corporate vision from their own personal vision' (Fairholm, 1997: p. 198). Conger (1992) posited anticipating the need for change and acting in advance as one method of bringing the vision into focus. Servant-leaders take this further and are focused on their followers – seeing others not as they are today, but for who they can become, and serving them as such.

Trust

According to Story (2002), trust is an essential characteristic of the servant-leader. Servant-leaders model truth in the way they coach, empower, and persuade. This trust exists as a basic element for true leadership. Further, Melrose (1998) stated that leaders do what they say, which engenders trust (p. 292). Additionally, the openness of a leader to receive input from others increases a leader's trustworthiness (Kouzes and Posner, 1997). Followers are more likely to follow a leader whose behaviours are consistent and trustworthy, and who can connect with their aspirations (Kouzes and Posner, 1993).

Empowerment

Bass (1990) posited that empowerment is power sharing with followers in planning and decision-making. Empowerment is entrusting power to others, and for the servant-leader it involves effective listening, making people feel significant, and putting an emphasis on teamwork (Russell and Stone, 2002). Covey (2002) believed that the leader serves as a role model for empowering others and for valuing their differences. McGee-Cooper and Trammell (2002) argued that understanding basic assumptions and background information on important issues empowers people to discover deeper meaning in their jobs and to participate more fully in effective decision-making (p. 144).

Service

The act of serving includes a mission of responsibility to others (Wis, 2002). Leaders understand that service is the centre of servant leadership (Russell and Stone, 2002). Leaders model their service to others in their behaviour, attitudes, and values (Lytle *et al.*, 1998). According to Block (1993), people are accountable to those they serve, whether customers or subordinates. Greenleaf (1996a) argued that, for leaders to be of service to others, they must have a sense of responsibility. Herein lies the crux of servant leadership, the desire and ability to serve others.

Developing the measure

Patterson's constructs were used to build items for a servant leadership instrument that initially consisted of 42 items. The original version of the so-called Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI) measured the seven concepts of Patterson's theory of servant leadership. Statistical analysis was informed by using the literature review and Patterson's (2003) work on servant leadership concepts to build a set of survey items.

Then the advice of a jury of experts on servant leadership was used to revise, add to, and delete some items (cf. Dennis, 2004). This study used DeVellis' (2003, 1991: pp. 60–100) 'Guidelines in Scale Development' to develop an instrument for Patterson's theory of servant leadership. DeVellis's guidelines for scale development consist of eight steps:

- determine clearly what it is you want to measure
- generate the item pool
- determine the format for measurement
- have initial items reviewed by a panel of experts
- consider inclusion of validation items
- administer items to the administrative sample
- evaluate the items
- optimize scale length.

The participants for the study consisted of a stratified sample taken from the study response data base at the Center for Science and Technology, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. The surveys were created, and administered, by means of an online survey using Surveysuite (University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA).

Three separate data collections were used for the development of this instrument, which resulted in refining the instrument. The final data collection netted responses from 300 participants. Factor analysis was used to determine the underlying factors. The statistical results indicated that the SLAI measured five factors of Patterson's (2003) seven factors on servant leadership. The following concepts or dimensions were confirmed in research using factor analysis: love, empowerment, vision, trust, and humility – with internal consistencies ranging from 0.89 to 0.94 (Cronbach alpha). According to the review of the literature, this is the first instrument to measure these five factors on servant leadership. Since its inception, the instrument has been used in research, projects, surveys, and multiple projects to measure Patterson's (2003) theory of servant leadership.

Current literature review

Since the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI) was copyrighted (2004), a total of 53 individuals have requested the use of the SLAI. Of these requests, we are aware of 15 that are still active (six are in an active stage of research, one is in data collection, eight are at the proposal stage), and 16 requests have been completed, resulting in

seven published papers, three unpublished papers, and six dissertations (Irving, 2005) at the time of writing.

Using a shortened version of the SLAI, Hale and Fields (2007) explored the extent to which students in the USA and Ghana experienced servant leadership, and the extent to which each group perceived a servant-leader to be an effective leader. They concluded that Ghanaians reported less servant leadership behaviour than North Americans. Furthermore, they found that service, humility and vision were related to leadership effectiveness.

Irving (2005) confirmed the positive relation between servant leadership and team effectiveness. Additionally, a significant relationship was found for job satisfaction. Alio's (2006) study explored factors influencing leadership in nursing. Her study concluded that servant-leaders are more likely to be high on extroversion and conscientiousness in an environment that fosters innovation, support, and recognition rather than in an environment that deviates from the standards. Lucas (2007) explored servant leadership in virtual and face-to-face teams, and results indicated no differences between the perception of servant leadership in virtual and face-to-face teams.

Joseph (2006) tested the theory of the SLAI with 182 employees enrolled in an educational institution in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. He investigated the relationship between the concepts of servant leadership and Chandler and Judge's (1998) distributive and integrative scales to measure leaders' negotiation strategy. Multiple regression analysis was used in a cross-sectional survey design, and support was found for a simplified revised model of servant leadership attributes and negotiation strategy. Only three of the SLAI concepts (service, vision, and humility) were found to be significant predictors of the leader's choice of negotiation strategy.

Herndon (2007) explored the relationships between servant leadership, school culture, and student achievement in Missouri elementary schools. Findings indicated that servant leadership has a significant influence on the factors of school culture, only one of the seven SLAI factors has a significant influence on student achievement, and the combination of servant leadership and school culture has a significant influence on student achievement. Irving (2007) performed an exploratory study in using the SLAI among French-speaking Rwandans, and compared this with some of the results in the US and Peruvian contexts. The reliability alpha coefficients of the SLAI were similar for the concepts of love, empowerment and vision for the comparison of French (Rwanda), Spanish (Peru), and English (USA).

Irving and Longbotham (2007) examined the effect of servant leadership on team effectiveness at the organizational and individual level. Servant leadership was found at the organizational level; the concept of love was found at the individual leader level; and job satisfaction was found at the individual participant level. The results identified servant leadership as a significant predictor of team effectiveness. Lucas (2007) explored servant leadership, looking at the difference between servant leadership in face-to-face and virtual teams. Results indicated no differences. The study was the first to analyze the potential differences in both virtual and face-to-face team teams in a US corporation, advancing Patterson's theory to new contexts.

Dimitrova (2008) examined Patterson's (2003) theory of servant leadership in Bulgarian contexts. Support was found for all the causal relationships among the servant leadership constructs proposed by Patterson's theory with one exception, the relationship between altruism and vision. Additionally, the author performed t-tests to determine the influence of leader-follower gender similarity to the servant leadership constructs. These tests yielded no significant differences. At the time of writing, her study is unique in Eastern Europe, and pioneers servant leadership research in Bulgaria and the region. Patterson's (2003) theory of servant leadership was tested by Earnhardt (2008), whose study pioneered servant leadership research in a military context. Patterson's servant leadership model was supported by the study.

Mcintosh and Irving (2008) tested the Spanish version of the SLAI – the Instrumento de Contribución al Liderazgo de Siervo (ICLS) – on a sample of 78 participants from a university. The reliability of three of the ICLS scales is strongly supported by the data, with alphas of 0.92 for empowerment, 0.90 for vision, and 0.834 for love. The authors found the humility concept scored considerably lower than other SLAI (ICLS) concepts, and it is their opinion that humility contrasts more significantly with the typical Peruvian leadership style. Padhye (2008) evaluated leadership in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in Phoenix, Arizona, with the purpose of improving controller performance by developing effective leadership and reducing work-related stress. The results indicated most managers aligned (self-scored) with democratic leadership styles followed by autocratic leadership styles, and subordinates' scoring indicated a strong agreement with the rating on autocratic leadership styles. In the area of servant leadership, all of the front-line-managers scored themselves higher in all of the categories, as compared with the operations managers. The implications suggest that management have only limited servant leadership skills.

Rennaker (2008) examined the relationship between servant-leaders' attributes and communicative patterns as observed by followers. Multiple regression analysis indicated a positive relationship between the independent variables of listening and persuasion, and an acknowledgment (attribution) to leaders by followers of the dependent variables of the SLAI (love, humility, vision, trust, and empowerment).

The SLAI and other instruments: a comparison

A review of the literature for servant leadership instruments presently reveals five other instruments. These instruments were developed by Laub (1999), Page and Wong (2000; Wong and Page, 2003), Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Liden *et al.* (2008), and Sendjaya *et al.* (2008).

Laub (1999; Chapter 9) developed the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA). The OLA model employs the categories: valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership. The current assessment has 60 items, including six items that measure job satisfaction. Laub's research found a positive correlation between the OLA score and the job satisfaction score. Another outcome from the OLA is that it identifies six levels of organization health, each defined by a different level of power. Definitions of leadership choice – autocratic, paternalistic, and servant – are defined by the mindset of those within the organization. Laub's OLA may assist an organization by indicating whether there is a shared organizational awareness or whether there is open communication. The OLA is primarily used to measure servant leadership at the organizational level, while the SLAI's primary focus is on the servant-leader of the organization.

Wong and Page Wong (2003) created the Servant Leadership Instrument (SLI) based on Adjibolosoo and Senyo's (1995) Human Factor (HF) model. Page and Wong defined the servant-leader 'as a leader whose primary purpose for leading is to serve others by investing in others' development and well-being for the benefit of accomplishing tasks and goals for the common good' (Page and Wong, 2000: p. 2). The factors of the Page and Wong instrument are honesty, authenticity, courageous leadership, responsible leadership, visionary leadership, servanthood, power and pride, and developing and empowering others. This instrument is designed for individuals to assess their leadership characteristics. Dennis and Winston (2003) stated 'this scale represents a potential tool with positive implications for training new and existing leaders' (p. 456). The Page and Wong SLI is very similar to the SLAI, in

that it measures the individual leader for servant leadership characteristics. Both are also similar in number of concepts, eight as opposed to seven, and the nature of the concepts themselves: Dennis's concepts (which include possible overlapping of the concepts identified in Page and Wong's work) comprise love (responsible leadership), humility (power and pride), altruism (courageous leadership), vision (visionary leadership), trust (honesty and authenticity), service (servanthood), and empowerment (empowering others).

Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) developed a research-based model of servant leadership based on the concepts conceived by Greenleaf (1977) and Spears (2002), and evaluated the relationship of this idea with leader-member exchange theory and transformational leadership. The results from their data collection indicated a support for five critical servant leadership characteristics: wisdom, persuasive mapping, organizational stewardship, altruistic calling, and emotional healing. The results were statistically proven valid and there was strong internal consistency. Additionally, the tool indicates there may be a link between servant leadership and organizational outcomes. The similarities between the SLAI and Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) servant leadership instrument are that both are used to measure individual leaders, and share common concepts of altruism (altruistic calling) and service (organizational leadership). Barbuto and Wheeler's instrument also goes one step further to investigate the link between servant leadership and organizational outcomes.

Liden *et al.* (2008) developed a 28-item servant leadership scale in which 20 per cent of the items included were from the servant leadership scales in Page and Wong (2000), Ehrhart (2004), and Barbuto and Wheeler (2006). Liden *et al.* identified seven dimensions of servant leadership: emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and behaving ethically. The instrument is designed to measure servant leadership in staff in supervisory positions. They found that, at the individual level, servant leadership makes a unique contribution 'in explaining community citizenship behaviours, in-role performance, and organizational commitment' (p. 161).

The Liden *et al.* (2008) servant leadership scale is similar to the SLAI, in that it measures the individual leader for servant leadership characteristics in relation to the follower, the organization, and the community. (The SLAI concept of altruism and *agápao* love also includes the community.) Both instruments are similar in number of concepts and brevity – there are seven concepts in each: Dennis (2004) uses six-items in each

concept; Liden *et al.* (2008) use four-items in each concept. Dennis's concepts (which include possible overlapping of the Liden *et al.* concepts) comprise *agápao* love (emotional healing), altruism (creating value for the community), empowerment (empowering), humility (putting subordinates first), service (conceptual skills), trust (behaving ethically), and vision (helping subordinates grow and succeed).

In an 88-item servant leadership instrument, Sendjaya *et al.* (2008) identified the themes of transforming influence (TI), transcendent spirituality (TS), responsible morality (RM), covenantal relationship (CR) authentic self (AS), and voluntary subordination (VS) (see also Chapter 4). After analyzing the results, it was determined that there was validation of internal consistency and also a close relationship between themes. However, when the researcher conducted an exploratory factor analysis of individual items there were no conclusive results as to their validity. The implication is that additional research is required, perhaps into the analytical procedure used, in order to validate internal confidence. As a result, no comparison can be made between the SLAI and Sendjaya *et al.*'s instrument at the time of writing.

Conclusion

The main strengths of the SLAI in terms of measuring servant leadership include face and content validity that was built into the test development process, following methods set in DeVellis's (1991, 2003) Scale Development Guidelines and the high reliability of the subscales in terms of internal consistency. The criterion-related and construct-related validity of the instrument were established empirically and have been supported (Dennis and Bocarnea, 2005; Irving, 2005). The main weakness is that the remaining items of Patterson's theory, altruism and service have not been established as yet. Also, it should be acknowledged that vision was operationalized in terms of the organization and not in terms of the follower, as originally theorized.

In addition, confirmatory factor analysis is needed to validate construct validity. Although factor analysis provided goodness of fit for the SLAI subscale items, further replication studies are needed to show that the instrument measures what it purports to measure. We would also like to argue that the usefulness of the instrument is dependent not only on its predictability of servant leadership, but also on its usefulness in practice. Furthermore, it is recommended that case studies be applied to examine the differences between non-servant-leaders and servant-leaders in terms of outcomes – for example, follower satisfaction, company

strategy, long-term vision, and so forth. With more data from leaders who advocate servant leadership, it will be possible to 'norm' the averages for the individual concepts – that is, vision, trust, and empowerment. Moreover, comparing scores with those who espouse another style of leadership – such as a stronger focus on chain-of-command – could assist in separating the differences in terms of the SLAI's effectiveness for teams, individual job attitudes, organizational processes, and so forth.

The SLAI can be used to assess servant leadership from the perspective of the leader and also from the perspective of the followers. Participants are invited to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each of the questionnaire items on a scale of 1–7: the higher the number, the stronger the agreement with that statement. Statements are reflective of how participants' leader would think, act, or behave. There are nine demographic items (if participating in an online survey, for example): age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, tenure at current job, longest job tenure ever, workforce tenure, education, and work situation. The instrument is self-report and anonymous, and takes no more than ten minutes to complete. At the moment, research is ongoing, with new refinements of the instrument under way.

The samples that have used the SLAI to date vary considerably: police officers in California; army values for at-risk youth; principals' educational preparation for medical professionals in Ohio; case studies in organizations; school culture; students at a faith-based university; to examine the relationship between servant leadership and conflict management; to examine the relationship between NAIA college presidents and Champions of Character Award winners; to explore the qualitative and quantitative aspect of John Wooden letterwinners (high school or college awards for athletics, performing arts or in academics); teacher perception of servant leadership for secondary school principals in Thailand. Countries include Bulgaria, Ghana, Malaysia, Peru, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, the UK, the USA and West Africa. Languages include Bulgarian, French, Russian Spanish, Thai and Turkish.

In conclusion, the SLAI could be used to analyze the practice of servant leadership because it allows for a test of the extent that leaders are practising love, empowerment, and vision. To further this last endeavour, we would encourage the development of programmes that foster servant leadership practices. The use of the SLAI within such programmes may foster an increased learning and knowledge of servant leadership in companies.

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The Place for Qualitative Research Methods in the Study of Servant Leadership

Bruce E. Winston

Servant leadership research began with Farling *et al.*'s (1999) conceptual article calling for empirical research. Prior to 1999, works on servant leadership were descriptive or definitional in nature, and did not seek to provide a scholarly study of the concept. Since Farling *et al.*'s conceptual article, the servant leadership research has offered additional conceptual, definitional or descriptive studies (Stone and Russell, 2003; Laub, 2004), models (Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003; Rennaker, 2005), and scale development studies (Laub, 2003; Sendjaya, 2003; Liden *et al.*, 2008; Dennis and Bocarnea, 2005; Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006).

With all that we know today about servant leadership, I do not believe we really 'know' servant leadership. The definitional and measurement instrument studies referred to ascribe characteristics such as 'honesty', 'trust', and 'hope' to servant leadership that also apply to other leadership styles, such as 'authentic leadership' (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008), 'transformational leadership' (Bartram and Casimir, 2007), and 'spiritual leadership' (Fry, 2003).

While we have theoretical studies on servant leadership (Patterson, 2003; Rennaker, 2005), we have not spent sufficient effort on deepening our understanding of the theories we proffer. This is where qualitative research methods can assist us – specifically, phenomenological studies' focus on the 'lived-experience' (Grant, 2008). Van Manen (1997) said that phenomenological studies seek to 'gai[n] a deeper understanding of the nature of everyday experience' (p. 9). Within phenomenological studies, we can – and should – use in-depth interviews and case studies of exemplary servant-leaders in order to understand the theory. Phenomenological in-depth interview studies result in extensive data that the researcher codes into concepts, patterns, and an interpretation of the subject's lived experience of the phenomena. According to Yin (2008), the goal of

the case study method is to generalize back to the theory. Thus, we begin with theory and end with theory. In addition, there is room for grounded theory research to understand the concept more fully.

Let me provide an example from a qualitative case study I conducted (Winston, 2004). Since the results of the case study generalize back to the theory, I prepared a set of interview questions intended for the followers of a servant-leader that I felt was an exemplar. His followers concurred that he was an exemplar and, to determine that loyalty by the followers towards the leader was high, I asked the following question: 'If a new school was built across the road and the focus of the school was the same as yours, and [the leader] asked you come with him as he took on the task of leading the new school at the same rate of pay to do the same job as you do now, would you go with him?' To my surprise, some of the participants said 'No', although their other answers were very supportive of the leader being a servant-leader. Further probing questions allowed me to ascertain that the reason for the answer was that these followers had greater loyalty to the organization than to the leader. This insight helped me understand the moderating affect of organizational commitment on follower-leader commitment, and added to the understanding of the servant leadership concept. This insight might not have emerged from a quantitative study, other than to show a lower statistical relationship in servant-follower loyalty and minor comment in the discussion about an interesting aberration in the numbers. Although we need quantitative studies, there is room for qualitative studies to gain insight into the nuances of the concept.

This article presents four qualitative methods: ethnographic, critical social studies, phenomenological, and grounded theory, showing how each has a place in the servant leadership research stream. The reader should gain an appreciation for each of the four methods, and see how each method might contribute to greater understanding of servant leadership.

Ethnographic studies

Ethnographic studies examine the whole of a cultural unit to discern the patterns of behaviours, rites, rituals, values, and beliefs. The ethnographer must observe the culture without altering it, but must, out of necessity, be part of the community. While this potentially creates a high risk of researcher bias, the research can use this bias as a form of triangulation if the researcher compares his or her reaction to the culture to that of the people being studied. From ethnographic studies, we develop

an understanding of what people do and why they do it, so that we can understand the underlying elements of success or failure in the broad perspective. Spindler and Spindler (1987) refer to ethnographic studies as 'Small Ns and Big Generalizations' (p. 49).

A subject group could be an organization, with the researcher working within the boundaries of the organization. The researcher uses observations, interviews, and group discussions, as well as the organization's documents, to understand the culture of the organization. There is a paucity of research in the field of servant leadership in which ethnography was used with the exception of Kezar (2000), who conducted an education-institutional-scope case study of leaders and determined three groups of people in the institution: servant-leaders, servants to central administration, and paper-pushers. Two reasons for this lack of studies are the difficulty in conducting the research – it is time consuming, and the difficulty in describing what a researcher does. An ethnographer observes the culture and attempts to 'recognize' that which is important. Determination of what is important is up to the researcher. This is not without guidance, in that the researcher should be an expert on what is already known about the culture. Thus, for servant leadership, a researcher needs to be an expert on all that is known about the topic to date. Ethnographic studies would help us understand the role of culture in servant leadership.

The role of culture

According to Schein (2004) culture is an 'abstract' notion; yet, Schein goes on to say that culture is a collection of values, beliefs, rites, rituals, shared meanings, history, and mental models. The 'servant leadership' culture may help us understand the concept of 'servant leadership' – but we have a dilemma, in that we have to 'know' servant leadership to study servant leadership. This is where qualitative research helps us. By first selecting organizations in which the people declare themselves to be in a 'servant leadership' organization, ethnographic researchers might spend time in the culture and describe its component parts. Over time, and with multiple ethnographic studies in various organizations, an overarching 'servant leadership' culture should be describable. Much work is still to be done to understand the elements of the 'servant leadership' culture that are different than other leadership cultures.

It is possible that servant-leaders operate with different mental models than 'non-servant-leaders, but we do not know whether this is true, since research in this area is lacking. The mental models may be based

on a set of values and beliefs that differ from non-servant-leaders. If the premise of Upper-Echelon Theory (Hambrick and Mason, 1984) is correct, it may be that there is a flow from the servant-leader's values and beliefs to the organizational culture. But, we do not know whether this is how servant leadership culture is developed. Ethnography may help us realize whether the servant culture is practised or merely espoused. In-depth interviews and focus groups of critical incidents and phenomena might be helpful in our research endeavours.

Critical social studies

The use of qualitative research in the area of critical social studies may help refine our understanding of servant-leaders, servant leadership, and servant-led organizations through the study of language and meaning. Social-Rhetorical Critical Analysis (Robbins, 1996) provides a method by which we can examine the written text and spoken messages to uncover the meaning and purpose of the messages used by leaders and followers to create and sustain the servant-leader–follower relationship. An example of this type of study is Ulmer's (2001) research into Aaron Feuerstein's communication with stakeholders following the crisis of the devastating fire at Malden Mills in 1995. (Feuerstein chose not only to use the insurance money to rebuild the factory, but also to continue paying the salaries of the unemployed workers while the factory was being rebuilt, very much against common CEO business practice.) In addition to the analysis of the written and spoken message, critical social studies examines semiotics – the images and 'signs' in a culture. Critical social studies methods may help us to understand how servant-leaders use visual artefacts in organizations to develop or support a servant-led culture.

Phenomenological studies

Whereas ethnographic studies are about people and culture, phenomenological studies are about events (phenomena). The goal of phenomenological studies is to understand the 'what', 'why', 'who', 'how', and 'when' of phenomena, so that we might draw inference and conclusions to explain and predict similar events in other contexts. The presumption in phenomenological studies is that, if we understand the 'events', then we can generalize to the concepts that undergird the events. For example, Ulmer's (2001) study cited in the critical social studies section applies here in that, in addition to studying the communication process

as part of critical social studies, we can also study the what, why, who, how, and when of Feuerstein's communication acts with stakeholders. In addition, Kupers (1998) used a phenomenological approach to study the role of emotions in service industries. Although not specifically focused on servant leadership, the same method could be used to study the role of emotion in servant leadership/followership in a service-focused industry. Through the study of the phenomenon, we may understand the values, beliefs, and mental models of servant-leaders such as Feuerstein.

Phenomenological studies make use of in-depth interviews and also focus groups to collect data from organizational participants. In addition, phenomenological studies may take the form of a case study seeking to understand the characteristics and distinguishing elements of exemplary case studies.

In-depth interviews

According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviewing 'involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation' (p. 3). The advantage to in-depth interviewing is the opportunity to ask probing follow-up questions to learn more about an individual's perception of the idea, programme, or situation. This advantage is also to its detriment, in that researcher bias can enter into the procedures by which the researcher asks leading questions in order to gain the desired data. Researcher bias can be mitigated by using multiple interviewers together with results that confirm the validity of results from multiple interviewers.

While in-depth interviewing is time-consuming, and thus expensive, the procedure allows the researcher to obtain data that may not be retrieved through quantitative methods. The 'unexpected' findings from in-depth interviews compensate for the increased time and expense. In-depth interviews seek to understand the individual's perception of particular idea, programme, or situation, whereas focus groups allow the researcher to build data collection from multiple people at one time. Keyes *et al.* (1999) provide an example of the use of in-depth interviews, as well as focus groups, in a qualitative study to help understand the role of spirituality in servant leadership as evidenced by observed leadership behaviours involving 'inclusion'. Their study determined that servant-leaders create an environment for the support of the organization while simultaneously providing a voice of 'critique'.

Focus groups

In contrast to in-depth interviews, focus groups use the synergy and stimulation of multiple people in an interview setting. The risk when working with a group of people is that one or two people may dominate the conversation; others may not engage in the dialogue process. The researcher's role includes the control or stimulation of participation. Krueger and Casey (2000) contend that a focus group 'is a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures ... with 5–10 people' (p. 2). Researchers using the focus group method seek to include participants that have specific and particular knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study. Participants would have observed or been directly affected by the phenomenon. The researcher attempts to understand the phenomenon under study from the participants' perspective. The ability to allow the comments of some participants to trigger recollections or insights by other participants is an advantage over the in-depth method, however; the risk of 'group think' or the conversation being dominated by just a few participants may reduce the value of the data collected. The focus group reduces or removes the confidentiality of the data, which may cause some participants to withhold information.

Focus groups are beneficial to the study of servant leadership in that followers' collective lived experience with the leader may provide deeper insight into servant leadership than we have gained thus far. In addition, focus groups can gain insight into the followers' implicit leadership expectations, which may help us to understand how followers react to servant-leaders.

Exemplar case studies

Case studies, according to Yin (2008), generalize back to the theory or concept, which is important to the understanding of servant leadership, in that the premise of this chapter is that we need to know more about the concept of servant leadership. At the beginning of this chapter, I described the insights gained about followers' loyalty to the institution. This unexpected piece of information informs the literature, in that future studies of servant leaders in organizations with long-tenured employees may want to include a measure of loyalty to the institution as a confounding variable when studying the impact of a servant-leader on employees. It is doubtful that a quantitative study might have uncovered this insight into institutional as opposed to leader loyalty.

Case studies may be longitudinal, as the researcher 'follows' the exemplar along a period of time, or cross-sectional, when attempting to understand the exemplar at a specific moment. Both have value for the study of servant leadership, in that the literature lacks information as to how a servant-leader affects the organization over time, as well as what makes a servant-leader an exemplar within the limited scope of a single phenomenon. An advantage of case studies is that, as with ethnographic studies, the researcher investigates the research topic within a real-life context. This increases the number of confounding variables and makes it harder to separate the concept, but that is part of the qualitative process – studying the concept within the context of the lived experience.

Contee-Borders (2002) demonstrated the value of exemplar case studies as she explored the characteristics of: listening, empathy, healing, persuasion, awareness, foresight, conceptualization, commitment to the growth of people, stewardship, and building community in servant leadership. The value of qualitative research to her was in the exploration of what we do not yet fully know, rather than in measuring what has been suggested as truth. Following up on Contee-Borders' study, Smith (2003) used the exemplar case method to explore servant leadership in the IS Internal Revenue Service. Her case study demonstrated that the motives of the leader were foundational for servant leadership to flourish – even in what might be considered a very 'non-servant' environment. Her use of qualitative research allowed her to follow up with probing questions to reach deeper into the concept. Case studies may examine multiple people, as evidenced by Omoh's (2007) study, which examined the lived experiences of 13 followers of a university president to understand more fully the characteristics and behaviours of a servant-leader.

Grounded theory

According to Locke (2002), 'grounded theory is a general research approach designed to support the inductive development of theory about a phenomenon through a set of systematic procedures for the collection and analysis of qualitative data' (p. 17). This has merit in the study of servant leadership in that, while we have models and theoretical concepts about leadership – as seen in the work of Patterson (2003), Winston (2003), and Rennaker (2005), we lack a unified accepted theory of servant leadership. Grounded theory may help us develop the theory. Locke helps us understand the role of grounded theory in her statement:

Given its concern with theory building, grounded theory researchers work to be able to make plausible claims about the theoretical elements

they compose from their empirical observations. The naturalistic empirical observations are generalized in the developed conceptual framework ... The end products of the grounded theory process, by comparison, have little to say about the extent of their expression in a population. Rather, the framework is considered to have analytic generalizability when it can plausibly account for a large number and range of empirical observations ... The presumption is made that researchers understand how to observe and develop field notes and how to conduct interviews and such that the raw materials for analysis (such as field notes, interview transcripts, and documentary data) have been accurately and systematically collected. (Locke, 2002: p. 23)

From Locke's statement, grounded theory is a method that combines the methods of ethnographic and phenomenological research, but seeks to develop a more defensible theoretical explanation of the data collected.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory uses both inductive and deductive reasoning to build theory. The researcher first gathers data through observations, remembrances of organizational participants/past-participants, and written documents. Then inductive logic is used to build conceptual elements that might be combined into a theory that explains and predicts the concept. The researcher then conducts a literature review on topics equal or similar to the conceptual elements. This is different than traditional quantitative empirical data, in which the researcher begins with a literature, develops hypotheses or research propositions, and then conducts research. With grounded theory, the research begins with research and moves to a literature review later. Glaser and Strauss propose that the researcher should work in isolation, not discussing the theory until after the study paper has been written and the researcher is confident that the theory both explains and predicts the concept, as well as being fully supported by the data collected.

A weakness in grounded theory is the risk of researcher bias; this requires extant data to build a case that withstands scrutiny. An advantage of grounded theory is that the researcher does not have to begin as an expert in the field, since it is never clear what the researcher will find until the research is concluded. This implies that the researcher must, however, be an expert in the method and procedures of grounded research.

Grounded theory research would be helpful in the study of servant leadership, if studies were conducted observing leaders who are described by followers as 'servant-leaders' with the purpose of 'understanding' what the leader does or does not do. While similar to an exemplar case

study, the grounded theory method is meant to result in a theory rather than refer back to a theory. The current servant leadership models in the literature (Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003, and Rennaker, 2005) may be supported or challenged through the use of grounded theory. Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2005) used grounded theory to explore servant leadership more fully, resulting in the discovery of key factors in servant leadership: valuing people, and also networking, enabling, acting with integrity, being accessible, and being decisive. Their study used a combination of the existing literature, interviews, content analysis of 2000 items by a panel of psychologists, and subsequently a quantitative factor analysis to help discriminate the factors. Bryman (2004), in a review of qualitative studies of leadership, noted that, among the studies that referred to grounded study, little detailed analysis was presented by the authors. It would therefore be advisable for servant leadership researchers to consider the need for more in-depth analysis than the current literature seems to imply.

Observational studies in different environmental contexts

Is servant leadership effective in different contexts – such as a financial crisis, a natural disaster, a market shift making the organization's mission irrelevant, or some other environmental deterministic condition? This, we do not know. Qualitative research may help us discover whether the pace of change has an effect on the relevance of servant leadership. The focus of servant-leaders on followers (Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003) would imply that servant leadership works best in circumstances governed by a slow rate of change, in that time can be given to followers to support their development. But how does servant leadership perform in situations where rapid change is required – such as in the case of a merger, acquisition, or crisis? We could use critical incident studies, critical social studies, or phenomenological studies to investigate – either by having the researcher participate in the organization during the change initiative, or by having the researcher interview both the leader and followers after the fact and determine what happened, how – and, most importantly, why.

Low rate of change

A low rate of change in an organization's environment would seem to allow the servant-leader time to work with followers and to develop both commitment and loyalty. However, the literature lacks studies to

show how this occurs. While we have models (Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003, and Rennaker, 2005), we do not have proof of how these models work. Qualitative research would help here. A low rate of change in the environment means that employees leave the organization and are replaced by new personnel. How does servant leadership affect the selection and hiring of new employees? Qualitative research would help us answer why and how.

High rate of change

A high rate of change in an organization's environment – such as merger, acquisition, natural disaster, or punctuated equilibrium – has been researched by Gersick (1991). Gersick contends that organizations in equilibrium make minor adjustments in reaction to minor changes in the environment but that, in periods of revolution caused by external forces, both the size of internal reactionary change and the choice of behaviours seem to be beyond the scope of general employee involvement, becoming part of the leader's role in managing reorientation – a concept that Gersick takes from Tushman and Romanelli (1985). Gersick's contention would support the use of an autocratic leadership style rather than servant leadership, but can the servant leadership style affect how the leader manages the reorientation? Does servant leadership affect the way a reduction in the workforce takes place? Does servant leadership affect the benefits provided to employees that have been laid off? Does servant leadership seek to bring unity through employees when confronted with an external threat that demands a swift response? Qualitative research would assist us in understanding the what, how, and why of servant leadership.

Issues in qualitative research

Qualitative leadership is not without concerns: as noted, researcher bias can be a concern. While quantitative methods can show validity and reliability through test-retest, split-half analysis qualitative research has to address these issues with triangulation and reliability testing between those handling the data.

Bias

Bias is the result when the researcher seeks to prove an accepted belief, or when a researcher is unable to see the 'true' results due to existing mental models that exclude the possibility of the results.

Validity

Johnson (1997) states that there are three types of qualitative research validity: descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical. The term 'descriptive validity' relates to accuracy in describing the concept correctly. According to Maxwell (2002), descriptive validity concerns the accuracy of the data and whether the researcher accurately recorded the facts as they occurred. Descriptive validity may be increased by the use of multiple researchers, each recording what he or she observed and then, as a group, comparing the overall data for similarities and differences. An example of this is the study by Winston *et al.* (2009), in which two researchers each recorded data in 58 separate interviews. Only data that the two researchers had in common were used in the study.

Altheide and Johnson (1994) contribute to our understanding of validity by pointing out that, although the data may have descriptive validity, there is a need to confirm that the researcher has accurately interpreted the data. For example, in the case of multiple researchers, only data fitting the interpretation collectively agreed upon should be used as findings.

Additionally, researchers may use both researcher analysis and computer software analysis with programs like Nud*ist (http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_previous-products_n6.aspx) and Atlas TI (<http://www.atlasti.com/>).

Theoretical validity refers to the instrumentality of the findings in explaining and predicting the concept under study (Kirk and Miller, 1985). This is of particular concern for both case studies and grounded theory since, according to Yin (2008), the role of case studies, is to generalize back to theory, and the role of grounded theory is to create theory.

Reliability

The notion of 'reliability' is equally as useful in qualitative research as it is in quantitative research (Patton 2002; Golafshani, 2003). Reliability is an issue for qualitative research because of the lack of replication studies. It implies that a researcher's qualitative study will yield the same results when repeated or when undertaken by a different researcher. Reliability also means that a study undertaken at one point should yield the same result if repeated later, presuming that nothing occurred during the intervening period to alter the topic under study. For example, a servant leadership case study undertaken in 2009 should produce the same results in 2011, assuming that there has been no change with regard to the leader or the organization under study. This assumption is the reason why reliability is difficult to determine, since organizations seem to be undergoing constant change.

Reliability in qualitative research also means that multiple observers should report the same results simultaneously. This, according to Kirk and Miller (1985), implies that, with qualitative research, reliability becomes validity (p. 45). While Kirk and Miller are correct in observing that there is an overlap, 'reliability' implies that you can rely on data whereas 'validity' implies that the data are valid: agreement by researchers regarding data fits both criteria, but each has been viewed through a different lens. Mays and Pope (1995) sum up the issue of reliability: 'there are two goals that qualitative researchers should seek to achieve: to create an account of method and data which can stand independently so that another trained researcher could analyse the same data in the same way and come to essentially the same conclusions' (p. 109). Mays and Pope imply that qualitative researchers do not focus sufficient attention on reliability. This is an issue in servant leadership qualitative research that requires consideration and resolution: researchers have an obligation to explain in the final research articles how reliability was determined.

Conclusion

This chapter presented four qualitative methods: ethnographic, critical social studies, phenomenological, and grounded theory, together with the concerns of bias, validity, and reliability. While there is ongoing quantitative research, which should continue, there is a need for additional qualitative research to assist us in understanding the various components comprising servant leadership. Although we now have several instruments with which to measure servant leadership (Laub, 2003; Sendjaya, 2003; Liden *et al.*, 2008; Dennis and Bocarnea, 2005; Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006), it is not clear how these instruments measure servant leadership alone, or whether they measure factors and scales of leadership evidenced in other leadership concepts – such as authentic leadership (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008), transformational leadership (Bartram and Casimir, 2007), or spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003). As we seek to define and measure servant leadership using quantitative measures, this chapter calls for more qualitative research to ensure we are measuring the appropriate elements.

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