Maestro-Understanding the Development of a Servant Leader

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This interpretive biography of the life of Maestro Henry Charles Smith explores the process of how servant leadership develops. Meaningful life experiences and events recalled by Maestro Smith are interpreted and discussed in relation to his development as a servant leader. His stories suggest that his leadership emerged, in part, from personal values regarding the loving concern for the welfare and well being of others and strong, optimistic self-efficacy beliefs. These values and beliefs were imparted to him through observation and interactions with significant people early in his life and continued their formation through his career as a musician, teacher, and conductor. Maestro Smith identifies stories from his experience reflecting turning point moments that challenged and reinforced his values and efficacy beliefs. The significance of these events is discussed and connections are drawn with current theory and models of servant leadership.

I don’t know that I can define or articulate my leadership style. I can only think that I always tried to be prepared musically. Beyond that I guess I just tried to get the job done in a way that enables others to do their best and that affirms and supports them as professionals and as wonderful people.

Henry Charles Smith, June 6, 2002

A large portion of existing servant leadership literature focuses on defining what it is, describing how it differs from other leadership practices, discussing its merits, verifying its efficacy, and persuading others to embrace and practice its principles across a broad spectrum of organization contexts (Cheshire, 1998; Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1995, 1998; Spears & Lawrence, 2002). In addition, there are insightful essays and personal reflections on servant leadership formation by servant leaders (George, 2003; Melrose, 1995; Turner, 1999), as well as thoughtful, creative learning materials and training programs designed to foster the development of servant leaders available from the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. Nevertheless, this rich body of work has not yet created a deep understanding of how one becomes a servant leader. Greenleaf offers his explanation of servant leadership formation in the oft-quoted passage, “It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (p. 13). This begs the question: Where does this feeling come from and how is this choice made?

This interpretive biography (Denzin, 1989) explores how Maestro Henry Charles Smith, a renowned Emmy award-winning musician, world-class conductor, and honored master teacher became a servant leader. This exploration presents: (a) a description of interpretive biography and data gathering, (b) an introduction to
Maestro Smith, (c) Maestro Smith’s reflections and interpretations of life events and experiences, (e) researcher interpretations of these events and experiences, (f) discussion and linkages to current theory, and (f) suggestions for future research.

**Interpretive Biography**

Denzin (1989) describes interpretive biography as a research method that focuses on understanding the lived experience of an individual. It involves the “studied use and collection of personal-life documents, stories, accounts, and narratives which describe turning point-moments in individual lives” (Denzin, p. 13). These turning point moments or “epiphanies” are “interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people’s lives [because] they alter the fundamental meaning structures of a person’s life” (p. 70). There are four forms of epiphanies: (a) the major epiphany involving an event that is life altering, (b) the cumulative epiphany that involves reactions to recurring experiences over time, (c) the minor epiphany representing a significant “problematic moment in a relationship or a person’s life,” and (d) the re-lived epiphany that retrospectively gives meaning to past episodes when they are relived (Denzin, p. 71).

**Data Gathering**

Maestro Smith and I engaged in a series of telephone conversations and written correspondence between June 6 and July 1, 2002. During this time Smith identified, recalled, and reflected upon events or periods of time that deeply impacted him as a person, musician, conductor, teacher, and leader. Additional data was gathered from interviews conducted with colleagues in June 2002, media materials, and other documents related to Maestro Smith’s life and work. One important dynamic of interpretative biography is that the researcher actively participates in the interpretation of lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Denzin, 1989). In recognition of this reality, my personal interactions with Maestro Smith are reflected in this biography.

**Meet Maestro Henry Charles Smith**

Andrea Banke, the principal oboist for the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, will never forget the first time she met Maestro Smith,

> I grew up believing the old cliché that great music requires great tyranny; that is until I starting working with Mr. Smith. The first time I played with the Mr. Smith, I was a substitute playing the English horn solo in Symphony Fantastique, a very exposed part. I was terrified. When I walked on stage for rehearsal all I wanted was to get through the part and sit down. Mr. Smith called out to me, “Oh, hello there. How are you are? You know the part? Ah. Well, it will be beautiful!” I finished playing and started back to my chair when I heard a soft, “Well done.” I was so astonished I felt numb. In my experience compliments from the conductor are unheard of. (Telephone interview, June 16, 2002)

I first met Maestro Smith in less dramatic circumstances while serving on the board of directors of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra (SDSO). In short order, I discovered that I was in the presence of a master musician who had played more than 2,000 concerts as the principal trombonist with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Eugene Ormandy and many of the greatest conductors of the 20th century. Henry, as his friends call him, is an accomplished trombone and euphonium soloist, chamber musician, writer, and editor whose recordings are internationally recognized. In 1969, he won the Grammy with the Philadelphia Brass Quintet for the “Best Classical Record of the Year” (Nowicke, 2002).

As a conductor he is equally accomplished. While on the conducting staff of the Minnesota Orchestra he conducted over 1,000 concerts. He has guest conducted the Detroit, Dallas, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Phoenix, and San Antonio symphonies, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and most recently the National Symphony Orchestra. Thoroughly committed to teaching, Maestro Smith has served on the faculties of the Curtis Institute of Music, Indiana University, Temple University, St. Olaf, Bethel and Luther Colleges, and the
University of Texas. Maestro Smith is also Professor Emeritus at Arizona State University. He has conducted the Young Artist Orchestra of Tanglewood and was Music Director of the World Youth Symphony at Interlochen Arts Camp for 16 years. In 1999, after 10 years of service, Maestro Smith announced his intentions to retire from the SDSO after the 2000-2001 season. Following Henry's final concert, an awe-inspiring performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, he was appointed Music Director Emeritus.

The Beginnings

Henry Charles Smith grew up in the affluent western suburbs of Philadelphia. His parents, Henry Charles Smith Jr. and Gertrude Ruth Downs, rented their home in this neighborhood to allow their children to attend the Lower Merion Township Schools. The family did not own a home until Henry was in high school. The family car, a 1937 Ford, was sold in 1941 when Henry's father could not get a gas rationing sticker sufficient to meet their commuting needs. The family turned to public transportation instead. According to Henry, "It didn’t matter, we were all good walkers." Henry describes his father as a caring, ethical, and very conservative man who did not trust banks to hold his money. Not that it mattered; his father did not have much money anyway. Of his mother he says, "My mother was incredibly loving and supportive of everything I ever did—especially musical things." (Personal communication, June 23, 2002)

Henry's grandfather, Samuel Edgar Downs, was a scholar, educator, and community leader. Downs was Superintendent of the Lower Merion Township School system. Through his leadership, the school system attained a level of excellence that was nationally recognized. Henry warmly remembers his grandfather as a very gentle man who really knew what he was doing as an educator and community leader. Henry recalls that his grandfather really cared about people, kids in particular. As a child of course I loved him as a grandfather, but I also realized that the way he treated people was special. I was also aware from my kid's eye perspective that the way people reacted to him, the way they treated him with respect and affection was remarkable and unique. I guess I really wanted to be like him. (Personal communication, June 23, 2002)

Grandmother Ruth was a linguist and world figure in Braille. She was the first person to translate all four Gospels into Braille, in three languages no less: French, German, and Arabic. Samuel and Ruth were known as "pillars of the Ardmore Presbyterian Church." Henry Charles Jr. was not a churchgoer, but he encouraged church attendance for the children, which Gertrude managed. The extended family was deeply spiritual, but as Henry remembers, it was not something discussed openly. A table blessing before meals was observed, but beyond that their individual faith was a private affair. "But," admits Henry, "I never had any doubt about who they were or what they believed—from day one my family was a ‘rock.’ The way they acted and treated each other said it all." (Personal communication, June 23, 2002)

The Musician

As a result of his attendance at the Narberth Presbyterian Church, young Henry met Bryant Kirkland, who was fresh out of Princeton Seminary. Kirkland made a lasting impression on Henry as a scholar and preacher, but more importantly he gave Henry musical opportunities that encouraged the passion for music Henry discovered when he was in the second grade. "I began to study the violin in school. I am not sure why. It just seemed like something I wanted to do. Jean Staples the general music teacher just made me feel like there was something wonderful about music." When Henry attended a high school football game in the 5th grade, he heard the high school band for the first time and resolved that

I was going to play in that band some day. So I signed up for clarinet lessons in the 6th grade. I went to my first lesson and they handed me a baritone horn. I didn’t think it was a clarinet but I didn’t want to ask any stupid questions. They said “bowl” so I blew and a lovely F natural came out. I can remember it like it was yesterday. To the extent that you know this in the 6th grade, I knew this was an important moment and my life would hinge on this. (Personal communication, June 23, 2002)

This revelatory moment launched Henry into his life’s work. He learned to play the trombone and by the 9th grade he was playing solos and winning competitions including the Pennsylvania solo competition. Then the high school band director gave Henry the opportunity to conduct and write music for the band to perform. He
often jokes that he became a musician because he couldn’t be a high school football captain, but in all seriousness, he admits that prior to finding music, I was a very unhappy average student. When sides were chosen for softball all the guys were picked, then the girls and then me. I was sensitive about this. But the recognition and joy I found from music changed me forever.

The now happy young man “without even trying or so it seemed,” became an honor student. (Personal communication, June 23, 2002)

Reverend Kirkland encouraged Henry to play solos at church, which Smith says taught him early on how to “handle performance nerves.” Kirkland allowed Henry to use the church as a venue for rehearsing a youth orchestra and community choir he started. “The chance to create my own opportunity was priceless. The affirmation and support I received was invaluable.” However, in addition to this encouragement, Henry believes he was fortunate to have studied with Donald Reinhardt during his senior year in high school. As Henry tells it, Reinhardt did two very important things for him,

He said, “Every day, play Bolero as part of your warm-up.” So I did. Then when I had to play it with the Philadelphia Orchestra years later, it didn’t make it easy, but it made it more predictable, and I knew I could play it. The other thing he made me do was to learn to read seven clefs. This has been enormously helpful as a player, and also as a conductor, because the seven clefs of course, can be the basis of all transpositions. For score reading it has been a tremendous boon to me because it has just been second nature to read all those clefs and to transpose. Those were some of the wonderful things Donald Reinhardt did for me. (Nowicke, 2002, p.3)

Henry credits his band director Dr. Bruce Beach for giving him a life direction at this young age, “My ambition at that point was to become a band and orchestra director. If that is what Dr. Beach did then that is what I wanted to do too.” Kirkland’s influence however had young Henry leaning toward the ministry, but as Henry confesses, “Music won out.” (Personal communication, June 28, 2002)

Henry completed an undergraduate degree in music at the University of Pennsylvania and went on to receive an artist’s diploma from the Curtis Institute (sandwiched in between were 2 years in the US Army). Then he auditioned for the principal trombone with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He became the Associate Principal for the orchestra for 18 months and then Principal. Pondering this, Henry remarks that “all this happened as if lightning had struck and I really had no idea why or how come. I really owe my career to my grandfather, Jean Staples, Bruce Beach, and Eugene Ormandy.” (Personal communication, June 28, 2002)

The Teacher
In time, Henry, like others in his family, began teaching and soon developed a life long commitment to developing musicians. He discovered that “performers who teach and teachers who perform are consistently happier, better adjusted, and more productive. Performance is so individual and ego-centered. To not teach becomes a real dead end that stifles one in many ways.” Henry also discovered a deep sense of purpose in teaching that focuses on the development of succeeding generations. He has never forgotten an interaction he had with Rostropovich when the master cellist first came to America to record the Shostakovich Cello Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

I asked him, “Do you teach?” With an astonished look on his face Rostropovich said, “Of course we teach. If we don’t who will?” Here was one of the greatest cellists of his era who all his life would teach his students all day and then in the evening give a recital, play a concerto with a major orchestra, or accompany one of his students at the piano in their recital.

Reflecting on this Henry concludes, “It makes sense—to pass on your skills to others and to care about others. It helps to complete a circle of energy and healthy humanity.” (Personal communication, June 28, 2002)
The Conductor

Henry believes “had it not been for all the rests in the trombone parts,” he probably would not have become a conductor. Since the trombone is used in a limited way in the symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms, and Mendelssohn, he had time on his hands and became interested in everything going on in the orchestra. He started bringing full scores to rehearsals and followed along when he was not playing. “I ultimately found it more challenging to be responsible for the entire concept and interpretation of a piece than just playing and fitting the trombone into other parts,” (Personal communication, June 28, 2002)

The young Maestro Smith quickly learned however, that conducting involved more than interpretation. He became aware that each role, that of player and that of conductor, is accompanied by its own set of nerves and stress problems. As a conductor he understood both kinds of stresses and was determined to help musicians deal with the stress through support and appreciation, qualities he frequently encountered in his relationship with Eugene Ormandy. Henry admits he adored Ormandy because he always felt affirmed and supported by him.

*Ormandy told me a few months after I joined the orchestra that after the first five notes of my audition he decided to hire me. When I asked why, Ormandy replied, “Because I heard a sound, a concept of phrase and music making I wanted in my orchestra.” When your boss tells you that, it increases the terror every time you play because you want to live up to expectations and do your best. His attitude towards me often was, “Don’t tell me it is difficult, don’t tell me it’s impossible, just do it.” The effect this had on me was to tell myself, “He thinks I can do anything,” so I would try and I usually could. Even when he was being demanding, he was supportive and affirming of me as a musician and a person.* (Personal communication, June 28, 2002)

Henry has a similar memory of Leopold Stokowski when the master guest conducted in the 1960s.

*He was conducting a rehearsal and a concert with some big brass moments and difficulties—lots for the trombones to do. I was having a bad day physically with the horn. Nothing was working right. However the clarity of Stokowski’s conducting, the inspiration of the moment, his genius at conducting an orchestra, his positive supportive attitude, his appreciation of my efforts, his intense concentration lifted me past the physical struggle I was having and I gave one of the finest performances of my career.* (Personal communication, June 28, 2002)

However, in spite of these affirming experiences, an unexpected incident with Ormandy left him questioning his desire to conduct.

*Ormandy had decided it was time to get rid of a particular woodwind player, a man who had played with Stokowski and Ormandy over 40 years with distinction. Ormandy put this player in a very stressful musical situation without warning. It went badly. This player was put on the spot again. It went terribly. His health was immediately affected. Every time Ormandy gave him a cue, he had a look that said, “I dare you to do it right.” Health suffered more. After a week of this treatment his doctor told this player if he wanted to live he had to get out of the orchestra. He did and his health improved. Seeing this happen two rows in front of me I resolved that if conducting meant you had to do things like this I would never conduct.* (Personal communication, June 23, 2002)

These incidents profoundly impacted the developing Maestro and his approach to leading—an approach that includes being ever mindful of the conductor’s complete dependence on the musicians as well as the emotional toll performing takes on them.

*I am after all the only person on stage who does not make a sound. As one who made his living for many years as a decent trombonist, I will never forget how extremely difficult, challenging, and nerve shaking it is to play well in front of 3000 people—or even 10 people, I try to remember this when I conduct.* (Personal communication, June 6, 2002)

Henry learned from these experiences that, “It does make a difference what the conductor does, what his attitude is.” He vividly recalls a later proof of this learning in South Dakota. The roof of the old concert hall had collapsed in 1994 leaving the SDSO without a home. For the next 5 years the orchestra, aptly nicknamed the
“gypsy symphony” by Maestro Smith, gamely played in gymnasiums, a basketball arena, and a ballroom at a convention center.

Playing in a basketball arena was very hard, it was more than difficult to deal with heat, light, ambient noise from fans, and lights and stage problems before you could even think about the music. Every time I had to go on stage I thought to myself, “This is the last time I will ever do this,” but then the music would start and I would forget about it. I was constantly aware that if the leader cracked or showed his frustration it would have a horrible effect on the morale and the performance of everybody else—including the audience. Survival demanded a PMA from me—a positive mental attitude. I tried to focus on making the best music possible. The show must go on and it did somehow. (Personal communication, June 28, 2002)

Looking back on his career as a conductor and leader, Henry reflects,

When I was a very young conductor I wanted very much for people to like me. Probably I thought too much about this. Now I am eager to achieve the finest performance possible. I want the players to want high standards as much as I do. I want them to love the music as much as I do. With these goals in mind I am glad if someone likes me but I am not obsessed with making this happen. I have learned that you must work through the framework of your own personality. I really want most to tend to the musical business in a way that affirms and supports the musicians personally and artistically. (Personal communication, July 1, 2002)

Findings—Revealed Epiphanies

The events described and interpreted by Maestro Smith reveal meaningful epiphanies that marked his life and collectively helped shape his character, foster his sense of purpose, and give meaning to his life as a performing artist and leader.

Major epiphany. Henry’s major epiphany is the moment he first attempted to play the baritone horn and recognized that his life would “hinge on this.” This sudden awareness changed his life forever, giving him a sense of identity that no longer involved how he viewed his lack of athletic ability. This lack became essentially meaningless as he discovered a sense of purpose through his passion for music.

Cumulative epiphanies. There are five recurring experiences that shaped the lens through which Henry would view his leadership. These experiences involve: (a) self-discovery of interests and talents; and (b) the observation of behaviors and interactions with significant family members, teachers, clergy, musicians, and conductors. The themes embedded in these epiphanies are:

1. The concern for the welfare and well being of others beginning within the family, extending to the community, the larger world, and future generations.
2. The recognition of talent and unwavering affirming and supportive encouragement of its development.
3. The desire and sustained motivation to achieve artistic mastery.
4. The inclination to lead and enjoy the act of leading.
5. The sense of joy and wonder in life, emanating from a belief in a higher being.

Minor epiphany. The minor epiphany that profoundly challenged Maestro Smith came from his experience of watching “two rows ahead” of him a colleague and friend being subjected to harsh criticism and emotional abuse from Maestro Ormandy, someone Henry “adored” and deeply respected as a musician and mentor. This incident left Henry questioning his desire to conduct and had the potential to derail this ambition. In order to move ahead with his plan to become a conductor, he had to resolve this conflict. Maestro Smith identifies this incident as a significant career defining moment.

Relived epiphanies. There are three relived epiphanies in Maestro Smith’s reflections. The first involves the act of performing. Being a musician, while intensely creative and enjoyable, is also very stressful and anxiety provoking. Every time Maestro Smith conducts, he relives his own experience as a musician which reaffirms his approach of placing first priority on people. The second is the experience he had performing in a basketball arena, where he relived and came to know in a deeper way the impact his own behavior could have on others. This difficult performance setting gave even greater meaning to Maestro Smith’s desire to affirm and support
musicians personally and artistically. And finally, in telling these stories, Maestro Smith reaffirmed his priorities that he believes are inseparable. These are “life, love, faith and music and the sharing of all four with wonderful people,” (Personal communication, June 28, 2002).

Discussion

Servant leadership is not the norm among conductors. Conducting is a profession that has been described as “the last bastion of totalitarianism in the world” where “conductors stand at the very pinnacle of the orchestras' musical hierarchy” (Seifert & Economy, 2001, pp. 9-10). This hierarchy begins with the maestro as the artistic mastermind over the orchestra who micro-manages every aspect of performance and expects musicians to do as they are told. Thulean (1990) explains that the role of the conductor in contemporary society is “still rooted in the aristocratic tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries. The person on the podium is seldom questioned and never challenged,” (p. 1).

In a disturbing description of life in orchestras, Levine and Levine (1996) observe that the “myth of the omniscient conductor” is granted to the conductor by orchestra members in the form of consent that “pretends the conductor stands on the podium by divine right” (p. 19). They further explain that “internalized norms and taboos protect the authority” of the conductor from any challenge, even when “musicians may be in a better position to determine how a work should be performed,” (p. 19). In this controlled environment, the free exchange of ideas is not welcome and musicians become “in essence rats in a maze,” (p. 20). In time, working in this maze leads to high levels of stress and job dissatisfaction. The fact that Maestro Smith’s servant leadership emerged from this context and was sustained over many decades is quite remarkable, almost improbable.

Two themes emerge from Maestro Smith’s stories: (a) the strength of Henry’s commitment to demonstrating a loving concern for the welfare and well being of others, and (b) his unwavering optimism and belief in his ability as an artist and a leader. In pondering these themes, two theories come to mind: human values (Rokeach, 1979) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). While theory connecting is more in keeping with the discipline of classical biography than that of interpretive biography (Cresswell, 1998), in this case a brief discussion of these two theories seems warranted.

Human Values

Rokeach (1979) defines values as “core conceptions of the desirable within every individual and society” (p. 2). Values are learned, arising from experiences that engage psychological processes and involve social interaction, cultural patterning, and storage (Williams, 1979, p. 17). Values are significant because “they serve as standards or criteria to guide not only action but judgment, choice, attitude, evaluation, argument, exhortation, rationalization and . . . attribution of causality” (p. 2). In essence, values “merge affect with concept” (Williams, p. 16). In a theoretical discussion of the role of values in servant leadership, Russell (2001) contends that “values are the core element of servant leadership; they are the independent variables that actuate servant leader behavior” (p. 9). Maestro Smith’s stories suggest that his leader behavior is indeed based on a strong set of values.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy “refers to one’s beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Just as values are learned, self-efficacy beliefs are socially constructed. Individuals with strong efficacy beliefs choose their course of action and optimistically work towards goal attainment and in so doing, exert positive influence on their environment. In general, highly efficacious people put forth greater of amounts of effort, will persevere longer in the face of obstacles, and be less negatively affected by negative environmental forces than individuals with lower self-efficacy beliefs (p. 73). Bandura has observed “that the striking characteristic of people who have achieved eminence in their field is an unshakeable sense of efficacy and a firm belief in the worth of what they are doing” (pp. 72-73). In the case of Maestro Smith, this certainly seems to be true. His actions are deliberate, intentional, effused with optimism and goodwill, and feature an unshakeable faith in positive outcomes.
Summary

Based on Maestro Smith’s recollection and reflections on his lived experiences, it appears that the foundation for Maestro Smith’s servant leadership was laid early in his life through his experiences with family and other significant people that fostered a strong personal set of values that are complimentary to the principles of servant leadership. He matured personally and professionally surrounded by people who enabled his talent to flourish, who challenged him to strive for excellence, and achieve artistic mastery. By the time Maestro Smith turned to leading others full-time, he not only possessed high self-efficacy beliefs, but also a keen awareness and deep understanding of the potency of conducting and its potential impact on musicians artistically and personally. Through a series of meaningful experiences combined with self-reflection, he resolved that he would lead from the framework of his own personality. This framework includes the imperative to treat others with loving concern for their welfare and well being, even when faced with pressure to do otherwise. Through his experiences, Maestro Smith became rooted to the belief that people are as important as the music and, that as a leader, he would and could pursue musical excellence in a supportive environment that not only nurtures talent but the human spirit as well.

Implications for Theory

Greenleaf asserts that “true leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a deep desire to help others” (as cited in Spears & Lawrence, 2002, p. 3). The desire to help others is an almost universal human value (Rokeach, 1979). In the case of servant leadership, it is considered a high priority value. As discussed earlier, the role of values has been identified as an important variable in servant leadership (Russell, 2002). However, the process that prompts an individual to place high priority on this value has not been integrated into this discussion.

Greenleaf (1977) also contends that becoming a servant leader involves continuous choice. One does not choose to pursue this path once and only once. As Greenleaf explains, “It is always a fresh, open choice,” and the outcome of the choice is “always a hypothesis under a shadow of doubt” (p. 15). Where then, does the strength to choose come from? And once the choice is made, what sustains it and prevents it from being compromised by doubts?

Regarding the first question, in the life of Maestro Smith this strength appears to come, at least in part, from his considerable self-efficacy beliefs. Winston (2003) discusses self-efficacy in his extension of Patterson’s (2003) model of servant leadership. He identifies self-efficacy as a variable in follower responses to servant leadership. Maestro Smith’s story suggests that self-efficacy from the leader’s perspective should also be considered as an important variable in servant leadership.

Returning to the second question, intuitively it seems that values and efficacy beliefs might be significant variables in servant leadership that endures, but Greenleaf (1977) identifies another variable. According to Greenleaf it is “psychological self-insight” (p. 15) that sustains this choice even in the face of doubt. Rich self-insight is woven throughout Maestro Smith’s stories, offering support for Greenleaf’s belief and justification for further exploration of this variable in relation to servant leader development.

As empirical research on servant leadership development continues to build in strength, the variables of human values, optimistic self-efficacy beliefs, and the ability to engage in meaningful self-reflection seem to hold promise and should be further explored.

Suggestions for Further Research

This interpretive biography has explored the formation of servant leadership through the lived experiences of a single servant leader. As engaging and compelling as this life story is, it is not sufficient for answering the
question of how servant leadership develops. Additional research is required if a deeper and clearer understanding of this phenomenon across leaders is to emerge. The following suggestions are presented for future research:

1. Explore other autobiographical and biographical reflections on servant leadership development to identify common themes across these experiences. These explorations could be conducted using cross-case study, phenomenological, or grounded theory research methods.

2. Investigating the relationship of values, self-efficacy beliefs, and self-insight in servant leadership development. This research should include a review of the processes that form values, generate self-efficacy, and awaken self-insight.

The potential result of this research is a firmer grasp of servant leadership development processes that might generate innovative and more effective approaches for developing and sustaining servant leadership among individuals and within organizations.

References


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