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# From the Editor

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**S**ervant leadership is a concept that generally evokes a range of reactions from the very positive ("Yes! That's what this organization needs!") to the less positive ("What is it–but a contradiction in terms?"). Anything that controversial clearly needs to be studied. This special issue represents the work of several scholars to do just that. The papers included were compiled from over 20 studies presented in August 2006 at a conference held annually at Regent University. The Servant Leadership Roundtable brings together seasoned academics and young developing scholars to discuss and debate aspects of research related to the nature and outcomes of servant leadership. The research in this field of leadership first described by Jesus continues to develop and grow. I want to thank our guest editors Kathleen Patterson, who makes sure the Servant Leadership Roundtable happens, and Mihai Bocarnea, who is the director of Regent University's Ph.D. program in Organizational Leadership. I hope you will find their selections informative and stimulating.

Enjoy the variety of this special issue of *IJLS*.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, p. 96

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# From the Special Edition Editors

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**T**his issue is a special edition that showcases servant leadership research that was recently presented at Regent University's Servant Leadership Research Roundtable in August 2006. We are pleased to have participated in the roundtable and further pleased to now bring you a sampling of the work that was presented.

The articles you will find are both enlightening and informative and add to the growing literature base on servant leadership. The first article assesses six essential servant leadership themes and team effectiveness. Following this, the second article seeks to assess servant leadership from a philosophical point of view and a worldview perspective. Another article includes a look into an American auto dealership and the role of servant leadership in the succession planning process. Finally, an article is presented which looks into how servant leadership is related to trust and team commitment.

Our thanks go to the authors for the diligence in their servant leadership research. Furthermore, we are grateful to those of you who have continued the high interest that has been surrounding the servant leadership literature. We trust you will enjoy this special *IJLS* edition.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, p. 97

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# Team Effectiveness and Six Essential Servant Leadership Themes: A Regression Model Based on items in the Organizational Leadership Assessment

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As evidenced by LaFasto and Larson's (2001) work with over 6,000 team members and leaders, interest in teams continues to capture the attention of both leadership scholars and practitioners. Subsequently, research into what leadership behaviors contribute to team effectiveness becomes relevant for those at the crossroads of theory and practice. Utilizing the Organizational Leadership Assessment (Laub, 1999) as a measure of servant leadership and the Team Effectiveness Questionnaire (Larson & LaFasto, 2001) as a measure of team effectiveness, this paper presents a multiple regression model that is able to explain a significant percentage of the variance in the effectiveness of teams. The essential servant leadership variables identified were (a) providing accountability, (b) supporting and resourcing, (c) engaging in honest self-evaluation, (d) fostering collaboration, (e) communicating with clarity, and (f) valuing and appreciating.

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**I**nterest in the theory and practice of teams has grown dramatically in recent years as evidenced by LaFasto and Larson's (2001) research with over 6,000 team members and leaders. This emergence of teams may be traced, in part, back to societal shifts which occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. One student of the impact of these shifts on organizational life was Robert K. Greenleaf. Writing in the 1970s, Greenleaf (1977) noted that in light of the revolution of expectation among young people, one who presides over a successful business "will need to evolve from being the chief into the builder of the team" (p. 85). It is arguable that such societal and organizational observations are even more relevant today as leaders seek to answer the question of how to lead organizations in the increasingly decentralized and team-based structures that are a growing mark of systems in the 21st century.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 98-113

ISSN 1554-3145

Some have argued that these shifts toward team-based structures are consistent with the shifts from Newtonian to Quantum paradigms (Irving, 2005; Wheatley, 1999). Addressing this point, Margaret Wheatley argued that "*relationship* is the key determiner of everything" (p. 11), rooted in physical realities at the subatomic level. For instance, Wheatley noted that "subatomic particles come into form and are observed only as they are in relationship to something else. They do not exist as independent 'things'" (p. 11). From this, Wheatley argued that relationships, and not lone individuals, are the basic organizing unit of life. Therefore, participation and cooperation are essential for survival in this world of interconnected and networked organizations. These shifts toward the quantum world of thinking and organizing not only place an emphasis on relationships as the basic organizing unit; but they also emphasize (a) the whole over the part, (b) dynamic processes over static processes, (c) organizational networks over organizational hierarchies, and (d) systemic interconnectedness over linear progression and thought. The holistic focus on interconnectedness, relationship, and dynamic process in networked organizations naturally lends itself to the use of relational organizational structures such as teams.

Organizations reflect these macro shifts in our societies and lead to a critical leadership question for those at the crossroads of leadership research and practice: what form of leadership will be most effective in our emerging world of team-based and networked systems? This question provided the impetus for this study, which was designed primarily to examine the effect of servant leadership on team effectiveness by examining which items in Laub's (1999) Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) will have the most significant impact on team effectiveness. The OLA as a single measure of servant leadership was the single greatest predictor of team effectiveness in a previous analysis (Irving & Longbotham, 2006). In light of this, the authors concluded that a closer examination of the OLA was in order. Based on this examination, the authors present a multiple regression model that explores this effect and identify six essential servant leadership themes that are especially predictive of team effectiveness. Toward this end, the authors review the essential literature surrounding servant leadership and teams, present an overview of the methods and results, and discuss at length the findings and implications of this study.

## Literature Review

### *Servant Leadership*

Through his initial work on servant leadership, Greenleaf (1977) provided a foundation for the contemporary study and emerging discipline of servant leadership. The key to Greenleaf's conceptualization of servant leadership is his understanding of what characterizes the servant leader, namely being a servant first. In response to the question, "Who is the servant-leader?" Greenleaf provided his now frequently quoted response:

> The servant-leader *is* servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* 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. The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: 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



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in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (p. 27)

While persons in the leader-first model may utilize service at times for the purpose of realizing the visions and goals of the leader and/or the organization; the servant-first model is focused on making "sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 27) and, as such, is a follower-oriented theory of leadership (Laub, 1999; Matteson & Irving, 2005, 2006; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).

Building on this servant-first notion of leadership; Laub (1999), Stone et al. (2004), and Matteson and Irving (2005, 2006) all argued that the focus of the servant leader is on that which is best for their followers. On this point, Laub (2005) wrote, "servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader" (p. 160). Stone et al. identified this point as a key to understanding what differentiates servant leadership from transformational leadership. They argued that while transformational leadership tends to be focused on an organizational vision (what is best for the organization), servant leadership is focused foremost on that which is best for the followers. Matteson and Irving (2005) took this a step further by contrasting the focus, motivation, context, and outcomes of transformational, servant, and self-sacrificial approaches to leadership.

From the early 1990s through 2003, the work surrounding servant leadership focused on identifying themes to help to operationalize the concept of servant leadership. Graham (1991) stressed the inspirational and moral dimensions. Buchen (1998) argued that self-identity, capacity for reciprocity, relationship building, and preoccupation with the future were essential themes. Spears (1998) emphasized the dimensions of listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment, and community building. Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999) argued for the importance of vision, influence credibility, trust, and service. Laub (1999) put forward valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership. Russell (2001) argued for vision, credibility, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciating others, and empowerment. Patterson (2003) presented the dimensions of *agapáo* love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service as the essential dimensions of servant leadership. This study focuses on Laub's (1999) servant leadership themes.

While these operational themes have been helpful for the study of servant leadership, recent developments of empirical measures for servant leadership have provided a platform for quantitative studies of servant leadership. Of the instruments that have been developed to date; including those developed by Laub (1999), Sendjaya (2003), Page and Wong (2000), Dennis (2004), and Dennis and Bocarnea (2005); Laub's (1999) OLA has been the predominate instrument for measuring servant leadership at the organizational level. This is evidenced by Drury (2004), Hebert (2004), Irving (2004, 2005), Laub (1999, 2003), and Ledbetter (2003). Thus, the OLA is the instrument used to measure servant leadership in this study.

### *Team Effectiveness*

Team effectiveness has been in evidence since the construction of the planet's oldest monoliths in Malta c. 4000 B.C. Unfortunately, the factors contributing to team effectiveness were not documented until the beginning of the 20th century when Elton Mayo first "uncovered the importance of teams" (Parker, 1990, p. 16). Mayo (as cited in Parker) noted the importance of leadership and the fostering of conditions in the organization conducive to developing effective teams. In the 1930s, Kurt Lewin's work narrowed this perspective and focused on



ISSN 1554-3145

group dynamics as the means of developing effective teams. McGregor (1960) in his *The Human Side of Enterprise* further narrowed the focus to that of individual employees, seeing them as more than just "cogs in the system." It was the work of Blake and Mouton (1964), though, that focused on the importance of the leader in building an effective team.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the number of teams exploded as teams became an integral part of organizational life in the United States (Longbotham, 2000). With this explosion came the need to understand how to have effective teams. Most "how-to" literature focused on "team-building, team dynamics, conflict resolution, decision-making, and other team technologies" (Hacker, 1999, p. 61). There were, however, other voices. W. E. Deming's (1986) book, *Out of the Crisis*, recognized the importance of leadership in the effectiveness of teams. This view was reiterated by Scholtes (1988) who viewed leadership's importance so strongly that he attributed any team failure to indifferent or uninvolved leadership (Longbotham). The literature has identified many factors that may contribute to team effectiveness. As key as some of these factors may be to team effectiveness, it is the

> role of the leader [that] is the toughest, most-important role for the team's eventual success or failure. . . . It has been said that the role of the leader is "like giving a brain to the scarecrow, a heart to the tin man, and courage to the cowardly lion." Teams with good leaders can accomplish results even when it appears that the deck is stacked against them. (Furman, 1995, p. 25)

In addition to these contentions from Deming, Scholtes, and Furman that leadership of teams is important; Harrington (1991) claimed that the focus on team building, team dynamics, conflict resolution, and other team technologies was on "the wrong part of the business" (p. x).

A recent Amazon.com search of popular press materials yielded 128 books on team effectiveness, indicating that the use of teams is alive and well and that there is considerable interest in how to have an effective team. A search for team effectiveness in academic literature, however, yielded few empirical studies. Most articles have proposed conceptual models or have a very narrow focus, but the trend is changing. There is an increasing focus on empirical research with respect to teams. Natalie, Sora, and Kavalipurapu (2004) identified mission, vision, and leadership as common themes in a qualitative study of 60 leaders of teams. Brenegan (2003) contended that knowing one's team was a crucial factor in effective team leadership. Kuo (2004) studied transactional, transformational, and paternalistic leadership and found all three to be highly correlated with team effectiveness. This investigation of servant leadership and team effectiveness supports and augments the findings linking leadership and team effectiveness.

## Statement of the Problem and Associated Research Questions

### *Impact of Servant Leadership on Team Effectiveness*

As noted in the introduction, the use of team approaches by leaders in the organizational context continues to grow substantially. While it may be assumed that leadership that works well in one organizational level will likewise be effective in teams, it is vital that those at the crossroads of leadership scholarship and practice address the important questions facing leaders of team-based organizations. The question may be framed broadly as: what form of leadership will be most effective in our emerging world of team-based and networked systems? More specifically, it has been the interest of the authors to examine the effect of servant leadership on team effectiveness by means of examining which of the individual items in the OLA will have



ISSN 1554-3145

the greatest impact on team effectiveness. In light of this, the primary research question driving this study is: which servant leadership themes will have the greatest impact on team effectiveness and to what degree? Based upon this question and the associated results, the authors propose a model for understanding significant predictors of team effectiveness.

## Method

### *Sample Characteristics*

The research sample for this study is drawn from a U.S. division of an international nonprofit organization. The sample frame included around 1,800 members. Since the organization and the U.S. division in particular utilize team-based structures, this was an appropriate sample frame for the study. The research sample was collected from these 1,800 members in an open invitation via e-mail to each of the divisional members in order to provide equal opportunity for member participation, helping to insure a random sample and to be consistent with the method of communication frequently utilized in the normal flow of information within the organization. Of the 740 participants, 719 provided complete data that could be included in the analyses; this number represented a response rate of 40.5%. The participants (a) were 47% female and 52.2% male, with .8% not reporting their gender; (b) were 6.9% top leadership, 23% management, and 69.2% workforce, with .9% not reporting their position; and (c) 1.2% graduated high school only, 86.1% completed bachelors studies, 11.6% completed masters studies, and .7% completed doctoral studies, with .4% not reporting the highest level of education completed. Participation in the study was both voluntary and anonymous for these participants.

Once participants received an e-mail invitation to participate in the study, they were invited to a URL containing a web-based format of the OLA (Laub, 1999) and the Team Effectiveness Questionnaire (TEQ; Larson & LaFasto, 2001). In addition to these instruments, basic demographic questions related to participant position level, gender, and educational level were included. Utilizing this web-based format allowed for an electronically-mediated collection of the research data. Due to the geographically dispersed nature of the organizational division throughout the US, members of the sample frame were accustomed to using web-based resources. The instrument was available to the sample frame for a period of 2 weeks. Within this 2-week period, the minimum sample size was obtained.

For the purpose of this study, the operational definition of *team* was adopted from Larson and LaFasto's (1989) work. In distinguishing teams from groups, Larson and LaFasto (1989) defined a team as (a) two or more people, (b) a specific performance objective or recognizable goal to be attained, and (c) a coordination of activity among the members of the team that is requisite for the attainment of the team goal or objective. While some groups may share the first two characteristics of this definition, it is the coordination of activity that is a distinguishing characteristic of teams. In this study, team leaders and team participants share all three characteristics.

### *Instrumentation*

Participants in this study completed two instruments: Laub's (1999) OLA, which is a measure of servant leadership at the organizational level, and the TEQ (Larson & LaFasto,



ISSN 1554-3145

2001), which provides a collective measure of team effectiveness. In this study, the alpha coefficients for each of these scales were (a) .97 for the OLA and (b) .82 for the TEQ.

## Results

*Impact of Servant Leadership on Team Effectiveness*

The ideal way to study the impact of servant leadership on team effectiveness would have been a designed experiment that controlled everything except the servant leadership behaviors being tested (Box & Draper, 1987). The reality of the organizational world is that gaining permission to experiment with teams would be unlikely. The next best option is to bring empirical tools to a specific organizational setting as was done in this study.

The goal in the data analysis was to develop a model for team effectiveness using individual components of the OLA to see which aspects of servant leadership at the organizational level most influenced team effectiveness in this setting. The model was developed using all possible regressions up to 10 independent variables. Determining the best subset of independent variables entails two opposing objectives: simplicity and fit. The goal "is to achieve a balance between simplicity (as few variables as possible) and fit (as many as are needed)" (Longbotham, 2000, p. 25). With this goal in mind, the best model has six OLA items. The increase from a model with six variables to one with seven had a negligible increase in $R^2$ which will always increase with the addition of variables. The criterion used to determine the best six-factor model was lowest mean-squared error (MSE) or the tightest fit. The specifics for the possible six-item models are displayed in Table 1 with the chosen model first. All six of the OLA items in the chosen model have statistically significant coefficients as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 1: *Model Summaries*

| Model size | $R^2$ | Root MSE | Variables in model |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 0.3867 | 0.3518 | OLA 14, 30, 43, 47, 49, 55 |
| 6 | 0.3862 | 0.3520 | OLA 7, 14, 30, 47, 49, 55 |
| 6 | 0.3856 | 0.3521 | OLA 14, 30, 38, 47, 49, 55 |
| 6 | 0.3847 | 0.3524 | OLA 14, 30, 47, 49, 55, 59 |

Table 3 shows the analysis of variance for the six-item model. It displays the strength of the model as a whole and provides the probability ($p$ =.00) that the relationship evidenced by the sample occurred by chance if there were no relationship between team effectiveness and the independent variables.



ISSN 1554-3145

Table 2: *Regression Coefficients*

| Variable | Coefficient | Standard error | *t*-value ($H_o$: $\beta$=0) | Significance | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 1.48 | 0.10 | 15.49 | 0.00 | Reject $H_o$ |
| OLA_14 | 0.10 | 0.01 | 6.60 | 0.00 | Reject $H_o$ |
| OLA_30 | 0.08 | 0.02 | 4.35 | 0.00 | Reject $H_o$ |
| OLA_43 | 0.05 | 0.02 | 2.13 | 0.03 | Reject $H_o$ |
| OLA_47 | 0.06 | 0.02 | 2.70 | 0.01 | Reject $H_o$ |
| OLA_49 | 0.07 | 0.02 | 3.97 | 0.00 | Reject $H_o$ |
| OLA_55 | 0.13 | 0.02 | 7.88 | 0.00 | Reject $H_o$ |

Table 3: *Analysis of Variance for Six-Item Multiple Regression*

| Source | DF | Sum of squares | Mean square | F-Ratio | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 1 | 7488.74 | 7488.74 | | |
| Model | 6 | 54.80 | 9.13 | 74.23 | 0.00 |
| Residual | 708 | 87.11 | 0.12 | | |

## Discussion

### *Six Essential Servant Leadership Themes*

In view of the regression model identified in the analysis, the authors suggest that leaders should attend to six primary servant leadership themes when seeking to effectively lead in team-based environments. These themes, rooted in the six associated OLA items (see Table 4), are (a) providing accountability, (b) supporting and resourcing, (c) engaging in honest self-evaluation, (d) fostering collaboration, (e) communicating with clarity, and (f) valuing and appreciating.

*Providing accountability*. In the regression model, the first item raises the importance of accountability in the effective accomplishment of team goals. Based on the associated OLA item, leadership that "[holds people] accountable for reaching work goals" (OLA_14) is a significant predictor of team effectiveness. It is important to observe the role of accountability and initiative on the part of servant leaders. While the focus of servant leaders is primarily on followers (Laub, 1999; Matteson & Irving, 2005, 2006; Stone et al., 2004), this emphasis should not imply disinterest in the accomplishment of goals. Illustrating this reality, one of Laub's (1999) essential characteristics of servant leadership is providing leadership. For Laub (1999), providing leadership involves (a) envisioning the future, (b) taking initiative, and (c) clarifying goals.



ISSN 1554-3145

Rather than servant leadership wandering aimlessly without initiative, servant leaders care about taking initiative toward goal clarification and attainment. The distinctive of servant leadership is not that goals are not accomplished, but rather that the leader's focus on serving the best interest of followers becomes the essential pathway for reaching goals.

Table 4: *Regression Model Themes and Associated OLA Items*

| Servant leadership theme | OLA item # | Associated OLA item |
|---|---|---|
| Providing accountability | OLA_14 | *"In general, people within this organization are held accountable for reaching work goals."* |
| Supporting and resourcing | OLA_30 | *"Managers/Supervisors and top leadership in this organization provide the support and resources needed to help workers meet their goals."* |
| Engaging in honest self-evaluation | OLA_43 | *"Managers/Supervisors and top leadership in this organization honestly evaluate themselves before seeking to evaluate others."* |
| Fostering collaboration | OLA_47 | *"Managers/Supervisors and top leadership in this organization encourage workers to work* together *rather than competing against each other."* |
| Communicating with clarity | OLA_49 | *"Managers/Supervisors and top leadership in this organization communicate clear plans & goals for the organization."* |
| Valuing and appreciating | OLA_55 | *"In viewing my own role I feel appreciated by my supervisor for what I contribute."* |

Arguing a similar point, Patterson (2003) noted that pursuing "a mission does not mean . . . that organizations with servant leaders are unsuccessful; quite the contrary is true" (p. 4). As Branch (1999) pointed out, successful organizations such as Synovus, TD Industries, SAS Institute, and Southwest Airlines have been effectively led by servant leaders. One of the explanations for such success is the servant leadership focus on stewardship; a theme that Spears (1998), Nix (1997), and Russell and Stone (2002) have argued is an essential part of servant leadership. Stewardship implies that both "leaders and their followers are . . . stewards or agents of the organizations they lead" (Russell & Stone, p. 149), thus being accountable for reaching goals is not foreign to servant leadership. In fact, this type of stewardship necessarily involves honesty and accountability (Block, 1993; DePree, 1997; Russell & Stone); since a commitment to the development of others, another central feature of servant leadership, is related to fostering ownership and responsibility and insuring that leaders and followers are accountable for the matters for which they are responsible. Such observations from the servant leadership literature help explain the finding in this study related to providing accountability.



ISSN 1554-3145

*Supporting and resourcing*. The second item in the regression model is the importance of leaders supporting workers and providing necessary resources for the accomplishment of their goals. Based on the associated OLA item, leadership which "provid[es] the support and resources needed to help workers meet their goals" (OLA_30) is a significant predictor of team effectiveness. Patterson (2003) argued that the servant leadership dimension of empowerment is one of the primary pathways used by servant leaders in supporting followers in goal clarification and obtainment. On this point, Patterson wrote, "by empowering followers, servant leaders are allowing them freedom to proceed toward their goals, helping them make dreams reality" (p. 24).

As with the first theme of providing accountability, this second theme in the regression model supports that servant leadership is not uninterested in goals; rather, it is providing creative and supportive pathways toward fostering goal attainment. In light of this ongoing interest in goals, emphasis on the servant leader's role of supporting becomes essential. Rather than servant leaders taking over responsibilities from followers for the purpose of insuring that things are done right and goals are accomplished, servant leaders focus their energies on providing the necessary support and resources to help followers see their goals become reality. On this point, Blanchard (1996) addressed the concept of responsibility in light of the upside down pyramid, stating that "when you turn the pyramid upside down . . . the people become responsible, and the job of management is to be responsive to them" (p. 85). Rather than locating responsibility with the leader, it is located primarily with followers. This organizational shift makes the servant leadership dimensions of supporting and resourcing all the more important since the shift in mindset toward working for your people means that your purpose as a leader becomes primarily about helping your people "accomplish their goals" (Blanchard, p. 85).

The supporting role of the servant leader helps to insure that followers have the relational and structural support needed to carry out their responsibilities. The resourcing role of the servant leader helps to insure that followers have the human, fiscal, environmental, and material resources necessary to help followers accomplish their goals. This shift in focus toward leader supporting and resourcing is consistent with leadership transitions toward the influence and empowerment of people; which Russell (2001), Miles (1997), and Pollard (1996) see as being accomplished through structuring work environments in such a way that workers feel more effective and motivated.

*Engaging in honest self-evaluation*. The third item in the regression model is the importance of leader self-evaluation over (or at least prior to) an evaluating of others. Based on the associated OLA item, having leadership that "honestly evaluate[s] themselves before seeking to evaluate others" (OLA_43) is a significant predictor of team effectiveness. Though counterintuitive for some leaders, self-evaluation plays a central role in the type of servant leadership that is effective in the team-based context. One of the reasons for this is due to the fact that values are often instilled more through actions than words (Malphurs, 1996; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Russell (2001) built on this by explicitly engaging the importance of modeling in servant leadership. On this point, Page and Wong (2006) argued that servant leaders in high-involvement and high-impact teams model for others by setting a personal example in meeting high standards and investing considerable energy to champion the common goals of the organization. Actions often speak louder than words. In light of this, modeling humility in the form of self-evaluation is an important step in fostering an environment of personal growth and goal accomplishment for leaders and followers alike.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 98-113

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Seeing humility as a foundation dimension of servant leadership, Patterson (2003) described humility in leadership as a leader's ability to grasp the idea of not knowing, understanding, or having all the answers. Such a conceptualization of humility is foundational to leader self-evaluation. Ferch (2005) argued, "one of the defining characteristics of human nature is the ability to discern one's own faults, to be broken as the result of such faults, and in response to seek a meaningful change" (p. 97). While leadership in traditional or hierarchal organizational structures often is shaped around a downward flow of evaluation toward workers and followers, the present research demonstrates the importance of evaluation beginning at the level of self-leadership. In light of this, Ferch's observation about human nature holds particular value for those seeking to lead as servants in the team-based environment.

In contrast to humility which contributes to the leader's self-evaluation, the leader's ego can significantly damage one's capacity for self-evaluation. Noting that the issue of identity was the first and most often recurrent characteristic of the servant leadership, Buchen (1998) associated self-identity with the curtailment and redirection of ego and image. Based on Greenleaf's thinking, Buchen noted that ego holds the capacity to clog reception in leaders. This observation is based on the argument that leaders who are full of themselves are regularly screening what and who is important to their ego and, therefore, insure that nothing else gets through. Such unhealthy filtering of information through ego works against the positive effect of servant leadership on team effectiveness. In contrast to this, leaders who have the capacity to humbly engage in self-evaluation will be able to demonstrate a level of leadership authenticity through maintaining integrity and trust (Laub, 1999) that will positively contribute to the effectiveness of teams.

*Fostering collaboration*. The fourth item in the regression model is the importance of the leader's fostering an environment of collaboration over competition. Based on the associated OLA item, leadership which "encourage[s] workers to work *together* rather than competing against each other" (OLA_47) is a significant predictor of team effectiveness. The emphasis on collaboration in teams can be found throughout the servant leadership literature. First, it is a concept that was drawn out of Greenleaf's reflections by Spears (2005). Spears (2005) labeled this emphasis as building community. In community building, the theme is not limited to collaboration in work but goes further in an attempt to foster community. As Spears (2005) noted, this has become especially important in light of what "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" (p. 36).

Building on Spears' (2005) comments about building community, Laub (1999) argued that working collaboratively with others is one of the primary means by which servant leaders build community. Such collaboration fostered by servant leaders is seen as the foundation for effective teams at a theoretical level in the literature. For instance, Page and Wong (2006) argued that in effective teams, leaders empower others and foster collaborative efforts. Additionally, Laub (2003) argued that higher OLA scores are indicative of higher levels of team functioning. For example, teams with low OLA scores are characterized by (a) members being out for themselves, (b) members being manipulated and pitted against each other, and (c) members being punished for nonperformance. Conversely, teams with high OLA scores are characterized by (a) an extremely high level of community, (b) members working together well, and (c) members choosing collaboration over competition against one another. Such observations are consistent with Buchen's (1998) argument that servant leaders have a primary function of



ISSN 1554-3145

building human infrastructure on which relationships and community may be built. In light of these theoretical connections between servant leadership and teams, the findings of this study are grounded in the servant leadership literature. The servant leader's role of fostering community and a collaborative work environment is essential in effective team leadership.

*Communicating with clarity*. The fifth item in the regression model suggests the importance of leaders communicating plans and objectives clearly. Based on the associated OLA item, leadership which "communicate[s] clear plans and goals for the organization" (OLA_49) is a significant predictor of team effectiveness. In light of the emphasis on goals in several of the previous themes, it should not be a surprise that clarity of communication around organizational plans and goals would also be a significant leadership behavior for those leading in team-based organizations. Clarity of communication begins with clarity of ideas and concepts. In pursuing clear communication around organizational plans and goals, leaders must have the capacity to lead out of a clear vision.

Farling et al. (1999) argued that vision is an essential part of servant leadership. Leaders who possess vision are better suited to communicate plans and goals clearly since they speak out of a clear mental picture of where the organization is going. Srivastva (1983) described this concept of a clear mental picture in the following manner: "by envisioning we mean creating in one's mind an image of a desired future organizational state that can serve as a guide to interim strategies, decisions, and behavior" (p. 2). These interim strategies, decisions, and behavior facilitate goal accomplishment. In light of this, servant leaders who lead out of vision will be better suited for communicating organizational plans and goals with clarity. It is not surprising to see that Laub (1999) argued for clarifying goals as one of the primary means by which servant leaders provide leadership. The leader's focus on helping people understand the goals of the organization and insuring that they are committed to these goals is one of the essential tasks of leadership (Handy, 1996). For servant leaders who do this well, clearly communicated goals facilitate greater effectiveness in the accomplishment of team and goals.

*Valuing and appreciating*. The sixth and final item in the regression model suggests the importance of leaders valuing their employees and expressing appreciation for the contributions they make. Based on the associated OLA item, leadership that makes employees "feel appreciated by [their] supervisor for what [they] contribute" (OLA_55) is a significant predictor of team effectiveness. This observation is consistent with what others have argued in the servant leadership literature. For instance, Russell (2001) emphasized the importance of appreciating others in servant leadership; noting that "servant leaders visibly appreciate, value, encourage, and care for there constituents" (p. 79). Russell's observation is built upon Winston's (1999, 2002) argument for the importance of leaders exhibiting love for coworkers. Dennis (2004) further described this by noting that the love of servant leaders includes truly caring about team members as people, making them feel important and being genuinely interested in their lives.

Further affirming the importance of leaders valuing and affirming followers, Laub (1999) argued that building up others through encouragement and affirmation is one of the primary means by which servant leaders develop people. Part of developing people involves truly empowering them in the context of team work. On this connection between empowerment and valuing others, Russell and Stone (2002) made the case that "empowerment is entrusting power to others, and for the servant leader it involves effective listening, making people feel significant, putting an emphasis on teamwork, and the valuing of love and equality" (p. 7). With such



ISSN 1554-3145

empowerment, servant leaders are able to demonstrate their words of affirmation with actions that speak clearly. This emphasis on truly valuing and appreciating followers for their contribution to the team and the organization is a significant factor that, based on the findings in the present study, is predictive of greater leadership effectiveness.

*Recommendations for the Crossroads of Scholarship and Practice*

At the crossroads of scholarship and practice is empirical research. In the present study, the individual items of the OLA have been examined in light of team effectiveness in order to determine which servant leadership themes are most significant in predicting the effectiveness of teams. These findings provide the basis for recommendations to both leadership researchers and practitioners.

*Recommendations for leadership researchers*. While the present study contributes to the study of leadership predictors of team effectiveness, additional work is needed to advance this line of inquiry. First; because the present study was limited to the nonprofit sector; similar investigations and analyses should be extended to other sectors such as business, education, military, and government. Second; since servant leadership, transformational leadership, and transactional leadership have all been linked to team effectiveness; these constructs, in addition to servant leadership, should be measured concurrently to explore which specific leadership themes in these constructs have the strongest impact on team effectiveness.

Third, leadership predictors of team effectiveness should be measured utilizing complementary instrumentation. While the OLA provides a well established measure of servant leadership, the inclusion of additional servant leadership measures would help to corroborate the present findings. Additionally, future studies should use other measures of team effectiveness in order to evaluate leadership predictors of this dependent variable from alternative or complementary perspectives. Finally, while this study provides a model for the effect of servant leadership on team effectiveness, it did not explicitly explore the qualitatively-oriented question of why this effect exists; though the six themes identified could provide a basis for such work. In light of this, qualitatively-oriented research could advance the field by better addressing the dynamics that make a servant leadership approach within organizations especially effective in team-based contexts. While not exhaustive, these recommendations provide a basis for future research in servant leadership studies.

*Recommendations for leadership practice*. While there are many opportunities for future research, the present research provides the basis for informed recommendations at the level of leadership practice. Because servant leadership is a significant predictor of team effectiveness, it is vital for organizations to incorporate these themes into leadership for team contexts. Beyond this broad recommendation, a second recommendation is derived from the regression model in this study. Specifically, the following servant leadership themes are recommended for those leading in the team-based context: (a) providing accountability, (b) supporting and resourcing, (c) engaging in honest self-evaluation, (d) fostering collaboration, (e) communicating with clarity, and (f) valuing and appreciating. For those seeking to lead at the crossroads of contemporary research and practice, these findings reinforce the vital importance of servant leadership in organizations structured around decentralized and team-based communities. While more autocratic or paternalistic forms of leadership may have their place in hierarchically



ISSN 1554-3145

governed organizations, the present research emphasizes the priority of servant leadership in the emerging networked communities commonplace in today's organizations.

## Summary

In light of the emerging trends toward decentralized and networked structures, the theory and practice of teams continues to be an important issue for those at the crossroads of scholarship and practice. This study provides significant data for researchers and practitioners alike. Servant leadership has been identified in this study as a significant predictor of team effectiveness. In light of this, those who use team structures in organizations are advised to better understand both servant leadership in general and the six essential servant leadership themes in particular if they desire to increase their effectiveness. These six essential themes; (a) providing accountability, (b) supporting and resourcing, (c) engaging in honest self-evaluation, (d) fostering collaboration, (e) communicating with clarity, and (f) valuing and appreciating; hold the capacity for leaders to effectively navigate the waters of team-based leadership. 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.

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ISSN 1554-3145


# Servant Leadership: A Worldview Perspective

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The concept of worldview is introduced and explored as a framework for creating a philosophical foundation for servant leadership. The author uses the work of Schaeffer (1968), Pearcey (2004), Murphy and Ellis (1996), and MacIntyre (1984, 1988) to demonstrate the fragmented nature of modern philosophic and scientific traditions, how this affects ethics and morality, and how this fragmentation can be remedied to produce a unified and cohesive worldview. Five major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism) are examined for their overall compatibility with servant leadership. An eight-component worldview based upon the Judeo-Christian tradition is offered as a potential foundation for servant leadership and an answer to the question: Why should I practice servant leadership?

**W**hile attending the 2005 Servant Leadership Roundtable at Regent University, I was struck by the frequency of a recurring question from the audience: What are the philosophic foundations for servant leadership? Whenever asked, it was answered by speakers or participants with a wide variety of responses ranging from purely religious explanations to vague allusions to particular values. Ultimately, the question was never fully answered to the satisfaction of the person asking it. The overall impression was that there really were no philosophic, conceptual underpinnings to servant leadership other than the essays of Greenleaf (1996, 1997) and the commitment to treat people with kindness.

## Does Servant Leadership Literature Offer a Philosophic Base for the Theory?

Greenleaf's (1997) theory of servant leadership was formulated after he read Herman Hess' *Journey to the East*. Greenleaf (1997) stated that the story greatly impressed him, but the idea laid dormant for over 11 years before he began to write essays expanding on various ideas related to the blossoming theory of servant leadership. These essays touched on various aspects related to power, manipulation, hope, responsibility, strength, and so forth. Eventually, they coalesced into a theory of servant leadership consisting of 10 attributes: listening, empathy,

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 114-132

ISSN 1554-3145

healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 1995).

The development of servant leadership as a theory has been a slow process as researchers struggle to articulate an adequate theoretical infrastructure. Theorists have explored servant leadership attributes (Russell, 2002) and values (Russell, 2001), offered models (Buchen, 1998; Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003; Wong & Page, 2003), compared servant leadership with other theories (Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Humphries, 2005; Matteson & Irving, 2005; Rennaker, 2005; Smith, Montagno, & Kuzemenko, 2004; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Whetstone, 2002, 2005; Winston & Hartsfield, 2004), offered a typology of servant leadership (Laub, 2004), explained its benefits theoretically or through research (Banutu-Gomez, 2004; Greenleaf, 1997; Greenleaf, 1996; Irving, 2004; Irving, 2005; Polleys, 2002; Reinke, 2004; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Spears, 1995; Spears & Lawrence, 2002; Stupak & Stupak, 2005; Winston, 2004), explored contextual appropriateness (Humphries, 2005; Smith et al., 2004), and criticized its assumptions in relation to gender (Eicher-Catt, 2005).

Very few studies have offered a philosophical base for the theory, anchoring it in a particular worldview. There have been attempts to link it to Christianity since the New Testament records Jesus Christ telling his disciples that "…the greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:11-12, New International Version; Russell, 2003; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Wong & Page, 2003). However, these attempts have not sought to create a cohesive rationale for servant leadership in the context of a worldview or explained basic aspects of what would constitute a biblical worldview. Russell provided the most comprehensive textual support for servant leadership from a Judeo-Christian perspective but fell short of showing a philosophic rationale supporting why servant leadership should be practiced (Russell, 2003). In addition, attempts to link servant leadership to a religious tradition have met resistance in a pluralistic society where a myriad of worldviews compete for attention, where it is assumed that there will be a separation between religion and public life, and where a logical framework for the inclusion of religious values in everyday life is missing. This position of separation flows from presuppositions fueled by a fragmented modern worldview, as explored later in this paper.

Patterson (2003) used the concept of virtue as a descriptor for servant leadership. Virtue, first defined by Aristotle, involves doing right things through moral character (Patterson, 2003; Whetstone, 2002). Patterson (2003) identified seven virtues associated with servant leadership: agapáo love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. Winston (2003) used these virtues as a basis for building an interactive model of servant leadership. Stone and Patterson (2005) revisited it when placing servant leadership within a historical continuum of leadership development. By building on Aristotle's philosophic framework, the beginnings of an underpinning for servant leadership were offered. However, Aristotelian ethics have been criticized for gender bias; impracticality in application; and the observation that virtues divorced from theology are the product of socially constructed agreements and, therefore, schemes of virtue may include diametric opposites in different cultures (Hauptli, 2002). Whetstone (2005) stated that an Aristotelian approach to ethics is inadequate to stand on its own. MacIntyre (1984) stated that since the enlightenment, there has been no agreement among modern philosophers as to what specific virtues exist. This inability to agree upon what constitutes virtues opens any list of virtues to criticism.

Table 1 lists a comparison of the virtues identified by Aristotle and what are recognized as traditional Christian virtues and those outlined by Patterson (2003). Aristotle valued pride,



ISSN 1554-3145

while Patterson listed humility as a virtue. Finally, Aristotle's concept of the fulfilled or complete person came from a reflection upon the nature of the pantheon of Greek gods. His ethic was rooted in his religious tradition, providing the ethic with a means for determining how humans ought to live or what is sometimes called a teleology. Virtues are moral in nature (Whetstone, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005). Drawing attention to virtues, an arm of morality/ethics, as a basis of action raises the questions as to whether or not the virtues mentioned are grounded metaphysically or philosophically? If virtues have no grounding philosophically, are they merely another form of relativism?

Table 1: *A Comparison of Virtues*

| Aristotelian | Traditional Christian | Patterson (2003) and servant leadership |
|---|---|---|
| Courage | Chastity | Agapáo love |
| Temperance | Abstinence | Vision |
| Generosity | Liberality | Altruism |
| Pride | Humility | Humility |
| Self-control | Patience | Trust |
| Truthfulness | Kindness | Empowerment |
| Justice | Diligence | Service |
| Wittiness | | |
| Friendliness | | |
| Practical knowledge | | |
| Scientific knowledge | | |

Patterson's (2003) approach of linking servant leadership to virtues implies that servant leadership is a moral form of leadership. Whetstone (2002, 2005) originally raised the same sentiment by demonstrating that servant leaders operate out of a moral concern for others. I believe the absence of a philosophic foundation for servant leadership, which conceptually anchors ethics or morality in a specific philosophic system, causes one to be unable to answer clearly the question: why should I practice this form of leadership? Is servant leadership merely another technique which can be applied and discarded at the leader's whim or according to the bottom line? Or, is it a philosophic orientation, linked to a cohesive worldview which gives meaning to values and attributes in servant leadership and functions as an orientation that governs perceptions, understanding, and praxis in the world?

I will first examine the concept of worldview, defining and clarifying its role in the selection and organization of values. Second, through a summary of Pearcey (2004) and Schaffer's (1968) work in philosophy and Murphy and Ellis' (1996) analysis of the modern hierarchy of scientific inquiry, I will explain how current fragmented and competing worldviews undermine a sound philosophic base for any justification of values or ethics and result in a quandary as to how to classify ethics. Thirdly, the question of whether or not philosophy can offer a foundation for servant leadership is answered. This is followed by Murphy and Ellis' explanation of how to repair the fragmented worldview of science and philosophy while maintaining the integrity of science through MacIntyre's (1984, 1988) approach of requiring any philosophic or worldview system to be linked to a traditional religion in order to create cohesiveness and consistency within the worldview and objectify the fields of ethics and



ISSN 1554-3145

morality. Having argued that there is a necessity to link worldviews to religion, the paper then examines extant leadership literature linking religion to leadership studies and specifically whether or not the five major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism) have any serious incompatibility with servant leadership. The next section presents a specific worldview drawn from broad principles of a Judeo-Christian perspective as a potential foundation for servant leadership. This worldview is then examined as to how well it aligns with leadership theory in general and servant leadership in particular, comparing worldview components with servant leadership attributes, followed by a concluding section.

## What is Worldview?

"Worldview comes from the German word 'weltanschauung' meaning a 'look into the world.' It refers to a wide world perception. It constitutes the framework through which an individual interprets the world and interacts in it" (*Worldview*, 2006, p. 1). Nash (1996) stated that the writings of philosophers identify assumptions about the make-up of reality or how the world works, conceptual schemes, or patterns of ideas or values and organizes them to form a worldview. In the same manner, religions offer a scheme for interpreting the world and, therefore, are recognized as worldviews as well (Nash, 1996). A worldview is used to interpret and make sense of the world. Perceptions of the world and reality can greatly differ between people or cultures since their assumptions of what is important and true differ. There are many types of worldviews vying for supremacy. These include religious systems (formal philosophic systems such as modernism or postmodernism), less formal systems including large group perspectives such as a particular culture, or personal systems.

A history of challenge, debate, and theorizing within the philosophic community demonstrates how worldviews may have inherent weaknesses, inconsistencies, or inabilities to account for various beliefs or practices. This is consistent with Kuhn (1970) who; in explaining the history of scientific advancement; identified the challenges, shifts, and transformations associated with comparing belief systems and selecting the most stable or cohesive.

## Which Worldview? How Fragmentation in Modern Worldviews Breeds Confusion

Schaeffer (1968, 1976) and later Pearcey (2004) argued that modern Western worldview suffers from a fragmentation of false dichotomies which affect every aspect of life, particularly morality. Beginning with Plato and his dichotomy of form and matter, the authors examined western philosophic thought, showing how this false dichotomy confuses morality and ethics in particular. The dichotomy is currently expressed as a juxtaposition of values and ethics against science and facts. This placing of ethics in the realm of relativism spurred Murphy and Ellis (1996) to look at the problem of ethics in the fragmented scientific paradigm and whether or not there is a rationale which would unite the current fragmented philosophic reality into a unified worldview.

If one agreed with Pearcey (2004), Schaeffer (1968, 1976), and Murphy and Ellis (1996) that the fragmentation of modern worldviews has created an unsure foundation for ethics or morality, are there implications for leadership? It is not difficult to find the effects of this fragmentation within companies and individuals as they go about daily life and business. The most glaring effect is that values or morality are cast as a purely individual or relative matter. In its most extreme form, it could be called hyperrelativistic. This is relativism that goes beyond

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 114-132

ISSN 1554-3145

cultural norms, mores, and folkways into a type of anarchism in which companies and individuals recognize no law but themselves. This is exemplified in the excesses and questionable practices of leaders and businesses. As business expands globally, authors such as Greider (1997) document labor and manufacturing practices of business in the developing world that rival egregious activities associated with Europe and the United States in the 19th century. The more common effects of a fragmented worldview in business relates to dichotomies that often breed conflict between competing values. One such occurrence relates to the conflict between shareholder and stakeholder focus found in arguments of social responsibility in business. The shareholder perspective promotes profit alone as the major consideration in business decisions while the stakeholder perspective promotes human and social impact as the major considerations in business decisions. Another effect would be the dichotomy between task and people orientation in leadership.

Fragmentation of worldview affects every level of science as well. In science in general, this fragmentation is exhibited when scientists defend certain inquiries as value free. The pursuit of knowledge is held as the highest value, and the collateral damage done by a logical application of certain findings is seen as the broken eggs necessary to make an omelet.

Can philosophy provide a foundation for servant leadership? The ultimate question is why should one practice servant leadership? The values of servant leadership lean heavily toward human consideration and morality (Whetstone, 2005). Without having a sound, unified worldview that justifies use of servant leadership; one falls prey to the reality that, ultimately, the reason is either utilitarian/pragmatic or situational. The utilitarian/pragmatic reason contradicts the idea that people are to be viewed as an end as opposed to a means, a key value in servant leadership. If the only reason we use the servant leadership approach is that it causes people to work harder to obtain organizational goals, then we undermine the very theory itself. If we take a purely situational approach, stating servant leadership can only work in certain settings and contexts, we again undermine some of the key values described in the theory. In the situational approach, humans are only to be valued if their culture or personal beliefs align with the theory. Pragmatism and situational ethics both fail as reasons for practicing servant leadership.

This brings up the question of whether or not modern philosophy is a suitable base for servant leadership. Kantian philosophy and humanism have been used as potential foundations for leadership. Bowie (2000) argued for a Kantian form of leadership which is highly egalitarian. However, he also stated that “Kant specifically rejects the notion of servility as an acceptable stance for any person-leader or otherwise” (p. 188). To Kant, a servant leader allows himself or herself to be used as a means to others attaining their goals. The idea of one agent using another, even if it is voluntary, is unacceptable. From Bowie’s perspective, Kant’s philosophic position cannot be used as a foundation for servant leadership.

Humanism has been examined in relation to leadership in general by McGuire, Cross, and O’Donnell (2005) and found wanting. After articulating how humanistic approaches; which emphasize meeting job-related personal, self-esteem, and self-development needs; are normally applied in the workplace, the authors concluded that those who adhere to humanism are “misguided because they fail to grasp, take into account or make explicit the core principles that continue to underpin the capitalist enterprise” (p. 132). They stated that “humanist approaches may mislead employees, and perhaps HRD professionals, by fostering the illusion that the needs of the employees and organizations are always mutually inclusive” (p. 133). Their response uncovers how a fragmented worldview has shaped our concept of capitalism, framing its goals as diametrically opposed to individual development.



ISSN 1554-3145

In addition, humanism itself seems to be on the decline as it appears to be forsaking its original commitment to human interests as the center of civilization. Veith (2005)outlined how one prominent scientist equated humans to bacteria who need to be cleansed from the planet. Merriam (2004) argued that population growth has cheapened our concept of the value of humans to the point that there is greater outcry over the torture of an animal as opposed to a human. Although an examination of Kantian philosophy or humanism hardly represents an overview of all aspects of modern thought, they do illustrate how Western philosophy as it now stands cannot be used to justify servant leadership.

MacIntyre (1984, 1988), in seeking to provide a firm foundation for ethics and virtues, argued that if ethics are divorced from a religious tradition, they are robbed of a high view of humans. The whole concept of how people ought to live has been the focus of philosophers for centuries. However, MacIntyre (1984) feels that it cannot be convincingly argued outside of a religious tradition. According to MacIntyre (1984), how humans ought to be treated becomes entirely relativistic and essentially meaningless when divorced from some religious tradition.

With this understanding, Murphy and Ellis (1996) addressed how fragmentation in worldview creates a scientific paradigm void of ethics. By following MacIntyre's (1984) method of creating a narrative for examining the cohesiveness and consistency of paradigms, Murphy and Ellis reasoned through the process of placing various scientific fields into a hierarchy based upon their complexity. Once Murphy and Ellis completed the hierarchy, they noted that there is no scientific sphere for ethics or morality. The authors explained how unacceptable this is by demonstrating that values and assumptions of morality and ethics are embedded in each scientific field and in how science is conducted as a discipline. Murphy and Ellis then suggested that since ethics/morality are embedded at every level in scientific inquiry; they are required as part of a scientific hierarchy of disciplines and, because the very nature of ethics and morality implies an oversight role, are required to be placed at the upper levels of the hierarchy where they are able to govern all levels below. Having shown the necessity for ethics/morality as a scientific discipline; the authors use the research and reasoning of MacIntyre (1984) to link morality to a religious system, demonstrate that it is necessary to place ethics and morality below some metaphysical belief system, and unify the fragmented scientific system.

If all levels of science (including the social sciences) are saturated with ethical and moral assumptions in either their theories or practice, if all levels of science require an ethical/moral discipline for critique, and if morality and ethics must be linked to some traditional religion in order to have coherence; then servant leadership must also be linked to some overarching worldview. What then could serve as a foundation for servant leadership? According to MacIntyre (1984), one of the first places to look is religion.

## Five Major Religions' Worldviews and Their Compatibility with Servant Leadership

Kriger and Seng (2005) posed a contingency theory in leadership based upon the worldview of five religions that together represent over 82% of the world's population. They compared the worldviews of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism in relation to factors such as the nature and exemplars of leadership, core vision, basis for moral leadership, source of wisdom for leaders, levels of being, and the role of community. The explanations of worldview were not exhaustive or critical in their appraisal of each religion. In fact, they stated that their primary focus was upon Buddhism and Islam, followed by Hinduism, with sparse reference to Judaism and Christianity. They concluded that leadership in the five religions



ISSN 1554-3145

corresponds more closely to charismatic leadership theories since each tradition provides a series of individuals as role models who exemplify leadership behavior as well as acceptable life patterns, not to mention their inclusion of heroes and heroines who arise in times of crises to provide guidance and inspiration.

Kriger and Seng (2005) also provided a list of values drawn from the study of spirituality in the workplace that included forgiveness, compassion/empathy, integrity, kindness, honesty/truthfulness, patience, humility, loving kindness, service to others, peacefulness, thankfulness, guidance, joy, equanimity, and stillness/inner peace. They stated that these values were also found within each of the five religions. How well did each of the religions embody these values? As pointed out earlier, Russell (2003) identified key support for servant leadership within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) along with Wong and Page (2003) made a strong case for linking it to Christianity in particular. However, the components of a Judeo-Christian worldview were not explained in any detail by any of these authors. It is therefore necessary to present, in broad terms, essential elements of the Judeo-Christian worldview in order to understand its compatibility with servant leadership theory.

This exploration of a broad worldview of the Judeo-Christian tradition will not be a theological treatise encompassing all the details and complexity associated with theology or praxis. Rather, it is an exploration of broad concepts associated with practical theology as evidenced in how individual and community roles and values are explained. Eight different components of worldview are defined. These components highlight the tension that exists when seeking to reconcile the inalienable rights of individuals with the ever-present responsibility to community and the community's responsibility to protect and serve the individual. These eight components consist of human dignity, personal responsibility, character, community, the use of power, compassion, stewardship, and justice. These components have been reduced to broad topics from an examination of the Old and New Testament teachings related to how individuals are to be treated and the essential values associated with what the Scriptures teach a healthy society should embody. Many find their roots in Old Testament instructions from God to the nation of Israel regarding the structure of the Hebrew society.

*Human dignity.* Individuals are important and are to be treated in a manner that makes them ends, not means. This is because God has created each person in His image. Each person is worthy of respect because of their potential life with God. Each person, no matter how damaged or hopeless they may seem, has worth. People have value that exists apart from any sense of utility. Individuals have rights to specific types of treatment, and leaders have an obligation to ensure that individuals are treated in a manner that affirms the image of God in their lives. Each person, consciously or unconsciously, feels this dignity that God has placed inherently in them. Cahill (1998) pointed out that one of the gifts of Judaism to the world was the idea that the individual is important. Prior to this, the emphasis was upon the group or tribe. The emphasis on the individual is a key aspect of personal dignity. Whenever this dignity is injured, the individual suffers loss; and, ultimately, the community of which the person is a part suffers. Human dignity assumes that leaders affirm the ideas, visions, goals, and aspirations of followers. People have the right and responsibility to shape their own destinies. People have certain rights that exist apart from socially constructed law. We express this dignity through a sense of personal integrity. When a person has a strong sense of dignity or self-respect; he or she strives to live in a manner that affirms that dignity, giving honor to the image of God within him or her.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 114-132

ISSN 1554-3145

*Personal responsibility.* Dignity produces a sense of personal responsibility. Individuals take responsibility for their actions. When a person's sense of dignity is injured, one of the first things to suffer is a sense of personal responsibility for his or her actions. Peterson, Maier, and Seligman (1994) outlined extreme cases that result in a sense of helplessness or what is currently called a victim mentality. The person embracing this victimhood places responsibility for his or her life and actions on others. Steele (1990) and McWhorter (2000, 2005) outlined how this loss of dignity and victim mentality can permeate not only the psyche of a people but how it can influence leaders to formulate solutions to problems that perpetuate this sense of helplessness and lack of responsibility. Central to the idea of personal responsibility is the concept of character.

*Character.* Character focuses on the necessity to not only do good, but to be good. Specific character traits are isolated in Scripture as not only being pleasing to God; but beneficial to the self, the family, and the greater community. Some of these include wisdom, teachability, loving kindness, joyfulness, peace making, humility, meekness, longsuffering, gentleness, patience, self-control, courage, self-sacrifice, trustworthiness, truthfulness, empathy, and foresight. The presence of these attributes is expected to be seen in how one lives and conducts business within the world.

*Community.* In the Old Testament, the idea of community embraced extended family, village location, tribal affiliation, and national identity. Most people were members of small groups of friends, family, and business associates with whom they had interaction on almost a daily basis. The emphasis on the individual is tempered by emphasizing the need for individuals to be aware of the common good of the community. This tension between individual needs and wants and community needs and wants permeates all of Scripture. There are expectations related to how communities were to relate to individuals; with special emphasis on the marginalized, disenfranchised, or unfortunate. There were also expectations related to the responsibilities individuals had to ensure that communities were peaceful, prosperous, and just places to live.

*Use of power*. How leaders use power is a key area of interest in the Scriptures. The recurring theme is one of sharing power; not amassing power, misleading or manipulating people, or using them as pawns in some grand vision or scheme of the leader (Berkhof, 1977; Christian, 1994). Each person should have the opportunity to participate in shaping their individual destiny. The use of power must affirm and strengthen human dignity. Power usage must involve the average person having the means to act upon their dreams and desires.

*Justice.* Of particular note is the attention given to those who are marginalized, disenfranchised, and downtrodden in society in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. This concern is a dual concern. On the one hand, it reveals the value God places on an individual regardless of whether that individual is rich or poor, a member of the community or not, useful or not. It emphasizes that communities have a responsibility to care for these marginalized people. On the other hand, it reveals that a community's concept of justice exposes the strength or weakness of that community and whether or not its worldview is sufficient for its long-term sustainability (Perkins, 1995). Is the community a just community? Mott and Sider (1999) pointed out that this theme is captured by the prophets and enriches the concept of justice found in the Scriptures beyond what was common apart from Scripture. The concept of justice found



ISSN 1554-3145

within Scripture includes (a) procedural justice, which specifies fair legal process for rich and poor alike; (b) commutative justice, which defines the fair exchange of goods and the conducting of business (e.g., fair weights and measures); (c) distributive justice, which specifies fair allocation of a society's wealth; (d) retributive justice, which defines fair punishment for crimes; and (e) restorative justice, which is an aspect of distributive and retributive justice and specifies fair ways to correct injustice and restore socio-economic wholeness for persons and communities. Specific admonitions exist in the Old and New Testaments relating to the marginalized in society and the responsibility of leaders to care for them.

*Stewardship.* God declares that the earth and all that is in it is His: "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Pslm 24:1). Humans are given the responsibility to care for God's creation. People have the opportunity to use resources placed in their care as stewards, one who manages resources according to the wishes of another (Block, 1993). Stewardship includes the development of personal skills and abilities, stewardship of community, management of personal and social resources, management of social systems, care for the marginalized, and care for the environment, among other things. Young (2003) argued that stewardship involves a redefinition of capital to include physical, social, financial, reputational, and human capital.

*Compassion.* It is interesting that throughout Scripture are economic principles of capital redistribution, part of distributive and restorative justice. This is justice coupled with love. Here God is seeking to correct and restore community that has been fractured by material need (Mott & Sider, 1999). It makes leaders responsible for removing oppression that causes members of a community to be excluded, devalued, or merely forgotten.

God was so committed to caring for the marginalized and to economic parity that He declares that to fail to do these things reveals a heart that does not know Him. He explains to a leader that commitment to these principles is of paramount importance:

> Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me? declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 22:15-16)

This represents an institutionalization of compassion, along with the cluster of justice principles, within Jewish society. Leaders were judged by how they revealed compassion.

These broad components of a biblical worldview align quite well with numerous theories outside the realm of Scripture that extol the need for respect for human dignity, human responsibility, justice, community, compassion, stewardship, and proper use of power (Bachrach & Baratz, 1972; Block, 1993; Borda & Rahman, 1990; Ellul, 1972, 1976, 1984; Etzioni, 1993; Field, 2003; Garbarino, 1988; Gaventa, 1982; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2002; Greider, 2003; Lukes, 1974; MacIntyre, 1984; Margalit, 1996; Mott & Sider, 1999; Perkins, 1995; Roby, 1998; Schneider, 2002).

Whetstone (2002) used the five themes of personalism as a potential basis for practicing servant leadership. Although personalism does not exist as a formal field of philosophy and is not clearly defined, its five themes are very similar to the broad aspects of a biblical worldview. The themes in personalism are (a) the centrality of the person, people are of value apart from utility; (b) subjectivity and autonomy, the necessity for autonomy and self mastery; (c) human



ISSN 1554-3145

dignity; (d) the person within the community; and (e) participation and solidarity, the requirement to love others and avoid alienation.

## Five Religious Worldviews and Areas of Incompatibility with Servant Leadership

By focusing on the list of values or attributes associated with servant leadership, Sarayrah (2004) outlined how Bedouin Arabic culture exhibits values that seem compatible with servant leadership. Kriger and Seng (2005) also isolated similar values based upon the admonition that followers in Islam bestow power upon the leader and give them the right to lead. The authors assumed that any worldview anchored in a traditional religion will be compatible with servant leadership. Is that the case?

Buddhism's values seem closest to Patterson's (2003) virtue approach to servant leadership. Buddhism is technically a nontheistic religion and poses virtues which guide the follower. These virtues relate to inner states and external practices of the leader. Of particular interest are the four immeasurable states of mind: love, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Buddhism places a strong emphasis on the leader practicing and embodying the virtues appropriate to daily situations (Kriger & Seng, 2005). Although this represents a strong contingency theory approach to leadership, the values outlined by Kriger and Seng seem consistent with servant leadership values. Would these religions serve as a philosophic foundation for servant leadership?

Values flow from a philosophic position or worldview. When only values are considered, each religion reveals some level of agreement with servant leadership. What is missing is a consideration of the hot buttons associated with each of the five religions' worldview. These hot buttons are part of the greater worldview associated with each religion and raise questions about whether or not a specific values comparison alone is sufficient.

For instance, no mention is made of the dual system of justice existing in Islam regarding Muslims and non-Muslims that incorporates the concept of jihad and challenges the broad worldview concept of the dignity of all humans. Sarayrah (2004) drew parallels between Bedouin-Arab tribal leaders and the values they embrace and servant leadership. However, no mention was made of how non-Muslims are treated.

In Islam, non-Muslims are divided into two basic categories: pagan idol worshipers and people of the book (Jews and Christians) who are generally referred to as dhimmi (Ye'or, 1985). The harsh treatment of these groups has been catalogued historically from the inception of Islam until present day (Bostom, 2005; Ye'or, 1985). For instance, dhimmis are not allowed to present evidence against a Muslim in a court of law governed by the Koran; their oath is considered invalid (Ye'or, 1985 p. 56). They are required to pay a submission tax that is determined entirely by the whim of Muslim leaders, are not permitted to build nor repair centers of worship not related to Islam, and are prohibited from holding any position that places them in authority over a Muslim (Bostom, 2005; Ye'or, 1985).

In addition to the tiered Islamic social structure in which dhimmis are second class citizens, Muslim women also suffer under a dual standard and experience second class status (Creevey, 1991; Mostafa, 2003; Nicolai, 2004; Sidani, 2005). A typical response by an Islamic scholar to the reality that the rights of women and non-Muslims under shari'a are not equal to male Muslims is to argue for a nonuniversal approach to human rights. Rather than adhere to a universal declaration for human rights as declared by the United Nations, they would say human rights need to be evaluated based upon local values and worldviews, essentially legitimizing



ISSN 1554-3145

significant human rights violations (An-Na'im & Henkin, 2000). Is it possible for a tradition that adheres to these positions to be regarded as a possible philosophic foundation for servant leadership?

In Hinduism, the hot buttons relate to the caste system and karma. The Hindu doctrine of caste divides people into Brahman, kshatriyas, vaishyas, shudra, and untouchables (or dalits). Brahmans embody the highest, most respected level; while dalits represent the lowest and least respected level. This division denies the value of the individual, forcing a solidarity in which all are expected to conform to caste in behavior and self-image and in which individuals are not to be judged apart from caste (Saha, 1993). Caste determines job allocation as well as access to resources and services (Borooah, 2005). Mandelbaum (1964) noted that the concept of karma teaches that what one experiences in this life is the result of one's conduct in previous lives, precluding the striving to change one's fate or social position. Both these doctrines seem to conflict with concepts of essential human dignity. Is it possible for a tradition that adheres to these positions to be regarded as a possible philosophic foundation for servant leadership?

Compared to the two previous religious traditions, Buddhism seems more compatible with servant leadership since it has an emphasis on the interrelatedness of all creation and humanity. Like Hinduism, it too has a strong emphasis on karma and how previous lives create the current reality in which individuals find themselves. Current suffering can be traced to errors in previous lives or incarnations needing correction in the current life. Although there is an embracing of suffering, there seems to be little mention of offering a helping hand in the present or a transformation of society to reduce poverty, disease, or disabling environments (Miles, 2002). There is conflict between Buddhism and the concept of human rights as well as Buddhism's view of common labor. Buddhists feel humans have no inalienable rights as defined by western thinking. This follows logically from their teaching that the self is an illusion. To place value on any one thing, such as the self, is to ignore the interdependence of all things. This is described in an article examining the failure of privacy rights in Thai culture (Kitiyadisai, 2005). In spite of this, it appears that distinctions are made by Buddhists in relation to the value of individuals. In examining the traditions of giving in religions of India, it is found that Buddhist monks discriminate between donors based upon ideas of merit and impurity, thus creating a type of caste system within Buddhism, denying certain individuals or groups the ability to earn merit toward nirvana (Brekke, 1998). Is it possible for a tradition that adheres to these positions to be regarded as a possible philosophic foundation for servant leadership?

Judaism and Christianity hold similar positions related to issues since they share a portion of the Scriptures, the Old Testament. This worldview has come under criticism for an apparent gender bias that discriminates against women (Cohen, 1980; Eicher-Catt, 2005). It could be argued that the case is not as strong for Christianity when one includes the protestant denominations that endorse the ordination of women and promote women having access to all levels of leadership. Both Judaism and Christianity still suffer from practical issues related to gender discrimination, yet they tend to have a better track record in their treatment of women than the three religions previously examined. The criticism is valid but not critical enough in scope to warrant setting aside the broad Judeo-Christian worldview outlined earlier, particularly when the definitions are applied equally to both genders.

Ultimately, all five religions suffer, to a greater or lesser degree, from inconsistencies or teachings that seem incompatible with the values of servant leadership. However, as worldviews, three of the five have serious contradictions with servant leadership. Does this mean that one has to abandon all religion as a basis for servant leadership because of conflict with specific values? I

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 114-132

ISSN 1554-3145

believe that the answer is no. Two of the traditions reveal only minor conflict with overall values, and current social trends associated with those religions show much movement toward reconciliation. Consequently, it is possible to use a broad Judeo-Christian or biblical worldview as a foundation which would be compatible with servant leadership. When viewed in broad, sweeping language such as presented in this paper; the broad biblical worldview is compatible with personalism, servant leadership as well as many other leadership styles expressed in leadership literature. Rather than linking a theory like servant leadership to a specific teaching, linking it to a comprehensive worldview provides a stronger philosophic base. Even Jesus' command to be servant leaders grew out of His understanding of Hebrew worldview.

## Worldview versus Nomological Nets?

Pearcey (2004) and Murphy and Ellis (1996) have shown how the inclusion of worldview provides cohesiveness and unity as well as a rationale for determining ethical choices. Nomological nets outline the essential structures of theories by linking other theoretical constructs to a particular theory. Kuhn (1970) pointed out that since each new theory introduced into a paradigm is measured by existing theories in the paradigm, a circular logic is constructed. It is possible to construct a theory or paradigm that is internally logical, supported by an extensive nomological net, and morally repugnant. An example of this is represented in the field of bioethics. Some ethicists in this field have asked how one can support the destruction of life in order to protect life (Gushee, 2006). Ultimately, this decision is made not based on science but on worldview. Fragmented modern worldviews may support this type of reasoning. However, it still remains that the issue is a moral issue and, ultimately, a moral decision. When that decision is made purely upon relativistic frameworks, not only varying but frightening decisions can arise. Although nomological nets provide rational support for what *is* (the arena in which science thrives), they provide no support for what *ought to be* in an ideal sense (the realm of worldview since it deals with teleology). Guidance regarding how to live or what constitutes good or bad behavior is ultimately rooted in worldview even though we often experience it through the lens of culture. Culture and worldviews are intertwined to a very great degree.

The applicability of specific leadership theories supported by empirically verified nomological nets has come under scrutiny as culturally implicit theories of leadership have been explored (Banutu-Gomez, 2002; Boehnke, Bontis, DiStefano, & DiStefano, 2003; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Evaristo, 2003; Hartog, House, Hanges, & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1999; House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002; Kim, Danseruau, Kim, & Kim, 2004; Pillai, Scandura, & Williams, 1999; Volkmar, 2003). Although leadership theory to this point has not been explained in terms of worldview and no specific worldview inquiries have been a part of studies such as the GLOBE project; worldview lurks in the background, shaping cultural values which in turn shape implicit ideas of leadership. With more examination of culture, we may find that our understanding of leadership theories and their fungibility can be traced to worldview. How compatible will some theories be with some cultures? Servant leadership theory has been used in this paper as a starting point for comparison.

## A Broad Biblical Worldview and Its Compatibility with Servant Leadership

The values and attributes of various leadership theories including transformational leadership (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978, 2003; Tichy & Devanna, 1986), servant leadership (Bass,



ISSN 1554-3145

1990; Greenleaf, 1996; Spears & Lawrence, 2002), self-sacrificial leadership (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999), and authentic leadership (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Gardner, Avolio, & Luthans, 2005; Klenke, 2005) are compatible with one or more of the eight broad Judeo-Christian worldview components. These components as outlined in the earlier section provide strong support for the various attributes of servant leadership (see Table 2). Each of the individual values of servant leadership finds a basis for expression in multiple aspects of this worldview. Each component in the worldview provides a different perspective on the expression of each value in servant leadership. In addition, the components of this worldview provide a broad framework that should prove acceptable within secular circles. The five themes of personalism as outlined by Whetstone (2002), being secular in origin, have significant overlap with a broad biblical worldview. If the components of a broad biblical worldview themselves were presented to a secular group without mention of their linkage to a religious tradition, they would find strong support.

Another essential point to grasp is that a single worldview may support more than one leadership theory. Individual leadership theories may embody worldviews in differing degrees of application. This may infer that a person's choice of which leadership theory to employ depends upon (a) the person's dominant worldview and (b) personal traits, talents, and preferences. Leadership theories initially may be chosen based upon psychological fit, brought about by external worldview and internal states and preferences. This, of course, is not a new revelation.

Table 2: *How a Biblical Worldview Supports Servant Leadership Attributes*

| Biblical worldview components | Human dignity | Personal responsi-bility | Character | Community | Use of power | Stewardship | Compassion | Justice |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Servant leadership attributes | | | | |
| Listening | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |
| Empathy | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Healing | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Awareness | | x | x | | x | x | x | x |
| Persuading | x | x | | x | x | | | |
| Foresight | | x | x | x | x | x | | x |
| Stewardship | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Growth of people | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| Community | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x |
| Conceptualizing | | x | x | x | x | x | | x |



ISSN 1554-3145

## Conclusion

The identification of a philosophic base for servant leadership, or the need to define one, has been absent from the literature but has been found to be a question asked in discussing why one should practice servant leadership. Patterson (2003) promoted the concept of virtues as a potential explanation for the necessity of practicing servant leadership and, as such, presented the theory as being essentially moral. In modern philosophy, there is little agreement as to which virtues to select or how to select them. This is largely due to the fragmented worldview present within current Western thinking.

Through the work of Schaffer (1968, 1976), Pearcey (2004), and Murphy and Ellis (1996); the effect of a fragmented worldview upon everyday thinking and particularly upon the sciences was explained as well as the need to bring about a unified approach which places ethics/morality back in its rightful place in the hierarchy of the sciences. MacIntyre's (1984, 1988) work explained the need for worldviews and ethics/morality in particular to be linked to a specific traditional religion in order to have consistency and cohesion. Accomplishing this removes morality and ethics from the continually shifting sands of relativism and cultural change.

Since servant leadership has been defined as a moral or virtuous leadership style and, according to MacIntyre (1984), it is necessary to link such a system to a traditional religion in order to maintain cohesion and consistency; five major religions were examined for whether any of the key components of their worldview created serious conflict with the values of servant leadership. The work of Kriger and Seng (2005) served as launching point related to religious worldviews and leadership theory. Eight components of a broadly defined biblical worldview based upon the Judeo-Christian tradition were explained. Using extant literature, these five major religious worldviews were examined for compatibility with servant leadership. Significant contradictions with servant leadership theory were found within Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. These contradictions do not preclude servant leadership from being practiced within those traditions but raise serious questions as to how compatible these traditions actually are with the whole theory and its implications. The potential problems associated with Judaism and Christianity were less serious. For this reason, a broadly defined Judeo-Christian worldview, consisting of eight components, was compared with each value in servant leadership (as shown in Table 2). The values or attributes of servant leadership were found to be strongly supported within this worldview.

There is significant compatibility between the values and components of servant leadership and a biblical worldview. Linking servant leadership to such a worldview would answer the question posed in the introduction: what are the philosophic foundations for servant leadership? It would also provide a more objective answer to the question: why should I practice servant leadership? An answer based upon the broad biblical worldview suggests that one should practice servant leadership because it affirms human dignity, increases the bond of community by fostering compassion and attention to people's needs, empowers people and helps them develop character, moderates and critiques the use of power, and provides an environment that promotes justice.

When looking at servant leadership through the lens of worldview, one is brought back to the thought that servant leadership may be more than a leadership theory, as leadership theories have been traditionally presented. Leadership theories have been generally explained or presented as styles or techniques open to picking and choosing based upon preference or

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 114-132

ISSN 1554-3145

situation. Research in culturally implicit leadership theory has shown that worldview has an impact on whether or not the theories are transferable between cultures and, as a result, whether leadership theories would be compatible with specific worldviews. Although worldview has not been a primary issue in the development and understanding of leadership theory to this point, that very well may change. Consequently, I have sought to show that servant leadership is more a personal orientation toward life which grows from a particular worldview. I offer a broad interpretation of a Judeo-Christian worldview as an explanation. A key implication is that servant leadership does not exist as merely a tool to use; rather, it is more of an archetype or ego ideal that governs daily interactions. It does not represent leadership that merely serves, but servant leadership as a whole. It has more to do with *being* than merely *doing*. In my view, what servant leadership presents is being a servant.

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# Servant Leadership's Role in the Succession Planning Process: A Case Study

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This case study applied the seven constructs of Patterson's (2003) model of servant leadership (agápao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) to examine the role and effect of servant leadership on the succession process within Freedom Automotive, a for-profit organization. The current owner, a past owner, and six of the seven executive committee members provided data triangulated by three methods of data collection: the observations of the organization over a 4-month period, the data from company records, and responses to eight in-depth interviews conducted using emergent design. This examination of the succession process in a servant-led organization showed a positive relationship between servant leadership principles and the succession process.

**A**t a 2004 servant leadership roundtable conference, Jim Laub (2003) presented a paper identifying two primary reasons that servant leadership is espoused by leaders, writers, and researchers: it is the right way to view leadership, and the concept works. Although scholarly research into servant leadership is increasing (Laub, 2004; Wong, 2003), a lack of specific details persists when examining the definitions and models of servant leadership (Laub, 2003; Patterson, 2003; Russell & Stone, 2002; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Winston, 2004). According to Yin (1994), one strategy to discover the details is through the use of case studies.

One business process which holds potential to reflect the impact of servant leadership is succession planning. It is logical that servant leadership would place emphasis on succession planning with its emphasis on the follower (employee) and the follower's development (Bieschke, 2006; Stone et al., 2004). While virtually all organizations encounter the need for succession planning, research and literature have not focused on the actual process (Dyck, Mauws, Starke, & Mischke, 2002). This study provided the opportunity to examine the succession process in a servant-led organization to determine the manner in which the process is involved with servant leadership's focus on the individual employee. The research used Patterson's (2003) model of servant leadership and its seven constructs (agápao love, humility,

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 133-147

ISSN 1554-3145

altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) that explain the process by which servant leadership behavior manifests itself in the workplace.

Succession planning was selected for examination for several reasons. It is seen as one of the most critical elements for the continued success of an organization (Brady & Helmich, 1984; Gersick, Davis, Hampton, & Lansberg, 1997); the leader's focus is on the follower (Northouse, 2001); and there is little or no empirical research in this area (P. S. Davis & Harveston, 1998).

This case study provided a portion of the research void by studying Freedom Automotive, a for-profit car dealership which had previously been identified as a servant-led organization (Contee-Borders, 2003). Conoly Lincoln-Mercury's leadership merged with Freedom Ford creating Freedom Automotive, an organization created by a leadership succession at the executive level of two automotive dealerships. The case study method of research included in-depth interviews, observations, and the review of company documents.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to collect data and information from Freedom Automotive, owned and operated by Scott Rigell who was identified in Contee-Border's (2003) study as a servant leader, to determine if servant leadership had influenced a previous dealership executive leadership succession or might influence a future dealership executive leadership succession. Ultimately, it was anticipated that the research would help answer a sideline question: does servant leadership work?

Servant leadership and succession planning are both vital issues which have had little in the way of formal research studies data, especially in the area of privately owned businesses. All businesses, large and small, are realizing the importance of executive succession and especially the need to plan for succession. Rothwell (2001) stated, "Amid the twofold pressures of pending retirements in senior executive ranks and the increasing value of intellectual capital and knowledge management, it is more necessary than ever before for organizations to plan for leadership continuity and employee advancement" (p. xvii).

As necessary as succession planning is, Bieschke (2006) referenced a recent poll showing that 94% of organizations had no succession plan at all. In light of that statistic, how do CEOs and business leaders pass on the reigns of leadership to their offspring or others? What planning do they need to do to ensure that their organizations continue after they are no longer able to lead them? Most importantly for this research; what role, if any, does leadership style play in the succession process? While some research has been conducted on the first two questions, none was found on leadership style's influence on the succession process.

## Case Study Site

To accomplish the purpose of this study, it was important to identify an organization which met the dual requirements of being a servant-led organization which had recently gone through a succession or was planning a succession. Freedom Automotive became the first choice for this case study for several reasons. Previous research by Contee-Borders (2003) identified the CEO, Scott Rigell, as a servant leader through the implementation of Kouzes and Posner's (1995) Leadership Practices Inventory to both Rigell and his top management team. Her research also asserted that Rigell believes he had implemented the concept of servant leadership within his company.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 133-147

ISSN 1554-3145

The second reason for selecting Freedom Automotive was the fact that there had previously been a succession at the CEO level which involved the current CEO. This allowed analysis of the succession process through studying the previous succession as well as looking at any processes currently in place for the future. The final reason for selecting Freedom Automotive was accessibility. The business owner had been receptive to servant leadership research in the past.

Bieschke (2006) noted, "Many organizations are just one step away from extinction" (p. 1). Bieschke (2006) followed this comment by asking if the Christian church would exist today if Jesus had not recognized and demonstrated the need to equip followers to become the future leaders. If Jesus recognized the need for succession planning in his time, then businesses also need to recognize this today.

Gersick et al. (1997) discussed succession as a process rather than a single event. McConnell (1996) explained that the succession process needs to take a "consistent approach to assembling, analyzing, and retaining information about potential leaders and planning for their further development" (p. 1). The attack on the World Trade Center in New York City highlighted why succession planning was so important. Many companies lost key executives in this disaster and were forced to replace them with no advance notice or preparation.

Brady and Helmich (1984) realized the importance of leadership succession and especially executive succession when they pointed out that "few events in the history of an organization stand to have greater repercussions on its ultimate success" (p. 12). Greengard (2001) pointed out that succession planning was not an easy task: "Mapping out the future involves more than an organizational chart displaying the corporate hierarchy" (p. 34). Yet, despite the obvious need for a succession plan, many companies neglect the task. "45 percent of boards at companies with sales of more than $500 million have no meaningful process for grooming potential CEOs. And, remarkably, 24 percent of Fortune 500 companies don't consider succession planning a top priority" (Greengard, p. 36). One of the myths associated with succession planning is that it is only useful for large organizations; when in fact, it is a valuable tool for organizations of all size (McConnell, 1996).

Patterson (2003) developed a servant leadership model which uses seven variables to explain the leader-follower relationship: agápao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service (see Figure 1). She also showed that the focus of the servant leader is on the follower rather than the organization. Stone et al. (2004) labeled this focus to be the most important distinguishing characteristic between servant leadership and transformational leadership. Bieschke (2006) related succession planning to looking for and cultivating future leaders.

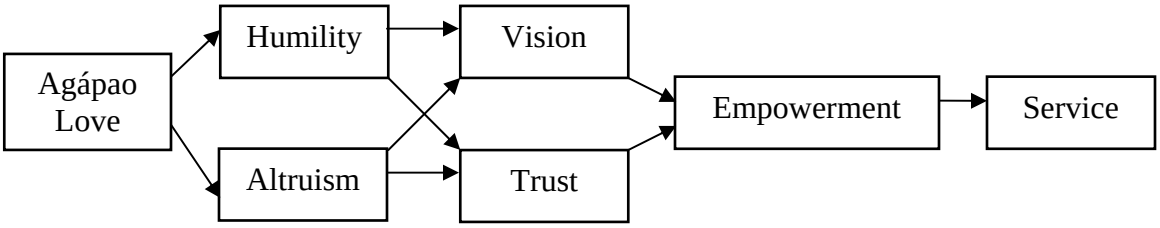


*Figure 1.* Patterson's (2003) servant leadership model shows the flow and interaction of the constructs.



ISSN 1554-3145

## Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions: (a) how did servant leadership affect the leadership succession of Conoly Lincoln-Mercury to Freedom Automotive? and (b) how has servant leadership at Freedom Automotive influenced the succession planning process? Freedom Automotive has three dealerships located in the Tidewater, Virginia area. This case study built on a previous study done on this company which identified it as a servant-led organization (Contee-Borders, 2003). The previous study described how Freedom Automotive's leadership took deliberate steps to incorporate servant leadership attributes into the company's culture. This current study had the following limitations: (a) this study limited generalizability by focusing on only one business, and the results are not intended to be generalizable to a larger universe (Yin, 1994); (b) one researcher conducted on-site interviews and documentation, making interviewer reliability and bias a possible concern; and (c) only one succession within the organization was considered in the study. The study was limited to exploring the succession process rather than looking at successions throughout the organization at all levels.

Succession planning and servant leadership have different definitions depending on which literature is reviewed. For this research, succession planning is the process of identifying people who could presently move into key positions or could do so after specifically targeted development occurs (McConnell, 1996).

## Servant Leadership

To understand Patterson's (2003) servant leadership model, it is necessary to define each of her seven variables. The first variable is agápao love. Winston (2002) defined agápao love as "to love in a social or moral sense, embracing the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty, and propriety" (p. 5). Agápao love means the servant leader does the right thing for the right reasons. The servant leader considers each person as a total person with needs, wants, and desires (Patterson, 2003) and should genuinely care for them (Crom, 1998).

Patterson (2003), in her second variable of humility, posited that "humility opens the door to vision, but not only vision, it also allows an environment of trust to exist" (p. 6). Winston (2002) stated that humility is "a peaceful virtue that rejects self-glorification and is an almost social reversal in that it purports the idea of serving" (p. 2). Patterson referenced several authors who came to the conclusion that humility is a virtue which allows servant leaders to connect with their followers by not overestimating their own merits (see Bagger, 2002; Hare, 1996; Harrison, 2002; Lawrence, 2002). Sandage and Wiens (2001) also looked at humility as being focused on others which equates with the primary emphasis of the servant leader as a follower-focused leadership style.

The third variable in Patterson's (2003) model is altruism. Winston (2003) described Patterson's position on altruism as "leaders having concern for the welfare of others and going to lengths to care for and improve the welfare of employees even if it means personal sacrifice to the leader" (p. 3). Patterson said, "altruism is helping just for the sake of helping, at any level, and further that this helping is selfless" (p. 14). There is no personal gain in altruism. As with the overall view of servant leadership, altruism moves the leader to seek the benefit of the follower rather than the benefit of the organization (Winston, 2003).

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 133-147

ISSN 1554-3145

Vision is the fourth variable in Patterson's (2003) model. Her concept of vision is different from that normally found in the literature. Patterson stated, "vision for the servant leader refers to the idea that the leader can see a person as a viable and worthy person, believes in their future state, and thus seeks to serve them as such" (p. 16). Winston (2003), while suggesting that the term vision may be the wrong one to use in this context, explained its use by Patterson as the leader needing "to find out what the follower wants to do with regard to meeting the follower's needs within the context of the organization" (p. 3). This is more of a concept of getting people in the organization aligned with the values of the organization.

The fifth variable in Patterson's (2003) model is trust. Fletcher (1999) and Wis (2002) stated that trust is one of the most important elements of servant leadership. Patterson said, "servant leaders lay the foundation of trust, and trust holds the servant-led organization together. Servant leaders do what they say they are going to do" (p. 19). Patterson's model showed that trust and vision work together and lead to empowerment.

Empowerment is the sixth variable in Patterson's model. Winston (2003) stated that empowerment provides "the follower with the power, authority, accountability, responsibility, and resources to achieve what the follower wants to achieve relative to his/her vision within the organization" (p. 4). Empowerment is a major factor in servant leadership and should be one of its primary foci (Russell & Stone, 2002). Winston (2003) noted that this empowerment of followers is progressive in nature, allowing the follower to learn and grow until he or she is capable and willing to handle larger levels of empowerment.

The final variable is service. Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999); Russell and Stone (2002); Buchen (1998); Wis (2002); Guillen and Gonzalez (2001); and Fairholm and Fairholm (2000) have agreed that service is the core of servant leadership and should be a primary function of leadership. Patterson stated that "the very idea of service is at the heart of servant leadership theory and occurs as the leader serves others, mainly the followers" (p. 22). Winston (2003) noted that this serving is out of a focus on serving rather than the sense of servitude or requirement to serve. This service by the servant leader is to provide the follower with what he or she needs to accomplish their tasks, visions, or goals.

## Succession Planning

Succession in small family firms is a rare event, happening only once per generation. Therefore, there are few people in either the family or the business with any experience of when and how the issue should be handled (Fox, Nilakant, & Hamilton, 1996). Ward and Aronoff (1992b) listed three reasons why letting go of the family business is tough for parents: (a) they felt financially insecure, (b) they felt the business was their personal identity, and (c) they felt control over the business gave them more control over family members and family behavior.

Another issue in family-owned business succession is the extent to which second generation ownership would be jointly shared. According to Ward and Aronoff's (1992a) research, about 50% of the owners of family firms in the United States expected that in the next generation, their businesses would be jointly owned and managed by two or more of their children. Many family-business experts have proposed that these shared ownerships would inevitably fail (Ward & Aronoff, 1992a). Morris, Williams, Allen, and Avila (1997) addressed this problem when they listed three sets of determinants for a successful family business transition: "the preparation level of the heirs, the nature of the relationships among family members, and the types of planning and control activities engaged in by the management of the



ISSN 1554-3145

family business" (p. 385). Morris et al. declared that relationships within the family have the single greatest impact on successful transitions.

Founders face an unavoidable succession dilemma of making either an explicit or implicit strategic decision about transferring ownership of the family business. The main alternatives are to sell the business to someone outside the family or to make arrangements for an interfamily succession (Bjuggren & Sand, 2001). However, as it turns out, family conflict is the biggest obstacle to passing the business to successors (Bedosky, 2002).

The implication is that these relationships need to be managed just like a business manages its relationships with suppliers or customers. Yet, only approximately 20% of family-owned businesses have succession plans, mainly because the incumbents are unwilling to turn over authority to the younger generation (Rohland, 1996; Yue, 1999). Nelton (1990) offered that the 80-something founder refusing to turn management over to the 50-something "kid" may become more common. Poe (1980) observed that many business owners are too busy keeping their businesses alive to worry about succession, and they lack confidence in their children to take over the businesses.

Chief executives of family businesses also have to deal with the problem of not only finding a successor but realizing that their search is not limited to the person with the most suitable record and abilities but must take into account the added complications of family membership and expectations (Brown & Coverley, 1999). The literature has provided abundant reasons for incumbents to plan for succession including minimizing taxation, continuing the business, developing expertise, maintaining employee relations, and meeting strategic goals (Brown & Coverley). Without a well-conceived succession plan, leadership might not be placed in the right hands; unnecessary tax consequences may occur for the heirs; crisis planning might be needed during a time of emotional strain; and siblings may fight over roles, money, and authority (Korman, 1999). A proper succession process affords family firms the opportunity to select effective leaders who are capable of rejuvenating their businesses (Ibrahim, McGuire, Ismail, & Dumas, 1999; Ward, 1987). Several studies have suggested that the succession process should be initiated very early in the heir's life (S. Davis, 1968; Stavrou, 1999; Ward, 1987).

## Research Method

This research used two design strategies Patton (2002) called emergent design flexibility and purposeful sampling. Emergent design flexibility means the researcher was open to adapting inquiry as an understanding of the situation deepened or changed. This strategy allowed "the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be" (p. 56). Patton went on to say that qualitative designs need to remain open and flexible and continue to be emergent even after data collection begins. Guba and Lincoln (1989) added that emergent design requires the researcher to follow new information as it emerges.

Purposeful sampling was selected because it offers "useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 40). In this research, the phenomenon of interest was the effect of a servant leader on succession planning. By purposefully selecting a servant-led organization which had gone through a succession, the researcher gained insights and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest. This design strategy also did not try to generalize the data from a sample to a population but merely looked at gaining insight about the phenomenon studied.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 133-147

ISSN 1554-3145

The data collection for this qualitative study took place during a 2-week period in March 2006 at Freedom Automotive's headquarters in Virginia Beach, Virginia and at the three dealerships comprising Freedom Automotive in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. Scott Rigell was the key participant in this research for several reasons: he had been identified as a servant leader by the research done by Contee-Borders (2003), he was the CEO of Freedom Automotive, and he went through a type of succession when he obtained Conoly Lincoln-Mercury. The initial step, therefore, was to interview Scott Rigell to get an overview of the organization and to explore both the process he went through in procuring Conoly Lincoln-Mercury and the succession process he had put in place at Freedom Automotive. Additional interviews were done with Conoly Phillips, the previous owner of Conoly Lincoln-Mercury, and with five of the six senior leaders within Freedom Automotive. All five of these leaders are members of Freedom Automotive's Executive Committee.

Document analysis took place in the human resources department at the headquarters location and at two of the three dealerships. Patton (2002) indicated that documents are a rich source of information about organizations and their programs. Documents regarding promotion policies, training programs, evaluation programs, and hiring practices helped to shed light on the succession process of the organization.

This research utilized the general interview guide with servant leadership and succession planning as the two issues explored. This guide differed slightly for each level of respondent since questions concerning the succession between Conoly Lincoln-Mercury and Freedom Automotive did not apply to upper level executives at Freedom Automotive. Each interview was recorded using a digital recorder. The interviews were recorded on a separate file and carefully numbered to correspond with any demographic information obtained for each individual. The interviews were transcribed and were between 45-60 minutes in length.

All interviews were conducted using unstructured methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) which allowed an exploration of the role servant leadership played in the succession process without trying to define the role. The research also looked at Freedom Automotive's employee handbook, new member orientation manual, vision statement, organizational goals, information and slogans displayed in the dealerships, and observations of employee interaction with each other and with customers at both Freedom Ford Norfolk and Freedom Lincoln-Mercury. These additional methods of data collection enabled data source triangulation wherein the researcher examined all data collected to ascertain whether the themes found in the data remained consistent at different times (Stake, 1995). An iterative process was employed to review the data (personal interviews, organizational material, and observations).

## Findings

Freedom Automotive does not have a formal written succession plan at either the owner level or the senior executive level. This agreed with Bieschke's (2006) reported poll which showed 94% of organizations having no succession plan at all. Yet, the data from this study showed that there was a succession between Conoly Phillips and Scott Rigell and that there was a strong informal succession process operating at Freedom Automotive. In both cases, the Phillips-Rigell succession and the informal succession process at Freedom Automotive, servant leadership appeared to be a major influence in the actions taken.

During the interview with Scott Rigell, he mentioned that he had discussed contingencies with his wife if something were to happen to him. His ultimate desire was to leave the business

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 133-147

ISSN 1554-3145

to his son, but only if the son was qualified to run it. He also mentioned that it would be probably 10 years before his son was ready to move into a general manager's position and then a few more years before he would be ready to take control of the business. Scott also mentioned he had three daughters and was not ruling out one of them or a future son-in-law as a possible successor. However, Scott gave the impression that he was not very concerned about his succession. He was only 45 years old at the time of this study; and, because his executive management team was effectively running Freedom Automotive, he did not feel the need to have a definitive succession plan. Despite the fact that there was no formal succession plan or process set up at Freedom Automotive, after compiling and analyzing the data collected, an informal succession process did indeed exist and was identified. It came about from a previous succession at the senior executive level of Freedom Automotive.

In 2002, Scott Rigell made all three of his general managers the presidents of their dealership and gave them and empowered them (along with three executive committee members) with the authority to make all decisions concerning the normal operations of the three dealerships. One president said the three of them "really act as the dealer in our stores" (personal communication, March 20, 2006). Scott met with his executive committee and said, "as I see it, I've got three choices . . . and the third one is to give you, meaning my senior managers, the opportunity to run the stores without a chief operating officer and see how that goes" (personal communication, March 15, 2006). Scott told them that he would evaluate them based on profitability, market share, and customer satisfaction. Although the executive committee members did not move into new positions, they did change positions in respect to their responsibilities and accountability.

In 2006, Scott took another step by offering his senior managers 20% ownership in their stores because he felt like they should reap some of the benefits since they ran the stores. Scott said other dealers could not believe he would let his general managers completely run their store without his direct input. When the presidents of the dealerships were asked how often they met with Scott, they replied that they met about once every 3-4 weeks with, at times, as long as 3 months between meetings. Scott does not come to the executive committee meetings either.

When discussing the promotion of his general managers to presidents of their respective dealerships, Scott made an interesting comment about why he made that decision. Scott said, "I hit 40, and I thought, 'I don't want to do this, I don't want to do this anymore'" (personal communication, March 15, 2006). He also said that he was not ready to sell the stores, so he offered his management team the opportunity to run the stores with virtually no input from him. Agápao love said you do the right thing for the right reason at the right time. Was this agápao love or selfishness? There was altruism, humility, trust, vision, empowerment, and service involved in his actions; but, was it based on servant leadership? From the executive committee's standpoint, it was based on servant leadership. One of the executive committee members said of the transition, "he [Scott] had some other things he wanted to do. As long as the dealerships continued to thrive and they were run the way that he ran them, he wasn't going to be involved. And, he's lived up to every word of it" (personal communication, March 20, 2006).

An analysis of the data collected showed that servant leadership did have an impact on the succession process between Conoly Philips and Scott Rigell and at Freedom Automotive. The findings, however, also uncovered the lack of a formal succession plan at Freedom Automotive. Furthermore, there appears to be apathy toward the need for a plan at the executive level in the organization. This finding was in line with the literature (Bieschke, 2006) but differed from what was anticipated. Freedom Automotive's extensive training program and



ISSN 1554-3145

employee coaching could be construed as a succession plan, but those interviewed on the executive committee revealed that Scott Rigell and the executive committee had never given much thought or attention to who would lead should a senior member leave or the owner be incapacitated. It was generally assumed that the general sales manager would take that position if such a need arose. There was not, however, a specific program in which individuals were prepared or trained to fill a specific position. Senior leadership had not given thought to the possibility of replacing their positions in the future.

The lack of a succession plan might be correlated to the absence of turnover at the executive level. The high level of job satisfaction could be directly related to the practice of servant leadership principles in the organization and the focus on the needs and well-being of the employees. This low turnover was also cited as being well below the industry average for all job levels at Freedom Automotive. The low turnover was reflected in interview comments by the executive committee members that most employees elected to stay with Freedom Automotive even when they could make more money somewhere else. Often employees who leave for other positions will call a few months later to inquire if there is a possibility to return, indicating that employees value other work values besides money. The low turnover rate is a characteristic commonly found in organizations where servant leadership is proactively practiced and reflects positively that servant leadership is effective in sustaining employee longevity due to its focus on people development and growth within the organization.

Although no formal succession plan was found at Freedom Automotive, there was an informal succession process occurring. More importantly, this informal succession process appeared to be motivated by the servant leadership principles practiced by the owner of Freedom Automotive and his executive committee. The general sales managers had been promoted to the position of president of their respective dealerships. The increased responsibility, authority, and operational autonomy (empowerment) delegated to the executive committee members by Scott was not extraordinary in the context of a servant-led organization. From the succession perspective; it was extraordinary in that the CEO was still very much alive, active in operations, not intending to retire in the foreseeable future. Patterson's (2003) model predicted that Scott Rigell would be motivated by a sincere desire to do what was in the best interest of his senior leadership. The outcome manifested itself in the form of the promotions. Therefore, the leadership succession had already taken place.

Scott Rigell commented in the interviews that he was tired of doing things the way he had done them for the past 10 years, had become bored with the car business, and wanted to do other things. As Scott's corporate interests changed, he allowed his executive committee to have the control required to run their operations and removed himself as a potential barrier. Scott gave them the autonomy to run the organization and did, in fact, implement a nearly complete succession of responsibility and authority. Scott retained responsibility for some of the larger conglomerate financial issues, but the rest of operational decision making was delegated to the respective presidents.

While upwards of 90% of the leadership succession has already occurred, there is still issues that need to be addressed. What if something happens to Scott? Will his successor utilize the same servant leadership style or allow the committee to continue running the organization? There is still the need for a smaller scale succession plan to address these issues.

Smith, Montagno, and Kuzmenko (2004) observed that servant leadership works better in a stable external environment and transformational leadership works better for organizations facing intense external pressure. When Scott Rigell first purchased Freedom Ford, the dealership



ISSN 1554-3145

was losing money annually and was not in the best of financial conditions. Scott introduced servant leadership principles; within months, the chaotic work environment had stabilized. Evidence in this case would indicate that servant leadership can contribute toward creating a stable organizational environment. The subsequent ongoing long-term financial well-being of the organization and lack of employee turnover at all levels provide strong evidence that servant leadership is exerting a positive organizational influence and work environment.

Winston's (2003) model includes a feedback loop to Patterson's (2003) model. This additional feedback loop posits that when servant leaders focus on the individuals within the organization with their best interests at heart, the employees reciprocate by wanting what is best for the leader. This reciprocal effect became evident in the executive committee members' interviews in their comments conveying the love and admiration they have for Scott and their desire to see the business prosper. In this context, Winston's (2003) reciprocal model of servant leadership holds potential for organizations.

This research did not validate the financial status of Freedom Ford, but comments by the executive committee indicated that the company has done very well since the committee members were given increased authority and autonomy. If servant leadership is actually correlated to increased profitability, other organizations might find servant leadership principles attractive and worth initiating.

## The Need for Additional Research

This study raises intriguing questions for future research studies. For example, Freedom Automotive provides an environment in which Patterson's (2003) model could be used to examine the impact of servant leadership on organizational profitability. This study examined the success process at the executive level. Additional research should examine the impact servant leadership has on the ongoing succession processes at other levels in the organization.

The need to further delve into leader motivations became apparent in this study. Did owner motivation and that of other senior leaders impact the succession process at Freedom Automotive? Was their motivation self-centered or inline with Patterson's (2003) model? Did the succession originate in self-centered motives or in doing the best thing for the managers and, ultimately, all of the employees?

The findings from this case study should be replicated in other servant-led for-profit organizations to further solidify a positive correlation between servant leadership and the integrative succession process discovered at Freedom Automotive. Is there a reciprocal effect from employees to leadership in organizations using servant leadership principles per Winston's (2003) model? Is the longevity at Freedom Automotive indicative of this reciprocal effect? How well do servant leadership principles function in organizations experiencing unstable external pressure? Does servant leadership contribute to the stabilization of external and internal environments? What will happen to Freedom Automotive if something unexpectedly adverse happens to the senior leadership?

## Summary

The findings from this case study are not generalizable to other businesses and organizations; but the data add to the cumulative evidence that servant leadership principles are tangible, achievable, applicable, and may actually integrate succession as a part of operations.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 133-147

ISSN 1554-3145

With organizations looking for ways to be more competitive and viewing employees as a critically important corporate asset, these observations have intriguing implications for organizations desiring to implement servant leadership principles.

This study found that servant leadership did positively affect the succession process at Freedom Automotive, but not in a conventional manner. It also found a lack of succession planning when servant leadership's focus on the employee implies such a system would be in place.

It was not the intent of this study to try and answer all the questions about servant leadership. It was hoped that this study would add to the body of knowledge about servant leadership and lead to further research and inquiry.

Succession planning still holds potential to reflect the impact of servant leadership in organizations. Servant leadership's emphasis on the follower (employee) and the follower's development provides the impetus for organizations to embrace the concept of succession planning. This study did, however, find a unique integrative low-grade approach to the process as an unconscious part of daily operations. That provided an innovative twist to the manner in which the actual process can be implemented.

Patterson's (2003) model of servant leadership and its seven constructs (agápao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) continue to explain the process by which servant leadership behavior manifests itself in the workplace. There is every indication to believe that Jim Laub (2004) was right—servant leadership is the right way to view leadership for some organizations and the concept that works for them.

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*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 133-147

ISSN 1554-3145

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# Structural Equivalence of the Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) Servant Leadership Questionnaire on North American and South African Samples

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The Servant Leadership Questionnaire (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006) was applied to 417 salespersons from 100 dealerships operated by an automobile retailer in South Africa. The structural invariance of the instrument was investigated by means of item analysis as well as exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Item analyses indicated that the items all correlated very highly with each other and formed part of the same construct. The five-factor structure identified by the authors of the instrument could not be replicated by the exploratory factor analyses carried out on the responses of the present sample. A unidimensional structure seemed to represent the best fit with the data when confirmatory factor analyses were performed to determine the configuration of the measurement model.

**T**his report contains the results of a study on the metric equivalence, specifically the configuration equivalence, of the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) developed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006).

Servant leadership, first identified by Greenleaf (1970), is based on the premises that a successful leader must be willing to primarily and principally serve the interests and needs of his or her followers, assisting the development of these followers to become leaders. In recent years, the notion has attracted considerable attention in the form of theoretical and empirical papers (e.g., Blanchard, 2000; Buchen, 1998; Drury, 2005; Graham, 1991; Nwogu, 2004; Patterson, 2003; Quay, 1997; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Spears, 1995, 1998; Winston, 2003). These publications mainly addressed the notion from a conceptual point of view and generally called for empirical research into the relationship between this and other variables in the organizational behavior field.

There have been empirical studies on the relationship between servant leadership and other variables (Irving, 2005; Parolini, 2004). And, there have been attempts to develop an instrument to measure servant leadership on an organizational or individual basis (Dennis &

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 148-168

ISSN 1554-3145

Bocarnea, 2005; Laub, 1999; Sendjava, 2003). A measuring instrument developed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) followed—the SLQ.

Measurement invariance (or measurement equivalence) has been receiving a significant amount of attention in recent years. This may be ascribed to the internationalization, in fact globalization, of business organizations that have made it necessary to have measuring instruments that can, with confidence, be applied to individuals from different cultural backgrounds. VandenBerg and Lance (2000) provided evidence that more attention is and should be given to this aspect of measurement in the organizational behavior field but that more work is to be done in this regard.

The aim of the present study was to determine the measurement equivalence, specifically the configurational equivalence, of the Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) SLQ, developed in the United States of America, when applied to a South African sample of employees working in the automobile retail field.

## Method

### *Participants*

The study was conducted in an automobile retail organization with 100 dealerships spread across South Africa. Having so many outlets over a wide geographical area makes the organization's distribution system of new and used vehicles one of the largest in the South African industry. The organization was chosen as it was considered to meet the following criteria that were determined prior to commencement of the study. The research organization had to have a strong balance sheet, indicative of a stable company; clearly defined and focused business strategies; a clearly identified brand; clearly defined work teams and a declared orientation and developed program towards making sales teams effective; formally expressed people oriented leadership; a chief executive known to have a listen-and-learn approach; and an organizational culture perceived to be diverse and containing individuals from the different ethnic groups present in South Africa. It was determined that the research organization met these criteria to a large extent.

For the purposes of the study, the sales manager(s) were regarded as the team leader(s). All the sales teams had been functioning for at least 1 year before the data collection started. Team leaders assessed the effectiveness of their teams. In turn, team members assessed the servant leadership behavior of their team leaders; their own trust in the organization, the management of the organization, and their coworkers; and their personal commitment to the team of which they were a member. The present paper is only concerned with the responses to the instrument measuring the servant leadership behavior of the team leaders (sales managers).

Of the 114 sales managers included in the study, 16 were women and 98 men, respectively constituting 14% and 86% of the sample. The mean age of the managers was 39.1 years ($SD$ = 8.73), and the mean number of years in their current jobs as managers was 3.82 years. Individuals seeing themselves as Whites, Indians, Blacks, and Coloreds (term refers to a heterogeneous group of people who possess some degree of sub-Saharan ancestry in South Africa) respectively formed 84.2%, 9.6%, 4.4%, and 1.8% of the sample. Fifty percent of the respondents indicated their current home language as Afrikaans, while 46.5% regarded English as their current home language. The majority of sales managers (52.6%) had at least 12 years of education, while 46.5% had either a post-school certificate or diploma or a university degree.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 148-168

ISSN 1554-3145

The sales persons were individuals working on the sales floors of the dealerships; selling, in different combinations, new and/or used commercial and/or passenger vehicles of a wide variety of trade names. There were 417 individuals in this group; 96 (23%) women and 321 (77%) men. The mean age of the sales persons was 36.3 years (*SD* = 16.8). Slightly more than half (52.8%) had a maximum of 12 years of education, while 42.7% had a post-school certificate or diploma or a university degree. The mean job tenure as a sales person was 4 years. Whites formed 68.8% of the sample, Blacks 14.9%, Indians 12.2%, and Coloreds 4%. Of the sample, 40% reported that their current home language was Afrikaans, 41.6% English, and 4.6% indicated their home language as Zulu. The remainder of the sample was distributed over the eight other South African official languages. Christians formed 66.7% of the sample, Protestants formed 45.5%, and Catholics 21.2%.

*Measuring Instruments*

Data gathering was done by means of a combination questionnaire containing three measuring instruments. The three questionnaires were (a) the rater version of Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) SLQ, (b) Ferres' (2001) Workplace Trust Survey (WTS), and (c) Bennett's (1997) Team Commitment Survey (TCS). Apart from these instruments, the composite questionnaire also contained demographic questions.

All sales persons who could be accessed by e-mail received the composite questionnaire. Sales managers who could be reached by e-mail received a questionnaire containing 11 questions aimed at measuring the sales managers' views on the effectiveness of the sales teams under their direction.

For the purposes of this paper, more information is provided on the SLQ only. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) proposed a conceptualization of the servant leadership construct that combined the 10 characteristics of servant leaders identified by Spears (1995). They added the dimension of *calling*, meaning the desire to serve others, which is also seen in the early work of Greenleaf (1970) and other scholars in the field (Akuchie, 1993; Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Graham, 1991; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Subsequently, Barbuto and Wheeler developed operational definitions of the dimensions of the construct, as they interpreted it, and wrote five to seven items to represent each of the 11 resulting possible subscales. Further study of the construct and revision of items followed to eliminate difficult or perplexing language and/or grammar. Examination of face validity followed this process.

To determine the psychometric properties of the envisaged questionnaire, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) administered it to 80 elected community leaders and 388 members of a statewide professional organization. Exploratory factor analyses were then carried out on the collected data. This resulted in a reduced set of 23 items loading strongly and uniquely on five factors: altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship. The internal reliability coefficients of the factors ranged between .82 and .95, and the dimensions of the rater version of the questionnaire (used in the present study) correlated substantially with each other. Of the 10 correlations between the dimensions, 7 were above .50, with 5 being higher than .60. The authors of the instrument carried out confirmatory factors analysis using LISREL (version 8.54) on the five-factor structure. The obtained fit indices indicated a good fit between the measurement model (factor structure) and the data.

The psychometric and conceptual information on the SLQ that Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) provided led to the decision to use the questionnaire as measure of servant leadership in



ISSN 1554-3145

the present study. Another reason for using the SLQ was its ability to assess servant leadership behavior of individuals (sales managers) as opposed to measuring servant leadership levels in the whole organization, as could be done by means of another available instrument, Laub's (1999) (Servant) Organization Leadership Assessment.

*Procedure*

The material in the composite questionnaire and all other material used in the study were translated from English into Afrikaans using the translation-retranslation approach advocated by Brislin (1970). Executing a survey electronically does not change the basic nature of this kind of research. There are, however, specific aspects of an electronic survey that can be seen as advantageous. Turnaround time is usually decreased; many people respond to e-mail messages soon after receiving it (Zats, 2000). This was supported in the present study; since 137 responses were received within 24 hours after the questionnaires had been sent out, representing 25.8% of the total responses. Three follow-up reminders were sent out to prompt individuals to complete the questionnaires. An overall response rate of 72.1% was achieved. Other advantages of the electronic survey method include the computer mainly handling the data entry, reducing errors and problems with missing values; the elimination of handwriting issues; lower costs, due to no printing or postage and less paper waste; and accelerated data analysis and feedback.

Zats (2000) pointed out that doing surveys electronically does pose some problems. Firstly, potential respondents must have access to e-mail and be able to respond to messages sent by means of this method. In the present study, only 31 of the 767 messages sent to potential respondents could not be delivered. A second problem is the nonanonymous nature of e-mail communication. In the present study; an outside person was used to control the website, organize the responses, and remove information that could lead to the possible identification of an individual's name and/or position.

Some additional problems had to be overcome. The organization where the research was done had created barriers at the e-mail servers in order to avoid overloading their system. This meant that the e-mail messages to potential participants had to be sent in batches of fewer than 50 at a time. Sending the messages to all the potential participants took about 12 hours instead of the envisaged few minutes. Secondly, careful time-frame planning had to be carried out as the data gathering started 6 weeks before the onset of the summer holiday season. Participants were made aware of this constraint, and a date for the return of the questionnaires was carefully set.

An effort was made to get as many potential respondents as possible involved in the study by communicating it as widely as possible throughout the organization. To avoid a situation where potential respondents ignored the message, the human resources director sent out an e-mail notice which announced the survey and indicated the organization's permission for the study to be carried out. In this notice, the independence of the researchers was also stressed. Respondents were allowed to complete the questionnaire during working hours.

Since electronic data gathering is a relatively new approach with widely varying procedures, more details on data collection are provided. A research website was established. A third party information technology specialist electronically programmed the composite questionnaire. Several dummy runs were carried out before the survey was officially launched. The e-mail addresses of the sales persons were obtained from the employing organization. Access to the research population was gained through these e-mail addresses. The sales persons and the sales managers each received an e-mail message consisting of a cover letter which



ISSN 1554-3145

briefly explained the reason for the survey and instructions, the relevant questionnaire, and a web address to which the completed questionnaires had to be returned (this function was activated by clicking on the submit-button at the very end of the questionnaire). The e-mail message and questionnaire were sent in English and in Afrikaans. The option existed for the respondent to complete the survey in either of the two languages. The only identification that a respondent had to provide was the dealership to which he or she belonged. This was necessary as it had to be possible to link the sales managers' and sales persons' responses to each other. A quantitative approach was used to analyze the data. Due to the nature of the study, both bivariate and multivariate procedures were employed.

## Results

The aim of the data analysis procedures was to determine the configurational (structural) equivalence of Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) SLQ when applied to a South African sample of employees ($N$ = 417) in the automobile retail sector compared to the results on the validation sample used by the authors of the instrument. Only the construct validity of the instrument when applied to the South African sample is investigated in this paper. All analyses were carried out by means of the SPSS set of statistical procedures, augmented by the use of LISREL 8.3.

Whether the 23 items in the SLQ formed part of the same construct was investigated first. Item analysis was carried out for this purpose. The corrected item-total correlations of the 23 items are shown in Table 1. The items in the SLQ all seemed to form part of the same construct. The corrected item-total correlations are all above .75. The value of Cronbach alpha for the 23 items was .981.

The item analyses were extended by calculating the item-total correlations of the items in the different subscales of the SLQ as well as the Cronbach alpha coefficients of the subscales. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 2. All five factors in the questionnaire had Cronbach alpha coefficients > .90 when applied to the present sample. Taken together with the finding of the 23 items having a Cronbach alpha that also exceeded .90, the conclusion seemed to be that the items were very closely related to each other. This is also clearly seen when the corrected item-total correlations in Table 2 are inspected. These values were mostly above .80; only two fell below that level but were above .70.

To determine how well the factor structure identified by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) fit the responses from the present sample, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out. The factor structure found by Barbuto and Wheeler was imposed on the responses of the present sample. Parcelling of items was done by randomly assigning items to four parcels. The fit indices obtained from this analysis are shown in Table 3. The factor structure identified by Barbuto and Wheeler did not fit the responses of the present sample entirely satisfactorily. The incremental fit indices did reach satisfactory levels, mainly above .90. The value of the standardized RMR is also at a satisfactory level at .021. However, the value of RMSEA was relatively high at .15, higher than the value of .08 or even .10 that the index ought to reach to indicate a good fit between the data and the measurement model. The 90% confidence interval for the value of RMSEA was at the lower end. The value of chi-square could not be interpreted reliably as the sample size exceeded 200, the number at which the obtained value of chi-square tends to become unreliable. The value of the normed chi-square was, however, 14.30; numerically well beyond the range of 2 to 5 that would point to a well-fitting measurement model.

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 148-168

ISSN 1554-3145

Table 1: *Corrected Item-Total Statistics (N = 417)*

| Servant-leadership item | Corrected item-total correlation | Cronbach's alpha item deleted |
|---|---|---|
| SL1 | 0.779 | 0.981 |
| SL2 | 0.754 | 0.981 |
| SL3 | 0.825 | 0.981 |
| SL4 | 0.796 | 0.981 |
| SL5 | 0.724 | 0.981 |
| SL6 | 0.822 | 0.981 |
| SL7 | 0.863 | 0.980 |
| SL8 | 0.796 | 0.981 |
| SL9 | 0.860 | 0.980 |
| SL10 | 0.782 | 0.981 |
| SL11 | 0.856 | 0.980 |
| SL12 | 0.820 | 0.981 |
| SL13 | 0.772 | 0.981 |
| SL14 | 0.886 | 0.980 |
| SL15 | 0.839 | 0.980 |
| SL16 | 0.856 | 0.980 |
| SL17 | 0.840 | 0.980 |
| SL18 | 0.879 | 0.980 |
| SL19 | 0.852 | 0.980 |
| SL20 | 0.851 | 0.980 |
| SL21 | 0.885 | 0.980 |
| SL22 | 0.853 | 0.980 |
| SL23 | 0.894 | 0.980 |

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 148-168

ISSN 1554-3145

Table 2: *Correct Item-Total Statistics: Original Factors (N = 417)*

| Factor 1 | Item-total correlation | Cronbach's alpha item deleted |
|---|---|---|
| | Items | |
| 1 | 0.815 | 0.938 |
| 11 | 0.851 | 0.927 |
| 16 | 0.891 | 0.914 |
| 21 | 0.889 | 0.915 |
| | Factor 2 items | |
| 8 | 0.862 | 0.929 |
| 12 | 0.907 | 0.915 |
| 13 | 0.840 | 0.938 |
| 17 | 0.866 | 0.928 |
| | Factor 3 items | |
| 3 | 0.895 | 0.944 |
| 4 | 0.883 | 0.946 |
| 7 | 0.840 | 0.954 |
| 9 | 0.925 | 0.939 |
| 22 | 0.857 | 0.950 |
| | Factor 4 items | |
| 5 | 0.724 | 0.925 |
| 6 | 0.789 | 0.916 |
| 10 | 0.800 | 0.912 |
| 14 | 0.874 | 0.897 |
| 18 | 0.872 | 0.897 |
| | Factor 5 items | |
| 2 | 0.773 | 0.941 |
| 15 | 0.863 | 0.926 |
| 19 | 0.880 | 0.923 |
| 20 | 0.841 | 0.930 |
| 23 | 0.869 | 0.924 |



ISSN 1554-3145

Table 3: *Fit Indices: Original Factorial Structure (N = 417)*

| Fit Indices |
|---|
| Degrees of freedom = 5 |
| Minimum fit function Chi-square = 71.51 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Normal theory weighted least square Chi-square = 71.89 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Satorra-Bentler scaled Chi-square = 51.63 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Chi-square corrected for nonnormality = 51.83 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Estimated noncentrality parameter (NCP) = 46.63 |
| 90% confidence interval for NCP = (27.19; 73.53) |
| Minimum fit function value = 0.17 |
| Population discrepancy function value (FO) = 0.11 |
| 90% confidence interval for FO – (0.065; 0.18) |
| Root mean square error for approximation (RMSEA) =.15 |
| 90% confidence interval for RMSEA = (0.11; 0.19) |
| *P*-value for Test of close fit (RMSEA < 0.05) = 0.00 |
| Expected cross-validation index (ECVI) = 0.17 |
| 90% confidence interval for ECVI = (0.13; 0.24) |
| ECVI for saturated model = 0.072 |
| ECVI for independence model = 6.87 |
| Chi-square for independence model with 10 *df* = 2849.92 |
| Independence AIC = 2859.92 |
| Model AIC – 30.00 |
| Saturated AIC = 30.00 |
| Independence CAIC = 2885.09 |
| Model CAIC = 121.96 |
| Saturated CAIC = 105.50 |
| Normed fit index (NFI) = 0.97 |
| Nonnormed fit index (NNFI) = 0.95 |
| Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) = 0.49 |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.98 |



ISSN 1554-3145

| Fit Indices cont. |
|---|
| Incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.98 |
| Relative fit index (FRI) = 0.95 |
| Critical N (CN) = 88.78 |
| Root mean square residual (RMR) = 1.24 |
| Standardized RMR = 0.021 |
| Goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.94 |
| Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) = 0.81 |
| Parsimony goodness of fit index (PGFI) = 0.31 |

The five factors found by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) correlated quite highly with each other. The correlations are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: *Pearson Correlations among Dimensions identified by Barbuto and Wheeler (N = 417)*

| | Altrus | Emot | Wis | Pers | Stew |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aktrus | 1 | | | | |
| Emot | 0.826 | 1 | | | |
| Wis | 0.813 | 0.725 | 1 | | |
| Pers | 0.843 | 0.805 | 0.872 | 1 | |
| Stew | 0.854 | 0.781 | 0.875 | 0.871 | 1 |

Consequently, a question was raised with regard to the independence of the dimensions of the rater-version of the SLQ. It was decided to carry out exploratory factor analysis on the responses of the participants of the present sample. It was felt that this procedure would possibly shed more light on the structure of the instrument. Principal factor analysis was preferred as the extraction method, and an oblique rotation was specified. This was in line with the thinking of Gorsuch (1997) and Kerlinger and Lee (2000) who agreed regarding the problems related to using principal components extraction and to orthogonal rotation of the axes, causing principal factor analysis with oblique rotation of the axes to be preferred. The value of the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .975. Since this is > 60, this indicates that carrying out factor analysis on the data is feasible. In the first round of the principal factor analysis, two eigen values > 1.00 (16.49 and 1.20) were obtained. A scree plot was developed and confirmed the possibility of the existence of two factors. The rules that were followed to determine the number of factors to be extracted and the items to be included during exploratory factor analysis were:



ISSN 1554-3145

1. The number of factors to be extracted should not be more than the number of eigen values > 1.00.
2. An item not loading > 0.30 on any factor will be excluded.
3. An item loading > .30 on more than one factor will be excluded if the difference between the higher and the lower loading is < 0.25.

It was therefore decided to first extract two factors by means of principal factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation. The items were randomly grouped into parcel, and the sums of the parcelled items were used in the subsequent analyses. The resulting structure matrix is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: *Two Structure Matrix: Principal Factor Analysis (N = 417)*

| Servant-leadership item | Factor | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 |
| SL1 | 0.776 | 0.321 |
| SL2 | 0.768 | 0.126 |
| SL3 | 0.867 | -0.986 |
| SL4 | 0.839 | -0.107 |
| SL5 | 0.734 | 0.126 |
| SL6 | 0.828 | 0.240 |
| SL7 | 0.881 | 0.133 |
| SL8 | 0.779 | 0.549 |
| SL9 | 0.894 | 0.002 |
| SL10 | 0.795 | 0.154 |
| SL11 | 0.859 | 0.291 |
| SL12 | 0.800 | 0.628 |
| SL13 | 0.754 | 0.585 |
| SL14 | 0.889 | 0.287 |
| SL15 | 0.850 | 0.197 |
| SL16 | 0.849 | 0.406 |
| SL17 | 0.824 | 0.547 |
| SL18 | 0.883 | 0.282 |
| SL19 | 0.869 | 0.146 |
| SL20 | 0.856 | 0.259 |
| SL21 | 0.879 | 0.425 |
| SL22 | 0.875 | 0.108 |
| SL23 | 0.911 | 0.160 |

*Note.* Extraction method: Principal axis factoring. Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser normalization.



ISSN 1554-3145

The two factors together explained 76.91% of the total variance, with factor 1 and factor 2 respectively explaining 71.67% and 5.24%. Of the common variance, the two factors respectively explained 93.19% and 6.81%. Not one of the items had its highest loading on the second factor. On the other hand, all the items loaded >.70 on the first factor. It was therefore decided to extract only one factor by means of principal factor analysis. A scree plot indicated that a one-factor structure could possible be the most acceptable solution. Parcelling was done as described before. The result of extracting only one factor is shown in Table 6. All the items now loaded >.70 on the one factor extracted. This factor explained 71.67% of the total variance. The scale had a very high Cronbach alpha of .981.

Table 6: *SLQ: One Factor Structure (Principal Factor Analysis)*

| SL item | Factor 1 | SL item | Factor 1 |
|---|---|---|---|
| SL1 | 0.784 | SL13 | 0.773 |
| SL2 | 0.763 | SL14 | 0.894 |
| SL3 | 0.841 | SL15 | 0.849 |
| SL4 | 0.811 | SL16 | 0.860 |
| SL5 | 0.733 | SL17 | 0.841 |
| SL6 | 0.830 | SL18 | 0.887 |
| SL7 | 0.875 | SL19 | 0.863 |
| SL8 | 0.796 | SL20 | 0.859 |
| SL9 | 0.875 | SL21 | 0.891 |
| SL10 | 0.792 | SL22 | 0.866 |
| SL11 | 0.864 | SL23 | 0.906 |
| SL12 | 0.819 | | |

*Note.* Extraction method: Principal axis factoring.

Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) used principal components as the method of extraction of factors from the responses of the members of their sample. It was therefore decided at this stage to replace principal factor analysis and direct oblimin rotation by principal components with varimax rotation. Specifying this extraction rendered two eigenvalues > 1.00 (16.49 and 1.205), representing respectively 71.67% and 5.24% of the total variance and 93.19% and 6.81% of the common variance (see Table 7). It was decided not to pursue a possible two-factor solution any further; the large number of cross loadings made it seem likely that only one factor was present. A one-factor solution was specified and rendered the factor loadings shown in Table 8. All the items loaded on the single factor, with the lowest loading being .747 and the highest .908. This seems to be a pattern very similar to the result of a one-factor extraction using principal factor analysis, as shown in Table 6. Confirmatory factor analysis was carried out on the one-factor solution obtained from the principal factor analysis in order to determine how well this factor structure fit the data. These results are depicted in Table 9.



ISSN 1554-3145

Table 7: *SLQ: Two Components Structure*

| SL item | Component | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 |
| SL1 | 0.514 | 0.620 |
| SL2 | 0.675 | 0.410 |
| SL3 | 0.878 | 0.290 |
| SL4 | 0.877 | 0.251 |
| SL5 | 0.623 | 0.424 |
| SL6 | 0.634 | 0.549 |
| SL7 | 0.756 | 0.474 |
| SL8 | 0.354 | 0.815 |
| SL9 | 0.834 | 0.377 |
| SL10 | 0.675 | 0.449 |
| SL11 | 0.622 | 0.610 |
| SL12 | 0.339 | 0.864 |
| SL13 | 0.295 | 0.848 |
| SL14 | 0.655 | 0.612 |
| SL15 | 0.686 | 0.517 |
| SL16 | 0.528 | 0.710 |
| SL17 | 0.410 | 0.816 |
| SL18 | 0.653 | 0.606 |
| SL19 | 0.738 | 0.478 |
| SL20 | 9.645 | 0.577 |
| SL21 | 0.547 | 0.729 |
| SL22 | 0.767 | 0.450 |
| SL23 | 0.759 | 0.513 |

*Note*. Extraction method: Principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.



ISSN 1554-3145

Table 8: *SLQ: One Factor Structure (Principal Factor Analysis)*

| SL item | Component 1 | SL item | Component 1 |
|---|---|---|---|
| SL23 | 0.908 | SL17 | 0.847 |
| SL14 | 0.897 | SL3 | 0.848 |
| SL21 | 0.894 | SL6 | 0.839 |
| SL18 | 0.891 | SL12 | 0.828 |
| SL9 | 0.880 | SL4 | 0.821 |
| SL7 | 0.879 | SL8 | 0.807 |
| SL22 | 0.872 | SL10 | 0.803 |
| SL11 | 0.870 | SL1 | 0.796 |
| SL19 | 0.869 | SL13 | 0.785 |
| SL16 | 0.867 | SL2 | 0.776 |
| SL20 | 0.865 | SL5 | 0.747 |
| SL15 | 0.856 | | |

*Note.* Extraction method: Principal component analysis.

Table 9: *Fit Indices: One Factor (N = 417)*

| Fit Indices |
|---|
| Degrees of freedom = 5 |
| Minimum fit function Chi-square = 27.74 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Normal theory weighted least square Chi-square = 26.69 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Satorra-Bentler scaled Chi-square = 19.60 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Chi-square corrected for nonnormality = 19.70 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Estimated noncentrality parameter (NCP) = 14.60 |
| 90% confidence interval for NCP = (4.58; 32.16) |
| Minimum fit function value = 0.067 |
| Population discrepancy function value (FO) = 0.035 |
| 90% confidence interval for FO = (0.011; 0.077) |
| Root mean square error for approximation (RMSEA) = 0.084 |
| 90% confidence interval for RMSEA = (0.047; 0.12) |
| *P*-value for Test of close fit (RMSEA < 0.05) = 0.64 |
| Expected cross-validation index (ECVI) = 0.095 |
| 90% confidence interval for ECVI = (0.071;0.14) |



ISSN 1554-3145

| Fit Indices |
|---|
| ECVI for saturated model = 0.072 |
| ECVI for independence model = 8.55 |
| Chi-square for independence model with 10 df = 3546.84 |
| Independence AIC = 3556.84 |
| Model AIC = 39.60 |
| Saturated AIC = 30.00 |
| Independence CAIC = 3582.01 |
| Model CAIC = 89.93 |
| Saturated CAIC = 105.50 |
| Normed fit index (NFI) = 0.99 |
| Nonnormed fit index (NNFI) = 0.99 |
| Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) = 0.50 |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.99 |
| Incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.99 |
| Relative fit index (RFI) = 0.98 |
| Critical N (CN) = 227.27 |
| Root mean square residual (RMR) = 0.27 |
| Standardized RMR = 0.0054 |
| Goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.97 |
| Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) = 0.92 |
| Parsimony goodness of fit index (PGFI) = 0.32 |

The indices shown in Table 9 seem to indicate an acceptable fit with the data. The SRMR had a value of .0054, well below the level of .05 which indicates a good fit. The value of RMSEA was .084, which is lower than the level of .10 which indicates an acceptable fit. The upper level of the 90% range for the value of RMSEA was, however, at .12; higher than .10. The value of the normed chi-square index was 5.5, higher than the value of 5.0 that is sometimes set as an upper level for a good fit. This should, however, be seen in the context of the difficulties associated with the interpretation of the value of chi-square when $N > 200$, as is the case in the present study. The incremental fit indices are mostly above .90. The goodness of fit and the adjusted goodness of fit indices are both above .90.

When the values of the indices in Tables 3 and 9 are compared, the one-factor structure found in the present study seems to represent a somewhat better fit with the data than the five-factor solution accepted by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006). The values of RMSEA, SRMR, ECVI, model AIC, CAIC, NCP, and SNCP are all lower in the one-factor solution; and the incremental fit indices are higher than in the five-factor solution.

To determine the stability of the findings with regard to the factorial structure of the SLQ, an internal cross-validation procedure was employed as a second (different) sample was not



ISSN 1554-3145

available. For the purposes of the cross-validation, the present sample was randomly divided into two subsamples. Confirmatory factor analysis was carried out on the responses of the two subsamples treated as independent samples (see Table 10). The one-factor structure seems to fit the responses of both subsamples satisfactorily. The value of RMSEA (.10) for subsample 2, however, seems to indicate an only marginally acceptable fit with the data. The values obtained for the different forms of chi-square are all higher for subsample 2 than for subsample 1.

Table 10: *Fit Indices Obtained From CFA on SLQ Responses ($N_1$ = 208, $N_2$ = 209)*

| | Random Sample 1 | Random Sample 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Degrees of freedom | 5 | 5 |
| Minimum fit function Chi-square | 13.91 ($p$ = 0.016) | 18.24 ($p$ = 0.0027) |
| Normal theory weighted least square Chi-square | 14.12 ($p$ = 0.015) | 17.86 ($p$ = 0.0031) |
| Satorra-Bentler scaled Chi-square | 11.09 ($p$ = 0.050) | 16.09 ($p$ = 0.0066) |
| Chi-square corrected for nonnormality | 11.43 ($p$ = 0.043) | 16.22 ($p$ = 0.0062) |
| Estimated noncentrality parameter (NCP) | 6.09 | 11.09 |
| 90% confidence interval for NCP | 0.0068; 1980 | 2.55; 27.21 |
| Minimum fit function value | 0.067 | 0.088 |
| Population discrepancy function value (FO) | 0.029 | 0.053 |
| 90% confidence interval for FO | 0.00; 0.096 | 0.012; 0.13 |
| Root mean square error for approximation (RMSEA) | 0.077 | 0.10 |
| 90% confidence interval for RMSEA | 0.0026; 0.14 | 0.049; 0.16 |
| *P*-value for Test of close fit (RMSEA < 0.05) | 0.19 | 0.051 |
| Expected cross-validation index (ECVI) | 0.15 | 0.17 |
| 90% confidence interval for ECVI | 0.12; 0.22 | 0.13; 0.25 |
| ECVI for saturated model | 0.14 | 0.14 |
| ECVI for independence model | 8.75 | 8.22 |
| Chi-square for independence model with 10 *df* | 1801.07 | 1700.59 |
| Independence AIC | 1811.07 | 1710.69 |
| Model AIC | 31.09 | 36.00 |
| Saturated AIC | 30.00 | 30.00 |
| Independence CAIC | 1832.76 | 1732.76 |
| Model CAIC | 74.46 | 79.52 |
| Saturated CAIC | 95.06 | 95.14 |



ISSN 1554-3145

| | Random Sample 1 | Random Sample 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Normed fit index (NFI) | 0.99 | 0.99 |
| Nonnormed fit index (NNFI) | 0.99 | 0.98 |
| Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) | 0.50 | 0.49 |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) | 1.00 | 0.99 |
| Incremental fit index (IFI | 1.00 | 0.99 |
| Relative fit index (RFI) | 0.98 | 0.98 |
| Critical N (CN) | 225.59 | 173.02 |
| Root mean square residual (RMR) | 0.26 | 0.42 |
| Standardized RMR | 0.0046 | 0.0085 |
| Goodness of fit index (GFI) | 0.97 | 0.97 |
| Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) | 0.92 | 0.90 |
| Parsimony goodness of fit index (PGFI) | 0.32 | 0.32 |

As a next step in the cross-validation procedure, the two subsamples were treated as independent samples. It was specified that in the confirmatory factor analysis to be carried out, all the parameters were first constrained and then unconstrained (see Table 11). These analyses were followed by calculation of the indices in Table 12 to determine whether differences exist when all the parameters where constrained ($H_o$) compared to when all the parameters could vary freely ($H_a$). From Table 12, it can be seen that the null hypothesis should be rejected. There seems to be a significant difference between the fit of the responses of the two samples to the instrument configured as a unidimensional measure.

Table 11: *Fit Indices Obtained From CFA (Independent Samples: Constrained/Unconstrained)*

| Global goodness of fit statistics | | |
|---|---|---|
| | All parameters constrained ($H_o$) | No constraints on parameters ($H_a$) |
| Degrees of freedom | 20 | 12 |
| Minimum fit function Chi-square | 79.66 ($p$ = 0.00) | 67.12 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Normal theory weighted least square Chi-square | 81.79 ($p$ = 0.00) | 64.26 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Satorra-Bentler scaled Chi-square | 93.46 ($p$ = 0.00) | 68.44 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Chi-square corrected for nonnormality | 150.21 ($p$ = 0.00) | 88.06 ($p$ = 0.00) |
| Estimated noncentrality parameter (NCP) | 73.46 | 56.44 |
| 90% confidence interval for NCP | 47.09; 107.36 | 34.10; 86.29 |

*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 148-168

ISSN 1554-3145

| Global goodness of fit statistics | | |
|---|---|---|
| | All parameters constrained ($H_o$) | No constraints on parameters ($H_a$) |
| Minimum fit function value | 0.19 | 0.16 |
| Population discrepancy function value (FO) | 0.18 | 0.14 |
| 90% confidence interval for FO | 0.11; 0.26 | 0.082; 0.21 |
| Root mean square error for approximation (RMSEA) | 0.13 | 0.15 |
| 90% confidence interval for RMSEA | 0.11; 0.16 | 0.12; 0.19 |
| *P*-value for Test of close fit (RMSEA < 0.05) | 0.0037 | 0.0033 |
| Expected cross-validation index (ECVI) | 0.27 | 0.25 |
| 90% confidence interval for ECVI | 021; 0.36 | 0.20; 0.32 |
| ECVI for saturated model | 0.072 | 0.072 |
| ECVI for independence model | 8.46 | 8.46 |
| Chi-square for independence model with 10 *df* | 3501.66 | 3501.66 |
| Independence AIC | 3521.66 | 3521.66 |
| Model AIC | 113.46 | 104.44 |
| Saturated AIC | 60.00 | 60.00 |
| Independence CAIC | 3571.99 | 3571.99 |
| Model CAIC | 163.79 | 195.03 |
| Saturated CAIC | 210.99 | 210.99 |
| Normed fit index (NFI) | 0.98 | 0.98 |
| Nonnormed fit index (NNFI) | 0.98 | 0.97 |
| Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) | 0.98 | 0.59 |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) | 0.98 | 0.98 |
| Incremental fit index (IFI | 0.98 | 0.98 |
| Relative fit index (RFI) | 0.98 | 0.97 |
| Critical N (CN) | 196.70 | 163.10 |
| Group goodness of fit statistics | | |
| Contribution to Chi-square | 36.42 | 33.49 |
| % Contribution to Chi-square | 45.72 | 49.89 |
| Root mean square residual (RMR) | 1.11 | 3.08 |
| Standardized RMR | 0.021 | 0.056 |
| Goodness of fit index (GFI) | 0.93 | 0.94 |



ISSN 1554-3145

Table 12: *Comparisons of Chi-Square Values when Variances are Constrained/Not Constrained*

| Servant Leadership: Random Sample 1 and Random Sample 2 simultaneously | | |
|---|---|---|
| | All parameters constrained ($H_o$) | No constraints on parameters ($H_a$) |
| Chi square | 93.46 | 68.44 |
| *Df* | 20.00 | 12.00 |
| RMSEA | 0.13 | 0.15 |
| NFI | 0.98 | 0.98 |
| CFI | 0.98 | 0.98 |
| Difference in Chi square $H_o - H_a$ | 25.02 | |
| Critical value Chi square (8; 0.05) | 15.51 | |
| Significant | Yes | |

## Discussion

In the validation process of the SLQ, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) identified a factor structure consisting of five dimensions after creating items in terms of a formulation of the contents of servant leadership by Spears (1995) and additional elements identified by them. Barbuto and Wheeler performed exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to determine the factor structure of the instrument. The confirmatory factor analysis results indicated that a good fit existed between the factor structure and the data. The factors in the rater version of the resulting SLQ were highly related to each other. The respondents in the validation process consisted of 388 colleagues of 80 elected community leaders who completed the rater version of the instrument.

In the present study, 417 sales persons rated the servant leadership behavior of their immediate managers. When the original structure was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis, the results indicated an adequate but not good fit between the measurement model and the data. Further investigation of the responses, through item analysis as well as explanatory factor analysis, made it clear that the 23 items all correlated very highly with each other. Exploratory factor analysis, both with principal extraction and direct oblimin rotation and principal components extraction with varimax rotation, yielded two eigen values > 1.00. Further investigation, however, indicated that it would be sensible to extract only one factor. Specifying one factor indicated (with both principal axes and principal components extraction) that the 23 items all loaded highly on one factor. Confirmatory factor analysis yielded indices that reflected a good fit between the unidimensional measurement model and the data. The indices all indicated a better fit with the data by a one-factor structure than a five-factor one. An internal cross-validation procedure indicated that the one-factor structure did not fit the responses of two randomly divided subsamples equally well.



ISSN 1554-3145

The results are not fully understood. It should be remembered that the two samples probably differed not only in terms of the cultures and countries of origin but also in the kind of work and the organizations in which the members engaged. The unidimensionality of the questionnaire, when applied to the present sample, could possibly be due to a response set in the reaction to the items. This might have been aggravated by social desirability responses as the participants had to assess the servant leader behavior of their immediate superiors (sales managers). The SLQ has not been examined regarding its susceptibility to social desirable responding. In the present study, the participants possibly saw the behavior of their managers in unitary terms (i.e., they responded to a general picture of their superior).

The results of the present study seem to indicate that the SLQ, in a structural sense, has some portability to the sample used. The internal reliability of the unidimensional scale is very high. When the five-factor structure is inspected, it is clear that the high intercorrelations among the items resulted in high internal reliability of the subscales, as identified by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006).

The present study was carried out on a rather homogenous sample. Though work locations were spread out over South Africa and subjected to different marketing approaches and strategies of different motor manufacturers; the respondents did the same kind of work, within the same industry, in the same country. Future studies should probably be done on more heterogeneous samples in terms of work demands, products, marketing strategies, and procedures from different industries. It will probably be necessary to investigate effects of the social desirability on the responses to the questionnaire.

The study seems to have contributed some understanding of the construct servant leadership in the South African culture. What is clear is that the construct servant leadership remains intact. When applied to the South African sample, however, it is not as multidimensional as is the case when it is applied to a U.S. sample. Currently, further analysis of the responses of the participants in the present study is being undertaken regarding the predictive validity of the instrument and the redundancy or nonredundancy of the servant leadership construct.

## About the Authors

Dr. Zani Dannhauser is a registered industrial and organization (I/O) psychologist, master HR practitioner, and trained assessor. Her academic career commenced in 1998. She has worked as an academic at various universities in South Africa, including the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the University of Johannesburg (previously RAU). Since January 2003 she has been appointed in both a lecturing and researching capacity at the University of Stellenbosch . She also spent a substantial time working in the private sector as a professional I/O psychologist, mainly within the financial, medical-legal, educational, automotive, and consulting industries–in both a professional and psychologist capacity. Dr. Dannhauser still consults for different organizations across various industries. She completed her doctorate on positive organizational behavior, focusing primarily on the domain specificity of servant leadership and its effects on teamwork. Her research interests include servant leadership, teamwork, and organizational behavior.
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*International Journal of Leadership Studies*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2, 2007, pp. 148-168

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