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THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

—LARRY SPEARS
THE GREENLEAF CENTER

WHAT HAPPENS TO SERVANT-LEADERS
WHEN THEY GET TIRED?

Not long ago I was reminded of a quote—two quotes actually—which the noted author M. Scott Peck had shared with us as part of his 1993 Greenleaf conference keynote address. Peck, who passed away in 2005, and who is best known as the author of *The Road Less Traveled*, had admitted at the time that he was feeling tired, and he quoted T. S. Elliot, who had written: “Middle age is when they keep asking you to do more and more, and you’re not yet decrepit enough to turn them down.”

I have had the great honor of knowing some remarkable and notable servant-leaders, one of whom was Peck. “Scotty” and I spent time alone together on three or four occasions in the early 1990s, and I knew from previous conversations with him that he was, indeed, feeling tired.

As the audience laughter subsided back in 1993, Peck, who was 57 years old at the time, told us that he was beginning to feel both old and tired, and he posed the following question for us to think about: “What happens to servant-leaders when they get tired?”

“Life is difficult,” wrote Peck in the opening sentence of *The Road Less Traveled*, first published in 1978. Fifteen years later at our servant-leadership conference he posed the question: “What happens to servant-leaders when they get tired?”

I must confess that when I originally heard him ask that question in 1993, it made but a limited impression on me. I had come to the Greenleaf Center as CEO in 1990 as a 34-year-old possessing a seemingly inexhaust-



ible supply of both ideas and energy. I have always had an intuitive feel for making use of limited resources to maximum effect—nurturing and coaxing steady growth—and over the past seventeen years I have sought to make use of this gift in service to the servant-leader movement and the Greenleaf Center. On the whole, both my energy level and my creative spirit have remained high—especially for those aspects that represent what I feel to be my own special calling in servant leadership: encouraging others through the written word in their understanding and practice of servant-leadership.

However, having now passed the half-century mark, and having served for seventeen years in a very demanding role, I recently found myself personally wrestling with Scotty's question: What *does* happen to servant-leaders when they get tired?

SPEED BUMPS

In November-December 2005 my mother, Bertha Spears, spent many weeks in the hospital, during which time her heart stopped beating on four separate days and had to be shocked back into beating. We almost lost her at that time, but she surprised her doctors and others by rallying and eventually getting strong enough to return home. With the help of a phalanx of visiting caregivers for support she eventually returned to her apartment, and throughout 2006 I learned a whole lot about the ins and outs of congestive heart failure, Medicare, and the incredible support services that exist in organizations like Meals on Wheels, Senior Services for the Aging, Visiting Nurse Association, and others. These organizations and others in cities and towns across the U.S. help to make it possible for many people to continue to live at home in spite of major illnesses. I've observed that these caregivers are also, quite often, tired servant-leaders.

In early 2006 my wife, Beth Lafferty, was diagnosed with breast cancer. Many of you will no doubt understand the fear that comes with any kind of cancer diagnosis. If we are in need of a reminder of our own mortality, this will almost certainly provide us with a clearer wake-up call to that reality. Thankfully, Beth had been vigilant in getting an annual screen-



ing; and, the cancer was discovered early, it was small, and it had not spread into her lymph nodes. She had a lumpectomy in February, followed by a series of 33 radiation treatments in March and April. She will also be taking tamoxifen for the next five years and having frequent check-ups. At this point the long-term prognosis is excellent—something we are all so grateful for. Still, as anyone who has dealt with a life-threatening situation knows all too well, it can both be a source of worry and fatigue, and serve as a powerful reminder of the relatively short and unpredictable nature of our time here on earth.

In December 2006 my mother experienced a rapid decline in her health, and on December 21 she died following a short stay in the hospital. My mom had survived one life-threatening battle with tuberculosis as a teenager in the 1950s, at which time she lost a significant portion of her lung function. Then, as a young mother in her twenties, she faced an even greater illness in kidney disease. Thankfully, after six months in the hospital, she recovered from this second life-threatening illness and came back home to us. I was eight years old at the time; my mother was twenty-six years old. Mom's battles with tuberculosis, and then with kidney disease, were later followed by several other debilitating illnesses, including rheumatoid arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and congestive heart failure. Yet throughout her life she remained positive and did whatever she could to help others. Even in death, and despite all that her body had been through in her 69 years of living, she was still able to donate her corneas to help two people facing blindness, and her skin tissue to aid burn victims. What a remarkable final gift of life she made. My mother is remembered by her many friends and family members as a woman who faced life's challenges with an upbeat attitude and a caring heart.

On top of all of this, during the past two years at the Greenleaf Center I had found myself in the increasingly difficult position of spending more and more of my time in the role of "operationalizer" (to use Bob Greenleaf's language) as I attempted to address some of the leadership and management challenges common to so many non-profit organizations. And



then there is the omnipresent challenge of accomplishing our organizational mission with insufficient financial resources. At the same time, my heart was increasingly calling me in the opposite direction of “conceptualizer”—to use Greenleaf’s counter-posing term. By the end of 2006 I had begun to understand the depth of meaning behind Peck’s question of 1993: “What happens to servant-leaders when they get tired?”

I found myself once again being drawn into re-reading most of M. Scott Peck’s books, including *A World Waiting to Be Born*, first published in 1993. I believe that this is the only book that Peck wrote in which he spoke about servant leadership, and he did so in a direct and powerful fashion. I was struck by the following observation by Peck in that book:

Greenleaf and I are in agreement that the civil manager must be a servant leader, and that the art of civil management is that of servant leadership. . . . While Greenleaf doesn’t do this, his term, servant leadership, calls up the Christian notion of “the suffering servant.” What he does do, however, is distinguish between two types of servant leaders. Both feel called to power and fulfilled by its exercise. Beyond this they differ. One enjoys crises and the experience of living on the brink of exhaustion. The other finds crises sapping and lives in fear of the depletion of his or her emotional resources. Without making any distinction between their effectiveness, it is clear that the latter type suffers the more in her leadership role. Insofar as I myself am a servant leader, I clearly belong to this latter type. I have no doubt that my personality affects what follows in this regard. For while I see glory in the role, it does not seem to me an easy glory, and I shall consistently speak of the suffering the civil manager needs to bear in the exercise of her vocation. May God have mercy on you. (p. 246)

I began to understand in a deepening way that, like Peck, I was also a servant-leader who found crises to be both sapping and depleting of my own emotional resources. Throughout my seventeen years in the role of CEO I had always viewed it as an exquisite burden to bear, but I now realized that I was feeling distressed. The fun in my work which had been



present for me for so many years had disappeared, and it felt as if all that was left was the grind.

“May God have mercy on you,” indeed.

ON THE ROAD TO FIND OUT

With the initial encouragement of friends at the Fetzer Institute, and with the support of the Greenleaf Center board, I was able to spend the second half of 2006 engaged in a creative sabbatical—my first in fifty years. It proved to be a hugely renewing and satisfying experience, and I found myself feeling incredibly energized. During that time, my friend Paul Davis and I completed the manuscript for a new book, and I started a second one; I began to work on several new essays; I traveled and gave talks, and I generally allowed myself to be open to new ideas and to new experiences. I also found that I was able to take the time to think about what it is that I hope to accomplish with my servant-leadership work in the future. Following much careful thought, and through conversations with key advisors and friends, I came to the conclusion that I might yet be able to make a meaningful contribution by stepping out of the active management role at the Greenleaf Center and into my new role, which took place on April 15, 2007 when Kent M. Keith joined the Greenleaf Center as our new CEO. I look forward to a strong and vital collaboration.

I feel deeply honored by the creation of this new full-time position as Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus, and I am most grateful to the board for making that possible. I am excited by the wide range of publications projects that I have begun, and I hope to be of even greater service to both the Greenleaf Center and to the servant-leader movement worldwide through my work in this new position.

At the 1993 Greenleaf Center conference Scott Peck said there was no simple answer to his question, “What do servant-leaders do when they get tired?” He did suggest that it was up to each of us to understand and to work through it with the hope of finding our own unique solutions. When



we become open to new possibilities, they can sometimes materialize in ways we cannot imagine.

I hope to meet you on the road less traveled.

Larry C. Spears

Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus

Senior Advisory Editor,

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WHEN WE RISE

—SHANN FERCH
GONZAGA UNIVERSITY

Recently, my wife Jennifer and I have been studying death tolls due to slavery, war, and genocide. The numbers are shocking, especially when one considers for a moment the significance, horror, and reach of the world's inhumanity. Immanently apparent is the great complexity involved in all large-scale human endeavors, the layers of power, nuance, and chaos with regard to time and place and perspective. I do believe in the principle *judge not, lest ye be judged*. I also believe in the principle of light, something common to our experience and beautiful to behold, the simple truth that light shines in darkness, and as the sacred text reminds us: the darkness cannot overcome the light. This robust notion, a notion that can be called illumination, is obscured at times, especially when we are faced with the overwhelming deadliness of our collective history.

And therefore the questions press forward: Do we rise? Or do we merely fall?

The following numbers are conservative estimates based on the reading Jenn and I have done over the past year.

Total deaths from two atomic bombs dropped on Japan: 400,000.

Total deaths from conventional firebombing of Japan: 500,000.

In Japan alone, the United States destroyed 60 cities during WWII.

In light of the loss of life, and the devastation of families, industry, and the human heart, a deep responsibility for servant-leaders everywhere presents itself, and specifically in the U.S. May we beg forgiveness of those we've inflicted harm upon, and may we be granted the grace to make



amends. In studies of leadership and forgiveness I can say much has been accomplished to this end. And much is yet to be fulfilled.

Both within U.S. borders and beyond, the numbers are staggering, the numbers are worldwide, and they span history. Each number is an individual human being.

Total deaths throughout Asia attributed to the totalitarian regimes in Japan under Hideki Tojo and others for the fifteen years prior to atomic warfare: 15 million.

Total deaths attributed to Hitler: 23 million.

Total deaths attributed to Stalin: 27 million.

Total deaths attributed to Mao Zedong: 50 million.

Total deaths attributed to the Crusades: 9 million.

Total deaths attributed to the North African Arab (Middle East and surrounding area) slave trade over ten centuries: 25 million.

Total deaths attributed to the African/Atlantic American and English slave trade over four centuries: 10 million.

Again, may we beg forgiveness of those we've inflicted harm upon, and may we be granted the grace to make amends.

Now consider what some scholars designate as the Native American Holocaust. Conservative estimates place the total death count in excess of 30 million due to dominant culture's infliction of war, disease, and famine. The staggering nature of our wrongs to one another makes it increasingly difficult, but also increasingly necessary to approach the past, present, and future of our violence and, again, beg forgiveness of those we've inflicted harm upon, and deeply hope to be granted the grace to make amends. Significantly, though dominant culture often works hard to conceal it, dominant culture dominates; gendered, economic, and racial suppression that is age-old continues to be a stronghold throughout Western and American society.

And the violence goes on worldwide. Four million war-related deaths recently in the Congo. One million deaths due to genocide in Rwanda. Consider Liberia. Consider the Sudan.



Now consider the courage and underlying power of those who have chosen a servant-led way of life. Servant-leaders exist in the midst of slavery, war, and genocide, and lead the way toward healing and an end to violence. The Nez Perce, notorious servant-leaders of their own nation as well as in the context of United States history, hold a reconciliation ceremony each year at the site of the Big Hole Massacre. There, a little more than a century ago, Nii Mii Pu (Nez Perce) men, women, and children were massacred by U.S. forces. Today, the descendents of those who were massacred meet with the descendents of the Cavalry who committed the massacre. The Nii Mii Pu invite reconciliation, and peace. They help us rise.

Consider Martin Luther King, Jr.'s timeless message of profound social action. He forwarded a clear, sharp vision: the oppressor will never willingly give up power. And he placed human capacity in relation to the divine, in deep relation to what he called soul force, by proposing the following: when we love the oppressor, we bring about not only our own salvation, but also the salvation of the oppressor. His servant-leadership provided a unity that spanned the globe, that he and his wife Coretta Scott King called The Beloved Community. In the face of brutal inhumanity, he and Coretta rose speaking humanity, and they helped us rise.

Consider Corazon Aquino, the woman who became president after her husband was killed; she rose with People Power and restored the beauty, strength, and excellence of the Philippines. And consider her husband, who just months prior to his martyrdom, said, "The Filipino is worth dying for." In their spirit, humanity is again given the grace to rise.

Consider Czechoslovakians, enduring decades of Nazi and Communist suppression before they rose as a nation, gave the world The Velvet Revolution, a revolution without bloodshed, and elected Vaclav Havel, the poet, the playwright, as President. In this spirit, in all our shadow and light, in all our humanity, we rise.

Consider South Africa and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Consider those who work for peace in the Middle East, Northern Ire-



land, the Congo, the Sudan, Rwanda, North Korea, and throughout the world.

A movement both of personal surrender and collective ultimacy comes to the fore. An understanding starts to emerge: that within the horrific violence of the human endeavor it is the nature of humanity to rise, to rise toward that which makes us whole, heals us, and presents us to one another as capable of human dignity, and able to reconcile, even after the gravest of human atrocities. There exist irrevocable movements in the history of the world in which we rise toward perfect forgiveness and fearless responsibility in making amends for the wrongs we've committed.

When we rise, we find the light we seek.

When we rise, love attends us.

And we return to beloved relationship.

Kahlil Gibran, the great Lebanese poet, said, "The strong of soul forgive." In this year's journal I see authors who are strong of soul. They forward a way of life that is important, vibrant, and necessary in the present day. This way of life, the life of the servant-leader, was articulated by Robert K. Greenleaf, and it is imbued with listening, foresight, healing, stewardship, and community.

May light and the legitimate power Greenleaf envisioned be with you in the confusion of our age. I am thankful for the many servant-leaders, in both informal and formal positions of power, within our families and communities, within our workplaces, and in our governments. Servant-leaders gift the world with action, integrity, and authentic love. They give us hope. They help us rise.

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WHO IS THE SERVANT LEADER?

—ROBERT GREENLEAF

Who is the servant-leader? Is not every servant a leader because of influence by example? Walt Whitman may have answered this when he wrote, “We convince by our presence.”

Servant-leaders differ from other persons of goodwill because they act on what they believe. Consequently, they “know experimentally” and there is a sustaining spirit when they venture and risk. To the worldly, servant-leaders may seem naive; and they may not adapt readily to prevailing institutional structures.

The hierarchy of contemporary institutions that exist to serve humankind may be seen to be on three levels. In the base group are families, communities, businesses, governments, schools, and health and social agencies. Standing next above, in a position to serve both individuals and institutions, and with power to exert a value-clarifying influence, are churches and universities. At the third level, because of the great opportunity to harbor and nurture prophetic voices that give vision and hope, I see theological seminaries and foundations. In a sustained good society, the gap between opportunity and performance narrows progressively at levels two and three. When there is faltering, as there seems to be now, the gaps between opportunity and performance may have widened, perhaps most at the third level.

The transforming movement, should there be one, may come from anywhere and may spread in unaccountable ways. But that movement will be favored if seminaries and foundations give shelter and encouragement to the originators, and if churches and universities are effective mediators to base-line institutions. All have the opportunity to convince by their presence, by acting on what they believe *in their internal affairs*, and by being more hospitable to servant-leaders.



In the absence of solid evidence of such initiatives, servant-leaders may stand alone, largely without the support of their culture, as a saving remnant of those who care for both persons and institutions, and who are determined to make their caring count—*wherever they are involved*. This brings them, as individuals, constantly to examine the assumptions they live by. Thus, their leadership by example sustains trust.

They also serve who only stand and wait.

—John Milton



AMERICA AND WORLD LEADERSHIP

—ROBERT GREENLEAF

In January 1976 I attended an International Symposium on Leadership Development. In responding to the charge of arrogance by Americans, I made the following statement.

Our African friend has said that we Americans are arrogant. It hurts—but I accept the charge.

Our arrogance stems, I believe, from the fact of our great power. In the years that the British were the great power, they were seen as arrogant. When the next shift comes, the nation that emerges into that unfortunate spot will quite likely be seen as arrogant. Civilization, it seems, has not advanced to a point where, as a natural gift of grace, either individuals, institutions, or governments are likely to be both powerful and humble without some basic changes in public thinking that are not yet evident. Some may make it, but the odds are against it.

In this conference I have learned from Father Benjamin Tonna of Malta that humility in the more powerful is ultimately tested by their ability to learn from and gratefully to receive the gifts of the less powerful. It is in my experience to know this, but sometimes one needs to be taught before one understands one's own experience.

When I retired from my active business career twelve years ago, I was asked by an American foundation to take an assignment for it in India. The first school of administration to be set up there after independence in 1947 was a close copy of an English model that, by 1964, had proved not to be a sound idea for India. And the foundation had been asked to give technical assistance and a grant of money to help develop a new program for that



school that would better serve the development needs of India. I took on the staff work on that project and made four long visits over the ensuing four years. I found the top cut of Indian society with which I dealt, both in and out of government, to be highly sophisticated. Yet I was treated as if I had a level of expertise far beyond what my old colleagues at home who knew me well would concede. This is heady stuff, a fertile breeding ground for arrogance, and the several thousand who participated in aid programs in India, both private and governmental, in the heyday of technical assistance, were all exposed to some measure of it.

By the usual standards of judging a consulting engagement, mine was successful. A new program for that school of administration did emerge, and it has been sustained. Also, in this period, I believe I learned something about the steps that needed to be taken in India to develop a new leadership to recover that great nation from the deprivation of three hundred years of colonial rule during which the Indians had been educated for, and participated extensively in, routine administration, but they had not been allowed to learn such essential skills as goal setting, negotiation, or institutional design. These had all been done for them by their colonial masters.

In 1970, I made my last visit to India. This time I went only to New Delhi to confer with the foundation staff that was based there about the new conditions they faced in India and how the foundation might best serve while it still had the opportunity. It was then clear that the future of that country was not likely to accord either with Gandhi's dream of a village-based nation or Nehru's classical socialist aim of an industrialized one. Rather, it seemed that they were embarked on their own evolutionary path on which they would move forward, much as the rest of the world does, not according to an idealistic plan but by responding creatively to world conditions and the current state of their own society. And I felt that there needed to be a new concept of how things get done in India under these new conditions, both for the benefit of the Indians in building their new institutions and for the guidance of those whom they might choose to advise them. Otherwise, these advisors would have to learn for themselves, the hard way



as I did, how things get done there—if, indeed, they ever learned. But, alas, it was a tardy suggestion. The opportunity for the foundation to give that kind of service in India was very soon to be gone. The advice was twenty years late.

In 1971, when I signed off on this foundation relationship, I had some things to say in my report that have a bearing on the question of how those in a position to lead can best lead, and why Americans who try so hard at it are seen as arrogant by so much of the world. But, first, I want to comment on the Indian view of aid when I first went there, while Jawaharlal Nehru was still prime minister, a post that he held for the first seventeen years after independence.

Nehru was Oxford educated and Western in outlook. Furthermore, he denigrated both Indian religion and culture, and he welcomed technical assistance the way I, and many others like me, were prepared to give it as one of the means for helping India to take a fast course into the family of advanced (Westernized) nations. This was 180 degrees off the course that Gandhi had charted for them and prompted Nehru in his autobiography to make such comments as: “How very different was his [Gandhi’s] outlook from mine. . .and I wondered how far I could cooperate with him in the future.” “He has a peasant’s outlook on affairs, and with a peasant’s blindness to some aspects of life.” “In spite of the closest association with him for many years, I am not clear in my own mind about his objective. I doubt if he is clear himself.” Part of the confusion about goals that I sensed there stems, I believe, from this very basic conflict in outlook between Gandhi, who gave the masses of common people a great dream of their own good society, and Nehru, who headed the first government and led them in quite another direction.

With the perspective of my own experience in India and much reading of its history and biographies of its leaders, I made the following comment in my final report to the foundation that employed me:

Anyone who has spent even as little time as I have in India cannot help having views about the whole aid-giving, aid-receiving relationship. . . It



does not seem to me to be a sound basis for a relationship for one nation to be aid giver and another aid receiver for a long period of time. A one-way flow of aid is all right for an emergency or a short period of readjustment, but not as a long term thing—and twenty years [the time this foundation had been working in India] is a long period. I believe, further, that, on balance, the Indians have as much to give us as we have to give them (different things, perhaps, but just as much). And it seems presumptuous, over a long period of time, for us to assume that, because we happen to have a surplus of money, the giving should be one way. Therefore, I believe that if we want to continue to be useful to the Indians, we should use our resources as much to learn from them as to facilitate their learning from us.

By a quirk of fate, in the years that I have been available to do it, I have served as a consultant to several foundations, both large and small. In addition, I was a trustee for some years of a middle-sized one, so I have had a rather concentrated immersion in the field of giving, and I have had a good deal of occasion to reflect on the role of giving. Recently I have summarized this experience in two articles in *Foundation News*, the journal of philanthropy (see chapter 6 herein). In one of them I made this observation:

Those who have been deeply involved in foundation staff work, particularly in a large foundation, are aware of the incessant pressure of grant requests. They know how difficult it is to judge the merit of a request. And they know that many meritorious ones must be turned down. Sensitive people have referred to this as “corrupting work” because grant applicants, no matter how prestigious and powerful they may be, approach the foundation as supplicants. Communication is warped to the extent that a feeling of omniscience is a serious occupational disease of foundation staff work. Not all who are exposed contract the disease, but the incidence is high. An early foundation officer recommended a ten-year limit of tenure to reduce the liability.

In his book *Private Money and Public Service*, Dr. Merrimon Cuninggim, former president of the Danforth Foundation, takes a more theological



view when he suggests that “giving is a potentially immoral act.” He continues:

Its danger lies in its assumption of virtue by the agent, of the virtue of agency, with an accompanying train of unvirtuous assumptions. The relatively innocent desire to help is so thinly distinguished from wanting to be the helper. But the latter is capable of all sorts of distortions: wanting to be well known as the helper, wanting to dictate, to paternalize, to manipulate. It is not likely that a foundation, any more than a person, will escape these faults by thoughtlessness or accident. Only by being conscious of the danger is there a chance to escape. In other words, a foundation must believe in the potential immorality of giving.

Out of reflection on my own experience, and particularly in the context of this conference where the arrogance of power has been so sharply highlighted, Dr. Cuninggim’s admonition to the giver to be conscious of the danger and believe in the potential immorality of giving seems not enough. We in the United States who are placed in a position of power by our massive surplus (relatively) for giving, from both public and private resources, will not escape the opprobrious label of “arrogant,” nor will we have a chance to achieve that possible wholeness of existence, as individuals and as a nation, simply by being aware—unless that awareness opens the way to a new basis of relationship between aid giver and aid receiver, both among individuals and institutions in our country and between our nation and others, particularly the developing nations.

In this regard I see no middle ground between arrogance and humility. One may not safely give unless one is open and ready to receive the gifts of others, whatever they may be. Scripture holds that it is more blessed to give than to receive. But if one has the great power of affluence in modern terms, a condition which the writers of scripture may not have foreseen, this may be a questionable generalization, because *receiving* requires a genuine humility that may be uncomfortable and difficult to achieve, whereas *giving* poses the risk of arrogance, which, unfortunately, is easy to come by—and some seem to enjoy it.



An important dimension of leadership within a nation that has the substantial power of affluence, such as we in the United States have, will be the ability to persuade those who are in a position to give, whether an individual, an institution, or the nation, that they should reach out for, gratefully receive, and help pay the cost of the giving to themselves by the less favored.

In the contemporary world it is at least as blessed, especially for the powerful, to receive as to give—and much harder to do.



WITH A SERVANT'S HEART: REFLECTIONS OF LARRY SPEARS

—INTRODUCED BY SHANN FERCH

INTRODUCTION

Earlier this year, longtime Greenleaf Center President & CEO Larry C. Spears announced he would be stepping down from that role and into a new position with the Greenleaf Center as Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus. A search for a new CEO was launched and in April it was announced that Kent M. Keith had been appointed as the Greenleaf Center's new CEO, and that Larry Spears has now begun in his new role.

Larry's graceful relationship to the notion of servant-leadership as a way of life has informed a generation of important thinkers. In this graceful relationship to serving and leading, Larry has not only heralded a bright new day in the field of leadership studies, he has also given people the opportunity to more fully realize the kind of legitimate power and greatness embodied in the ideas of Robert Greenleaf.

In my own interactions with Larry, I have been struck by many important aspects of his character. Specifically, he is a deep, willing, and attentive listener. . . and from his listening arises the kind of questions that re-envision the world and create a sense of "seeing things whole." Diminishment, degradation, negation, the many ills of the human condition, fall away and a more purposeful, articulate, and generous mindset comes to the fore. A second recurring experience I've encountered in Larry is his natural presence: a presence of quietness and peace. He walks unhurried and unharried by the speed of the contemporary world. In the book of Isaiah it is said of such a person: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." This is a resonant echo of what it is like to be with Larry on occasions as



varied as dinner, a significant leadership engagement, a long-term writing project, or a simple walk together. Finally, I am honored to have been with Larry during a couple of his most recent times of immense gratitude. He views the world through loving and grateful eyes, and from a heart of compassionate thankfulness he gives to those he loves. His life is a personal tribute to his wife and sons, and his devotion to so many of the fine people of servant-leadership throughout the world is delightful and profound.

There are vital findings emerging in present social science research. One such finding is that those with higher capacity for gratitude also experience greater levels of critical thinking. When we lack gratitude, we diminish or perhaps arrest our ability to conceptualize or foresee the kind of great dream that might carry us to a transcendent discovery in the human community. Larry Spears, a man of gratitude, has for the past seventeen years forwarded the subtle and immeasurably rich notions of servant-leadership, and helped transform the harsh landscapes of organizational life into valleys of peace and mountaintops of exceptional vision. With his acceptance of his new role as Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus, this seems like a good moment in time to pause in recognition of Larry's monumental work in advancement of servant-leadership. I'm thrilled that he will continue with the Greenleaf Center in his new role as Senior Fellow & President Emeritus, and that he will now be able to more fully focus his energies on his true love and calling: raising global awareness of the meaning and practice of servant-leadership through the written word.

Shann Ferch

Editor, The International Journal of Servant-Leadership

Professor, Leadership Studies

Gonzaga University



1

THE FIRE WITHIN

—LARRY C. SPEARS

Over the past seventeen years I have had the great privilege of personally getting to know (and especially to learn from) many wonderful servant-leader practitioners and thinkers. The following insights from three of them come to mind as I write this:

The great opportunity is to discover in one's mature years an unrealized growth potential. Growth, not in terms of external achievement, but in the things that are important in the quiet hours when one is alone with oneself; growth in the capacity for serenity in a world of confusion and conflict, a new kind of inner stamina, a new kind of exportable resource as youthful prowess drops away.

—Robert K. Greenleaf, *On Becoming a Servant-Leader*

There are four needs in all people: To live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy. When these needs overlap, you find that internal motivation, the fire within. Starting with your own fire, you can create something that will burn bright for many people and last a lifetime—you can empower others to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy. You can be a servant-leader.

—Stephen R. Covey, *Focus on Leadership*

Once we have broken out of the ego-shell of self we are open to our fellow humans—first in awareness, then in growing sensitivity, compassion, and empathy, and finally in love and dialogue.

—Bill Bottum, *Within Your Reach*

I have spent the better part of two decades doing my best to provide effective and caring organizational leadership and management for the Greenleaf Center. Along the way—and most often done on the nights and weekends from home, or from hotel rooms while traveling—I've been able



to focus some of my energies on the writing and editing of servant-leadership books, journals, articles and the like. Over the years it has increasingly been this work—squeezed in here and there where I can—that has helped to introduce servant-leadership to millions of readers, radio listeners, and television viewers.

While both types of endeavors have provided immense satisfaction—coupled with great results for a very long time—in recent years I have felt my own personal “fire” burning with a far greater intensity around the creation of new publications and other kinds of learning resources. The drumbeat of my own personal calling—to encourage greater awareness and practice of servant-leadership through my written and edited works—finally reached the point where I have felt the need to make a choice between the necessary full-time focus on management and leadership of The Greenleaf Center on the one hand, and the ongoing development of the servant-leadership movement worldwide via the creation and promotion of new learning resources on the other.

Through conversations with a number of friends and advisors, and with the support of the Greenleaf Center board, I have finally been able to make that difficult choice and I will soon be moving from the role of President & CEO to that of Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus. My conversations with a number of people have been invaluable in this process. The following people have functioned as a kind of informal “Clearness Committee” for me, and I wish to publicly thank them: James Autry, Paul Davis, Shann Ferch, Beth Lafferty, Jack Lowe, Jeff McCollum, John Noble, and George SanFacon.

Among the responsibilities in this new Greenleaf Center position are the researching, writing, editing, and publishing of a wide range of meaningful works.

Much of this work will now be done from my home office, though I plan to maintain a schedule that will have me working from my Greenleaf Center office at least one day a week. I will also be able to better set my own work priorities, and to maintain a more reasonable work and travel



schedule than in the past. I hope to be of even greater service to both the Greenleaf Center and the servant-leader movement worldwide through my work in this new position.

I have a number of projects already underway which I expect to see published in the next year. Among these are:

- *Scanlon EPIC Leadership*. My friend and president of the Scanlon Leadership Network, Paul Davis, and I have produced an anthology of writings titled *Scanlon EPIC Leadership: Where the Best Ideas Come Together*. It includes contributions from Warren Bennis, Max DePree and others.
- *Servant-Leadership Anthology*. Over the past three years I have been collecting and soliciting potential contributions to our next servant-leadership anthology. I'm reading through over 120 articles and essays and will select about 25 of them for inclusion within it.
- *Servant-Leadership and Myers-Briggs*. I've recently picked back up this manuscript essay which Greenleaf Centre-United Kingdom Board Chair Ralph Lewis and I are working on.
- *Full-Spectrum Servant-Leadership*. This is the working title for a monograph which George SanFacon and I are writing, and which includes ideas and inspiration from our mutual friend, Bill Bottum.
- *Annotated Bibliography of Servant-Leadership*. Over the past two years I have encouraged and assisted Betsy Hine in her work to create the first *Annotated Bibliography of Servant-Leadership*. The first edition of this bibliography has recently been posted on the Greenleaf Center's website, and we plan to update it on an annual basis. Betsy's initial article about it is included in this, the 2007 *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*.

Over the past 17 years I have also come to understand that certain broad themes run through many of my own writings, and in my selections of materials for the volumes which I've edited, among them: the search for meaning; a commitment to peace and social justice; the possibility for service to others as a pathway to spiritual development; and, the concept and



practice of servant-leadership. For me, servant-leadership is a key to opening these and other doors of perception. I am looking forward to this unique opportunity to expand and deepen both the knowledge base and wisdom literature about servant-leadership, and in support of The Greenleaf Center.

2

LARRY C. SPEARS APPOINTED TO THE NEW POSITION OF GREENLEAF
SENIOR FELLOW & PRESIDENT EMERITUS

[The Greenleaf Center, Westfield, January 1, 2007] The Robert K. Greenleaf Center has announced the appointment of Larry C. Spears to the newly-established position of The Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus.

The *Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus* position is the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a Greenleaf Center associate who has made an extraordinary contribution to the furtherance of the Center's mission. The Senior Fellow & President Emeritus has a wide range of important responsibilities and roles for the Greenleaf Center and the servant-leadership movement worldwide and provides both vision and voice for the servant-leader movement worldwide through leadership and service. Embedded within this position are a variety of roles including those of author, educator, chronicler, documentarian, archivist, storyteller, historian, journalist, teacher, interviewer and researcher.

Specific responsibilities include the research, writing, editing, and publishing of a wide range of meaningful works—via print, electronically, and audio-visual media—that will provide opportunities to engage people in societal transformation and contribute to the ongoing development of the practice of servant-leadership. The position reports to the Board of Trustees of the Greenleaf Center. Responsibilities include:

- Biennially edit, write and/or produce one new book.



- In conjunction with Gonzaga University, annually co-edit and produce *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*.
- Annually edit and produce one or two new publications in the “Voices of Servant-Leadership Essay Series.”
- Annually edit and produce a minimum of two issues of the Greenleaf Center’s newsletter, *The Servant Leader*.
- Annually write and publish a minimum of one new journal, newspaper or magazine article.
- Annually publish one interview.
- Annually produce and disseminate updated editions of the resource catalogue, “Voices” flier.
- Continually support the CEO and the Center direction by helping expand the awareness and practice of servant-leadership in a variety of venues, which may include the translation of Center literature into multiple languages.
- Occasionally travel for meetings, presentations and outreach.

In his new role as Senior Fellow & President Emeritus, Larry Spears will be responsible for setting his own priorities and schedule. He will now do much of his work outside of the office (working from home, some travel). Spears will maintain his office at the Greenleaf Center and will be in the office one day a week.

3

A MESSAGE FROM JACK LOWE, GREENLEAF CENTER BOARD CHAIR

[Reprinted from The Servant Leader, Winter 2007, The Greenleaf Center.]

In 1980 I succeeded my Dad on the Greenleaf Center Board of Trustees. From that time until 1990, the Center was principally a vehicle to support Bob Greenleaf’s diminished writing and to occasionally decide to reprint some of his previous work. We met less than once a year to accomplish these responsibilities. By the end of that decade we had a part-time staff and were beginning to think about new possible initiatives. Through-



out the 1970s and '80s we had been funded primarily by Lilly Endowment; then, in 1989 we were informed that they were extending to us a final three-year diminishing grant to allow us to get on our own two feet or to cease to exist.

In facing that reality all those years ago we decided to hire a full-time executive director with the hope of creating a future for the Greenleaf Center. Great good fortune brought the Center together with Larry Spears as that Executive Director. In the ensuing years the Center has not only survived (a very speculative outcome in 1990), but has thrived. The timeline inside describes many of the accomplishments under Larry's leadership. Some of the highlights include:

- Sixteen annual International Servant-Leadership conferences featuring some of the leading servant-leadership thinkers, writers, and practitioners in the world.
- The creation of an extraordinary number of publications, including: Nine full-length books; twelve pamphlets in our groundbreaking *Voices of Servant-Leadership* Essay Series; the translation of our books and essays into more than a dozen languages; writing over two hundred published articles; editing over fifty newsletters; two annual journals; and so much more.
- The establishment of eleven International Centers around the globe.
- Ten Leadership Institutes for Education (LIFE) reaching some 200 educational institutions.
- An appearance on NBC's *Dateline* in 2004 which was seen by over ten million viewers.
- Securing foundation support totaling over two million dollars through writing some twenty different grant proposals.
- The building of a permanent headquarters owned by the Center, and much more.

All of us on the Board acknowledge Larry's selfless and excellent service to the Greenleaf Center and to the idea of servant-leadership over the



last seventeen years, and all of us who think servant-leadership is a key ingredient to building a more just and caring society are in Larry's debt.

While Larry's stewardship of the Center has been extraordinary, his real passion has always been in the publications that reach a much wider audience than any other activity of the Center. To follow that passion, Larry will now take on the new role of Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus. This will allow him to focus most of his energy and creative spirit on the many different publication aspects of the Center, while being available to support the other activities of the Center and encouraging the growing global awareness of servant-leadership.

4

THROUGH THE YEARS: SELECTED EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR
THE WORK OF LARRY C. SPEARS

Goodness! You've accomplished a lot. Thank you, Larry, for continuing and enhancing the ideas of my old friend, Bob Greenleaf. You're a gentleman and scholar. [2003]

Warren Bennis, author, *On Leadership*

I'm proud of what you've done. [2004]

Ken Blanchard, author, *The Servant-Leader*

You have caused the impossible dream to happen—you saved the Greenleaf Center from certain destruction and made it into an international, overwhelming success—with love. [2000]

Bill Bottum, Greenleaf Center trustee from 1981-2001

I hold you in high regard. [1999]

James MacGregor Burns, author, *Leadership*

I appreciate the leadership you give to Greenleaf's seminal work. [2001]

John Carver, author, *Board Governance*



Chapman University presents you with its Outstanding Leadership Award in recognition of your pioneering efforts and enduring commitment to promoting servant-leadership around the world. [2002]

Chapman University

Good friend and partner! Congratulations on the marvelous book, Practicing Servant-leadership. Keep leaving a legacy. When we were born our work was born with us. You're doing it well. Love & appreciation. [2005]

Stephen R. Covey, author, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

Your influence personally, professionally and organizationally is much greater than you will ever know. As a student of nonviolence I believe good spirals out from people, and the good in you has spiraled out in many different directions. Talent like yours is not given to many, and the world needs you. [2005]

Paul Davis, President, Scanlon Leadership Network

The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership has been blessed with the presence, talent, capabilities, sincere devotion, ethical guidance, and determined stewardship of a man who, for the past ten years, has brought the highest quality of management and leadership to work every day. We are awed by his sense of responsibility, the care he brings to all of his work, whether that is editing a book, writing articles, putting together agendas and financial plans, or working with board members. Our board, staff, and all of us here have been the lucky recipients of his focus and curiosity, his stability and his generosity, his seriousness and his sense of humor. Larry, you have our deepest gratitude for all that you have done—things of high visibility and things of quiet humility. Your ongoing reflective presence, your determination, and your creativity have wrought wonders. As a manager, a leader, an author, an editor, and a fellow traveler on this path called servant-leadership, all of us thank you. [2000]

—The Greenleaf Center Board of Trustees



To Larry: Who leads, who inspires, who keeps the faith. [1998]

—Frances Hesselbein, editor, *The Leader of the Future*

The 2004 Dare-To-Lead Award is given in recognition of your demonstrated commitment and many contributions to building effective, responsible leaders. [2004]

—The International Leadership Network

Thanks for holding up the ideals of servant-leadership! [2005]

—John Izzo, author, *Second Innocence*

Thanks for sharing with the world your own sense of inner calling and outer expression. [2002]

—Michael Jones, author, *Creating an Imaginative Life*

Thank you for the opportunities you've created, and the extraordinary difference that you are making. [2003]

—James M. Kouzes, author, *Encouraging the Heart*

Thanks for your own "fire," and hopes of sitting around it with you often! [2005]

—Richard J. Leider, author, *Claiming Your Place at the Fire*

*Having just read the most recent issue of *The Servant Leader*, I am impressed by the progress you have made. It really is quite extraordinary. Your growing number of international centers, your many conferences, and the steady stream of publications—all these are impressive. And they did not happen by accident. I can see your energy, enthusiasm, intelligence behind them all. Congratulations!* [2000]

—John Nason, president emeritus of Carleton College

You and your colleagues have done a splendid job with the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership. If Bob were alive, he'd be so pleased, and, as I write this, I know he's pleased. The concept has spread far and wide. I



often think of the early days when we used to meet at Kennett Square so that Bob could join us. Of the people who used to be at those meetings just Jack Lowe is still with you. What a Prince of a man, Jack Lowe is. And to you, Larry, congratulations. You've made the idea not just sprout, but grow and blossom! [2002]

—Sister Joel Read, President Emeritus, Alverno College,
former board member

Thanks for your wonderful leadership at the Greenleaf Center. [1999]

—Georgia Sorenson, author, *Dead Center*

It has been said that all ministers have a theme and whether they are a bore or interesting depends on how many variations they can get on the theme. I am so pleased to see that you are coming up with new angles and new audiences. I also know how difficult it can be to follow a charismatic founder, and that adds all the more to my respect for what you have been able to accomplish. [2000]

—Edgar Stoesz, author, *Common Sense for Board Members*

You have done a wonderful job of leading the Greenleaf Center and promoting Greenleaf's ideas. You have a great spirit and a lot of hustle that results in a great organization with a great mission. [1998]

—Charles Waldo, professor of marketing, Anderson University

Many blessings for your important work; with gratitude for our shared journey. May you continue to proclaim, teach, and host the vision of a world of servant-leaders. [2005]

—Margaret Wheatley, author, *Finding Our Way*

I've great respect for your work. [2005]

—Danah Zohar, author, *Spiritual Capital*



LARRY C. SPEARS, GREENLEAF SENIOR FELLOW & PRESIDENT
EMERITUS: THE ROBERT K. GREENLEAF CENTER FOR SERVANT-
LEADERSHIP

Larry Spears was named Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus in 2007, following seventeen years of faithful service as President & CEO of The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership. Prior to 1990 Spears had been Managing Director of the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium, a cooperative association of 12 colleges and universities in the Philadelphia area. He also served as a staff member with the Great Lakes Colleges Association's Philadelphia Center and with the Quaker magazine, *Friends Journal*, in Philadelphia, PA.

Larry is also a writer and editor. Since 1970 he has published over 300 articles, essays and book reviews, including many for in-house publications. Larry is Senior Editor of the Greenleaf Center's newsletter, *The Servant-leader*. He has also been interviewed by numerous publications, including: *Fortune*, *the Indianapolis Business Journal*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Washington Post*, and *Advancing Philanthropy*. A February 2004 television broadcast interview of Spears by Stone Philips on NBC's *Dateline* was seen by ten million viewers.

Larry is the editor of ten books:

- *Scanlon EPIC Leadership: Where the Best Ideas Come Together* (with Paul Davis, forthcoming)
- *Practicing Servant-Leadership: Succeeding Through Trust, Bravery and Forgiveness* (with Michele Lawrence, 2004, Jossey-Bass)
- *The Servant-Leader Within* (with Hamilton Beazley & Julie Beggs, 2003, Paulist Press)
- *Servant-Leadership* (2002 Silver Anniversary edition, Paulist Press)
- *Focus on Leadership: Servant-Leadership in the 21st Century* (with Michele Lawrence, 2002, John Wiley & Sons)
- *The Power of Servant-Leadership* (1998, Berrett-Koehler)



- *Insights on Leadership: Service, Stewardship, Spirit, and Servant-Leadership* (1998, John Wiley & Sons)
- *Seeker and Servant* (with Anne Fraker, 1996, Jossey-Bass)
- *On Becoming a Servant-Leader* (with Don Frick, 1996, Jossey-Bass)
- *Reflections on Leadership: How Robert K. Greenleaf's Theory of Servant-Leadership Influenced Today's Top Management Thinkers* (1995, John Wiley & Sons).

He is also a contributing author to most of these ten books and to the following four books as well:

- *Robert K. Greenleaf* (2004, Berrett-Koehler)
- *Cutting Edge: Leadership 2000* (2000, University of Maryland)
- *Stone Soup for the World* (1998, Conari Press)
- *Leadership in a New Era* (1994, New Leaders Press).

Larry is Series Editor of the *Voices of Servant-Leadership* Essay Series, and he serves as the Senior Advisory Editor for *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*.

Spears is an occasional speaker on servant-leadership. The titles of some of his addresses include "Servant-Leadership and the Honoring of Excellence," "Servant-Leadership and Business," and "Greenleaf's Influence on Trusteeship." Among his presentations are addresses to The University of Michigan, Alberta (Canada) School Board Association, Indiana Bell, National Society for Experiential Education, and the Association of College Honor Societies. He has addressed audiences throughout North America, Europe, Australia and Asia.

Under Larry's leadership The Greenleaf Center experienced tremendous growth and influence. The Center now has eleven branch offices located around the world in Australia/New Zealand, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Japan, Korea, The Netherlands, the Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Among several honors, Spears was the recipient of the 2004 *Dare-to-Lead Award* given by the International Leadership Network. Larry has thirty years of experience in organizational leadership, entrepreneurial development, non-profit management, and grant



writing, having envisioned and authored 30 successful grant projects totaling several million dollars. He is a longtime member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Larry is a Fellow of the World Business Academy. He and his wife, Beth Lafferty, have two sons: James, 20, and Matthew, 17.



SERVANT-LEADERSHIP: LOVE, HONOR, AND COURAGE

—MYRLIE EVERS-WILLIAMS
FORMER PRESIDENT, NAACP

This talk was delivered by Myrlie Evers-Williams as a Keynote at the 2006 International Conference of the Robert K Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Good morning. Good morning to each and every one of you. I am delighted to have been invited to share this morning with you. A few months ago, as a matter of fact, I was in Chicago and had a chance to meet with Jeff Miller and others from the Greenleaf Center. We had an absolutely marvelous discussion and in a moment of weakness, when I was asked if I would speak, I said, “Of course I will. I’d be delighted. I’d be honored.” Those things are still true. But time has a funny way of slipping up on you, without you realizing that what you just promised is just around the corner. And then other things happen and it’s like, “Did I really say that I would do that?” Yes, I did, and I’m pleased to be here. I do have friends in this audience, and I wish to thank them for helping me to physically make it here this morning. I would love to shake the hand of each and every one of you, but I will not do that, since I seem to have a non-contagious cough. So don’t stay away, don’t stay away, but be aware of what is happening with me.

Servant-leadership, and your theme, Love, Honor, and Courage, is as important today, or more important today, than it has been throughout the time of the universe. For certainly in this highly technical world that we have, those very basic things are so important to our civilization. To be able to communicate one with another, we have to be able to understand what



the other is saying, and hopefully to realize where that person is coming from, particularly if their viewpoint is not the same as yours. So communication is key, in whatever it is that we do.

I remember years and years ago when I was a child, there was a little game that would always appear in the newspaper: “What’s in a Name?” I doubt if there are any of you in the room old enough to remember that, but it was a kind of thing that we toyed with, we played with and we could attach labels to. What’s in a word? Servant-leadership happens to be a term that raises questions in the minds of some people. I happen to have been one of those persons. I’m pleased to put it in the past tense. In a discussion about corporate leadership, in a discussion of community leadership, the word “servant” came up. And I recall saying, “Absolutely not. I can’t deal with the term ‘servant.’ Why does that have to be there?” I think it was a little surprising to other people in that discussion that I would say that. But so much of what we say, so much of what we do, so much of what we look at is based on our own personal backgrounds, where we come from, what has happened to us, and in my instance, “servant” took me back to my home state of Mississippi. And I could only think of “servant” in the terms of bowing, scraping, yessuh, yes’m, kind of in the slavery context. And “servant,” in the highest level of what it means, could not penetrate into my mind, into my being. So I found myself rejecting servant-leadership because of my own personal background. I had to cut loose all of those feelings. I had to remove that misunderstanding of what “servant” actually meant. I won’t go through the entire process that it took, but I’m pleased to say that it has been some time now, and thanks to you, Jeff Miller and Teresa Hogue and others, I embrace that fully in the sense of what it truly means.

It is wonderful to sit and see all of the flags representing the different nations here, who understand and who practice and who promote servant-leadership. But once again we must be aware of how people that we are reaching out to, to come into the fold of servant-leadership, truly understand what it means, that we must be able to interpret what servant-leadership is



to an even broader community. I think of what is happening today in terms of how far we have come in America in terms of terminology. I recall, and maybe some of you do, too, when the word “Ms.” was first used in corporate America. We did not want to be Miss, we did not want to be Mrs. We women wanted to be represented for who we were, our skills, our abilities, what we could do. Somewhere along the line, the word “Ms.,” or the abbreviation, came up. That created a problem for women in the corporate world, women of color, because we could not identify with Ms., M-S, because it sounded too much like M-I-Z, Miz, which we had to deal with in a segregated community. And then, lo and behold, the understanding came of that, and we began to embrace that, too. These words, or the meanings, are ever evolving. But they all have something substantial and sound that we find that we can embrace.

Servant-leadership, love, honor, and courage. I thought about those things, and I could not help but reflect back on where those elements enter into our lives. Hopefully, it begins in the home. It does not necessarily begin in a lecture hall on a university or college campus. It begins at home, the appreciation and the understanding of those words. Someone said to me, “Oh, you know you are a wonderful leader.” And I said, “Of course I’m not. I don’t see myself as a leader. I was forced into the role.” And the argument was, “You may have been forced, but you’re still a leader.” I finally said, “Okay, I’m a reluctant leader.” It was not something that I set out to do or something that I wanted to do. And I thought about my grandmother, a woman with great wisdom, and as a little child she would always pray with me each and every night to be sure I said my prayers. And I would do what I had to do, and okay, I’m up and through with it. And she would always say, “But, Baby, come back, come back, come back.” Well, what is it that I left out, I would think. And she would say to me, “You did not ask God to make you a blessing. You must always ask Him to make you a blessing.” That became habit, habit without understanding. And then finally, habit because I believed that it was something that I should do, that I should embrace because I lived in a family, I lived in a community where people



were servant-leaders, even though they did not know that that's what they were at that time. Of seeing the commitment, of needing to come together, educated, uneducated, but all caring, hoping, working to make this a better place, this universe a better place in which all of us could prosper and enjoy.

So, hopefully, servant-leadership is something that we begin to instill in our children at home and at school, and we work in the different programs to help them understand that it is a commitment that they must have, not only to themselves and their families, but the community as a whole. Today, we look at what is happening in our corporate communities, in our nation, in our world as a whole. And so many things are troubling. We just had a court case that we're all familiar with, the Enrons and others, and we say, what happened? What happened to social responsibility? What happened to corporate America's leadership in terms of not only being in business to make a profit, but to help those employees to have a stable life, one where they could grow, one where they could retire, one where their trust was held closely to the corporate structure? I think we're going to find a number of young people coming out of the schools of business in our colleges and universities who are going to see lessons in what has happened here recently. And hopefully they will change their direction to at least embrace responsibilities that they have, not only in their communities but in their companies as well.

I'm a firm believer that whatever appears to be negative is basically a challenge, and that if we embrace it as a challenge regardless of how terrible it may be, we can learn from the experience, we become stronger, and we can go forth. We are constantly looking for leaders, my friends, either at ourselves as a leader or potential leader, or for those who say that they are. The media in America has had a tremendous influence on our determination of who our leaders are. I shall not forget that when Dr. King was assassinated, and about a year had passed after the mourning, the media began to ask the question, and up until the last couple of years it still asked the question, "Who is your leader?"



Must we have just one leader? Can't there be more than one? Cannot the approach to the same issue be different? Is there not an opportunity for those who represent different positions of coming together and finding a way in which they can work to solve the problems, to address the problems of the day? I say, Don't tell me that I have to have one leader. Expand, for in variety there is strength.

But hopefully around the issues that really matter, we will be able to come together with different opinions, different approaches, but be able to enhance each other and tackle the same problems that we have. In all of these things that we call problems, that I prefer to call challenges, I think of some of the positives that have come from it. Women in particular who found it difficult to move up the corporate ladder, even though we talked about the possibilities as being endless, but corporate America said those possibilities would be endless in about twenty to thirty years. Lots of women decided they didn't want to wait that long. It was a negative, yes, but what happened? Around this country women began to come together, show their leadership skills. Men who were in leadership positions began to understand and support, and today we have more businesses headed by women than we can probably count, not only in this country but throughout the world. And it continues to build in that way. There was a saying, "If I cannot—if I cannot become a vice-president here, if I cannot use my leadership skills here, then I will form my own company. I will be the CEO, I will be the president, the secretary, the treasurer, any of those or all of those if I choose to do so, and I will be able to reach out in my leadership to embrace others and to bring them into the fold as well."

But think of our leaders, and I think we have more than one kind of leader. We have leaders who are appointed; we have leaders who are reluctant, but they are leaders; we have leaders who are self-appointed, who think that they know it all, they demand it all, they wish to be covered each and every time by the media—it becomes a very selfish, self-centered type of leadership. That is not servant-leadership. It is not, "I am who I am, I am



the best. I'm over here, lights. I'm over here, reporters. I speak for these people. I do this and I do the other."

I don't believe there are too many "I's" in servant-leadership. I thought about the number of people who fall in that category, those known and those unknown. If ever there was a servant-leader, one who did not intend to be, it was Rosa Parks. Look at what that life of giving and doing has done, and that will continue to live over the years, that will continue to impact young people, and hope that they will develop some of those same strategies and the love and the honor and the charisma that she had. And she didn't want anyone to bow before her. I think about Dr. King, of course, a man who did not seek out leadership, but a man whose wife said, "You have the strength, you must lead." And they became partners as servant-leaders. I think about Bill and Melinda Gates as servant-leaders. You may or may not agree with me, but that's okay, too. But they had the billions of dollars, and people began to ask and say, "It's unfair for them to be so rich. What are they going to do? When are they going to begin to give?" And in their time, their time, their planning, their research, they found an area, or a couple of areas, in which they could make an impact with their money, not for the glory of themselves but to help people throughout this world. I put them in the category of being servant-leaders, too.

And of course I cannot stand here without saying that the man who was the father of my children, my husband Medgar Evers, was perhaps the epitome of servant-leadership to me, a man who fought off his wife's pleas to leave the Civil Rights movement to be safe some place in California, Chicago, or elsewhere, and his word was simply, "I can't do it. I'm doing what I have to do." And I would ask the question, "Well, why you? Why not someone else? We need you." And his answer was, "I'm doing it for the other people there, my people, all people. It is so that you and my children can have a better life." And I had a difficulty trying to understand that, because all I could see was the danger that was involved in that, and that as a leader, he was going to be taken from us. His heart was big. He'd invite people in. I'd say to him, "You invite them to the house and you give them



food, and we don't have enough to eat. You give them clothes off of your back, and you don't have enough clothes." And he would always say, "We'll make it." And we always made it. But at last sometimes we have to make decisions. And I said to him, "I can't deal with this anymore." And he said to me, "Either you're with me, or you aren't. I'm doing what I must do. I have no choice. You have a choice. You can stay with me and work with me, or you can leave." And I reached a point where I said, "I'm not so sure I can stay. I'm not so sure I *want* to stay. I'm not sure I want the children growing up in this." And he said, "Well, you have an option. You can leave." And being a young wife, that was quite a blow, because I wanted him to embrace me and say, "My darlin', I love you so, I can't live without you. Don't you dare think about going. I'll quit." He knew what he had to do. I knew what I had to do. And that was to stay there, and to support him in a role that he had not defined for himself, but that of a leader.

And to fast-forward, I made a promise to him that if anything happened to him and I was still around, that I would see that justice prevailed. I did not say that thinking I was going to be a leader, would impact any change. But it took thirty-plus years of being called all kinds of names, of being told that nothing would happen. And this is where courage comes in, my friends, of believing in something strongly enough where you will not turn back regardless of the circumstances. And it took courage, I will have to say that, to continue to push for evidence and what-not, not knowing what would happen. In His time, things were revealed. And in His time, justice was served. And the man who pulled the trigger and took my husband's life was convicted.

But that was not the glory of it all. It opened up some twenty-two-plus old Civil Rights cases, of which there were eighteen convictions. And people said, "Why did you bring up the past? Why do you do that?" There is such a thing called cleansing. And it helped to cleanse not only my native state of Mississippi, but the South and America as a whole. And it sent a word, I believe, abroad, for those who were looking at America, and saw



this blemish on it, said, “Well, perhaps things are going to happen there, too.” We never know, in what we say, in what we do, what good can come from it.

I appreciate the attention given to the fact that I was Chairman of the Board of NAACP at a time when the organization was bankrupt physically, financially, and morally. And I just want to hit on that part, a non-profit organization that had deteriorated to a point where it was almost a laughing-stock, where when we said that it was the strongest, the oldest civil rights organization in the nation, people said, “Ha ha, yeah.” That’s it. And someone said to me, “You must run.” And I said, “Absolutely not. I’m not a leader. I don’t want to be involved in that. It’s dirty, it’s low-down, it’s time-consuming. I have other things I have to do.” And I did, because my second husband was terminally ill with cancer at that time.

But speak of servant-leadership. He said to me, “This is something you must do. It is the last thing I will ask you to do for me. You run and you win.” To fast-forward, I won by one vote, *one vote*, into a leadership role that I did not want, but one that I came to embrace, to take all of the things that my community had given to me and hopefully point it into that one direction of healing and of growth. It’s necessary when we are put in leadership roles, or we are leaders, that we expand our horizons, that we include others who are much more proficient in managing, in outreach, in technology, whatever it takes to make this thing work. And that is what happened. I have never, my friends, been on my knees and begged as much as I did for money to help save that organization. But money alone, and you know that, does not solve all of the problems. There are other things that have to come along with it. Yes, we had no code of ethics. That was promptly installed. Many who were leaders throughout the area said, “How dare you ask me to sign a code of ethics!” Well, how dare I not demand that you sign a code of ethics, because look where we are now. We have to build something that’s strong and stable so that the larger public will know that we’re on the road to recovery.

Those people were servant-leaders, too. They gave, they did, they did



not look for compensation, but they were insulted because they were asked to do that. Most of them did, some did not. You reach out to those who are knowledgeable and who can help you, as we did with Harvard University, the School of Business, and asked them to come in and please help us to set up guidelines for this organization to continue to be, and continue to flourish. There were no guidelines, ninety-plus years of operation, no guidelines for operation. An operating plan is critical in whatever it is that we do. Because regardless of whether we are a non-profit organization or a for-profit organization, it's a business and should be run as a business.

I'm looking at the time here, and I know you have a full agenda, but I want to just touch briefly on an institute, the institute named The Medgar Evers Institute. It was founded in Jackson, Mississippi. We're now based in Bend, Oregon. And it grew out of the need, a very personal need if you will, for me to see that Medgar and his work would be remembered. Our youth today, so many of them, see leaders, or leadership, attached to dollar signs. (coughs) That's a sure sign that it's time to stop talking. . . Sports, music, there's nothing wrong with any of that. Oh, yes, it is too, yes it is. I'll take that back. It depends on the kind of music. It depends on the kinds of words that are sung. Perhaps it's a generational type thing with me. But for some of it I find it utterly disgusting. Utterly disgusting that we would allow our young people to be soiled, if you will, by so many of the words that are used in the songs. I don't know what I can do to bring that to the attention of many publics who are not already addressing that, particularly the young. But that's a part of servant-leadership, too, of seeing things that are demoralizing and being strong enough to speak out against it. But not only that, but to have solutions that we can present to those young people to help them understand their potential. But in The Medgar Evers Institute, the concept came about primarily because of meetings with youth. And I would ask, "Do you know who he is?" "No." "Well then, you certainly don't know what he did." "Well, yes, he played basketball, didn't he?" "No. Do you know about a movement that helped shape things so you can enjoy yourselves as you are now?" "No, and I'm not sure I'm interested.



Everything is okay.” For those of a little older generation than the very young, there was an attitude of, “I don’t care. I’ve gotten mine. I did it by myself. All of that’s old. It happened in the past. There’s no need to deal with it now.”

A group of us came together and said, “How can we combine these elements and others? How can we reach out in the community? How can we get our young people involved in what we call today servant-leadership? And it was through those exchanges that we came up with the concept of The Medgar Evers Institute. It is young; we are growing; we are still looking to increase the impact that we have not only in Mississippi, but throughout the country. We are calling it “the journey to stewardship” where young people are valued as resources, not as objects. When provided skills and opportunities to contribute, we believe that young people will engage for the greater good in their communities. And we hope to build a strong sense of ownership with those young people and their communities, and responsibility to build quality, to engage in service, and to engage in reaching out across the generations to determine the needs in those communities in which they reside, to become volunteers, to work with others in the group, to help bond between the very young and the very old, or the aging, the experienced ones. I like that best of all—“the experienced ones.” But in so doing, Medgar’s name and his work can not only live on, but it can grow. That we can join in partnerships with other groups and organizations who are of like mind, pool our resources and see that not only the spirit, but servant-leadership continues to grow.

We hosted a group of young people from seven states, in Mississippi, who came together for two days. We asked them to develop for us a group of objectives—something that we adults had sat down and worked with and worked with and worked with for a month or two. At the end of those two days, within two hours, they had come up with a list of objectives that just blew us out of the water. It was amazing what their thinking, their insight on the challenges of that day—not that specific day, but of the day—what they were!



And they said, “We don’t want to just point out the problems, we want to be involved in finding solutions from it.” They put my generation in its place. They said, “You fought for this, you fought for that. We don’t want to sing ‘We Shall Overcome.’ You did that. We want to take all of the good and positive things and all of the good minds, and come up with solutions and be able to implement them. We want to be leaders of a different kind, embracing all that you were, but adding to it.” And they left us with this one message: “Don’t let this be the first and the last time that you embrace us and bring us together. For your generation too often does that, brushes us aside; we never hear from you again.” That was one heck of a challenge to us, something we’ve had to work very hard to try to see that we kept our promise to them, because they were already leaders in their schools and in their communities. And that is how we build: one on top of another, reaching out to include all.

I embrace, wholeheartedly, the whole concept of servant-leadership, whether it be in the community, whether it be in corporations, whether it be in institutions of higher learning, whether it be in every country that makes up this world in which we live. For, indeed, if we care, these are the skills. And there are always the opportunities to be, in the best sense of the word, a servant-leader.

I thank you.

Myrlie Evers-Williams was the first full-time chairman of the NAACP and is the widow of murdered civil rights leader Medgar Evers. She met him when they were students at Alcorn A&M College in 1950. They married in December 24, 1951 and she left school before finishing her degree. Evers-Williams went back to school after Evers’ death and graduated from Pomona College, in 1968, with a degree in sociology. She served as director of consumer affairs for Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO), where she developed the concept for the first corporate booklet on women in non-



traditional jobs. This booklet, *Women at ARCO*, was in great demand throughout many printings and revisions. 1975, Evers-Williams married her second husband, Walter Williams. In 1987, Evers-Williams was the first African-American woman appointed to serve as commissioner on the Los Angeles Board of Public Works. Evers-Williams was chairman of the NAACP from 1995 to 1998. She is credited with spearheading the operations that restored the association to its original status as the premier civil rights organization in America. She is the author of *For Us, the Living* (1967) and *Watch Me Fly: What I Learned On the Way to Becoming the Woman I Was Meant to Be* (1999). In the best seller, *I Dream A World: Black Women Who Changed America*, Evers-Williams states that she “greet[s] today and the future with open arms.”



IN THE NAME OF SERVICE: EXPLORING THE SOCIAL
ENTERPRISE WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE THROUGH
THE LENS OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

—VIRGINIA KLAMON
ZÜRICH, SWITZERLAND

While the profit motive has significantly shaped the language and practice of business and bounded the interpretative frame of entrepreneurship, a profoundly new form of entrepreneurial organization is emerging: the social enterprise. Social entrepreneurs are reimagining the capitalist paradigm, reinventing the field of entrepreneurship, and redefining the social sector in promising new ways. Individuals fluent in the language of business are creating positive social impact and, at the same time, striving for commercial excellence. Whether by pioneering the business of micro-lending, distributing fair-trade products, or employing at-risk adults, social entrepreneurs are passionate about addressing otherwise unmet societal needs. They target the gaps made when public service and private markets fail to deliver critical goods and services, particularly for those most marginalized by society (Hartigan, 2003). Social entrepreneurs recognize that the complex and systemic problems facing society must be met by radically transformed mindsets and new institutional arrangements.

The demands of this century compel us to envision a future in which the bottom line stands in service to social good, not in competition. Yet it is in transforming individual drive into collective purpose and commitment that the critical challenge of entrepreneurship emerges (Pettigrew, 1979). In attempting to master this transformation leaders have learned that dictating vision, no matter how heartfelt, is counter-productive (Block, 1993; Senge, 1990). The command and control model of leadership inhibits people from working together in meaningful ways and is out of step with the require-



ments of a dynamic world marketplace (Wheatley, 1999). Today, individuals yearn for a leadership paradigm that rekindles the spirit, supplants self-promotion with service, and acknowledges that meaning and purpose arise out of the dynamism of relationships (Covey, 1994; Jaworski, 1996; Pollard, 1996).

Leadership is a dynamic and emergent property of interpersonal interaction (Day, 2001). Servant-leadership animates this dynamic by inviting members to be personally accountable for the success of their organization. The practice of servant-leadership nurtures autonomy and self-responsibility in all organizational members by cultivating critical thinking skills, expanding capacity for moral reasoning, and enhancing participative competence (Graham, 1991). Servant-leaders enact this form of participatory and transforming (Burns, 1978) social engagement by seeking to value and develop others, building community, behaving authentically, and sharing power and status for the good of others (Laub, 1999). When organizational members participate in the expression of servant-leadership, they co-create a lived experience of “servanthood.” This fosters a workplace experience in which leadership excellence becomes manifest in the productive spirit of self-management (O’Toole, 1996).

Servant workplaces do not emerge accidentally; we must construct them with focused intention. Action, generated from a stance of service, is a duty and responsibility of servant-leaders. Human beings possess the unique ability to align intentions with actions; it manifests from will in the expression of leadership (Hunter, 1998). In theory, what renders servant-leadership distinct from other leadership models yet akin to social entrepreneurship is the ethical motivation that inspires individuals to act. In practice, questions remain. Do social entrepreneurs internalize their service commitment, modeling leadership behaviors that inspire full participation, self-responsibility, and interdependence? Do the pillars of social justice and service bind together social entrepreneurship and servant-leadership in an extraordinary relationship of servanthood?

This research introduced the lens of “organizational climate for



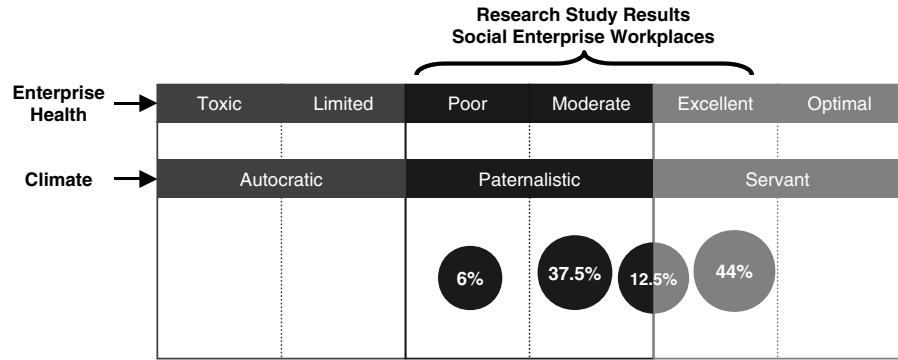
servanthood” to examine whether two intriguing and emerging phenomena, servant-leadership and social entrepreneurship, intersect to create a compelling new model of servant organization. The Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) was used to measure an organizational climate for servanthood and profile organizational health (Laub, 2003). When organizational members enact a climate for servanthood, they create true communities inside their enterprises. These communities keep vibrant the conditions of freedom and connectedness, not through prescribed behaviors but by clarity of purpose and voluntary commitment (Wheatley, 1999).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overview Summary

To a considerable extent, enterprise members in this study created healthy, servant-oriented workplaces (see Figure 1). Almost one-half of the social enterprises (44%) in this sample met the empirical requirements for servant organizations. The extent to which servanthood behaviors are evident in an organization distinguishes servant-oriented from servant-minded climates and generates organizational health levels ranging from excellent to optimal (Laub, 2003). An additional 12.5% were at the servant-paternal boundary, suggesting that they, too, materially share the attributes of healthy, servant organizations.

This finding illumines social enterprise organizational life, and is notably more positive than prior research investigating other workplace settings (Laub, 2005). Still, the study results call for balanced optimism. Just over one-third of the study enterprises (37.5%) created a positively paternalistic climate, and a further 6% enacted a negatively paternalistic climate. Members’ perceptions about their workplace were generally more diverse in paternalistic versus servant enterprises, reflecting differing views about their organizational experience. This suggests that some enterprise members sensed they were valued in the organization while others were uncertain. Diminished levels of organizational health, associated with



Adapted from "Six Organizational Health Level Descriptions" (p. 180) by J. Laub (2005). In *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*

Figure 1. Social Enterprise Results Summary

paternalistic climates (Laub, 2003), directly affect the enactment of an enterprise’s mission, resulting in detrimental consequences for the organization and organizational members (White, 1997). If left unattended, paternalistic practices can inhibit the conditions that foster productive, sustainable organizational outcomes.

No participating enterprises enacted an autocratic climate. This stands in marked contrast to the 31% representing autocratic organizations found in prior research (Laub, 2003).

Detailed Findings and Practitioner Implications

The behavioral practices that stem from and reinforce leaders’ values and beliefs were core to understanding this research. Over one-half of the survey questions (55%) gathered perceptions about executive leaders and directors, those individuals who hold formal authority in their organizations. Interestingly though, on average, survey ratings were lower on questions about leader behavior than on questions pertaining to all members or questions specific to the respondents (see Figure 2). In other words, respondents’ perceptions indicated that the entire community of organizational members demonstrated characteristics of servant-leadership to a



greater extent than did the social enterprise leader cohort. This outcome acknowledges the central role organizational members play in shaping climate and culture, and simultaneously draws attention to the opportunity for social enterprise leaders to grow into a more complete model of servant-leader.

Respondents perceived their personal relationship with their leaders more positively than they viewed all leaders in general (see Figure 2). Several survey questions explored respondents' perceptions about their personal role in the organization. For example, the questions inquired whether the respondents personally felt appreciated, listened to, and affirmed by those above them. The results suggest that either individuals experienced servanthood behaviors more consistently in the interpersonal interaction with their bosses, or the individuals were less familiar with other organizational leaders and therefore unable to comment on the presence of the targeted behaviors, resulting in a neutral rating score.

Patterns emerged from the servant-leadership dimensions (see Figure 3). *Building communities* and *displaying authenticity* moved upward in servant-oriented enterprises, making these characteristics more distinctive among the six servant-leadership dimensions. In contrast, *displaying authenticity* received one of the lowest scores of all subscales in the negatively paternalistic environment. Perceptions related to *providing leadership* moved downward in servant and positively paternalistic environments, while they increased in the negatively paternalistic workplace. This upward movement suggests that members perceived clarity of direction, goal definition, and accountability with greater emphasis (relative to other dimensions) in the negatively paternalistic organization than in servant-oriented or positively paternalistic enterprises. This may be a signal that respondents in servant-oriented and positively paternalistic environments look for more focused direction from their leaders.

Social entrepreneurs are constructing a new worldview that combines social activism with business discipline. Civil and business societies now share the common language of entrepreneurship, enabling radically new

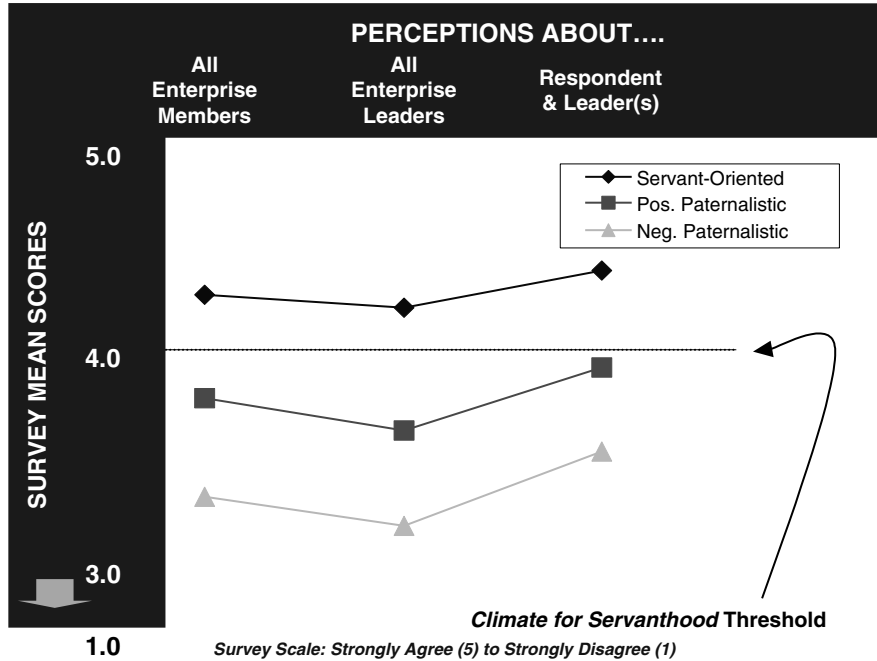


Figure 2. Survey Subgroup Perceptions

patterns of collaboration and ushering in new organizational forms. Nonetheless, a vast pool of resources from the private sector remains largely untapped and unincorporated in social enterprise practice. There remains an opportunity to more broadly communicate the existence of this compelling new workplace proposition to inspire and attract talented, entrepreneurial business practitioners in search of the very things they can no longer muster in their corporate experience: passion, purpose, and commitment to something larger than themselves. By tapping into this source, business practitioners can behold an extraordinary opportunity to co-create this field.

Servant organizations achieve and sustain the highest levels of organizational health (Laub, 2003). These organizations call forth the wisdom of their employees, contribute to their sense of greater purpose, and reinforce

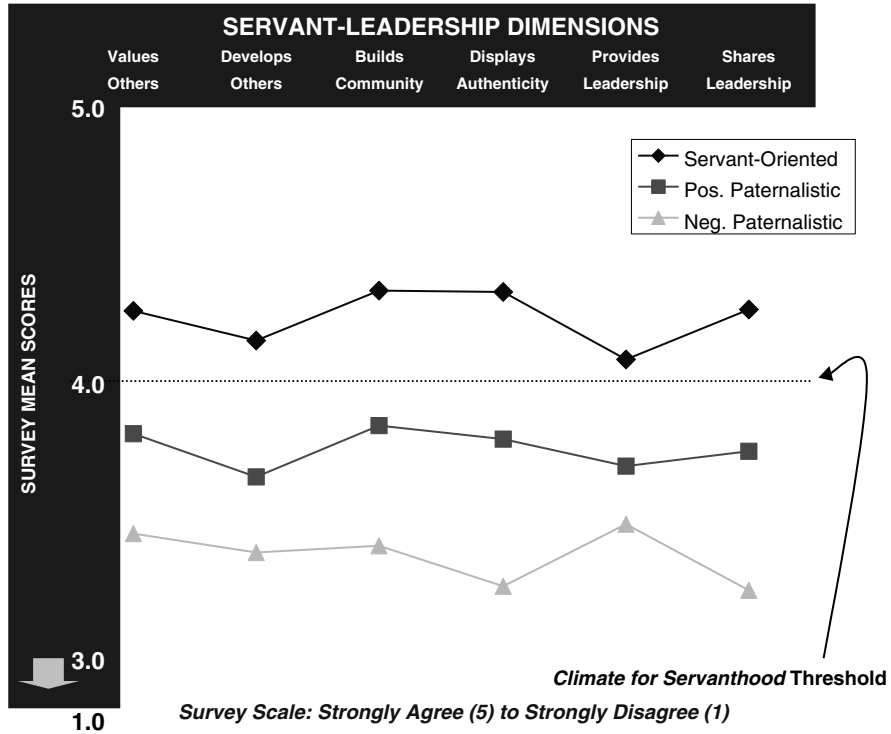


Figure 3. Servant-Leadership Dimension Results

their personal and professional values in a manner that invites full participation, self-responsibility, and interdependence. Servant organizations attract motivated individuals who welcome positive change and encourage continuous improvement (Laub). Here, organizational energy is continually renewed. In servant workplaces, failures are viewed as learning opportunities and creativity is both encouraged and rewarded. Successful innovation, the bedrock of social entrepreneurship, requires an organizational climate conducive to creativity. Innovation is both elusive and material; it is a feeling that is rooted in the prevailing organizational psyche that reflects both the organizational climate and the organizational culture (Ahmed, 1998). Certain characteristics must be embedded in the workplace experience to



promote innovation, including: (a) cooperative teamwork, empowerment, and autonomy; (b) resource diversity, time to think creatively, and intrinsic rewards for creative risk-taking behavior; (c) tolerance of mistakes and constructive conflict management; (d) open and transparent communication based on trust; (d) a sense of pride and ownership; (e) congruence between espoused and enacted values; and (f) celebration and encouragement (Ahmed; Martins & Terblanche, 2003). These conditions, so vital for advancing innovation, can be fully leveraged to catalyze social change.

However, in paternalistic enterprises organizational trust is more fragile, leaving some members uncertain about just how open they can be with one another (Laub, 2003). In these workplaces, risks may be taken, but there is an underlying fear of failure. Such organizations encourage creativity, but only to a point: moving too far away from status quo is undesirable. Either moderate or limited levels of organizational health may characterize paternalistic workplaces, depending upon the nature and expression of paternalistic behaviors.

In positively paternalistic environments where organizational health is moderate (Laub, 2003), reward power may be used to establish member loyalty (Wong, 2003). Leaders value relationships when they benefit organizational goals, but task execution is the first priority. Furthermore, members may experience tension stemming from an implicit expectation of conformity instead of open acceptance of diversity. In negatively paternalistic environments, conformity is expected and individual expression is discouraged (Laub). Members are valued more for their contribution and less for who they are. Even if utilizing a team structure, teams tend to be task-focused and display competitive energy versus collaborative behaviors. Leaders may delegate power, but only for specific tasks and positions. Generally, this is a noticeably individualist environment with limited organizational health.

Paternalistic leadership typically emerges as a form of benevolent rule (Wong, 2003), creating a tacit assumption that leaders are wiser and more knowledgeable than “followers” (i.e., other organizational members).



Paternalistic leaders tend to treat members as children, and whether positive or negative, remain firmly in a parental role (Laub, 2003). This behavior creates dependent relationships and inhibits individual and organizational maturation. Members come to rely on leaders for guidance and decision-making, ultimately jeopardizing long-term enterprise sustainability.

Social entrepreneurs are portrayed as transformative forces, relentlessly pursuing a vision to advance new ideas for addressing major problems. Often they are described as unique change agents, distinct from other social sector actors. Yet entrepreneurship requires that a multiplicity of individuals actively participate in the transformational process. Individuals distributed throughout an organizational network each possess essential, but incomplete, information. An entrepreneurial network creates innovation by combining skills and information in a manner that leverages resourcefulness and improvisation (Garud & Karnøe, 2003). Although building a social enterprise community was a distinguishing feature of servant-oriented social enterprises, with approximately half the study enterprises classified as paternalistic, there exists an opportunity for social enterprises to more actively foster the organizational conditions that nurture relationships and catalyze the emergence of productive enterprise communities.

While survey respondents in servant-oriented social enterprises perceived a notable presence of authentic behavior, perceptions in paternalistic workplaces trended downward. These results highlight the opportunity to foster deeper levels of authenticity among enterprise members and specifically among leaders. Similar to *building communities*, members in servant-oriented enterprises scored *displaying authenticity* among the highest dimensions (refer to Figure 3). The survey emphasizes the personal characteristics of integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness. The questions specifically draw attention to whether leaders are open to learning from others, able to constructively receive criticism, and voluntarily admit mistakes. When individuals create a negatively paternalistic climate, advancing from limited organizational health to a more productive climate requires profound transformation.



In practice, social enterprise leaders may struggle in expressing *provides leadership* and *shares leadership* behaviors as complementary. These dimensions were inversely related when comparing servant-oriented and negatively paternalistic climates (refer to Figure 3). It is both possible and desirable to empower others while providing leadership direction. As scholars similarly point out, organizations perform best when individuals are adaptive, yet highly consistent and predictable, and foster high involvement, but do so within the context of a shared vision (Denison & Mishra, 1995). Strikingly, members in servant-oriented and positively paternalistic enterprises scored *provides leadership* among the lowest dimension, yet *shares leadership* was scored relatively high. In contrast, members in the negatively paternalistic enterprise scored *provides leadership* as the highest subscale and *shares leadership* among the lowest. Social enterprise leaders would benefit by developing a more balanced expression of *provides leadership* and *shares leadership*.

A distance exists between knowing who others are and acting on the capacity to support who they want to become. This finding suggests a possible “knowing-doing” gap. The scored relationship between *valuing others* and *developing others* was similar in all enterprise climates (refer to Figure 3). In general, members perceived a higher level of *valuing* versus *developing* behaviors. Notably, in both servant-oriented and positively paternalistic enterprises, members’ perceptions of *developing others* measured among the lowest. Social enterprise members, particularly leaders, may benefit from developing coaching and mentoring skills so they can, in turn, facilitate the development of others.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature centered on three primary theoretical models: (a) social enterprise and the corresponding field of social entrepreneurship; (b) organizational climate, as an embedded construct of culture; and (c) servanthood, as an organizational expression of servant-leadership. This first section includes a review of the emerging field of social entrepreneur-



ship and social enterprise models. The following section provides a review of the organizational climate and culture literatures. The third section presents the philosophy of servant-leadership, specifically the defining attributes of servanthood, and the servanthood climate survey instrument.

Emerging Field of Social Entrepreneurship

The institutionalization of social entrepreneurship, considered a phenomenon of recent history, was shaped by key events unfolding in a larger story (Hartigan, 2004; Martin, 2004). In the late 1980s, Bill Drayton founded Ashoka, an organization dedicated to developing the profession of social entrepreneurship by shaping a citizen sector that is entrepreneurial, productive, and globally integrated (Ashoka, 2005). Drayton traveled the world in search of individuals using innovative methods for advancing social change. Through Ashoka, Drayton assembled a global fellowship of social entrepreneurs and created a thriving social innovation community of practice.

In the ensuing years, the social entrepreneurship movement drew wider public attention as citizens became increasingly aware of exploding social and economic inequality occurring in the world (Martin, 2004). Corporate social responsibility and citizenship agendas emerged in parallel, largely motivated by anti-globalization sentiment and heightened media attention to social issues. Alongside these events, the rising legitimacy of commercial entrepreneurship, particularly evident in the United States, stimulated a new enterprising model. Social entrepreneurs leveraged these events, constructing a radical new worldview that combined social activism with business discipline.

The supposition is that this historic transformation now provides a bounty of compelling new careers that focus on instrumentally addressing the economic and social divide (Emerson, 2004; Drayton, 2002). Further, others acknowledge that civil and business societies now share the common language of entrepreneurship, enabling new patterns of collaboration and ushering in new organizational forms (Fourth Sector Network, 2005).



Three overarching perspectives characterize the variations in contemporary social entrepreneurship applications (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2002). One view holds that social entrepreneurship is a vehicle to catalyze large-scale social transformation (Ashoka, 2005). This perspective claims that small local changes reverberate across the social system network, producing larger long-term change (Alvord et al., 2002). Accordingly, this process demands an understanding of the complex social system interdependencies, permitting the introduction of new paradigms at critical junctures “that can lead to cascades of mutually-reinforcing changes that create and sustain transformed social arrangements” (Alvord et al., p. 137).

A second perspective describes social entrepreneurship as innovating for social impact. Innovations and social arrangements are the key mechanisms to advance social change, and little emphasis is placed on commercial viability (Dees, 2001). This view endorses the idea that unique traits of social entrepreneurs enable the discovery and exploitation of novel forms of organizing.

A third perspective defines social entrepreneurship as the combination of commercial enterprise with social outcomes. Often the organizing form takes the shape of social enterprise. From this view, social entrepreneurship is “the art of persistently and creatively leveraging resources to capitalize upon marketplace opportunities in order to achieve sustainable social change” (Social Enterprise Alliance, 2004, Lexicon section, ¶ 9).

Social Enterprise

As depicted in Figure 4, organizations may be distinguished from one another according to their business purpose and conceptually aligned along a spectrum of motives (Alter, 2004; Emerson, 2000; Dees, 1996). Purely philanthropic organizations that serve the public interest and rely solely on capital, labor, and in-kind donations (e.g., church pantry) anchor one end of the spectrum. Purely commercial enterprises that operate in a rational self-regarding interest, and exchange goods, services, and payments through economic markets, anchor the opposing end. In purely philanthropic orga-



nizations, money is neither the primary medium of exchange nor the measure of value creation. In contrast, pecuniary motives and measures are salient features of the purely commercial enterprise. Each of these organizations tends to be referenced by their legal status, non-profit versus for-profit, or colloquially described mission-driven versus profit-driven organizations. However, shorthand use of legal status or motive in isolation from other organizational variables is only partially informative (Dees).

Hybrid organizations operate in the middle ground between purely philanthropic and commercial enterprises and serve differing aspects of both social and commercial value creation (Alter, 2004; Dees, 1996; Emerson, 2000). A social enterprise is but one of four different hybrid organizations that uses a blend of market and mission-driven methods to achieve social impact (see Figure 4). Hybrid organizations adjacent to social enterprises include non-profit organizations with income-generating activities and socially responsible businesses.

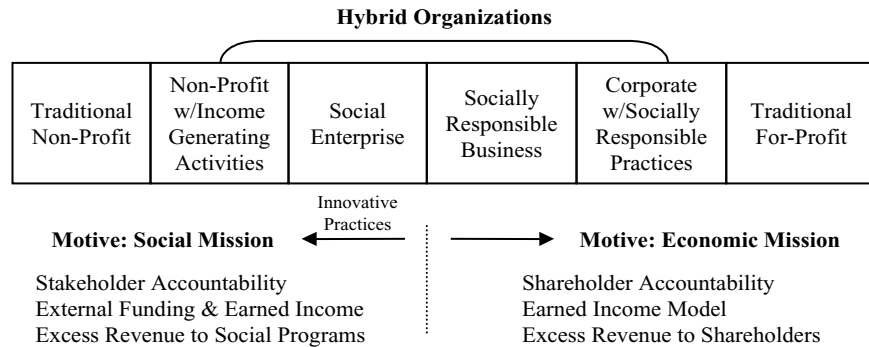


Figure 4. Spectrum of Hybrid Organizations

The legal structure of a social enterprise may vary; however, non-profit status is more common than for-profit structure. Furthermore, the distinction between a non-profit social enterprise and a non-profit organization with income generating activities is subtle and subject to debate (Alter, 2004). Alter argues that income-generating activities, when operated as a



business, differentiate social enterprises from other non-profit organizations. Dees (2005) augments this definition, incorporating a requirement for entrepreneurial and innovative methods for creating social change. For this reason, non-profit hospitals and other similar non-profit institutions are classified as non-profit income-generating organizations, not social enterprises (Dees, 1996). Innovative methods for delivering against a social mission, supported by entrepreneurial self-financing activity, render social enterprise unique. Entrepreneurship scholars and practitioners are becoming increasingly particular about making these attributes requisite components of the social enterprise construct (Boschee & McClurg, 2003; Dees, 2005). Their intention is partly to honor the remarkable contributions of social entrepreneurs and to call attention to the risk of endorsing exaggerated claims absent evidence of fundamental change (Boschee & McClurg).

A socially responsible business, situated on the commercial end of the spectrum, serves a primary goal of economic value in a way that respects ethical values, people, communities, and the environment (Dees & Anderson, 2003). Notable examples of this type of hybrid organization include Ben & Jerry's and The Body Shop. Emerson (2004) claims that "the work of social entrepreneurship and the creation of social enterprise is also the work of a for-profit manager striving to drive the practice of corporate social responsibility into her firm" (p. viii). Hence, a corporation with socially responsible business practices constitutes the fourth hybrid form. These businesses typically achieve social impact through the work of their corporate foundations or employee volunteer activities.

Advancing toward the commercial end of the organizational spectrum offers no guarantee of success, and Dees (1996) cautions that social enterprise leaders should be judicious when exploring this territory. Embedded in each structural option are management implications that warrant consideration. Subscribing to a market-discipline approach may be beneficial, but it may also risk diverting attention from an enterprise's social mission.

Social entrepreneurship is a key interpretive frame for elucidating the present-day construct of social enterprise; however, the non-profit manage-



ment and for-benefits perspectives also inform this practice. While the various interpretative frames define similar social enterprise characteristics, the perspectives reflect implicit assumptions about differing individual and organizational mindsets. These assumptions shape the behaviors of social enterprise practitioners and their workplace environments.

When social enterprise becomes a vehicle for non-profit self-sufficiency, then the non-profit mindset informs individual and organizational behavior. The Institute for Social Entrepreneurs (2005) suggests that attitudinal differences embedded in traditional non-profit and for-profit mentalities often elicit profoundly contradictory behaviors. Flannery and Deiglmeier (1999) point out that the differences stem from conflicting underlying assumptions concerning risk-taking, time, human relationships, and purpose for existence. For example, the “nonprofit arena is set up to minimize risk” (p. 5), creating a risk-averse mindset. These underlying assumptions manifest in activities ranging from everyday decision-making to strategic planning.

Interestingly, the nonprofit paradigm may be obscuring the potentialities of this field by overshadowing the entrepreneurial influence that ignited the movement. Today, some non-profit organizations adopt the social enterprise construct to mitigate the consequences of declining funding sources, rather than as an expression of entrepreneurship. Dees (1996) posits that the increasing popularity of market-based solutions to social problems artificially accelerated this form of commercial activity. The non-profit vocabulary and mindset are now embedded in the social enterprise discourse, particularly in the United States. While non-profit organizations have a long history of generating revenue to supplement or complement their social mission (Sealey, Boschee, Emerson, & Sealey, 2000), the application of market-based approaches for non-profit organizations has sparked critical debate. The recent literature now employs a cautionary tone when discussing the use of commercial methods for non-profit revenue generation (Dees & Anderson, 2003).

In contrast, when social enterprise is conceptualized as the institutional



expression of social entrepreneurship, then the individual and organizational mindsets reflect the trademark characteristics of entrepreneurship. Schneider (1987) argues that people behaving in organizations make organizations what they are. Social entrepreneurs embrace the exploitation of novel opportunities, using innovative methods and distributed entrepreneurial agency. Furthermore, they pursue opportunities to deliver against a dual mission without regard to resources at hand, consequently bearing more risk than would be associated with more secure forms of access to resources (Dees, 2001). These behaviors distinguish entrepreneurial management from administrative management (Dees).

Organizational Climate and Culture

The climate and culture literatures address the creation and influence of social contexts in organizations and reveal considerable conceptual and definitional similarity (Denison, 1996; McMurray, 2003), offering crucial building blocks for organizational analysis (Schein, 2000). Climate and culture scholars seek to uncover the mysteries of organizational life, to distinguish between what is manifest or latent, the cognitive from the social, and the objective from the subjective (Denison, 1996).

Organizational climate research, the elder sibling to organizational culture, made early strides in research and literature, but was quickly eclipsed by significant interest in the culture phenomenon (Schneider, 2000). Set against the 1980s landscape of global competitive markets, academics shifted focus from climate to culture, targeting a rising commercial market of business practitioners and positioning culture as a vehicle for competitive advantage (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Pascale & Athos, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Organizational culture, with its emphasis on underlying values and assumptions, captivated an audience eager for a new language with which to speak about and understand an elusive aspect of organizations—organizational behavior. Concurrent with the growing prominence of organizational culture, culture researchers trained in ethnographic tech-



niques leveraged this opportunity to reassert the qualitative paradigm as scientifically legitimate (Martin, 2002).

Today, organizational climate and culture are often viewed as integrated phenomena. A review of the literature revealed numerous instances in which climate and culture studies were interchangeably classified as one or the other. Despite the difficulty of distinguishing between culture and climate definitions, it is possible to claim that climate is a way of measuring culture (Payne, 2000). Climate describes how individuals experience their organizations by measuring their perceptions of their workplace. How leaders behave and what actions leaders reward largely shape these perceptions. Behavior and espoused values comprise the surface and intermediate levels of organizational culture, which are measurable through the construct of climate. Organizational climate is a measurable phenomenon that reflects a social psychological reality that is shared by organizational members and impacts organizational behavior (Evan, 1968).

The most widely used definition claims that *climate* refers to common perceptions held by individuals in reaction to a situation (Denison, 1990, 1996).

Organizational climate is a relatively enduring characteristic of an organization which distinguishes it from other organizations: and (a) embodies members' collective perceptions about their organization with respect to such dimensions as autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation and fairness; (b) is produced by member interaction; and (c) serves as a basis for interpreting the situation; (d) reflects the prevalent norms, values and attitudes of the organizations' culture; and (e) acts as a source of influence for shaping behavior. (Moran & Volkwein, 1992, p. 20)

Climate research targets issues of interest, referred to as dimensions, such as a climate for service, or innovation, or empowerment (Schneider, 1975). Some scholars (Denison 1996; Schneider et al., 2000) note that there is no natural limit to the dimensions characterizing the climate domain. Ultimately, the development of climate measures should specify a



theoretically meaningful and analytically practical universe of all possible dimensions, from which a salient subset can be used (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991). Choosing a subset does not deny the existence of a larger universe of facets; rather, it indicates the relevance of some particular dimensions within a given context.

The most basic characteristic of an organizational climate index is its referent, the organization (Denison, 1990, 1996). As a theoretical model, organizational climate is a unit-level construct with shared unit properties; the properties originate in the individual unit members' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions and emerge as a consensual, collective aspect of the unit as a whole (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). The aggregation of lower-level variables into higher-level variables creates an aggregate-level construct that is both related to and different from its lower-level counterpart; it is partially isomorphic (Bliese, 2000). Bliese refers to this aggregation as a "fuzzy composition process."

James and Jones (1974) argue that homogeneous perceptions can be aggregated to represent climate as an organizational property; however, perceptual agreement is a precondition for use of aggregated mean scores as a meaningful indicator of this organization-level construct (George & James, 1993). In establishing agreement, it must be evident that organizational members' responses are more similar to each other than would be expected by chance.

Servant-Leadership: A Construct of Servanthood

Servant-leadership requires new terms of engagement between individuals in a leadership relationship. This philosophy calls each member to be personally accountable for the success of a group or organization, dispersing responsibility throughout the organization. The mental model shifts from a mechanistic to a quantum paradigm (Zohar, 1997). Mechanistic perspectives embed hierarchy, structure, and control in the organizational environment (Wheatley, 1999). The quantum mindset claims that unity is the fundamental truth; relationships are processing structures that function best



when there are participation, empowerment, autonomy, and the unobstructed generation and exchange of information (Wheatley).

Greenleaf (1977) proposed the organizing concept of *primus inter pares*, first among equals, to facilitate the creation of dynamic and agile organizational systems guided by a conceptual leader who “sees the whole in the perspective of history—past and future—states and adjusts goals, analyzes and evaluates operating performance, and foresees contingencies a long way ahead” (p. 66). This organic system leverages the diversity and capacities of each individual, enabling the group to anticipate and create the future (McCollum, 1995). Wheatley (1999) claims that self-managed teams are more productive than any other organizing form and exceptionally successful in adapting to uncertainty.

Although Greenleaf was a life-long business practitioner, he articulated his philosophy as a conceptual framework, rendering its application difficult (Northouse, 2001). Greenleaf’s inspired servant-leadership writings did not materially circulate among leadership scholars and practitioners until the last ten years. Mainstreaming this literature has been a slow process. In an attempt to operationalize this philosophy, other writers extracted characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes from Greenleaf’s original work. A review of Greenleaf’s writings resulted in the publication of ten key characteristics of a servant-leader, including: (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d) awareness, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to the growth of people, and (j) building community (Spears, 2000).

Greenleaf was purposeful in sidestepping the convention of prescribing attributes or traits of servant-leaders. His focus was the consequential impact of servant-leaders’ actions on others and the institutional environments in which they worked. He positioned servant-leadership outcomes as the ultimate test of effectiveness. Leadership theories often espouse effectiveness, yet few define the measure by which it is evaluated. The performance measure for servant-leadership is whether those served grow as individuals, and whether they become healthier, wiser, more autonomous,



freer, and more likely to serve others, while benefiting or at least not further depriving the least privileged of society (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1995).

Although scholars, business leaders, and organizational consultants claim that servant-leadership core concepts are essential prescriptions for the twenty-first century organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1998; Block, 1993; Drucker, 1999; Jaworski, 1996; Senge, 1997; Wheatley, 1999; Zohar, 1997), few tools exist that operationalize and measure this construct. A review of the literature identified only three research instruments that explicitly target servant-leadership in an organizational context. Abel (2000) identified the work environments in which servant-leaders are effective or ineffective. However, Abel's theory of workplace effectiveness focused exclusively on the servant-leader cohort in the context of the environment, and empirical validation was not conducted. Ehrhart (2001) developed a general measure of servant-leadership based solely on a literature review and validated by a field test consisting of 254 university students averaging 19 years of age with limited work experience. Furthermore, he defined leadership as a "unit-level cognition about how unit members as a whole are treated by the leader" (p. 36). This definition overlooks the reciprocal and relational nature of social exchange in the servant-leadership paradigm.

Laub (1999) constructed a survey instrument, the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA), based on a Delphi process consisting of 14 servant-leadership experts. Laub translated the servant-leadership conceptual framework into an applied model, creating the only empirically field-tested instrument known to the researcher. The OLA was designed as a comprehensive model of servant-leadership applied to organizational life (Laub). The OLA examines the distributed aspects of leadership and servanthood by measuring perceptions across all organizational levels. It has proven to be a valid and reliable instrument with strong construct and face validity (Laub, 1999, 2003). In operationalizing the servant-leadership philosophy, six dimensions emerged as key characteristics: 1) values others, 2) develops others, 3) builds community, 4) displays authenticity, 5) provides leader-



ship, 6) shares leadership (Laub, 1999). These six dimensions underpinned this research study.

The OLA instrument intentionally employs common use vocabulary terms to facilitate ease of understanding for all organizational members. The instrument is sectioned into three parts, measuring the respondent's perceptions of: (a) a generalized view of all organizational members; (b) a generalized view of all executive leaders/directors, managers, and supervisors; and (c) his/her direct relationship with his/her leader(s). The data may be analyzed at the organizational or organizational sub-group level. As it is a multi-rater instrument, perceptual comparisons may be made to assess differences between cohorts based on predefined demographics (e.g., level, tenure, gender).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

This study was designed as exploratory research, employing a survey method based on nonprobability sampling. The OLA survey instrument supported the introduction of the multilevel climate for servanthood construct, aligning theory with measurement. The OLA instrument is consistent with the protocol requirements for organizational climate instruments, specifically: (a) non-evaluative, non-objective measures are to be used; (b) data are perception-based and amenable to analysis at various levels; (c) dimensions are theoretically sound; and (d) items describe facets of the organizational experience/environment, exclusive of organizational structure (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991; Newman, 1977; Schneider, 1975).

Thought and practice leaders in the social enterprise domain recommended organizations to include in the sample. Each expert was asked to provide at least five recommendations based on sample selection criteria that included: (a) the study definition of social enterprise; (b) a geographic region defined as the United States of America; and (c) a requisite number of organizational members (i.e., employees and volunteers) totaling at least ten individuals. Some individuals suggested additional field experts and provided email addresses to facilitate direct inquiry. Twenty social enter-



prise organizations agreed to participate in the study from the sample frame of 49 enterprises. Of the 20 participating organizations, 16 provided useable data. Results were based on 208 surveys collected from these 16 social enterprises located throughout the United States and in Canada.

The survey, conducted via the Internet, ran from September 21 to October 17, 2005 on a 24x7 schedule. WebSurveyor® Corporation, an independent commercial application service provider, hosted the survey site, capturing data via secure and confidential electronic methods. Organizational demographic information was collected from each participating social enterprise. These organizational data included: social enterprise business area, year founded, total FTEs, total budget, and social enterprise profitability status. This data is displayed in Table 1.

In addition to the organizational information collected, five personal demographic questions were asked of the survey respondents. Specifically, the questions inquired about respondents' organizational role and tenure, gender, education, and age. The survey required that respondents give responses to all questions, but they could choose the option of "decline to answer" for age, gender, and education related questions.

The survey sample included 52.9% female, 38.1% male, and 9% who declined to answer. Over half of the respondents (57.1%) completed undergraduate or graduate education. Of those providing an age, 43.8% were less than 40 and 45.2% were 40 or older; 11% declined to answer. The majority of participants (69.5%) worked for the social enterprise three years or less, 18.2% worked between four to six years, and 12.3% had a tenure of seven years or greater. Overall, the sample consisted of 21.0% Executive Leaders/Directors, 31.9% Managers/Supervisors, 37.6% Staff, 5.2% Board Members, and 3.3% Volunteers. One percent of organizational role data was missing.



Table 1: Social Enterprise Organizational Demographic Data

Variable	Category	N	Percentages	n	Percentages
Business Area	Education	1	6.3	25	11.9
	Environment/Animals	1	6.3	6	2.9
	Health	2	12.5	13	6.2
	Human Services	5	31.3	100	48.1
	Public/Society Benefit	2	12.5	11	5.2
	Other	5	31.3	53	25.7
	Total	16	100.0	208	100.0
Year Founded	Before 1990	4	25.0	98	47.1
	1990-1999	6	37.5	46	22.1
	2000-2005	6	37.5	64	30.8
	Total	16	100.0	208	100.0
FTEs	0-9 FTEs	6	37.5	49	23.3
	10-19 FTEs	6	37.5	50	24.3
	20-39 FTEs	2	12.5	30	14.3
	> 40 FTEs	2	12.5	79	38.1
	Total	16	100.0	208	100.0
Tax Status	Non-Profit	15	93.7	196	94.3
	For-Profit	1	6.3	12	5.7
	Total	16	100.0	208	100.0
Operating Budget	< \$499,999	4	25.0	30	14.3
	\$500,000 - \$2.4 million	6	37.5	46	22.4
	> \$2.5 million	6	37.5	132	63.3
	Total	16	100.0	208	100.0
Profit Status	Requires Subsidy	5	31.2	40	19.0
	Breakeven	4	25.0	29	14.3
	Financial Surplus	3	18.7	80	38.1
	Uncertain	1	6.3	5	2.4
	Other	3	18.7	54	26.2
	Total	16	100.0	208	100.0

This research study viewed climate and culture through the “Integration” frame (Martin, 2002) whereby perceptual consensus was necessary to justify aggregating data (George & James, 1993). When studying organiza-



tional climate, it is important to show that group members agree in their perceptions of the workplace. Measurement indices must indicate that survey ratings are more similar to each other than would be expected by chance. Climate-related agreement levels for the study enterprises ranged from moderate to high, and were accompanied by a considerable degree of respondent reliability. Therefore, survey responses could justifiably be aggregated for each study enterprise. Based on the aggregated average survey score, each enterprise was placed into one of the organizational climate and health categories. This study utilized the procedure for estimating agreement based on the indices presented by Lindell (2001). Findings from this exploratory study of social enterprise organizational climate may be used, with caution, to draw inferences about deeper levels of organizational culture.

Directions for Future Research

As with all empirical research, certain limitations were associated with this study. First, a non-random and restricted sample size limited this research. Second, since this study pioneered exploration of the social enterprise workplace experience, a lack of comparative data constrained interpretive analysis. Finally, OLA research using the Autocratic-Paternalistic-Servant model of organizational health is nascent and OLA norm group data are limited. This study also introduced new measurement methods for OLA research, and comparative data from multi-organization OLA studies do not exist.

Because this study was the first to examine the interior life space of social enterprises, additional research is needed to more broadly characterize the enterprise workplace experience. Therefore, future directions for research include replicating this study, but increasing the number of social enterprises with a particular focus on diversifying enterprise size and age demographics. Doing qualitative research to experientially investigate the lived organizational practices in social enterprises would be beneficial,



since individuals may respond to survey questions based on idealized perceptions of behavior.

Are all servant organizations great workplaces? Furthermore, are all great workplaces servant organizations? Great workplaces outperform the market based on economic indicators. Whether servant enterprises demonstrate higher levels of organizational performance is uncertain, presenting another interesting area for further study. The opportunity exists to explicitly test whether the servant-oriented enterprises found in this study meet the empirical requirements for great workplaces as measured by the Great Place to Work Institute® (2005).

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MODESTY IN LEADERSHIP: A STUDY OF THE LEVEL FIVE LEADER

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Human resource metrics and in particular, the management practices that impact bottom-line performance, have received increasing interest in recent years in the business community, as companies look to human capital rather than industrial capital to achieve success. A study that has garnered a great deal of attention in this area is the subject of Jim Collins' best-selling book *Good to Great* (2001). In it, Collins reports on the findings of his research team in their analysis of companies who significantly out-performed their competitors over an extended period of time. The research team examined companies who had a 15-year cumulative stock return at or below the general stock market and then cumulative returns that were at least three times the market over the next 15 years. The researchers further stipulated that the firms had to perform exceptionally regardless of the performance of their industry. Of 1,435 companies studied, only 11 met their criteria. Although Collins specifically tried to avoid having his team examine the leadership style of the CEOs, the researchers persuaded him that a common leadership style was shared by the leaders of all 11 companies and should not be ignored. This leadership style which Collins eventually termed the "Level Five leader" was characterized primarily by two things: modesty and an overwhelming sense of commitment to the organization above self. Collins admits in *Good to Great* that this finding did not fit the preconceptions of the research team.



Described as “more Lincoln or Socrates than Patton or Caesar” (Collins, 2001, p. 3), these CEOs were, according to the researchers, quiet, humble, shy, modest, and so forth. One individual is quoted as saying, “I never stopped trying to become qualified for the job” (Collins, 2001, p. 20). They were people with a “quiet, dogged nature” who conveyed an “awkward shyness and lack of pretense [which] was coupled with a fierce, even stoic, resolve” (Collins, 2001, p. 18). The researchers were clearly quite impressed by these people, as Collins states, “They have become models for us, something worthy to aspire toward” (Collins, 2001, p. 38).

Modesty or humility has received very little attention by researchers as a characteristic of leaders. In a meta-analysis of studies of leadership, there was not one mention of modesty cited in any study (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). A later study noted that modesty was not a typical characteristic of charismatic leaders (Bono & Judge, 2004) and a database search for articles using “modesty” or “humility” plus “leadership” turned up very little. One notable exception is Badaracco (2003, 2002) who coins the term “quiet leaders” to describe a person “whose modesty and restraint are in large measure responsible for their success” (Badaracco, 2003; Badaracco, 2002). Certainly modesty is not a typical criterion when selecting for leaders. The fact that these highly successful firms were all led by people that were modest inspired this research.

BACKGROUND

Why has modesty not emerged as a characteristic of leaders? There are many reasons for this. However, perhaps part of the issue may reside with the research focus on charisma and the traits of emergent leaders versus effective leaders. Over 400 studies on the topic of charisma were identified in a search in the PSYCHINFO database. Typical behaviors associated with charismatic leaders are “using inspirational language and delivery style and [they] must engage in exemplary acts involving risk and sacrifice” (Kanungo, 1998). In a well-known study of U.S. presidents, descriptors of charisma were: “finds dealing with the press enjoyable,”



“enjoys the ceremonial aspects of the position,” “is charismatic,” and “is seen as a world figure” (House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991, p. 378). It is easy to see how modesty and charisma would appear to be incompatible qualities. Charismatic leaders appear very heroic and were especially appealing during the turnaround specialist era; their propensity for high drama captured the public’s attention.

Traits such as dominance, capacity for status, sociability, social presence, and self-confidence have all been correlated with ratings for emergent leaders (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Judge et al., 2002). Modesty and kindness, however, have had mixed results as traits for emergent leaders (Bono & Judge, 2004). This emphasis on heroic traits encourages a mythology about what a leader should “look like” that is based on implicit leadership theory rather than data (Hogan et al., 1994). Search committees, who generally make selections for CEOs, are quite likely to be subject to this bias. Consequently, we may be perpetuating a particular leadership style that appears heroic while undervaluing a quieter style that doesn’t draw attention to itself.

There has been less research on effective leaders, although psychologists agree this is a very important topic (Hogan et al., 1994). The difficulty has been to isolate such things as situational factors over which the leader has no control from the leaders themselves (Kanungo, 1998). Traits that have been linked to leader effectiveness are: desire for advancement, energy, confidence, decisiveness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness (Hogan et al., 1994). However, many of these studies have been conducted in a laboratory setting, and Collins’ research is arguably one of the few studies to link business results with personality characteristics of effective leaders.

It is important to state here that the researchers of this study are not saying that the Level Five leader is the only type of effective leadership style. However, research does indicate that the opposite of modesty—narcissism—is often a key derail for managers. And narcissistic leaders are often seen as charismatic (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Tourigny,



Dougan, Washbush, & Clements, 2003). Arrogance, untrustworthiness, overambitiousness, and aloofness have been found to be common derailers (Hogan et al., 1994; Kanungo, 1998), but people with these characteristics often interview well and impress their supervisors.

Large, bureaucratic organizations which emphasize status and impression management are particularly vulnerable to these characteristics; the hiring process searches for the very characteristics that may contribute to those executives' ultimate failure (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005).

However, to characterize the Level Five leader as only modest would be inaccurate. These leaders are also individuals with a high degree of commitment to goals and a willingness to put the organization ahead of their personal interests. They take personal responsibility when things fail and are quick to credit others when things go well. As the researchers of this study considered what this meant, it seemed to imply that these leaders were conscientious people of good character and that there were underlying values that drove their behavior. Behaving consistently with one's values is a definition of integrity. It is interesting to note that Badaracco's book grew out of a course in moral leadership. And although the idea of leaders guided by a sense of internal principles is not new (Covey, 1990), again, it is not something that is given a high priority in the selection process. We are much more attuned to competencies than to character.

Research shows, however, that integrity is extremely important in gaining the support and trust of others. It may be, in fact, the most important factor in leadership effectiveness (Covey, 2004; Hogan et al., 1994; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Judge et al., 2002; Kanungo, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 1987). As one author states, quoting Socrates, "the first key to greatness is to be in reality what one appears to be" (Maxwell, 1993, p. 36).

The closest theoretical orientation to the Level Five leader seems to be the servant-leader concept developed by Robert Greenleaf (Greenleaf, 1991). Both concepts are outwardly focused rather than self-focused. Greenleaf said, "The great leader is servant first," and that the leader's first duty is to the employees. He stated that asking the question "Do those



served grow as people?” is a means of assessing whether someone is a servant-leader (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 7). Collins’ Level Five leader is also outwardly focused, although he frames it as a focus on the organization rather than specifically on the employees. However, Collins also states that the Level Five leader is concerned with succession and the development of people. This seems very similar to Greenleaf’s concept. Both Greenleaf and Collins mention Abraham Lincoln as a prototype for a leader that fits their respective concepts. Collins, in fact, says he considered calling the people in his study servant-leaders but rejected the idea because it seemed too soft. In addition, Collins suggested that Greenleaf’s concept did not include the commitment aspect (Collins, 2001). However, Greenleaf clearly states that the servant-leader is empathetic without sacrificing standards. He also notes that the servant-leader “elicits trust through competence. . . and values and a sustaining spirit . . . that will support the tenacious pursuit of a goal” (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 9). This certainly seems to indicate that commitment to high performance is important to the servant-leader. The difficulty with Greenleaf’s concept is that the servant-leader is, by his own admission, an intuitive concept based on his years assessing leaders at Bell Labs, and has not received analysis regarding its correlation with business performance. Perhaps that is why Collins’ book has created such fervor in the business community, while Greenleaf’s ideas are arguably still not in the mainstream of corporate America practices.

For the purposes of comparison, the researchers have listed the attributes of each type of leader, based on a careful reading of Greenleaf and Collins.



Greenleaf	Collins
Psychological self-insight, accurate self appraisal	Modesty—credits others for success, accepts responsibilities for failures
Strong initiative	Fanatically driven to produce results
Inspirational goal-setting	Inspired standards
Long-term sustained enthusiasm and commitment	Workmanlike diligence
Deep listening	Engage in debate and dialogue “truth is heard” culture
Courageous	Determined pursuit of “best in world” strategies
Detached problem-solving	Engage in debate and dialogue Questioning style, “truth is heard” culture
Other-centered communication	
Withdraws and reflects	
Accepting and empathetic	
Highly intuitive	Inferred from business results, hedgehog concept
High work standards	Inspired standards
Good judgment	Inferred from business results, hedgehog concept
Prescient regarding future events	Long-term perspective
Heightened awareness	Realistic confidence
Influences through gentle persuasion (questioning) and example	Questioning style
Motivations: 1) use talents for benefit of the common good, 2) shared wholeness, 3) growing people	Motivations: achieving long-term business success, using talents to benefit company
Love in community, demonstrated through unlimited liability for each other	“love affair” on team, friends for life
Reference to Jesus as a servant-leader	May be spiritual, select for character – rigorous process
First priority is build a group of people who become healthier, stronger and more autonomous	People first, strategy second; set up successors for the future
	Balance in lives
	Genius for simplicity
	Quiet, calm nature
	Focused, disciplined culture



As one can see from the chart, there appears to be quite a bit of overlap. In fact, only three attributes of the servant-leader and four of the Level Five leader are unique to one type or the other. An important distinction might be made around communicating to be understood and acceptance and empathy displayed by the servant-leader. These qualities suggest someone with high emotional intelligence. The servant-leader concept has been expanded over the years, and more recent interpretations include using encouragement and affirmation, building strong personal relationships, working collaboratively, valuing others' differences, sharing power, and releasing control (Laub, 2005); humility and emotional intelligence (Dierendonck & Heeren, 2006); and willingness to teach and delegate (Russell & Stone as cited in Rennaker, 2006). As the concept has matured, it appears that the aspects of Greenleaf's original concept that relate to interpersonal capabilities have received most of the attention and have become deeper and richer—perhaps because this aspect of the concept is particularly appealing and found to be lacking in many leaders.

Interpersonal capabilities are largely ignored by Collins. He does describe the cultures of the 11 companies as characterized by love, deep friendships, and respectful dialogue. Greenleaf refers to communities characterized by love, and a more recent article asserts that servant-leaders create “cultures of trust” that validate and empower people rather than demeaning or alienating them (Fawell, 2006, p. 407).

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to better understand a leadership style shown to be effective in achieving business results and raise an awareness of alternative leadership characteristics that CEOs and managers may find beneficial for their organizations. As previously discussed, much leadership research has been conducted in laboratory settings. Because this leadership style struck the researchers as complex, involving multiple dimensions, a structured study focused on a few attributes seemed limiting. More importantly, the researchers were interested in understanding at a



deep level the participants and how they came to be the people they were, a goal better suited to a collective case study (Stake, 2005, pp. 445-446). A case study in the form of naturalistic inquiry lends itself well to understanding complex phenomena and provides the researchers with vivid, rich, and dense descriptions in the natural language of the phenomena being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Eisner, 1991; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Polkinghorne, 2005).

The researchers were initially drawn to an innovative study of master therapists (Skovholt & Jennings, 2004) that used a case study approach. This led to Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR), an approach to understanding a small group of cases at a deep level. CQR has been used in the field of Counseling Psychology to understand therapists and those seeking counseling (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). CQR is closely linked to grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This strategy allows the data to emerge through a discovery process without preconceptions, yet “has a positivist concern for a systematic set of procedures” (Babbie, 2007, p. 296). Because the researchers hoped to find specific behaviors linked to typical managerial competencies, the idea that grounded theory is focused on understanding a “complex network of related constructs around a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2003, p. 15) seemed particularly apropos to the study. Knowing that they would be analyzing, organizing, and categorizing a significant amount of data, grounded theory offered both the structure and the flexibility desired by the researchers. Grounded theory also lends itself well to the incorporation of quantitative information (Babbie, 2007), something that was considered important to this study. However, it should be noted that the research evolved and was a blend of CQR and grounded theory protocols. More on this topic will be discussed later in this paper.

The researchers also felt it was important to study the participants in their context. By understanding the cultures in which these individuals flourish, one might be able to both determine the likely fit of a Level Five job candidate to a particular organization and identify those cultural elements that might be helpful in attracting these types of people. This is



similar to the concept of transferability as identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Context seemed particularly important to this research because this type of leader is not usually seen as fitting the prevailing leadership image, and it seemed likely that the cultures that support this type of leader would be atypical as well. To summarize, the study can be seen as interpretative, incorporating both ethnographic and phenomenological elements into primarily a grounded theory orientation using a cross-case analysis.

A mixed-methods approach using concurrent procedures, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative elements, was chosen. Interviewing, a method commonly used in naturalistic inquiry, provided the main source of information. A strength of the interview process is that it facilitates the expression of various points of views and opinions; additionally, respondents are free to expound upon them as they see fit (Weller & Romney, 1988; Yin, 2003). Another advantage of interviewing is that it allows the researchers the freedom to clarify ambiguous responses or pursue a particular train of thought. Psychological instruments intended for selection purposes were also incorporated; observations and documents also provided helpful information.

Triangulation is important in naturalistic research, as it enhances the trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and was an important part of this study's methodology. Interviews were conducted with both leaders and their direct reports. The leader-participants also took two personality instruments. Several of them provided additional unsolicited information, such as emails, videos or annual reports, to help the researchers. TDIndustries provided information on their performance management plan and graciously invited one of the researchers to attend an introductory supervisory course to better understand how they operationalize servant-leadership. Openness and an earnest interest on both sides characterized this experience. While they do not seek the limelight, the participants saw the value of bringing more understanding and attention to this leadership style, and were willing and equal colleagues in the research process. By gathering information from multiple sources, the researchers were able to



draw “convergent conclusions from divergent data” beyond what the more typical qualitative study might reveal (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

Selection of Participants

Participants were selected through a peer nomination process. A paragraph describing the leadership construct was written and offered to interested colleagues. The construct was based largely on the Level Five leader. However, because two important elements of leadership—creating a vision and inspiring others to follow them—were not mentioned in Collins’ work, concepts from Greenleaf’s work were also included.

The Quiet Leader Construct

The Quiet Leader has a strong sense of commitment to the long-term success of the organization and never wavers from this. He or she works hard and sets high standards for performance by self and others. The QL does not tolerate mediocrity in any form, yet will attribute bad results to self and good results to others. The QL has strategic thinking ability and sets a vision for the company based on strong intuition and foresight—is able to think globally and grasp the implications of current actions at some later time. He or she has a modest nature, is quick to give credit to others and rarely credits self. He or she inspires trust through integrity and competence and is therefore, able to persuade others to follow him/her. The QL is motivated to make the company the best it can be, not by personal ambition, and pursues this with quiet, calm determination. Rather than grand gestures, the QL moves in steady and consistent manner toward the goal. Because of his/her commitment and modesty, the QL is seen as a “plow horse not a show horse.” (Collins, 2001, p. 33)

When an individual was identified as someone who fit the construct, an inquiry was made to determine whether he or she would be interested in participating in the study. Since Collins notes that the people in his study resembled servant-leaders and the researchers concurred, it was determined



that some participants would be executives currently practicing servant-leadership. An organization well-known in the field of servant-leadership, TDIndustries of Dallas, Texas, was approached and asked if they would participate. The Human Resources leader was interested in the study and agreed to the request. Four executives from the organization who fit the construct were then nominated. Two executives from a local Twin Cities credit union who had embraced both servant-leadership and the *Good to Great* findings as part of their operating philosophy were also identified. It was determined that six to ten participants would provide ample data for these initial case studies and the nomination process was stopped when nine participants were confirmed.

In summary, all participants held leadership positions in their organizations. Eight of the nine had line responsibility. Three were CEOs, and a fourth was a former CEO. All had extensive work experience and their ages ranged from late 40s to early 60s. Organizations represented included a construction company, a bank, a credit union, a publishing company, and a food distributor. These organizations were primarily located in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area with the exception of TDIndustries, headquartered in Texas. A limitation of this study was that some of the Texas-based interviews were conducted via conference-call; another was that only one participant was female and no minority groups were represented.

Each selected participant was then asked to name three direct reports (DRs) who they believed knew them well enough and had worked with them long enough to provide meaningful insight into their leadership style, preferably a year or more. This study chose to interview direct reports because subordinates' perspectives have been linked with managerial job performance ratings and it also provided a measure of triangulation (Hogan et al., 1994). It was important that the DRs had a depth of experience in the organization and that they could reflect on and articulate their experience in a meaningful way. A possible limitation of the study is that the leaders may have picked direct reports who they felt would provide more positive com-



ments on their style, or who they thought might be willing to give the time, rather than identifying a broad spectrum of opinions.

Development of Questions

The development of the initial interview script was guided by the critical competencies of the Level Five leader as identified by Collins plus basic managerial competencies such as decision-making and communication. The competencies of the servant-leader were also researched and questions regarding these were woven into the script. This approach is consistent with the findings of Strauss and Corbin (1998), who note that an examination of previous research and literature will also provide the necessary background information and will suggest a variety of theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Consistent with this method, the researchers drafted domains and then developed broadly based questions designed to access the basic behaviors unique to this personal leadership style. As the interviews were conducted and the relevant data was gathered and analyzed, investigation into some competencies was expanded while exploration of others was abridged or aborted.

A separate and different set of questions was developed for the direct reports; these addressed behaviors that they would have encountered and witnessed in various work situations. Both subjects and direct reports received their questions several days prior to the interview, consistent with CQR methodology (Hill, 1997).

Interviews

All participants were interviewed face-to-face in their environment, usually by both researchers. This enabled the researchers not only to interview the leader, but also to observe the leader's facility, his or her interactions with other members of the organization, and interactions among other members of the organization, as well as the overall climate of the organization. Direct reports were interviewed primarily face-to-face except for a



few cases in which geographical distance or time constraints made it necessary to conduct the interview via phone.

Instruments

In addition to interviews, observations, and various documents, the study infused additional intentional triangulation by incorporating the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ) and Motivation Questionnaire (MQ). These were administered electronically to all participants. The OPQ and the MQ were developed and published by Saville-Holdsworth Limited (SHL Group) and have been used extensively for selection purposes in business. An ipsative version of the OPQ, recommended for selection purposes, was used. The OPQ measures personality characteristics important in the world of work in three domains of Relationships, Thinking Styles, and Feelings and Emotions. It takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. The MQ examines motivating factors in work in four domains: Energy and Dynamism, Synergy, Intrinsic, and Extrinsic. It takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. Both instruments were developed using subjects in professional or supervisory positions. Copies of both instruments were provided free of charge to the researchers in exchange for a copy of the study results.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

To some degree, the analysis of the data began with the dialectic as the researchers discussed and categorized the data and checked and verified these categories with each other. The analysis then proceeded with the transcription of the 32 interviews. To protect the anonymity of the direct reports, participants were coded one through nine (e.g. SBJ1) and the direct reports were listed by their respective participant and then identified by number (eg. SBJ1, DR2). Each interview transcription was identified only by this coding. These transcriptions totaled over 190 pages. All participants were sent their transcriptions to review and were able to make



changes. They did not receive the transcripts of the DRs. At times, the transcription process generated more questions, which were sent to the participant with the transcription for his or her consideration. The responses of the participants were then incorporated into the transcription as a final version.

Following the CQR methodology, 16 domains were identified by the researchers after reading the transcripts. The comments of the interviewees in the transcriptions were then separated into clearly distinct thoughts, sometimes by breaking sentences, and categorized into the domains. In two instances subjects were contacted by phone or email to clarify an ambiguous point. On some occasions, comments were placed into more than one category. The researchers worked closely together to discuss and categorize the data. This method requires that the researchers maintain an honest, open dialogue; it values researchers' working collaboratively to "construct a shared understanding of the phenomena" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 522). This provides a check and balance for the researchers by not requiring that one person alone collect and code all the data. Nuances and shades of meaning were examined and discussed, context was considered, and an attempt was made to remain unbiased and objective. The consensual qualitative research model requires "mutual respect, equal involvement, and shared power" (p. 523), a process that worked well for the researchers. However, in its purest form, the CQR method would have required a team of researchers, a pool of judges trained to code, and auditors to judge and verify results. This was beyond the means of the researchers.

Comments were then paraphrased with attention to simply rewording the interviewees' actual words in an objective manner, following the CQR methodology. "Our general rule is to make as few inferences as possible about the meaning of the data at this stage and to remain as close as possible to the participant's perspective of the experience" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 546). The researchers were careful not to add interpretations to the comments or otherwise change the meaning. A composite report for each participant was then developed, incorporating the paraphrased thoughts from



both the leader and direct reports into one document, along with representative quotes. After all individual case studies were analyzed, a cross-analysis was done to determine consistency across cases.

A bulleted list of 185 specific characteristics/behaviors shared by all nine participants was developed. Characteristics that were compelling or impressive, yet not shared by all nine participants, were eliminated at this juncture. Perhaps not surprisingly, the domain of Leadership had the highest number of items. Thirty-four characteristics were included in more than one domain. For example, “admits gaps in knowledge” was seen as a behavior that fit both the Decision-Making and Communication domains.

The direct reports were asked to “list five adjectives you would use to describe this person” during their interviews. A list of these adjectives was compiled separately from the transcriptions. An affinity diagram was then created, clustering related words and labeling each cluster. This will be discussed more in the Results section.

The results of the OPQ and MQ were then analyzed and descriptive statistics developed for illustrative purposes only, given the small sample size. The OPQ and MQ results are reported in standard scores called stens, with a mean of 5.5 and SD of 2. The means and standard deviations were computed for all the participants for 33 scales on the OPQ and 17 scales on the MQ. One participant did not complete the MQ.

RESULTS

The study incorporated data from a variety of sources to develop a better understanding of a leader who is unassuming, yet achieves strong results. The analysis paid particular attention to determining if there were characteristics that were common across all data sources to assess trustworthiness. The study revealed that indeed, findings from the participant interviews, the interviews with the direct reports, and the results of the OPQ and MQ were consistent. In addition, the various approaches provided a complementary perspective. For example, several direct reports volunteered information about situations in which they themselves had failed to meet



expectations, and how their supervisor had behaved. This information would not have been available to the study via the instruments.

As mentioned previously, 185 specific behaviors and motivators were identified in this study. Although these attributes may be useful in and of themselves for selection and development purposes, some summarization of key findings is also appropriate.

Qualitative Key Findings

A number of themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews and documents and the observations of the researchers. These themes consisted of the following qualities of leaders: problem-solving approach, interpersonal capability, motivators, steadfast yet realistic pursuit of goals, humility and self-effacing humor, highly principled, importance of culture, inquiring communication style, judicious use of power, commitment, and modesty. Each of these will be discussed in more detail.

Problem-Solving Approach

He thinks about organizational wisdom, not just facts and figures. (SBJ5, DR2)

Since this leadership style is shown to be highly effective in achieving business results, something which was also demonstrated by the participants in this study, how they achieve this was of particular interest to the researchers. A key element appears to be their problem-solving approach. All participants saw complexity in situations. They further recognized the limits of their knowledge and were keenly aware of the need for a decision-making process that was respectful of diverse opinions, encouraged debate and open communication, and was focused on a quality rather than an expedient outcome.

I try to convey the idea that they are included and I invite their ideas. I



invite them to fully participate in whatever it is we are working on. And I listen and I give them feedback. And I try to make it very constructive. Feedback that is personal but helpful. So that they can come back and say “OK, well this is my thinking and this is why I think the way I do.” (SBJ9)

Whenever possible, decisions were openly discussed with employees and various options were put on the table. As one leader stated, “I involve the people closest to the issue to solve the problem. The people doing the work think it is their idea. And they are the quickest to change if it isn’t working and try something else” (SBJ3).

They were also very reflective people and tended to contemplate before acting. They ask questions. This thoughtfulness is likely a factor in their growth as individuals. As one leader stated:

I was fortunate to look at things differently, you know, to study things, to observe it. And I watched my manager, who was a manager of managers, and say, “What would I do in this situation? Why is this working, why isn’t it working?” And then as I became a manager, I was able to go back and say, “Here’s the philosophy I am going to live by.” (SBJ5)

Their decision-making process was thorough, though not hesitant. It would be unfair to characterize them as consensus-makers. All were very aware of which decisions were solely theirs, and they did not shirk these tough decisions. It was very clear to the researchers that through this process, optimal decisions were made, and importantly, employees feel a part of the decision-making process. Decision quality and buy-in from employees are certainly success factors in achieving business results for these leaders.

Interpersonal Capability

I think your values and what you believe. . . that’s going to determine your approach. And as complicated as relationships are, that’s as compli-



cated as one's approach to leadership and being the person you are.
(SBJ6)

Although not specifically mentioned in the construct, all participants shared a strong interpersonal capability, an intriguing result for the researchers. Their ability to operate in a highly nuanced manner indicates strong emotional intelligence, keen recognition of their role, and the importance of a long-term perspective. They put a great deal of thought into important discussions with people and carefully considered the method of delivery and the message given; compassion, and a deep respect for people played a significant part in their interactions. One leader said: "If it's a people issue, I need to make time for it. I like to walk on the beach to work things through. I need time to process" (SBJ2). Direct reports repeatedly conveyed how much they appreciated this characteristic. One person offered the following:

I talk to him about personal things. I feel I can trust him. He listens a lot. He may throw out scenarios. He doesn't tell me what to do. He asks questions. He doesn't give advice. He shares what he has been through. "Do it in a way you are comfortable with," he'll say. "This may help you." (SBJ4, DR1)

This is consistent with other research which indicates that the leader characteristic of having a humanistic approach is highly valued by staff (Wood & Vilkinas, 2004). There were numerous stories of how the supervisor had displayed a deep and genuine concern for them, sometimes retelling events that had transpired many years before. During several interviews the researchers observed moments when the participant was clearly disturbed, sometimes visibly emotional, regarding the impact of his or her actions on the employees. However, at other times, it became apparent that this type of leader may appear to delay performance discussions or at times may provide feedback in such a subtle manner that others may not "get the message."



Motivators

Telling me I can't do something is. . . the best motivation you can give me because I am going to try and come through and prove it. And not in a grandstanding kind of style, just let the track record see where it will take you. (SBJ8)

This type of leader strives to make an impact and leave a legacy through an organization that is financially healthy and composed of a capable team that can successfully address whatever business challenges they face. They are not motivated by status or personal advancement, but by a sense of contribution. As one leader said:

Maybe it's ambition to serve. I don't know. I can't say for sure what makes me aspire to leadership. I like making a difference. I like impacting things. I don't think it's an ego thing. It's a duty thing. I like helping. But I will say, being honest, that it feels good to be acknowledged for that. (SBJ1)

These leaders tend to be risk-takers who constantly strive for high quality, focusing on a cycle of continuous improvement, rather than achieving a specific financial target. One leader described sending a 13-page memo to his boss, the president, providing a detailed argument for moving the business in a direction that was quite different from their current strategy. Oftentimes, this risk-taking was a factor in the direct reports' enjoyment of their jobs. One DR, talking about a series of mergers the organization had gone through, told the researchers that he stayed in the organization because it was exciting and he wanted to see what would happen next.

Developing people was also perhaps as important as building a business. As one participant said, "The magic for me is when the passion builds in the group. It's not me" (SBJ3). Another said, "I like to help people find what is within themselves" (SBJ9). Yet another said, "but the part I really get a kick out of is watching other people enjoy the challenge" (SBJ5). Not



only did the researchers hear comments like these repeatedly from both the participants and the DRs, but the comments were said emphatically. It was clearly an important aspect of their leadership style.

Steadfast yet Realistic Pursuit of Goals

I couldn't imagine *not* doing it. I just didn't even think about it. (SBJ1)

The participants were all tenacious in pursuing ambitious goals. There were numerous stories of what appeared to be highly risky situations through which the leaders persevered because it was very clear to them that this was the right path, even though they were perhaps not able to see all the road signs leading to their destination. However, they also knew when another approach was clearly indicated, and they would adjust accordingly. They were able to remain passionate, yet objective. Their ability to remain somewhat detached appeared to be a good counterbalance to their strong sense of commitment.

Humility and Self-Effacing Humor

We had a school play and he was a bird in a gilded cage. (SBJ7, DR4)

Because modesty was an aspect of the construct, it is not surprising that the participants all exhibited a strong sense of humility. However, it also bears mentioning that this came through repeatedly in the interviews, particularly in the participants' tendency to employ a sense of humor that poked fun at themselves, and also in a distinct lack of comfort with official or prestigious titles. These leaders were anything but pompous.

Their self-effacing sense of humor enhanced their authenticity and likeability. In fact, it seemed to the researchers that the participants took pains to be authentic. The researchers found themselves immediately comfortable in their presence. By building rapport and conveying a down-to-earth style, it was easy to have a conversation with them. It also likely



supports an environment that gives permission to admitting to mistakes and lack of knowledge, rather than placing energy on impression management. This style of humor was interpreted by the researchers as an indication of their self-confidence and level of comfort with themselves; however, it is obvious that this view may not be shared by everyone. In some cultures this approach could, perhaps, work against them. Also, their sense of humor combined with a driven, results-oriented style may, at times, be confusing to people unaccustomed to this style.

Highly Principled

[The CFO] was presenting some numbers on benefits changes. When we added it up, we realized we had more money than we needed. [He] was ignoring this. I thought it was important to give it back to the employees. I said, "We need to do this." He kept ignoring me. I said, "You aren't listening to me!" It felt like I was mean. In the end, though, we did decide to give it back. Others came up to me afterwards and said they were glad I pressed the issue. I feel I am the conscience of the group. I ask questions that others don't. (SBJ7)

It was anticipated that the participants would be people with integrity, as this was specifically mentioned in the construct. However, it was impressive to discover how highly principled they all were and how this guided their actions in a very central way. One of the leaders repeatedly used the phrase "What's the right thing to do?" (SBJ5). Several direct reports spoke of actions the participant had taken that were not easy or expedient, but chosen because they were clearly the best option from a values perspective. It also became apparent how the leader's strong sense of character engendered loyalty among employees and created deep emotional bonds. One DR said, "I've never liked a job as much as I like this one. It's like your dad. You want him to be proud of you" (SBJ5, DR3). Another said, "I admire him personally and professionally. So many people want to come work for him. We owe him what he gives us. We owe each other what he gives us" (SBJ3, DR2). The direct reports expressed a sense that



they could trust their job to this person because they knew the leader would take actions that would be fair to the employee and would not act out of self-interest. This was mentioned repeatedly in the interviews with direct reports. As one DR said, “Why do I follow him? Because I could put my wallet full of \$500 bills on the table and come back a week later and it would still be there. I *trust* him!” (SBJ8, DR2).

Importance of Culture

I think that the biggest obligation we have is for the culture. (SBJ6)

The importance of the culture and their role in defining it was hugely important to the participants. As one leader said, “The president of the organization is the president of the culture. He achieves the least of the business results” (SBJ1). All participants conveyed a very intentional approach to culture and often took swift action to preserve it.

They were aware of how business results and the corporate culture are closely connected and worked carefully not to sacrifice one for the other. Another leader said, “We went out of our way to be fair to people. We went about the merger in a very deliberate way because we were dealing with people’s livelihood” (SBJ7). And because these leaders have a highly attuned interpersonal sense, they are aware of subtle inconsistencies between desired cultural attributes and actual behavior on the part of employees.

Inquiring Communication Style

If I ran the meeting, it would be all what [I] want. That’s what these people will do because [of my position]. And I know I could probably influence them into what conclusion I came to. But that is also not my role. My role is to give them information, coaching and technical advice for them to make the decision. (SBJ4)

These leaders are very aware of the power of their opinion and use it



carefully. They tend to inquire, solicit, and offer ideas rather than issue commands. Several use stories as a way of conveying an idea. They are not oblique, however, and will insert their opinions, if necessary, or state that things must be done a certain way. However, their preference is not to do this. Part of their motivation may be to enhance the problem-solving ability of others through subtle coaching, rather than telling, and thereby grow the organizational thinking capacity. They are also acutely aware that if they tell others what they think too soon, the employees may comply without real buy-in, and it is this long-term commitment they are interested in achieving. This approach requires patience on the part of the leader and sensitivity on the part of the subordinate. Just because their supervisor isn't telling them what to do, doesn't mean he or she doesn't care very deeply about moving in a particular direction. Again, this aspect of leadership style could be misinterpreted by others.

Judicious Use of Power

Leadership gives you influence. It does give you power. All kinds of power. I prefer influence to power. (SBJ1)

As mentioned above, these leaders are very aware of their positional power, and the researchers were particularly interested in how a modest person deals with the power of the position. The researchers found that power was used carefully, and usually to remove barriers. Speaking to the subtlety of one leader's use of power, a DR said, "He's a bright but soft light bulb. The light is everywhere, but he doesn't blind anyone" (SBJ7, DR2).

The participants were attuned to small but meaningful symbols of power, such as the arrangement of a room. In only one case, for example, did a leader choose to be interviewed behind his desk. One participant spoke of this:

I am aware that I am a big guy, so I know I can tower over people; so I sit at a table instead of standing. I want the message to be the thing, not my



size, not have it be “Here is this big guy staring down at me.” . . .we have it in, “Where is your comfort zone?”, not “Come to my office.” (SBJ2)

Commitment and Modesty

One person can’t make this happen. It is going to take all of us working very, very hard, and I still don’t know if we are going to do it. It’s nothing I am going to do. I don’t even know how to do it. I’ll clear the way. I try to be honest and give my perspective. I’ll have opinions of where we ought to go. But on a day-to-day basis, things will shift. (SBJ3)

The two characteristics Collins ascribes to the Level Five leader seem to relate to a number of attributes displayed by the participants. All of them seemed to have strong intellectual horsepower, although this was not directly assessed. In addition, they all possessed a keen intuitive understanding of people, quiet confidence, and a reflective and principled nature. These leaders understand the situations they encounter at a level of complexity that many others do not. And they are honest with themselves, first and foremost. They understand their strengths and limitations and recognize that they are fallible human beings. They know that others have talents which they don’t, and that they need those individuals to be successful. They have a strong sense of duty and this weighs on them. They recognize that many others depend on them, and they choose their actions carefully. Once committed, they are very clear about the goal and the difficulties facing them. The question of whether commitment and modesty are outward manifestations of a cluster of other attributes would be an interesting topic for another study.

Five Adjectives Exercise

As mentioned previously, the DRs were asked the question “What are five adjectives you would use to describe this person?” Given that a lexi-



con of adjectives is frequently used to build personality constructs, this seemed like a useful question. The Affinity Diagram is shown here.

FIVE ADJECTIVES AFFINITY DIAGRAM

Interpersonal	Character	Problem Solving	Work Habits	Inspired Leadership	Self-Assurance
CARING Caring (6) Kind (5) Understanding (3) Compassionate (3) Empathetic (2) Loving (2) People-oriented Big-hearted Sympathetic Supportive Encouraging Nurturing Thoughtful gestures	AUTHENTIC Honest (3) Leads by example Genuine (2) Sincere DEPENDABLE Dependable (3) Dedicated Reliable MODEST ADMITS FAILURES	LISTENER DOESN'T BLAME OPEN-MINDED Open-minded (2) Sees others' POV Appreciates diversity THOUGHTFUL Thoughtful (3) Analytical (2) Reflective DECISIVE KNOWLEDGEABLE	PROMPT THOROUGH DRIVER Driver (2) Results-oriented PERFECTIONIST Perfectionist Demanding EFFICIENT Efficient Good organizational skills	COURAGEOUS CHALLENGES THE SYSTEM INSPIRATIONAL ADVENTUROUS ENTHUSIASTIC Enthusiastic Passionate	STRONG EVEN-KEELED POLISHED SELF-ASSURED
ENABLES PEOPLE Enables people Helps people	ETHICAL Ethical/moral Trustworthy	INSTINCTIVE			
SELF-GIVING	SPIRITUAL (3)	VISIONARY Visionary Forward-thinking			
PATIENT		INTELLIGENT Intelligent (2) Smart			
LOYAL		CREATIVE			
ACCESSIBLE					
SOCIAL					
EMOTIONAL					
LIKEABLE					
NICE					
FUN (2) Happy Jolly					
HUMOROUS (2)					
FAIR (5)					
TRUSTING (4)					



As can be seen from the chart, six categories emerged from the analysis: Interpersonal, Character, Problem-Solving, Work Habits, Inspired Leadership and Self-Assurance. The largest grouping, by far, was Interpersonal. This was especially interesting, given that the Quiet Leader description did not mention interpersonal capability. The highest number of mentions within the Interpersonal category was in a cluster labeled “Caring” and within that, the words “Caring” and “Kind” were specifically mentioned 11 times by the DRs. The most widely shared characteristic reported by the participants and most meaningful to the direct reports was the leaders’ evident concern for their staff. This more than any other stands out as a defining attribute to the direct reports. The groupings that received the next highest number of mentions were “Character” and “Problem-Solving.” The portrait that emerges from the adjectives selected by the direct reports is a person who is caring, authentic, dependable, open-minded, employs a thoughtful decision-making style, strives for productivity and results, tends to challenge the status quo, and appears to be self-assured.

Quantitative Key Findings

It would be inappropriate to draw too many conclusions from the results of the two instruments administered, given the small sample size. However, the instruments were chosen as a way of cross-validating the findings from the interviews and did prove useful in this regard. Several interesting findings will be discussed here for illustrative purposes. As stated earlier, the mean on the OPQ is set at 5.5 stens and the standard deviation is 2 stens. Consequently, any score higher than 7.5 or lower than 3.5 would be more unusual. There were no scales in which the combined mean and standard deviation of our participant group fell outside these boundaries. However, there were four scales that trended high and one that trended low, and these are worth expounding upon (see below).



OCCUPATIONAL PERSONALITY QUESTIONNAIRE
NOTABLE SCALE RESULTS

Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation
Modesty	7.2	.8
Caring	7.1	1.0
Behavioral	7.0	1.2
Conventional	3.8	1.3
Trusting	7.6	1.6

Within the Relationships category, these were the Modesty Scale (a high scorer was defined as someone who dislikes talking about achievements) and the Caring Scale (a high scorer was defined as being sympathetic to the concerns of others, helpful and supportive). Within the Thinking Style category, the Behavioral Scale (in which a high score indicates a person who likes to analyze the motives of others and is inclined to take this into consideration in their decisions) was high for the composite group, while the Conventional scale trended lower (indicating that they are less constrained by tradition than other people and more inclined to follow novel approaches). Finally, within the Feelings and Emotions category, the Trusting scale was high, indicating that the leaders were inclined to see people as reliable and honest. A Thinking Style scale called Evaluative was mid-range, indicating that their analysis of situations is typical of most people.

These results suggest a servant-leader profile: someone who is compassionate and concerned for people, conveys trust in others, has an interest in others' ideas and considers them in a balanced manner, and is likely to deflect attention away from their own contributions. They are likely, as well, to place a high value on a supportive and respectful work environment, in which cooperation is valued over competition with others. The low score in Conventional may be related to the participants' being from



smaller organizations, which are often more nimble. Of note is that the scores related to Sociability were all average, indicating that while the leaders dislike talking about their accomplishments, they are generally extraverted. Modesty and introversion do not appear to be related.

On the MQ, like the OPQ, there were no scales which were outside the range of expected scores. However, there were four scales on which the participants scored more highly than would be typical, and three that trended lower (see below).

MOTIVATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE
NOTABLE SCALE RESULTS

Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation
Power	7.3	1.9
Commercial Outlook	7.5	2.5
Recognition	3.8	1.4
Ease and Security	3.8	1.6
Personal Principles	8.5	1.2
Flexibility	7.4	2.3
Material Rewards	3.8	1.9

In the Energy and Dynamism domain, the composite scores on Power and Commercial Outlook were high. These scores indicate that the leaders in this study were more motivated by the opportunity to wield influence and authority in a situation with bottom-line impact than was expected, and that these areas are their main sources of energy at work. This is consistent with the Level Five leaders' drive for business results. This is also likely related to their positions in upper level management. The Power score was intriguing, as the topic of power was of key interest in this research. Because the participants are at high levels in their respective organizations, it is not surprising that they are motivated by situations they can drive.



The next set of scales in the MQ is called the Synergy cluster and relates to aspects of a work environment, but separate from the task, that may be motivating to people. The participants scored somewhat low on the Recognition and Ease and Security scales, but very high on the Personal Principles scale. In fact, this score was the highest of any scale on either instrument. This would indicate that they do not need praise and recognition from others or job security to the degree others do to feel motivated. However, they would find it very difficult to work in an environment with questionable ethics.

In the Intrinsic motivators category, the participants' composite score was high on Flexibility, indicating they preferred situations without much structure, while in the Extrinsic motivators category, the leaders in this study were less motivated by Material Reward than others might be. Their scores on a Status scale were more typical.

Their scoring pattern suggests that the participants are attracted to leadership roles because they believe they can make a financial impact in a principled organization, rather than because of the external trappings of success. Their relatively lower concern for pragmatic considerations of job security and compensation may be due to their current life situations. The results may be different among Level Five leaders who are younger and/or less financially secure.

Examining the OPQ and MQ results together, the pattern that emerges is of an inter-personally-oriented leader who elicits trust by conveying a sense of integrity and demonstrates a ready interest in the lives of employees and their ideas. This leader may have a somewhat entrepreneurial orientation and bring innovation to situations. Employees will likely feel that they helped contribute to the organization's success. There is also likely to be encouragement for trying rather than criticism for failing in these organizations. These leaders' ability to both identify and drive for business opportunities while building a loyal group around them that is similarly focused, is surely a key factor in their success.

The overall pattern seen in the quantitative results is similar to what



the researchers observed in the qualitative research. However, there are some differences that bear mentioning.

Initially, the high Power score was a bit surprising. The researchers heard repeatedly from DRs that they had not observed the leaders using power. However, it may be that “power” has become a somewhat inflammatory term in business, representing self-aggrandizement, rather than using influence and authority for a purpose beyond self-interests.

The mid-range score on Status was also surprising, as the researchers found in the interviews that these leaders seemed quite uncomfortable with status. Business cards and use of titles became a marker for modesty in this study. All the leaders downplayed their titles. One participant did not have a promotion that had occurred a year ago on his business card. Another did not even carry a business card. A typical comment by one of the leaders who happened to be President of his firm was:

One of the things is that there is no human being better than another. We're all equal. You call me John, you don't call me Mr. [X]. I don't care what your title or role is. The responsibilities might be different, but that doesn't mean you are different. (SBJ5)

The high scores on Modesty and Personal Principles were encouraging, as these characteristics were in the description and thereby confirmed the sampling approach used in the study. It was also consistent with what was revealed in the interviews. There was a distinct use of “we” rather than “I” in the interviews when discussing achievements. Furthermore, several times subjects mentioned that they had exited an organization because the dominant culture was inconsistent with their values.

A point worth mentioning is that the MQ does not assess developing people/coalescing a team as a motivator. However, this was seen as a very important factor for all the leaders in this study, as discussed earlier.



CONCLUSIONS

Most of the characteristics identified by Collins and Greenleaf were observed in this research. We found people who, as Collins stated, worked in a focused and disciplined manner toward the tenacious pursuit of goals. They were quick to deflect praise and credit others. They used a questioning style and engaged others in open debate. They all showed a commitment to high standards. The “ferocious resolve” that Collins found was observed in varying degrees. Some participants were faced with situations that were more dramatic than others. Confidence that they would prevail in the end, coupled with a clear sense of the challenges they faced (termed by Collins the Stockdale Paradox) was observed. Like Greenleaf, we found that the leaders were reflective and had a strong sense of who they were—their strengths, their limitations, and what was important to them. They were very engaged by the growth of people and facilitating that process. They had a questioning nature and employed it when solving problems and influencing. They cared deeply about people and felt tremendous responsibility for them. We did not uniformly observe prescience or the healing through shared wholeness that Greenleaf discusses. We saw a motivation for both achieving business results (Collins) and growing people (Greenleaf). The behaviors observed were consistent with the behaviors outlined in the model proposed by Dierendonck & Heeren (2006) and many of those by Russell and Stone. In addition, like Russell and Stone, we found organizational culture to be an important aspect of servant-leadership (as cited in Rennaker, 2006).

To characterize these leaders based on competencies or personality attributes would be inadequate. Character plays a strong role in shaping who they are, consistent with both Collins’ and Greenleaf’s findings. Collins equivocated on whether this is a leadership style that one can grow into, or whether a Level Five leader is born, not made. This study would assert that a principled and discerning nature is essential in this type of leader, and that without it, coaching for development is fruitless. It also suggests incorporating character as an element in the selection process, as the companies



in Collins' study did. Although it is obvious how difficult this may be to address, it is a necessary and fundamental element of this type of leader.

In seeking to identify these individuals, it is important to pay attention to the processes people used to achieve goals, not simply the results. This study revealed that these leaders are as concerned with the "How" as much as the "What." Seeking out feedback from direct reports is important as well, since a key element of success for this type of leader is the ability to gain followers through their character and competence and their strong interpersonal capability. Finally, examining the hiring and promotion processes can be revealing. Do the ratings purposely weight people who are skilled at impression management over those who are less self-promoting? It is our hope that this research can be helpful in providing a richer portrait of these individuals so that they can be more readily identified in hiring decisions and talent management discussions.

Although some key findings have been uncovered in this study, there is opportunity for future research. A study that includes more women and minorities is called for. Not only would it allow the key findings to be further validated, but also it would be helpful in developing a statistical comparison between this leadership type and the norms captured by SHL on upper level managers for the OPQ and the MQ. In addition, the concept of modesty in leadership continues to intrigue us and offers many fruitful areas for further study. These leaders appear to be highly self-aware, though this study did not specifically probe this topic. What is the link between modesty and self-knowledge? Is a person who is reflective by nature more modest? How does a belief in a Higher Being contribute to modesty? Are people who are modest more emotionally intelligent? A new research focus on transcendental leadership that is emerging in the leadership literature (Sanders, Hopkins, & Geroy, 2003) may be useful in shedding some light on these questions. Finally, we would encourage more researchers to pay attention to other aspects of the servant-leader besides interpersonal capabilities. While this is an attractive aspect of these leaders, research focused



on it alone does a disservice to an effective type of leader by not addressing such important qualities as a drive for business results.

We look forward to future studies on this topic. Like Collins, we found these leaders to be both admirable and enjoyable to meet. We always came away from the interactions feeling uplifted and wishing a bit wistfully that we could work in these organizations. Like the heroic leader, the participants draw people to them. However, while some heroic leaders might become wearisome because of their arrogance, the modesty of the leaders encountered in this study would certainly contribute to steadfast loyalty and trust. And the good news is, if we are willing to put aside mythological beliefs about what good leaders look like, potential Level Five leaders abound in business settings. “The problem is not, in my estimation, a dearth of potential Level Five leaders. They exist all around us if we know what to look for” (Collins, 2001, p. 37). We hope this study has contributed to advancing that goal.

NOTE

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THE IMAGE OF GOD, SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AND FORGIVENESS

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The image of the leader as servant has come to exercise a profound influence within secular organizations (Spears, 1995, p. 3). Yet one can argue that its antecedents are in the religious world. Servant-leadership is a major theme in the Judeo-Christian tradition, from the weeping Joseph embracing his brothers (Genesis 45:15, New Oxford Annotated Bible) to Jesus washing the feet of his disciples (John 13:5). The image also figures in Islam, Zen and Taoism (Vanourek, 1995, p. 300). Robert K. Greenleaf (1977), whose writings brought the image of the servant-leader into the public imagination, was a Quaker; his seminal essay on servant-leadership was inspired by Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East*, in which the hero is ultimately revealed as head of a religious order (Spears, 1995, p. 3).

The image of the leader as servant also resonates for people who are not visibly connected to any religious tradition. Tom Peters (1982), whose writings on leadership are well-known, expresses suspicion of the contemporary movement to bring spirituality into secular arenas such as the workplace (Peters & Waterman, as cited in Lee & Zemke, 1995, p. 107). Yet Peters also urges managers to develop a caring attitude toward employees and to "shun the glory that feeds our insecure egos" (as cited in Tarr, 1995, p. 82; Vanourek, 1995, p. 301). His perspective is very near to Greenleaf's (1977), who insisted that "the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader" (pp. 9-10).

It is significant that a leadership model with religious roots could have settled so comfortably into the public imagination, especially given the



intense focus of many Americans today on preserving the separation of church and state (Boston, 2005, p. 1). I believe the success of this model has to do with its implicit commentary on the value of human beings. To voluntarily serve another person is to acknowledge that he or she is worthy of effort, attention and respect. As Spears (1995, p. 7) wrote, “Servant-leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers.” Moreover, Greenleaf (1977) maintained that the value of service was not in the act itself, as much as in its effect on the recipient. He asked,

Will all (or almost all) of the people touched by that influence grow as persons? Will they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more likely themselves to become servants? And what will be the effect on the least privileged in society; will that person benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (1977, p. 27).

Greenleaf’s (1977) call for leaders to consider the effect of their influence on the people they serve, especially the least fortunate, resonates with Jesus’ command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). In Greenleaf’s words, “Caring for others, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built” (p. 49). Yet I would argue that the roots of Greenleaf’s call to care for others go back even further in the Judeo-Christian tradition, back to the early chapters of Genesis. “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). From the biblical point of view, to consider people as worthy of care is not just one possible anthropological stance among many. Rather, it is the only response commensurate with God’s work in creation, in which God imprinted the divine image on Eve and Adam and, through them, on every human being.

Inherent in this biblical doctrine, however, is a paradox; for those who are made in the image of God do not always exhibit the beauty and splendor of God’s character (1 Chronicles 16:29). As Greenleaf (1977) wrote, “Any-



body could lead perfect people—if there were any. But there aren't any perfect people" (p. 21). Therefore servant-leadership involves the acceptance of "the halt, the lame, half-made creatures that we are" (p. 21). At no time are "the vagaries of human nature" more visible than when communities are in conflict, whether that conflict be personal, familial, national or global (p. 20). In conflict, servant-leadership must grapple with the dark side of human nature and the reality that human beings, while made in God's image, have a long history of hurting one another. According to Greenleaf, the true servant "always accepts and empathizes, never rejects" (p. 20). Yet are people who have actively harmed others, ranging from manipulative co-workers to participants in mass atrocity, still worthy of acceptance and empathy?

In this essay I examine the biblical idea of creation in the image of God with particular reference to the practice of forgiveness. As Ramsey (2006) affirms, forgiveness is a logical extension of the values embedded in servant-leadership (p. 5). A leader who is dedicated to serving others naturally focuses on their healing, which Greenleaf defines as "making whole" (1977, p. 36). In the biblical tradition, the word *shalom* signifies the peace of God that is rooted in God's own wholeness or holiness, and is God's intention for human life (Feinberg, 1984, p. 833). To forgive is to acknowledge that, although genuine harm has been done, a return to *shalom* is possible if both victim and perpetrator can turn away from the wrongs of the past and begin a new relationship, one that is based on honesty and growing trust. The concept of human beings as made in the image of God can fuel the practice of forgiveness by reminding leaders of the transcendent aspect of human nature; by affirming the creation unity that people share, whatever their differences may be; and by encouraging us to view individuals and communities through eyes of hope. By practicing forgiveness, servant-leaders can lead persons in conflict, as well as the community around them, toward the *shalom* that is God's intention for human life (p. 833).



THE IMAGE OF GOD AND TRANSCENDENCE

The creation of human beings in God's image has been a subject of Christian reflection since the early days of the church (Motyer, 1984, p. 680). Theologians across the centuries have agreed that although God's imprint is on all of creation, humanity reflects God's character in a unique way; this reflection gives women and men permanent worth and dignity (Henry, 1984, p. 546). Christian theologians have, however, hotly debated the question of which aspect of human personhood particularly contains the divine image, be it rational intelligence, moral choice, or religious openness (p. 547). In recent years, a kind of consensus has emerged which highlights the human capacity for relationship as the best reflection of God's image in us, for that capacity involves and depends upon the other proposed answers of "rational understanding, moral obedience, and religious communion" (p. 548). In other words, humanity "is made for personal and endless fellowship with God" and with one another (p. 548). Frankl (2000) agreed with this consensus when he spoke of

that fundamental characteristic of the human reality which I have come to term its *self-transcendent* quality. I thereby want to denote the intrinsic fact that being human always relates and points to something other than itself—better to say, something or *someone*. . . . Man [sic] is oriented toward the world out there, and within this world, he is interested in meanings to fulfill, and in other human beings. By virtue of what I would call the pre-reflective ontological self-understanding he knows that he is actualizing himself precisely to the extent to which he is forgetting himself, and he is forgetting himself by giving himself, or loving a person other than himself. Truly, self-transcendence is the essence of human existence. (p. 138)

The self-transcendence of humanity suggests that we are most authentically human (and, paradoxically, closest to the divine image) when we are stretching toward loving relationship with God and others. On these grounds, there is nothing trivial about the way in which human beings deal



with one another. To actively harm another person is to violate the image of God in that person and in myself; it is “like spitting in the face of God” (Tutu, 1999, p. 93). Both Frankl (1974) and Tutu spoke with authority on the subject of “man’s inhumanity to man,” having witnessed the atrocities of Auschwitz and apartheid-era South Africa, respectively. It is significant that, given their experience, both men strongly affirmed the existence of a transcendent element in human nature that remains, no matter how an individual’s actions may defile it. According to Frankl, the strange fact of human existence is that we are both bearers *and* violators of God’s image.

In concentration camps . . . we watched and witnessed some of our comrades behave like swine while others behaved like saints. Man [sic] has both potentialities within himself. . . Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know man as he really is. After all, man is the being who has invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who has entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord’s Prayer or the *Shema Yisrael* on his lips. (pp. 212-213)

In situations of deep conflict, it is tempting for leaders to collapse Frankl’s (1974) paradox and consider participants in the conflict as either heroes or monsters (Tutu, 1999, p. 125). Leaders who identify themselves as servants may feel this temptation with particular intensity because of an orientation toward healing the wounded and creating justice for victims. The concept of persons as bearers of the image of God, however, suggests that leaders ought to consider the well-being of both victims and perpetrators as they strive to bring about healing in communities. According to Tutu (p. 83), the members of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission benefited from this theological perspective on offenders.

We . . . were quite appalled at the depth of depravity to which human beings could sink and we would, most of us, say that those who committed such dastardly deeds were monsters because the deeds were monstrous. But theology prevents us from doing this. Theology reminded me that, however diabolical the act, it did not turn the perpetrator into a demon. We had to distinguish between the deed and the perpetrator . . .



to hate and condemn the sin while being filled with compassion for the sinner. (p. 83)

Furthermore, Tutu (1999) recognized that creation in the image of God includes moral responsibility (Henry, 1984, p. 548). Therefore, failing to identify perpetrators as bearers of God's image was a way of "letting accountability go out the window" (p. 83). "If perpetrators were to be despaired of as monsters and demons, then . . . we were then declaring that they were not moral agents to be held responsible for the deeds they had committed" (p. 83).

The leaders of the TRC chose to extend compassion and forgiveness as a way of reminding perpetrators that they were in fact human beings, made for relationship with God and with others, with all the transcendent requirements of that identity. Some critics of the commission identified the TRC's approach as so-called "cheap grace" and a miscarriage of justice (p. 50). Yet I believe that reminding perpetrators of their essential humanity through forgiveness is (paradoxically) the most effective way of demonstrating how despicable their actions have been, and how great a responsibility they now hold for healing the damage that has been done in their community. In other words, because they offered amnesty to offenders, the leaders of the TRC made it safe for feelings of repentance and responsibility to emerge:

I say we are sorry. I say the burden of the Bisho massacre will be on our shoulders for the rest of our lives. We cannot wish it away. It happened. But please, I ask specifically the victims not to forget, I cannot ask this, but to forgive us, to get the soldiers back into the community, to accept them fully, to try to understand the pressure they were under then. This is all I can do. I'm sorry, this I can say, I'm sorry. (Col. Horst Schoberberger, as cited in Tutu, pp. 150-151)

In post-apartheid South Africa, Bishop Tutu (1999) and the other members of the TRC exemplified the caring that Greenleaf (1977) identified as the heart of servant-leadership (p. 49). Victims experienced the



TRC's care as empathy and support; perpetrators experienced it as empathy and forgiveness (Ramsey, 2006, p. 18). In both cases, the TRC treated their fellow South Africans as bearers of God's image and invited them to express that identity in a new relationship with one another and with God, for the healing of their nation and as a sign to the world that the *shalom* of God is possible (Tutu, pp. 273, 282).

THE IMAGE OF GOD AND CREATION UNITY

In the context of servant-leadership, the goal of forgiveness is unity between persons who were formerly enemies (Tutu, 1999, p. 280). Muck (2006) distinguished between three different types of unity that appear in biblical history: creation unity, affiliation unity, and relationship unity. Both affiliation and relationship unity have to do specifically with the Christian church; however, creation unity refers to the ontological oneness that humanity experienced in the early chapters of Genesis, prior to our expulsion from the Garden. This unity was based on the shared image of God and did not rule out difference; in fact, "to have unity, you must first of all have difference" (Symposium outline, p. 1). Muck asserted that beneath the many divisions apparent in today's world, this creation unity still exists and will one day be restored in the kingdom of God (p. 1).

Based on Muck's (2006) schema, one could argue that forgiveness is best understood not as the creation of a new relationship, but as the expression of an ontological unity that continues to exist among human beings, however great the apparent alienation between them. Tutu (1999, p. 31) referred often to this creation unity using the African term *ubuntu* (also called *botho*), which means "a person is a person through other persons." *Ubuntu* reflects *shalom*, or "the primordial harmony that was God's intention for all creation" (p. 263). It assumes that human beings were designed to live in community with one another. Even when that community is damaged by disrespect or violence, some vestiges of it remain: so much so, that whenever we harm another person, we also harm ourselves (Muck, 2006, p. 1). In other words, the concept of *ubuntu* parallels what Frankl (2000)



affirmed as the essence of human existence: our orientation toward relationship with God and with others (p. 138).

Greenleaf (1977, p. 37) identified servant-leaders as builders of community, since “only community can give the healing love that is essential for health.” Muck’s (2006) concept of creation unity suggests a paradigm shift for servant-leaders who are seeking to build and sustain community: from the superhuman task of creating unity, to the more manageable vision of restoring a unity that is already inherent in creation. In today’s world, however, servant-leaders must build community across divisions that seem nearly as ancient as the Garden of Eden. Some of these divisions have been solidified by centuries of persecution and violence, as is the case with the division between Jew and Gentile (Wiesenthal, 1998, p. 18). The brutalities of the Holocaust have had the double effect of making community between Jews and Gentiles unthinkable without forgiveness, while being so heinous as to make forgiveness seem impossible. In his book *The Sunflower*, Wiesenthal described an encounter between Jew and a Gentile that perfectly illustrates this double effect. Wiesenthal was a prisoner in a Nazi camp in Poland when he was called to the bedside of a dying SS officer who wished to confess his war crimes to a Jew. During the encounter, Wiesenthal expressed compassion to the dying soldier; yet when asked directly for words of absolution, he walked quietly from the room and never returned (p. 55). So unnerved was Wiesenthal by this encounter that he ended his narrative with the question, “Was my silence at the bedside of the dying Nazi right or wrong?” (p. 97).

In the symposium of responses that follows, many commentators expressed the conviction that Wiesenthal (1998) was justified in withholding forgiveness. He had no right to forgive on behalf of his fellow Jews, for one can only reasonably forgive sins against oneself (Alkalaj, p. 102, Bejski, p. 115, Heschel, p. 171, etc., in Wiesenthal). However, while he did not want to minimize Wiesenthal’s dilemma, Tutu (1999) took issue with this perspective (p. 275). He compared the SS officer’s confession with the



apology from Dr. Willi Jonker (representing the Dutch Reformed Church) to the victims of apartheid in 1990.

One could well ask whether [Dr. Jonker] could claim to speak for past generations of [the DRC's] members, though it would be an oddly atomistic view of the nature of a community not to accept that there is a very real continuity between the past and the present and that the former members would share in the guilt and the shame as in the absolution and the glory of the present. . . . They too are part of who we are, whether we like it or not. . . . That is what makes a community a community or a people a people—for better or for worse. (pp. 276, 279)

One can extend Tutu's (1999) argument even further on the basis of *ubuntu*. Deeper than the continuity between members of a community is the creation unity that extends between everyone made in the image of God, such that all of us belong to one community, the human community (p. 265). In this sense Wiesenthal and the dying SS officer were members of the same community due to "a certain basic human equality as common both to 'victim' and 'perpetrator'" (Pawlikowski, in Wiesenthal, 1998, p. 221). Stein (in Wiesenthal, 1998) argued that the compassion Wiesenthal displayed at the officer's bedside was an act of solidarity with him; for "he did not treat the man as a monster who had committed monstrous deeds. Rather, he honored the humanity of a man who had lost his humaneness" (p. 253). I respectfully submit that had Wiesenthal chosen to speak words of forgiveness, they would have been justified on the same basis.

No servant-leader will find it easy to encourage unity between persons who are divided from one another along ethnic or religious lines, especially when those divisions have been hardened by violence. Yet the concept of creation unity can inspire servant-leaders both to ask and to grant forgiveness, ideally allowing them to serve as models to others in their community. From the perspective of creation unity, asking and granting forgiveness begin with the acknowledgement that I too am, in Frankl's (1974) terms, both a bearer and a violator of the divine image (pp. 212-213). In other words, I forgive "because I fear not to be forgiven" (Cargas, in Wiesenthal,



1998, p. 124). Creation unity is a powerful spur toward forgiveness because it reminds us that all persons, myself as well as others, are capable both of the greatest heroism and the deepest depravity (Tutu, 1999, p. 85).

THE IMAGE OF GOD AND HOPE

According to Greenleaf (1977), hope for the future is an important aspect of servant-leadership—especially with regard to the next generation (p. 171). Servant-leaders are called to “raise the spirit of young people, help them build their confidence that they can successfully contend with the condition [of society], work with them to find the direction they need to go and the competencies they need to acquire, and send them on their way” (p. 172). Tutu (1999) maintained that in our divided world, one of the core competencies we need to instill is the ability both to ask and to grant forgiveness.

If we are going to move on and build a new kind of world community there must be a way in which we can deal with a sordid past. The most effective way would be for the perpetrators or their descendants to acknowledge the awfulness of what happened and the descendants of the victims to respond by granting forgiveness, providing something can be done, even symbolically, to compensate for the anguish experienced. . . True forgiveness deals with the past, all of the past, to make the future possible. (pp. 278-279)

Tutu’s (1999) statement that forgiveness “makes the future possible” is based on the recognition that if violence continues to grow in our world, there may well be no future for our children to inherit. Yet forgiveness also expresses hope for the future in its assumption that both individuals and communities are capable of responding to “the better angels of our nature” (Lincoln, 1861, paragraph 35). As Tutu summarized, “In the act of forgiveness we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to make a new beginning on a course that will be different from the one that caused us the wrong. . . It is an act of faith that



the wrongdoer can change” (1999, p. 273). For Tutu, the basis of this faith is the lingering presence of the image of God, even in the worst perpetrator (p. 83).

In calling the next generation to take up the discipline of forgiveness, Tutu (1999) was issuing a call for transformational leadership, of which hope is a necessary ingredient (Spears, 1995, p. 4). According to Northouse (2001), transformational leadership is the process by which a leader “engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (p. 132). It assumes that even in situations of intense conflict where persons have committed great wrongs, those wrongs do not prevent community members from embracing change (p. 138). The hope that characterizes transformational leadership has a firm foundation if one accepts the biblical idea of a transcendent aspect of human nature that is not defaced by even the grossest moral failure (Henry, 1984, p. 547). Forgiveness then can serve as a powerful expression of this hope, and a mechanism for transformation in which both leader and followers become “healthier, wiser, freer, more likely themselves to become servants” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 27).

Finally, the concept of human beings as made in the image of God suggests that servant-leaders need not assign arbitrary limits to the transformational power of forgiveness. If there are no conditions under which God’s image in a person may be defaced, then forgiveness is appropriately unconditional (Enright, 1998). Ramsey (2006) found empirical support for this hypothesis in her study on the experiences of former perpetrators in post-apartheid South Africa (p. 26). She concluded that “in an environment where human beings practice the principles of servant-leadership, empathy, forgiveness, and healing, there is hope for redemption in the hearts of some of the most hardened persons, the most unrepentant perpetrators, and hope for the restoration of community” (p. 26). Interestingly, perpetrators experienced the most transformation when the forgiveness offered them was “not bound by the remorse or denial of the perpetrator” (p. 26).



THE DIVINE IMAGE

I began by observing that servant-leadership, a concept with roots in the religious world, has had great influence among persons who do not embrace any form of religious tradition. I end with a parallel observation. The concept of the divine image in human beings, which is an important cornerstone of Jewish and Christian theology, can be instructive for anyone who contemplates asking or granting forgiveness, whether or not that person is actively religious. It is instructive because forgiveness begins and ends with a recognition of shared humanity, and a sense that the *shalom* of the community is of greater value than one's personal well-being. Such are the core convictions of servant-leadership (Spears, 1995, p. 3).

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SERVANT-LEADERSHIP, REGENERATIVE LOVE,
AND FORGIVENESS

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SERVANT-LEADERSHIP – “NONE DARE CALL IT RELIGIOUS?”

Christine Wicker, a senior religion reporter for *The Dallas Morning News*, captures an intriguing aspect of the spirit of Robert Greenleaf and the servant-leadership movement he created in her essay, *Seeking the Soul of Business*. Wicker observes that “None dare call it religious! But a management philosophy catching on at companies across America sounds so much like religion that adherents are sometimes at pains to make the difference clear. This is spirituality. Ethics. Values. Common sense. And market imperative, they say” (Spears, 1988, p. 246). But not necessarily the domain of religion.

The prologue to Wicker’s essay states that Wicker is writing a book on “individualistic spirituality, a trend that University of Chicago church historian, Martin Marty calls one of the three greatest changes happening in American religion today” (Spears, 1988, p. 247).

It is important to note that there is indeed an elementary rebirth of the power and practicality of love as incorporated, for instance, in Greenleaf’s servant-leadership writings as well as other writings in a variety of fields perhaps best described as a rise of consciousness or “individual spirituality.” But it is important to note that this rebirth of the power of love is not led by any specific religious organizations. In fact, the reference to religion is placed in the context of honoring both the individual person’s identity and the collective’s choice to pursue wholeness within the context of relig-



ion, or outside that context. For instance, though the image of Christ washing the feet of his disciples was a central image to Greenleaf regarding the power, beauty, and love evoked by servant-leadership, Greenleaf did not impose his own personal beliefs on others, and in fact encouraged a graceful, open sense of mutuality for humanity as a whole, regardless of religious tradition. In later life Greenleaf often lived in community as a Quaker, and was blessed with an iconoclastic, often countercultural persona. He appeared to foresee and thus discard the heavy baggage religious, gnostic, atheistic, or even irreligious biases and ideological colorations often introduce, and he forwarded a kind of elegant and disciplined view of the regenerative powers of love for all people.

Thus, servant-leadership appears to fit comfortably in the description of individual spirituality or “individualistic spirituality,” to borrow Martin Marty’s words, as a part of a growing worldwide consciousness of the practical power of love and forgiveness both within the context of religion and outside religious contexts.

Ervin Laszlo, the founder and president of the Club of Budapest and author of the books *The Choice* and *Macroshift*, writes in the magazine *IONS Noetic Sciences Review*, March-May, 2002, No. 59, p. 9, that “Behind the global cacophony of terrorism, war, social, economic, and ecological upheaveal, something else is happening. A quiet but significant groundswell of consciousness is arising perhaps just in time to save us a sustainable niche on this still-beautiful planet.”

Laszlo adds:

Perhaps the most promising aspect of the people involved in this groundswell of consciousness is their spirituality. This need not mean adherence to a formal religion or organized church. It can be an inner-directed attitude, a search for personal identity and meaning in life. Spirituality unlike religion is a private matter, penetrating the relationship between the individual and the cosmos. Unlike religion, it does not require a particular place for its exercise, nor does it require a priesthood. Its temple is the mind of the individual, and its altar is the state of consciousness that comes about through deep meditation and prayer, art and literature in



their many forms and the remarkable fact that science is evolving in a holistic way of thinking about the world. (IONS, March-May, 2002, pp. 10, 14-15)

Laszlo also reports that “addressing a joint session of Congress in Washington in February of 1991, Czech writer-president Vaclav Havel said,

Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better. . . . and the catastrophe towards which this world is headed—the ecological, social, demographic, or general breakdown of civilization—will be unavoidable. (IONS, March-May, 2002, p. 15)

Laszlo, however, while admitting that “Havel’s view is well taken,” writes,

but it is not a ground for pessimism. The breakdown of civilization is not unavoidable: Our consciousness can be evolved. In a significant number of people it is evolving already. If each of us would evolve his or her consciousness, today’s stream of what I call “Holos-consciousness” would swell into a mighty tide that could change the world. (IONS, March-May, 2002, p. 15)

Robert Owens Scott, editor of the magazine *Spirituality & Health*, which deals with the soul-body connection, expressed similar sentiments in the magazine’s Spring 2001 edition about a cultural revolution he too sees taking place:

Two years ago, we founded this magazine on a simple premise. Namely, that all of us are living in an era of such profound and hopeful change that it is not an exaggeration to call it a renaissance. The word, of course, means “rebirth.” What’s being reborn is our sense of ourselves as spiritual beings, deeply connected and open to one another and to something greater than ourselves. These are exciting times, and whether that’s a blessing or a curse is up to us. The first step in realizing our potential may lie in recognizing what’s going on around us. (p. 1)



UNLEASHING THE AMAZING POWERS OF LOVE

Peter Block, a supporter of servant-leadership and a well-known business consultant and author, is quoted by Wicker about the religious aspects of servant-leadership and Robert Greenleaf's philosophy. Wicker tells the story about Block, a Jew, who was once complimented after a speech dealing with servant-leadership and told he sounded like a good Christian. His reply was, "I'm just trying to figure life out." And then he added the telling words so many people feel about servant-leadership: "It's pure pragmatism for me" (Spears, 1988, p. 247).

Individual spirituality and servant-leadership are founded upon a very simple, yet profound basis—to wit: the expansion of the power of our love and the respect it builds in our relationships with others. It assumes that we are here in this time and space experience to love and serve and that the only thing that really matters is that we love each other.

Unfortunately, the expansion of our love is conditioned by differences of religion, nationality, race, tribe, gender, cultures, skin color, social class, money, ego, politics, *ad infinitum*. Depak Chopra writes that only when one "drops the terrific burdens and encumbrances of defensiveness, resentment and hurtfulness, can we become lighthearted, carefree, joyous and free" (1994, p. 61). That is not an intricate concept. Love is very learner-friendly.

The notion of deep learning presents itself: learning that only love and forgiveness have any chance of ridding our human ego of its many judgments, criticisms and hatreds that divide humanity.

Dr. Gerald G. Jampolsky writes:

If we love, we tend to forgive, and forgiveness is the vehicle for changing our perceptions and letting go of our fears, condemning judgments and grievances. We need to remind ourselves constantly that love is the only reality there is. Anything we perceive that does not mirror love is a misperception. Forgiveness, then, becomes the means of correcting our misperceptions; it allows us to see only the love in others and ourselves and nothing else. (1979, p. 65)



The more we expand love and forgiveness, the more we realize their practical power.

When I was in my first year of college many years ago, student attendance was required at weekly chapel services. At that time I had never been a member of any church. I found, however, that I enjoyed these services. At one of these chapel events an elderly preacher rose to speak. After surveying the student body, he opened his sermon by quietly saying, “Never criticize.” He paused, took his time to again view his audience, and quietly repeated his admonition: “Never criticize.” He then suddenly pounded the podium with a very loud thud of the flat of his hand (awakening many students in the process) and thundered the words, “No, never!” Most of us were very startled.

His message was elementary: “The power of love in your life is what you are. So don’t compromise it by negative judgments, resentments and criticisms.”

Although those thoughts didn’t sink in right away, the seeds were planted.

I have come to believe, after 14 years in our nation’s government, that eventually we all must learn that we need an ability, indeed, perhaps better referred to as a response-ability, to drop our negative judgments, defensiveness, resentments, hatreds and criticisms that serve only to short-circuit our natural gifts of love. We do, indeed, need to remind ourselves constantly that love is the only reality there is and that we are all here to love and serve. Conscious thinking often sees only distorted visions. Love is ever true. The author Joel Goldsmith writes, “We are admonished to withhold all judgments because if we judge by appearances the world is filled with skies that sit on mountains and car tracks that come together” (Goldsmith, 1961, p. 63). Most people wouldn’t go so far as Goldsmith, nor would they agree with Shakespeare’s Hamlet that “nothing is good nor bad but thinking makes it so.” But we all know in our better moments that much of what we see is illusions of our mind and that there is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us it hardly behooves any of us to busily



judge and criticize each other, lest we become and be known, over time, as all judgment but not much of love.

Each time we catch ourselves criticizing and hating, our better selves remind us that someone so taught us as a child and that only the miracles of love and forgiveness can undo it.

That seems to me to be what Robert Greenleaf was also writing about when he urged employers to abandon command and control leadership for a servant-leadership that validates the worth and dignity of employees with a love that was free of criticisms, commands, and judgments. Greenleaf writes:

Love is an indefinable term and its manifestations are both subtle and infinite. But it begins, I believe, with one absolute condition: unlimited liability. As soon as one's liability for another is qualified to any degree, love is diminished by that much. (1977, p. 38)

Unlimited liability to love, of course, is unconditional love.

This kind of love is usually held up for ridicule in the "real world." Good for poets and philosophers, dreamers, perhaps, but not practical. But this is beginning to change.

In Larry Spears' interview of Margaret Wheatley he mentioned that in her book *Leadership and the New Science* she wrote, "Love in organizations is the most potent source of power we have available." Spears then asked her, "What do you think that servant-leaders inside our many organizations can do to unleash love in the workplace?"

Wheatley replied:

It's simple: just be loving. Why has expressing love become such a problem when it is a fundamental human characteristic? This is where I think we have overanalyzed and overcomplexified something that is known to everyone alive. Babies know how to unleash love. (Spears & Noble, 2005, p. 62)

We should all pause to let Wheatley's words sink in. Wheatley is not a



philosopher. She is a business consultant of renown. She gives practical, common-sense advice to business people who seek her help and advice. Well, there it is. In practical, common-sense English. There's nothing mysterious about love. It is simple. It is practical. It is a "fundamental human characteristic." Yet it is too often imprisoned deep within us.

Robert Browning wrote:

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise from outward things. There is an inmost center in us all where truth abides in fullness—and to know rather consists in finding a way whence the imprisoned splendor from within may escape, than in effecting entry of a light supposed to be without. (1948, p. 431)

Yet we all seem to "seek without" for the great truths, for our light. But, alas, our light is never without. It is the imprisoned splendor of love and compassion always within and always ready for its miraculous use. It binds us together with all mankind, always reminding us that wholeness is indeed our natural state.

Albert Einstein, perhaps the greatest scientist of the 20th century, put it this way:

A human being is a part of the whole that we call the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This illusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for only the few people nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature. ([http://en.wikiquote.org/Albert Einstein](http://en.wikiquote.org/Albert_Einstein))

We all have to free ourselves from the prison of our illusions and the insecurities of our freedom by simply being still and quiet and widening our circle of compassion and love so that at least as we enter old age—and hopefully before—we can free that imprisoned splendor of love within us.

We all know better than we do. If we knew "back then" what we know



now, our circles of compassion would be wider. Yet, life is nothing if not a learning process. There is an old German saying that “we get too soon old and too late smart.” But one never gets too old to continue learning. The opportunity to love and serve is always there.

Lama Surya Das, one of the foremost teachers of Buddhism in the West, quotes Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in *Insecurity of Freedom*, as follows:

One ought to enter old age the way one enters the senior year at a university. The years of old age may enable us to attain the high values we failed to sense, the insights we have missed, the wisdom we ignored. They are indeed formative years, rich in possibilities to unlearn the follies of a lifetime, to see through inbred self deceptions, to deepen understanding and compassion, to widen the horizon of honesty, to redefine the sense of fairness. Pablo Casals at the age of 93 was practicing the cello five or six hours a day. Someone asked him, “Pablo, why are you still practicing the cello?” Casals answered: “Because I think I’m making progress.” (Lama Surya Das, “Ripening Over Time: The Art of Becoming a Wise Elder,” *Spirituality & Health*, February 2006, p. 85)

THE WONDERFUL GIFTS OF RELIGION?

The wonderful gift of religion is the message that we are spiritual in nature. A major drawback, however, to religion is expressed in the magazine *Spirituality & Health* by Elizabeth Lesser, co-founder of the Omega Institute, the nation’s largest holistic education and retreat center. Lesser writes:

We’ve had thousands of years of rule-based theologies that demand love and proscribe hatred, envy and inhumanity. (2001, Spring, p. 37)

In response to that accusation her close friend Huston Smith, author of *The World’s Religions*, asked,

How much of the damage you are thinking of was due to Christianity and



how much to the fact that the people who perpetrated it happened coincidentally to be Christian and behaved in the way greedy and power hungry people tend always and everywhere to behave? (p. 38)

To which Ms. Lesser replied:

But I don't think it is enough to say that the shadow side of a religion is activated coincidentally; that the greedy and power hungry people within a certain religion would be greedy and power-hungry regardless of religious affiliation. I think that religions have to take more responsibility than that.

Elizabeth Lesser and Huston Smith are great friends and have a strong mutual respect for each other's views. And so, religions can be good or bad and at times ridiculous and so can people pursuing spirituality independent of religion. Obviously, good teachers like Elizabeth Lesser and Huston Smith abound within or without formal religion—teachers who strive even to free their students of the teacher's own philosophical preferences. Condemnation of a given religion is like condemnation of the self: it is worthy, if received well and authentically acted upon. Let's take, for example, two of the major religions of the ancient and contemporary world, and one ideology. In the name of both Islam and Christianity, and what many call "the new religion," an ideology called Science, dastardly deeds have been perpetrated throughout history. Now let's extend this thought. Both within and outside the context of Islam, Christianity, and Science, whole cultures have perpetrated massacres, mass bloodshed, genocide, and human atrocities of every form. Even so, there is a sense of illumination that accompanies all great spiritual traditions, as well as all great cultural traditions, and yes, all great ideas, which we might also call great dreams. And within such traditions, ideas, and dreams, a transcendent understanding tends to rise from the ashes of our human frailties and failures.



UNCONDITIONAL LOVE THRIVES WITHOUT ORGANIZATION, RULES OR REGULATIONS

Many religions, however, still have significant problems in conditioning love on the basis of religious affiliation. Neither can many religions affirm other religions as authentic ways of salvation or liberation on their own terms. History is replete with thousands of years of religious discrimination between and within religions as well as against those who profess no religious faith. Even in this twenty-first century there remains a great deal of misunderstanding, hatred, vengeance and the conditioning of love by those who lead or profess to represent world religious faiths. In addition, there is little effort among the world's religious leaders to address what Elizabeth Lesser refers to as that "shadow side" of religion. Why haven't religious leaders sought an international body of religions that would at least affirm the free flow of love and the sanctity of human life as everyone's right—especially the world's war-ridden children's? Who is at fault for this elementary neglect?

A friend of mine recently was part of a group that traveled to Israel and to the West Bank of Palestine to view the walls the Israelis have built to shut out the Palestinians. The group heard from Dr. Jad Isaq, a Palestinian who heads the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem; he talked about the pain of being a Palestinian whose land has been stolen. Here is what my friend reported that Dr. Isaq said to this group of Christians:

Dr. Isaq said he had no use for religion. He said he sees three kinds of religious people: Christians—like George Bush who woke up one morning and said he dreamed that God told him to invade Iraq. So he did. And next week he might say God told him to invade Iran. Jewish—like Ariel Sharon who said this is the land God gave him, so it's all right for him to take it from the Palestinians. Muslims—like the suicide bomber who does not like what is going on so he kills himself and others with him. Between these three crazies, I cannot live. If these are the three religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, then to hell with religion.



I do not validate Dr. Isaq's conclusions as to who are the "crazies" in the Middle East. There are enough of them to share the blame. But I do agree with Rabbi Michael Lerner "that we cannot continue using violence against violence as a way to end violence" (*Tikkun*, March/April 2006, p. 11).

HONORING THE HISTORY OF THE GREAT SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

I also believe that Robert Greenleaf, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, Bishop Tutu and many new leaders of the 20th Century have honored the history of the world's great spiritual traditions by demonstrating that the regenerative power of love can nullify vengeance and terrorism. There is an old saying that "he who uses vengeance must remember to dig two graves: one for his enemy and one for himself."

That, I believe, is the strong and unified message capable of being delivered by all of our great religions to the "crazies" of this beleaguered world who espouse terrorism in all of its sophisticated and not so sophisticated forms and guises. If political and religious leaders fail to speak out about the regenerative power of love as a natural antidote to vengeance, then others who are individually spiritual must do so. Love, in the final analysis, is simply treating people with respect, that is, validating their worth and dignity. The roots of violence are always found in disrespect and despair.

In an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* on February 23, 2006 entitled "Roots of Violence Found in Disrespect," staff writer Jane Lampman writes:

Respect is one of the most widely shared yearnings among human beings, and it touches the emotional core of people in profound ways. Respect given can be powerful and transformative. The results of respect withheld can be painful or even explosive. At a time when civility seems to be diminishing, some see the power of mutual respect as a way to break through cultural stereotypes and religious prejudices.



Lampman also quotes Akbar Ahmed, professor of Islamic studies at American University in Washington, who points out:

Cultures are rubbing against each other more than ever before in history. We need to be sensitive to . . . respect, honor, dignity, and how they are viewed in different societies.

Obviously, the simple power of love can demonstrate respect for a person who may be viewed as an enemy. Lampman quotes Rabbi Marc Gopin, director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia, as stating that when such a demonstration of the power of love occurs “it’s a shock” and “respect can have remarkable effects.”

It’s not as though the world has not recently experienced national leaders who have embraced and successfully used the practical power of love in meeting hatred, vengeance and terrorism. Examples abound in leaders such as Gandhi of India who championed love, non-violence, forgiveness and peaceful civil disobedience as a response to unjust laws in successfully leading India to a largely bloodless revolution against England.

And a youthful-hearted though physically aged Nelson Mandela, the liberator of South Africa from brutal terrorism and apartheid, followed Gandhi’s advice and used the power of love and nonviolence to convince President F. W. de Klerk of South Africa to announce to a startled world that the best interests of the white community of South Africa would be served by negotiating themselves out of the exclusive control of political power. Martin Luther King also replicated Gandhi’s reliance on the power of love and forgiveness in his successful civil rights revolution in America in the 1960s. And there were many more world leaders in that brutal and bloody 20th Century who recognized the practical powers of love and that using violence against violence is no way to end violence.

We live in a fast-shrinking world of time and space. And, as Vaclav Havel expressed it, time may be running out unless there is “a global revolution in human consciousness” (*IONS*, March-May 2002, p. 15).



And today there is growing evidence of such a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness. After all, the human spirit is freer today than ever and the potential of the evolving human spirit—that imprisoned splendor within us all—is boundless. Under these circumstances, movements such as servant-leadership and individual spirituality encourage us to lead by emphasizing the amazing regenerative powers of love in all our lives.

And why not? After all, the idea is hard to escape, that we are all here to love and serve. For some, that's what life is all about. For many, the beauty of love is what makes life worth living. Everyone knows its touch, some more than others. Some in a highly conditioned form. But we all know it exists. No one has to take it on faith. It is the universal, golden rule of life that is increasingly being verified by high-quality science. No one, religious or not, can copyright love, for love crosses all the many boundaries, prejudices, religions, politics, tribes and cultures with ease.

Love sells only itself and is easily felt and identified. No broker is necessary. It validates the interconnectedness of us all.

In a real sense, no political or theological walls can be erected that fence out love. Charles Schultz, a practicing Christian and the creator of "Peanuts" and Charlie Brown, reportedly said after having taught Methodist Sunday School for ten years, "The best theology is probably no theology: Just love one another."

The story told of the well-known teaching of Hillel, the celebrated first-century rabbi for whom Jewish campus organizations today are named, illustrates this simple point. A man approached Hillel and said, "If you can teach me the whole truth of the Torah while I stand on one foot, you can make me a Jew." Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary" (Kimball, 2002, p. 131). That is simply a good description of unconditional love and it is at the center of all of our great religions and thoughts, yet is often buried in the commentaries, regulations, dogmas and cultures of organized religions or in the disorganized methodologies of thought found both within and



outside religion. Fortunately, as was previously expressed by Wheatley, it is also “a fundamental human characteristic—babies know how to unleash love” (Spears & Noble, 2005, p. 62). Is it any wonder that Hillel’s fame with young people has lasted over the centuries?

A GENTLE CHIDING OF RELIGION

It is interesting to note that even the Dalai Lama has gently chided organized religions. In a review of two of the Dalai Lama’s best-selling books, *Ethics for a New Millennium* and *The Art of Happiness* in the New York Times on October 27, 1999, Richard Bernstein quotes the Dalai Lama as stating: “I sometimes say that religion is something we can perhaps do without.” Bernstein comments: “One wonders if that is not part of his appeal, a call for a ‘spiritual revolution’ that does not depend on the idea of a supreme being. It appears the perfect way to satisfy the spiritual hunger of people living in a scientific and secular age.”

Bernstein further comments: “The Dalai Lama, refreshingly, claims no unusual spiritual powers. He identifies himself as an ordinary man, prone to the same troubles as the rest of us, but one who has learned something about conquering the impulses that make us unhappy.”

In the same article, Bernstein quotes the Dalai Lama as stating, “Generally speaking, one begins by identifying those factors which lead to happiness and those factors which lead to suffering. Having done this, one then sets about gradually eliminating those factors which lead to suffering and cultivating those that lead to happiness. That is the way. . . . Happiness comes from cultivating the traits of selflessness, generosity and compassion for others,” which gently relieves one of the burdens of judgments, criticisms, and defensiveness, hence breeding happiness.

I see these words of the Dalai Lama as part of a not-so-quiet cultural and spiritual revolution of the practical powers of love—perhaps, part of the reinvention of spirituality that also includes what Greenleaf was referring to in his views of servant-leadership that aim to simply validate the worth and dignity of people. How refreshing.



A story told by Huston Smith in *Spirituality & Health* (Spring 2001, p. 38) is revealing about the Dalai Lama's refusal to judge others. Mr. Smith writes that a Hindu swami tried several times to get the Dalai Lama to say that Buddhism was a more peaceful religion than Christianity. When the Dalai Lama dodged the questions and it was put to him a third time, the Dalai Lama said, "If I say anything against someone else's religion, the Buddha would scold me"—with a twinkle in his eye, no doubt.

This simple message that our judgments (such as the one proposed to the Dalai Lama) often get in the way of, and dilute, our love is a big part of the driving force of the individual spirituality renaissance which Greenleaf, Block, Wheatley, Laszlo, Scott and so many others appear to be articulating. We all may have separate views of life, but that doesn't mean that judgments and criticisms have to get in the way of our extending love and kindness beyond our normal limits.

The noted American poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox is quoted by Carol Zaleski in *The Christian Century* magazine (March 21, 2006, p. 35) as expressing these sentiments:

*Don't look for the flaws
As you go through life
And even though you find them
Be wise and kind, and somewhat blind,
And look for the virtues behind them.*

There is an old saying that if one has a choice of being right or kind, one should always opt to be kind. Few of us can follow that admonition. But there is wisdom in it.

In fact, one of the most self-serving things one can do for mind and body is to love others "no matter what," that is, by dismissing our judgments and criticisms that only serve to drag us down and dilute our energies.

If that sounds difficult to do, it's because as simple and as beautiful as unconditional love is, it involves changing our customary frames of refer-



ence. This is not easy. Consider Harry Emerson Fosdick's words said of Henry Ward Beecher: "No one ever felt the full force of his kindness until he did Beecher an injury" (Fosdick, 1958, p. 29). With Beecher, unkindness was met not with judgments, unkindness or vengeance, but with more love, no matter what! Obviously, Beecher had a different frame of reference than most. And it included the immense power of loving unconditionally.

Fosdick also wrote, "We can never forgive as much as we have been forgiven" (quoted in Perry, 2002, p. 27) and quoted Booker Washington as saying, "I will not let any man reduce my soul to the level of hatred" (Perry, 2002, p. 31).

Fosdick also quoted Abraham Lincoln as stating:

No man resolved to make the most of himself can spare the time for personal contention. Still less can he afford to take all the consequences, including the vitiating of his temper, and the loss of self control. You have more of that feeling of personal resentment than I have. Perhaps I have too little of it; but I never thought it paid. I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing. (quoted in Perry, 2002, pp. 31-32)

Lincoln obviously knew that ill judgments, criticisms and loss of one's temper serve only to dilute the power of one's love, or as the Dalai Lama might express it, serve only to produce impulses that make us unhappy.

THE BEAUTY AND SIMPLICITY OF LOVE

The beauty of love is that it is not a matter of intellect. It only has to be released. Lama Surya Das seems aware of this when he writes, "Wisdom tells me I am nothing; love tells me everything" (*Spirituality & Health*, February 2006, p. 85).

Nor is the power of love as impractical as it may seem when one realizes that quantum physics is now verifying that the physical appearances reported by our limited human receptors can be highly illusory. Indeed, subatomic particles, of which we are all constructed, act and react in accor-



dance with the attitude and feelings of the scientific observer. We are finally beginning to be aware that most people tend to be as good or as bad as we choose to see them as being.

We have begun to understand a Henry Ward Beecher, a Booker Washington, a Gandhi, a Mother Teresa, a Martin Luther King, a Will Rogers, an Albert Schweitzer, a Nelson Mandela, a Bishop Tutu, a Vaclav Havel, a Corazon “Cory” Aquino, and countless others who have discerned the elementary power of love and forgiveness when it is not conditioned by the heavy baggage of endless judgments and criticisms. Were these people saints? By no means! But they are people who have evolved in consciousness enough to realize how painful it is to their souls to let their love be conditioned by the acts or words of others.

Steven Covey, in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, also affirms that the simple, universal principles of unconditional love

are not esoteric, mysterious or “religious” ideas. There is not one principle taught in this book that is unique to any specific faith or religion, including my own. These principles are a part of most every major enduring religion, as well as enduring social philosophies and ethical systems. They are self-evident and can easily be validated by any individual. It’s almost as if these principles or natural laws are part of the human condition, part of the consciousness, part of the human conscience. They seem to exist in all human beings, regardless of social conditioning and loyalty to them, even though they might be submerged or numbered by such conditions or disloyalty. (1989, p. 34)

Using today’s high-tech verbiage, one could say that we are all “hard-wired” for love. I am convinced that this is what fires the engines of our world’s greatest leaders. It is part of an evolution of consciousness, a transformational bridge to authenticity and service without purely personal agendas. And that’s why so many people are interested in it. In its essence, love makes complex things simple.

Dr. Dean Ornish, a cardiologist, author of the book *Love and Survival*,



is one of the many writers speaking about the practical power of love from a viewpoint of the complexities of medicine and new science. He writes:

This book is based upon a simple but powerful idea: Our survival depends upon the healing power of love, intimacy and relationships. Physically. Emotionally. Spiritually. As individuals. As communities. As a country. As a culture. Perhaps even as a species. . . Love and intimacy are at a root of what makes us sick and what makes us well, what causes sadness and what brings happiness, what makes us suffer and what leads to healing. If a new drug had the same impact [as love and intimacy], virtually every doctor in the country would be recommending it for their patients. It would be malpractice not to prescribe it, yet, with a few exceptions, we doctors do not learn much about the healing power of love, intimacy and transformation in our medical training. Rather, the ideas are often ignored or even denigrated. (1998, pp. 1, 3) .

Dr. Ornish further writes,

I am not aware of any other factor in medicine that has a greater impact on our survival than the healing power of love and intimacy. Not diet, not smoking, not exercise, not stress, not genetics, not drugs, not surgery—that has a greater impact on our quality of life, incidence of illness, and premature death from all causes. (pp. 3-4)

He continues,

Put in another way, anything that promotes feelings of love and intimacy is healing; anything that promotes isolation, separation, loneliness, loss, hostility, anger, cynicism, depression, alienation and related feelings often leads to suffering, disease, and premature death from all causes. While the evidence on the relationship of psycho-social factors to illness is controversial, most scientific studies have demonstrated the extraordinarily powerful role of love and relationships in determining health and illness. (p. 29)

Ornish adds,



I am learning that the key to our survival is love. When we love someone and feel loved by them, somehow along the way our suffering subsides, our deepest wounds begin healing, our hearts start to feel safe enough to be vulnerable and to open a little wider. We begin experiencing our own emotions and the feeling of those around us. (p. 96)

LOVE AND THE POINTING FINGER OF “TOUCHY-FEELEY”

Of course, despite the growing support of the power of unconditional love, community, relationships, bonding and connectedness, there will always be doubters of the power of love as a natural cosmic law.

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D., Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine and author of the book *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, addresses such doubters from the viewpoint of medicine and science. Dr. Remen cautions,

Anything that is not intellectual is seen as a weakness in this culture—the intuition, the spirit, the soul, the heart. Up until very recently, people devalued these things. It still opens one up to the pointing finger of touchy-feely. (Quoted in Ornish, 1998, p. 206)

Dr. Remen, however, adds,

But I don't care about the pointing finger anymore. Often, people who point that finger have no idea what human strength looks like. These things that are seen as so soft are far more powerful, when the chips are down, than the ideas and the intellect, all these things we respect so much. They are what enable us to meet the events of our lives and not be trampled by them. Ideas are not as powerful as the heart and the soul. Love is more powerful than ideas. (Quoted in Ornish, 1998, p. 206)

Immediately upon the tragic occurrences of September 11, 2001, when our nation's feelings were suddenly and catastrophically “down,” the soft values of love, community, relationships, connectedness, all immediately surfaced across America to unite and strengthen our nation. It is, indeed,



these softer values which enable us in troubled times to experience what human strength is and how important our relationships and connectedness with each other are.

It appears at times that those involved in the delivery of health care often go to great lengths in order not to talk about love and affection in healing. Somehow, the words love and intimacy are hard to say, for fear, I suppose, of that pointing finger.

Dr. Deepak Chopra, in his book *Unconditional Life*, tells the story of a hospital's treatment of premature babies. One group of babies was given normal treatment in the hospital's intensive care unit for neonates. The other was scheduled for fifteen minutes of special attention, in which someone reached in through the portholes of their sealed cribs to stroke them and gently wiggle their arms and legs. Dr. Chopra reported that

the result of such a simple addition to the usual hospital formula was striking. The stroked babies gained 47 percent more weight per day than the control group; they were more alert and started to act like normally delivered babies sooner. Finally, they left the hospital a week ahead of schedule, allowing the authors of the study to note a savings of \$3,000 per infant. . . . Here, the contrast between life and antilife seems almost too obvious to point out. Scientific medicine has reached the stage where it is not respectable to call stroking by its right name—much less love and affection. Stroking has to go by the Orwellian “tactile/kinesthetic stimulation.” (Chopra, 1992, pp. 14-15)

Dr. Chopra also told in his book *Quantum Healing* the interesting story of an Ohio University study of heart disease in the 1970s that was conducted by feeding quite toxic, high-cholesterol diets to rabbits in order to block their arteries, duplicating the effect that the diet has on humans. Dr. Chopra reported:

Consistent results began to appear in all the rabbit groups, except for one which strangely displayed 60 percent fewer symptoms. Nothing in the rabbits' physiology could account for their high tolerance to the diet, until it was discovered by accident that the student who was in charge of



feeding these particular rabbits liked to fondle and pet them. . . . This alone seemed to enable the animals to overcome the toxic diet. (Chopra, 1992, pp. 30-31)

Dr. Chopra added that repeat experiments, in which one group of rabbits was treated neutrally while the others were loved, came up with similar results.

LOVE: THE ONE CREATIVE FORCE

Eric Butterworth tells the story of a distinguished professor of sociology who conducted a study to determine the effects on children living in an environment that was ravaged by war-like conditions and economic uncertainty. He gathered 200 young boys from the most impoverished and violent areas of Baltimore and sent a group of eager graduate students to interview them. Sadly, but not surprisingly, his researchers' evaluation of each boy's future was, "He hasn't got a chance" for success. They could see only despair ahead of them.

Twenty-five years later, another professor, intrigued by the study, conducted follow-up research to see exactly what had happened to those 200 boys. Had their lives turned out as dismally as they had feared? Surprisingly, they had not. Of the 200 original research subjects, 180 were located, and of these 180 nearly all of them had grown up to be successful, healthy, happy adults who were contributing positively to their communities.

What had happened between the time of the original research study and adulthood? The follow-up research could find only one common factor that linked all of these people together. All of them reported that they had been profoundly impacted by the same teacher. When this teacher was located, now much older, and asked to tell what remarkable things she had done to change the course of these children's lives, her eyes sparkled and her lips broke into a gentle smile. "It's really very simple," she said. "I loved those boys" (Canfield & Hansen, 1993, p. 2).

She just loved them! That was the very practical and in-common treat-



ment that teacher gave to her students that brought unanticipated success to their lives!

Some would say that to extend love unconditionally to others is weakness, a retreat from the realities of life. But it is the weak who retreat from the deep realities. Love and gentleness can only be expected from the strong. Truly successful people are aware that their primary responsibility in life is to love and serve others.

Evolving humanity is beginning to realize that anything that gets in the way of loving and serving—be it political, social, religious, tribal, racial, whatever—is a misuse of our consciousness, and, indeed, consciousness is what we are.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN

In our children's formal education, we stress all kinds of achievements to be attained, in terms of grades, athletic prowess, academic laurels, attending the finest schools, and so forth, with the implication that ultimately these effects of the world will bring important jobs, material comforts, increased social advantages, and meaning and purpose to life.

But as alluring as these achievements are, in the final analysis, they are of secondary importance for our children in terms of their experience, from mature, transparent, authentic adults, as we are here in this fragile time and space experience to love and serve humanity. The world's most revered leaders have always been servant-leaders, from Gandhi and Mother Teresa, to Robert Greenleaf and many more. This kind of a focus in life always produces people on the front lines of serving humanity!

We all might consider anew how children would react during their formative years if they were advised that their basic purpose in life, their road to true greatness, is simply to love and to forgive (themselves and others) and to serve humanity.

Perhaps children would be impressed by the very practical statement of a highly regarded and successful American football coach, Vince Lom-



bardi. Robson M. Marinho quotes Lombardi as saying, “I don’t necessarily have to like my players and partners. But, as a leader I must love them. Love is loyalty, love is teamwork, love respects dignity and individuality. This is the strength of any organization” (Marinho, 2006, p. 261).

Recognizing how powerful love is, of course, is very challenging for most of us, but giving love and forgiveness in our daily lives is not complex. It is a universal power bestowed at birth, and it is a practical necessity of life. It can be dispersed liberally or grossly limited by our own conditions or racial, religious, cultural, tribal, social, economic and many more man-made restrictions.

Consider how Martin Luther King felt about the power and accessibility of love. King wrote about greatness and simply related it to love:

Everybody can be great. . . because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love. (Quoted in Canfield & Hansen, 1993, p. 34)

Dr. George Wald, a Harvard biologist who won the Nobel Prize, writes: “What one really needs is not Nobel laureates, but love. The Nobel laureate is a consolation prize. What matters is love” (1998, p. 96).

And consider too what Martin Luther King said about terrorism, certainly the antithesis of love and service, on the night before he was assassinated:

The choice is no longer violence or nonviolence. That’s not what we’re talking about. It’s nonviolence or non-existence. Unless we all become nonviolent we are doomed. (*Tikkun*, January/February 2006, p. 46)

One only has to look at terrorism and the growing hate and vengeance that is popularized by world political leaders, our entertainment industries, news media and extremist religions, amoral philosophies and overly-reductionistic scientist-atheists to see how important King’s message of love, nonviolence and forgiveness is.



If challenged by parents and educators, children could be led to focus on how they can best use their unique talents of love and forgiveness to serve people and a frightened world. And why not? Love is natural to children, especially to very young children. A one-year-old baby will immediately give back smile for smile and love for love because that is his nature. While all children, considering conditions at birth and their early environment, may not continue to respond with love, most of them have that potential which could be brought out by parents and teachers who are not afraid to talk openly about those words *love* and *forgiveness*. Who knows how many Gandhis, Lincolns, Martin Luther Kings, Corretta Kings, Corazon Aquinos, Albert Schweitzers, Henry Ward Beechers, Desmond Tutus, Nelson Mandelas, Mother Teresas, and Robert Greenleafs are potentially within our children just waiting to be drawn forth?

THE TURNING OF VIOLENCE AND HATE INTO TOLERANCE, LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

In January of 2006, Michelle Bachelet was elected as the first woman president of Chile. She was also the first woman to rise to political prominence on her own merits rather than on the political power of her husband. Bachelet also bears her own scars from the dark years of massive human rights abuses during Pinochet's coup in 1973. Her father, an Air Force general who opposed Pinochet, died after being tortured in one of Pinochet's prisons. Bachelet and her mother were also arrested by the Pinochet government, tortured, and forced into exile. The *Chicago Tribune* reported on January 17, 2006 that at her inauguration as President of Chile,

The 54 year old pediatrician spoke on Sunday of life and healing, not death and revenge. "Violence entered my life, destroying what I loved. Because I was a victim of hate, I have dedicated my life to turn that hate into understanding, into tolerance and, why not say it, into love."

The power of love was waiting within her to be tapped. How encouraging and unique it is to hear a prominent politician, a victim of hate, dedicate her



life to “turning hate into understanding and tolerance and, why not say it, into love.”

Yes, why not say it? Again, as Margaret Wheatley asks, “Why has expressing love become such a problem when it is a fundamental human characteristic?” (Spears & Noble, 2005, p. 62). Is it not a powerful human instinct in all of us? Shouldn’t it be more popularly expressed when it is such a deep human instinct?

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Michelle Bachelete is not your ordinary political leader. Her insights reflect a growing awareness of world leaders that forgiveness allows, indeed, encourages leaders to, using her words, turn “hate into understanding, into tolerance and, why not say it, into love.” She understands that in failing to forgive by cherishing our grievances we only dilute our most valuable resource, our power of love.

Gerald G. Jampolsky, M.D., advances the same insight in his definition of the power of forgiveness:

Forgiveness then becomes a process of letting go and overlooking whatever we thought other people may have done to us, or whatever we may think we have done to them. When we cherish grievances we allow our mind to be fed by fear and we become imprisoned by these distortions. When we see our only function as forgiveness, and are willing to practice it consistently by directing our minds to be forgiving, we will find ourselves released and set free. Forgiveness corrects the misperception that we are separate from each other, and allows us to experience a sense of unity and at-one-ment with each other. (1979, pp. 65-66)

In other words, forgiveness frees up our dormant love.

Mrs. Bachelete has found her real self, her purpose of life, and that’s good news for the people of Chile.

Desmond Tutu, the South African Anglican Bishop who helped lead opposition to apartheid and decades of black and white terrorism in South



Africa, also spoke eloquently and bravely about the power of forgiveness. After the creation of democracy in South Africa, Bishop Tutu chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was designed to grant forgiveness and amnesty for all acts of terrorism, for blacks and whites who admitted their guilt for actions committed during the South African apartheid nightmare and sought forgiveness. In Tutu's book, aptly entitled *No Future Without Forgiveness*, he writes:

Thus, to forgive is indeed the best form of self interest since anger, resentment, and revenge are corrosive of the *summum bonum*, the greatest good, communal harmony that enhances the humanity and personhood of all in the community. (1977, p. 35)

Tutu further writes:

Forgiveness is not being sentimental. The study of forgiveness has become a growth industry. Whereas previously it was something often dismissed pejoratively as spiritual and religious, now because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa it is gaining attention as an academic discipline studied by psychologists, philosophers, physicians and theologians. In the United States there is an international Forgiveness Institute attached to the University of Wisconsin, and the John Templeton Foundation, with others, has started a multimillion-dollar Campaign for Forgiveness research.

In an article entitled "A Drive to Help Others Forgive," Jane Lampman, in the January 25, 2007 edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*, tells the story about the immense power of forgiveness that reshaped the life of investment banker Azim Kharmissa, whose only son, Tariq, a student at San Diego State University, was shot and killed by a 14-year old gang member as he was delivering pizzas for a part-time job. Khamisa recounted that when he learned of his son's death, it "felt like a nuclear bomb detonated inside of me." He reported that he was filled with extreme grief for a long time but "eventually experienced a very profound vision that there were victims at both ends of the gun."



That led him to make a crucial choice of forgiveness of the life of the murderer and his family. It also led him to create an antiviolence program that measurably altered attitudes among youths in San Diego and other cities. After his son's death, Khamisa created the Tariq Khamisa Foundation to develop and hold antiviolence forums in elementary and middle schools throughout San Diego. Seeking to inspire youths to choose nonviolent alternatives for solving their differences, he invited the father of his son's killer to join him in this work. The father accepted and Khamisa asked this utterly striking question:

Would he have become my friend if I'd wanted revenge? Revenge is never the right response. Conflict will never go away, but from conflict, brotherhood and unity are possible.

How many of us would have asked such a question? It is difficult for most of us to realize how necessary it is to practice love and forgiveness in our lives. Yet we really have no choice. Sooner or later the necessity is like a clarion call: we are here to love and serve. It's really just that simple if humanity is to save itself a place on this still-beautiful planet.

The world badly needs people like Bishop Tutu, Mrs. Bachelete and Azim Kharmissa who are not afraid to speak out about the practical power of forgiveness. They are just three of those not so rare new leaders of our age who have learned not to let other people's wrath and vengeance control their actions or dilute their love or cause them to follow the road to still more vengeance.

CONCLUSION

There is an emerging global awareness in human consciousness today sparked by prophetic new and exciting voices.

These voices are grounded on a growing belief in one's individual spirituality, the wholeness of our natural state and, as Robert Greenleaf expressed it, in the simple and regenerative forces of love and forgiveness.



Common folk lived over the centuries with a simple and often hidden faith in the power of love and forgiveness, and we are all the better for their unrecorded lives that were challenged by so many counterproductive cultures, clans, dogmas and beliefs.

George Eliot seems to recognize this in the novel *Middlemarch*.

For the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

(2003, p. 838)

Growing numbers of people, worldwide, now live, however, not in faithfully hidden lives but in open and global revolutions of profound changes that challenge our clashing cultures and disparate religious and nonreligious beliefs. Increasingly, the common and caring folk see themselves, as Robert Owens expressed it, “as spiritual beings deeply connected and open to one another and to something greater than ourselves” (*Spirituality & Health*, Spring 2001, p.1).

That something “greater than ourselves” requires the granting of universal human rights for all of the people on our good earth regardless of gender, race, religion or nationality. This may be a struggle for some of our political and religious leaders, but these are values sorely needed by much of humanity. Fortunately, they are easily available to anyone through giving love and forgiveness, because these are our most fundamental human characteristics, and they are inexhaustible and easily shared. They simply require, in the words of Robert Greenleaf, that we validate the worth and dignity of the people with whom we interrelate. And remember we are here to love and serve. And love alone makes life sweet.

And the crucible of life is love. No more. No less.

Teilhard de Chardin agreed:

The day will come when, after harnessing space, the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that



day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire. (quoted in Canfield and Hansen, 1993, p. 1)

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REACHING OUT TO A RACE: MARCUS GARVEY AND MASS COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE LENSES OF SERVANT- LEADERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

In light of the career and work of Marcus Garvey, the leadership skills he employed help to amplify Robert Greenleaf's description of the true and genuine servant-leader. In his classic book published in 1977, *Servant-Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Greenleaf identifies a series of attributes and virtues necessary to fulfill the role of "the great leader" who is "seen as a servant first" (p. 7). In his eyes, the concept and dynamics of leadership need an urgent re-definition and conceptual realignment if collective entities are to reach the noble goals to which they aspire:

A fresh critical look is being taken at the issues of power and authority, and people are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways. A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. (pp. 9-10)

The following pages will be an exploration into the leadership methodology of Marcus Garvey against the backdrop of Greenleaf's servant-leadership themes. The first part will be a historical examination of Garvey followed by a context analysis of servant-leadership.



GARVEY'S BACKGROUND

Marcus Garvey was born in Jamaica in the late 1800s. He resided in the United States from 1916 to 1927, never becoming a U.S. citizen. Yet in this brief span of time Garvey left a lasting impression upon the African American struggle for freedom and equality (Salley, 1993, p. 175).

According to Franklin (1994), African Americans began a major migration out of the South during World War I. By answering the Northern call for more laborers, many blacks were able to leave an economically depressed region for a "land of promise" (p. 376). As a result, hundreds of thousands left with high hopes, not only of securing gainful employment, but also of bidding farewell to a social and political life of second-class citizenship. The unrelenting onslaught brought on by the anti-black court systems, segregation, disenfranchisement, and lynching "served as important stimuli for blacks to move out of the South" (p. 376). Unfortunately, racial discrimination did not dissipate as many African Americans had anticipated. Valiant military service abroad did not alleviate the oppression either. Post-war race riots throughout the North and South only amplified this one frustrating fact: that the ideals of true democracy were elusive to people of African descent, no matter what region they lived in (pp. 380-381).

Many groups took up the cause for black equality, as a result. Organized labor and numerous organizations such as the Division of Negro Economics and the Associated Colored Employees of America tried, in vain, to enhance the black man's lot economically, socially, and politically. The "wheels of change" appeared to grind with unbearable slowness; and the majority of black Americans, who realized this, were reluctant to be mobilized into action (Franklin, 1994, pp. 376-381).

THE GARVEY THEME AND ORIGIN

It was just before this critical juncture in time, 1916, that Marcus Garvey arrived on the American scene. He displayed a unique ability to com-



municate and reach a great number of disillusioned African Americans. The secret to his success was an emphasis on racial pride “at a time when African Americans had so little of which to be proud” (Franklin, 1994, p. 395). As the father of modern black nationalism, he captured the imagination of a downtrodden people with his new inspiring message:

Garvey exalted everything black; he insisted that black stood for strength and beauty, not inferiority. He asserted that Africans had a noble past, and he declared that American blacks should be proud of their ancestry. (p. 395)

Along with this message of racial pride, Garvey established the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) among the black urban masses. This was an organization which he founded in Jamaica in 1914. Its eight-fold purpose conveyed the theme of Garveyism which sparked black interest nationwide:

- 1) to champion Negro nationhood by redemption of Africa;
- 2) to make the Negro race conscious;
- 3) to breathe the ideals of manhood and womanhood into every Negro;
- 4) to advocate self-determination;
- 5) to make the Negro world conscious;
- 6) to print all the news that will be interesting and constructive to the Negro;
- 7) to instill self-help; and
- 8) to inspire racial love and self-respect. (Bute and Harmer, 1997, p. 166)

The response in the black urban setting was, uncharacteristically, very favorable. By mid-year 1919, the association had more than thirty branches across the country with a membership reaching tens of thousands (Franklin, 1994, p. 395).



COMMUNICATING PRIDE AND IMAGE BUILDING

A series of inner convictions provoked Garvey into his role as a leader. Acutely aware of the lack of black pride among people of African descent, he set out to create a black world based on a black value system and rooted in black consciousness:

Where is the black man's government? Where is his King and Kingdom? Where is his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs? I could not find them [throughout his global travels], and then I decided, I will help to make them. (Salley, 1993, p. 80)

This “helping to make them” took on many forms. Black pride needed to be embodied in something visual, something impressionable, and something touchable; this is where the genius of Marcus Garvey began to stand out. Black Americans were stirred by his frequent use of pageantry, ceremonies, and parades which exalted black themes and accomplishments. He instituted grand titles and imperial uniforms among his devoted followers. In 1921, the New York branch of the UNIA proclaimed him “Provisional President of Africa” and created the “dukes of the Nile” among his lieutenants. “Black Cross” nurses were established and adorned in uniforms which bore decorative orders such as the “Sublime Order of the Nile” and the “Distinguished Order of Ethiopia” (Wesley, 1976, p. 162). Although the UNIA has received sharp criticisms over the years from scholars in this regard, historian Sean D. Cashman (1991) has conceded that Garvey's organization was indeed the “first truly mass movement of African Americans, [and] a predecessor of later African-American organizations, especially those advocating black power and black pride” (p. 39).

Garvey also used literary and artistic channels to instill black pride into the masses. Literature and the arts played an important role in the UNIA from its inception. Its weekly newspaper, *Negro World*, was considered the most influential black publication of the 1920s and '30s. It single-handedly gave the movement (and the black struggle in general) a newfound sense of



literary legitimacy. Each publication contained poems, short stories, book reviews, articles of literary criticism, and inspiring accounts of historical research. Its all-black authorship served as a powerful source of pride and identification for its subscribers. The paper employed endless graphics and forms of art to promote religious themes with African roots, such as a black God and a black Savior. At its height, the weekly publication reached a circulation of over 50,000 in the U.S. and over 200,000 worldwide (Martin, 1983, 133).

Finally, Garvey's methodology reached a zenith in 1919 with the launching of the "Black Star Line" (BSL). The BSL, composed of three UNIA-owned and -operated steamships, was the project that "could carry the weight of its [the UNIA's] goals," in that ships were the "predominant symbol of national power" (Stein, 1986, p. 64). And since all funds raised for the enterprise were raised through selling stocks to blacks only, the ships would be a genuine trophy of the "economic prowess of blacks" (Shelly, 1993, p. 81). Although it would eventually fail as an economic venture, the Black Star Line elevated Garvey to a noted international leader of black communities on three continents (Stein, 1986, p. 149). Racial pride and image promotion had proven to be an effective means of mass communication, domestically and abroad.

THE EFFECTS OF GARVEY'S APPROACH

Garvey experienced success because of his ability to reach the unlettered, working-class black. He filled a vacuum for those African Americans who had fled from an inhospitable South to a disheartening North. He struck their imagination with his unique touch of magnetism. As Caheman (1991) has concluded, the Garvey movement "represented a new black consciousness in which millions of African American citizens could sublimate their despair and disillusionment in the promise of a better and more fulfilled future" (pp. 40-41).

His methodology had an "overwhelming impact on the self-esteem of African Americans," influencing their political behavior and creating a



“legacy for black leadership” (Conniff and Davis, 1994, p. 260). What makes him unique is that he instilled not only a “philosophy and ideology of freedom, but also a *psychology* of liberation” (Anderson, 1993, p. 26). Upon visiting his grave in 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the man who reached out to all races, acknowledged the legacy of Marcus Garvey with these words:

He was the first man of color in the history of the United States to lead and develop a mass movement. He was the first man on a mass scale and level to give millions of Negroes a sense of dignity and destiny, and make the Negro feel that he was somebody. (Salley, 1993, p. 82)

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AND MARCUS GARVEY

First and foremost, the servant-leader, according to Greenleaf, must be one who goes to any measure to ensure that “other people’s highest priority needs are being served.” The evidence of such a phenomenon is seen in the individual growth and personal development of those being led, which makes them “healthier, wiser, freer, [and] more autonomous” (1977, p. 13). Garvey, being the true visionary of his day, took on the burdens of a subjugated segment of society due to racial discrimination and attempted to address its members’ most basic need: a sense of pride, dignity, and self-esteem. As referred to earlier, Garvey reached out to and connected the masses in a way unlike that of any leader before him, by turning the people’s highest need for identity into the centerpiece of his work.

Painter (2007) agrees, contending that through his creation of such items as the black nationalistic colors of green, red, and black, Garvey was able to empower a large number of people, turning them into a community of camaraderie and pride never imagined before. Garvey’s genius at public relations via the parades, uniforms, nurses’ corps, and flair and pageantry gave a boost to black Americans where they needed it the most: collective black esteem. Thus, individual productivity as well as creativity flourished



among African American artists, writers, musicians, and entrepreneurs at a level that was hitherto undreamt of (pp. 203-205).

Secondly, another prerequisite of the servant-leader cited by Greenleaf is the ability to take the initiative as a pattern for others to follow in one's footsteps. He relates this unique attribute of "going out ahead to show the way" as the "very essence of leadership" (1977, p. 15). Again, Garvey seems to follow suit in this regard. The appointing of himself as the "Provisional President of Africa" was not a mere exercise in self-aggrandizement, as it may seem at first blush. He took a bold step to embody and articulate a definitive sense of black consciousness and black self-awareness that gave a leader the authority to mobilize a previously disoriented and aimless people. Garvey himself now stood as the very symbol of this newfound black self-determination. Large numbers of African Americans were magnetized by the potential and possibilities of their own race for the first time in American history (Painter, 2007, p. 203).

As a third item, Greenleaf (1977) proposes that a servant-leader must be one who promotes a goal that captures the imagination of others and thereby compels and propels them into committed and convicted action:

Not much happens without a dream. And for something great to happen, there must be a great dream. Behind every great achievement is a dreamer of great dreams. Much more than a dreamer is required to bring it to reality; but the dream must be there first. (p. 16)

The creation by Garvey of the Black Star Line steamships clearly fulfilled this aspect of Greenleaf's captivating dream. The newfound pride and allegiance to Africa that he had promoted fostered a sense of possibility and practicality. The pilgrimage and emigration plan known as "Back to Africa" was now seeming realistic. Painter (2007) contends that such an innovation literally "galvanized the black masses" as a whole (p. 204). It is also worth noting that commitment to this "dream" would demand at least an economic participation in buying of shares even for those not daring to go overseas. As a result, Garvey was able to mobilize an entire race behind a collective



aspiration that uplifted a people right out of their history of disillusionment and despair.

A fourth trait of the servant-leader highlighted by Greenleaf is the ability to listen. By his estimation, genuine listening bears fruit in one's followers that is both constructive and measurable, in that "true listening builds strength in other people" (1977, p. 17). This virtue was a trademark of Garvey's work in the United States. For the first time the plight of black Americans' condition and status under racial oppression was being not only heard, but also understood, articulated, and addressed. By tapping into that "significant level of meaning in the hearer's experience" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 17), Garvey's voice and leadership brought forth a collective thrust of pride, self-esteem, and validation never witnessed before in African American history.

The fifth attribute cited by Greenleaf (1977) is the crucial ability of the servant-leader to articulate a vision that evokes commitment on the part of others. This skill in "tempting the hearer into that leap of imagination" (p. 18) seems to be one of the signature qualities within Garvey's leadership style. This is especially evident in his rallying cry to create a new African nation via the Black Star Steamship Line. This concept was ingenious in that it took the pride of African Americans to an unforeseen level of distinction, credibility, and even stateliness. As Hine, Hine, and Harold (2003) point out, this exclusively black enterprise was to crystallize in a political entity that would constitute a beacon of black entrepreneurial genius and autonomy (pp. 407-410). The willingness of the black masses to take "that leap of imagination" Greenleaf referred to was phenomenal, as evidenced by the total of \$750,000 in donations from Garvey's followers (Painter, 2007, p. 204).

The sixth trait of a servant-leader is that of empathy. Greenleaf's (1977) articulation of the impact and evidence of true empathy upon those being led seems to mirror the legacy and influence of Garvey upon his followers:

People grow taller when those who lead them empathize and when they



are accepted for what they are, even though their performance may be judged critically in terms of what they are capable of doing. Leaders who empathize and who fully accept those who go with them on this basis are more likely to be trusted. (p. 21)

Garvey, despite being typical of a black person at that time in lacking education and social prominence, was granted a newfound level of acceptance and respect never accorded to the typically disadvantaged African American. The end result, as contended by Clayborne, Lapsansky-Werner, and Nash (2007), was that Garvey's "bold programs—so popular that even Garvey [himself] was astonished—challenged traditional black leaders and their black intellectual followers by appealing to poor black people, desperate for a ray of hope" (p. 349). In Greenleaf's terms, the black masses indeed "grew taller" under the acceptance and empathy of a genuine servant-leader.

The seventh and final attribute of a servant-leader I want to highlight is that of creativity. As Greenleaf (1977) states:

Leaders, therefore, must be more creative than most; and creativity is largely discovery, a push into the uncharted and the unknown. Every once in a while a leader needs to think like a scientist, an artist, or a poet. And a leader's thought process may be just as fanciful as theirs—and as fallible. (p. 23)

In light of this, Garvey's creation of the newspaper *Negro World* embodied the thematic essence of Greenleaf's observation. Trotter, Jr. (2001) concludes that as a result of the weekly's promotion of black art, black literature, and black theology, Garvey was able to literally "transform blackness into a symbol of beauty" (p. 412). This innovation successfully elevated the notion of black self-assertion to that of an expression of art and cultural legitimacy. "Black America"—redeemed and redefined—had come of age.



GARVEY—THE “EARTHEN VESSEL”

Marcus Garvey, like all of us within the family of humanity, had several imperfections and flaws that can cast a shadow upon his legacy of servant-leadership. First and foremost, as noted by Dudley (1997), was Garvey’s abuse and mismanagement of the UNIA’s funds that totaled a conservative estimate of at least one million dollars. Second, the Black Star Line steamship company went out of business with debts of \$750,000 to investors and stockholders (p. 197). A third failing, according to Hine (2003), was Garvey’s arrest, indictment, and eventual deportation for twelve counts of mail fraud involving the selling of Black Star Line stock (p. 367).

In Greenleaf’s own deep appeal to the humanity evident in all, the imperfect life of Garvey can serve as a richer illustration of servant-leadership on a more profound level and in a more personal and reflective manner. Greenleaf spoke of unlimited liability, the idea that our approach to others can be unconditional, and in a sense, ultimately graceful. Garvey’s story is what Parker Palmer (2004) refers to as a “divided life. . .not a failure of ethics. . .[but] a failure of human wholeness” (p. 7). Garvey, to a certain degree, lived a divided life, as several areas of his outer world were not in harmony with his inner world. His life serves as reminder to us all that the pursuit of genuine wholeness is a noble matter and that no individual—and especially, no leader—is an exception to this human tendency to live a divided life. Rather than nullifying Garvey’s special gifts of servant-leadership, however, his personal shortcomings afford a means for the servant-leader deep within to shine out more clearly as we look back on his life. This principle is what the Apostle Paul referred to in 2 Corinthians 4:7: “But we have this *treasure* in *earthen* vessels that the *excellency* of the power may be *of God* and not out *of us*” (Recovery Version of the New Testament).



CONCLUSION

Garvey's effectiveness as a leader and innovator in mass communication is clearly an undisputed matter among the many historians cited in this study. Yet, in light of the principles of servant-leadership, there remains a new level of insight into what Greenleaf calls the conversion of common leaders into "affirmative builders of a better society" (p. 10). Marcus Garvey, in the face of intimidating odds, reached, uplifted, and mobilized the black masses as a servant first—secondarily, as a leader. According to a recent assessment by Azevedo (2005), Garveyism had a "profound political and psychological impact on the black world [as a whole]" (p. 233). Marcus Garvey, when considered in the light of Greenleaf's theory, shines as the epitome of servant-leadership in action—which very well may explain his remarkable legacy and efficacy:

Servant leaders differ from other persons of goodwill because they act on what they believe. Consequently, they "know experimentally" and there is a sustaining spirit when they venture and risk. To the worldly, servant leaders may seem naïve; and they may not adapt readily to prevailing institutional structures. . . . servant leaders may stand alone . . . as a saving remnant of those who care for both persons and institutions, and who are determined to make their caring count—*wherever they are involved*. (Greenleaf, 1977, pp. 329-330)

Garvey's life of service to his people stands out in the chronicles of American history and leadership studies. He had a fire within that could not be extinguished by the daunting obstacles before him and the oppressed people he sought to serve. His sense of liability for his fellow people of African descent was unconditional in nature, producing a strong registration of self-responsibility within. As a result, he was motivated to sacrifice without any notion or fear of the cost at hand. In light of this, Greenleaf's (1996) brief explanation of the hallmark traits of a responsible leader sheds further light upon Garvey's effectiveness as a servant-leader:



As I see it, responsible people build. They do not destroy. They are moved by the heart; compassion stands ahead of justice. The prime test of whether an act is responsible is to ask, How will it affect people? Are lives moved toward nobility? p. 306

This was clearly Garvey's legacy—moving lives “toward nobility.” His personal sense of responsibility radiated into the masses and produced what Greenleaf has framed as the building of communal responsibility out of which rises an enduring love that heals and makes the world whole. Garvey's life is a resonant echo of what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. so profoundly stated in life-affirming beauty and simplicity: “Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?”

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SERVANT-LEADERSHIP CONTEXT: A MULTI-CASE PILOT STUDY

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In the 1970s, Greenleaf (1977) observed, “A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one’s allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader” (p. 10). Greenleaf stated, “*The great leader is seen as servant first*, and that simple fact is the key to his [sic] greatness” (p. 7). Consequently, Spears (1996) credited Greenleaf with originating the term “servant-leadership.” Similarly, Russell (2001) stated, Greenleaf “inspired the servant leadership concept among modern organizational theorists” (p. 78). Further, Greenleaf predicted, “To the extent that this principle prevails in the future, the only truly viable institutions will be those that are predominantly servant-led” (p. 10). Despite Greenleaf’s contention, Smith, Montagno, and Kuzmenko (2004) suggested that servant-leadership appears less viable than other approaches in dynamic and challenging environments. Thus, research is necessary to determine the contextual patterns in which servant-leadership operates viably.

According to Greenleaf (1977), the key to viability in servant-led organizations is commitment to a “people first” philosophy resulting in “people-building” (p. 40) institutions. He stated, “The first order of business is to build a group of people who, under the influence of the institution, grow taller and become healthier, stronger, more autonomous” (pp. 39-40). Further, Greenleaf observed, “A hopeful sign of the times, in the sector of society where it seems least expected—highly competitive business—is that people-building institutions are holding their own while they struggle successfully in the market place” (p. 39). Spears (1996) argued that unlike



many leadership fads, “servant-leadership has proven to be a concept with real staying power” (p. 33). Thus, three decades after Greenleaf’s conclusion about competitiveness, research should determine whether such servant-led, people-building institutions continue to hold their own in the business market.

Although Greenleaf (1977) proposed that servant-led institutions are able to compete in the business world, he suggested that servant-leadership also is viable in education and religious sectors. Similarly, Spears (1996) wrote, “Servant-leadership crosses all boundaries and is being applied by a wide variety of people working with for-profit businesses, not-for-profit corporations, hospitals, government, churches, universities, and foundations” (p. 34). Further, Greenleaf indicated that the desired outcomes of such people-building organizations entail more than bottom-line results. He explained, “Business exists as much to provide meaningful work to the person as it exists to provide a product or service to the customer. The business then becomes a serving institution—serving those who produce and those who use” (p. 142). Accordingly, research exploring the contexts in which servant-leadership operates and the outcomes achieved by servant-led organizations is warranted.

Although Laub (2003) noted that Greenleaf (1977) “did a beautiful job of describing the concept” (p. 2) of servant-leadership, Laub proposed the need for an operational definition and for explication of the constructs comprising servant-leadership. Building from Greenleaf’s writing, Spears (1998) distilled ten significant attributes of the servant-leader including (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d) awareness, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to the growth of others, and (j) ability to build community. Spears noted, “These ten characteristics of servant-leadership are by no means exhaustive” (p. 6). Thus, subsequent researchers have identified characteristics or variables and constructed descriptive or causal models related to servant-leadership. Several models exist including those set forth by (a) Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999), (b) Russell and Stone (2002), (c) Wong and Page (2003), (d)



Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), (e) Patterson (2003), and (f) Winston (2003). However, Winston (2004) noted that there has been insufficient research to provide evidence of the actual existence and practice of the values and behaviors attributed to servant-leaders such as those identified by Spears, and scholars such as those listed above who have followed after Spears, from Greenleaf's work. The lack of empirical research contributes to such claims as Eicher-Catt's (2005) that servant-leadership is a myth. Thus, despite development of the servant-leadership concept since Greenleaf, need remains for empirical research to determine whether support exists for the servant approach to leadership.

Related to the claim that servant-leadership is a myth (Eicher-Catt, 2005) is concern regarding the utility of servant-leadership for influencing organizational level measures such as productivity or efficiency. Although Greenleaf (1977) proposed that servant-led organizations are viable and competitive, K. A. Patterson (personal communication, June 2006) noted that a common question asked during business conferences regarding servant-leadership is whether servant-leadership actually *works* for organizations. Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2003) further complicated the issue of utility by claiming that servant-leaders focus more on follower needs than organizational objectives, creating vagueness regarding servant-leaders' influence on organizational outcomes. Smith et al. (2004) echoed the follower focus of servant-leadership, stating, "Though the organization and external stakeholders are mentioned, it is clear that needs of the members of the organization are placed in priority over organizational success" (p. 82). Such perceived priority of follower needs over organizational success underscores the importance of research into servant-leadership's effectiveness for organizations.

Beyond proposing that servant-leadership focuses on follower needs more than organizational outcomes, Smith et al. (2004) also suggested that contextual factors might influence the utility of servant-leadership for producing organizational results. The authors proposed that servant-leadership is most appropriate in static environments rather than in dynamic environ-



ments. Additionally, Winston (2004) hinted at contextual influences in the conclusion to his case study of Heritage Bible College (HBC), suggesting that future research should examine secular organizations “to see if HBC’s non-profit Christian education emphasis plays a role in employees’ comments” (p. 613). However, Humphreys (2005) concluded, “The literature has been silent as to servant-leadership and contextual influences” (p. 1417). Accordingly, there is cause for research exploring the contextual factors related to servant-leadership’s existence and its effectiveness for organizations.

To contribute to the literature and to help end the silence noted by Humphreys (2005), this paper reports the results of a pilot, qualitative research study involving several companies reputed to operate via servant-leadership. The review of Greenleaf’s (1977) writing and the work of subsequent researchers have suggested the need for research regarding the current contextual patterns of servant-led institutions. Creswell (2003) indicated that qualitative research should begin with a central research question that is broad enough “so as not to limit the inquiry” (p. 105). Thus, the central research question for this study was, *What are the contextual factors within which servant-leadership appears to function?* Further, Creswell indicated that a small number of sub-questions should follow the central question and should guide the research design and methods. Sub-questions for the study focused on the contextual patterns of organizations operating via servant-leadership, including (a) What ownership models are represented in servant-led companies? (b) What industry types are represented by servant-led companies? (c) What geographic locations are represented by servant-led companies? (d) What philosophical commitments are represented by servant-led companies? and (e) What stock performance outcomes are demonstrated in servant-led companies? This report begins by explicating the multiple-case study methodology utilized to address the research questions. Next, the report describes the multiple cases via cross-case analysis of emergent themes. Finally, the report concludes with a summary of findings and suggestions for future research.



METHODOLOGY

De Vaus (2001) indicated that case studies might involve either single-case or multiple-case designs. However, he proposed that “multiple cases are essential if the case studies are being used for inductive purposes” (p. 227). Because the stated research questions express interest in inductively exploring contextual patterns relative to servant-leadership, the study utilized a multiple-case design. De Vaus also suggested that multiple-case designs might be parallel wherein different investigators simultaneously examine each case, or that designs might be sequential wherein investigators explore one case before exploring a subsequent case. De Vaus proffered that sequential explorations best serve inductive purposes. Further, De Vaus proposed that case studies might entail either nomothetic or idiographic approaches. Idiographic studies seek “to develop a complete explanation of each case” (p. 233), while nomothetic studies seek to identify key factors related to a “class of cases” (p. 233). Because the intent of this study was to inductively explore some of the key contextual factors related to a class of cases, the study was conceptualized as a (a) multi-case, (b) sequential, and (c) nomothetic design and method.

Case Selection

Yin (2003) indicated that selection of cases in a multiple-case study should be done for replication logic rather than sampling logic. That is, rather than by random selection, cases are selected because of the theory-based prediction that a case will produce similar or contrasting results to other cases in the study. Figure 1 shows a process model of the multi-case method described by Yin. Dotted lines in the model represent feedback points at which growing insights from sequential exploration of cases might lead to modification of (a) underlying theory, (b) selected cases, or (c) data collection protocols.

For the present study, a broad conceptualization of servant-leadership comprised the initial theory for case selection. Winston (2004) noted the

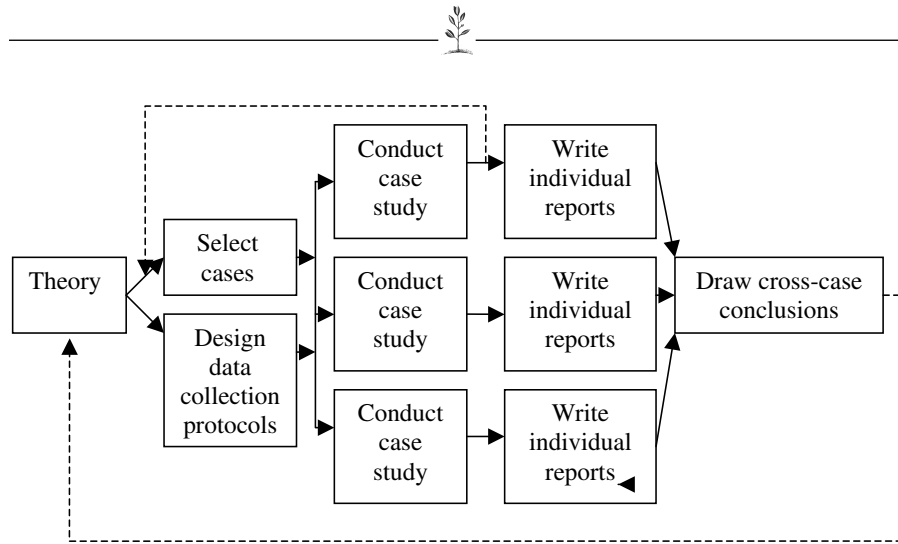


Figure 1: Multi-case method (Yin, 2003).

presence of multiple models and definitions of servant-leadership in the literature. However, no specific conceptualization was utilized in this pilot study to allow for the inclusion of a maximum number of cases. Cases were identified through a search of online databases and through an examination of published books with tables of contents suggesting discussion of servant-leadership in corporate contexts. This process yielded a list of twenty companies identified in the literature as servant-led. One limitation generated by this method of selection was that cases were included based on *reputed* servant-leadership rather than empirically concluded servant-leadership. Further, included cases can be subdivided as self-attributed servant-leadership, which denotes a company claim to follow servant-leadership, and literature-reported servant-leadership, which denotes a claim by the media rather than the company. A second limitation was that only companies with national exposure were likely to be included. Thus, the study does not account for the number of extant companies without national exposure that might utilize servant-leadership.

Reflecting the feedback-induced modifications of the multi-case



method (Yin, 2003), four companies were eliminated during the process of conducting the individual case studies. Because The Body Shop was the sole United Kingdom-based company in the list of twenty, it was eliminated so that the study remained focused on companies in the United States. Because Summa Health was the sole non-profit organization in the original list, it was eliminated to keep the study focused on for-profit businesses. Because Sisters of St. Joseph and Townsend & Bottum, which had been reported as servant-leadership organizations, have been subsequently acquired by non-servant-leader organizations, they were removed from the study. Thus, the modified selection criterion for cases was *for-profit companies in the United States who are reported in the literature to be led via servant-leadership*.

Sources of Information

Yin (2003) suggested six sources of information for case studies including (a) documentation, (b) archival records, (c) interviews, (d) direct observations, (e) participant-observations, and (f) physical artifacts. Further, Yin proposed that triangulating data sources helps to establish the rigor of a case study. For the present study, information about each of the companies was gleaned from publicly available sources including (a) popular press, (b) company web sites, (c) search engines such as Google and Hoover's research, (d) servant-leadership books (e.g., Collins, 2001; Collins, 2005; Spears, 1995; Spears & Lawrence, 2002; Spears & Lawrence, 2004), (e) academic databases, and (f) historical observations. Because the data were not triangulated with interviews or recent observations of actual leadership behaviors, this study is proposed as a pilot study for making a preliminary assessment of contextual patterns relative to reputed servant-leadership. The research did not attempt to verify whether these organizations were actually operating via servant-leadership. Accordingly, any findings would need substantiation and explication in subsequent research.



CASE DESCRIPTIONS

Yin (2003) indicated that a multiple case study might be reported through the exclusive use of cross-case comparison. In a cross-case comparison, each segment of the case report is devoted to a separate cross-case theme rather than to separate narratives for each case of the study. Cross-case themes were developed via coding of individual case descriptions relative to the research questions of the study. Creswell (2003) noted that coding involves organizing material into “chunks” (p. 192). Flick (2002) indicated that the first two stages in the coding process include the development of open codes and the arranging of open codes around axial codes. Flick described the third stage of coding as the creation of one or two manifest codes that explain the relationship between the axial codes. Table 1 shows a list of the U.S.-based, for-profit corporations reputed as servant-led in the literature. From a cross-case comparison, several axial themes emerged including (a) conservatism, (b) consumer orientation, (c) social responsibility and environmentalism, (d) individualism, and (e) conflicting results. The following segments of the case-report discuss each of these axial codes. The manifest codes *value alignment* and *various components* are summarized in the conclusion to the report.

Conservatism

Conservatism is a conspicuous theme for those organizations that self-claim to be servant-led corporations. *Conservatism*, which means “traditional or cautious” (American Heritage, 2000), is used in this study to refer to values and to philosophies such as views on work ethic and finances. Most of the major companies in the top half of Table 1 appear to be conservative companies based on the coding of their philosophical orientation and geographic locations.



Table 1
U.S.-Based, For-Profit Companies in the Servant-Leadership Literature

Inclusion Rationale	Ownership	Industry	Consumer-Focused	Location
Company-Claimed SL				
Men's Wearhouse	Public	Retail	Yes	South
PPc Partners	Employee	Construction	No	Central
Schneider Engineering	Family	Civil Engineer	No	Central
Southwest Airlines	Public	Transportation	Yes	South
Synovus	Public	Financial	Yes	South
TDIndustries	Employee	Construction	No	South
Vanguard Group	Client-owned	Financial	Yes	Northeast*
Literature-Reported SL				
Ben & Jerry's	Subsidiary	Retail	Yes	Northeast
Container Store	Private	Retail	Yes	South
Herman Miller	Public	Manufacturing	No	Central
Meridith Corporation	Public	Media	Yes	Central
Schmidt Associates	Private	Architects	No	Central
ServiceMaster	Public	Services	Yes	Central
Starbucks	Public	Retail	Yes	Northwest
Toro	Public	Manufacturing	No	Central
U.S. Cellular	Subsidiary	Communications	Yes	Central

* Valley Forge, PA; Charlotte, NC; Scottsdale, AZ

Philosophical orientation

Smith et al. (2004) suggested that servant-leadership works best in static environments. Accordingly, a conservative philosophical orientation appears reflected in the selection of an industry or approach that yields a level of stability. Companies like Vanguard and Synovus might be consid-



ered stable due to a conservative philosophical orientation in the financial industry, as the industry generally strives to be and to appear extremely stable. Vanguard and Synovus publicly state their conservative philosophy as part of their finance-industry approach and as part of their leadership expectations. Vanguard is known for conservative investing and conservative hiring practices (Hoovers, 2006). Synovus says they expect their leaders to lead with (a) moral integrity, (b) trust, (c) fairness, and (d) servant-leadership (Synovus, 2006). Companies such as Southwest might be considered somewhat stable due to operating in regulated or semi-regulated industries. Although the airline industry might be perceived as volatile, partial regulation introduces a measure of stability. For example, airlines are not entirely free (a) to choose destination cities, (b) to determine what items can be carried by passengers, or (c) to predict when their airplanes will take off or land.

Geographic location

The majority of the companies in the study are based in the south and central U.S. All of the companies who claim to be servant-led, except for Vanguard, have most of their employees in states that tend to vote Republican, as shown in Figure 2. Conspicuously absent from the entire list are the states of New York and California, which house more corporate headquarters than any other states. Further, the State of California dominates the list of Best Companies to Work for (Great Places to Work, 2005), but they do not appear to have any corporations publicly following a servant-led model. The two companies that are located in more liberal geographies, Ben & Jerry's and Starbucks, are both focused on social activism and environmental responsibility, and neither company makes a self-attribution of servant-leadership.

The companies who self-claim servant-leadership yet are not located in the South are (a) employee-, (b) family-, or (c) client-owned corporations (i.e., PPc Partners, Schneider Engineering, and Vanguard). PPc Partners and Schneider Engineering are privately held and relatively small, which might



give them flexibility in practicing and publicly stating their beliefs. The third company, Vanguard, has publicly stated their conservatism as part of their financially conservative posture, even though their headquarters is not located in the South. Vanguard’s headquarters is located in Pennsylvania, yet their employees are split between three large centers in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Arizona, which are not generally considered culturally liberal.

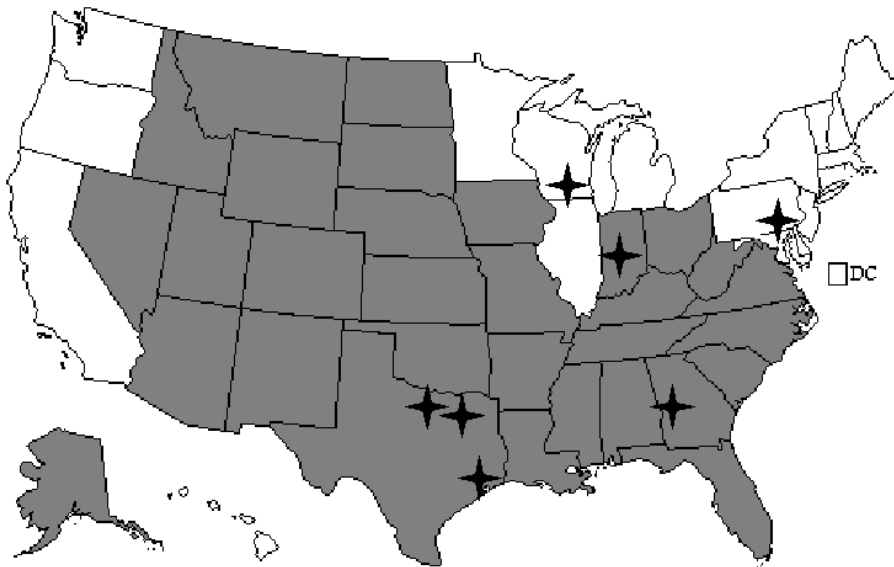


Figure 2: Self-claimed servant-leadership organizations plotted on 2004 Presidential election map with gray as Republican and white as Democrat.

The contextual dimension of self-claimed servant-leadership companies appearing to be located in specific geographic regions suggests possible value alignment of employees with servant-leadership. That is, the stated or espoused values of employees in the South might make them more



likely to accept the terminology and the practice of servant-leadership. Conger (1999) suggested that different cultural value systems might influence leadership effectiveness. Further, Russell (2001) suggested that certain values are the core elements of servant-leadership. Accordingly, it appears that personal values in certain regions of the country align well with the organizational values embodied by servant-leadership, reflecting Chatman's (1989) concept of person-organization fit.

Consumer Orientation

Consumer-orientation is a second theme emerging from cross-case comparison. Although it might be argued that all products and services are directed toward a consumer, some industries function in a business-to-business or manufacturing-oriented manner rather than in direct association with the public. However, a common characteristic of the cases in the current study is a tendency to operate in a face-to-face relationship with the populace. For example, Men's Warehouse and The Container Store conduct business in a retail environment. Table 1 reveals that ten of the sixteen cases function within a face-to-face context.

Consumer orientation as a typical characteristic of servant-led companies appears to suggest the existence of certain values in the organizational culture, such as respect and concern for individuals. Great customer service and great attitudes might require happy, motivated employees (Heskett, 1994). Follower-focused or participative leadership models seem more conducive to producing satisfied employees than autocratic models (Yukl, 2002). Although not identified as adopting servant-leadership, the Ritz Carlton hotel chain claims to be "ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen" (Sucher & McManus, 2001), hinting at a possible link between follower- and consumer-focus. The follower orientation of servant-leadership might reflect a cultural pattern consistent with consumer orientation. Schein (1990) suggested that culture is the pattern of values and behaviors that develop as members of an organization respond to both internal and external stimuli. Similarly, Laub's (1999) description of the servant organi-



zation suggested, “The characteristics of servant-leadership are displayed through the organizational culture and are valued and practiced by the leadership and workforce” (p. 3). Thus, servant-leadership values imbedded in a culture might resonate in a consumer orientation.

Of the six companies in Table 1 that are not coded as consumer-focused, three claim to utilize servant-leadership including (a) PPc Partners, (b) Schneider Engineering, and (c) TDIndustries. A common characteristic of these companies is an employee- or family-ownership structure. The three remaining companies that are not coded as consumer-focused do not self-claim to utilize servant-leadership and include (a) Herman Miller, (b) Toro, and (c) Schmidt Associates. A common characteristic of these companies is geographic location in the central part of the country. Although these six companies do not operate in a face-to-face environment, their ownership model or geographic location seems to underscore the relevance of culture as a contextual factor. Marquardt and Engel (1993) suggested that culture might manifest at various layers including (a) geography, (b) family, and (c) structure. Thus, the values embodied in consumer-orientation might be evident at the level of ownership models and geographic culture even when a consumer-orientation is not inherent in the business model of the organization.

Social Responsibility and Environmentalism—Confounding Theme

The third theme revealed by the research was social responsibility and environmentalism. However, this theme tended to be isolated within those companies that do not make a self-attribution of servant-leadership. Further, it is unclear that social responsibility and environmentalism are essential to the principles of servant-leadership, suggesting that the constructs are potentially confounding themes. That is, the media sources reporting that some organizations are servant-led might have confused the concepts of servant-leadership with those of social and environmental activism. Their view might be that acting in an environmentally conscientious manner is a



way of serving each other and future generations (Dryzek, Downs, Hernes, & Schlosberg, 2003).

The cases that are located in assumedly more culturally liberal geographies shown in Figure 2, such as the northeastern United States and the Pacific Northwest, are most likely to be focused on social and environmental activism. Although only two companies from this study (i.e., Starbucks in the Northwest and Ben & Jerry's in the Northeast) are located in those areas, this theme is very consistent with non-servant-leader companies from those regions (Dryzek et al., 2003). Although Vanguard is located in Pennsylvania, it was not grouped with Starbucks and Ben & Jerry's. Vanguard's employees are split between three large centers in (a) Pennsylvania, (b) North Carolina, and (c) Arizona, which are not generally considered culturally liberal. Additionally, the emphasis on social and environmental activism in the individual case reports of Starbucks and Ben & Jerry's offers a striking contrast to all of the other individual case reports, suggesting that such focus might not be synonymous with a servant-leadership approach. None of the companies that were coded with the conservative theme claim to be social- or environmental-activist organizations.

Although not synonymous with servant-leadership, social concern and environmentalism appear compatible with the construct. Laub (2003) indicated that servant-leadership provides for the good of "the total organization and those served by the organization" (p. 3). Presumably, the emphasis might be extended to the larger social and environmental level. However, Laub's fundamental definition of servant-leadership is "an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader" (p. 3). Similarly, Stone et al. (2003) emphasized the follower-focus of servant-leadership, and Patterson (2003) indicated that servant-leadership is concerned with follower development. Thus, social responsibility and environmentalism might coexist with servant-leadership but are not identical with the construct. Social responsibility does not necessarily require a leader to put the interests of the follower above his or her



own interests. Further, an organization can emphasize social responsibility but not necessarily focus on follower development.

Individualism—Confounding Theme

As shown in Table 1, nine of the companies in the study possessed literature-reported rather than self-attributed servant-leadership claims. Thus, the term “servant-leadership” does not appear in the companies’ literature or on company websites. Rather, individualism seems to be a key theme among the nine companies. Several possibilities exist to explain the absence of a servant-leadership self-claim. A first option might include the attempt to substitute less controversial words in place of “servant-leadership” while continuing to use servant-leadership concepts in human resource practices. The Container Store and ServiceMaster might be examples of this approach. Container Store and ServiceMaster both stress the opportunities for individual growth and achievement, and they have a history of promoting from within. Although both companies have leadership philosophies consistent with servant-leadership, neither organization explicitly uses the term “servant-leadership.”

Herman Miller and Toro might represent another option. Both companies experienced an economic downturn that resulted in employee layoffs. Because it could be perceived as hypocritical to talk about being a servant-led company wherein people take priority over organizational objectives while leadership closes plants and lays off thousands of employees, public references to servant-leadership might have been removed. The websites of Herman Miller and Toro now focus on (a) individuals, (b) diversity, and (c) community service.

A third possibility is that individualism has been confused with servant-leadership. A culture of self-serving behaviors and benefits could conceivably lead to a servant-leadership attribution because the follower gets what he or she wants. Individual gratification appears to be a predominant reason that many of the current companies on the list of best companies to work for achieved their status. Although the definition of a best place to



work suggests that employees “trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do, and enjoy the people they work with” (Great Places to Work, 2005, What makes a great place to work® section, para. 1), these criteria are not obvious in the comments from employees whose organizations made the list. The comments from the winning companies’ employees in 2005 focused on rewards and astonishing amenities, including (a) lucrative profit-sharing, (b) stock options for all new employees, (c) vacations to Maui for all employees, (d) 100% tuition reimbursement, (e) a low-cost fitness center open 24 hours, (f) free cappuccino, (g) made-to-order sushi, (h) parties every Friday night, (i) onsite day care, (j) free hair and nail salons onsite, (k) monthly cake days to celebrate employee birthdays, (l) strolling musicians, (m) chair massages, and (n) a concierge service that can organize a birthday party at a moment’s notice (Great Places to Work).

Despite the potential attraction of strolling musicians and other amenities, the focus on follower needs (Patterson, 2003) that is a central tenet of servant-leadership does not imply satisfaction of all employees’ wants. Burns (1978) noted, “Leaders are distinguished by their quality of *not* necessarily responding to the wants of ‘followers’” (p. 69). Accordingly, leadership in an organization might focus on individualistic wants in a manner that is not consistent with the altruism and empowerment associated with servant-leadership. Further, the claim to servant-leadership by an organization or the media does not determine the ontological existence of the construct in a company. Laub’s (2003) definition indicated that servant-leadership is a specific “understanding and practice of leadership” (p. 3). Thus, the existence of servant-leadership in an organization is determined by the actual form of leadership revealed in beliefs and behaviors. Individualism appears to be an understanding and a practice that might mimic servant-leadership on some levels, but not necessarily be indicative of the construct.

Conflicting Results

Because a question arising in servant-leadership conferences relates to



Table 2
*U.S.-Based, For-Profit Public Companies' Financial Performance
 Compared to the S&P 500*

Company	Stock Ticker	Stock as of July 5, 2001	Stock as of July 5, 2006	Percent Change
Company Claims SL				
Men's Wearhouse	MW	\$17.93	\$31.21	+74%
Southwest Airlines*	LUV	\$18.67	\$16.60	-11%
Synovus	SNV	\$27.73	\$26.76	-3%
Literature Reports SL				
Herman Miller*	MLHR	\$24.76	\$26.48	+7%
Meridith Corporation*	MDP	\$35.09	\$48.98	+40%
ServiceMaster*	SVM	\$10.39	\$10.25	-1%
Starbucks	SBUX	\$10.96	\$37.56	+243%
Toro*	TTC	\$10.80	\$46.00	+326%
U.S. Cellular	USM	\$58.40	\$59.41	+2%
S&P 500	GSPC	\$1,219.24	\$1,270.92	+4%

*Layoffs and off-shoring during period.

the utility of the leadership theory (K. A. Patterson, personal communication, June 2006), individual case analysis included the company's stock performance where applicable. An exploration of stock performance suggests conflicting results among the publicly traded companies. Only three out of the seven cases in the study with company-claimed servant-leadership are traded publicly in stock markets. Six out of the nine cases with literature-reported servant-leadership are traded publicly. The other seven organizations utilize some type of private ownership approach, and financial data are less available. Table 2 shows a five-year stock price comparison for each of the public companies. Only one company-claimed servant-led organization, Men's Wearhouse, demonstrated performance superior to the S&P 500 index during the five-year period. Of note relative to performance



is Men's Wearhouse' acquisition of other companies between 2001 and 2006. Five of the seven literature-reported servant-led organizations demonstrated stock price growth superior to the index. Notable points for consideration relative to performance include the following: (a) the company with the largest increase, Toro, closed their U.S. plants and moved production to Mexico; (b) the company with the second largest increase, Starbucks, made a major acquisition and launched an international expansion; and (c) five of the nine public companies engaged in layoffs and off-shoring during the five-year period. However, the discussion herein relative to social responsibility and individualism casts doubt that some of the literature-reported servant-leadership companies actually embody servant-leadership.

The existence of contextual factors such as acquisitions and off-shoring in the companies demonstrating performance superior to the S&P 500 reflects the position that leadership is only one factor in the success of organizations (Northouse, 2004). Other contextual factors such as (a) business strategy, (b) workforce strategy, (c) industry trends, and (d) business execution should be considered along with the style of leadership. Multiple factors played a role in the success of such companies as Men's Wearhouse and Toro, and it is likely that multiple factors played a role in the poorer performance of other companies. Ruschman (2002) reported TDI executives as indicating that servant-leadership and trust provide only some of the underpinnings for a successful organization. TDI executives articulated the belief that in addition to these variables, an organization must have a solid business strategy and great customer focus. Similarly, Southwest Airlines says their distinct business strategy and anti-establishment culture have helped them to soar above the legacy carriers (Ruschman). Vanguard had a well-constructed business model and perfect timing for their industry, as history has proven that low-cost index funds were the best investment strategy during the bull markets of the last thirty years. Container Store rode the largest home buying and home improvement trend in history as two-income baby boomers sought to organize their hurried lives. Men's Wearhouse joined the movement toward better clothing at discount prices, along with



the outlet and “seconds” stores, while other stores such as Sears and J. C. Penney lost ground in the market. Starbucks started a new industry, riding the lifestyle trend toward self-indulgence. TDI and PPc Partners joined the construction boom, while ServiceMaster performed services for two-income families and Synovus rode the credit card wave. U.S. Cellular was part of the cell phone revolution, and Toro had the boomers playing golf (commercial landscape equipment) and buying nicer tools for themselves. Many of these companies had great business models and solid execution along with an employee-focused workforce strategy, which are elements that are not exclusive to servant-leadership in organizations although appearing consistent with it. Because focus on individual employees can result in (a) employee satisfaction, (b) positive employee behaviors, and (c) a profitable bottom line (Corporate Executive Board, 2004), having an employee-focused workforce strategy consistent with servant-leadership may have been one of the defining factors in the cases with positive stock performance.

CONCLUSION

The cross-case comparison of organizations explored for this pilot study suggests that the typical organization using servant-leadership might be described as an organization located in a conservative geographic location and operating in a consumer-oriented industry. Figure 3 shows the graphical positioning of cases in the study when plotted according to conservative and consumer-oriented axes. Further, the cross-case comparison suggests that organizations steeped in an individualistic mindset or with a social responsibility focus might be identified incorrectly as servant-led. Accordingly, this study proposes that a manifest code (Flick, 2001) relative to the context of servant-leadership is value alignment, conceived as including (a) geographic influences, (b) philosophical orientation, and (c) cultural themes such as consumer orientation. Even confounding themes such as social responsibility and individualism might be included in



value alignment as these themes can be consistent with, but not synonymous with, a servant-leadership approach.

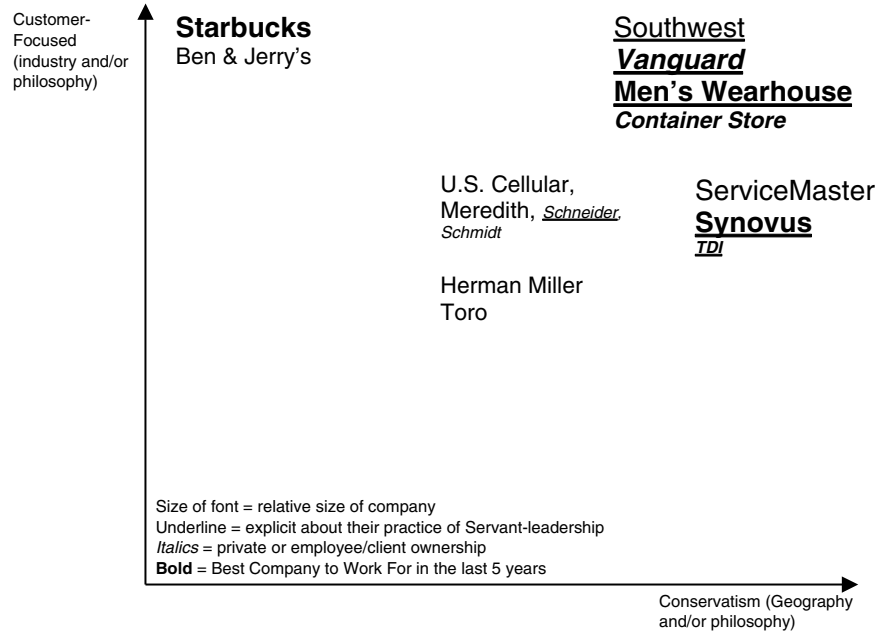


Figure 3: Case positioning by conservatism and customer-orientation.

The study proposes that a second manifest code relative to the context of servant-leadership is various components. That servant-leadership did not result in uniform stock performance among cases in the study suggests servant-leadership is not the sole causal factor for organizational outcomes. Other factors such as (a) industry, (b) environment, and (c) business execution commingle with an adopted leadership approach.

Although Smith et al. (2004) proposed that servant-leadership is appropriate in stable environments, lack of previous research and theory suggests that the understanding of the context is immature (Morse, 1991).



Following Yin's (2003) multiple-case study method as shown in Figure 1, the findings of this study might be used to refine theory relative to context and to move the servant-leadership literature forward. However, several limitations suggest that the typical profile and manifest codes identified by this study should be considered tentative and subject to further substantiation. These limitations also indicate areas for future research.

1. The study assumed that companies reported to employ servant-leadership actually operated via a servant-leadership philosophy. In an associated assumption, the claims of servant-leadership were often drawn from limited sources such as websites or quotations from one senior leader. No empirical research was conducted to determine whether these companies actually practiced servant-leadership at any levels in the organization. Future researchers should explore whether servant-leadership in the listed companies comprises an actual theory-in-use.

2. An individual organization's model and definition of servant-leadership were not confirmed via observations of the organizations or through interviews with organizational personnel. As mentioned in the confounding themes, reports of servant-leadership might be referring to constructs different from those theorized in the literature about servant-leadership. Additionally, individual companies might utilize different servant-leadership models. Researchers should determine whether a specific model or definition of servant-leadership available from the literature is utilized more often by organizations that have adopted a servant-leadership philosophy.

3. The companies' levels of conservatism were also assumed without empirical research. The corporations located in Texas and Georgia were assumed to be conservative primarily because the bulk of their workforces lived in the so-called Bible Belt and because both states' citizens tend to vote Republican. Corporations in the central part of the country tend to have traditional work ethics and family values, with many of the districts voting Republican. Vanguard was also coded as conservative due to their approach in the financial industry and due to a contextual analysis of their website, which strongly expressed their conservatism as an institutional philosophy.



However, future research should seek to operationalize more precisely and to measure a conservatism variable.

4. The companies' levels of consumer focus were assumed from their respective (a) industries, (b) websites, and (c) reports such as the "best companies to work for" and "most admired companies." One of the authors, Novak, has been observing consumer industries for many years from a marketing and customer service perspective. Many of the well-known companies are legendary for their focus on customers and customer service, and those standards were used to code the consumer focus of these companies. Future research might develop a more specific measure of consumer focus.

5. The performance measure of servant-leadership for this study was limited to companies' stock performance. However, it is unclear whether this measure is the appropriate outcome criterion for the servant-leadership construct. Stone et al. (2003) noted, "The servant leader does not serve with a focus on results; rather the servant leader focuses on service itself" (p. 8). Further, Greenleaf (1977) indicated that the true test of servant-leadership is the development of people and the reproduction of the service inclination in others. Thus, future research should operationalize the appropriate outcome standards of servant-leadership and argue for the valence of those measures to organizations above other possible measures.

In summary, this study does not attempt to identify or to discuss all of the factors that are essential to organizational effectiveness, but seeks to explore some of the contextual patterns related to the reported practice of servant-leadership. Servant-leadership appears to operate in contexts that provide a value match to servant-leader constructs, including conservative contexts and consumer-oriented philosophies. Although an individualistic focus and an emphasis on social responsibility are likely compatible with servant-leadership, these themes are not synonymous with the concept and might provide confounding variables for research to explore.

Consideration of the context for servant-leadership also brings the issue of performance outcomes into view. Smith et al. (2004) suggested that servant-leadership is most suitable in a stable economic environment.



Accordingly, it might be easier to be a generous, follower-focused employer when the profits are flowing and the company stock continues to rise. Collins (2001) proposed that success and momentum drive continued success and momentum because people like to be part of a winning organization. Additionally, success and momentum drive profits, which are often reflected in employee compensation and benefits. Many of the studies and articles that claimed servant-leadership to be competitive in the corporate world (Spears & Lawrence, 2002) were published when the U.S. economy was growing steadily. The economic downturn of 2002 caused many of these servant-led companies to (a) close plants, (b) offshore manufacturing, (c) lay off employees, and (d) enter into tumultuous labor negotiations with unions. A more turbulent environment might make servant-leadership less effective (Smith et al.). Similarly, the value culture that places a priority on short-term material and monetary gain seems to have taken precedence over the more spiritual, morally-driven, and long-term value culture. In the present climate of economic uncertainty, publicly traded companies appear to be making shareholders their first priority, customers second, and employees last.

For servant-leadership to continue to demonstrate “staying power” (Spears, 1996, p. 33) in the corporate world, the question of context (Smith et al., 2004; Humphreys, 2005) must be addressed and a database of success stories must be built. Additionally, the success stories need supporting data and sustainable models beyond mere anecdotal references. Until that support is established, the definitions and models of servant-leadership are incomplete, and some will continue to posit that servant-leadership is a myth (Eicher-Catt, 2005). Consistent with the iterative feedback and theory modification of the multi-case method described by Yin (2003), the findings of this pilot study should be used to stimulate further research exploring the context and competitiveness of servant-leadership.



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THE JOURNEY OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FROM THE INSIDE OUT: BEGINNING

—PAUL M. NAKAI
LEADERSHIP SPIRIT INTERNATIONAL

The following essay is the first in a two part series by Paul Nakai. Look for the second installment, entitled The Journey of Leadership Development from the Inside Out: Going Forward in the 2008 International Journal of Servant-Leadership.

A few years ago, a young boy climbed over a protective fence surrounding a high voltage transformer box. Unfortunately, the box's locking mechanism was faulty and the child managed to get into the transformer and was severely burned. As you would imagine, the various parties started to litigiously position themselves to insure a "fair" settlement. A flurry of emotions, accusations, defenses and explanations followed.

Amidst the positioning and finger pointing and contrary to the suggestions of his legal counsel, the CEO of Wisconsin Electric, Dick Abdoo, stepped forward and accepted accountability for the situation and pledged that the company would do whatever they could to ensure that a similar accident could not happen again. Equally important, Dick went on to guarantee that Wisconsin Electric would partner with the child's family to make the child whole once more.

The conviction to quietly do the "right" thing, often contrary to accepted logic, is a mark of the type of leadership that sometimes goes unnoticed or gets lost in the busyness of our daily work lives. What enables certain leaders to make decisions like this? Is the decision rooted in their personal values or is it the result of their stance toward others? Regardless



of the reason, it is often the product of higher order thinking. On the surface, it appears to be a leadership trait of contradictions, that is, quiet modesty versus strong-willed certainty. But upon closer examination, there is a leadership foundation that has been developed and has evolved over the years.

Over the past thirty years, I have had the good fortune to work with and for a number of accomplished, inspiring and heartfelt leaders. Fourteen of these Chief Officers stand out for me as corporate leaders under whom I would thrive as an employee, as well as persons from whom I would learn a great number of leadership lessons. Perhaps for me, more importantly, I would not hesitate to have either of my children understudy any of these individuals. In speaking with these organizational leaders regarding the many challenges that they face, all fourteen have voiced two similar questions:

- How do I assist “really good people/leaders” to become “great leaders”?
- How do I insure that the organization is on the “correct” path to insure its viability and contribution both for today and for future generations?

The vast majority of my time with these executives was spent exploring their next leadership insight, insuring their company’s future, or furthering their senior team’s leadership journey. However, interestingly enough, these same questions arose when we would occasionally discuss their private or home lives.

- How do I assist my family (spouse, children, relatives and friends) to live more of the time in resilience, love, inspiration, forgiveness, service and openness?
- How do I insure that my family is on the “correct” path to insure its strength and contribution both for today and for future generations?

The observations put forth in this article have applications to both pro-



fessional and personal life. These questions appear to be the motive behind the efforts of these fourteen executive leaders.

MY TRANSITIONING MODEL OF THE EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL LEADER

For a number of years, I held a very stylized vision of the epitome of the leader. He or she would be a larger-than-life personality, a take-command rainmaker capable of miracles in the face of all odds. In the eyes of many, these special individuals appeared to be the authoritative spokespersons on leadership. Because there were so few of these figures, I assumed that there was limited room “at the top” of this leadership hierarchy and that “normal” folk could only hope to achieve this type of notoriety born from tremendous accomplishment and performance. In my mind, I linked big personalities to big results. Upon reflection, I noticed within me an implied dependency on the capabilities and insights of a demanding central figure. What made this figure so intriguing was that it seemed more immediately reassuring and familiar. In fact, it was more comfortable to me to feel that these actions and traits were beyond my capabilities. More importantly, I felt and believed that these heroic leaders were a “special breed” capable of thought well beyond the abilities of others.

It has only been within the last few years that I started to notice accomplishment and performance occurring without this type of leadership persona at the helm of the organization. How could this be? Without this type of heroic leadership, could great performance be happening because of random luck or serendipitous circumstance? I was soon to discover that luck or circumstance, although important, was not the substance behind their success. As good as the heroic leaders were individually, they did not necessarily awaken the same leadership capacity in those around them. Succeeding with these personalities demanded more of my focus on what they wanted versus listening to my own common sense. Instead of exercising my own capacity for wisdom, my focus was on the application and implementation of their wisdom and ideas.

I started to notice that there were many examples of subtler and quieter

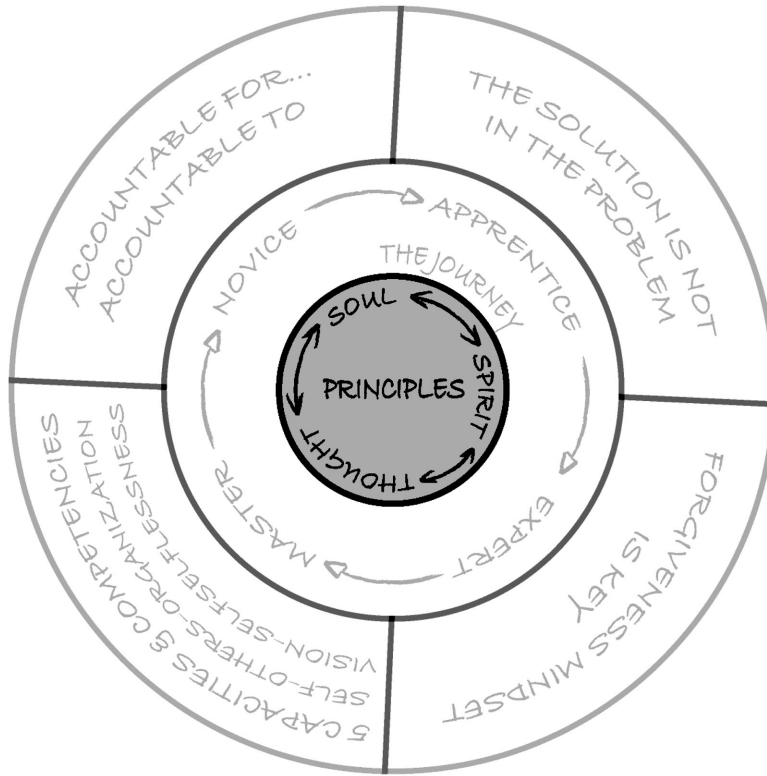


leaders evoking performance, accountability and fulfillment from those around them. However, because of these leaders' very quiet everyday nature, unless you were consciously looking for signs of this leadership or worked with them directly, their public presence often went unnoticed. It was tremendously easier to have a two-way conversation with these everyday leaders. There was a disarming modesty about them, yet they were ethically and directionally definite and strong-willed. They expected and supported an awakening of leadership capacity in those around them.

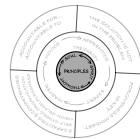
In working with these leaders and in speaking with those who were with them for awhile, I found that these leaders appeared to follow a common path of increasing leadership consciousness. Although this evolutionary journey of leadership development was not a linear process, its elemental pieces started to become clear. Their journey also served as a model of how one might continually evolve and transform into the type of leader that is most required at any given moment.

I would describe this building and developmental process via three interrelated levels of understanding. This perspective often results in a unique focus, a higher order of solution and laser-effective action. The three inter-related levels of leadership understanding are:

- The personal understanding of the PRINCIPLES of the Soul, Spirit and Conduit of Leadership
- The recursive mindset steps of the JOURNEY of leadership development: Novice – Apprentice – Expert – Master
- The concepts manifesting this LEADERSHIP wisdom, insight and solutions:
 1. The answer is rarely found in the problem
 2. Accountable for and accountable to
 3. Capacities and competencies (self, others, organizationally, vision and selflessness)
 4. Forgiveness mindset is key



PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP. . . SOUL, SPIRIT AND CONDUIT



Like all leaders, these individuals made decisions and took action on what they saw as necessary to do or as the appropriate direction to take. Their focus was one of identifying the path of greatest contribution and service. As these leaders spoke of their developmental journey with me, they appeared to personally share three common understandings or principles of how life worked. These principles were behind every action, every thought and every decision that they made. They were at the source of their resiliency, creativity and impact



on others. With this perspective, their personal journey of discovery, insight and achievement took on clarity and meaning and no longer appeared to happen in a serendipitous or haphazard way. Although they could not make life or people act the way that they wanted, the progress that they precipitated was, in many ways, even more profound.

1. The Journey of the Soul of Leadership—Leadership Consciousness

Many people go through life with the attitude that there is only one way to experience life; or that they are destined to live life following the patterns in which they have been programmed or educated. For the most part, these individuals unknowingly appear to live the same conscious day, 365 times a year. Although they may want more, they succumb to their belief that their past method of operation blocks their progress for the future. There is a consistency in how they react to life's stimuli and they consider their trait of not changing their mind or feelings as a strength and an act of integrity. True forgiveness and a fresh start are infrequent concepts. They can hold a grudge for quite awhile. These individuals will address their challenges or solve problems in the same way—time and again—expecting the problem to yield or go away.

Unlike these people, the fourteen leaders on whom I base this paper have realized that there are an infinite number of ways that life can be experienced. They know that there are infinite levels of awareness and consciousness and that each level yields a new perspective on life. However, this is not an exercise in fantasy, intellectual manipulation or forced creativity, but is more a journey of discovery and insight. They realize that they cannot force this journey of wisdom into occurring, but can only be open to its potential. Their journey is one of clarifying and understanding the Soul of leadership and experiencing it at deeper and more profound levels. They also realize that they cannot make anyone become a leader. All that they can do is to try to awaken this capacity in others by modeling their consciousness and articulating, as best as possible, their understanding of life.

In a small way, we have all experienced this dimension of leadership



when we experience fluctuations in our moods and states of mind. Although it is important to be able to acknowledge this shift in our emotions, it is equally important to notice the impact that our mood of the moment has on our view of life in that moment. Depending on our mood, we can have different opinions of and feelings toward the same event. If we do not realize that this is happening, our decisions and actions reflect our perception of the moment and may not be reflective of our best efforts. However, I hasten to add that the answer to this phenomenon is not to force oneself to put on a happy face or to look only for the positive in every event. This can also handicap a person's ability to perceive what is truly happening and commensurately handicap the appropriateness of the response.

These leaders realize that this Principle of Soul goes well beyond the notion of moods. They realize that this journey of wisdom and common sense is a natural endeavor marked by insights and revelations. These insights or jumps in consciousness often result in seeing things a little clearer and with greater perspective. Although these insights yield a peaceful and centered mind, the resulting actions may take courage, perspective, a greater love and compassion. These leaders accept that on occasion they will feel insecure or uncertain but that it can be a temporary condition of their thinking and consciousness. Their innate capacities and buoyancy are all that is needed to right their vessel.

Perhaps even more poignant is these leaders' realization that their life is a journey of ever more profound clarity, contribution and positive impact. The majority of the executives with whom I work are on this journey of ongoing greater personal fulfillment in everything that they do. In this way, they see their lives as consistently evolving. Contrast this ongoing exploration with the assumptions that many others hold toward learning and growing. Many people will only grow or explore a new way when they feel as though they "have to" do so. Only when the pain is great enough or the problems overwhelming will they look for another way to see things or entertain another methodology to the solution. Is it any wonder that to



these individuals, growth and development takes on a discomfort or painfulness?

For those leaders who are certain in what they know and are consistently open to learning anew, their sadness manifests whenever they step off this path for whatever reason and for however long. But I can honestly say that each of these leaders in their own way finds their bearings and resumes their journey. They realize that they cannot will fulfillment into being, force it to appear in the manner or fashion that suits them best, or make it happen on their schedule. Through their search for greater peace, happiness and fulfillment, they have noticed that what they personally want happens more easily for them when they are unconditionally open to the possibilities through their moments of silence and non-contingent faith.

It is the wise leader who understands that achieving excellence in today's endeavors *and* accepting an openness to change are the two dynamic elements for long-term success. I saw an example of this recently when I observed Dave Roberson, CEO of Hitachi Data Systems, speaking with one of their major clients. Not only did Dave show how their present offering of products, services and support were world-class, but he also displayed how Hitachi has consistently been on this path of ongoing evolutionary change and improvement. Examples of this change mindset manifested in more ways than merely the generation of new products and approaches. In many ways, it questioned and then raised the level of the assumptions behind good business and customer service. In that instance, it appeared that the clients at the briefing took greater heart in knowing that they had a partner in their journey of ongoing improvement to meet an ever-changing environment. They committed themselves not only to doing today's business together, but also to mutually developing the next phase of their journey.

2. *The Spirit of Leadership—Realities and Worlds of Leadership*

In addition to this journey of consciousness, these leaders have come to realize that there are two realities to life, a life of *form* (tangible, measur-



able) and a life *before form* (source, spiritual formlessness). Again, most people are only aware of and familiar with the *form* of life. It is the life in which we live and experience through our physical senses. It is manifested through what we see, hear, touch, feel and smell. It is what we can measure, spend, save, manipulate, control and mold. We learn to function in this life of *form*. We learn our lessons in school and from our past. We strive for titles, promotions and notoriety. The world of *form* is powerful and can quickly solve many problems within short order. In our daily lives, there are many times when we can solve issues or live a fuller life through intellectual redesign of our thoughts or by acting in an understanding fashion. However, frequently there are also times when the capabilities and potential of *form* are inadequate to the task at hand.

In the extreme, sometimes the situation at hand is so multifaceted and complex or so emotion-laden that the world of *form* can, at best, only help us cope. In these times of fear or pain, purposefully reframing our thinking or manipulating our emotions falls short of true peace and realization. Many of these leaders have felt the inadequacy of the intellect or the temporary nature of burying hurtful feelings. However, they have found solace and, more importantly, revelation and a fresh start when they allow the world *before form* (spiritual) to embrace and engulf them. The state *before form* enables us to change our minds, to forgive, and to see new possibilities to old nagging problems by seeing life at a different level of consciousness or awareness. It offers everything for those who are truly in the moment. It is the state of wisdom.

These quiet leaders realize that there appears to be a source of insight, forgiveness and revelation and that these traits are normal and natural events that they can potentially access in moments of quiet vision, non-personal thought and reflection. Some experience the fruits from this source and the enabling state of health through quieting activities like golf, morning walks, meditation, prayer, music or art. Some attribute this state to their religion or to their philosophical and spiritual underpinnings. But the magic is not in the mechanisms that they have come to utilize. Their higher



answers come to them through this state of wisdom. Progressing on this journey, on a day-to-day basis, each of these leaders has developed his or her faith, respect and trust in this state of wisdom, that is, in this state of *formlessness*. Their insights are unencumbered by what's happened in the past. They are not bound by previous failures, confusion or successes. They are not blindly bound to the form of life and work they presently know, but are open to exploring more effective and fulfilling ways to achieve their purpose and mission. Their revelations manifest themselves as a fresh start, intuitive impressions, and clearer vision. I also must be careful not to over-explain the unexplainable, for fear of diminishing its promise and capacity.

Perhaps the more profound understanding displayed by these leaders is that they do not view *form* and *formless* as an either/or phenomenon. They see both *form* and *formless* as ever present and consistent. They are both *simultaneous* elements of life. These leaders are comfortable with both. As Robert Greenleaf has stated: "The leader needs two intellectual abilities that are usually not formally assessed in an academic way: he needs to have a *sense for the unknowable* and be able to *foresee the unforeseeable*" (1977, pp. 21-22).

The spirit of leadership is the source of breakthrough insights, the true power behind every action and the capacity for continual evolutionary growth and impact. The conduit between all of this potential and making it actual is thought.

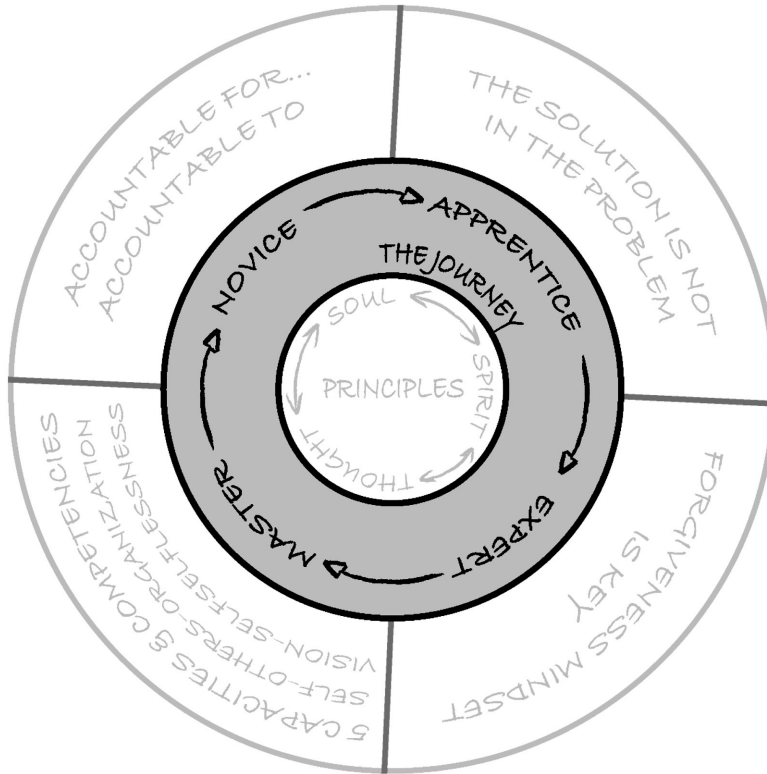
3. *Thought: The Conduit of the Leadership State*

Most people know that they think; however, very few see their thoughts in the moment and fully realize the power that their thinking has on their life and on their actions. Unlike many, these fourteen leaders speak of their thoughts and how their thoughts determine their perception of reality. They can see how their perception determines what they see of life and, commensurately, how they respond to life's events. They realize that their thoughts are their conduit to their experience of life.

Even beyond their psychological understanding of the influence of the

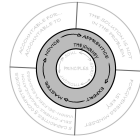


“content” of their thoughts, they appear to have an appreciation and understanding of the process of their thinking. These leaders frequently speak of their thoughts in an impersonal and ego-less way. They appear to see their thinking as an illusion of their consciousness, which enables them to see beyond to a greater truth. They are passionate and certain in their vision, deeply involved with life . . . yet their egos appear disengaged from the situation or events. Because of this, they display an appropriate flexibility, agility and gracefulness as they go about their day. As such, they have the ability to hold their thoughts lightly when necessary.





THE RECURRING MINDSET STEPS OF THE JOURNEY OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

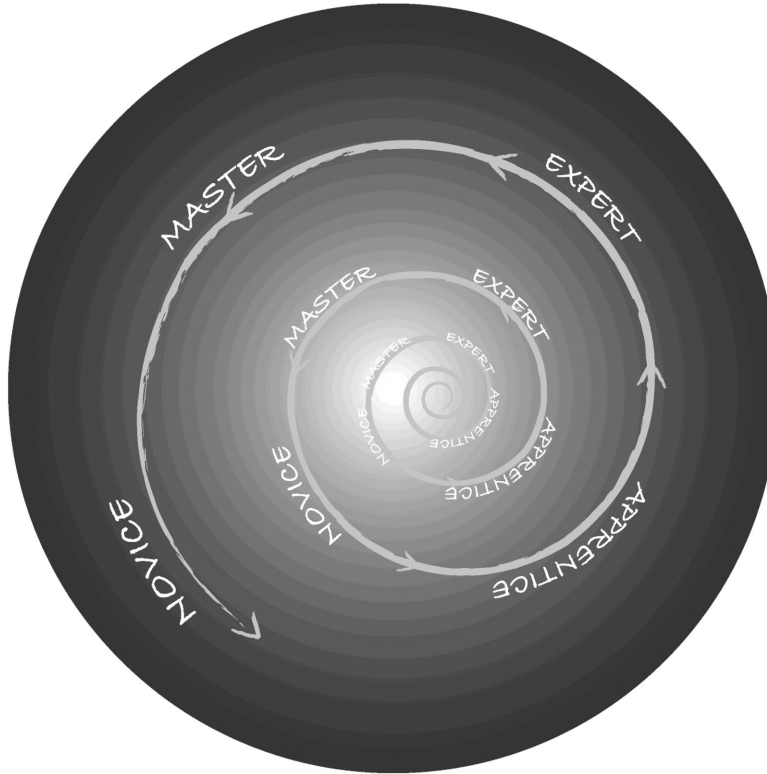


The dynamic understanding of Leadership Soul, Spirit and Thought lay at the foundation of these individuals' ongoing and evolving development as organizational and community leaders. Upon speaking with these leaders about their leadership journey, a pattern of thought, awareness and action started to appear. In every case where learning and development halted, this pattern was either interrupted or stopped.

There arose at least four general states of mind or mindsets that these constantly evolving leaders experienced. They would intuitively move in and out of these states of mind depending on the needs of the moment or the situation they were facing. However, their basic personality did not appear to be significantly altered and the stances or actions that each individual took to these moments in time were varied based both on their perception of the situation and their individual makeup.

The evolving leadership capacity that is experienced through these four states of mind is rooted in one's willingness to be open to new possibilities and to actively admit to—and be OK with—"not knowing" the correct answer. There needed to be a desire and willingness to learn something that could potentially make obsolete everything that one knew up to that moment and to be open to the possibility that one's next insight could radically alter one's experience of life in a profound and positive fashion. Although this journey of discovery and revelation went through many states, the four that were mentioned regularly are:

- The *Novice*
- The *Apprentice*
- The *Expert*
- The *Master*



I will try to describe these states of being in the following paragraphs. To be accurate and complete, I hope to capture the state of mind and the pattern of thought that each state embraces. I have tried to describe how each state manifests and shows up behaviorally. As such, I hasten to caution the reader that the answer does not lie in the behavior and urge you to try to imagine the thinking, perspective and awareness that lead to this behavior. In addition, it does not appear that these mindsets necessarily occur in a linear process or that one state of mind needs to lead to the next. For example, depending on the situation, one could go from Apprentice to Master or from Expert to Novice. I would also imagine that if one's personal revelation was significant, it would be possible to go from Novice to Master



within a short span of time. Here are some of the ways that these states of mind were described.

The Novice mindset: Ego-less exploration and curiosity; exploring with one's heart and spirit as well as with one's head and intellect; having no preconceived idea or expectation of what one is pursuing or a pre-determined idea of what is meant to be found; open to unconditional, non-contingent insight and learning; humble and curious, the potential doorway to discovering new ideas or levels of consciousness; and/or, open to new thought.

From this exploration, something frequently stands out to the seeker. Perhaps it begins as an impression, a feeling or an insight. However, it ignites one's curiosity and creativity and provides the general focus to enable one to step forward to clarify and add substance to this insight or vision. One might then continue the journey with the mindset of a journeyman or apprentice.

The Apprentice mindset: Having chosen a general path of learning and exploration; looking for experts and masters to follow and from whom to learn, the potential doorway to enhancing learning; gathering relevant and appropriate knowledge and skills, furthering one's capabilities and deepening one's understanding of specific areas of life; refining one's focus and conditional/selective discovery; and/or, collecting-learning-organizing and internalizing information, experiences, points of view, data and thoughts.

Once a person is recognized by his or her peers through credentials and performance, he/she begins to gain the station of expert. At this point in time, the "seeker" now becomes the "source" of information and ideas.

The Expert mindset: Has paid the price and worked hard for expertise and competence; very learned—a source of information and experiences; "rightness" based on past performance, insights, credentials and achievements, the potential doorway to heightened contribution and performance; and/or, intellectually refining and deepening one's awareness of the complexity and multi-dimensional facets of one's area of expertise.

By combining a stance of humility and curiosity with a wealth of



knowledge and experiences, the Expert has the opportunity to bring alive the knowledge that he or she possesses. These people hold the potential to inspire others and to awaken in them their vision of contribution. Instead of merely applying, choreographing and strategizing through the intellect, the Expert has the opportunity to personally live his or her ideas and breathe life into them in the moment. This step is the doorway to the Master.

The Master mindset: “What I’ve learned is just and only what I’ve learned”; “The more aware I am, the more I realize how very little I know”; hopes to take what has been experienced and understood to a higher level of performance and profundity; creative and insightful; performs intuitively and instinctively; humility and modesty coupled with certainty and confidence, the potential doorway to greater learning; and/or, sees life through the eyes of a new consciousness which obviates or points out the limitations of the old perspective . . . anxious to become a Novice once again.

Again, although I present these states of mind in a linear fashion, this journey does not appear to progress in a linear, step-by-step way. It is an evolving, recursive process of discovery, exploration, internalization, deepening and expanding one’s consciousness, understanding and action. When a person is in the influence of this journey, an aliveness and enthusiasm about life is apparent. Without it, a person gets stale, predictable and arrogant. The leaders in whom I observe this dynamic aliveness display an almost graceful movement from one state of mind to the other.

Is there a predictable catalyst that causes this evolution to happen? In my conversations with these leaders, it became apparent that there is no one type of event that moves the individual from one level of consciousness to another. Sometimes it appears to be precipitated by crisis that causes one to be brutally honest with oneself . . . personally or professionally. Sometimes it is brought on when the facts and situation require it. Or, the consciousness shift occurs when it is noticed that the current way in which things are getting done is not working well, or even has its own obsolescence built into it. Regardless of the situation, this evolutionary movement takes place because of an insight or revelation. It occurs when one steps aside from



one's ego and looks to spirit (vision) for the answer as opposed to rearranging intellectual thought or choreographing one's feelings and emotions (coping). As such, this shift in consciousness is usually noticed after the fact and usually by someone observing the person. When a consciousness shift occurs, the person just sees life differently. They may not be aware of the difference until it is pointed out to them that their actions and demeanor have changed.

If insight is the precursor to each step of this evolutionary journey, what tends to get in its way? What makes the status quo so attractive that the potential for growth and change in consciousness appears distasteful?

Specifically, there may be as many reasons for this resistance as there are people on earth. Perhaps individuals are so happy or comfortable with the familiar/current situation ("sacred cows") that anything that could change that situation is viewed as a threat. Perhaps they have developed the inability to embrace the uncertainty of change, or perhaps they always need to have the answer. Perhaps they've diminished their ability to truly listen, or perhaps they've convinced themselves that they are the ones who do the influencing and judging. Perhaps they've lost faith and trust in the infinite capacity of the *spiritual*. Regardless, here are some of the observations from these leaders:

Resistance to moving from the Novice mindset: Being swept up in and enamored of the exploration overshadows the desire to focus, to contribute, or to take action; more enthralled with one's personal thoughts versus clarifying and strengthening one's personal vision; and/or, wanting to refine and complete the search, unaware that this is a limitless journey—the "professional seeker" bouncing from one idea to the other.

Resistance to moving from the Apprentice mindset: Greater safety in learning others' insights and actions; knowing *about* subjects without personally owning the ideas; not inspired; holding the lessons outside of themselves versus internalizing and becoming the lesson; regurgitating and



applying others' wisdom and insights; and/or, one's ego remains safe when one learns about leadership versus behaving like and being a leader.

Resistance to moving from the Expert mindset: One comes to enjoy and value the investment, influence and rightness experienced once one is recognized as an expert ("I am the expert, it's worked for me up till now, I do the influencing, my wealth of knowledge is always right"); humility is uncomfortable; and/or, one has become unfamiliar and uncomfortable with not knowing or looking like a rookie.

Everything that can be invented has been invented!

—Charles H. Duell

Director of the US Patent Office 1899

Resistance to moving from the Master mindset: Caught up in their own magic to be creative and innovative with what they already know; and/or, not seeing and accepting the thin veil that lies between Master and Novice, that is, not realizing that the power of the Master lies in the Novice mindset.

Sensible and responsible women do not want to vote.

—Grover Cleveland

President of the United States 1905

However, movement does not occur by merely recognizing one's resistance or hesitancy to explore one's biases and assumptions. To stay on their recurring and evolutionary path of development and greater contribution, these leaders have discovered certain insights that assist them in their journey. The most frequently mentioned realizations follow.

One thing that I value is to be able to honestly say that how I am today is not how I was a year ago. . . and, how I see life next year will hopefully be different than how I see life today. This is not to say that there are not values and insights that will stay with me throughout my life. This is more than merely doing things differently or doing different



things. It has to do with how the world looks to me and how I feel about me, what I'm doing, my life and those in it.

—Dennis Litos
CEO, Doctors Medical Center

THE CONCEPTS OF WISDOM

Focus, Solutions and Actions

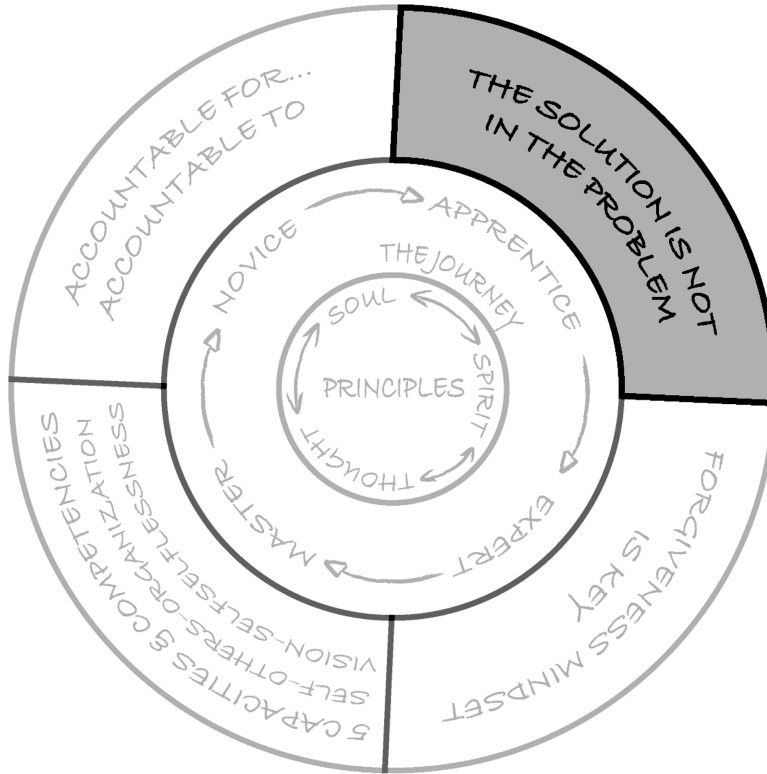
For these leaders, how then do the two levels of understanding, that is, the Principles and the phases of the Journey, come together and manifest in the world in which they live and lead? What realizations guide these leaders in their developmental journey of contribution and service? Four were regularly mentioned.



The Answer Is Not to Be Found in the Problem

For many of us, whenever we are faced with a challenge or problem, our first reaction is to fully understand the issue before us. We analyze it, measure it, trace its history, find the causes or elements that led to its becoming a problem, and so forth. In short, we become an expert on the problem—not necessarily a master of the solution.

In some cases, the fix becomes apparent and is a relatively simple alteration within the parameters and assumptions of the day. However, there are many issues facing leaders that possess many facets and are filled with emotional repercussions. The consciousness that sees the situation as a problem has tremendous difficulty in seeing the larger solution. Often, the more that a person focuses on the problem, the more real it becomes in his/her mind. One indicator of this “realness of the problem” is that one’s spirits go down and hopefulness decreases. In addition, poor judgment, reactivity, insecurity and impatience increase. As a result, the given situation doesn’t get appreciably better. Because the problems are not fully addressed



or are only partially resolved, the problems are ignored, “go underground,” or are avoided until they reappear, perhaps in a different form.

In order for a higher level solution to occur, one’s consciousness needs to shift in order to allow one to see the total situation through new eyes. Without this shift in consciousness, one is doing little more than rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

It is relatively easier to speak as an authority on the problem: one describes reality (as one sees it today). There is usually agreement that a challenge exists. There is little conflict about the activities of the past that got us to this predicament. However, when you speak of the solution, you are speaking of a future state in time, something that has yet to happen. For



the solution to be believable and possibly motivating to other people, there needs to be a sufficient amount of faith, hope and trust in the system. The leader needs to be sensitive to the receptivity of the people and, more importantly, needs to be clear in his/her vision of the solution. This inspiring vision does not come from merely rearranging what one already knows. It comes from that state of *formlessness*, the quiet reflection open to all possibilities. The strength and clarity of this vision get the people in the solution mindset and away from focusing on the problem.

We can see examples of this throughout history. Franklin Roosevelt focused on the promise of hope and work as the antidote for the realities of the Depression, Gandhi focused on the value of personal dignity as the character trait that would conquer foreign occupation, and Martin Luther King's vision of equality provided visible contrast to segregation and discrimination.

This, too, is the promise of Robert Greenleaf's works on servant-leadership. He and those who follow these principles describe a vision of leadership and organizational agility and wisdom beyond the ills of the day. It is a vision that defies obsolescence and is one whose relevancy is consistently validated through the results achieved by those who embrace its principles and put them into action. In many ways, this vision arises beyond the challenges and points in a direction that transcends the problems.

To "The Fourteen" . . . I hope I am hearing your truths.

James A. Attwood, CEO Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York (dec.)

Bob Best, CEO, Atmos Energy Company

Harry Bubb, CEO, Pacific Financial Corporation (ret.)

John Clayton, Director, Senn-Delaney Leadership Consulting Group-UK (dec.)



Shinjiro Iwata, CMO, Hitachi Global Storage Technologies

Jim Hart, CEO, Senn-Delaney Leadership Consulting Group

Terry Hartshorn, Chairman and CEO, PacificCare (ret.)

Dennis Litos, CEO, Doctors Medical Center of Modesto

Dr. Mary McFarland, Dean of the School of Professional Studies, Gonzaga University

David Roberson, CEO, Hitachi Data Systems Corporation

John Ruch, CEO, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Utah and Idaho (ret.)

Richard Rudman, COO, Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) (ret.)

Larry Senn, Chairman, Senn-Delaney Leadership Consulting Group

Gregory Smith, CEO, Ford Motor Company of the Americas (ret.)

*dec. . .deceased

*ret. . .retired

Paul Nakai is the founding partner and principal of Leadership Spirit International, with offices in San Francisco, California, United States of America. Leadership Spirit International is a consulting group specializing in developing and deepening the leadership capacity of executives, in teambuilding and optimizing performance-based relationships, and in shaping organizational culture to more effectively meet organizational objectives. Paul was formerly a Managing Partner and Executive Vice President with the Senn-Delaney Leadership Consulting Group, where he specialized in executive coaching and leadership development to support and lead intense business challenges such as mergers and acquisitions, shifting corporate cultures, leadership shortages, downturns or upswings in business, and debilitating internal strife. Paul has consulted and led major engagements in healthcare, insurance, financial services, manufacturing, energy, high technology, aerospace, pharmaceuticals, and telecommunications, including crucial engagements at Three Mile Island Nuclear plant and for



NASA in response to critical challenges. Through Leadership Spirit International, he is dedicated to servant-leadership in order to assist executives in unleashing the spirit behind their personal leadership as well as unleashing the collective spirit of their organizations.

The International Journal of Servant-Leadership welcomes Paul's understandings of corporate culture. We look forward to his ongoing editorials which can be found in each volume of the journal under the section entitled: "Servant-Leadership and the Executive."



PARKER PALMER ON SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

—INTERVIEWED BY MICHAEL LIEBERMAN CAREY,
MIKE POUTIATINE, AND SHANN FERCH

The following transcript is excerpted from an interview with Parker Palmer conducted for the Gonzaga University online Servant-Leadership Mentor Gallery. Questions have been removed for freedom of content flow.

Parker Palmer:

What really fascinates me is how visible our brokenness is. A rational person would think nobody needs to be led toward seeing it or understanding it; it's all around us all the time. It's on the nightly news and it's in the morning newspaper and it's in the self-reports that people give of their own lives. So I think we're talking about a network of mythologies or illusions that we maintain in order to try to convince ourselves that things aren't as bad as they seem, maybe in the manner of a dysfunctional family which keeps pretending that everything is fine here even though Dad is drinking way too much and hitting people way too often. The way that leaders can help people see their brokenness, I think, is by acknowledging their own. I don't think we are willing to trust anybody on the issue of how broken we are until that person has acknowledged his or her own brokenness. And I understand that that's a tricky business for leaders. There's a strange dance that goes on between leaders and followers where followers want leaders to pretend that they're totally together and totally in charge, and then they resent them for acting as if they were superhuman, making all the rest of us feel like dorks. So we do this sort of strange dance in which we project on leaders our need for the very thing nobody has, we don't have, so we need somebody to pretend that they have it. But I don't think ultimately that



that's a dance that people really want to do. The problem is that a leader has to take his or her community, or his or her organization, or his or her group, through a rough passage, through whitewater, to get to the other side, to get to the place where we can all acknowledge that God ain't finished with any of us yet, that we're all broken, we are all works in progress, and we need each other to help put the pieces together, to help make something better happen.

I mean I think for example concretely about congregations, in say the Protestant or the Catholic community, which are the ones that I'm most familiar with. There's this tremendous need in most congregations on the part of laypeople to have the priest or the pastor be a godly person in some illusory way, and a lot of priests and pastors feel the falsehood of that. They know themselves well enough to know that they're sinners, that they're broken, that they're struggling along with everybody else. Moving a congregation from that place of shared illusions to a place of reality, where people feel safer because the leader has acknowledged his or her brokenness, is a struggling period of time. Sometimes the people rise up and say, "Well you may be broken, but that means we should get a new leader," and that's a price the leaders sometimes have to pay. This question, like a lot of questions, the question comes down, if I'm the leader in question, it comes down to a matter of how much I value my own integrity. And I have to say for myself, at age 65, that I no longer have much interest in putting on a show for anybody, for a very simple reason: I've understood something about my own mortality in recent years, in a way I wasn't capable of understanding it ten or twenty or thirty years ago. And I've realized that at the end of the road I'm not going to be asking, "Did I put on a good enough show?" I'm going to be asking, "How real was I? Was I really there? Did I really do that? Did I live my real life?", and I find that a very salutary question, a very bracing question. In any given moment when I'm tempted to pull my punches or hedge the truth or slip away from something difficult that I feel called to, it's helpful to ask, "How am I going to feel about this moment as I'm drawing my last breath?" And I'm pretty clear at this point



that I'm not going to be asking, "How much did they like me?", but I'm going to be asking, "Did I live it by my own best lights?" I think that's why St. Benedict, in his rule for monks, says, "Daily keep your death before your eyes"—not because it's a counsel of morbidity, but because it's very life-giving advice. If you daily keep your death before your eyes, you're likely to live more fully in the moment than you would otherwise.

That's a very interesting question, because if you put this, as I did in *The Courage to Teach*, in terms of academic disciplines it's fairly easy to see what the great thing is. I mean for the physicist it's the mystery of a subatomic particle, or for a literary scholar it's the mind of Dostoevsky or Melville; for a historian it's the dynamics of the Holocaust or the Third Reich—this profoundly important and engaging subject that draws the scholar's work forward. So what's the equivalent of that in organizational life? Well, two things come to mind. One is that *we* are the equivalent of that. I think it's absolutely critical that we see organizations as habitats for human beings. The workplace is where people spend an incredible number of hours of their lives. And in fact I've been doing a lot of thinking lately about how our workplaces do not treat the people in them as great things worthy of reverence and respect, just as a great scholar extends reverence and respect to whatever he or she is studying. I think in fact that the workplace has become the battlefield of many people's lives—the place where they feel violence done to their identity and integrity as they become cogs in a machine, or deployable and replaceable resources used simply on behalf of some organizational goal or ulterior motive, and that's not a nice way to be in the world. That's a way that murders the spirit—and actually, if you translate it in terms of organizational bottom line, gets worse work out of people than you would if you extended them respect at least, if not full reverence. So I think that step one is that a leader has to understand that the great thing in organizational life is the people who inhabit that organization, and that the organization, in order to serve its own mission, has to serve its people well. I think that good leaders in corporate life understand that, but not everyone by a long shot does.



But there's another thing that I'd like to say, for which I'll give a homey example. And that has to do with the products that organizations put out, or put on the market in the world of business. My dad was a businessman in Chicago for 55 years and he eventually became president and owner of the major Midwest distributor of Syracuse china, Reed and Barton silverware, and Fostoria glass for restaurants—usually pretty good restaurants in Chicago and other major Midwestern cities. So I grew up in a household where one of the great things was a piece of Syracuse china. My dad would hold one of these plates up to the light and he'd say, "This is fine china, because you can see your hand right through it. Now look at this piece of dime-store china. You can't see your hand. The light doesn't—it's not translucent." And we learned all of these marks of what good china and good silverware looked like, as opposed to their cheap imitations. And what I started to learn, slowly on, was that my dad had a reverence and a respect for quality in the product he was selling. And the reason he would not sell anything that in his judgement did not have quality, was that to do so would be to dishonor the people he was selling to. He wanted to sell a product that he believed in. And it's very interesting, as an academic person, as an intellectual, as a person who spent his whole adult life hanging around folks who have really very little appreciation for things—they have appreciation for ideas, or for art, or music—but they don't have appreciation for objects; in fact among intellectuals, objects, unless they're folk art or something, are often thought of somewhat pejoratively; they have a diminished view. It was very interesting to grow up with a man, my father, for whom I had immense respect, best man I ever knew, who had respect for a piece of china or a piece of silverware, and linked that in his mind to good service to a customer, to putting on the table at a restaurant something that would enhance the dining experience for everybody concerned. So I think one of the questions we have to ask ourselves in organizational life is, Are we selling, marketing, something of real quality, or is this a sham? Is this a shell game? Is this one of those products that, as my grandfather used to say, was made for buying and not for using? And if so, that crucial great



thing is then lacking at the center of organizational life. So I think it's people, and I think it's things as well. Great thing literally in that case.

The commonest image of what it means to hold these tensions is that I'm gonna have my heart broken. That happens sometimes. People's hearts end up in little shards on the floor and putting it back together is a long process of reconstruction which maybe never gets accomplished, I mean there's some people who die heartbroken. It came to me some years ago that there's this other way of imaging the breaking of the heart, which is not that it's going to end up in shards on the floor, but that it's being broken open to greater capacity. While that's just wordplay on one level, it's actually, for me, life experience; I mean, I believe in that difference. The whole question of how you turn it from one thing to the other, from the shards on the floor to this tight little thing called my heart being open to a larger capacity to hold more of the world's pain and more of the world's suffering. The whole question of how that happens is very mysterious, and I don't have a formula for it. I can tell you a couple things that have been important to me, I guess things that I've written about because they've been important to me. One is that I don't know anybody who has taken that journey towards—from the heartbreak to the being broken open—without having gone through profound personal struggles. In my case it was two really devastating bouts with clinical depression, where I just came to question everything about myself and my world, to the point that I wasn't sure that I could keep on living in this society, in this world. There are lots of people who know exactly what I mean, that kind of journey into personal devastation, where you really feel, "I'm not living anyway; why should I maintain the pretense?" I don't know how I exactly came through to the other side to kind of reclaim my life with new clarity and new gratefulness and new vitality. I can tell you that I found a good therapist. I can tell you that I spent a lot of time just in the dark. I can name some pieces of that journey, but *how* ultimately it came together I really don't know. I think there's a mystery about that that we shouldn't mess with.

But I also know that in the midst of that very solitary experience, it



was very important to have people, just a few people really, who knew how to stand at the border of that solitude, respecting the mystery, not trying either to invade it or to evade it, but simply to be present to me in a way that helped make the grace happen. It's really interesting in this culture. Most people either want to invade you—at that moment they want to say, “Oh, here's a fix. If you'd only read this book, if you'd only go on this diet, if you'd only take this herbal preparation or pop this pill from the pharmaceutical company, all will be well.” So they want to invade you with fixes, which kind of gets them off the hook; now they can walk away feeling, “Well, he may kill himself, but I did the best I could,” and they can kind of check you off their to-do list—or they want to evade you. They want to turn their eyes away and pretend this isn't happening. They never saw it and they don't want to look your way again. So it was pretty rare to find people who were willing to stand on the border of my solitude and honor it without fleeing from it—reminding me, just by the quality of their presence, that I was still part of the human community, and that there were people who understood without ever saying that they understood. I knew they understood, because the first sign that someone doesn't understand is when someone says, “I understand exactly what's happening to you.” That's the clearest clue that they don't. What fascinates me is that I think it's possible—I not only think, I *know* it's possible—to teach people that way of being together. We have this project now around the country, the Courage to Teach project or the teacher formation project, that has been going on now for ten years in thirty cities, which has gathered groups of public school educators—we're now working with physicians, lawyers, nonprofit leaders, and a mixed group of other folk, gather a group of twenty-five folks, take them on a two-year journey through eight retreats, and during that time teach them how to be together without either invading each other's souls or evading each other's struggles. It's doable. I've seen it happen to thousands of people. But it's a form of community that's very rare in our culture and that we need to get very intentional about if we want it to happen. When it does happen, the results are amazing, because it allows the person to draw deeply on their inner resources and to hear, or to understand,



what those inner resources are, to attend to the inner teacher, in a way they don't do when they're just sitting alone in their room. But there's something about the electricity of being in a respectful, watchful, observant community that makes a difference for folks.

I actually sometimes liken it to the experience that some of us have had of sitting at the bedside of a dying person. I've talked with lots of people who've had that experience, and I hear people talking about two important things that they learned in that experience. One is that the person that they were sitting with did not have a problem that they could fix. And so for the first time in your life you realize, "I cannot be in this room as a fixer of this problem, because this is not a problem that has a solution; this is dying, and nobody has a solution for that. So I have to learn a different way of being here." And I've asked lots of people, "Well what were you doing? What is that different way? You know you were doing more than just taking up space in the room. What *were* you doing?" And the only answer I've ever gotten is something like, "I was just being present. I was being fully present. I was trying to be there with my whole self, even if wordlessly." So you learn not to invade, but to be present to this very solitary journey called dying. And the second thing that you learn is, you know how disrespectful it would be to avert your eyes from this, to say this is too ugly to watch, this is too problematic to watch, this is too fearsome to watch. Instead I need to turn toward it and just hold it in my attentiveness without either invading it or evading it. So we have some human scale experience of what it means to be present to another person this way. I sometimes find myself saying to myself or others, "You know what, we're all dying all the time anyway. Wouldn't it be good to learn to be present this way to each other before the last couple of hours?" And no one's ever argued with me about that.

That's a question that I think about a lot, actually, because we're just constantly surrounded by so much evidence of evil in our lives, from the children that are starving at this very moment in places where there should be plenty of food to go around—there's more than enough in this house, I



know that, and in this country; or economic arrangements are made in ways that seem indifferent to massive suffering. It's a challenging question: What keeps hope alive in the face of all that? And then the question that immediately follows on it: What do you do with that hope, how do you engage with the world in the face of that evil? I think that for me what keeps hope alive is really fairly simple. It's seeing people who haven't been done in by the way the world is. It's seeing people who model hope in their actions, and realizing that I too could do that if I could find a place to stand that's as solid as where those folks are standing. So I think for me what keeps hope alive is the modeling of hope by others, and it's why the whole notion of community is so critical to me, community in the sense of being connected with generative lives of folks who, in whatever arena it is they care about, and it might be anything from the world of business to the world of early child care, early care of young children, people who are keeping hope alive in their very actions, in their own embodiments. I think staying close to people like that is so important in a world where the media are, minute by minute, hour by hour, bringing us modeling of a very different sort, a modeling of frenzy, a modeling of banality, a modeling of cheap commercialism, a modeling that says really the most important thing in the world is to be a consumer. I guess what I'm saying is, we get along with a little help from our friends. And I've needed friends in my life that I actively seek out because they're walking a different path, and they constantly remind me just by the fact that they're walking it that I could walk that way too.

I think there's something besides community though that is necessary to keep hope alive, and I guess it would be the paradoxical opposite of community: solitude. Because if I stop and look at what kills hope in so many people's lives, the answer, I think, is frenzy—the drivenness of our culture, that wants us always to be active, always to be engaged, always to be producing, always to be getting ourselves noticed. And so solitude, in which all of that noise and all of that kerfluffle can settle down—the water can become still, the silt can go to the bottom and you can see with some clarity what's really there—because what's really there is not the propa-



ganda of our own government or the madness of war, I mean that's there; but what's underneath that and behind that is I think what Thomas Merton called "the hidden wholeness." You can only see it, however, when you get quiet enough in heart and mind and eye to let it come into view through the blizzard. So I think it's probably the modeling of other people, and my own willingness to take an inner journey in which I get very quiet and more perceptive than I usually am, to that hidden wholeness that lies beneath the broken surface of our lives. I think for me those are the things that keep hope alive.

I think the first thing I have to say about the decision whether to stay in a system or bail out is that I personally realized at some point in my mid-30s that in order to pursue my vocation, I had to really liberate myself from large-scale organizations. And starting in my mid-30s, which is now thirty years ago, I began walking a much more independent path, to the point where for the past almost twenty years I've worked completely independently, not on anybody's payroll, not on any organization's payroll. But what's important to say about that is that that's not a piece of advice for other people. It's about vocational discernment; it's about the struggle to know who one is and what one's gifts are and how those gifts are best deployed in the world. At age almost 65 I can speak fairly clearly about the decision I made thirty years ago in a way I couldn't at the time. I started to realize as time went by that given the way I'm made, I was spending a lot of time in organizational life getting conflicted with the way power was being used in that organization—I think the slang phrase for it is "getting my undies in a bunch"—rather than using all of that energy in deploying my gifts towards good ends in the world. So I was picking fights with my boss or picking fights with the way the organization was structured, and it was like the devil made me do it. I couldn't see my way out of that until one day, as it were, I said to myself, "Parker, if you ever want to use a maximum amount of your energy towards worthwhile ends and a minimum amount of energy picking fights with organizations, you need to find a way of making a living that's largely outside of organizational life." And what's



been fascinating to me is that having done that, I have found my work over the last thirty years coming more and more back to serving those institutions. As it turns out it wasn't that I hated those institutions; I actually love schools and religious organizations and corporations rightly understood, because I love their proper missions, I love their honest truthful missions. I just don't belong *in* them. I can be more help outside them than I can within. And so I found my way back, especially in education, to being a person who's tried to support the best possibilities in education with and for those who have stayed within the institution.

Parker Palmer is known for his work in education, spirituality and social change in institutions including schools, community organizations, primary, secondary and higher education, and business and corporations. He is author of numerous books, including *A Hidden Wholeness* (2004), *Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation* (2000), and *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity and Caring* (1990). Palmer's writing has earned numerous awards and citations and has been translated into several languages. His work has been cited in the major voices in the media, including the *New York Times*, *National Public Radio* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. He travels extensively as a speaker, facilitator and workshop and retreat leader. A native of Chicago and graduate of Carleton College and the University of California at Berkeley, where he received a doctorate in sociology, Palmer serves as a senior associate of the American Association of Higher Education, a senior advisor to the Fetzer Institute and the founder of Courage to Teach, for k-12 teachers nationwide.

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FILM REVIEW: *AKEELAH AND THE BEE*

—MARK A. BEATTIE
GONZAGA UNIVERSITY

—FRANK A. BEATTIE
SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

*Dear Father,
We dream
While we may*

*Who are we to need?
We need
While we wait*

— Neil Diamond

From the soundtrack of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*

In searching for a film to review that expressed the nature and notion of servant-leadership, we viewed several films with threads of promise. However, few really encapsulated what we felt Robert Greenleaf or even Hermann Hesse would look for in a movie. Frustration was beginning to set in, when close relatives received a movie trailer in the mail from Starbucks, where they both are employed. The trailer held promise of a film that portrayed servant-leadership in a family-friendly context. Knowing of Starbucks' corporate commitment to servant-leadership, we were not surprised at this first entrance of their entertainment area into film. We began our conversations about how the notion of servant-leadership could be presented in such a mass market. Could a corporate-held value impact society? Does it even permeate the very company promoting the ideal?



SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AS CORPORATE ETHOS

Greenleaf (1977) shared the story of how John Woolman quietly and over a long time convinced the Society of Friends (Quakers) to rid themselves of slavery, whereupon they became the first American religious group to denounce and forbid slavery. Woolman accomplished this through persuasion. “Leadership by persuasion has the virtue of change by conviction rather than coercion” (p. 30). Most of the readers of this article are familiar with and have experienced leadership by coercion and top-down pronouncements. Many corporations and institutions have yet to test whether servant-leadership can transform the culture and behavior of their employees and leaders.

Corporations provide new employees with pages of orientation paperwork on their first day at work. Included with the forms I-9 and W-4 are the mission and values statements. A quick signature is all a new employee has to give before heading down the hall to provide a urine sample. Hmmm. . . how do corporate-espoused ethoses such as servant-leadership really play out in the work-a-day world? The purpose of this review is to explore the contagious aspects of servant-leadership as an agent for social change. The analysis also will provide a review of the film *Akeelah and the Bee*, showing how it portrays the contagious power of servant-leadership. Further analysis will examine the connections between the espoused corporate values and observable community experiences, providing a comparison that asks: Can corporate values drive social change?

Using film as a method to convey the concepts of servant-leadership would likely be applauded by Hesse (1956), who wrote in *Journey to the East* about a conversation with the character Leo regarding artists dissolving into their work, not unlike the nursing mother. The story returns at the end of *The Journey to the East* as H. H., the narrator, recognizes the importance of the concept as the tale of the journey ends. “The law of service. He who wishes to live long must serve, but he who wishes to rule does not live long” (p. 34). The subject of this paper and of the film is not longevity



or superiority, but whether it is possible to effect social change with the corporate value of servant-leadership.

AKEELAH AND THE BEE

Akeelah and the Bee was released on April 28, 2006. Rated PG for some language, this family/young teen movie fits into a new genre of spelling bee movies following the documentary *Spellbound* and the screen adaptation of the novel *Bee Season*. Set in South Los Angeles, the film shows 11-year-old Crenshaw Middle School student Akeelah Anderson (Keke Palmer) as a typically unmotivated, disenfranchised youth. Her unique talent for spelling is revealed when she wins the school spelling bee after registering under threat of detention by the principal, Mr. Welch (Curtis Armstrong). With one victory in hand, Akeelah begins preparation for the regional contest under the tutelage of Dr. Joshua Larabee (Laurence Fishburne). Akeelah's brother runs with a rough crowd and her single mother, Tanya (Angela Bassett), is none too pleased about Akeelah's new-found passion and a training schedule that includes clandestine trips to the suburbs.

Akeelah's hard work is paying off, but she is not alone. Certainly, her coach and mentor, Dr. Larabee, play a part, but it is the "50,000 coaches" that offer their assistance that make the difference. One scene depicts Akeelah sharing her deepest fears of inadequacy with her mother. It is her mother who encourages Akeelah to allow others into the process of preparing for the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. Akeelah becomes the talk of the town as all the people in it suddenly count themselves as winners. Figuring prominently in this collection of coaches is Javier (J. R. Villarreal).

Javier is one of the competitors in the regional bee when he meets Akeelah and invites her to study with the team from his school, Woodland Hills. Taking the bus across town to a suburban school, Akeelah meets up with Javier and other spellers as they prepare for the next contest. The collegial group is presented in stark contrast to the stonefaced Dylan Chiu



(Sean Michael Afable), who is driven to succeed by an overbearing father. Javier is the connecting spirit between all the spellers, more focused on the relationships than on winning. Even in the national finals when he is eliminated, he brings Akeelah and Dylan together while cheering them on to a tie victory in the end.

THE ACTORS AND OTHERS

Building upon an impressive acting career that began when she was nine with a role in *Barbershop 2: Back in Business*, Keke Palmer stars as Akeelah Anderson. Keke has starred in the Emmy-nominated television movie *The Wool Cap*, which also earned her nominations for the NAACP Image Award and the Screen Actors Guild Best Leading Actress. Palmer plays alongside J. R. Villerreal (Javier), cast in the other main youth role. Also running up an impressive list of credits, Villerreal has been seen in guest lead roles in television dramas and is starring in the soon-to-be-released motion picture *Harvest of Redemption*. Look for Villerreal in the short film *Ay Mijo* as well (“Akeelah and the Bee,” 2006).

Veteran stars Laurence Fishburne as Dr. Larabee and Angela Bassett as Tanya Anderson worked together previously, playing Ike and Tina Turner in *What’s Love Got to Do With It?* Here they team up again as Keke’s coach and mom, respectively. Bassett has earned the Golden Globe Award and NAACP Image Awards, as well as nominations for an Emmy and Academy Award. A gifted and versatile actress, Bassett brought her experience in stage, television, and film into this production. The only drawback may have been the shortage of scenes with Bassett and Fishburne that would have captured some of the electricity of their previous pairing, for which the latter received an Academy Award nomination. Fishburne has a resume too long for listing in this review and brought a powerful force to the film. He has received the Tony Award for his role in *Two Trains Running* and Emmy awards for the television dramas *TriBeCa* and *Miss Evers*. As a director, Fishburne debuted with *Once in a Life*, which he also produced.



Written and directed by Doug Atkinson, the film shares a glimpse of the youth experience of South Los Angeles and can be commended for the casting of a virtually all-minority cast. The roles portrayed break many stereotypes of minorities depicted in the media today. Positive relations are emphasized, sometimes glossing over the realities of inner city struggles. Atkinson's writing was recognized in 2000 when the screenplay won the Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting competition. No stranger to television or the stage, Atkinson writes from a depth of experience that sets the stage for the film well, even though the writing provides a familiar take on the "underdog wins the day" sports theme of many pictures.

Released by Lions Gate, the film is co-presented by 2929 Entertainment and Starbucks Entertainment. Lions Gate has begun an impressive repertoire of films already as a successful independent movie studio. Not afraid of controversy, Lions Gate was behind *Fahrenheit 9/11* and recently earned big notice through its production of the 2006 Oscar Award-winning film *Crash*, also set in Los Angeles (Palmer, 2006, p. 15). Adding a bit of the *Crash's* edginess would have provided a more realistic portrayal of *Akeelah and the Bee*, but would have risked losing the family rating and probably was not in the interest of corporate partner Starbucks. This was Starbucks' first foray into film production and promotion; the company saw it as an extension of its profitable music division that includes music sales and production. Extensive in-store promotional efforts coincided with the April 28, 2006 opening of the film. We found it an odd commentary that presenting a realistic depiction of the way many families need to live in America today means taking a risk of losing both "family-friendly" ratings and corporate sponsorship.

The producers included industry powerhouses Sid and Nancy Ganis, Michael Romersa, Daniel Llewelyn, and Laurence Fishburne. Executive producers included Todd Wagner, Mark Cuban, Marc Butan, Helen Sugland, and Lions Gate's Michael Burns, Michael Paseorek, and Tom Ortenberg (Gould, 2006).

Akeelah and the Bee is a wonderful family film with enough layers of



character portrayal and critical thought to hold interest for all ages. Despite being a reworking of a fairly predictable theme, the film reveals interesting aspects when looked at through the lens of servant-leadership. Three such elements are: vocation, the contagious nature of servant-leadership, and the transforming power of the same.

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AS VOCATION

Is one called to servant-leadership? How does one find his or her vocation? Jeffries (1998) concluded “that we all have a vocation, that we are all called to a unique purpose and certainty” (p. 31). Wheatley (2005) paraphrased T. S. Eliot’s poetry to express her understanding of calling. She reflected, “We do what we are called to do because we feel called to do it. We walk silently, willingly, down the well-trodden path still lit by the fire of millions. And the rest, I know now, is not our business” (p. 244). Greenleaf (1977) detailed this as the natural feeling to serve as opposed to the conscious choice to lead, fostering an environment in which others, “*while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants” (pp. 12-13, emphasis original). These understandings open the definition of leader to anyone who feels called to help another person—far more people than are usually considered as leaders.

The film seems to share the callings of many characters depicted at various points. Dr. Larabee is called to coach Keke, but it is more out of a “running from, than running to.” Tanya has already lost her husband; she has one son away in the military and another tangled up in the wrong crowd. Deeply concerned she might lose Akeelah to her passion for spelling, Tanya comes to her vocation reluctantly. Keke’s friend, Georgia (Sahara Garey), remains by her even when feeling lost in the hype. Most illustrative of servant-leadership as a calling is Javier. His character exhibits the natural being of a servant-leader who is called into the vocation. His character closely resembles that of Leo in *Journey to the East* in terms of his genuine concern for all participants. He looks to establish a community



of practice rather than competition, shrugging off his own loss in his happiness at seeing Keke excel.

THE CONTAGIOUS NATURE OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

There is a pivotal scene in the film in which Akeelah and her mother are sitting with each other. Akeelah has just lost her coach, Dr. Larabee, and she is not feeling up to the daunting task of going on without him. Recognizing her loneliness, her mother reassures Keke by letting her know she has “50,000 coaches.” Suddenly, the whole of South Los Angeles is clamoring to assist, and everywhere Keke looks there is someone quizzing her on spelling words. The film depicts the contagious power of servant-leadership, often felt to be a quieter, more personal form of leadership.

Greenleaf (1977) also cautioned that the servant-leader may “stand alone, largely without the support of their culture, as a saving remnant of those who care for both persons and institutions, and who are determined to make their caring count—*wherever they are involved*” (p. 330). Many examples of ostracized servant-leaders can be noted throughout history: Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, and Jesus are often mentioned as servant-leaders who were not fully accepted by their cultures, yet remained committed and passionate about making the world better for others. Bach (1970) shared the powerful story of Jonathan Livingston Seagull’s being called to “Stand to Center for Shame. . . for his reckless irresponsibility, violating the dignity and tradition of the Gull Family” (p. 39). Yet Jonathan continued to fly with a passion in the face of those who wished to control his actions, finding Chiang would mentor him and in turn mentoring the young gull, Fletcher.

There appears to be an undercurrent of similar thought moving through the world today, struggling as it may against those who seek to hoard power rather than share it. John Woolman exhibited this contagious nature when he campaigned for the abolition of slavery among Quakers. Recent news articles in the press share stories of unparalleled philanthropy, volunteerism, and environmental concern. Jim Donald, president and CEO of Starbucks,



personally contacts twelve managers daily, and the significant film promotion encouraged spelling, followed by reading promotions and an essay contest. In contrast, a recent trip through a handful of other fast-food establishments garnered kid's meals filled with trinkets, action movies tie-ins, TV giveaways, and video games.

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

The closing scenes of the film present the emotional climax of the Scripps National Spelling Bee in all its intensity. Throughout the movie the antagonist is played by Dylan, a young Asian classmate of Javier, and his overbearing father, Mr. Chiu (Tzi Ma), who are out to win at all costs. Javier's welcoming and gentle nature transform the naturally competitive situation though his love and encouragement for both Keke and his classmate. The result is a cliff-hanging duel between Akeelah and Dylan that uses up all the spelling words in the judges' reservoir, resulting in a tie between the two. It is tempting to shout the Hollywood theme, "Everyone's a winner," at the end of the film. The transformational metaphor of life flowing between Leo and H. H. shows that it is possible for all to win (Hesse, 1956, pp. 116-118). However, the deeper meaning portrays the possibility that an entire community can be transformed into servant-leaders, cheering for Akeelah, increasing its own self-esteem, and developing a cohesive spirit.

Greenleaf (1977) declared that it is possible to "start the movement toward a more serving society, one institution at a time" (p. 88) based on the dream of a single individual, just as Akeelah held the dream of winning the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Further, trust must be the basis of the relationship between the servant-leader and the ones who are empowered, as noted: "The only sound basis for trust is for people to have a solid experience of being *served* by their institutions in a way that builds a society that is more just and more loving, and with greater creative opportunities for all its people" (p. 70, emphasis original). In offering to coach Akeelah, her neighbors demonstrate their trust in her and their hope that they will be part



of the change in their society. Just as Woolman changed the perceptions of the Quakers toward slavery, Akeelah changes how South Los Angeles views itself. Whether a corporation like Starbucks can change the landscape of retail foodservice through promotion of spelling, reading, and writing, remains to be seen.

CONCLUSION

Servant-leadership as a vocation may involve great sacrifice, as depicted in Martin Bell's (1970) story "Barrington Bunny." The little rabbit, Barrington, finds his vocation is to be "warm and furry. . . A gift. A free gift" (p. 6). Javier experiences this feeling of vocation by being friendly and encouraging even as he is eliminated from the spelling bee. For Barrington, it means keeping a field mouse warm in a snowstorm even though doing so means losing his life. Finding a vocation in servant-leadership does not always mean an easy path. Greenleaf (1977) forewarned seekers:

To be on with the journey one must have an attitude toward loss and being lost, a view of oneself in which powerful symbols like *burned*, *dissolved*, *broken off*—however painful their impact is seen to be—do not appear as senseless or destructive. Rather the losses they suggest are seen as opening the way for new creative acts, for the receiving of priceless gifts (p. 327, emphasis original).

When one gives of one's self in order to share one's gifts, the truth of Hesse's (1956) contention is experienced: it is though giving that one's life is fed (p. 118).

Akeelah and the Bee provides a depiction of servant-leadership as a vocation that is freely given and contagious. It is presented in an accessible form with resonance for all ages. This film is recommended for anyone wishing to explore how servant-leadership can be lived in his or her own vocation, how it can transform a culture or community, and how it can be related in a contagious love with family and friends.



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