AN INDUCTIVE MODEL OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP: THE CONSIDERED DIFFERENCE TO TRANSFORMATIONAL AND CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This research aims to better understand the phenomenon of servant leadership in organizations by exploring its generic values and attributes. The paper presents an inductive model of servant leadership which has been constructed using computer-aided content analysis of archival documents relating to six preeminent historic servant leaders. Results showed that these servant leaders share special values and attributes that are also linked. The profile of servant leaders is differentiated from transformational and charismatic leaders.

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INTRODUCTION

Emerging reports in the popular business press of companies that have achieved superior profit and employee satisfaction when led by CEOs who are practitioners of a servant leadership philosophy prompt academic enquiry into this phenomenon. It is also spurred by the recent indictment of some business executives who behave immorally and the implications of their association with other professionals like auditors, bankers, and lawyers. It is apparent that there is no shortage of ideas on how to lead a group, an organization, or a nation. So, what is so special about servant leadership? Will it lead to a better quality of life for the organization or community involved? These questions are best answered by examining the evidence from cases of servant leaders in history. Customers, employees, students, clients, electoral constituencies, all esteem service in one way or another. Yet, the dominant theories of leadership in two major paradigms: transformational (Avolio, Waldman, & Yammarino, 1991; Bass, 1985; Tichy & Devana, 1986) and charismatic (Bryman, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House, 1977; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993; Trice & Beyer, 1986) do not focus on service. Serving others is the key attribute of servant leaders (Blanchard, Hybels, & Hodges, 1999; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Pollard, 1997; Senge, 1995) but this would appear to be a contradiction; how can a leader serve?. We explore this paradox using empirical data derived from history and the contemporary corporate sector.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Role of Leadership Values in Management

To gain an insight into management actions and decisions in an organization, it is helpful to understand the personal values of its leaders. As to why values are necessary for individuals in society, Kluckhohn (1951: 400) said: "without values system, individuals could not get what they want and need from other individuals in personal and emotional terms, nor could they feel within themselves the requisite measure of order and unified purpose" and Rokeach (1973: 21) stated: "a major advantage gained in thinking about a person as a system of values rather than a cluster of traits is that it becomes possible to conceive of his undergoing change as a result of changes in social conditions." According to March (1994: 110), beliefs play an important role in group decision-making. Consequently, it may be inferred that organizational leaders, who are guided by their value system, also guide the decisions and actions of the organizations they lead with reference to it. Constructive personal values of the leaders in an organization will lead to constructive organizational decisions and actions.

Notions of Servant Leadership

One of the earliest management texts on servant leadership advocated that a leader ought to begin by serving his or her followers, with the aim of empowering and developing them (Greenleaf, 1977). Greenleaf was the first to use the term servant-leader in an organizational context. Subsequently, various authors have espoused different characteristics of the servant leader, as follows:

- altruistic (Blanchard et al., 1999; Block, 1993; Chin, 2002; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998);
- appreciative (Blanchard et al., 1999; Covey, 1992; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998);
- possessing awareness (DePree, 2002; Spears, 1998);
- building community (Buchen, 1998; DePree, 2002; Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1998);
- coaching (Blanchard, 1995; Blanchard et al., 1999; Fairholm, 1998; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998; Melrose, 1998);
- committed (Blanchard et al., 1999; Manz, 1998; Melrose, 1998; Pollard, 1997);
- communicative (Melrose, 1995; Spears, 1998);
- conceptual
(Spears, 1998); showing empathy (Blanchard et al., 1999; Greenleaf, 1977; Halal, 1997; Manz, 1998; Spears, 1998); empowering (Blanchard et al., 1999; Buchen, 1998; Chin, 2002; DePree, 2002; Fairholm, 1998; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998; Melrose, 1998; Pollard, 1997; Spears, 1998); encouraging (Blanchard, 1995; Blanchard et al., 1999; Covey, 1992; DePree, 2002; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998; Melrose, 1998; Pollard, 1997); being an exemplar (Blanchard et al., 1999; Covey, 1992; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Manz, 1998; Pollard, 1997); facilitative (Blanchard, 1995; Greenleaf, 1977; Melrose, 1998); giving (Blanchard et al., 1999; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998; Pollard, 1997); healing (Blanchard et al., 1999; Block, 1993; Manz, 1998; Spears, 1998); humble (Blanchard et al., 1999; Block, 1993; Chin, 2002; Greenleaf, 1977; Halal, 1997; Manz, 1998); possessing integrity and honesty (Blanchard et al., 1999; Block, 1993; Chin, 2002; Covey, 1992; DePree, 2002; Fairholm, 1998; Kouzes et al., 1993; Manz, 1998; Melrose, 1998); just (Blanchard et al., 1999; DePree, 2002; Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998); listening (Blanchard, 1995; Blanchard et al., 1999; Chin, 2002; Halal, 1997; Manz, 1998; Melrose, 1995; Pollard, 1997; Spears, 1998); loving (Blanchard et al., 1999; Chin, 2002; Ferris, 1988; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes et al., 1987; Manz, 1998; Pollard, 1997; Turner, 2000); risk taking (Melrose, 1998; Pollard, 1997); serving (Blanchard et al., 1999; Block, 1993; Buchen, 1998; Covey, 1992; DePree, 1997; Fairholm, 1998; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes et al., 1987; Manz, 1998; Melrose, 1998; Pollard, 1997; Senge, 1995); spiritual and moral (Blanchard et al., 1999; DePree, 2002; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998; Russell, 2001); showing stewardship (Block, 1993; DePree, 2002; Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1998); supportive (Blanchard, 1995; Blanchard et al., 1999; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998); trusting (Blanchard et al., 1999; Block, 1993; DePree, 1997; Fairholm, 1998; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes et al., 1987; Lowe, 1998; Manz, 1998; Melrose, 1998); visionary (Blanchard, 1995; Covey, 1992; Fairholm, 1998; Melrose, 1998; Spears, 1998); and possessing wisdom (Blanchard et al., 1999; Greenleaf, 1977; Manz, 1998).

The list is long and contains diverse attributes, some of which relate to leaders in general. The discussion in relation to the attributes is usually anecdotal. How would we use this list of qualities to identify a servant leader? What would be the theoretical and empirical basis for such a judgment? With this question in mind, we sought to establish a model of servant leadership using historical case material.

The Dawn of Servant Leadership

Anecdotal evidence suggests that servant leadership transcends time and culture (Lunardini, 2000; McGready, 1999; Murdoch, 1990b; Riechers, 2000). The practice of servant leadership has been found to exist in early civilizations. In ancient Egypt, it was reported that around 1440 BC, Moses chose to renounce his good life and rich inheritance as a high ranking prince in the palace of the Pharaoh in order to serve the slaves by leading them out of slavery in Egypt (Exodus, Ch. 1-40). One of the earliest recorded sayings (about 3 AD) describing servant leadership was by the Lord Jesus Christ in an incident when he was confronted with the desire of his disciples of wanting to be first, which is indicative of a desire to lead and rule. He answered their desire with these words:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave. {Matthew, Ch. 20, v. 25-27}

In their biographies it can be seen that some preeminent servant leaders have strong spiritual beliefs. Leaders such as Dr Albert Schweitzer, Abraham Lincoln, Mother Teresa, Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., Eleanor Roosevelt (who won social justice and human rights for women, children, Blacks, and the poor), William Booth (founder of the Salvation Army), Bob Pierce (founder of World Vision), Jean Henri Dunant (founder of the Red Cross), Nelson Mandela, and Kim Dae Jung (former South Korean President) have a fervent background of Judeo-Christianity. Schweitzer, King, Mother Teresa, Mandela, and Kim were recipients of the Nobel Peace prize for their service to humanity.
The common denominator of these servant leaders is “service above self and for the good of others.” Their leadership values and attributes constitute the phenomenon of servant leadership.

In modern times, the term “servant-leadership” was coined in an organizational context in the 1970 essay by Robert Greenleaf entitled, “The Servant as Leader.”

It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived? (Greenleaf, 1977: 13-14)

In a conventional sense, the words “servant” and “leader” appears to be in opposition and to combine them in one concept would seem to be paradoxical, but Robert Greenleaf (1904-1990) purposefully brought them together to challenge the legacy of the power-control model of leadership which dominated leadership theory up to the 1980s. His unorthodox approach to leadership was one that strongly focuses on ethical and caring behavior of the leader. Greenleaf advocated serving others as the first priority of the leader. The Greenleaf hypothetical model of servant leadership propounds 1. Increased service to others, 2. A holistic approach to work, 3. Promoting a sense of community, and 4. The sharing of power in decision-making (Greenleaf, 1977).

This study is not intended to invalidate the concepts advanced by Greenleaf and other writers but to offer some empirical evidence in support of their ideas. In contrast to the hypothetical model offered by Greenleaf, the model in this paper is developed using an inductive process, by examining the leadership practices of preeminent servant leaders in nonprofit organizations and in the public realm.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Qualitative methods used in leadership research have been under-utilized in the past but are necessary to complement the more fashionable quantitative techniques so that contextual factors help us to further understand the nature of leadership (Bryman, Stephens, & a’Campo, 1996; Conger, 1998; Parry, 1998). Rich data gathered from field studies and published data are particularly suited to content analysis. Content analysis may be used in both qualitative and quantitative methods (Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997). In this research, we have used the inductive approach in the content analysis of archival documents to uncover the core attributes of servant leaders inherent in the sample. As such, the quantitative method of content analysis using a word or phrase count was avoided. The quantitative method of content analysis was unsuitable for comparing the six servant leaders in the sample due to the non-uniformity of secondary data about these leaders, in terms of the quantity of published materials available for each leader and the variety in the types of publications and sources: academic journals, popular press, and internet websites. Therefore, this qualitative data analysis differs from some quantitative content analysis techniques, which are commonly used to investigate a single construct or to compare multiple individuals utilizing a particular shared medium. With this exclusively qualitative approach, we aim to address the disparity between quantitative and qualitative approaches in leadership research.

Sample

The purposive sample of servant leaders selected for this study consisted of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, Dr Albert Schweitzer, and William Booth. All of them led in the public realm and founded nonprofit organizations. They have been acknowledged internationally for their service to humanity in an altruistic manner and have been lauded with awards like the Nobel Peace Prize and similar accolades. Since the identification of their leadership attributes was by way of content analysis of published data, the target sample
consisted of servant leaders for whom archival data was readily available. The purposive sample was also designed to include leaders with diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, nationality, age, ethnicity, education, profession, skills, circumstances, mission, and era lived.

**Coding and Analyses**

Krippendorff (1980: 63) suggested that for many content analyses, thematic units, requiring user judgment in the determination of the hidden messages conveyed in the narratives, may be preferable, despite difficulties in application which have restricted the use of this approach to content analysis in practice. Archival material of biographical data, writings, and speeches of the sample members were obtained in electronic format and fed into the qualitative data analysis software QSR NUDIST. This computer software is especially useful for coding and retrieval by topic. The published data were thematically analyzed by coding and recoding to unravel a common pattern of attributes and values about the servant leaders. Open coding was used, which according to Lee (1999: 48) “identifies the naturally occurring categories depicted by the data themselves...as many categories as needed in order to organize, explain, and assign the empirical data to these categories in a coherent fashion.” The coded data were recoded to expose more subtle categories. For example, the “patience” of the leader can be further interpreted and recoded to expose two subtle categories of “commitment” and “self-control”. Any attempt to keep the themes mutually exclusive was purposefully avoided in order to allow the inductive process of uncovering all possible links between the values and attributes. Theory and hypothesis testing of rich qualitative data were made possible with the aid of QSR NUDIST. We asked some questions such as “Did both men and women servant leaders possess altruism?” and “Was the altruistic attribute linked to any other attribute? And if so what were these other attributes?” Text and context across the sample of servant leadership were critically examined to compare commonalities and peculiarities. A purpose-built dictionary of coding was developed on an “a priori” basis to guide the coding, which is shown in Table 2. A sample of some texts thematically coded to display the major servant leadership attribute of “godly/spiritual/moral” is shown in Table 1. Coding for the remaining text contained in the archival documents was subjected to the same rules and procedures of thematic analysis. A total of 113 documents were content-analyzed and coded into themes for further disintegration into twenty values and attributes. The unit of analysis was the text unit in the document, which could be a line, a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph. A total of 7837 text units were coded to produce twenty values and attributes. The final set of twenty values and attributes pertaining to the sample of servant leaders are shown in Table 2. Some values and attributes were found to share common themes. By querying the data coding stored in the computer program, it was possible to explore the relatedness or linkage of one value to another across all members of the sample. Each value was then ranked according to the most linkages to other values. The ranking of these linked attributes is shown in Table 3, where the ten most linked attributes were altruism, vision/directional/change-seeking, justice/righteousness, passion/determination, boldness, godliness/spirituality/morality, commitment/focus, love/compassion/forgiving, integrity, and exemplary/role-leading. This means that they were the most widespread values and attributes found in the sample of servant leaders.

**Validity and Reliability**

Sampling was constrained by the requirements for internationally acknowledged servant leadership work as well as available archival data about the leaders themselves. These shortcomings are compensated by the advantages of qualitative content analysis, such as the unobtrusive measure and the absence of reactivity biases of the sample. I conducted a pilot study on one of the sample servant leaders, William Booth. A second coder independently coded the data using the devised coding dictionary, in order to check the reliability of the coding procedure, semantic validity, and face validity to ensure reproducibility and stability. As a result of the pilot study, some minor modifications were made to the coding dictionary. The improved procedure yielded an inter-rater agreement of over 90% in all the categories coded in the entire sample.
RESULTS

Key Observations

First, the sample of servant leaders shared a common set of twenty values and attributes as listed in Table 2. This was in spite of their diverse backgrounds in culture, gender, age, ethnicity, geography, era lived, education, skills, and profession. As shown in Table 3, the attribute of peace was left out for President Abraham Lincoln and General William Booth of Salvation Army since there were no texts to describe this attribute. But anecdotally, in spite of their struggle for freedom from slavery and poverty, we know that they did not resort to violent means involving bloodshed. In fact, from the broader picture, they were peace-loving leaders.

Second, the servant leadership values and attributes appeared to be universally implicit and endorsed. These typology values are well received in India, Africa, Britain, the U.S., Australia, and many more countries where Mother Teresa’s organization (Missionaries of Mercy) and William Booth’s organization (The Salvation Army) operate. Other members of the sample succeeded with the same values in their own cultures. The leadership values were also seen to transcend time.

Third, the leaders were highly effective in achieving their goals. Their actions had a profound and positive impact on their followers and caused a sea change in their environment. Mother Teresa drew massive support from the Indian and international communities for the “untouchables” of society. Likewise, in the case of Dr Albert Schweitzer, international awareness and support ensued for his humanitarian work in Africa. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. changed the American government’s position about racism. William Booth led the British and later the Western nations’ societal relief efforts against poverty. Eleanor Roosevelt won greater rights for women, children, Blacks, and the poor in America. Of course, President Lincoln changed the course of American history forever when he preserved the Union and freed the slaves.

Fourth, the leaders commonly exhibited altruism. They always gave to others without receiving the due personal financial compensation for their contribution. Even though their tasks were hazardous and sometimes gruesome, they performed with passion and perseverance. All the leaders gave of their time, and sometimes their very lives, for the causes they stood for. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, and Dr Albert Schweitzer gave away their Nobel Peace Prize money to fund the servant leadership work they were doing. General William Booth died blind and penniless in spite of the huge ongoing donations that went into the Salvation Army.

Fifth, the set of twenty values and attributes were linked to each other. For example, where a servant leader’s action was considered altruistic, it is seen to have arisen out of the attribute of godliness/spirituality/morality that led to the value of love/compassion/forgiveness, which then manifested as the altruistic action. All members of the sample openly expressed their spiritual beliefs and associated these to their moral actions. From Table 3, it can be seen that the attribute of mentoring in Abraham Lincoln was not linked to his other attributes. This was an exception rather than the rule. This absence may not have occurred should more data be available to support his mentoring attribute during the coding and analysis stage.

Sixth, on average, the ten highest ranked values and attributes found in the sample were altruism, vision, justice, passion, boldness, godliness/spirituality/morality, commitment, love/compassion/forgiveness, integrity, and exemplary/role-leading, as shown in Table 3. They were the ones that were most related to other values and attributes. This implies that they were the core drivers in these servant leaders. For example, Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mother Teresa were more highly driven by altruism in comparison with Abraham Lincoln and Eleanor Roosevelt. The variation in relatedness of these component values and attributes in the sample members suggests that the phenomenon of servant leadership occurs on a continuum or scale rather than as an absolute presence or absence. It is the blend of these values and attributes in the leader, which results in servant leadership.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A Model of Servant Leadership

We used the results of this study to develop a model of servant leadership, as depicted in Figure 1. The twenty common values and attributes identified in the sample are shown to link to each other interactively. The findings suggest that there is a distinct genus of leadership different from all other leadership types, which we term “servant leadership” in this article. In arriving at this model, we ignored the various ideas about servant leadership posited by various writers in order to focus on the leadership attributes in the sample from the ground up. Some identified values and attributes in the study correspond to some of the dispositions of servant leadership advocated by various writers in the literature such as altruism and spirituality. The servant leadership disposition in the sample was consistently alike across factors of time, geography, gender, age, culture, ethnicity, and activity. Thus, demographic variations did not alter the summation of the model of servant leadership. Instead, we see that the individual value components do vary with individual members of the sample. The relatedness of a component value or attribute to other values and attributes was moderated contextually as found in the different members of the sample. The linkage of values in the sample suggests that the total removal or absence of a component value or attribute of servant leadership would seriously undermine the effectiveness of an individual to function as a servant leader. For example, without self-control, there can be no humility, and without humility, there can be no servitude. This “missing link” concept of whether there could be altruistic actions by the leader without having humility or love or spiritual beliefs was positively confirmed in the sample using computer qualitative analysis. Servant leadership was also found to occur on a continuum scale rather than an absolute presence or absence of it. Most importantly, the major focus of all the servant leaders was “service above self and for the good of others.” I would define a “servant leader” to be a person who leads by serving others above self-interest for the greater good of the group, organization, and the community, guided by the major values of godliness/spirituality/morality, love/compassion/forgiveness, altruism, servitude, humility, self-control/discipline, integrity, justice/Righteousness, and boldness.

Transformational, Charismatic, and Servant Leadership

Despite the fact that none of the published literature suggests a dependency of the concept of servant leadership on the notions of transformational and charismatic leadership, there sometimes arises this query in people’s minds because of the well established nature of the latter two concepts based on empirical, published research. In fact, transformational leadership was first mentioned in the management literature by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and was not seriously developed until 1985 by Bernard Bass (1985). Furthermore, charismatic leadership was first mentioned by David Berlew (1974) but was not taken up seriously until 1976 by Robert House (1977). Significantly, Robert Greenleaf first mentioned servant leadership in 1970 (Greenleaf, 1977). This means that the concept of servant leadership was developed independently of the paradigms of transformational and charismatic leadership. Moreover, dominant theories like transformational and charismatic leadership do not explain the nature of servant leadership as modeled by historical servant leaders, with its central characteristics spirituality, altruism, and servitude (Egan, 1997; Frost, 1999; Murdoch, 1990a; Negri, 1993; Riechers, 2000; White, 1998) although there are some overlapping attributes in the paradigms such as vision and inspiration.

The advocates of transformational leadership theory have widened the attributes over the years, aiming to capture all the positive qualities of what an ideal leader should be, while mostly discounting the liabilities (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Steidlmeyer, 1999; Kanungo, 2001; Simons, 1999). But this in no way challenges the distinctiveness and independence of servant leadership as an earlier theoretical construct in management leadership studies.

According to Bass (1990), transformational leadership can be operationalized through a four-factor model, which consists of (1) Charisma - provides vision and sense of mission, instills pride, gains respect, and trust; (2) Inspiration - communicates high expectations, uses symbols to focus efforts,
and expresses important purposes in simple ways; (3) Intellectual Stimulation - promotes intelligence, rationality, and careful problem solving; and (4) Individualized Consideration - gives personal attention, treats each employee individually, coaches, and advises. Proponents of transformational leadership theory assume that all effective and successful leadership activities are attributable to these four factors. Some critics have questioned the wisdom of using transformational leadership to solely influence employees to do more for the organization (Keeley, 1995; Stephens, D’Intino, & Victor, 1995).

Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999) found that the transformational leadership model advanced by Burns (1978: 430) has some parallels with Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership model in the values of justice, equity, and human rights. However, servant leaders transcend these values by serving others as the highest priority, motivated by their spiritual beliefs. Interestingly, the present transformational leadership model advocated by Bass does not share this facet, nor the essence of morality (Bass, 1985, 1990), an observation, which was also pointed out by Rost (1993: 87).

Transformational leadership has been defined to be “when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group” (Bass, 1990: 21). This concept differs from servant leaders in that while the transformational leader stirs employees to contribute altruistically, the same leader does not seem to be required to model the altruistic behavior. Transformational leadership is characterized by the four I’s, which are individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Individualized consideration is when the leaders “pay attention to the individual employee and his/her needs rather than treating all followers alike and as having the same needs. Such leaders listen to and share an individual’s concerns while simultaneously helping to build the individual’s confidence.” Intellectual stimulation is where the leader is “concerned with providing ways and reasons for people to change the way they think about technical problems, human relation problems, and even their own personal attitudes and values that have developed over the individual’s life span.” Inspirational motivation is connected with “antecedents such as past personal accomplishments, the development of communication skills, and role modeling of other inspirational leaders … they often set an example of hard work, give pep talks, remain optimistic in times of crisis, and search to reduce an employee’s duties and workloads by using creative work methods.” Idealized influence refers to “showing respect for others and by building their confidence and trust in the overall mission” (Avolio et al., 1991: 13-15). The four I’s of transformational leadership represent an approach to leadership which emphasizes process, in contrast to the values-based approach to understanding servant leadership.

While transformational leaders are asserted to be effective (Bass et al., 1994; Tichy et al., 1986), there can still be problems with the leader’s morals and integrity, which can result in leadership failure. We see that business leaders who are highly applauded to be effective in transforming their companies can later act dishonestly to cheat stakeholders, thus triggering the question of whether it is possible to be a good leader without the accompanying moral character. Just before the quandary in Enron, CEO Kenneth Lay was a role model for leadership scholars (O'Toole, 2001: 172-174). Fortune magazine has named Enron to be the “most innovative company” in 1999 and again in 2000. Another transformational leadership celebrity is Lee Iacocca of Chrysler Corporation. At Ford Motor, Iacocca and his team decided to market the Ford Pinto to maximize profits on the basis that it was cheaper to pay for burn injuries and deaths than to change the car’s design (Giampetro-Meyer, Brown, Browne, & Kubasek, 1998). Yet, Iacocca is regarded to be an effective transformational leader by transformational theorists (Bass, 1985) and by others to be an effective charismatic leader (Gibson, Hannon, & Blackwell, 1998). More recently, transformational leadership researchers have attempted to install morals and ethics component into the model (Banerji & Krishnan, 2000; Simons, 1999). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) posited that to be truly transformational, leadership must be grounded in moral foundations and Kanungo (2001) argued that transformational leaders must be judged to be ethical as part of the identification. Certainly, we would agree with their view that to be an authentic transformational leader, one has to be of a moral character. In both the cases, there is yet to be empirical evidence offered to support the
notion that in practice, transformational leaders are truly moral agents. If this revision to include morality succeeds, the transformational model will be a step closer to the servant model.

Transformational leadership scholars might claim that servant leaders are indeed transformational leaders. Yet, the four I’s attributes of transformational leadership do not in any way coincide with the nine distinguishing attributes of servant leadership, which are godliness/spirituality/morality, love/compassion/forgiveness, altruism, servitude, humility, self-control/discipline, integrity, justice/righteousness, and boldness. But in likeness, the four I’s of transformational leadership do resemble the other attributes of servant leadership, which are inspirational, visionary/directional/change-seeking, articulate, encouraging/empowering, and mentoring/coaching/nurturing. This study suggests that while servant leaders are transformational leaders and beyond, the reverse is untrue. Servant leaders and transformational leaders share a common goal to transform the ir followers and organizations, albeit with different motivations, strategies, and personal values.

Several charismatic leadership models have been proposed (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Conger et al., 1987; Gardner & Avolio, 1998; House & Shamir, 1993; Shamir et al., 1993). According to the attribution theory-based model proposed by Conger and associates (1997: 291), “The term charisma is derived from an ancient Greek word meaning ‘gift.’ Later adopted by the early Christian church, charisma described gifts or charismata from God that enabled the receiver to carry out extraordinary feats such as healing or prophecy. Its application to secular and leadership contexts came much later in the pioneering work of the German sociologist Max Weber. Charismatic leaders differ from other leaders by their ability to formulate and articulate an inspirational vision and by behaviors and actions that foster an impression that they and their mission are extraordinary.” Accordingly, there are three stages in the model - the environmental assessment stage, the vision formulation stage, and the implementation stage. Although this is a revision of the earlier position in Conger (1987), the three-stage model drew criticism from Shamir (2001) denying that charismatic leadership could be “linear and orderly”.

The Charismatic leadership behaviors in the House (1977) and Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) models include articulating an appealing vision, emphasizing ideological aspects of the work, communicating high performance expectations, expressing confidence that subordinates can attain expectations, showing self-confidence, modeling exemplary behavior, and emphasizing collective identity. Other writers are concerned about the dark side of charismatic leadership (Gibson et al., 1998; Lindholm, 1990; Sankowsky, 1995).

In comparison to the above charismatic leadership propositions, we would argue that the leaders in our study do not conform to the charismatic leadership mold. First, they did not promote their own agenda or themselves to be extraordinary. Conversely, they were very humble. Second, they desired to serve first, then to lead (Greenleaf, 1977: 13-14; Matthew, Ch. 20, v. 25-27). Third, they operated from an ingrained spiritual base. Godliness/spirituality/morality attributes formed reference criteria for their purpose and actions. They drew strength from their fervent spiritual beliefs in order to overcome impediments and accomplish their vision. This spiritual drive is seen to be robust and sustainable in the sample. The servant leaders studied viewed life beyond the physical realm and looked to God and eternity. In this sense, their vision and horizon may be said to be unlimited. Fourth, their actions were motivated by their love for the collective as opposed to being spurred by the leader's individual need for power, achievement, and affiliation as typified by McClelland and Boyatzis’s explanation of leadership (1982). Fifth, they had a thirst for justice and righteousness. Their objectives were broadly similar; to serve the weak and disabled, to restore justice for the oppressed, and to lead the subjugated to freedom. All such attributes are absent from the charismatic leadership models advanced in the research literature.

If any one of these leaders were said to be close to charismatic leadership, it would be Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., only because he was very eloquent. Impressive rhetoric has been associated with charisma (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001). There are some shared attributes in the servant and charismatic models, which include vision, change
seeking, articulation, inspirational, encouragement/empowerment, and exemplary/role modeling. An apparent similarity between the charismatic and servant models lies in the altruism and boldness attributes. “Charismatic leaders may take on high personal risks, incur high costs, and engage in self-sacrifice to achieve a shared vision” Conger and Kanungo (1987: 642) hypothesized. On closer examination, altruism and boldness in the servant leader are exercised constructively for the collective interest while the “shared vision” may be self-serving in the charismatic leader. In reality, a servant leader is defined as wanting to serve others, which is why they are termed servant leaders. This “self” exclusion is not tagged in charismatic leaders. Even so, social charismatic leaders who are ethical are seen to be effective in their endeavors and to benefit others (Bryman, 1992; Howell & Avolio, 1992). Like the transformational model, there is a growing concern for ethics and morals in charismatic leaders (Conger, 1990; Gibson et al., 1998; Howell et al., 1992; Sankowsky, 1995). Charismatic leaders could easily manipulate followers for self-gain while pretentiously championing the interests of the organization or the group they lead. They would even deny flaws in their vision in order to appear supreme (Conger, 1990). As further leadership research proceeds to identify the ideal organizational leader, could it be that the current models of transformational and charismatic leadership will be revised to reflect some servant leader qualities as portrayed by the preeminent servant leaders in this study?

Servant leadership suffers from lack of awareness and understanding, and for want of a more glorious name. The term “servant” does not invoke an image of splendor and heroism. Outwardly, the name conveys a negative imagery, such as the leader wandering aimlessly or a “lame” leader subservient to all the workers in the corporation. It does not sound like leadership at all. How can a servant lead? It is of course the master who dictates the organizational culture in order to lead. Servant leadership is not expected to transform like transformational leadership or be extraordinary like charismatic leadership. This conjecture may explain the lack of interest in and lack of dialogue by business executives and leadership scholars about this type of leadership. On reflection, none of the sample members in this study conformed to this objectionable mold. On the contrary, the analysis reveals attributes of a robust vision, immense boldness, and magnificent tenacity, yet with benevolence and courage to lead in turbulent times.

Not all leaders find serving others, sometimes at one's own expense, an appealing personal objective. This resolution calls for humility and in most cases strong spiritual belief in the rewards of doing good deeds or simply obeying and pleasing God. Humility may convey different ideas to different people, as Bob Galvin (Chairman of the Executive Committee, Motorola) reflected, "How many of you think that humility is a significant quality for leaders? Let me define it for you. People who are humble do not think any less of themselves; they just think more of other people" (Abernathy, 1998: 40). Since servant leadership is not an absolute presence or absence of the phenomenon but rather occurring on a continuum scale, the strength of the personal values and attributes of the leader will determine the level of the leadership. Some critics might claim that servant leadership suffers from followers developing chronic dependency on the leader. This is contradicted by the results of this study. The followers of Mother Teresa have effectively continued and expanded the work of The Missionaries of Charity, which she founded. This is in spite of her not having chosen a successor before she died. Dr King’s followers had similar success with Southern Christian Leadership Conference. William Booth’s followers did well with The Salvation Army too. So did all the workers of Dr Albert Schweitzer, whose organization was led by his daughter after his death. Last but not least, American freedom and democracy won by Abraham Lincoln stand till this day. The organizational values and culture instituted by these leaders continue. Servant leadership deserves further investigation with other contemporary leadership theories. In sum, transformational and charismatic leadership are focused on the followers’ motivations and the leader’s skills and strategies but servant leadership is driven by the leader’s values anchored in spiritual beliefs and moral principles. In common, all the three types of leadership seek to change followers and circumstances but the raison d’être behind them remains different.
Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations in this study. First, the sample size is small. Thus, further empirical work needs to be carried out for a large sample. Second, the servant leaders in our study were from the public realm and led non-profit organizations. Although, servant leadership has been observed in profit organizations by other writers, appropriately designed empirical studies need to be done before conclusions and generalizations can be extended to the business world regarding servant leadership. Third, the study relied on secondary data, apart from the speeches and direct writings of the leaders themselves. Fourth, interviews could not be conducted with the followers of the sample leaders to establish the nature of the relationship. Validity and reliability would be further enhanced through direct interviews and field observations, which were not possible in this historical study. Despite these limitations, the results of this study have several important implications.

Implications for Research

Over two and a half decades, leadership research literature seems to have distilled down to transformational and charismatic leadership typologies. The mass of allied publications implies that they are the norm for effective leadership practice. Our findings in this study suggest that there are further leadership lessons to be learnt beyond these two types of leadership, as evidenced by the great contribution of the servant leaders.

Broader questions should be asked of servant leadership. Although the selected sample was servant leaders in the public realm and non-profit organizations, companies have benefited in employee satisfaction and profit by applying similar servant leadership principles, as has been reported in books and popular press. This is an encouragement for further research. Research can be targeted at servant leaders in the contemporary organization. The strength of the linkages between values in this context also is worthy of investigation. Another area would be contextual factors and how they moderate servant leadership practice. Further research could provide answers to the contributions and limitations of servant leadership in organizational processes like decision-making and planning. Research questions may also address the impact of cross-cultural factors on servant leadership practice. A study of its organizational effectiveness in comparison to transformational and charismatic types would prove significant. Re-evaluation of leadership theories is important in the light of current extreme pluralism in the workforce and complexity in ideology (Hofstede, 1999). The consequences of the new type of terrorist mass homicide have awakened workers to evaluate the meaning of work and life. Judging from the destructive actions of suicidal terrorist organizational followers as a result of absolute obedience to their leaders, normative leadership theories seems to be lacking in explanatory power. Also, the contemporary “twin” theories of transformational and charismatic leadership which are built on traditional concepts of motivation and attribution seem to be inadequate to explain these more recent events as they ignore the “spiritual needs” dimension of people. Could it be that we construct leadership theories to fit with known research methods because we have not yet learnt to measure the abstract? On a positive note, servant leaders who contribute to others self-sacrificially would pose a challenge to contemporary leadership theorists.
REFERENCES


Frost, B. 1999. 'With malice toward none, with charity toward all' Abraham Lincoln, the Man Who Saved the Nation. *Biography*, 3(2): 90-98.


Table 1: A Sample of Text Coding for the Attribute of GODLY/SPIRITUAL/MORAL

| Dr Martin Luther King, Jr.                                                                 | “...And some began to say the threats, or talk about the threats that were out. What would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers? …Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop and I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will” (King, 1968, Apr 3). |
| Mother Teresa                                                                               | “How can I explain it - the very heart and mystery of the Christian Faith? To soothe those battered and old heads, to grasp those poor stumps, to take in one's arms those children consigned to dustbins, because it is His head, as they are His stumps, and His children, of whom He said that whoso received one such child in His name received Him’ (Muggeridge, 1997: 19). |
| Abraham Lincoln                                                                             | “The truly remarkable thing about Lincoln's religion was how these circumstances drove him to deeper contemplation of God and the divine will. The external Lincoln, casual about religious observance, hid a man of profound morality, an almost unbearable God-consciousness, and a deep belief in the freedom of God to transcend the limited vision of humanity” (Noll, 1992: 13). |
| Eleanor Roosevelt                                                                           | “Now, I happen to believe that we are born free and equal in dignity and rights because there is a divine Creator, and there is a divine spark in men. But, there were other people around the table who wanted it expressed in such a way that they could think in their particular way about this question, and finally, these words were agreed upon because ...” (Roosevelt, 1949, Mar 30). |
| Dr Albert Schweitzer                                                                        | “It seems evident that, for Schweitzer, this obligation to pay back to the world his own debt of happiness had become an obsession that could only be assuaged by deeds. In his book, Out of My Life, he writes, "The true understanding of Jesus, ... the true relationship to him is to be taken possession by him." The dedication of his life to those who "bear the mark of pain" became Schweitzer's answer to Jesus' command, "Follow me” (Negri, 1993: 28). |
| William Booth                                                                               | "William Booth was born in economic and spiritual poverty, yet he founded a worldwide organization dedicated to their eradication. Few would deny William Booth the title "The Prophet of the Poor. " He is best known today as founder and first general of The Salvation Army, an organization that exists to bring a better life to the poor through both social and spiritual salvation” (Murdoch, 1990a: 5). |
## Table 2: Coding Dictionary for Servant Leader Attributes and Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute/Value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALTRUISTIC/SELF-SACRIFICIAL</td>
<td>Able to consider and serve the well-being of others before self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICULATE</td>
<td>Able to speak plainly and convincingly to others about issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOLD/COURAGEOUS</td>
<td>Able to perform without fear or shame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMITTED/FOCUSED/PERSISTENT</td>
<td>Able to give steadfast support to others for a cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENCOURAGING/EMPOWERING</td>
<td>Able to give hope, assurance, and confidence to others in despair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXEMPLARY/ROLE-LEADING</td>
<td>Able to lead others by example by performing as a role model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GODLY/ SPIRITUAL/ MORAL</td>
<td>Believing in the God of creation or the sanctity of life that results in high moral behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMBLE</td>
<td>Possessing an attitude of genuine modesty and unpretentiousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSPIRATIONAL</td>
<td>Able to heighten the thoughts and aspiration of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTEGRITY/HONESTY</td>
<td>Able to do the same as what one proclaims or believes in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUST/RIGHTEOUS</td>
<td>Able to do according to what is right rather than what is popular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISTENING</td>
<td>Able to be open to suggestions and to receive corrections from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOVING/COMPASSIONATE/FORGIVING</td>
<td>Able to give extravagant grace and restrain critical judgment on others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTORING/COACHING/NURTURING</td>
<td>Able to foster and develop the skills and knowledge of others for their gain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASSIONATE/DETERMINED</td>
<td>Possessing a fiery fervency to achieve a purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEACEFUL</td>
<td>Able to uphold harmony and non-violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF-CONTROLLED/DISCIPLINED</td>
<td>Able to capture or restrain one’s indiscriminate thoughts and actions in order to accomplish a purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVING/ATTENDING</td>
<td>Able to serve others above self, unreservedly and purposefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISIONARY/DIRECTIONAL/CHANGE-SEEKING</td>
<td>Able to look beyond the present situation and to chart a route to achieve the desired outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WISE</td>
<td>Able to be considerate, prudent, sensible, and judicious in one’s thoughts and actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Ranking of Servant Leadership Attributes by Their Relatedness to Other Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>King</th>
<th>M.Teresa</th>
<th>Lincoln</th>
<th>Roosevelt</th>
<th>Schweitzer</th>
<th>Booth</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altruistic</td>
<td>*18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passionate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godly</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-controlled</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>**-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>**-</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>***0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Out of a total of 20 attributes in King, altruism is linked to 18 others by sharing themes.
** No attribute of peaceful is coded for this servant leader.
*** This attribute of mentoring is not linked to any other attribute.
Figure 1: A Linkage of Servant Leadership Values and Attributes

- Godly
- Goodly
- Listening
- Loving
- Serving
- Altruistic
- Exemplary
- Integrity
- Passionate
- Bold
- Mentoring
- Just
- Visionary
- Inspirational
- Committed
- Articulate
- Empowering
- Wise
- Self-controlled
- Humble
- Peaceful