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**DISSERTATION**

**SERVANT LEADERSHIP: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE  
PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYEES  
OF A CHRISTIAN-BASED, FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION**

**Submitted by**

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**In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the**

**Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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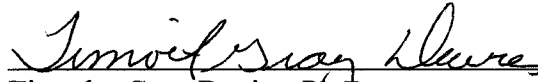
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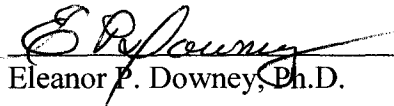
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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY DEBRA J. ARFSTEN ENTITLED SERVANT LEADERSHIP: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYEES OF A CHRISTIAN-BASED, FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### SERVANT LEADERSHIP: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYEES OF A CHRISTIAN-BASED, FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this study was to collect and analyze data from individuals employed at a Christian-based, for-profit organization to determine their perceptions of the presence of servant leadership characteristics at the organization. The Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA), developed by Laub (1999), was used in this study and a total of 262 surveys were returned for data analysis. The OLA was based on Laub's operational definition and six constructs of servant leadership which are valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership.

Data were analyzed based on gender, number of years at the organization, and level of employment. Results showed there were no significant differences on any of the constructs for the levels of gender and number of years at the organization. Results also showed that there were no significant differences in the level of employment for the constructs of valuing people, developing people, building community, and displaying authenticity. However, significant differences were found in the level of employment for the constructs of providing leadership and sharing leadership.

Results of the study indicated servant leadership characteristics were evident at some levels of the organization but were not evident throughout the entire organization.

According to Laub's constructs and score sheet, this organization would not be considered a servant organization.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

The term “servant leadership” was coined by Robert Greenleaf in his essay, *The Servant as Leader* (1970). His notion was that “the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (p. 2). Greenleaf’s philosophy of servant-leadership emphasized increased service to others, creating a sense of community in the workplace, and shared decision-making power.

The concept of servant-leadership did not originate with Robert Greenleaf. From the narrative accounts in the Bible, it is evident that servant leadership was taught and practiced more than two thousand years ago by Christianity’s founder, Jesus Christ. Greenleaf reintroduced this view of leadership in 1970. His views and beliefs were the foundational principles for The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership which exists to, support those, who through the practice of servant-leadership, seek to create organizations in which individual stakeholders become healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous; and in so doing, build a better, more human society which welcomes the full diversity of the human family. ([www.greenleaf.org](http://www.greenleaf.org))

#### Statement of the research problem

Although Greenleaf’s theory has been the subject of considerable discussion in the literature (e.g., Blanchard, 1998; Nielson, 1998; Spears, 1998), there has been relatively little empirical research published on the subject. Recognizing this, Laub (1999) decided to develop an instrument that assessed servant leadership attributes from

the perspective of the team, group, or organization. Laub began by developing a servant-leadership definition. Through a Delphi study, a panel of experts in the field of servant leadership participated in developing the constructs of a servant leader. These constructs became the foundation for the instrument, the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA). Based upon Laub's (1999) review of literature and the Delphi results, he defined servant leadership as,

An understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization. (p. 81)

Since the creation of the OLA, six dissertations have reported on the use of the OLA survey instrument and/or the servant leadership constructs defined in Laub's (1999) study. Five of the dissertations (Beazley, 2002; Braye, 2000; Horsman, 2001; Ledbetter, 2003; Thompson, 2002) reported findings from quantitative studies using the OLA instrument. One dissertation reported findings from a qualitative case study (White, 2003) which used Laub's (1999) model of servant leadership in the design of the research. The OLA was used in these dissertations to assess the perceptions of persons at a variety of settings including a government organization, two departments within an educational institution, law enforcement agencies, a construction and service company, and a group of women from several women-led businesses. However, no research has

reported on the use of the OLA to collect data from persons employed at a Christian-based, for-profit organization. These dissertations are discussed in Chapter Two.

### Purpose of the Study

The OLA was used to collect and analyze data from individuals employed by a Christian-based, for-profit organization, Omega Publishing Company (pseudonym). This study asked employees to report their perceptions of the presence of servant leadership characteristics at the organization. This study was a true replication of Laub's (1999) study as only the OLA instrument was used. Omega Publishing Company (OPC) was a publishing company that produced media resources and services for Christian churches including children's ministry, youth ministry, adult education, small group ministry, church volunteers, as well as resources for pastors and other church leaders. At the time of the study, OPC employed a total of 313 employees at three different management and staff levels: top management, supervisory/management, and workforce. OPC was chosen for this study because it included servant leadership as one of its core values for the foundation of their business. All employees of OPC were invited to participate in this survey to assess their perceptions on the presence and practice of servant leadership in this organization.

### Theoretical Background

Based on the extensive literature available, it is clear leadership continues to be an important and relevant topic for organizations (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 2002). Changes and challenges in organizations over the last several years indicate a different type of leadership is needed (Spears, 1998). Servant leadership is one model presenting a

different perspective on leadership focusing primarily on serving and caring for the followers (employees) in the organization.

Much of the current literature on servant leadership is anecdotal in nature, relying primarily on the experiences and insights of the authors (e.g., Blanchard, 1995; DePree, 1987, 1993; Greenleaf, 1970; Lopez, 1995; Spears, 1998). Although these contributions provide a fine overview of servant leadership, they do not provide empirical data to support the theory. In order to become better established in the leadership literature, additional empirical research on servant leadership is needed. A reasonable way to conduct this research is by using the OLA, a survey instrument specifically designed for measuring servant leadership characteristics in an organization. This research was intended to add new information to the literature by providing additional data obtained from persons employed at a Christian-based, for-profit organization. Research in this type of organization has not been conducted using the OLA instrument.

There are several reasons why the study was conducted. First, I believed research findings on servant leadership may provide important background data to other researchers examining servant leadership committed organizations. Second, and more specifically, I believed that data from this study might produce evidence of servant leadership in the organization but not necessarily at all levels in the organization. Accordingly, the research might explain how organizations may exhibit certain attributes of servant leadership but not others. This portrayal of organizations would add to our understanding of how servant leadership organizations are dynamic and constantly evolving in their commitment to these principles. Third, in addition to producing evidence regarding the presence or absence of various servant leadership constructs, this

study would also give indication of the relative strengths of these constructs at OPC and similar organizations. For example, an average score on any construct would indicate that the construct is present in the organization but is not at its optimal level. This information would help OPC identify areas of leadership that need improvement. Fourth, there is rich literature confirming or disaffirming the principles of various leadership theories in various settings (e.g., Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Rost, 1991). I believed findings from this study could serve as a contribution to the literature on servant leadership confirming or disaffirming servant leadership principles in certain situations. Such research may eventually outline the conditions necessary or sufficient to support the development of servant leadership. Finally, I hoped that findings from this study would be valuable to faculty such as myself teaching in universities committed to the practice of servant leadership. Findings from this research study are described and analyzed in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five.

### Research Questions

This study used a definition of servant leadership developed by Laub's (1999) study. To explore the perceptions of employees at OPC regarding the presence of servant leadership characteristics at the company's facilities, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How are the servant-leadership characteristics of valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership perceived by followers (employees) at OPC?
2. Do employee perceptions of servant leadership characteristics vary based on the respondent's level of employment in the organization?

3. Do employee perceptions of servant leadership characteristics vary based on the respondent's gender?
4. Do employee perceptions of servant leadership characteristics vary based on the respondent's years of employment in the organization?

#### Definition of Terms

Characteristics (of servant leadership) – This term refers to observable behaviors, attitudes, values and abilities that were exhibited by people within an organization (Laub, 1999). These characteristics are defined and described in Chapter two.

Company facilities – The term refers to the three buildings owned by OPC and used to operate its business. The company facilities were located in a community of 50,000 people in the western United States.

OLA – This acronym refers to the Organizational Leadership Assessment survey developed by Laub (1998) used in this study.

Organization – This term refers to Omega Publishing Company (a pseudonym) which was the site for this study. The acronym OPC is sometimes used to refer to the Organization.

Supervisory/management – This term refers to a level of employment in OPC comprised of 50 persons in supervisory/managerial positions.

Top management – This term refers to a level of employment in OPC comprised of persons in top management including the founder/president (CEO) and nine additional employees

Workforce – This term refers to a level of employment in OPC comprised of 253 persons in non-supervisory/management positions

### Delimitations

This study confined itself to only surveying employees of OPC.

Collection of data by surveys occurred at places identified by OPC.

Collection of data by surveys occurred during the daily operation at a date and time designated by OPC.

### Limitations

This study only analyzed data based on respondents' level of employment, gender, and number of years at the organization.

The small scope of this study limited the generalizability of findings. This study was not generalizable to other similar organizations.

### Researcher's Perspective

I was born and raised in the Midwest in a family with strong Christian and moral values. Attending church services and activities was and is a regular part of my life and something that is very important to me. I am an active member in the Lutheran church and my spiritual life, as well as my support for the practice of servant leadership, are very high priorities in my personal life as well as in my work.

My undergraduate degree and my master's degree are both in the field of Christian education. My undergraduate degree is from St. John's College in Winfield, Kansas, and my graduate degree is from Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska. These two degrees have prepared and led me to a professional career predominantly in the area of Christian education in both church and school settings. I have worked with children, youth, and adults in the church, taught in an elementary Christian school, and I am currently serving as an assistant professor of Christian education at a Christian liberal

arts university in River Forest, Illinois. In addition, I am a co-director of a university team designed to promote and implement service learning and servant leadership on the campus and in the community.

Because of its Christian foundation, the biblical concept of servant leadership has always been a part of the mission of each organization in which I have been employed. This focus on servant leadership set the foundation for the work conducted and relationships that developed in each of these organizations. The research to be completed in my study may help others in similar organizations contribute to the development of servant leadership.

#### Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in the following manner. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature of six major leadership theories ranging from leader-centered theories to follower-centered theories culminating in a focus on servant leadership. The six leadership theories are as follows: trait approach, behavioral approach, situational approach, power-influence approach, transformational leadership, and ethical leadership. Chapter Three identifies and explains the research design and methodology used in this study. Chapter Four describes and analyzes the collected data. Chapter Five presents a discussion of the findings and recommendations for further study.

## Chapter 2

### Introduction

The meaning of “leader” and “leadership” has changed considerably over the years (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines a leader as “one who guides others in action or opinion; one who takes the lead in any business, enterprise, or movement; one who is ‘followed’ by disciples or adherents” (p. 749). Leadership is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) as “ability to lead; the position of a group of people leading or influencing others within a given context; the group itself; the action or influence necessary for the direction or organization of effort in a group undertaking” (p. 750).

The beginnings of a general theory of leadership have their foundation in history and from practitioners such as Moses, Julius Caesar, Jesus Christ, and Martin Luther as well as more contemporary leaders such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Winston Churchill (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Traditionally, leadership has been thought of in terms of the heads, or chief officers of organizations regardless of the tasks or functions they may perform (Fairholm, 1998). According to DePree (1987), the art of leadership is “liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible” (p. xix-xx). Thus, the true leader enables the follower to realize full potential by removing obstacles that prevent the follower from doing the job (DePree, 1987).

While the concept of servant leadership has only come to the forefront of leadership discussions recently, the concept is really not that new. As Lad and Luechauer

(1998) observed, “There have long been leaders who lead from below; leaders who sought to enable, ennoble, and empower those with whom they work; leaders who through compassion, humility, and great personal/professional sacrifice inspired others to achieve great outcomes” (p. 67). According to Graham (1998), servant leadership can occur in any interpersonal relationship in any setting and is not limited to top-down hierarchical relationships. The author states, “Wherever or whenever servant leadership occurs, the leader’s example and nurture of others results in the healthy growth of those who are led” (Graham, 1998, p. 145).

Servant leadership is more difficult to define than other forms of leadership since much of the literature is based on the opinions and experiences of various authors rather than on empirical research. Thus authors tend to conceptualize servant leadership in different ways based on their personal experience and insight (Batten, 1998; Greenleaf, 1970; Spears, 1994). Spears (1994) described it as an inversion of the hierarchical pyramid, so that the needs of the employees, customers, and community become the most important reason for the company’s existence. Batten (1998) viewed everyone in the organization as a potential servant leader. He believed a commitment of total service and quality was key to serving both members of the team and the customer.

This chapter consists of five major sections. The first section will review six major leadership theories that have dominated leadership research studies. The second section will review the contributions of Robert Greenleaf to the servant leadership model. The third section will review the biblical influence in servant leadership. The fourth section will review overall results from previous dissertations that have used the OLA.

The fifth section will review six constructs as developed by Laub (1999) in determining servant leadership.

### Review of Dominant Leadership Theories

This section reviews six major theories that have dominated leadership research studies since the early twentieth century (Northouse, 2004). The significant features of each theory will be identified which then will provide context for development of the literature on servant leadership. The sequence of theories to be discussed is trait approach, behavioral approach, situational approach, power-influence approach, transformational leadership, and ethical leadership.

Each of these theories will be discussed in terms of its general description, related studies, and strengths and weaknesses. Other leadership theories have been reported in the literature, but these six theories are the dominant theories in leadership research based on a review of the literature and as confirmed by leading recent leadership texts (e.g., Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 2002). The sequential discussion will describe the evolution of change from leader-centered theories to follower-centered theories, culminating in a discussion of servant leadership.

#### *Trait Approach*

Leadership theory at the beginning of the twentieth century was dominated by the notion of the “great man.” This perspective focused on traits or characteristics possessed by great social, political, and military leaders such as Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Mohandas Gandhi (Northouse, 2004). Proponents of this view asserted that leadership qualities were inherited rather than learned and these characteristics differentiated the leaders from followers (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). The first

systematic attempts to study leadership occurred in the early twentieth century as the view of the “great man” theory evolved into formal trait theories (Northouse, 2004). The trait approach emphasized identifying the attributes of great leaders including personality, motives, values, and skills (Yukl, 2002).

Mann (1959) reviewed scholarly literature from 1900 through 1957 and summarized the present state of knowledge about the relationship between personality and behavior or status in groups. The focus of the study was on the dependent variables of leadership and popularity (status aspects) and total activity rate, task activity, social-emotional activity, and conformity (behavioral aspects) in the context of seven dimensions of personality including intelligence, adjustment, extroversion-introversion, dominance, masculine-femininity, conservatism, and interpersonal sensitivity. The results of this study suggested that personality traits could be used to distinguish leaders from non-leaders.

Similarly, Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986) conducted a meta-analysis of the literature to reexamine the relation between personality traits and leadership perceptions or extent of leader emergence. The intent of this study was to view the social-cognitive perspective regarding leadership perceptions. In addition, Lord et al. (1986) recognized a lack of leadership research on trait theories since Mann’s (1959) and Stogdill’s (1948) reviews. The results of the Lord et al. study showed that intelligence, masculinity-femininity, and dominance were significantly related to how individuals perceived leaders. This study also argued that personality traits could be used to distinguish leaders and non-leaders.

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) conducted a qualitative synthesis of literature on leader traits. They determined that the traits that differentiated leaders from non-leaders were drive, desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business. This synthesis concluded that individuals can be born with these traits and acquire them through learning.

The trait approach focused on qualities of the leader without consideration for the qualities or behavior of followers or the situation. This approach suggested that the leader and the leader's personality were central to the leadership process and emphasized that having a leader with a certain set of traits was crucial for effective leadership (Northouse, 2004). One of the strengths of this approach was the singular focus on the leader exclusive of followers and situations. This focus on the leader provided a deeper understanding of the how the traits and personality of the leader were related to the leadership process. Research focusing on this approach also identified benchmarks to identify traits associated with being a good leader (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991).

There were criticisms of this approach as well. Although hundreds of trait studies were conducted in the mid-1900s, none of them were successful in finding traits that would guarantee leadership success (Stogdill, 1948). A definitive list of leadership traits was not agreed upon by researchers, and this resulted in a highly subjective determination of the most important leadership traits. In addition, situational contexts were not taken into account when looking at leadership traits. Gouldner (1950) criticized trait theory for the following reasons: (a) traits were seldom listed in any order of importance, (b) traits mentioned in a single list were not mutually exclusive, (c) traits associated with achieving leadership were not separated from traits associated with maintaining leadership, (d)

studies failed to indicate which leadership traits existed before and which developed after leadership, and (e) the same trait functioned differently in personalities which were differently organized. In addition, Gouldner (1950) asserted that studies employed an ambiguous concept of traits since personality and psychological traits were discussed as if they were similar to physical traits.

Stogdill (1948) challenged trait theory and suggested that no consistent set of traits differentiated leaders from non-leaders across a variety of situations. In his first investigation of the subject, Stogdill (1948) reported on an analysis and synthesis of 124 trait studies conducted between 1904-1947. This survey identified a group of leadership traits suggesting why individuals were regarded as leaders. Identified traits were categorized in the following ways: (a) capacity (intelligence, alertness, verbal facility, originality and judgment); (b) achievement (scholarship, knowledge, and athletic accomplishment); (c) responsibility (dependability, initiative, persistence, aggressiveness, self-confidence, and desire to excel); (d) participation (activity, sociability, cooperation, adaptability, and humor); and (e) status (socio-economic position and popularity). The results of this study found that an individual in the leadership role was different from a group member in the following ways: (a) intelligence, (b) alertness, (c) insight, (d) responsibility, (e) initiative, (f) persistence, (g) self-confidence, and (h) sociability. This study showed traits were not the only factors in determining a leader. The traits of the leader must also be relevant to the particular characteristics, activities, and goals of the followers.

In a subsequent survey of the literature, Stogdill (1974) analyzed an additional 163 studies of leader characteristics completed between 1948-1970 and compared the

findings of these studies to the findings in his 1948 survey. This survey validated the idea that the leader's characteristics were part of leadership. However, this comparison revealed that personality characteristics along with situational factors were determinants of leadership. Traits positively associated with leadership in this study included: (a) drive for responsibility and task completion, (b) vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, (c) venturesomeness and originality in problem solving, (d) drive to exercise initiative in social situations, (e) self-confidence and sense of personal identity, (f) willingness to accept consequences of decision and action, (g) readiness to absorb interpersonal stress, (h) willingness to tolerate frustration and delay, (i) ability to influence other persons' behavior, and (j) capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand (Stogdill, 1974). Still, Stogdill's study showed no evidence of universal leadership traits. The inability to specifically define specific traits necessary in effective leadership resulted in a subjective determination of the most important leadership traits.

### *Behavior Approach*

Research regarding the behavior leadership approach began in the 1950s and was a response to the trait theory's inability to conclusively define and describe leadership. Research during this time period focused on two broadly defined categories of behavior: relationship behaviors (referred to as "consideration" by Stogdill, 1974) and task behaviors (referred to as "initiating structure" by Stogdill, 1974). The central purpose of this approach was to explain how leaders coordinate these two behaviors in order to influence subordinates in their efforts to reach a goal.

Several studies were conducted in the 1950s and 1960s by researchers at Ohio State University and The University of Michigan to determine how leaders could best

combine relationship behaviors and task behaviors (Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Katz & Kahn, 1952; Katz, Maccoby, Gurin, & Floor, 1951; Katz, Maccoby & Morse, 1950). However, the results of these studies were contradictory and unclear (Yukl, 2002). In one of the Ohio State studies, Hemphill and Coons (1957) analyzed how leaders behaved by having subordinates complete questionnaires about the leaders. A questionnaire of 150 questions was formulated and identified as the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). The results indicated that certain groups of behaviors were typical of leaders. This study identified two general types: initiating structure (task behaviors) and consideration (relationship behaviors) (Stogdill, 1974).

Researchers at The University of Michigan conducted a series of studies to explore how leadership functioned in small groups (Katz & Kahn, 1952; Katz, Maccoby, Gurin, & Floor, 1951; Katz, Maccoby & Morse, 1950). Two categories of leadership behavior were identified in these studies: production orientation (technical and production aspects) and employee orientation (strong human relations emphasis). The first category identified how managers spent their time and the typical pattern of activities, responsibilities and functions of the managerial position. It also identified their ability to facilitate goal accomplishment and reach objectives (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989; Reddin, 1967). These behaviors included activities such as directing, coordinating, planning, and problem solving. The second category identified the ability of the leader behavior to develop relationships with subordinates and help subordinates feel comfortable with themselves, each other, and the situation they were in (Reddin, 1967).

Blake and Mouton (1985) conducted studies to explore how managers used task and relationship behaviors in an organizational setting. A Managerial Grid (later renamed the Leadership Grid) was designed to explain how leaders could help organizations reach their purposes through two factors: concern for production and concern for people. Concern for production identified how a leader was concerned with achieving organizational task and objectives. Concern for people referred to the relationship the leader had with subordinates in the organization. These behaviors provided the core of the leadership process.

There were several strengths of the behavior approach (Northouse, 2004). This approach marked a major shift in the general focus of leadership to include the behaviors of leaders. This approach de-emphasized the personal characteristics of the leader and emphasized leader tasks and behaviors. The range of studies gave credibility to the basic tenets of this approach as evidenced by the Ohio State University and University of Michigan studies, and subsequently in studies conducted by Blake and Mouton (1985) and Blake and McCauley (1991).

Criticisms included the fact that research has not shown how the behavior of the leader was associated with performance outcomes (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 2002). A consistent link between task and relationship behaviors and outcomes such as morale, job satisfaction, and productivity has not been established (Yukl, 2002). Research studies were unable to define a universal style of leadership and behaviors that would be effective in every situation (Northouse, 2004). The behavior approach implied that the most effective leadership style was the combination of high task and high relationship, yet that has not yet been proven (Yukl, 2002).

### *Situational Approach*

Research regarding situational contexts that affect leaders began in the late 1960s. Reddin (1967) developed a leadership framework that he labeled the 3-D management style theory. This theory was based on two underlying personality variables that he labeled Task Orientation and Relationships Orientation. Reddin (1967) defined Task Orientation as “the extent to which a manager is likely to direct his own and his subordinates’ efforts toward goal attainment” (p. 63). Managers with a high task orientation were more directive than others in planning, communication, scheduling and introduction of new ideas. The term Relationships Orientation was used to describe the manager’s personal job relationships which were characterized by mutual trust and respect for subordinates’ ideas and feelings. Managers with a high relationship orientation had good rapport with others as well as good two-way communication. Two empirical studies, the aforementioned Ohio State Leadership Studies and the Michigan Leadership Studies, provided the foundation of determining the importance of these personality variables.

Hersey and Blanchard (1969) developed a life cycle theory of leadership which built on Reddin’s (1967) 3-D leadership framework. This theory was based on a curvilinear relationship between the two dimensions (task and relationship) and maturity. This was done in an attempt to understand the relationship between an effective leadership style and the maturity level of the followers. This theory was later renamed the situational leadership theory (Northouse, 2004). The traditional categories of initiating structure and consideration were used to formulate a situational theory of leadership in which the primary situational determinant of leader behavior was the task-relevant

maturity of the subordinate(s). This maturity consisted of two factors: job maturity, which reflected the capacity or ability of the individual to perform the job, and psychological maturity, which reflected the motivational state of the person in terms of the person's level of self-esteem and confidence (Graeff, 1983).

In addition to the categories of initiating structure and consideration, another category important to situational leadership theory was contextual factors (Case, 1933, cited in Stogdill, 1974; Gibb, 1954, cited in Ross & Hendry, 1957). These factors made up the internal and external environment of the organization. These factors included characteristics of followers, nature of the work performed, type of organization, and the nature of the external environment. The basic premise of situational leadership was that different situations demand different kinds of leadership. Different attributes were effective in different situations and the same attribute was not optimal in all situations (Gouldner, 1950). This required that the leader's use of directive or supportive behavior be adapted to the demands of different situations and the changing needs of the subordinates (Brown, 1936, cited in Stogdill, 1974). Directive behaviors included giving directions, establishing goals and methods of evaluation, setting time lines, defining roles, and showing how the goals were to be achieved. Supportive behaviors included helping group members feel comfortable about themselves and their work situation, showing support to others, and including them in problem solving, sharing input, and listening.

Situational leadership had several strengths (Northouse, 2004). Because it was a model for training individuals to become effective leaders, it was often used for leadership training in organizations. It was also a straightforward and practical model

which was easy to understand and easily applied in a variety of settings. It emphasized the concept of leader flexibility (Gouldner, 1950; Graeff, 1983) and was a reminder to treat subordinates differently according to the task at hand. It also encouraged leaders to seek opportunities to help subordinates develop new skills and self-confidence (Fernandez & Vecchio, 1997).

There were also several criticisms of this approach (Northouse, 2004). Only a few research studies investigating this approach have been conducted. In addition, it was not certain that this approach improved performance, and it was not clear how this approach compared to other leadership approaches. This approach also did not distinguish between the leader's relationship with the individual followers and the relationship with a group of followers.

#### *Power-Influence Approach*

Another leader-centered approach to leadership was the power-influence approach. This approach was focused on the leader's ability to affect others' beliefs, attitudes, and actions of the subordinates through the use of power and influence (Bass, 1960; French & Raven, 1959). Power was used not only for influencing subordinates but to influence peers, superiors, and those outside the organization (Yukl, 2002). Bass (1960) suggested that there were two types of power: position power and personal power. Position power was the power a leader had by virtue of a particular rank or position in the organization. Personal power was power derived from followers. In addition to the power conferred on a leader by rank or position, additional aspects of position power were identified that included control over the following: resources and rewards, punishments,

information, and the physical work environment. Personal power also included influence from expertise of the task as well as friendship and loyalty (Yukl, 2002).

The main purpose of French and Raven's (1959) study was to identify major types of power and systematically define them in order to compare them based on the changes that were produced and other effects resulting from the use of power. The intent was to show that power was conceptualized within a dyadic relationship that included the behavior of the person influencing (leader) and the reactions of the person being influenced (target person). A taxonomy was developed to classify these different types of power. Five common types of power were identified: (a) reward, (b) coercive, (c) legitimate, (d) referent, and (e) expert. Reward power was the control of the leader over important resources and rewards that may be desired by the target person. A leader with coercive power had authority over punishments. Legitimate power came as a result of the leader's formal authority to make the request. Referent power came from the desire of the target person to please the leader and gain approval from someone they respected and admired. Expert power came from the recognition of the skill level of the leader that was needed on a particular task (Yukl, 2002). In addition to these five categories, Yukl (2002) also identified a new category of power, ecological power, which gave the leader control over the physical environment, technology, and organization of the work environment.

Burns (1978) focused on two components in his analysis of power: motive and resource. He viewed power as a relationship among persons. While power itself may produce the intended effects, the more important component for Burns was the intent (or

motive) and resources of the leader, the follower, and the relationship between them.

Burns' (1978) definition of the power process was,

one in which the power holders, possessing certain motives and goals, have the capacity to secure changes in behavior of a respondent, human or animal, and in the environment, by utilizing resources in their power base, including factors of skill, relative to the targets of their power-wielding and necessary to secure such changes. (p. 13)

Burns (1978) also identified possible motives of power holders which included: wielding power over others, pursuing status, recognition, prestige and glory instead of power, need to achieve, ability to exhibit their skill and knowledge, and exploiting external resources to get others to do what they wanted. The motives of power holders may or may not have agreed with what the followers wanted or needed. Instead, power holders may have been viewed as controlling and manipulative in order to achieve their own goals. According to Burns (1978), for power holders to be leaders, the values and motivations of both followers and leaders must be considered when goals were created and actions defined.

To me, one strength of the power-influence theory may be the flexibility of the new category of ecological power identified by Yukl (2002). Having control over the physical environment, technology, and organization of the work environment may allow for modifications of the job design to increase motivation of the employee which may then increase job quality and satisfaction (Yukl, 2002). A weakness of the power-influence theory may be the view of the leader as controlling and manipulative without any concern for the needs or motivations of the followers.

### *Transformational approach*

The emergence of transformational leadership began with Burns' (1978) book on leadership. He viewed the roles of leadership and followership as interconnected and viewed transformational leadership as a process when "one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). Transformational leadership was viewed as a process that changed and transformed individuals in an organization. The transformational leader was concerned with values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and also focused on assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings (Burns, 1978).

Bass (1985) provided an expanded and refined version of transformational leadership. This new version focused more on the needs of the followers rather than the needs of the leader. Bass (1985) suggested that a leader can motivate followers by (a) raising followers' levels of consciousness about the importance and value of specified and idealized goals, (b) getting followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organization, and (c) moving followers to address higher-level needs.

Bass (1985) identified four factors that characterized different kinds of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The factor of idealized influence referred to leaders who were strong role models with high standards of moral and ethical conduct. In addition, leaders were respected and trusted by followers and were providers of mission and vision. Inspirational motivation described leaders who provided team spirit and inspiration in encouraging commitment to and being part of the shared vision.

Leaders who stimulated followers to be creative and innovative, challenged their own beliefs and values, and supported followers as they tried new and innovative ways of dealing with organizational issues exhibited the factor of intellectual stimulation. This factor also encouraged followers to think on their own in problem solving. Individualized consideration described leaders who listened to the needs of followers and acted as coaches and advisers as they helped followers grow through personal challenges.

A text on transformational leadership strategies that was frequently cited (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 2002) was Bennis and Nanus (1985). The authors noted the seminal work of Burns (1978) as a major contribution to their research. For this text, 90 leaders were asked a series of questions which resulted in identifying four common interactive strategies used by leaders in group settings. These included (a) attention through vision, (b) meaning through communication, (c) trust through positioning, and (d) the deployment of self. Unfortunately, Bennis and Nanus (1985) did not describe any characteristics of the selected leaders. There was also no description of how the data were analyzed.

Tichy and DeVanna (1990) conducted a study of 12 chief executive officers at large corporations. These leaders were selected because they exhibited transformational leadership in their organizations and throughout their career. The individuals included in this study were leaders who had been involved in a major transformation of an existing organization and leaders who were self-identified change agents defining success in terms of organizational change. The focus of this study was to find out how organizations changed, how they were transformed, and how leaders carried out the change process. Tichy and DeVanna (1990) developed and defined a three-act process from the results of

the study. Act 1 was the recognition of the need for revitalization which was triggered by environmental pressures. Tichy and DeVanna (1990) found that transformational leaders perceived and responded to this trigger. Act 2 was the creation of a vision in which a critical mass of employees accepted positive change for the organization. Act 3 was where transformational leaders institutionalized change and put the vision of change into practice.

Yukl (2002) identified seven guidelines for the transformational leader based on a review of theories and research findings on transformational leadership. Yukl found that transformational leaders (a) articulated a clear and appealing vision, (b) explained how the vision can be attained, (c) acted confidently and optimistically, (d) expressed confidence in followers, (e) used dramatic, symbolic actions to emphasize key values, (f) led by example, and (g) empowered people to achieve the vision. As a result, followers were motivated and felt trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader.

There were several strengths of transformational leadership theory (Northouse, 2004). First, there was a wide body of research on this theory which allowed different perspectives to be analyzed. In addition, transformational leadership had an intuitive appeal to many within organizations because the leader provided the vision and advocated change. Compared to trait theory, behavior theory, and situation theory, transformational leadership was more of a process between leaders and followers with the needs of others being the central focus. There was also a strong emphasis on followers' needs, values and morals.

There were also criticisms of this theory (Northouse, 2004). It was difficult to define the parameters of transformational leadership because it covered such a wide range

of concepts such as creating a vision, motivation, trust, and being a change agent. It tended to treat leadership as an ingrained personality trait or personal disposition rather than a behavior which can be learned. Northouse (2004) also questioned the applicability of this theory to lower-level leaders since most research has reported on qualitative data focusing on higher-level leaders.

### *Ethical leadership*

Ciulla (1998) described leadership as “a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good” (p. xv). Given this description, ethics lies at the very heart of leadership. Ciulla’s (1998) text on leadership ethics collected and organized a set of working papers written in 1996 generated from a small group of leadership scholars who were brought together by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Ciulla, 1998). These papers attempted to view leadership ethics through a variety of lenses to provide a practical insight into the moral dynamics of the heart of leadership.

The authors in Ciulla’s (1998) anthology found that the field of ethics was concerned with values and morals, right or wrong, good or bad, duty and obligation, and was a basis for understanding what it meant to be a morally decent human being. In regard to leadership, ethics was focused on assessing from a moral perspective what leaders did and who leaders were (Ciulla, 1998).

Two domains of ethical theory were identified by Northouse (2004). The first domain focused on the conduct of the leader. The second domain focused on the character or virtue of the leader. Three different approaches to assessing the moral significance of leaders’ conduct were identified in the first domain. The first one was

ethical egoism which stated a moral individual should act in order to create the greatest good for himself. The second was utilitarianism which advocated behavior that created the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The third approach was altruism which stated actions are moral if their primary purpose was to show concern for the best interests of others.

The second domain of ethical theories was virtue-based. Virtue-based theories focused on the character of the leader. Virtue-based theories focused on understanding leaders as ethical beings and suggested that virtues were rooted in the heart and disposition of an individual, and could be acquired and learned through practice (Northouse, 2004). In a conceptual study, Velasquez (1992) referred to the writings of Aristotle in discussing virtue-based ethical leadership. Aristotle believed that moral abilities were acquired by being in communities comprised of people exhibiting virtues such as courage, temperance, generosity, self-control, honesty, sociability, modesty, and fairness or justice (Velasquez, 1992). Based on those writings, Velasquez (1992) suggested that virtues such as perseverance, public-spiritedness, integrity, truthfulness, fidelity, benevolence, and humility were important for moral, professional managers.

Heifitz (1994) formulated an approach to leadership which emphasized how leaders helped followers confront conflict as well as effecting changes emerging from conflict. This leadership perspective had a critical ethical component because it dealt with the values of the workers as well as the values of the organization and the communities in which they worked. Heifitz (1994) stated that ethical leaders should create an environment of trust, nurturance, and empathy which allowed followers to have a safe environment to deal with conflict and tough issues. A moral dimension of leadership was

also identified by Burns (1978) in the discussion of transformational leadership. This dimension focused on followers and encouraged leaders to help followers in personal struggles related to conflicting values.

There were two common themes reflected in the perspectives of Ciulla (1998), Burns (1978), and Heifitz (1994). First, the leader-follower relationship was central to ethical leadership. Second, it was critically important for leaders to be attentive to the needs of their followers and respond in a way that reflected sound ethical judgment.

Several strengths of ethical leadership were identified by Northouse (2004). The general field of study provided some direction on how to think about and practice ethical leadership. The literature also suggested that ethics be considered as an integral part of the broader domain of leadership. The current body of research identified several principles that are important to the development of ethical leadership.

Several criticisms of this theory have also been identified by Northouse (2004). Research on ethical leadership is in the early stage of development and lacks a strong body of data based findings defining and explaining what it means to be an ethical leader to substantiate it. In addition, leadership ethics have primarily relied on writings of a few individuals who were influenced primarily by their own personal opinions and their view of the world. For example, Burns and Greenleaf had writings that were primarily descriptive and anecdotal and lacked significant empirical support.

Robert K. Greenleaf

Greenleaf's Quaker background along with his observations during his professional career contributed to his development of a theory of servant leadership. In addition, the book, "Journey to the East" (Hesse, 1956), inspired Greenleaf in his quest to

promote servant leadership in the workplace. This work of fiction offers a parable about a group of travelers who went on a mythical quest for a distinguished organization. The main character of the story was Leo who was both a volunteer and servant. Leo kept the group together by doing their chores and also sustained them in spirit and song. After Leo disappeared, the journey was abandoned as the travelers fell into conflict. The narrator, who was one of the travelers, found Leo several years later and then discovered that Leo, who was known as a humble servant, was actually the great leader of the Order. Greenleaf recognized that “Leo was actually the leader all of the time, but he was servant first because that was what he was, *deep down inside*” (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 2). The concept of the great leader being servant first was evident in Leo’s behavior and that simple fact was the key to his greatness (Greenleaf, 1970).

In 1964, Robert Greenleaf founded the Center for Applied Ethics which was renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center in 1985. The center’s mission is,

To support those who, through the practice of servant-leadership, seek to create organizations in which individual stakeholders become healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous; and in so doing, build a better, more humane society which welcomes the full diversity of the human family ([www.greenleaf.org](http://www.greenleaf.org)).

Greenleaf articulated his concept of servant leadership in his essay, *The Servant as Leader* (1970, 1991). Until his death in 1990, Greenleaf continued promoting his view of servant leadership to various organizations including education, foundations, churches and business.

While Greenleaf’s observations concerning servant leadership have been widely accepted and applauded by many, his writings were based solely on his insights from

Hesse's (1956) novel and his professional experience, not on empirical research.

Nevertheless, Greenleaf identified several characteristics of servant leaders, the foremost being the motivation of the leader. Greenleaf (1970) addressed motivation by noting that "the servant-leader *is* servant first . . . it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*" (p. 7). Greenleaf (1970) identified the best test to determine servant leadership was if followers, "*while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" (p. 7).

Larry Spears, current Director for the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, expanded on Greenleaf's writings and identified ten characteristics of a servant leader (Spears, 1998). These characteristics were: (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 has contributed significantly to the literature on servant leadership, however, his work, like Greenleaf's, did not significantly advance the concept in the scholarly discussion of leadership since it was not based on empirical research.

#### Biblical View of Servant Leadership

Part of the foundation of Greenleaf's beliefs on servant leadership comes from a Judeo-Christian tradition. While he doesn't write as a theologian, his beliefs in how Jesus did ministry undergird his writings on leadership. In speaking about an effective religious leader, he says,

As I read the record of the life of Jesus, I do not believe that his great leadership rested as much on his knowledge of the theological roots of his tradition as it did

on his belief in the dependability of the inspiration that was available to him as he faced the crises of his ministry (Fraker & Spears, 1996, p. 5).

The Judeo-Christian biblical viewpoint provided us an example of servant leadership. The philosophy of servant leadership was exemplified throughout Jesus' life. Not only did Jesus bring about a new viewpoint for the masses on what it meant to be a leader, but he also taught about the role of humility and demonstrated these points in such settings as Matthew 18:1-4, Matthew 20:1-16, and John 13:1-17. His approach to leadership contradicted traditional leadership paths to success and greatness. Jesus taught that being great meant being last instead of first, and ultimately becoming a servant to all. Of course, Jesus was especially concerned with greatness in a spiritual sense rather than a worldly view, yet his example of humility, service, and forgiveness has been viewed as exemplary leadership (Manz, 1998).

Jesus also taught about the role of humility, a key concept in servant leadership. In Matthew 18:1-4, he talked to his disciples about being the greatest in the kingdom of heaven by becoming humble like a child. His focus was on humbleness and resisting the temptation to become too self-focused and have an exaggerated sense of self-importance (Manz, 1998). Once again, Jesus taught about humbleness in Luke 14:11 when he said, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Concordia Self Study Bible, 1986, p. 1577). Following a discussion of the most important positions in the kingdom, Jesus said to the twelve disciples,

Instead whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not

come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

(Matthew 20:26b-28, p. 1478)

Prior to his crucifixion, Jesus once again took the opportunity to teach and model servant leadership. When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, he symbolically taught them about servant leadership.

You call me “Teacher” and “Lord,” and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. (John 13:12-17, p. 1633)

It was important to Jesus that he taught the concept of being a servant leader both through words and actions. Once the vision and direction were clear, those he taught could then go out and become servant leaders.

It is evident through these examples of Jesus’ leadership that the teachings in the Bible on servant leadership can serve as a foundation for Christian leaders, regardless if they are serving in a Christian organization. The concept of serving others first is in agreement with Greenleaf’s (1970) definition of servant leadership. In addition, the biblical teachings are also in agreement with Laub’s (1999) definition of servant leadership which focuses on the follower rather than the leader.

#### Constructs of Servant Leadership

In order to systematically study servant leadership, Laub (1999) developed a survey instrument to assess servant leadership characteristics in an organization. From his

review of literature and the results of a Delphi study from a panel of servant leadership experts, Laub (1999) defined servant leadership using the following six constructs: (a) the leader values people which includes believing in people, serving other's needs first, and by receptive, non-judgmental listening, (b) the leader develops people by providing opportunities for learning and growth, modeling appropriate behavior, and building up others through encouragement and affirmation, (c) the leader builds community by building strong personal relationships, working collaboratively with others, and valuing the differences of others, (d) the leader displays authenticity by being open and accountable to others, being willing to learn from others, and maintaining integrity and trust, (e) the leader provides leadership by envisioning the future, taking initiative, and clarifying goals, and (f) the leader shares leadership by facilitating a shared vision, sharing power and releasing control, and sharing status and promoting others. These constructs provided the foundation for Laub's (1999) definition of servant leadership which was,

An understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization. (p. 81)

A description of the six constructs follows. This description emphasizes the key characteristics of each construct and how each construct is evident in servant leadership.

### *Values people*

Laub's (1999) description of valuing people included believing in people, serving other's needs before his or her own, and receptive, non-judgmental listening. A leader exhibiting this kind of behavior reveals a belief in the people in the organization and was willing to "go down in the trenches and get their hands dirty" (Tice, 1994, p. 17). People felt valued when they sensed the leader believed in their ability to improve and saw potential in their work and their ideas (Tice, 1994). Listening and being receptive to ideas by the leader also showed a sense of value to employees (Autry, 2001; Kiechel, 1995; Tice, 1994). The importance of valuing each person and recognizing how each person contributed to the whole was central to this construct (Lopez, 1995). Lopez was in agreement with Greenleaf's (1970) philosophy of "primus inter pares" (first among equals).

### *Develops people*

Laub's (1999) description of developing people included providing opportunities for learning and growth, modeling appropriate behavior, and building up others through encouragement and affirmation. Handy (1989) used the term "bundles of potentiality" to describe how a servant leader exhibits a commitment to developing people in a servant-led organization. He stated,

Power, in the new organizations, comes from relationships, not from structures. Those who have established reputations acquire authority which was not handed down from above; those who are open to others create positive energy around themselves, energy which did not exist before. Love, or, to give it a more

corporately respectable title, “unconditional positive regard,” may not make the world go around, but it can certainly release unsuspected potential. (p. 379)

Tice (1994) used the term “limitless leadership” in his description of a servant leader. He preferred this terms because,

it comes closer to reflecting the essential nature of our existence as leaders and as human beings: an unending chain of generations, each supported by and building on the legacy of the last, each handing down a new legacy to those who follow.

(p. 17)

He agreed with Handy (1989) in terms of releasing potential as he described every opportunity as a possibility for increased growth and confidence, which then encouraged continual improvement in every aspect of life. Autry (2001) believed that servant leadership in an organization involved creating a place where people could do good work and could find meaning in their work. By using persuasion and reinforcing hope, Lopez (1995) believed that people could be empowered to do what they must do and recognized that they were empowered people.

#### *Builds community*

Laub’s (1999) description of building community included building strong personal relationships, working collaboratively with others, and valuing the differences of others. According to Autry (2001), a servant leader needed to embrace disagreement as a human part of the process of work and accept without judgment. In addition, there should have been no winners or losers in a discussion or decision. The leader should have been present for people and work at building community in the organization. Lopez (1995)

focused on unconditional love for others as an important aspect of building community which included accepting others as they were and learning to empathize with each other.

*Displays authenticity*

Laub's (1999) description of displaying authenticity included being open and accountable to others, being willing to learn from others, and maintaining integrity and trust. According to Tice (1994), servant leaders recognized they didn't have all the answers. In addition, they didn't make excuses for themselves or anyone else, and refused to enter into adversarial relationships with others. Servant leaders showed their authenticity by recognizing and accepting their own shortcomings and imperfections while continually striving to improve. Autry (2001) believed it was critical for the servant leader to always be his/her real self in every circumstance and to hold the same values all the time. It was also important to be open about doubts and concerns, and to be able and willing to admit mistakes to others (Autry, 2001; DePree, 1993; Kiechel, 1995). In addition, being authentic meant to let go of the ego and to always be your best and most authentic self.

*Provides leadership*

Laub's (1999) description of providing leadership included envisioning the future, taking initiative, and clarifying goals. Tice (1994) and Lopez (1995) believed that it was important for servant leaders to both create and articulate a clear vision and goals and then inspire others to help achieve it. In addition, DePree (1993) recognized the importance of understanding the past, having regard for the present, and respecting the future in the process of creating vision.

### *Shares leadership*

Laub's (1999) description of sharing leadership included facilitating a shared vision, sharing power and releasing control, and sharing status and promoting others. This resulted in the empowerment of employees to learn and grow in the organization. The goal of empowerment was to create leaders at all levels of an organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Leaders empowered employees by providing necessary resources and educational opportunities to build their knowledge and skill (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). By sharing power with employees, creative and productive transactions happened in making decisions and solving problems (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Manz, 1998). This was beneficial to both the leader and the employee.

### OLA Score Sheet

Laub's OLA scoring mechanism to analyze survey data and categorize organizations and the level of their servant leadership culture was applied in Ledbetter (2003). Laub provided this score sheet to me for use in this research in July, 2005 (personal communication, July 31, 2005). The numerical ratings and meanings of each level are provided in Table 1. According to Laub, the mean score of 4.0 on a 5 point scale indicates the level of "Agreement" and is the breakpoint score for identifying an organization as a servant organization.

Table 1

Laub's Score Sheet for the OLA

<u>Raw Score</u>	<u>Organizational Description</u>
0.0 to 1.999	Organization <sup>1</sup> – Toxic Organizational Health
2.0 to 2.999	Organization <sup>2</sup> – Poor Organizational Health
3.0 to 3.499	Organization <sup>3</sup> – Limited Organizational Health
3.5 to 3.999	Organization <sup>4</sup> – Moderate Organizational Health
4.0 to 4.499	Organization <sup>5</sup> – Excellent Organizational Health
4.5 to 5.0	Organization <sup>6</sup> – Optimal Organizational Health

Organizations at the Org<sup>1</sup> and Org<sup>2</sup> level are considered to be strong in autocratic leadership and almost devoid of any positive leadership. Employees do not feel valued and often feel used and abused by the leadership. There is a serious lack of honesty and integrity among the leadership and a very low trust level between all employees.

Organizations at this level are considered very unhealthy. An organization at the Org<sup>3</sup> level is characterized by a minimal level of trust. Employees feel they have to continually prove themselves and are only listened to when they speak of the same values and priorities of the leadership. The leader/employee relationship is similar to the parent/child relationship.

Laub describes an organization at the Org<sup>4</sup> level as one where many employees feel valued but others do not. Employees are listened to as long as it is in correlation to the values and priorities of the leaders. Many of the important decisions still remain with top leaders in the organization, and, while relationships are valued, tasks are the first

priority. The level of trust and willingness to take risks is at a moderate level. Employees are committed to the organization because of their own motivation to do good work. The Org<sup>5</sup> level is the first level that Laub describes as a servant organization level. Employees are valued at a personal and professional level and are encouraged to develop their talents in both areas. There is mutual listening between employees and leaders and employees are empowered to help make some of the important decisions. An Org<sup>5</sup> organization thrives on being a community and working in teams. There is a high level of honesty, integrity and trust, and serving each other becomes more important than self-interests.

An organization at the Org<sup>6</sup> level is considered to be a servant-minded organization. Some of its characteristics include authenticity, valuing and developing people, building community, and providing and sharing leadership. The trust level is high and the leader/employee relationship is often viewed as a partnership. Servant leadership characteristics are evident at all levels of the organization and employees are motivated to serve each other first before their own self-interests. The Org<sup>6</sup> level is the optimal level of health for an organization.

#### Previous Dissertation Results

Additional research on servant leadership had been completed using the OLA and Laub's (1999) definition of servant leadership. Each study, as described below, used a different setting and sample, indicating how the OLA can be used in a variety of organizations.

The purpose of Beazley's (2002) dissertation was "to investigate the premise that the servant leader is tacitly spiritual and this spirituality correlates with the performance of managers in carrying out the leadership activities of their organizational roles" (p. 7).

The objective of this study was to analyze the relationship between spiritual orientation of purported organizational servant leaders and servant leadership behavior as self-reported by those leaders and follower-reported by the leader's employees. Servant leadership was the dependent variable for this research project and was measured with only the leader portion of the SOLA as designed by Laub (1999). In addition to the SOLA, the Spirituality Assessment Scale was also used. A seven-point Likert scale was used on the SOLA in order to correspond with the same scale on the Spirituality Assessment Scale.

The site used for this study was TDIndustries in Dallas, Texas which was a purported strong servant-led company. A sample of 100 managers and 200 employees were chosen for a total sample of 300 participants. Completed usable surveys were received from 159 respondents indicating a total response rate of 53%. The final sample included 97 employees (48%) and 62 managers (62%).

The results of this study noted a relationship from the correlated dimensions of humility, honesty, and service to others which supports the work of Burns (1978) and Greenleaf (1973) who view servant leadership as a model that is based on values and morals. This study also showed that perceptions of servant leader behavior are influenced differently for the managers and employees. The results of this study did indicate significant differences between groups of participants as categorized by age, tenure, and years of studying servant leadership for some servant leader constructs.

The purpose of Braye's (2000) comparative case study was to assess the level of servant-leadership practice and belief in women-led businesses from the top-leadership perspective. Differences based on race, nationality, and age were addressed, as well as

gender differences based on the comparison to the male, servant-led businesses. The survey was conducted on-line using a cross-sectional electronic survey. There were 4360 persons invited to participate. While 156 agreed to participate, 96 provided responses, and 78 surveys were usable which equals a response rate of 2%. The findings revealed no significant differences in top male and female leaders in the level of belief and practice of servant-leadership as defined under Laub's servant leader constructs. This study supports Laub's claim that females are as capable of being servant-leaders as males.

The purpose of Horsman's (2001) study was to assess a variety of organizations to discover the perceived extent of servant-leadership characteristics; to discover if a relationship existed between personal dimensions of spirit and servant-leadership; to discover if there was congruity between personal dimensions of spirit and work life; and to discover if differences existed in perceived characteristics of servant-leadership, personal dimensions of spirit, and congruity based on personal and organizational demographics.

Horsman (2001) used the OLA instrument along with the Dimensions of Spirit (DS) instrument. The items used in the OLA instrument are similar to Laub's (1999) original study, however questions relating to job satisfaction were removed and questions referring to personal dimensions of spirit and congruity were inserted. The demographic variables used in this study were the same as Laub's original study. For this study, participants came from several organizations. In some instances, an entire organization was used while other instances involved only a group or unit within the organization. The sample for this study included voluntary participants who worked at all levels within an

organization including top management, middle management, lower management and regular employees, as well as volunteers.

For this study, no investigations were conducted as to whether or not prospective organizations might be servant-led. In total, 93 organizations of various types were approached and invited to participate in this study, with 37% consenting. A total of 1048 surveys were distributed to 36 organizations; 627 were returned from 34 organizations and 608 surveys were usable. The return rate on the distributed surveys was 58%. Six different types of organizations participated in this study: Community Service, Business-for-profit, Education, Religious, Government, and Medical Services. Demographics used referred to gender, age, education level, and ethnicity.

The results from this study indicated that servant leadership, according to Laub's (1999) definition, was found to exist to some extent in all of the organizations, but none could be classified as a servant leader organization. A significant positive correlation was found to exist between the perceived characteristics of servant-leadership in organizations and personal dimensions of spirit. In addition, congruity was found to exist between personal dimensions of spirit and the perceptions of the participant's life and work in the organization. In regard to personal and organizational demographics, there were no significant differences concerning servant leader constructs found within the variables of gender and ethnicity, however, significant differences were found within the variables of age, education levels, organization type, years employed, and position/role.

The purpose of Ledbetter's (2003) study was to further examine the reliability of the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) research instrument as developed by Laub (1999) and the presence of servant leadership practices derived from this research

instrument. This research project examined the leadership practices of law enforcement leaders and used the OLA to assess twelve law enforcement agencies.

A single approach for identifying participating leaders was chosen for this research study. A request for participants was placed on the International Association of Chiefs of Police website. Twenty five agencies were invited to participate with twelve agencies agreeing to do so (48%). Nine agencies returned the survey instruments indicating a 36% response rate. A total of 792 participants were identified by the 12 agencies and 1,584 surveys were distributed. In addition to the survey, participants responded to questions relating to demographic variables which included (a) age, (b) gender, (c) race/ethnicity, (d) length of time with organization, (e) educational attainment, and (f) type of agency (college/university, municipal, county, and state).

Based on Laub's rating score sheet for the OLA, only one organization would be classified as a servant led organization. The overall mean score of all of the organizations placed the group at an Org<sup>4</sup> level which is not indicative of servant leadership. Although only one organization scored high enough to be considered a servant led organization, the data supported a conclusion that the workforce of the responding organizations believed their leadership was authentic and shared its leadership authority. In addition, the data also supported that the workforce believed the leadership of the organizations valued people, developed people, built community, and provided leadership. The personal and organizational demographics revealed a perception gap with regards to age and length of time with the organization, however, they did not reveal a perception gap with regards to race/ethnicity, gender, level of education, size of the organization, or type of organization.

The purpose of Thompson's (2002) study was to focus on church-related colleges and universities who were choosing to adopt servant leadership as the guiding philosophy for the management of their institutions. Thompson selected one such institution, whose senior leadership had expressed an interest in adapting servant leadership and was in the early stages of adopting servant leadership principles. Thompson investigated the perceived presence of servant leadership characteristics in the management practices of the institution and its relationship to job satisfaction.

Thompson (2002) used the OLA survey instrument to survey employees from Academic Affairs and Student Services division. These employees were then separated into technical, management and institutional administrative levels. A total of 167 employees were invited to participate in the survey and 116 completed and returned the survey for an overall response rate of 70%. The OLA instrument was used in addition to the Short Form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ).

The overall OLA mean score placed the organization in the Org<sup>4</sup> category which indicates it is not a servant organization. The study found no statistically significant difference in the perception of servant leadership characteristics based on administrative level of the employee. The study did find a statistically significant difference existed between student services technical and both the academic affairs management and the faculty. In addition, a statistically significant positive correlation was found to exist between participants' perception of servant leadership characteristics and their level of job satisfaction as measured by the MSQ.

The primary research question of White's (2003) qualitative study asked: "How should a government organization model itself if striving to follow a New Public Service

orientation of public administration?” (p. 32). The organization studied endorsed a model known as a Quality Service System which has organizing principles and values analogous to those of servant leadership. White (2003) sought to discover if the documents and values of the organization reflected the characteristics of servant leadership, and if there was a servant leadership orientation evident in the organization leadership. White reported findings from in-depth interviews of 26 members of the organization and analysis of key documents. The analysis of the interview results indicated that servant leadership components, as extrapolated from Laub’s (1999) study, did exist in the organization in varying degrees. However, because this was a qualitative study, it is not possible to categorize this organization using Laub’s score sheet to determine if it was a servant organization.

#### Synthesis

The first sections of this literature review (Review of Dominant Leadership Theories, Robert K. Greenleaf, and the Biblical View of Servant Leadership) reveal that reported research and commentary has utilized a variety of methods including reviews of literature (Mann, 1959; Yukl, 2002), a meta-analysis of literature (Lord et al., 1986), quantitative studies (e.g., French & Raven, 1959; Hemphill & Coons, 1957; Katz, Maccoby, Gurin, & Floor, 1951), practitioner models and concepts of leadership (e.g., Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Reddin, 1967), and theory construction and Scripture (e.g., Concordia, 1986; Greenleaf, 1970; Spears, 1998). Regardless of the methodology, most of this research and commentary focused on private-sector, for-profit organizations with the explicit/implicit priorities being the production and effectiveness of the organization.

Each of the six leadership theories supported by the reviewed literature focused on the leader in some respect. Trait theory focused on the attributes of the leader exclusively without significant concern for the situation or the followers. Power-influence theory focused on the power and influence of the leader on the followers. Publications explicating this theory asserted the leader built power through position and personality and assumed a two-way reciprocal relationship with followers. Behavioral theory focused on the behavior of the leader rather than personal traits. In addition, behavioral theory viewed the actions of the leader toward the follower on both a task and relationship level. Behavioral theory and situational theory were similar in that the behavior of the leader was dependent on the nature of the situation. This included the need for adaptation of a leader's style based on the task requirements and the needs of the followers. Transformational theory focused on the leader, the follower, and the task of the organization. The goal was that both leader and follower were raised to a higher level of motivation and were united for the common purpose of the organization. Ethical theory focused on the leader but primarily in terms of character and behavior in relation to the follower. The intent was for ethical leaders to create an environment of trust and high moral values which then allowed a safe environment for the followers.

Servant leadership was least like trait theory and power-influence theory which focused primarily on leader attributes. There were similarities between servant leadership and behavioral theory and situational theory in terms of conceptualizing leadership with a view towards follower needs and effectiveness. Servant leadership was similar to transformational leadership in its focus on followers, however, it was most like ethical leadership because of the specific focus on the needs of the followers and the desire to

create an environment of high morals and values. The primary focus was on the relationships rather than the tasks. The literature review also suggested that servant leadership was an appropriate leadership style for both profit and non-profit organizations. Servant leadership's attention to the production and effectiveness of the organization was not less important than found under other theories, but the path to obtaining and maintaining high production and effectiveness was different. Servant leaders viewed the relationships with the followers as the most important aspect of leadership. The focus on serving others was the means to reach the end which was different from other theories.

The remaining sections of this literature review (Constructs of Servant Leadership, the OLA Scoring Sheet, and Previous Dissertations) report on efforts by Laub (1999) and his followers (Beazley, 2002; Braye, 2000; Horsman, 2001; Ledbetter, 2003; Thompson, 2002) to operationalize servant leadership through the use of the OLA. The OLA was created by Laub (1999) and is based on participant assessment of organizational behavior regarding six constructs (valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership and sharing leadership). As noted above, the OLA has been used to assess the presence of servant leadership at a variety of organizations. Researchers have focused on a variety of variables in assessing perceptions of servant leadership principles including age, gender, years at the organization, and level of employment.

As I have observed, servant leadership's prioritization of a specific set of means distinguishes it from other theories. I have also shown how empirical research on servant leadership is just emerging. Accordingly, there is a need for additional data-based

research to determine if servant-leader characteristics are perceived by followers in a self-proclaimed servant-led organization. Stated in other words, there is a need to determine if servant leadership's distinct theoretical features are, in fact, perceived by those working in organizations committed to servant leadership. My study added to the data-based literature on servant leadership because I surveyed members at all levels of a self-proclaimed servant-led organization in order to assess their perceptions of servant-leader characteristics evident in the organization.

## Chapter Three

### Research Approach and Rationale

Two considerations were critical in determining the methodology for this study. First, since the purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions from a large number of people, a quantitative methodology was employed. Specifically a survey research design was used for this study. According to Babbie (1983), “Survey research is probably the most frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences” (p. 209). Surveys can generate data that are useful for a great range of study topics and also lend themselves to a wide-ranging form of analyses. The researcher is provided with a set of responses which as a whole can be used to measure the characteristics and attitudes of a definable social group (Baker, 1999).

Babbie (1983) suggested that survey research is probably the best method available to the researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population that is too large to observe directly. In addition, Babbie stated that “standardized questionnaires have an important strength in regard to measurement generally” (p. 238). Unreliability in observations made by the researcher is nearly eliminated through survey research since all subjects are presented with a standardized stimulus (Babbie, 1983).

Second, because there was an absence of empirical research on servant leadership and Laub (1999) had initiated a line of research that may prove promising, a replication

study using the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) extends and progresses the knowledge base of servant leadership in two ways. First, additional data using the OLA supports the reliability and validity of the instrument which extends the knowledge base of the usefulness of the instrument. Second, a replication study lends support to the initial findings of the OLA by extending the findings to a different population. This extended the range of samples and the knowledge of the constructs of servant leadership.

### Participants

The population to be studied was all persons employed at Omega Publishing Company. OPC was a publishing company located in a small city in the western United States that produced media resources and services for Christian churches including children's ministry, youth ministry, adult education, small group ministry, church volunteers, as well as resources for pastors and other church leaders. OPC employed 313 people at a variety of management and staff levels. The first or top level of management consisted of the founder and president (CEO) and nine additional top management employees. There were 50 persons employed at the second level of supervisory/management positions and an additional 253 persons employed at the third or workforce level.

OPC was founded in 1974 as a home-based business by the president who was also owner of the company. In 1980, the business had grown large enough to move into its own building and add additional employees. At the time of this study, OPC owned and occupied three buildings and had employees who worked in a variety of different departments including accounting, communications, creative services, church volunteers,

distribution, sales, marketing, product development, human resources, supply chain, technology, and management.

The community in which OPC was located was comprised of residents employed in a diverse workforce of both blue-collar and white-collar professional jobs.

Approximately 42% of workers commuted between 10-60 miles for their employment.

This small city of 60,000 residents prided itself on maintaining a small-town family feeling while continuing to grow in local businesses and home development.

OPC was committed to five core values that included servanthood, quality, innovation, authentic learning and people friendliness. This organization was chosen for this study because it identified servanthood, which was OPC's characterization of servant leadership, as one of its core values. These core values were stated in various ways throughout the company. For example, a statement of the core values was given to employees, stated on the OPC website, and displayed on banners hanging in the OPC buildings.

### Measures

The instrument to be used in this study was the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) which was designed by Laub (1999). In order to develop the OLA, Laub used a Delphi method and selected experts who had written on servant leadership or had taught at the university level on this subject. Fourteen of the original 25 experts who were asked to participate completed all three parts of the Delphi. The first round of the Delphi consisted of a questionnaire which provided a summary statement of the research purpose and goals, a brief description of the Delphi method being used and forms for recording responses. The experts were asked to list at least ten characteristics of the

servant leader, and then review a list of characteristics drawn from the literature, adding any they felt should be included. The second round of the Delphi presented a compilation of all the lists received from the first round. The experts were asked to rate each of the 67 items on a seven-point scale, using the values of essential, necessary, desirable, and unnecessary. The third round of the Delphi included the results of the responses to round two. The experts were asked to rate each item once again and provided explanation of any items which fell outside of the interquartile range.

The characteristics that were rated as Necessary or Essential were used to construct the items for the instrument. A pre-field test was conducted with 22 participants. Revisions were then made on the field test version of the instrument. Laub (1999) conducted a field test of the constructed instrument in his original study. The field test consisted of 828 respondents from 41 different organizations categorized as religious, business for profit, education, government, community service, and medical service providers. Laub used individuals as units of measurement for his study. After reviewing the results of the field test, Laub revised the original instrument reducing the number of questions from 74 to 60 in order to decrease the time it took to complete the OLA and to make it more appealing to organizations that might use it in the future. The rationale for eliminating items was based on selecting items with lower item-to-test correlations and items that could be removed without affecting instrument validity. In addition, the original name of the instrument was the Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) but was changed to the Organizational Leadership Assessment to prevent any possible respondent bias.

## Description of the OLA Instrument

The OLA was designed to provide researchers and organizations with a research tool to measure perceived characteristics of servant leadership and could be used by individuals, teams, work units, company division or departments, or with entire organizations. The OLA measured employee's perceptions of servant leadership both at the level of the entire organization as well as at the level of managers/supervisors and top leadership. Laub (1999) gave the following reasons for this design and for the focus on the perceptions of people throughout the organization:

1. Servant leadership assumes a shared leadership; therefore the presence of servant leadership characteristics in an organization or team is an issue that everyone in an organization is responsible for.
2. With this instrument, leadership as well as the entire organization is assessed by people from various levels or positions in the organization. By comparing these different groups, through analysis of their responses, it becomes possible to determine if top leadership, management and the workforce share the same perceptions about the presence of these characteristics within the organization and within the leadership.
3. The format of designing the instrument to be taken by everyone in the organization will help to overcome some of the problems inherent in leadership self-assessments. The issue of social desirability often forces leaders to answer questions in ways that may be expected rather than a more honest or accurate response.

4. Top leadership and management may not be aware of the true impact, positive or negative, they have on the people of the organization. This instrument allows them to hear from all parts of the group in order to assess how their leadership characteristics and practices are measured against those of servant leadership. (Laub, 1999, p. 49-50)

Laub (1999) used the results from the Delphi survey to develop an instrument to assess servant leadership characteristics in terms of six definitional constructs: (a) the leader valued people which included believing in people, serving other's needs before his or her own, and by receptive, non-judgmental listening; (b) the leader developed people by providing opportunities for learning and growth, modeling appropriate behavior, and building up others through encouragement and affirmation; (c) the leader built community by building strong personal relationships, working collaboratively with others, and valuing the differences of others; (d) the leader displayed authenticity by being open and accountable to others, being willing to learn from others, and maintaining integrity and trust; (e) the leader provided leadership by envisioning the future, taking initiative, and clarifying goals; and (f) the leader shared leadership by facilitating a shared vision, sharing power and releasing control, and sharing status and promoting others.

For the purpose of this study, Laub's (1999) definition of servant leadership as presented in the six definitional constructs was used. The OLA was used without any additions or corrections (Appendix A). Six of the seven demographic questions used by Laub (1999) were used; however, only data regarding gender, level of employment, and number of years at organization were analyzed. The demographic question regarding type of organization did not apply in this study since only one organization was being used;

therefore, this question was not asked. Laub agreed to the use of the OLA for this study in this manner as reflected in his personal letter (Appendix B).

### Validity and Reliability

Laub (1999) reported that the revised 60-item OLA instrument had a mean of 223.79 on a total potential score of 300 and the standard deviation was 41.08. The OLA had an acceptable reliability score, using the Cronbach-Alpha coefficient of .9802. A reliability coefficient of .80 or higher is considered acceptable. From his study, Laub also reported the Cronbach-Alpha reliability coefficients of the six sub-scores were all .90 or above.

### Data Analysis

This study was a non-experimental study of the perception of servant leadership in a for-profit Christian organization. This study collected quantifiable survey data which were used to answer four research questions.

In question one, descriptive statistics were used to analyze how the characteristics of valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership were perceived by the followers (employees) at OPC.

In question two, data collected were analyzed based on the level of employment at the organization. The three levels of employment were top leadership, management, and workforce. The means of several groups were compared with analysis of variance (ANOVA) at a significance level of .05. Effect sizes were determined using Eta.

In question three, data collected were analyzed based on the gender of employees at OPC. Data were analyzed with independent *t*-test at the significance level of .05 and effect size was calculated using *d*.

In question four, data collected were analyzed based on the number of years at the organization. The three levels of number of years in the organization were 0-5 years, 6-15 years, and more than 15 years. The means of several groups were compared using analysis of variance (ANOVA) at the .05 significance level. Effect size was calculated using *Eta*.

In addition to the quantitative data collected, I also used an open-ended question soliciting qualitative data from respondents relative to the constructs assessed with the OLA. This question asked participants to, "Please share any additional thoughts you have about the leadership at Omega Publishing Company that you believe would be helpful in this study."

## Chapter Four

### Presentation of the Findings

The findings of this study are presented in this chapter. The first section, Description of the Sample, includes a description of the participant sample based on the demographic information of gender, education level, age, number of years at the organization, level of employment, and ethnicity. The second section, Research Question One, includes findings for research question one. The third section, Research Question Two, includes findings for research question two. The fourth section, Research Question Three, includes findings for research question three. The final section, Research Question Four, includes findings for research question four.

#### *Description of the Sample*

I personally distributed surveys at Omega Publishing Company (OPC) at a monthly staff meeting on May 10, 2005. A total of 239 surveys were returned and 236 surveys were usable. An additional thirty surveys were distributed to employees at the organization but not in attendance at the meeting. These were put in self-addressed, stamped envelopes to be returned to me. A total of 26 surveys were returned by mail. A final total of 262 usable surveys were completed for this study.

Four personal demographic questions and two questions relating to organizational demographics were asked of the survey respondents on an anonymous survey. The personal demographics concerned gender, education level, age, and ethnicity. The

organizational demographics concerned number of years at the organization and level of employment at the organization.

Table 2, presenting data regarding the gender of participants, showed that of 261 participants, approximately 65% were female and approximately 35% were male. One participant did not indicate gender. The apparent disproportion of females to males reflected the gender imbalance in the organization.

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Table 2

*Gender of Participants*

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Gender	N	Percentage
Male	92	35.11
Female	169	64.51
Gender not indicated	1	.38
Total	262	100

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Education levels of respondents were divided into seven levels (see Table 3). Of the 262 respondents, 8% had completed high school and approximately 29% had completed some college. Those holding undergraduate degrees and/or some graduate school made up approximately 52% of respondents. Those holding master's and doctoral degrees comprised 11% of the sample.

Table 3

*Education Level of Participants*

Education level attained	N	Percentage
Less than High School	0	0
High School	21	8.01
Some College	75	28.63
Undergraduate College	114	43.51
Some Graduate School	23	8.78
Masters Degree	26	9.92
Doctoral Degree	3	1.15
Total	262	100

The age of respondents comprised six age ranges (see Table 4). There were no employees who were age 19 or under. The two smallest groups were those ages 20-29 years (approximately 16%) and those ages 60 and over (approximately 8%). The next two largest groups were those ages 30-39 years (24%) and those ages 50-59 years (approximately 23%). The largest group was comprised of those ages 40-49 years making up approximately 31% of the sample.

Table 4

*Age of Participants*

Age	N	Percentage
0-19 years	0	0
20-29 years	41	15.6
30-39 years	63	24
40-49 years	82	31.3
50-59 years	61	23.3
60 and over	15	5.7
Total	262	100

Table 5, which presents data on the number of years at the organization, indicated that the largest number of employees had been at the organization for five years or less (approximately 64%). The second largest group was comprised of those who had been at the organization for 6-15 years (approximately 31%). The smallest group was comprised of those who had been at the organization for more than 15 years (approximately 5%).

Table 5

*Number of Years at Organization of Participants*

Number of Years	N	Percentage
0-5 years	168	64.1
6-15 years	82	31.3
More than 15 years	12	4.6
Total	262	100

Table 6, presenting data on the position at the organization, indicated that the largest number of employees comprised the workforce (approximately 78%). Nearly 19%

of employees were in management/supervisor positions, and approximately 3% were in CEO positions.

Table 6

*Position at Organization of Participants*

Position	N	Percentage
CEO	8	3.1
Manager/Supervisor	49	18.7
Workforce	205	78.2
Total	262	100

Table 7, presenting data on the ethnicity of the respondents, showed that approximately 94% of the sample indicated that their ethnic origin as White – not Hispanic. All other ethnic groups combined made up approximately 6% of the participants in the study.

Table 7

*Ethnicity of Participants*

Ethnicity	N	Percentage
White – not Hispanic origin	247	94.3
Black – not Hispanic origin	1	.4
Hispanic	11	4.2
Asian or Pacific Islander	1	.4
American Indian or Alaskan	0	0
Other	2	.8
Total	262	100

*Research Question One:*

*How are the servant-leadership characteristics of valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership perceived by followers (employees) at OPC?*

Table 8 shows the results of each construct based on the scores of the whole organization. For construct one, valuing people, the overall mean score for all respondents was 4.01 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .57. For construct two, developing people, the overall mean score for all respondents was 3.9 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .65. For construct three, building community, the overall mean score for all respondents was 4.03 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .55. For construct four, displaying authenticity, the overall mean score for all respondents was 3.94 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .62. For construct five, providing leadership, the overall mean score for all respondents was 4.05 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .57. For construct six, sharing leadership, the overall mean score for all respondents was 3.84 and the standard deviation was .68.

Table 8

*Overall scores for each construct*

OLA Subscales	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
Values People	255	2.30	5.00	4.01	.57
Develops People	255	1.89	5.00	3.90	.65
Builds Community	256	2.00	5.00	4.03	.55
Displays Authenticity	257	2.00	5.00	3.94	.62
Provides Leadership	255	2.44	5.00	4.05	.57
Shares Leadership	256	1.70	5.00	3.85	.68

*Research Question Two:*

*Do employee perceptions of servant leadership characteristics vary based on the respondent's level of employment in the organization?*

For construct one (Table 9), valuing people, the overall mean score for top management employees was 4.13 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .40. The overall mean score for managers/supervisors was 4.15 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .52. The overall mean score for workforce was 3.97 and the standard deviation was .59. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .132 which indicated there was no significant difference between levels of employment for construct one,  $F(2, 252) = 2.039$ .

Table 9

*Results for Level of Employment for Construct One*

Level of Employment	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
Top Management	8	3.30	4.70	4.14	.40
Mgr./Supervisor	48	3.10	5.00	4.15	.52
Workforce	199	2.30	5.00	3.97	.59
Total	255	2.30	5.00	4.01	.57

For construct two (Table 10), developing people, the overall mean score for top management employees was 3.99 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .40. The overall mean score for managers/supervisors was 4.03 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .60. The overall mean score for workforce was 3.87 and the standard deviation was .66. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .291 which indicated there was no significant difference between levels of employment for construct two,  $F(2, 252) = 1.240$ .

Table 10

*Results for Level of Employment for Construct Two*

Level of Employment	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
Top Management	8	3.33	4.67	3.99	.40
Mgr./Supervisor	48	2.56	5.00	4.03	.60
Workforce	199	1.89	5.00	3.87	.66
Total	255	1.89	5.00	3.90	.65

For construct three (Table 11), building community, the overall mean score for top management employees was 4.18 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .41. The overall mean score for managers/supervisors was 4.17 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .47. The overall mean score for workforce was 3.99 and the standard deviation was .57. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .097 which indicated there was no significant difference between levels of employment for construct three,  $F(2, 253) = 2.352$ .

Table 11

*Results for Level of Employment for Construct Three*

Level of Employment	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
Top Management	8	3.40	4.80	4.18	.41
Mgr./Supervisor	48	3.00	5.00	4.17	.47
Workforce	200	2.00	5.00	3.99	.57
Total	256	2.00	5.00	4.03	.55

For construct four (Table 12), displaying authenticity, the overall mean score for top management employees was 4.22 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .26. The overall mean score for managers/supervisors was 4.09 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .57. The overall mean score for workforce was 3.89 and the standard deviation was .64. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .062 which indicated there was no significant difference between levels of employment for construct four,  $F(2, 254) = 2.815$ .

Table 12

*Results for Level of Employment for Construct Four*

Level of Employment	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
Top Management	8	3.83	4.67	4.22	.26
Mgr./Supervisor	48	2.25	5.00	4.09	.57
Workforce	201	2.00	5.00	3.89	.64
Total	257	2.00	5.00	3.94	.62

For construct five (Table 13), providing leadership, the overall mean score for top management employees was 4.29 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .28. The overall mean score for managers/supervisors was 4.24 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .52. The overall mean score for workforce was 4.00 and the standard deviation was .58. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .015 which indicated there was a significant difference between levels of employment for construct five,  $F(2, 252) = 4.304, p < .05$ . A post-hoc test using the Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) analysis was conducted in order to determine where differences existed in the ANOVA. The Tukey HSD analysis revealed a significant difference at the .05 level between the workforce level and the manager/supervisor level ( $p = .022$ ). Managers/supervisors rated the value of providing leadership significantly higher than did the workforce. The effect size

between the manager/supervisor level and the workforce level was .44 which indicated a medium effect size.

Table 13

*Results for Level of Employment for Construct Five*

Level of Employment	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
Top Management	8	3.78	4.67	4.29	.28
Mgr./Supervisor	48	2.78	5.00	4.24	.52
Workforce	199	2.44	5.00	4.00	.58
Total	255	2.44	5.00	4.05	.57

For construct six (Table 14), sharing leadership, the overall mean score for top management employees was 4.2 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .39. The overall mean score for managers/supervisors was 4.08 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .59. The overall mean score for workforce was 3.77 and the standard deviation was .69. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .006 which indicated there was a significant difference between levels of employment for construct six,  $F(2, 253) = 5.299, p < .05$ . A post-hoc test using the Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) analysis was conducted in order to determine where differences existed in the ANOVA. The Tukey HSD analysis revealed a significant difference at the .05 level between the manager/supervisor level and the workforce level ( $p = .012$ ). Managers/supervisors rated

the value of sharing leadership significantly higher than did the workforce. The effect size between the manager/supervisor level and the workforce level was .48 which indicated a medium effect size.

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Table 14

*Results for Level of Employment for Construct Six*

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Level of Employment	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
Top Management	8	3.40	4.70	4.20	.39
Mgr/Supervisor	48	2.20	5.00	4.08	.59
Workforce	200	1.70	5.00	3.77	.69
Total	256	1.70	5.00	3.85	.68

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*Research Question Three:*

*Do employee perceptions of servant leadership characteristics vary based on the respondent's gender?*

For construct one (Table 15), valuing people, the overall mean score for male employees was 4.05 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .55. The overall mean score for female employees was 3.99 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .59. An independent *t* test was conducted and showed the level of significance was .473 which indicated there was no significant difference between genders for construct one,  $t(252) = .836$ .

Table 15

*Results for Gender for Construct One*

Gender	N	Mean	Std.
Male	91	4.05	.55
Female	163	3.99	.59

For construct two (Table 16), developing people, the overall mean score for male employees was 3.91 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .65. The overall mean score for female employees was 3.89 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .65. An independent *t* test was conducted and showed the level of significance was .576 which indicated there was no significant difference between genders for construct two,  $t(252) = .202$ .

Table 16

*Results for Gender for Construct Two*

Gender	N	Mean	Std.
Male	91	3.91	.65
Female	163	3.89	.65

For construct three (Table 17), building community, the overall mean score for male employees was 4.05 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .50. The overall mean score for female employees was 4.01 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .58. An independent *t* test was conducted and showed the level of significance was .302 which indicated there was no significant difference between genders for construct three,  $t(253) = .435$ .

Table 17

*Results for Gender for Construct Three*

Gender	N	Mean	Std.
Male	91	4.05	.50
Female	164	4.01	.58

For construct four (Table 18), displaying authenticity, the overall mean score for male employees was 4.00 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .60. The overall mean score for female employees was 3.91 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .63. An independent *t* test was conducted and showed the level of significance was .304 which indicated there was no significant difference between genders for construct four,  $t(254) = 1.217$ .

Table 18

*Results for Gender for Construct Four*

Gender	N	Mean	Std.
Male	91	4.00	.60
Female	165	3.91	.63

For construct five (Table 19), providing leadership, the overall mean score for male employees was 4.06 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .58. The overall mean score for female employees was 4.05 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .57. An independent *t* test was conducted and showed the level of significance was .873 which indicated there was no significant difference between genders for construct five,  $t(252) = .198$ .

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Table 19

*Results for Gender for Construct Five*

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Gender	N	Mean	Std.
Male	90	4.06	.58
Female	164	4.05	.57

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For construct six (Table 20), sharing leadership, the overall mean score for male employees was 3.95 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .64. The overall mean score for female employees was 3.79 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .70. An independent *t* test was conducted and showed the level of significance was .426 which indicated there was no significant difference between genders for construct six,  $t(253) = 1.902$ .

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Table 20

*Results for Gender for Construct Six*

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Gender	N	Mean	Std.
Male	90	3.95	.64
Female	165	3.79	.70

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*Research Question Four:*

*Do employee perceptions of servant leadership characteristics vary based on the respondent's years of employment in the organization?*

For construct one (Table 21), valuing people, the overall mean score for employees at the organization between 0-5 years was 4.01 out of a possible 5 and a

standard deviation of .56. The overall mean score for employees at the organization between 6-15 years was 4.00 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .59. The overall mean score for employees at the organization more than 15 years was 4.19 and the standard deviation was .62. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .572 which indicated there was no significant difference between the number of years at the organization for construct one,  $F(2, 252) = .560$ .

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Table 21

*Results for Number of Years at Organization for Construct One*

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Number of Years	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
0-5	165	2.30	5.00	4.01	.56
6-15	79	2.70	5.00	4.00	.59
More than 15	11	2.90	4.80	4.19	.62
Total	255	2.30	5.00	4.01	.57

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For construct two (Table 22), developing people, the overall mean score for employees at the organization between 0-5 years was 3.91 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .64. The overall mean score for employees at the organization between 6-15 years was 3.87 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .63. The overall mean score for employees at the organization for more than 15 years was 3.99 and the standard deviation was .90. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was

conducted and showed the level of significance at .834 which indicated there was no significant difference between the number of years at the organization for construct two,  $F(2, 252) = .181$ .

Table 22

*Results for Number of Years at Organization for Construct Two*

Number of Years	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
0-5	164	1.89	5.00	3.91	.64
6-15	80	2.11	5.00	3.87	.63
More than 15	11	2.11	4.78	3.99	.90
Total	255	1.89	5.00	3.90	.65

For construct three (Table 23), building community, the overall mean score for employees at the organization between 0-5 years was 4.01 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .57. The overall mean score for employees at the organization between 6-15 years was 4.03 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .52. The overall mean score for employees at the organization for more than 15 years was 4.26 and the standard deviation was .56. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .336 which indicated there was no significant difference between the number of years at the organization for construct three,  $F(2, 253) = 1.096$ .

Table 23

*Results for Number of Years at Organization for Construct Three*

Number of Years	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
0-5	164	2.00	5.00	4.01	.57
6-15	80	2.60	5.00	4.03	.52
More than 15	12	3.10	4.90	4.26	.56
Total	256	2.00	5.00	4.03	.55

For construct four (Table 24), displaying authenticity, the overall mean score for employees at the organization between 0-5 years was 3.96 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .62. The overall mean score for employees at the organization between 6-15 years was 3.9 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .61. The overall mean score for employees at the organization more than 15 years was 4.01 and the standard deviation was .78. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .714 which indicated there was no significant difference between the number of years at the organization for construct four,  $F(2, 254) = .337$ .

Table 24

*Results for Number of Years at Organization for Construct Four*

Number of Years	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
0-5	164	2.00	5.00	3.96	.62
6-15	81	2.25	5.00	3.90	.61
More than 15	12	2.42	4.92	4.01	.78
Total	257	2.00	5.00	3.94	.62

For construct five (Table 25), providing leadership, the overall mean score for employees at the organization between 0-5 years was 4.07 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .56. The overall mean score for employees at the organization between 6-15 years was 4.02 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .58. The overall mean score for employees at the organization more than 15 years was 4.09 and the standard deviation was .71. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .839 which indicated there was no significant difference between the number of years at the organization for construct five,  $F(2, 252) = .175$ .

Table 25

*Results for Number of Years at Organization for Construct Five*

Number of Years	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
0-5	165	2.44	5.00	4.07	.56
6-15	78	2.67	5.00	4.02	.58
More than 15	12	2.56	4.89	4.09	.71
Total	255	2.44	5.00	4.05	.57

For construct six (Table 26), sharing leadership, the overall mean score for employees at the organization between 0-5 years was 3.85 out of a possible 5 and a standard deviation of .65. The overall mean score for employees at the organization between 6-15 years was 3.81 out of a possible 5 and the standard deviation was .70. The overall mean score for employees at the organization more than 15 years was 3.97 and the standard deviation was .94. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and showed the level of significance at .734 which indicated there was no significant difference between the number of years at the organization for construct six,  $F(2, 253) = .309$ .

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Table 26

*Results for Number of Years at Organization for Construct Six*

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Number of Years	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
0-5	164	1.70	5.00	3.85	.65
6-15	80	2.20	5.00	3.81	.70
More than 15	12	2.20	4.70	3.97	.94
Total	256	1.70	5.00	3.85	.68

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Summary of Results

Data results showed that there were no significant differences in the levels of gender and number of years at the organization. Results also showed that there were no significant differences in the level of employment for the constructs of valuing people, developing people, building community, and displaying authenticity. However, there were significant differences in the level of employment for the constructs of providing leadership and sharing leadership. These results are further discussed in Chapter Five.

## Chapter Five

### Introduction

The OLA was used to collect and analyze data from individuals employed by OPC, a Christian-based, for-profit organization. This study asked employees to report their perceptions of the presence of servant leadership characteristics at the organization. This study was a true replication of Laub's (1999) study as only the OLA instrument was used. At the time the survey was administered, OPC employed a total of 313 employees at three different management and staff levels: top management, supervisor/management, and workforce. OPC was chosen for this study because it included servant leadership as one of its core values for the foundation of their business. All employees of OPC were invited to participate in this survey to assess their perceptions on the presence and practice of servant leadership in this organization.

The research focused on four primary questions:

1. How are the servant-leadership characteristics of valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership perceived by followers (employees) at OPC?
2. Do employee perceptions of servant leadership characteristics vary based on the respondent's level of employment in the organization?
3. Do employee perceptions of servant leadership characteristics vary based on the respondent's gender?

4. Do employee perceptions of servant leadership characteristics vary based on the respondent's years of employment in the organization?

This chapter discusses answers to the research questions based on the findings of this study. It does this by discussing responses to the OLA survey and relevant data obtained through the qualitative question posed at the time the survey was conducted. Qualitative data acquired are paraphrased when necessary to ensure participant anonymity. This chapter has six sections: Summary of Findings, Discussion, Implications for the Organization, Suggestions for Further Research, Limitations of the Study, and Conclusion.

#### Summary of Findings

As noted above, Laub developed a score sheet for the OLA to categorize organizations and the level of their servant leadership culture based on participant data. Laub provided this to me in July 2005 (personal communication, July 31, 2005). The numerical ratings and meanings of each level are provided in Table 27. According to Laub (2005), the score of 4.0 on a 5 point scale indicates the level of "Agreement" and is the breakpoint score for identifying an organization as a servant organization. In the analysis of each research question, this score sheet will be used as the basis to determine if the organization is at a servant level.

Table 27

*Laub's Score Sheet for the OLA*

Raw Score	Organizational Description
0.0 to 1.999	Organization <sup>1</sup> – Toxic Organizational Health
2.0 to 2.999	Organization <sup>2</sup> – Poor Organizational Health
3.0 to 3.499	Organization <sup>3</sup> – Limited Organizational Health
3.5 to 3.999	Organization <sup>4</sup> – Moderate Organizational Health
4.0 to 4.499	Organization <sup>5</sup> – Excellent Organizational Health
4.5 to 5.0	Organization <sup>6</sup> – Optimal Organizational Health

All of the mean scores in this study are in one of two levels: Org<sup>4</sup> (Moderate Organizational Health) and Org<sup>5</sup> (Excellent Organizational Health). Laub (2005) describes an organization at the Org<sup>4</sup> level as one where many employees feel valued but others do not. Employees are listened to as long as it is in correlation to the values and priorities of the leaders. Many of the important decisions still remain with top leaders in the organization, and, while relationships are valued, tasks are the first priority. The level of trust and willingness to take risks is at a moderate level. Employees are committed to the organization because of their own motivation to do good work. The Org<sup>5</sup> level is the first level that Laub (2005) describes as a servant organization level. Employees are valued at a personal and professional level and are encouraged to develop their talents in both areas. There is mutual listening between employees and leaders and employees are empowered to help make some of the important decisions. An Org<sup>5</sup> organization thrives on being a community and working in teams. There is a high level of honesty, integrity and trust, and serving each other becomes more important than self-interests.

### *Research Question One*

For research question one, the mean of all scores on the six constructs was 3.96 which would indicate that this was not overall a servant organization as defined by Laub (2005). However, the scores on three constructs did exceed the breakpoint score of 4.0: values people (4.01), builds community (4.03), and provides leadership (4.05). The other three constructs fell marginally below the 4.0 score: develops people (3.9), displays authenticity (3.94), and shares leadership (3.85). With the exception of the score on the sixth construct (shares leadership), the other five scores were very close to the breakpoint score indicating that there was evidence of servant leader behavior in this organization, yet potential changes could be made in the leadership to improve the perceptions of the employees to increase the scores.

The score on the first construct (values people) was 4.01 which indicates that this construct was at a servant level according to Laub (2005). This quantitative finding was consistent with comments offered by participants in response to the qualitative question posed to all survey respondents. Thus, for example, one respondent indicated, “Extended family always there to encourage and help. Best business I have ever worked for because of core values and love of God.” In addition, another employee said, “This company treats everyone equally w/o judging people. The leaders are so fair – we have fun here! I’ve never worked on a team that got along so well together – everyone helps each other!”

However, these positive perceptions were not shared by all respondents in the organization. For instance, one person stated, “People are treated differently based on where they work at OPC. Even the coffee maker in the café makes more money than us!”

Another employee said, “Unfortunately, owing to our growth, some leaders at the division level have become insulated from, and out of touch with, the needs and struggles of those below them.”

The score on the second construct (develops people) was 3.9 which indicates that this construct was not at a servant level according to Laub. While the score did not make the breakpoint score indicated by Laub, it was only marginally lower than the 4.0 score. Once again, the qualitative question solicited responses relevant to this construct that were both positive and negative. One person said, “The greatest weakness of leadership is encouraging, affirming, and empowering staff.” And yet another stated, “Leadership here has an amazing focus for success. They strive to make everyone on the team successful.” Some employees had very different views. One participant said,

This company needs to do a better job of promoting from within the organization. People who are here long enough are expected to do much more than normal while paid like any other new personnel. This in fact encourages attrition in the ranks rather than growth. Only those that can deal with extra pressure stay but never end up advancing within the company ranks, while top positions are filled by outsiders. Ultimately I feel that will cause this company [to lose] its special identity and become “just another company.” We deserve better.

In addition, another stated, “Although we strive to give leaders the tools necessary to grow within their leadership roles, we do not have the luxury of time to take those classes and grow ourselves.”

The third construct (builds community) scored the second highest of all constructs with a 4.03 which indicated it was at a servant level according to Laub. Comments

received on this construct were only positive and included the following: “Omega is a caring place to work, to be part of growing the kingdom for God in small ways to large ways. It’s a blessing to be on the team here” and “Very open and receptive. Friendly/family-like.” A final comment stated, “It’s an awesome team of people on a mission!”

The fourth construct (displays authenticity) scored a 3.94 indicating that it was not at the servant level according to Laub. The comments relating to this construct were overall positive, such as, “This is the most honest company of people I have ever had the pleasure of working with. The owners should give lectures to other companies on the proper way to run a successful company” and “There is a strong sense of integrity demonstrated at Omega. They are approachable and friendly.” A final comment stated, “This is the most authentic, healthy organization I know of that balances corporate goals with staff fulfillment in a way that keeps us profitable and extremely satisfied at work.” One person, however, strongly countered these comments saying,

The owners should connect with the “regular workers” more. They’re never even seen among the desks on the lower levels. They may be somewhat “celebrities” in the outside Christian world, but here they need to get off their walk of fame and act like real, down-to-earth people. We can see through the fake. We want the genuine.

The fifth construct (provides leadership) had the highest score overall with a 4.05 on a 5 point scale. While this score labeled them as a servant organization on this construct (according to Laub, 2005), there were several comments of both opinions on this construct. One employee said that Omega has the “best examples of leadership than

anywhere else I've worked." Another stated, "The leaders are the most creative thinkers – looking and planning toward the future but not losing sight of day to day goals. It is a privilege to work with such talented, dedicated Christian friends." Two employees specifically focused on servant leadership in their comments: "The leaders do the best job of servant leadership that I have ever seen at any church or para-church organization" and "These individuals model servanthood. It is a joy to work with them." Those with different opinions made the following comments:

For the most part the managers/leaders in my department are great – responsible, capable people. There is one exception, though. There is one manager in my department who I feel is not succeeding in his role. His supervisors are aware that this person is failing. I think their compassion for this person causes them not to take action to rectify the problem. But their failure to deal with this person's incompetence is creating problems within the department and also in other departments.

Another employee stated,

There are times – actually, more than that, there are situations that I feel need addressing, usually in a hard to do way, that are not addressed. Too often these things are left alone, ignored, brushed aside, and generally pretended like they are not problems.

A third employee said,

We're growing so fast and we haven't hired and trained people in awhile. People, including supervisors, aren't getting trained in procedures and everyday tasks because we're so quick to get them working on jobs. This is hurting us and will

soon cause major problems. All workers see this but supervisors aren't addressing it. It's assumed newbies will learn but they aren't.

The sixth construct (shares leadership) had a score of 3.85 which was the lowest score of all six constructs. This construct was not at the servant level according to Laub. The positive comment received on this construct referred to the inverted pyramid chart. It stated, "If you look at the leadership chart, the leaders are at the bottom!" Yet an opposing comment stated, "Look at the owners' new offices, then look at the horrible unproductive workspaces they created for us. Their inverted organizational chart is hypocrisy." Another said, "Decision making at the 'worker' level is discouraged. Working for family owned business – is not conducive to creativity – acceptance – autonomy – or confidence. Most of the 'outside' is an illusion – internally it works like a dictatorship."

#### *Research Question Two*

The overall mean scores for top management employees (4.17) and managers/supervisors (4.13) indicated a servant organization. The overall mean score for workforce was 3.92 which was not at a servant level according to Laub. There was a significant difference between the management/supervisor level and the workforce level for the constructs of providing leadership and sharing leadership. The workforce level was significantly lower than the management/supervisor level indicating less satisfaction with how the leaders provided and shared leadership at this organization. Dissertations completed by Horsman (2001) and Laub (1999) had findings of a significant difference between the top management and the management/supervisor and workforce levels, but not a significant difference between the management/supervisor level and the workforce

level. Ledbetter (2003) indicated a gap in perceptions between the top management and the other two levels with the largest gap between top management and management/supervisor. Braye (2000) did not include analysis on this demographic and Thompson (2002) used different categories of employees.

#### *Research Question Three*

The overall mean score for male employees on all constructs was 4.0 indicating a servant organization according to Laub (2005). The overall mean score for female employees on all constructs was 3.94 indicating an organization not at the servant level according to Laub (2005). While there was no significant difference between genders for the constructs, it was apparent from this study that male employees have a different, and more positive, perception of how these constructs were evident in the organization than female employees do. This finding was consistent with dissertation results from Braye (2000), Horsman (2001) and Laub (1999). Dissertations done by Ledbetter (2003) and Thompson (2002) did not include analysis on gender.

#### *Research Question Four*

The overall mean score for employees at the organization for 0-5 years was 3.97 which was not at the servant level according to Laub (2005). The overall mean score for employees at the organization for 6-15 years was 3.94 which also fell below the servant level. The overall mean score for employees at the organization for more than 15 years is 4.09 which was at the servant level. While there were no significant differences between the scores for each construct, it does appear that those who have been at the organization for the longest period of time had a more positive perception of the constructs evident at the organization. These findings cannot be compared to the dissertation results

previously discussed because two of them (Ledbetter, 2003; Thompson, 2002) did not analyze data based on this demographic and three of them (Braye, 2000; Horsman, 2001; Laub, 1999) used different ranges for this demographic.

#### Discussion

The lowest score on any servant leader construct was a 3.77 which fell right in the middle range of the Org<sup>4</sup> category. The highest score on any construct was a 4.29 which was in the middle range of the Org<sup>5</sup> category. Based on this range of scores, it appeared OPC would be at a level of Moderate Organizational Health (Org<sup>4</sup>) with some overlap into the Excellent Organizational Health (Org<sup>5</sup>) level. The results clearly indicated that this organization was not completely a servant organization according to Laub's score sheet, yet there were some constructs that were at a servant level. This finding is consistent with the dissertation results that were previously discussed, all of which had overall scores in the Moderate Organizational Health (Org<sup>4</sup>) level.

The overall positive scores in this study may be interpreted as actual perceptions of the employees. However, there may be other reasons for the high scores. This survey was conducted during a staff meeting and employees had a limited amount of time to fill it out. Some may have simply marked all high scores without much thought in order to complete the survey in the allotted time. Also, even though this was an anonymous survey, there may have been some employees who were concerned about being identified so only entered high scores in the event that happened. Another reason could be that the top leadership strives to employ only those who have a servant leadership mindset, therefore they not only acknowledged those who were servant leaders in the organization, but practiced it as well. This was particularly evident at the top management level with all

scores at 4.0 or higher except for one which was at 3.99. This could indicate that they perceived servant leadership throughout the organization, however, it is not uncommon for top management employees to have little contact with employees at the workforce level so their perceptions may only be based on the top level leadership and the managers/supervisors below them. The scores at the management/supervisor level were also all above the 4.0 score. While managers/supervisors typically have more contact with workforce employees, it is difficult to know if these high scores were based on how they perceive the top management and themselves or if they have included perceptions of the workforce level as well. It is also possible that both top leadership and managers/supervisors received more leadership training in servant leader constructs so their perceptions of themselves and each other may be higher.

It is important to note that only one out of six construct scores for the workforce level reached the breakpoint score of 4.0. This would indicate that many at the workforce level did not perceive servant leadership constructs from the leadership, either at the top level or with their own immediate supervisor/manager. If servant leadership was part of the core values of the organization, it was either not evident in the leadership to those at the workforce level, or the perceptions of the managers/supervisors and top leadership were distorted because of their position. The majority of the negative responses and comments on the survey came from the workforce level. If the top management wants to build stronger perceptions of servant leadership at the workforce level, more attention should be given to those at the workforce level to determine concerns about the leadership and ways to resolve those concerns.

## Implications for the Organization

Omega Publishing Company began as a home-based business over 30 years ago and was an organization with 313 employees at the time of this study. A third building was added to their campus recently indicating continued growth and economic success in the organization. This company appeared to have a solid reputation in the community and, based on website marketing comments, was meeting the needs of its consumers across the country. OPC was also an organization that would most likely continue to be attractive to future employees. A benefits plan included items such as healthcare coverage, profit sharing, personal development programs, and a fitness room. By all appearances, OPC could continue to grow and succeed for many years to come.

However, if OPC wishes to continue development as a servant organization, both internally and externally, it appears there is room for growth. Workforce employees can tend to feel marginalized in any organization due to lower pay, less attractive workspace, and how they are treated (real or perceived). Some of these workplace conditions may reflect what is consistent with the hierarchy that affects most organizations, i.e., a workforce employee is not going to make the same amount of money as a top management employee or manager/supervisor due to education and experience levels. However, OPC could work to change the perception and reality of how workforce employees are treated. Relationships are a key component of servant leadership. Therefore, top leadership and managers/supervisors have an opportunity to enhance relationships with those at the workforce level by communicating with them more frequently, visiting them occasionally in person, being more aware of their needs and concerns, and including them in some decision-making processes when appropriate. In a

large, busy organization, it could be a challenge to find the time to accomplish this, but it appeared that if the relationships were stronger, then the potential is there for better understanding of each person's position and needs, and the perception of the leadership would be more positive. In addition, the OLA results could assist top leadership in determining which constructs needs to be addressed to achieve a higher servant level and which level of the organization should be targeted in order to improve relationships. While this is not necessarily critical for the external success of the organization, it is critical for development of a consensus among employees that OPC is continuing its development as a servant organization.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

Based on my review of the literature and the results reported in this dissertation, it is clear there is still a need for further research in many areas relevant to servant leadership. As I noted in Chapter Two, empirical research on servant leadership remains limited. The use of quantitative surveys (e.g., Laub, 1999; Ledbetter, 2003) in such research is still at a pioneering stage of development. Nevertheless, findings by Laub (1999), Beazley (2002), Braye (2000), Horsman (2001), Ledbetter (2003), and Thompson (2002) and this research provide important guidance to future researchers working in the area of servant leadership. The following topics are offered as suggestions for researchers working in this area.

1. The results reported in this study offer some insight into the presence of servant leadership characteristics at one Christian-based, for-profit organization. However, quantitative studies of other Christian-based, for-profit organizations need to occur before these findings can be considered for generalization. Future researchers

might consider national surveys of Christian-based, for-profit organizations perhaps utilizing the resources of trade groups and associations. In addition, qualitative studies would provide a very good opportunity to obtain an in-depth understanding of the adoption, practice, and assessment of servant leadership at any organization committed to these principles. For example, researchers might employ phenomenological methods to understand the essence of leader and follower experiences in working at servant leader organizations. Alternatively, researchers might consider narrative or biographical research to understand the stories of servant leaders attempting to enhance servant leader characteristics.

2. More specifically, researchers might consider quantitative or qualitative studies attempting to measure and understand the effects of leadership training and knowledge of servant leadership constructs in an organization.

3. Alternatively, researchers might conduct quantitative and qualitative studies to investigate why top management and supervisors may report servant leader aspects of an organization more strongly than workforce employees. Is this due to certain stated leadership expectations when hiring? Are stated leadership expectations of workforce level employees different than those in top management and supervisors? Is there a way to close the gap in the perceptions between workforce level and top management and supervisor level?

4. Finally, researchers might gain valuable information and knowledge from the use of quantitative methods to determine if an organization with a religious association is more likely to exhibit characteristics of a servant organization. Furthermore, researchers might attempt to determine if there is a difference between for-profit and non-profit

religious-based organizations in regard to the existence of reported servant leader characteristics.

#### Limitations of the Study

1. The OLA contained a section in which participants were to answer questions based on their perceptions of either the top management or their immediate manager/supervisor. For some employees, their perceptions were different for the two levels so their answers were based on one or the other. It became unclear, then, if the results were more focused on top leadership or those at the manager/supervisor level. The OLA might be more effective if there were individual sections for each of the different levels.

2. The survey was distributed and completed during a staff meeting at the organization. It is possible that the limited time available may have influenced the thought and effort employees gave to the survey. Some may have simply marked all high or low answers just to complete the survey.

3. Doing internal surveys was fairly commonplace at OPC. Because this was not a new and unique experience, some employees may have taken it less seriously.

#### Conclusion

This study was done in order to add relevant, quantitative data-based research to existing literature on servant leadership. While there is much literature on this topic, much of it is anecdotal in nature and reflective of the authors' personal perspective and experience. While this literature provides helpful insights in developing a theory of servant leadership (e.g., Greenleaf, 1970), it does not add to the literature of data-based research. As servant leadership continues to be incorporated into the culture of

organizations, more opportunities will become available for additional research and study.

In addition, I believe it is important to continue to use Laub's (1999) OLA instrument to determine its ongoing validity and reliability. It is also important to adapt the tool as necessary for further research. There are opportunities for new survey instruments to be developed to provide other avenues for research which may provide different perspectives on the existing literature.

Servant leadership is a leadership model that focuses on serving others, at all levels of the organization. The potential to learn and teach this type of leadership is great and provides learning that will go beyond the organization into the world. However, further progress will depend on the completion of baseline research and the evolution of future research initiatives attempting to measure and understand the complex interactions between leaders, followers, and the principles adopted to bring out the best of human productivity, knowledge, and compassion in organizational settings.

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Appendix A

**Cover Sheet**  
**Organizational Leadership Assessment**

Dear Participant,

You have been invited to participate in a research study concerning how persons employed at Omega Publishing Company perceive leadership practices and beliefs at the organization. The title of this research project is *Servant Leadership: A Quantitative Study of the Perceptions of Employees of a Christian-Based, For-Profit Organization*. This research is being conducted through Colorado State University under the supervision of Dr. Clifford Harbour who is the principal investigator. The co-principal investigator who is conducting this survey today is Debra Arfsten who is a doctoral student. She can be reached at 708-524-1292 following the completion of this survey.

Once the surveys have been completed, the data will be combined and analyzed. The combined results of this survey will be shared with the president of Omega Publishing Company. No individual results will be shared. Your participation in this survey will be confidential. No names or identifying numbers will be used on the survey forms.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Questions about your rights as a participant may be directed to Celia S. Walker at 970-491-1563. There are no known risks in participating in this study.

If you wish to participate, please do the following:

- a) complete Question #1 on this cover sheet,
- b) complete the attached demographic sheet (page 1),
- c) complete the attached survey (pages 2 – 4),
- d) complete Question # 2 on page 5, and
- e) seal all documents in the provided envelope and place the envelope in the box.

This research study includes all employees at this organization. Please answer the questions based on how you feel about the organization, not how others might feel.

**Question #1:** Write in the name of the organization or organizational unit (department, team or work unit) you are basing your answers on in this survey.

**Organization** (or Organizational Unit) **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate your **present role/position** in the organization or work unit. Please **circle one**.

1 = Top Leadership (top level of leadership)

2 = Management (supervisor, manager)

3 = Workforce (staff, member, worker)

There are three different sections in the attached survey instrument. Carefully read the brief instructions that are given before each section. Please answer all questions. Thank you!



## Appendix C

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

### **Section 1**

In this section, please respond to each statement as you believe it applies to **the entire organization** (or organizational unit) including workers, managers/supervisors and top leadership.

#### **In general, people within this organization .**

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Trust each other					
2 Are clear on the key goals of the organization					
3 Are non-judgmental – they keep an open mind					
4 Respect each other					
5 Know where this organization is headed in the future					
6 Maintain high ethical standards					
7 Work well together in teams					
8 Value differences in culture, race & ethnicity					
9 Are caring & compassionate towards each other					
10 Demonstrate high integrity & honesty					
11 Are trustworthy					
12 Relate well to each other					
13 Attempt to work with others more than working on their own					
14 Are held accountable for reaching work goals					
15 Are aware of the needs of others					
16 Allow for individuality of style and expression					
17 Are encouraged by supervisors to share in making <i>important</i> decisions					
18 Work to maintain positive working relationships					
19 Accept people as they are					
20 View conflict as an opportunity to learn & grow					
21 Know how to get along with people					

Please provide your response to each statement by placing an **X** in one of the five boxes

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

**Section 2**

In this next section, please respond to each statement as you believe it applies to the **leadership** of the organization (or organizational unit) including managers/supervisors and top leadership

<b>Managers/Supervisors and Top Leadership in this Organization</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
22 Communicate a clear vision of the future of the organization					
23 Are open to learning from those who are <i>below</i> them in the organization					
24 Allow workers to help determine where this organization is headed					
25 Work alongside the workers instead of separate from them					
26 Use persuasion to influence others instead of coercion or force					
27 Don't hesitate to provide the leadership that is needed					
28 Promote open communication and sharing of information					
29 Give workers the power to make <i>important</i> decisions					
30 Provide the support and resources needed to help workers meet their goals					
31 Create an environment that encourages learning					
32 Are open to receiving criticism & challenge from others					
33 Say what they mean, and mean what they say					
34 Encourage each person to exercise leadership					
35 Admit personal limitations & mistakes					
36 Encourage people to take risks even if they may fail					
37 Practice the same behavior they expect from others					
38 Facilitate the building of community & team					
39 Do not demand special recognition for being leaders					
40 Lead by example by modeling appropriate behavior					
41 Seek to influence others from a positive relationship rather than from the authority of their position					
42 Provide opportunities for all workers to develop to their full potential					
43 Honestly evaluate themselves before seeking to evaluate others					
44 Use their power and authority to benefit the workers					
45 Take appropriate action when it is needed					

Please provide your response to each statement by placing an **X** in one of the five boxes

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

<b>Managers/Supervisors and Top Leadership in this Organization</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
46 Build people up through encouragement and affirmation					
47 Encourage workers to work <i>together</i> rather than competing against each other					
48 Are humble – they do not promote themselves					
49 Communicate clear plans & goals for the organization					
50 Provide mentor relationships in order to help people grow professionally					
51 Are accountable & responsible to others					
52 Are receptive listeners					
53 Do not seek after special status or the “perks” of leadership					
54 Put the needs of the workers ahead of their own					

### **Section 3**

In this next section, please respond to each statement as you believe it is true about **you personally** and **your role** in the organization (or organizational unit).

<b>In viewing my own role</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
55 I feel appreciated by my supervisor for what I contribute					
56 I am working at a high level of productivity					
57 I am listened to by those <i>above</i> me in the organization					
58 I feel good about my contribution to the organization					
59 I receive encouragement and affirmation from those <i>above</i> me in the organization					
60 My job is important to the success of this organization					
61 I trust the leadership of this organization					
62 I enjoy working in this organization					
63 I am respected by those <i>above</i> me in the organization					
64 I am able to be creative in my job					
65 In this organization, a person’s <i>work</i> is valued more than their <i>title</i>					
66 I am able to use my best gifts and abilities in my job					

Appendix D

June 5, 2004

School of Education  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523-1588

James A. Laub Ph.D.  
Associate Director  
Center for Life Calling and Leadership Development  
Indiana Wesleyan University  
4201 South Washington Street  
Marion, IN 46953-4974

Dear Dr. Laub,

The purpose of this letter is to request your written consent for the use of the Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) instrument published in your 1999 dissertation, "Assessing the servant organization: Development of the servant organizational leadership assessment (SOLA) instrument."

Ms. Debbie Arfsten is a Ph.D. student in our Community College Leadership Program. She has completed all of her content and research coursework and is now prepared to begin work on her dissertation. The enclosed prospectus (June 4, 2004) provides a summary of her dissertation topic and research design. The prospectus also explains how she intends to use the SOLA. The prospectus explains that Ms. Arfsten would like to determine the perceptions of employees in a Christian-based, for-profit organization regarding the presence of servant leadership characteristics at the organization. The SOLA is an ideal instrument for the research. Accordingly, on her behalf and as her committee chair, I am requesting that you consent to her use of the SOLA instrument under the following terms and conditions:

1. Ms. Arfsten is only permitted to use the SOLA instrument to collect data for the research outlined in the prospectus. She would not be permitted to use the instrument to collect data for any other study.
2. Ms. Arfsten must use the SOLA instrument in its entirety and she is not permitted to modify the instrument in any matter with the sole exception of deleting demographic items that are not pertinent to her study.
3. Ms. Arfsten is solely responsible for reproducing copies of the SOLA instrument for use in her study.
4. Ms. Arfsten is responsible for doing her own data collection, data entry, and data analysis.
5. Ms. Arfsten will provide you with a bound copy of her dissertation.

6. Ms. Arfsten will allow you to post her dissertation research to the website for the Center for Life Calling and Leadership Development, Indiana Wesleyan University.

7. Ms. Arfsten will complete collection of all data using the SOLA instrument by December 31, 2005.

8. Ms. Arfsten retains the right to present and publish findings from her dissertation research.

9. In all matters unrelated to your consent regarding the use of the SOLA, Ms. Arfsten's research will be guided by her dissertation committee, human subjects research requirements as provided by the Colorado State University Human Research Committee, and the Colorado State University Regulatory Compliance Office.

Dr. Laub, if the terms and conditions for granting this consent meet with your approval, please sign and date this original letter and return it to me in the enclosed envelope. Because Ms. Arfsten is now prepared to proceed with her work, I would request that you return the letter to me on or before July 9, 2004.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 970-491-5425 if you have any questions regarding this correspondence or the enclosed prospectus. Thank you for your consideration.

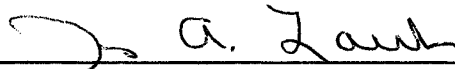
Sincerely,



Clifford P. Harbour, J.D., Ed.D.  
Associate Professor  
Community College Leadership Program

c: Ms. Debbie Arfsten

Agreed, accepted, and approved this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of June, 2004.



James A. Laub Ph.D.